

Volume - 26, No. 4

April 2020



Organ of the Central Committee,

CPA (ML)

New Democracy

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NEW DEMOCRACY

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Extension of Hardships

“A Good Leader Does Not Spread Panic”.

For the third time the Prime Minister addressed countrymen on the menace of Coronavirus and for the third time he failed to articulate in policies any concern for the overwhelming majority of the people of the country who are suffering much more due to the measures forced by the Govt. than from the panic created by the spread of Coronavirus. In all three of his speeches he left it to the people to take care of themselves and absolved his Govt. and the corporate who back his Govt. from any responsibility. This was extreme political distancing by RSS-BJP govt. from the people they claim to serve.

Left without any work and any money and resultantly without food, driven out by house owners from the measly dwellings in which they are to practice physical distancing, the workers working thousands of miles away from the homes they had left for the bare survival of their families, are living through a nightmare which the PM nonchalantly extended for nineteen more days. Obviously without any provisions, with not even a word on how they are to make it through it. Workers want to go to their distant homes, thousands of miles away, not because some palace or royal welcome awaits them there, but simply because one feels doubly pained at having to starve and die unattended in an alien land, a land turned alien for them despite all talk of unity and integrity. A pain which cannot be felt by the globe-trotting elite. And then rulers across the aisle blame on their homesickness what essentially is the sickness in

the belly, trying to cover their own lack of concern by finding the workers 'disorderly' behaviour disturbing the eye-soothing aerobatics of the good and greedy. Why and why can they not just be where they are, may be without food and shelter, but after all, how little is this sacrifice for the sake of the nation! How much degradation has taken place since the ancient days when our godly ancestors could go without food or water for years! Rulers are not able to find any sense in the yearnings for food and shelter, let alone in cares for the family members back in the villages. They find it reeks of ignorance, due to *maya*. On top of it, the recipients dare to point out the rotten nature of the food doled out or its inadequate amount. Beggars trying to be choosers! What has come of all the efforts of the rulers, these modern day Marie Antoinettes!

Choice between modes of death faced by these migrant workers is always difficult- there is no difference between creed, gender and caste, at least a part realization of the Constitutional mandate. A glimmer of hope of the possibility of return to their homes at long distances makes them rush to the mode of transport. In Mumbai, Surat, Delhi, tens of thousands, nay, lakhs converged on railways stations and bus stands only to escape seemingly certain hardships, evendeadth, taking chances with uncertain fears. What choice do the rulers have but to unleash police and security forces on these ungrateful creatures, that too for their own good! These are the hard decisions that 'democracy' forces on the rulers whose hearts and bellies are full with sympathy.

Indian rulers have earned the 'reputation' of enforcing the harshest lock down, that too on a vast scale-130 crore people. Many people are finding it a necessary evil, as if there was no other mechanism of stopping spread of this novel Corona virus; as if there was no other way of people keeping physical distance other than by

fear of the brandishing of police canes. Such inhuman enforcement has very few examples. Those spared of it are singing praise; those experiencing it have no voice. Besides those who died travelling on foot, an undocumented large number would have perished due to hunger. This is not to include those who have died due to lack of availability of health services, not being able to make it to hospitals and a few who could, being turned back if they were not considered Corona cases. The toll of moronic acts may end up much higher than that of Corona.

The way Indian Govt. has handled this outbreak is a clear example of rulers being divorced from Indian reality. Govt. actions can be compiled for future guidance of Don'ts. The virus came to India from abroad and it was late in arrival, probably taking a cue from Indian transportation. First case was reported from Kerala on January 30 and cases remained very few throughout February. Enough time was there for the Govt. of India to put its act together. But this precious time was lost in sending electronic shocks to women of Shaheen Bagh. However, besides this communal fascist agenda, there is another angle to it. This was the time when US and UK rulers, Trump and Johnson, were rubbishing the talk of danger of Corona. Modi was in august company. Tens of thousands were assembled in Gujarat to welcome Trump. Trump and his allies, including Johnson, were then gloating at the discomfiture of Chinese rulers as Corona first became an epidemic there.

But soon the outbreak started affecting western countries. Soon, Italy, Spain, France, Germany and UK raced ahead of China in number of cases as well as deaths. US came obviously on top justifying its billing as a Superpower. When the virus spread in western countries, Modi Govt. panicked. It announced a complete lock down, just allowing two days' break for swearing in of its govt.

in MP. Such was the panic and it was duly transmitted to the people through its careless announcement which gave rise to widespread chaos in cities including the capital Delhi. The type of lock down was not based on any recommendation of any scientific body of India. Rather it was a pale imitation of what was happening in some western countries, obviously with vigour of police and rigour of law thrown in. A statement jointly issued by Indian Public Health Association (IPHA) and Indian Association of Preventive and Social Medicine (IAPSM) said as much, “The unprecedented nationwide “lockdown”, announced in India from 25th March 2020 for three weeks, is apparently based on the experience and epidemiological evidence of the model in some specific contexts from other countries.” (Issued on April 11, 2020). The two leading bodies of community health experts made clear both foreign source of the measure and the fact that Indian scientists were not even consulted before announcing this measure or even before announcing its extension on April 14. That most of those adorning the top bodies of medical science would dare not speak up owes to the mode of their selection, promotion and retention in top places. It is unbelievable but true that the premier medical research body in India, ICMR, had sanctioned a study on efficacy of *MahaMratyunjya Jap* on head injury patients in ICU.

The time available to the Govt. for preparations was not utilized. Neither test kits were prepared nor public health facilities were strengthened. Rather the Union Budget on Health services was effectively reduced. So much was the carelessness that export of health equipment so necessary to tackle the needs of affected people was continued up to March 23. Indian govt. fully understands the role of foreign capital and their compradors in shaping the contours of ruling class politics and its agenda. Hence, it

is more sensitive to the diktats of the imperialist powers than the needs of the Indian people. Lifting of restrictions on the export of Hydroxychloroquine within 48 hours after its imposition, Trump's threat facilitating such a reversal and helping bring out the humanitarian concerns, and diversion of medical supplies meant for India to US, have all highlighted the subservient character of the Indian rulers. Corona has not been able to make any dent in it.

There was a fairly long period available to arrange kits for testing and equipment for protection of health care personnel, but all that was squandered. Despite all bravado expressed by the Indian Govt. spokespersons and also by its scientific advisors who know that they owe their jobs less to science and more to sycophancy (There are no likes of Dr. Fauci here in the establishment), there is frankly shortage of testing kits. It is expressed in low number of tests being carried out, the shortage covered up by restrictions on the criteria to carry out tests. Till April 14, 2020 only 200,000 tests were carried out i.e. roughly 0.15% of the population. Compare this with 3 million tests carried out by US so far for a population less than one fourth of our country and 1 million by Italy which has less than one twenty fifth of our population. It is worth mentioning that a public sector company had offered at the beginning of crisis itself to make testing kits, an offer not accepted by the Govt. Now, as promised imports get diverted, the first antibody testing kits will anyway be probably supplied by the same, but two weeks late in a situation where every day counts.

The performance on providing PPE is equally dismal. Govt. compares health care workers to soldiers in this "battle" but is throwing them into it without minimum necessary weaponry. Was it so difficult? Not at all. A number of concerns offered to make them but how could the Govt. of profiteers allow this opportunity to go

waste? Even now this can be done in a very short time if the Govt. allots resources to saving the people rather than to its corporate friends. Govt. allocation to fighting Corona is miniscule as compared to the handouts they gave to their corporate friends. Corona has not been able to frighten them enough, yet. It is just the lack of political will or the belief that the baton can do miracles. Doctors, nurses and other health care staff are being harassed and intimidated (even suspended) by authorities and Govt. for articulating their needs of PPE. No steps were taken to help defend health care personnel from misguided public perception of them being sources of Corona, largely due to panic created by the Govt. and people's full confidence that Govt. would do nothing to help them but leave them to fend for themselves. Probably RSS-BJP Govt. has not found anything in these attacks on medical staff which can be utilized for spreading communal virus. Narendra Modi, Amit Shah, Ajay Singh Bisht, do not act on these unless there is scope of a communal twist.

But RSS-BJP set-up is in the overdrive in spreading their communal virus even in the times of Corona. Muslims are selectively blamed for the spread; no mention of the community of those guilty of spread if they are not Muslims. This propaganda is buttressed by attacks on Muslim vendors. The whole affair is taken to a new level by allocating different wards to the patients from different communities in the contribution come in from Gujarat.

Prime Minister called on scientists, especially young scientists, to take a lead in making a vaccine. One thing that Corona has apparently done is that it has silenced at least some of those in power from expressing belief in the ancient glory of medical science before which the presentday medical sciences pale into insignificance. No doubt understanding the utter futility of scientific research, the present rulers had cut down Budget on scientific

research and made that inaccessible to scientists even where it was formally not cut. Now suddenly Modi has remembered Indian scientists. But Rome was not built in a day. And one cannot be sure that this turnabout will outlast Corona pandemic.

Public Health institutions, since long being undermined, are shouldering the main responsibility. Corona outbreak underlined the necessity of strengthening them. But RSS-BJP Govt. is not prepared to even look in that direction. There has been no attempt to bring private health establishments under Govt. control for the purpose of tackling Corona, a measure taken by a number of countries.

Having stunned India into lockdown, RSS-BJP rulers and the establishment supervised over by them, will have to re-open. They do not have any desire to provide for the people, execution of lockdown is ample proof of this. But they won't allow the people to go back to work as earlier. The rulers would extract their pound of flesh. Now Corona is being sought to be delivery agent. Already proposal is formulated to extend work day to 12 hours. Now the anti-worker Codes governing rights of workers are being brought in through Ordinance route. Profits of corporate have to be puffed up so they can fill the coffers of their political representatives. All this will be useful to turn sufferings into deliverance, dumping into saving, neglect into service, in brief, black into white.

MNREGS has dropped to mere 1% as per reports. No payments are being made. Govt. used to boast that it had opened accounts for everyone. Why not use it to make payment to all, wages, compensation and subsistence fund? Is this not the time for it? Why not procure all agricultural produce at MSP and give bonus to meet the exigency of the pandemic?

One great revelation of Corona has been that the Govt. which was projecting India as a rising superpower is all of a sudden complaining of her poverty. It is not able to provide wages to the people (that it left to the companies which everybody knows won't), rents are not being paid for locked down workers (that is left to house owners, knowing well what they are doing). No doubt they would rediscover plentiful India once it is a question of showering bounties over the corporate and not spending for the people. For the time being they are deducting the salaries of even Class IV employees, extracting contributions voluntary only in name. While other Govts. have ratcheted up spending, Modi Govt. is making people pay while stupendous wealth of corporate is not touched.

However, problems of the people have dramatically escalated. And so has changed the canvass of the articulation of their grievance. Rulers have done everything to drive the fear of Corona into the hearts of struggles of the people. The fear is being carefully orchestrated and manipulated into paralyzing the people while giving full scope to the Govt. to suppress them. While the Govt. has banned any and every assembly but the people are being increasingly assembled in jails, even for those alleged crimes which can be tackled later. This pandemic has not prompted the Govt. or the Supreme Court to order release of political prisoners. Probably the Govt. has made prisons Corona-proof. Or they wish to short-circuit the whole judicial process and deliver the verdict of guilty while ensuring its simultaneous execution.

Some govts. are throwing out migrant workers while their home states are not willing to take them. They have truly become stateless, NRC-NPR notwithstanding. In Delhi, Surat, Mumbai, and many more places the same pattern is repeated. Should this chicanery be not put an end to? Should the state Govts. not be made

accountable? - both those of states which these workers built and those of where they were born. Why do the ruling parties pretend and play the blame game while they are all naked in the bathhouse. They support each other, full of praise; when it comes to taking care of workers and poor, they start their familiar blame game.

Corona has been handy for the ruling classes. The tiny virus probably may not even be aware of the use it is being put to. But the real Corona will be that of passivity, of inability to hold rulers accountable, of failure to rise for rights, of failure to defend what people had. If the rulers cannot deliver, they be relieved. Conspiracy is quite stark in our country, or maybe it is so in other countries as well. Let us not permit the rulers who permitted spread of Corona in India to laugh at our expense. Corona may not know Class, but the ruling class knows how to use Corona, to use any calamity. Handling of Corona pandemic has been an unabashed story of callous lack of concern, ineptitude & inefficiency and above all, of making the people suffer.

April 15, 2020

Statement on Tableeghi Congregation

Stop Communalizing; Fight Corona Not the People

The Govt. and RSS-BJP running the Central Govt. came out of the political quarantine to which it has been confined by its mindless handling of Corona outbreak, as the news of cases from Tableeghs gathering at Nizamuddin Markaz surfaced. They sensed the opportunity to brandish their communal knife which was getting rusted since the outbreak of Corona though they did try their best to utilize the situation less for fighting Corona and more for suppressing the people including the peaceful and orderly gatherings observing all commands by the Central and state govts. and much more, for example at Shaheen Bagh.

By one-sided propaganda, the Central and state govts., Narendra-Arvind dispensations running Delhi, tried to brush aside their own inaptitude, mistakes of omission and commission to lay the blame exclusively on Tableegh for the outbreak of Coronavirus, obviously with profuse support from the corporate controlled media. They sought to brush under the carpet the larger picture i.e. of permitting arrivals through flights from abroad, after all those who came thus are the rich and connected. They also sought to make the people forget the tremendous hardships that were thrust on the poor sections of working people through mindlessly planned and senselessly executed plan of lock down which has no parallel except probably in demonetization. Corona pandemic has engulfed many countries but where have you seen people being mercilessly

thrashed by the police as in Delhi, UP, Punjab etc? All this is to be brushed aside in the new found villain of Corona spread.

Tableeghi Jamaat Congregation was held in Delhi from March 1 to 15. Thousands assembled there. But why blame them alone? Such congregations were taking place in many places. Reportedly forty thousand were at Tirupati, Vaishno Devi and other religious places. The Govt. did not wake up to the need to stop the spread of Corona. UP CM himself led a Ram Lalla procession during the lock down! Why did the PM have to wait till 24th to announce the lockdown, why not in continuity with the Janata Curfew on 22nd March? Was it not to facilitate the swearing in of Shivraj Chouhan Govt. in Madhya Pradesh on March 23?

Let us take Tableegh congregation. A large number of people participated from abroad. Visas to them were granted by the Central Govt. Even if visas were given earlier why were these not cancelled? The fact is that the Govt. itself is guilty of gross underestimation of the danger of spread of Coronavirus and is now using Tableegh congregation even as a scapegoat to cover its own failure. Govt. wishes to avoid scrutiny of its own culpability. Tableeghi officials are showing the request letters for permits for buses to take out those who were stranded there ('remain where you are' call) which they wrote to the DCP and Additional Commissioner (Central Govt.) and SDM and DM (Govt. of NCT Delhi). These letters were received by these authorities but why this request was not granted nor any arrangement made by the Govts? The two Govts. have not disputed the authenticity of these letters. TV channels ran an interview of a police officer telling the Tableeghi officials to disperse the people but nowhere he talks of any arrangement made for this. Or was he unaware of the lockdown. As a matter of fact the buses and road transport was

totally off the roads from 21st March. Delhi govt. had extended the ban on 23rd morning after 'Janata Curfew' on March 22. No passenger trains left Delhi after 4 AM of March 22. How were these people supposed to leave is the question the two Govts. are not answering. Probably it was for the TV visuals that Nizamuddin Markaz be emptied under the watchful eyes of omnipresent Ajit Doval. Why this could not be done more efficiently and timely and why so spectacularly? Why did Narendra Modi and Arvind Kejriwal Govts. not concentrate on implementing plans for mitigating the sufferings of the people due to lock down?

As for Tableegh, it is not fair to put criminal cases against them while so many other functions were held simultaneously and even on later dates. Why no action against the others? Why no action against the officials who permitted the entry of foreigners or officials who took no step to facilitate sending of those stranded. This is a deliberate communal vendetta.

While Tableegh officials may not bear any criminal liability but what about their moral and social responsibility? Why were they so careless about the safety and health of their own preachers and followers? The leader who now has come out with a call for Tableegh followers to take medical precautions and treatment is also shown claiming that Corona cannot infect people of faith. Only Corona had other designs! You may take care of the after-life but why push the people to it, whatever may await them in the said after life! Tableeghi officials claimed that there was no Corona positive case inside the Markaz while a large number of those who were there tested positive and many died. Why they did not complain about the patients inside their premises and not show such letters about this, like the ones they showed about permits for buses? Why push so many people having faith in them to an early deliverance? Why two

standards, one for the common believers who are supposed to wait for their death, and one for organizers who are claiming to practice quarantine? Though it is no surprise. It is well known how those who claim treatment of every known or even unknown ailments in the scriptures flock to hospitals for their own treatment rather than practising what they preach. They should cooperate with health personnel in saving lives of those afflicted and saving from affliction those not yet afflicted.

Don't blame the people for their backwardness or obscurantism. This is being promoted and perpetuated by the ruling classes who have do not want the public health services to be strengthened as evidenced by miniscule amount allotted to Health in Budget. The organizations preaching backwardness are linked to and patronized by the ruling classes who wish that the people should not demand accountability. Their strength is due to ruling class politics and not in the backwardness of people. Talking of the last is a favourite pastime of the proponents and apologists of the system.

People should see through this motivated communal propaganda. Govts. should care for the safety and health of every person living in India, belonging to any faith or persuasion, and not indulge in parceling off blame of their own failures. Every person afflicted or exposed to the danger deserves all sympathy and care.

Stop the communal propaganda!

CPI(ML)-New Democracy

April 2, 2020

Walking Into The Frame: India's Migrant Workers

Aparna

The massive numbers of migrant working class of the country have been liberally maligned by implication by the Central Govt, including by its representation in the Supreme Court. Several state govts also echo the sentiment. The Status Report submitted by the Govt. of India to the Supreme Court on 31st March in a case involving focusing attention on the migrant workers, says in para 41 (as quoted in The Wire by the Wire Analysis- 'Corona Virus Vs Free Speech- on 1st April 2020), "However unfortunately due to some false and/or misleading news/social media message, a panic was created.....there are approximately 4.14 crore who have migrated for purpose of work and employment" and stated that the "present barefoot migration consists of roughly 5 to 6 lakhs". It further says in para 48(source of quote same) that the Govt. is "seriously considering and will shortly implement" a system "to address panic in the minds of migrant workers keeping in view the socio-psycho local issue."After such a Report and the Solicitor General's similar submissions, the Supreme Court got completely lulled and accepted that there was no alternative narrative. It expressed faith in the steps being taken by the Government and in its order the two Judge bench of the CJI and JusticeNageshwar Rao wrote "The migration of large number of labourers working in the cities was triggered by

panic created by fake news that the lockdown would continue for more than three months.” The Wire’s comment has held that the Central Govt, via para 41, actually meant to say that the news that huge numbers of migrant workers were walking was a myth creation by social media and this led to panic, whereas not so many walked. Be that as it may, the Court held they walked due to panic. This panic was not due to their surety that they would be left unsupported during the period of work stoppage. It was not even due to fear of catching the unknown disease. It was panic due to social media misreporting the period of lockdown.

Govts., especially the Central Govt., are effectively conveying and publicly maintaining that migrant workers have been hell bent on walking tens of hundreds of miles, far far away from the cushions of shelter and food and stipends waiting for them, given to them by state govts and being assured to them by the Central govt through various pronouncements. They were determined, apparently, to violate the 25th March mantra, ‘stay where you are’. Since they were so certain they did not want to stay near workplaces in corona times, why did they not shift earlier, is the implied accusation.

Workers learnt, with the announcement of Janata Curfew of 22nd March, that they would have to lockdown for 14 hours on a Sunday. They also learnt that trains would not start from 21st March midnight till 22nd March midnight. On 22nd, in the midst of Janata curfew and also Delhi Govt orders of not more than 20 to collect at any site, a high-level meeting of cabinet secretaries of all states, the Cabinet Secretary and Principal Secretary to PM was held. Their decisions were there in the newspapers of 23rd morning and also known to those who watched the news on 22nd night. They announced a lockdown of 75 districts in the country, extension upto 31st March of complete cancellation of all 13,523 railway trains

serving passengers, lockdown of all interstate transport bus services and of metro trains till 31st March as well as suburban trains. Apparently, one of the reasons which had sparked concern was that three people under quarantine were found in long distance trains on 21st. Unlike the tens of others who had mocked the 'request to remain quarantined' of the Govts when they flew in from abroad since past several weeks, these 3 were caught as co-passengers noted the newly started 'quarantine' stamp on their wrists!

Thus on 23rd morning, in Delhi, other metropolises and in many parts of the country, workers woke to closed workplaces, withdrawn local transport, closed *dhabas* and local eateries, steep rise in price of flour and no interstate transport....Except. Yes except one. The domestic flights continued to operate till 25th March, Wednesday. Hiding the quarantine stamp on their wrists, foreign returned fliers too could still fly to a destination within the country with other unsuspecting fliers. On the 24/25th night, the PM 'locked down' the country for three weeks. Reports from the whole country substantiate that this is what led to absolute panic buying and loot of marketplaces, till clarifications were issued few hours later that same night that essential goods would continue to be available. By then thousands of migrants across the country for whom such expenditure was impossible, had started looking for ways to go home.

They apparently were walking away despite the Central Govt. going all out to take care of them. They were walking despite so many assurances of shelter and food being doled out to them by state governments. They had no problems, say govts, they just decided to go home as they had unsubstantiated fears. The PM 'apologized' to them on 29th March for any inconvenience caused to them for their own good, but still they walked and still have not stopped. Before the Supreme Court the Central govt. talked of fake

news and panic as workers were misled. Is this so? Or did they walk because they knew fully and clearly that Governments would simply discard them, even though there was no dearth of verbal assurances? Is this fear not well founded in the very well known, already being experienced and very much ongoing practices and priorities of Govts?

Is this so difficult to answer? The Central Govt's GO says no rentals will be charged forcibly; no less than the Bar Council of India has been forced to approach the Delhi High Court against tenant lawyers being asked to pay rentals or face eviction. Where then does the tenant migrant worker stand in Delhi, let alone any other city? The Kejriwal Govt assured on the 4th day of lockdown that 4 lakhs will receive cooked meals; the first two days, it itself said, it had fed 20,000. Was it immaterial that 3 lakhs and some eighty thousands would have gone hungry those days, according to its own admitted requirement? The Finance Minister of India assures free rations; in the Capital itself it is being given to only those with ration cards. The Labour Minister of the national Capital has conceded that online registered construction workers of 2019 in the city, which is the criteria the Delhi Govt. has chosen for giving support of Rs 5000, are nowhere near the number of actual workers (Indian Express page 4, 2nd April 2020). Is the Central Govt unaware that a huge section of migrant population possesses no BPL cards at all even in Delhi let alone the hundreds of Tribals from Odisha and Jharkhand flooding construction sites in Telengana, Andhra, Surat and Tamil Nadu? (These are situations which IFTU has direct knowledge of) In state after state, trade unionists seeking food for migrant workers stranded at closed worksites have had to literally force State Govt machinery to attend to these workers and usually they are still unsuccessful in getting a solution for longer than one meal.

In Panipat in Haryana, with a huge population of migrant weavers and rickshaw pullers working even normally for a pittance, leaders of IFTU called SDMs, ACPs and finally the Press along with themselves threatening to go on Dharna, before 4000 plus hungry who had no ration cards started receiving some relief on 31st evening. This relief turned out to be stale food! Somewhere a bit more responsive and somewhere much worse has been the experience in so many states. Vigorous forcing of SDMs, DMs by Trade Union leaders, sometimes needing to be accompanied by media highlighting, brought food to migrants from the 30th or 31st at the earliest- which means not earlier than the 5th day of the lockdown. Most migrants reported food and cash had finished by the second day of lockdown. In some states known for high rate of migration, intellectuals and activists have come together to pool all the distress calls received and try to contact organizations, administrators and Govts of other states to secure food and shelter for stranded migrants. In many places citizens groups, volunteers, RWAs are daily feeding large numbers and the demand still persists despite a week of lockdown getting over. When then will the promised aid come? And such activism has touched merely the tip of the iceberg. The Hindu (Delhi Edition of 2nd April 2020) carries a frontpage photo of workers sitting outside closed shops, waiting in a long line, without masks or physical distancing, for food to arrive in Koyambedu Market in Chennai. This could hardly be fake news and it is the seventh day of the lockdown. Even in LDF ruled Kerala, while the State Govt. promised all support, in practice in at least two cases involving multiple number of migrants, no funds were sanctioned by the state Govt for feeding migrants; it was left to the pockets of municipalities for funds to execute the “support” and insistent trade unionists are ‘disruptors’ of lockdown. Meanwhile, already there are clarifications from some govts that they are not

giving rations for noncard holders while others will give it for those who have Aadhaar cards bearing addresses of the state they have migrated to, not their own state. Migrants are likely to have addresses of their home state on their Aadhar cards. Even for those workers getting rations on cards, in most parts of the country, flour mills and *chakkis* are not allowed to operate and *aatta* (flour) has disappeared from small grocery stores; even otherwise it is officially Rs 50 or above per kilo in Delhi. Yet the Solicitor General maintained before the Supreme Court on 31st March that nearly 22.8 lakh migrant workers have been provided food and shelter by the Government after they left the cities for their native villages. Which government and where? The Union Home Secretary was also present in the hearing and informed the apex Court that 6.6 lakhs were in shelter homes run by the Government in various parts of the country (Statesman, 1st April 2020, cover page). Which governments and where? - the Central Government is not running any shelter and maybe the centres opened in various districts by various state govts since 31st March itself for compulsory quarantine of returning migrants have also been accounted for in this figure. Anyway, nobody at all spoke then or subsequently of the known over 30 deaths of migrants through sheer fatigue or through accidents, as they walked their way home.

The mighty numbers collecting at one point on 28- 29th night in the Capital, the forced or planned facilitation by govts of three states to this exodus, (anyway the arrangements could not have happened without the consent of the Centre) the confining of these workers in “forced quarantines” (this concept and this energy was sadly missing at airports for weeks) in shelter camps in districts as ordered by the Central Govt. along with clamp down orders at interstate borders, no doubt brought the entire issue of the migrant

workers into limelight. Workers dying while walking, over 30 of them reported thus, has kept them in the spotlight – but as irritants, as those that ruin the picture by becoming a defacing streak of harsh reality. Somehow the Supreme Court was reassured that the Central Govt. would give migrants food, so it only gave an opinion for prayer sessions to be held at shelter homes. Now the anti novel corona lockdown is set to be given a communal spin on the eve of the seriously and widely contended and now postponed NPR exercise due to have started on April 1st. In the process the Central Govt, aided by the mainstream media, will get the chance to ‘lockout’ from public discourse the walk of the migrant workers.

Yet they are continuing walking. The numbers may be more scattered, many might have been secluded into ‘quarantines’ at state borders, many may have made their weary way back to some point, the numbers moving may have shifted more towards central India, but they don’t appear willing to disappear. For anyone linking their walking to “panic” due to fake news on the social media platforms, their very continuing shows they are walking due to hard certainty. They are not all “barefoot”, but have reasonably packed few belongings and attired themselves for their long journeys. Cyclists and cycle rickshaw drivers have also cycled themselves home, it is heard. Those returning are certainly not the affluent of their villages and in most places are meeting hostile responses from administration and from other villagers and panchayat leaders.

It is not clear where the Govt’s estimate of their number comes from; they are still walking though maybe no longer starting. Their message is clear- they work for the wage of the day, without any individual bank balance, without any social or job security, without even being sure of a roof over their heads. For many, the women and children are at home and these too were

dependent to differing extents on the money transfers from the worksites. The workers themselves are the question mark over the sincerity and competence of the Central Govt's fight against the pandemic. This virus came from abroad; India had plenty of time. What use were 'thermal' checks of passengers without enforcing quarantine of 15 days and when a simple paracetamol tablet can fool any thermal checking instrument? Who should be explaining the presence of unquarantined foreigners and foreign returned entering through India's airports, irrespective of who other or which other agencies also did wrong? Who should answer why despite those in quarantine going 'missing', misreporting, being on long distance trains, on buses and domestic flights, as past weeks have repeatedly exposed, still compulsory quarantine was not imposed from late January itself when it was clear the virus had left the shores of China via airborne passengers? Neither making culprits out of migrant workers nor communal poison is going to deflect the answer. Unfortunately, India's common masses are the ones going to pay the biggest price for it.

2nd April 2020

Viral Agony in the Midst of Systematized Mendacity

Dr Vikas Bajpai

With the dramatic rise of Hindu majoritarianism in the national politics India's Muslims are a community that is hopelessly besieged. Supported by the progressive sections of the society, they sought to break this siege over the past few months by waging a relentless struggle against CAA-NRC-NPR combine. Over this period, no other community in India would have paid as much obeisance to the Tricolour and Indian Constitution as Muslims did, yet we only know too well about the insistence of the majoritarian forces to paint them as anti-nationals. I shudder to think of what the sense of being besieged, in a society which has increasingly normalised such a discourse, can do to the social, economic and psychological wellbeing of a person; to her ability to perceive and react to the routine big and small events that characterize our lives; and to her ability to confront adversity as it ought to be confronted.

It is in this context that the corona outbreak at Markaz Nizamuddin has provided another pretext to the Hindu communal forces for fortifying the siege around Indian Muslims, where cracks had appeared. Those who are irremediably indoctrinated with communal loathing are already proclaiming 'corona jihad' theory in social media platforms. This only makes the task of a reasoned

understanding of the developments all the more acute in order to nuance our strategy of combating this pandemic successfully.

It is indeed tragic that nearly 200 out of 4000 or so followers who attended the Tablighi Jamaat congregation between the 1st to the 24th of March, 2020 had tested positive as of 1st April, 2020. Even more worrisome is that an indeterminate number of carriers from the gathering in Delhi have possibly transmitted infection to different parts of the country. This poses an additional challenge in stemming the tide of the ongoing epidemic.

One cannot help but wish that none of this had happened. But now that it is there, mounting a vilification campaign on this count against Muslims in general and the Jamaat in particular, is not only counter-productive but is actually an attempt to communalize the pandemic for diverting attention from the enormous human tragedy that has been unleashed by the irresponsible manner in which the government has imposed the country wide clampdown, uprooting people from their homes and hearth, and its lack of preparedness to handle the consequences.

Tablighi's congregations are a well publicised annual affair. Every year the government issues thousands of visas to followers coming from different countries for the congregation. In a report by Deeptiman Tiwary published in the Indian Express on 1st April, 2020, it is stated even this year 2000 foreigners of Tablighi Association from 70 countries came for the Jamaat's congregation (Tiwary, 2020). Most of the followers who come for these congregations live and dine together at the Markaz because furthering a sense of community and identity is at the core of these congregations. Given the social and political milieu that obtains in India today, it is impossible that the authorities would not have kept

a watch on such a gathering of Muslims, especially as the Nizamuddin police station is just next door to the Markaz.

Even if we presume for a moment that it is the criminal lack of concern on the part of the Tablighi leadership (though they have strongly contested such allegations with facts of their own) which was responsible for this tragedy, does it absolve the government of its responsibility to have taken all the necessary measures for containing the outbreak by moving out the persons in the Markaz building to safe quarantine facilities and arranging for their testing? On March 16 the Delhi Chief Minister announced a ban on religious, social, political gatherings of more than 50 people in the Capital until March 31. Now it is claimed that the Delhi government had passed the necessary orders, but the Jamaat ignored them.

The Jamaat leaders may or may not have acted responsibly, but can a government merely make an announcement and then leave it to the proven or unproven ability of an organization to safely evacuate such a large gathering in a short time. Indeed, such an evacuation could have been meaningful only if those symptomatic of infection were separated, appropriate medical care, including testing facilities, were arranged and their contacts safely quarantined. It would indeed be miraculous were the Tablighi to have such a logistical capability, especially as there were enough reports around to point to Central government's failure in arranging proper facilities for isolation, quarantine and testing of those flowing into India from abroad. Added to this were the reports of VIPs dodging screening at airports and people escaping from the unsatisfactory conditions at the quarantine facilities. If the insistence of the government was only for somehow having the Markaz building evacuated, unmindful of attendant necessities, then it was only asking for 'dissipation' without 'mitigation', for, in

all probability enough people at the Markaz had already been infected with the virus before 16th of March as the following discussion shall bear out.

The connection of the spread of COVID-19 infection from the Jamaat congregation at Nizamuddin was first established after a foreigner who had participated in the congregation tested positive in Telangana on 17th March, just a day after the Delhi Government banned gatherings of more than 50 people. The same report of Indian Express quoted above states (Tiwary, 2020):

It (Ministry of Home Affairs) added that as of March 21, some 1,746 persons were staying at the Hazrat Nizamuddin Markaz. It is not clear what action was taken between March 18 and 21 to screen these people, or to get the Markaz vacated. The Delhi government had on March 13 issued orders banning assembly of more than 200 people for any kind of “sports activity or seminars.”

Interestingly, medical screening of those at the Markaz started only on March 26, after the death of a Tablighi associated COVID-19 patient was reported from Telangana.

There are other questions as well which beg for an answer. When were the visas issued to the Tablighis who came from other countries, and when did they actually arrive in India? Was this before the pandemic or after it had set in? In the case of latter why did the government not stop this year’s congregation at Tablighi Jamaat’s Markaz, especially as there was enough of information available to back such an action?

It needs be noted that an outbreak of coronavirus had already happened from a similar gathering of Jamaat held in Sri Petaling Mosque in Kuala Lumpur from Feb. 27 – March 1. The pandemic

spread from Malaysia to other countries of South-east Asia like Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei, Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam (Benar News, 2020). In the wake of this outbreak, Indonesia, the largest Muslim country in the world, cancelled a similar multi-day congregation of the Tablighi Jamaat in Sulawesi island which was to attract followers from a number of countries (Benar News, 2020).

There had been other forewarnings of possible spread of coronavirus from religious congregations, not necessarily from those of the Muslims alone. South Korea, which was one of the earliest countries after China to have faced the onslaught of COVID-19 pandemic, traced 60 percent of its 6,767 corona virus patients to a single point source i.e. Shincheonji Church of Jesus in the southeastern city of Daegu (Reuters, 2020). Two of the biggest virus clusters in Singapore were found to be connected to Churches. Likewise, the holy city of Qom was the top hotspot of the pandemic in Iran (Beech, 2020).

The diligence exercised by the Government of India in controlling the import of corona virus from other affected countries can be judged from the travel advisories issued by it. We need to see these especially with respect to the inflow of people from the countries relevant to the Nizamuddin hotspot.

The 3rd March, 2020 (by this time the huge corona outbreak in Tablighi Jamaat gathering in Malaysia had already happened) advisory issued by the ‘Ministry of Home Affairs’ states:

Passengers (foreign and Indian) other than those restricted, arriving directly or indirectly from China, South Korea, Japan, Iran, Italy, Hong Kong, Macau, Vietnam, *Malaysia, Indonesia, Nepal, Thailand, Singapore* and Taiwan must undergo medical screening at port of entry (BOI, 2020).

As per the same advisory only visas granted to travellers from five countries – China, Italy, Iran, South Korea and Japan were rescinded. Visitors from the South-East Asian countries were not even designated for any kind of quarantine. In fact, the words ‘compulsory quarantine’ are included in the travel advisory for the first time as late as 16 March, wherein ‘compulsory quarantine’ became enforceable with respect to only 9 countries – China, Italy, Iran, South Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the UAE (Mody, 2020). The countries of South-East Asia remained notable absentees from this list despite huge corona virus outbreaks having occurred there.

That the government allowed the Nizamuddin congregation to happen under these circumstances, was certainly not born out of its desire to attest to a spirit of liberalism or bolster its secular credentials. It was simply because of its indifference towards the wellbeing of the people at large and Muslims in particular; and, as someone has said, indifference is worse than hate.

Some commentators have needlessly gone in to a hyperbole by linking the fall out of Tablighi’s congregation with the medieval moorings of Islam in general and Indian Muslims in particular. It is advised by them that “India’s Muslims have to free themselves from the medieval fantasies of maulanas, and embrace more contemporary attitudes” (Jung, 2020). Embracing a progressive scientific outlook is indeed an eminently desirable objective for entire humanity, and not just for a community. If not less, the ‘medieval fantasies of maulanas’ are about as ‘mirthful’ or ‘melancholy’ as the pre-medieval prescriptions of ‘gau mutra sevan’ (drinking cow urine) and ‘gobar snan’ (bathing in cow dung slush) having the potential to cure corona virus infection. The moot point is that such attitudes are cultivated and maintained by the

vested interests through well recognized social, economic and political processes, religious obscurantism being one among them. Those at the lowest rungs of the society are the most gullible victims. It is perhaps some of this kind among those evacuated from the Markaz, who have been reported to have misbehaved with the nurses and other hospital staff in a hospital in Ghaziabad where they were kept in isolation.

If the Muslim bashing in ‘godia media’, that quickly followed this incident, is anything to go by, then it needs be admitted that those who gain by driving the wedge deeper between the Hindu-Muslim divide, have succeeded in their gambit. Just survey the following headlines that tickered on a leading Hindi news channel:

- Deshmein corona kekusurwar maulana ko jaaniye (know the maulana responsible for spreading corona in the country).
- Maulana kikartut ne phailadiya corona (Maulana’s doing leads to spread of corona).
- Corona factory wale maulana kisampoornakahani (Full story of the maulana of corona factory).

Such brazenly upfront bigotry has increasingly become the norm with mainstream media, rather than an exception, to the extent that one feels dispirited to even attempt a rebuttal. Yet, one could easily replace the ‘Maulana’ in these headlines with the ‘Leader’ who facilitated the spread of corona in the country by triggering distress migration of hapless and helpless starving labourers; or, the ‘local ruling party leaders / workers / district magistrates / senior police officers etc.’ who helped spread corona by leading huge thali clanging crowds, even as ‘social’ distancing (the term should actually be ‘physical’ distancing) lay discarded by the way side.

The processes by which a pathogen destroys individual bodies may be medical in the main, but the processes through which a pathogen of epidemic / pandemic proportions destroys human societies and civilizations are social, economic and political in the main. It is impossible to effectively take on such epic tragedies from a base of a society where social solidarity lies systematically shattered, economic miseries of the overwhelming majority have comprehensively undermined the most elementary material necessities of physical existence, let alone a dignified human existence, and where the polity has begun to take pride in devising ever more contorted devices to milk human misery. The ostracization of Muslims in their own country and of the millions upon millions for whom daily earning is a necessary condition of daily living does not augur well for India's fight against COVID-19.

If official statistics were to be relied upon, India is as yet nowhere near to the scale of the COVID-19 calamity that has already visited some countries much smaller in population as compared to India's, with the singular exception of China, which has a large population. Yet from none of these countries have we heard of victims of the pandemic being treated as culprits or criminals; unlike India, from nowhere else we have had pictures of police beating the life out of those distressed by this enormous misery; of people running amok with hunger; and of people being treated like tics, quite literally. At a timewhen countries have been converting their stadiums into field hospitals, the rulers in India are defining the norms of civility by converting stadiums into temporary jails where to confine the migrant labourers.

The gusto of thanks giving by thali clangers notwithstanding, we have known of doctors engaged in providing medical relief to those struck by the virus being turned out of their rented homes

and being virtually forced to expose themselves to the worst consequences of corona infection in face of an enormous shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE). Air India pilots and cabin crew who rescued Indians stranded in countries worst affected with corona are now ostracised by their neighbours. What then makes us believe that all the Tablighis who are now traversing across various parts of India, or the migrants headed home shall reveal themselves to the authorities were they to fall sick with corona? Their treatment as the villains of the piece, above all by the agencies of the state, will only help in making their presence all the more obscure, and will make them think twice before even seeking medical attention. The consequences of this need not be lost on the readers.

the way, at a time when they could have truly contributed to their professed passion for upholding Indian nationalism, all the ‘senas’ – the Hindu Sena, GaurakshakSena, KarniSena, Ram Sena et.al. seem to have become conspicuous by their absence; though it is still to be confirmed if they were busy in lending professional help to the authorities in setting right the irreverent migrant labour, besides of course the Muslims.

The ‘Pradhan Sewak’ (care taker in chief) has described the COVID-19 pandemic as the biggest calamity faced by the world since World War II. Under the circumstances the country expected him to be seen to be leading India’s fight from the front; he instead seems to have mastered the art of performing a Houdini act with his long disappearances between his addresses to the nation. The people expected ‘The Great Leader’ to inform the country about the measures being planned to strengthen the health services system down to the village level; measures for creation of new hospital beds and necessary medical equipment to take care of the

expected surge in corona patients; measures for provisioning of adequate PPE to protect medical personnel, perhaps the most vital resource in the fight against COVID-19; measures to provide proper nutrition and economic support to the poor to enable them to weather the onslaught of corona; and above all an impassioned plea to forge unity of all sections of Indian people to unitedly take on this humongous tragedy.

The Leader instead advised the people to take care of themselves against the disease in his first address to the nation; in the second address he advised each well to do family to take care of 9 indigent families during the lockdown; and in the latest address he has sought to put together 9 pins by advising people to light candles at 9 pm for 9 minutes on the 5th of April. At this rate we may soon be called upon to prepare for a 'cow urine drinking' party followed by a collective 'gobarsnan.'

The choice before us is clear - to drown ourselves in the disingenuous slush of 'Gobar' politics, or to forge broadest possible unity of Indian people in this fight against corona.

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COVID 19 : Over-reaction or Irrational and Delayed Under-reaction

Dr. Ashish Mital

Opinions are questioning India's 'over reaction' to Covid-19 outbreak. Their logic is based on the different trajectory of the virus in India. But there are ominous facts which should not be ignored. This virus has a RO (R naught) of 2.5, i.e. 2.5 persons are infected by one infected person. This is much more than the seasonal influenza virus which has a RO of 1.1 to 1.3, the SARS virus whose RO is 1.6, the H1N1 with a RO of 1.4 to 1.6 and the 1918 influenza virus which had a RO of 1.4 to 2.8. RO of under 1 means the disease will die out, 1 means it will stay alive and more than 1 means it will multiply. The Corona virus spreads much faster than others. The impact of this on our society could be really dreadful. Depending on the preventive measures, the RO of spread can change. So just because the trajectory has not been same in India, does not take away the importance of precautionary measures to slow the pace of spread.

The rapid rate of transfer of this virus has another importance also. That is, do what you will, it will spread and will spread fast. That the trajectory has been slow so far is well documented by ICMR figures of infection rates of around only 2.5% amongst the suspectable contacts (not general population, which India is not testing yet). These figures appear correct as daily test data reports

are difficult to manipulate in any big way. But all epidemiology experience points to the fact that the spread will occur, sooner rather than later. The impact of India's lockdown on the spread of Corona will only be known now, after 8 to 14 days of its implementation and also in comparison to data from Pakistan and Bangladesh which have mostly implemented only advisories.

Why the trajectory has been slow in India has several factors. But the most important one is that the virus has been sourced from outside and in India has mostly been contained in social groups limited to the upper class and air travellers, ruling class politicians and the like. Countries that have delayed containment measures, most of Europe and US, are paying the price. What failures led to rapid transmission in Italy, Spain and USA, we have still to know.

In India the spread and its impact are a definite threat and we must ensure that nothing is done to throw caution to the wind. It will be too early and seriously unscientific to rely on hypothetical conjectures floating that our genetic makeup provides better resistance, or that the virus strain in India is less virulent, or we have cross immunity due to wide malaria infestation, or that heat and humidity limits the virus, etc.

What we must remember is that India is a very poor country, with very poor health and nutritional security and a very huge population to take care of. This must never be lost sight of in any calamity, least of all this which can spread so easily and be so lethal. We must remember that our losses during earlier similar disease out breaks have been huge. A report on the Spanish flu of 1918 states "the influenza killed between 17 and 18 million Indians, more than all the casualties in World War One. India bore a considerable burden of death - it lost 6% of its people. More women - relatively

undernourished, cooped up in unhygienic and ill-ventilated dwellings, and nursing the sick - died than men. The pandemic is believed to have infected a third of the world's population and claimed between 50 and 100 million lives". We have faced several epidemic tragedies, cholera, typhoid, Smallpox, AIDS, Measles, etc and have been found woefully wanting in dealing with each of them. Possibly, and hopefully not, the outcome may be worse this time.

That is why we say our reaction has been 'Irrational', 'Delayed' and is an 'Under' Reaction.

Why Delayed?

Because we ought to have started acting, testing and quarantining well before this lockdown done on March 22 or 24- as you please, in January end or Feb itself. WHO had announced the danger in early January itself.

Why irrational?

Because our govt, our services infrastructure, particularly food and health security and our society with its inherent 'social distancing' and 'medieval outlook' are not geared to deal with a crisis of this magnitude. The govt has failed to address these factors.

Of the readily treatable and preventable disease in India, in 2018, 15 lakh people died due to Tuberculosis and there were 20 lakh Malaria cases and 1000 deaths. Of the 10.4 lakh deaths of underfives in 2017, more than 7 lakhs were attributed to malnutrition. The Global Nutrition Report states that India has the world's largest number of stunted (46.6 million) and wasted children (25.5 million). Forty four percent of all under five children in India are malnourished, a very important factor in the spread of

diseases, including viral diseases and their control. Nearly 1.6 lakh children die every year due to diarrhoea.

The already emaciated health services have been virtually paralysed since the lockdown. Patients are unable to reach them. Govt facility rarely serves even emergencies that reach, as everyone is Corona geared. Most patients are turned back. And almost the entire private sector is closed, both due to fear of creating rush and fear of the medical staff getting infected. Each disposable PPE gown costs Rs 2200 and is supposed to be used only for 6 hours. Which medical team can afford it? There is no govt supply. One team of doctors working in a charitable set up had this to say, “We are working with ordinary precautions and high risk, because each time we see a patient we have to decide whether our lives are meant for our own safety or the patient’s”.

This is the toll that privatization of health care has taken on the society, both infrastructure and attitude. As reports reflect, privatization has taken a big toll in Italy, Spain and US also. Corona pandemic cries out loud for improvement of public health care as the only way out.

Regarding food supply, there are announcements and the Good Samaritans, who are unlikely to last long and who anyway can play only a very peripheral role in such a big crisis. The officials have clearly announced to the village pradhans that there is no extra supply of rations, only regular supply is there. Only the Antyodaya card holders, those registered under MGNREGA and with the Labour department will be given free food and there is no supply for those without cards. Pradhans will be responsible for shortfall.

Then there is the serious crises of 8 to 10 crore migrants, stuck far away from home, mostly left high and dry, sitting in slums

with ‘ill-ventilated rooms’ which can become fertile nests for the virus to thrive. They are being beaten and pushed on the way, quarantined without facility, being scorned at and even sprayed with insecticides. They have suddenly been reduced to destitution.

What rationale was employed to close down a country with these many problems? “Only a one-day curfew” was appealed for, for March 22, all trains and buses were stopped suddenly on night of March 21 and the complete shut down for 3 weeks was declared on March 23, threatening to be extended. A deprived population left high and dry, instantly, when the govt woke up, without time to prepare and with the govt not interested.

Why Under Reaction?

Because the only govt institution which is reacting is the police. The rest is simply paralyzed, almost in Quarantine. The officials implementing the shut down move without masks, mostly in ‘clusters’. The UP Chief Minister, galavanting in a Helicopter, never has a mask on his face. For poor and underdeveloped countries, physical distancing, face masks and hand washes are the most important measures and the political and administrative machinery itself is setting a bad example.

But still there is time. We can still improve if there is a will. If the lockdown is made sensible with precautions, the young and healthy are mobilized to take care of society’s needs – the old, the sick, the destitute. And if the lock down is equipped with facility for emergency movement, not just for the haves (car passes), but for all, as in several countries.



On Tenth Death Anniversary of Com. PV

**Vigorous Efforts to Develop Struggles
for New Democratic Revolution is the
Homage to Revolutionary memory of
Com. Pyla Vasudev Rao**

Ten years back, on April 11, 2010 communist revolutionary movement of the country and CPI(ML)-New Democracy lost a stalwart, Com. Pyla Vasudev Rao. A leader of the Srikakulam Girijan Armed Uprising, Com. Pyla Vasudev Rao put everything to revive Srikakulam movement on the basis of revolutionary mass line after setback suffered by it. Evading police raids and searches, he took great risks to re-organize the Party and the mass movement. His life was a lifelong struggle for the New Democratic Revolution in India. 58 years of Party life of which 48 years as a professional revolutionary and 42 years of UG life has been his lot in the service of the people of this country.



His unswerving commitment to the cause of revolution and his determined struggle against all deviation from the revolutionary mass line defined him. At a time when rightism became the

dominant deviation from the revolutionary line, Com. Pyla was very vigilant about its expressions and very firm against its emergence. He repeatedly and clearly stated his positions as often as required. He firmly and rightly believed that the corrosive influence of right line devours a revolutionary party which changes and is bound to change its colour once this trend becomes dominant. He was a consistent supporter of protracted people's war and of building and developing areas of sustained resistance for that. His relentless and tireless struggle in this regard is well known to Party ranks.

Like all great revolutionary leaders, besides firmness of revolutionary commitment and clarity of his views, Com. Pyla had charming simplicity. Hiding his views was anathema to him. And yet he exuded warmth for even the comrades he differed with. His firm belief in the correctness of his views never prevented him from owning and openly so, his mistakes once he realized his mistakes. He had left the Party in 1992 harbouring a belief that Party was going to embrace rightist line. However, once he realized it was not so, he rejoined the Party a few years later. He did not hesitate to admit his mistake once he had realized it. This trait among the revolutionary leaders is worthy of emulation. It stemmed from a vision focused on revolution and commitment to do everything to advance towards its realization. For him everything else became secondary.

On his tenth death anniversary, let us pledge to intensify people's struggles to advance towards New Democratic Revolution. Let us pledge to safeguard revolutionary line of the Party. Let us pledge to spare no effort and shirk no sacrifice in advancing on the revolutionary path. He had led and guided us in that direction.

Lal Salam to Com. Pyla Vasudev Rao!

We are reproducing here the homage to Com. Pyla Vasudev Rao published in Party Organ in April 2010

Homage to Comrade Pyla Vasudev Rao

One of the leading lights of the Srikakulam armed Girijan struggle and senior Revolutionary Communist leader, Comrade Pyla Vasudev Rao breathed his last on April 11, 2010 at 10 am in Hyderabad. He was 78 years of age and was suffering from cancer.

Well known all over India, especially in Andhra Pradesh, as a revolutionary communist leader, Comrade Pyla Vasudev Rao was born on August 10, 1932 in Rittapadu village. This village is situated 4 kms from Palasa and is presently in Srikakulam district. While studying for his matriculation in Palasa he was attracted towards communist movement. In 1953 when a party unit of CPI was formed in his village he became its member. In 1955 he was appointed as a surveyor in the Revenue department of the govt. In 1957, on the call given by the party he resigned his job and became a whole timer of the party and started working for the party organization and peasant movement. During this time his area of work was Tekali and he was elected as the joint secretary of the district peasant organization.

On the decision of the party, in 1959 he took up a job as a teacher. For 3 years he worked as a teacher in village Makanapalli in Palasamandal. He enlightened the students and several of his students joined the communist movement. Again on the decision of the party, in 1962 he left his job and became a professional revolutionary and remained so till his death. In 1962 he was made a

member of the district committee of the party. At that time Comrade Ramalingachari was district secretary. During this period he took up the task of building a revolutionary peasant movement and the party in the area. He had an important role to play in the developing Girijan Peasant Movement in the area.

While Naxalbari Armed Peasant uprising exposed the cretinism of CPM's neo revisionism, it also gave a new direction to the various peasant movements taking place in different areas of the country. By re-establishing the direction of Telangana Armed Revolutionary struggle, Naxalbari proved to be a decisive turning point in the Indian communist movement which established a definite dividing line between Neo Revisionism and Revolutionary Marxism. The spark of Naxalbari ignited the flames of armed peasant struggles in different parts of the country. Armed peasant movements advanced in Debra-Gopiballabpur, Mushahari, Lakhimpur Kheri and Srikakulam. From the point of view of resistance to the attacks of the reactionary ruling classes and participation of masses, the struggle in Srikakulam reached the highest level in that period.

Armed struggle began in Srikakulam on November 25th 1968. From that time itself Comrade Pyla Vasudev Rao went underground and remained so till his death. From 1969 to 1972 he bravely escaped police raids, three times narrowly. Of his 58 years of party life, 48 years were as a whole timer and 42 in underground life. In the struggle for New Democratic Revolution in India, while Comrade Pyla was in favour of coordination between open and secret work, he believed in secret as primary. He was opposed to a basically open party.

The Srikakulam Girijan Armed Peasant Struggle had to face crude fascist repression from the govt. Several leaders were

martyred in fake encounters. Along with this, 'left' direction began to take foothold in the movement. Srikakulam movement had to face several losses and jerks. During this time Comrade Pyla had opportunity to work with Com. Panchadi Krishnamurthy, Comrade Vempatapu Satyam, Comrade AdiyattaKailasham, Comrade Appalusuri, Subbarao Panigrahi, Dr. Bhaskar and Dr. Mallikarjun.

After the movement suffered setbacks, Comrade Pyla took initiative to again make it stand up. He imbued the cadres with confidence and took over its leadership. CPI (ML) state committee was reorganized with Pyla as its Secretary. Comrades KondapalliSeetharamaiah and Satyamurthi were its members. Summing up the setbacks to the movement, Comrade Pyla was in disagreement with the line of individual annihilation of the class enemy. He met with Comrade Charu Mazumdar but differences on this issue continued. In the end he resigned as secretary of the State Committee and he began his efforts to reorganize the movement under the leadership of Srikakulam Regional Committee.

The struggle within CPI (ML) manifested in the division of the party in 1970. Comrade Pyla joined the Central Committee (Revived CC) led by Comrade Satyanarian Singh. During this unity Comrade PV was made a member of the Central Committee. Comrade Pyla worked tirelessly to make wide contacts in the agency areas in order to reorganize the movement. During this period there was division in the Andhra Pradesh Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries. Led by Comrade Chandra Pulla Reddy the APRCP was building up and expanding the resistance struggle in Godavari valley. In the unity between APRCP and CPI(ML) Comrade Pyla played an important role.

In 1976 AP state committee secretary, Comrade P Ramnarsaiah was martyred in a police encounter. After his

martyrdom Comrade Pyla was made the secretary of the state committee and he remained in that position for more than 12 years. During the ninth decade of last century party in Andhra Pradesh was known by the name of Comrade Pyla.

During the internal differences that developed within the party during 1979-80, Comrade Pyla opposed the right deviation and in 1980 Special Congress he was again elected to the Central Committee. During his entire life he remained an important leader of the party and Andhra Pradesh was his work area. Comrade Pyla was in favour of the direction of developing and expanding areas of Resistance and developing areas of Resistance Struggle in the direction of Armed Struggle. All along his life he supported the 1967-68 split in the CPM and the formation of CPI(ML) in 1969.

During his revolutionary life Comrade Pyla firmly opposed Right deviation and Revisionist tendencies and he continuously struggled against these trends. He always favoured the revolutionary mass line in the party. He considered that in areas of Resistance Struggle, building of squads has an important role and he opposed the tendencies to belittle their role. He favoured the building the militant strength of the people and the squads and he opposed all those tendencies which he considered opposed to these.

For the last few years, despite being unwell, Comrade Pyla remained active in party work to the extent possible. He was inspired and hopeful of development of revolutionary work in North East Andhra and South Odisha.

Comrade Pyla's life partner, Comrade Chandramma is also an important leader of the revolutionary movement and is a party leader. She was arrested in 1975 and remained in jail up to 1986. Their only child is a daughter, Aruna.

Comrade Pyla Vasudev Rao has passed away at a time when ruling classes are unleashing attacks on peasants, especially Adivasis, trying to displace them in favour of Foreign Companies and Big Capitalist Houses in different parts of the country. Revolutionary peasant movement is developing against these attacks and continuing atrocities of the landlords. In such a stage, the Srikakulam Girijan Armed Peasant Struggle is both an inspiration and a guide. Lessons of Srikakulam struggle are enlightening the path for Communist Revolutionaries and Revolutionary people.

Paying homage to Comrade Pyla Vasudev Rao, the Central Committee, the Andhra Pradesh State Committee and other state committees of CPI(ML) New Democracy have reiterated their resolve to strengthen the struggle to build New Democratic Revolution.

(Translated from Pratirodh Ka Swar, April 2010)

Trade Unions' Letter Against 12 hour Working Day

To,

The Union Labour Minister

Government of India, New Delhi

Sub: Proposal to make 12 hour working day by the government

Sir,

A news item appeared in the Hindustan Times today stating that the Government of India is considering changes in the Factories Act, 1948 that will alter the existing 8 hour working day to 12 hours. This would mean the normal 48 hours work a week would be hiked

to 72 hours a week. It is also being suggested that since there will be fewer hands to work in these days of corona virus as a result of retrenchments, the proposed change in working hours has become necessary. The statement further makes it clear that as there are exceptional circumstances prevailing in the country, exceptional provisions have to be made.

We the undersigned representatives of various trade union organizations strongly oppose this move to increase the number of working hours from eight to twelve as it will put further burden on the workers. In the first place given the present corona virus scenario in the country, it enjoins upon the government to take measures that protects and creates employment and not reduce the workforce. Allowing employers to resort to retrenchments on the one hand and augmenting production on the other are anachronistic and not acceptable.

It is true that there are exceptional conditions prevailing in the country and in the world also, but the measures being contemplated by the government run counter to the interests of a whole mass of working people and at the same time serve the interests of employers. At this time it is imperative for government to boost demand in order to revive the economy and therefore create jobs and lift wages.

We would also like to remind government that the 8 hour work day is protected by the ILO Convention No.1 defining a cardinal labour right. We therefore urge government to ensure that the proposed measures to increase working hours is not considered any further and set aside.

**{ NTUI, AIFTU (New), ECLTSAU, IFTU,
IFTU(Sarvahara), IMK, JSM, NDLF, TUCI }**

Trade Unions' joint Memorandum Against Legislation of Labour Codes by Stealth

To,

The Union Labour Minister

Government of India, New Delhi

Sub: Legislation of Labour Codes by Stealth

Sir,

It has been brought to our notice that the Government of India is in the process of enforcing the three labour codes namely the Industrial Relations Code 2019, the Code on Social Security 2019 and the Occupational Health, Safety and Working Conditions Code 2019 that at this time are before parliament through ordinance or executive order. This comes along with the proposal that government would also through ordinance or executive order seek to increase working hours from 8 hours to 12 hours a day. In a fortnight from now we will all mark May Day reflecting the global long struggle by the working class for the 8 hour workday that has been recognised by every successive government of this country and by the Ministry of Labour and Employment too.

We, the undersigned twelve trade union organizations – representing workers across every sector and state of this country – wish to place on record our strongest objection to this undemocratic and unacceptable action by government.

The Industrial Relations Code completely undermines the right to freedom of association as currently enshrined in our

constitution, paves the legal way for employers to promote their own trade unions and eliminates the possibility of collective bargaining. The code significantly eliminates the possibility of strike action that is a legitimate part of a collective bargaining process.

The Code on Social Security dilutes the existing provisions of provident fund and employee state insurance including the legislative guarantees presently enjoyed which ensure employer contributions towards them. While it claims to provide ‘universal’ social security to ‘all workers’ including those not covered by PF or ESI it does so only in name in the absence of either specific healthcare and pension benefits that are in turn financially provided for through legislation.

13th April 2020

The Occupational Health, Safety and Working Conditions Code 2019 while diluting various conditions of health and safety at a time when workplace accidents are on the rise does away with the responsibility of the principal employer in the case of contract labour effectively legalising the already widely recognised system of contract labour.

The foregoing apart all three codes along with already legislated Wage Code 2019 are complicated and contradictory through the use of multiple definitions and jurisdictions which would at best result in long and endless litigation than there already is and at worst even greater exploitation than there already is. Furthermore the codes result in significant abrogation of legislative rights through the rule making powers being granted to the executive.

The overwhelming majority of trade unions have expressed their objections to the above codes on amongst the above counts.

Trade unions have also expressed the lack of consultation including through the existing tri-partite forums apart from wider consultations. We have also drawn attention to the fact that one-way web-based consultation process is inherently undemocratic. Three weeks into the government enforced lockdown as a result to the Covid-19 Pandemic it is now apparent that employers have aken significant advantage of the situation. An overwhelming majority of the country's contract workers have received only partial wages for the month of March 2020 if any wages at all. This includes frontline workers who have continued to work though the lockdown. This includes non-payment by labour contractors to both government and public sector undertakings. Nearly half the working population who are migrants and work as casual and day labour have received no wages at all for this past month. We can have not had a starker measure legal 'compliance' in our country at a time when employers are bound by the Government of India's orders under the National Disaster Management Act, 2005.

In view of the foregoing any action of the Government of India with regard to bringing forward the labour codes will amount to coercive action against the country's working people and an undemocratic act directly and unambiguously favouring employers. In such an event we, along with other trade unions, would be left with no choice but to oppose these actions through all such democratic means available to us.

[Memorandum signed by leaders of NTUI, AIFTU (New),
ECLTSAU, IFTU, IFTU (Sarvahara), IMK, JSM –
Haryana, MSK, NDLF, SWCC (WB), TUCI]

TUs Protest Lathi Charge on Migrant Workers

One of the important shelter homes of Delhi Govt which has been a centre for "feeding migrants" is the one on the banks of the Yamuna near the main Interstate Bus Terminal or ISBT. It was much photographed in the initial periods of lockdown to show how over 3000 assembled when there was food for 400. Even now it probably has over 6000 migrants and those surrounding slum dwellers who have been rendered unemployed and are not entitled to ratiosns, needing a meal each meal time.

On 9th April there was a big argument between the rude staff and the people assembling for food, which led to staff beating the hungry, police lathicharge and some people jumping into the river to save themselves. They were fished out except one, is what the people present have said over television. On the 10th a body was taken out from the river and police lathicharged the gathering crowd. In this course two of the shelter homes here caught fire. Of course some workers have been arrested, being accused of setting the shelters on fire. No minister of the Delhi Govt has yet reached the migrants, least of all Labour Minister Gopal Rai. In Hindustan Times today, Shri Bipin Rai member of Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board of Kejriwal Govt and also DM (Central) Nidhi Rai have labelled the incident as due to 'vagabonds'. There is no need to comment on this adjective. 6 homeless were detained by the police here. 24 hours earlier migrants in Surat, hungry, homeless and wageless, had poured into the streets. For this 81 were arrested and 3000 others are part of the FIR lodged.

These are India's migrant workers..... the casual, contractual,

daily wagers, construction workers, workforce of textile and auto industries. Vagabonds, are they? Below is the text of the letter written to Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi CM, by 7 trade union centres (including IFTU) in Delhi on April 12, 2020.

This is to bring to your notice about an incident of fire that took place in a shelter home in Kashmere Gate. As reported, the incident took place over distribution of food and misbehaviour of staff. This resulted in one worker drowning in river Yamuna. They were all migrant workers and are facing grave hardship due to lockdown. It clearly shows that despite tall claims and propaganda the relief and conditions of migrant workers is miserable. The food available is far from adequate and staff far from courteous.

The death of worker is due to negligence of the government and unnecessarily act by officials.

In this regard we demand the following.

- 1. Immediate inquiry into the incident and fix the responsibility of officers responsible for the scuffle.*
- 2. File FIR against the guilty officials for murder.*
- 3. Immediate visit of Delhi Government to the site to reassure workers.*
- 4. Fix the responsibility of senior officials responsible for the deficiency in facilities.*
- 5. Ensure the appropriate facilities for food and shelter for migrant workers both in terms of quantity and quality.*

Sir, we the undersigned, urge you to take personal urgent intervention and appropriate action.

Could LOCKDOWN Have Been Less Harsh on People? May be Our Neighbours Can Tell!

Ashish Mital

We are nearing the end of a 21 day declared and a 24 day actual lock down. It has been mercilessly and thoughtlessly extended by another 3 weeks. While fear rules the upper classes, the poor wonder what is it that they are being punished for.

The economy is already in a mess. Agricultural operations need to be opened, very, very urgently. The govt is just unable to solve the food and health problems of the people. Protests are bursting out. Ruling leaders remain in denial mode. But for the police and media, essential services remain paralyzed. Crucial question is how will peoples locked down lives restart. It is the rich who have been the vehicles of spread of this epidemic and their fears are mainly fuelling the lock down.

Agriculture has suffered much because harvesting has been delayed; markets have remained closed; peasants are unable to resource implements and other necessary material; machines are awaiting repair; police has prevented movement; labour is not available, migrants are waiting to go home and available labour is costly; debts are rising; small peasants depending on vegetable farming and milk have already been hit as supply to cities is down;

and there is no guarantee of mandis opening while peasants glare at both distress sale and weather problems. It must be underlined that with 50% of India involved in agriculture related activities, restarting agriculture will require restarting most of transport, trade and human movement. How, now is the question.

Manufacturing and industry are affected.

According to NSS Office's Annual Survey of Industries there are 1,95,584 registered factories in India employing 156 lakh workers (IE, April 7, 2020, Which Factories should reopen after India's Corona virus lockdown?). The lock down on them has been almost complete. In addition to losses suffered, now whenever it opens, supply line problems, low demand and labour shortage threatens them. Moreover, imports from China and other countries where production is on, will ruin many of them. Some assess that we are looking at almost 15 million jobs being lost.

Health Care has vanished into the thin air:

Almost all hospitals, clinics, nursing homes are shut for routine care. Emergencies are not attended to even in govt hospitals as they are only waiting for Corona cases. Many doctors, in tune with middle and upper class have been scared into hiding, as they have not been provided with Personal Protection Equipment (PPEs) and they do not want exposure. Due to extreme short supply of safety gears, the working medical staff has become scarce. They are both being threatened and are being lured with extra pay incentives.

Corporate hospital services also have largely closed down. For them it is neither possible to make profit, nor it is time to be seen as not fulfilling social responsibility. The govt could and should have taken over all these corporate hospitals and converted them into

Corona care centres. Peoples' misery knows no end. Supplies are running thin. Situation is worsening by the day.

The problem in short is this.

When on 19th March the Prime Minister, in macho mode, made a ferment appeal for just 'one day Janata curfew, sirf ek din', the numbers infected by Corona in India were just 173 with 23 new cases that day. When the trains and all transport were blocked on 21st night the total infected were 283 with 60 new cases that day. And when on 24 March night a complete 3 week lock down was announced and flights were stopped the total infected were 519 with 88 new cases. Today, April 12, when there is a very urgent need to open up the economy and get people restarted, the total cases are 8356, with 1035 new cases and 40 deaths one day before and 909 new cases and 34 deaths in last 24 hours. How will India now open the lock down, which is reputed to be **the harshest, most extensive and most cruel in the world.**

Could we have learnt from Neighbours?

Bangladesh is not facing that big a problem in opening up. In fact, they denied they were under lockdown, as the word creates panic. The govt had announced on March 22 a 10 day holiday from 26th March onwards, till April 4, which was extended later. In between for 4 days it had motivated its workers to go home, allowing rail and road transport to further operate for an additional 2 days upto March 27th.

On January 22 itself they had put their airports on alert to screen (symptoms and thermal screening by doctors) all travellers from China. On Feb 2, visas for travellers from China were suspended. In addition, in all goods ships coming from east, their human travelers were put under surveillance.



Then, when on 8th March 3 cases were confirmed it immediately suspended mass program in honour of their former leader, Mujibur Rehman, whose daughter rules the country. But we were actively allowing oath taking ceremonies on March 23 and Ram Lala puja on March 25th. That highlights the level of consciousness and preparedness of our political leadership. After its first death on March 18th, the first area lockdowns in Shibchar and Madaripur were imposed. As of April 9, Bangladesh claimed that 52 residential areas of Dhaka are under lock down. Incidentally Bangladesh has a large number of people settled in Italy, which suffered a very heavy attack of nCorona.

Total infected as on April 12, 482. Total dead 30.

Population density of Bangladesh is 1,116 per square km in comparison to 464 for India.

Out of Bangladesh's 160 million people, 4 million are employed in the apparel industry. As per a report dated April 3, only 1 million of these were laid off during Corona holiday, that too due to decline in orders. The rest were working sporting masks, as imposition of

wearing masks was amongst the first precautions to be implemented.

There are several reports of many problems being faced by people there due to govt high handedness, corruption, etc. But it was also notified on April 10 that “operation of rail, buses and other transport would start gradually for the sake of people’s livelihood”.

In India the use of masks is still very scarce, particularly in villages and in slums.

They have an importance in preventing exhalation of and inhalation of droplets, the mode by which this virus spreads. They also prevent people from unnecessarily touching their faces, another necessary precaution. They also act as a mascot for promoting implementation of other safety measures like distancing and washing of hands. And they stay in place. But no less than a person than the **Prime Minister of India has belittled this by promoting his ‘new’ discovery, the ‘Gamcha’**. Quite obviously this was done to evade the responsibility of providing people with masks. The govt could have provided people with cloth and thread, created a social movement of stitching and distributing masks. But it has chosen otherwise.

In Sri Lanka also a severe lockdown was imposed, but here also the govt first announced a warning, then declared a holiday and then announced a curfew. Moreover, it provided transport for people to leave the capital Colombo by running special trains and buses. As of April 12, it had 199 cases, 7 deaths. Population Density 341 per sq km.

Could our leadership have learnt from Pakistan?

That is a very tall order. But we must know that Pakistan’s lockdown is amongst the least severe and at the outset its Prime

Minister announced that Pakistan is a poor country and it has little ability to provide for 25% of its population. Its lock down began in Sindh province, that too gradually. The governments allowed time for people to return, with the federal government stopping the railways only six days after the first provincial lock down. As on April 12, 5038 cases with 86 deaths. Population Density 287 per sq km. Incidentally Pakistan has a porous border with Iran and of course large number of Chinese are there now.

Of the other countries in Indian Subcontinent **Nepal** has 12 cases as of today, 8 of who came from abroad, 3 are Indian nationals and one is a local transmission. Nepal first imposed restrictions from March 1st itself including stoppage of visas from 5 countries including China, compulsory checking and quarantine for international arrivals. A lock down was imposed from March 24th. It has a large number of Chinese travellers due to projects and tourism. There are no deaths.

In Bhutan the first case was detected on March 6, all 90 contacts were quarantined, all foreign tourists were restricted. It has a total of 5 cases, all with travel history.

India is supposed to have taken a leaf out of the Wuhan experience. But as is quoted in an article in The Scroll by Shoaib Daniyal, dated March 31, an Indian working in Beijing, said that the China lockdown was less drastic than the one India has instituted. “Unlike India, in Beijing, buses ran. Cabs were made to run after the first week with a plastic sheet between the passenger and the driver. Domestic flights and trains were only barred from some provinces, not all.” In fact, public transport has not been totally closed in any country in Europe or USA. Moreover, it is well known that China locked down only Wuhan and its province Hubei

completely as it was the epicentre of the spread of this virus. But it mobilized the entire rest of the country to serve each and every house with food and other necessities.

SAARC move: The Indian govt had taken initiative to set up a SAARC coordination and fund for which it even offered 10 m dollars on March 14th. That would have been a good move to share experience and help each other. But after Pakistan designated a junior Health official to coordinate, India considered this as an insult to the initiative also and to SAARC. Then for some reason the move was not followed up.

Stringency Index:

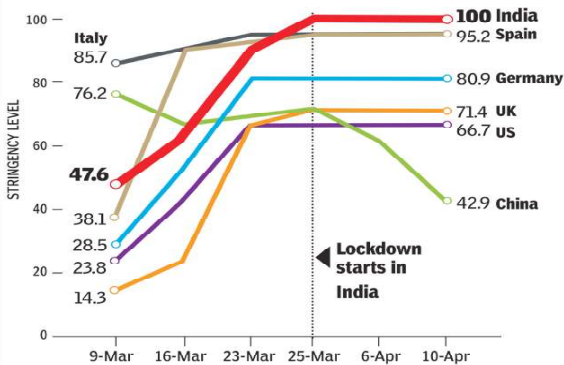
The stringency index records the number and strictness of govt policies enforced to check the spread of the virus. This was done by the Oxford's Covid Govt Response Tracker or OxCGRT. It collected data on based on nine indicators of government response — school closure, workplace closures, public event cancellation, public transport closure, public information campaigns, restriction on internal movement, and international travel controls (S1 to S7) and two others (S12 and S13) These are evaluated on an ordinary scale while four financial indicators, S8 to S11 are fiscal measures, monetary measures, emergency investment in healthcare and investments in vaccines.

As per this data responses of 73 countries have been evaluated. China is one country which was at a stringency index of 76.2 on March 9 and brought it down to 42.9. by end March. India then was at 47.6 and soon went on to 100. It is one of the 18 countries to score a 100 on this index. It will be interesting to see how SriLanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan fared on this scale, but unfortunately their exact evaluation is not reflected in the reports.

Tracking Govts' Interventions

The Oxford Covid-19 government response tracker scores the stringency of steps to create the Stringency Index

Stringency index (100=Strictest)



What has this strictness cost us?

India has 139 million migrant workers. Very few have reached their homes. Those that have, suffered on foot for hundreds of kilometres. All remaining are tied down either to their place of work, or “**quarantined**” for **indiscipline enroute**, not for Corona. The message has gone out far and wide that now these migrant workers are the source of spread of the virus. Rulers in states from which they come are themselves advocating that they don’t come back.

And these migrant workers are living without work and wages, with very meagre food supplies, without shops, bound mostly to their dwellings or containment cages. They are being abused, threatened and beaten. It is presumed that they are carriers of Corona. They are baton-charged, even fired at if they protest and are arrested. **All because the rich are petrified that they may spread the virus.**

So, they have become properly ‘**socially distanced**’, unwanted outcastes, without material reason. Only because of the panic spread by the central govt. They are sprayed with insecticides on the way, something which is not done even to animals as the insecticide can kill the human but not the virus. This photo below is from Lucknow, while an earlier incident was from Bareilly. Ignorant villagers have been made to believe that since the migrant labour have come back from big cities, they definitely are carriers. After all, our rulers believe so. They have at places been prevented from entering villages. Some dead are not cremated by even relatives for the same fear. And not to be left far behind, Corona now also has a communal, caste and class colour. The lower down the social ladder you are, worse is your plight, especially if you are a Muslim. The police are at the centre of such discrimination in allowing people to travel out during the lockdown.

The magnitude of loss due to problem of migrants is much bigger than is visible. For example, the value of financial remittances into Bihar villages from labour working outside was assessed to be 35.6% of the Gross state domestic product of the state in 2011-12 (IE, April 10, Through the Prism of crisis, Christophe Jaffrelot and Hemal Thakkar). Workers send back 25 to 50% of what they earn, in order that their families can survive. Over last two decades such migrations from a number of poorly developed states like Jharkhand, Odisha, Chattisgarh, MP have risen.

Colonial Mindset: This display of the colonial mindset of our rulers toward common people is vulgar. The stark reality is that in the entire sub-continent, the colonial laws and attitude is being worst exhibited in India. The people are to blame for not allowing governance to continue as ‘required’ by those in power. Possibly

Indian rulers consider themselves to be the true heirs of British colonial heritage.

All evidence so far from Corona spread, amply proves the continuing ‘couldn’t care less’ attitude of the Govt’s decision making. Major faults of the Govt and tasks for us are:

1. Switch to Precautions Mode:

The govt refuses to accept that Corona, like any other virus cannot be prevented from spreading. Spread it will anyway. Only with due precautions can one delay its spread. The precautions have already become a casualty. The law enforcement system is in ‘**knock down**’ mode of pushing people ‘indoors’, treating them as illiterate criminals, who can’t understand the ‘extremely serious situation’ arising out of the Corona threat. From the very top, i.e. the political leadership, this remains the thrust, as it is unable to switch to implement the precautions mode.

2. Accept the infection will spread, accept the collateral damage:

Corona spread is sourced only from international travel and it is still concentrated in cities, particularly those having more international travellers. There is hardly any case reported from any village. This spread, world-wide, has been concentrated in areas with cold temperatures and closed doors, rather than in open air. That actually could be a possible cause for it spreading less in the under-developed areas of poorer countries, especially those situated below 50 degrees latitude, as one study said. It is also strongly suspected that the Indian summer will not kill it and air-conditioned mass gatherings will remain a spreading source. We have yet not been given data on the social and class routes of spread in India. That data will give more answers to prevention methods

and thrust. The answers could come from implementing these measures over a several months as the **spread will linger on.**

3. Choking transport and economy is not the answer.

That this lock down of peoples' lives, economy and the health care, is causing and has caused much larger loss than would have ever been caused by Corona. The rich believe that for them much bigger loss would have been caused by the virus, while the poor question the rich, both for resourcing the virus and locking out their lives. Survival is becoming a big problem for the working people.

4. Account for deaths due to lack of medical facility:

While people suffer from both hunger and loss of livelihood in this lockout, the major immediate damage is due to total collapse of health care, for diabetics, hypertensives, ANC cases, diarrhoeas, fevers and infections, the list is endless. Loss of lives due to this is still to be assessed, but surely its loss is thousands of times that of Novel Corona.

5. Mobilize people, don't punish them:

The thrust to push and punish people for no fault of theirs has to stop. The desire should be to mobilize them to implement precautions. That is the answer.

6. Herd Immunity with lower losses:

Finally, it also needs to be stressed that there is a medical purpose also in making the economy function with checks and precautions for preventing spread. It allows as well as slows down the spread which reduces the number of immediate patients needing attention and allowing the medical services to take care of them. It also helps herd immunity to develop due to the slow transmission, finally obliterating the spread, as the virus keeps encountering more and more hosts who are healthy and already immune to it.

Imperialist/ Corporate Model of Development:

The way Corona has spread, in and from city and industrial centres of the developed world should also lead us to critically evaluate this imperialist dictated development model. Villages have been left barren and all economic concentration is in cities, where active labour migrates in large numbers. That such centres can breed lethal diseases like Novel Corona 19, while villages still may remain untouched, should lead us to rethink this model.

The perils of floating on a bloated 56 inches HOT AIR Balloon are that the ground reality will remain far away and the country will suffer very serious economic and socio-political problems. It must be addressed.

Win the Confidence of the People to Fight Corona Virus!

Aparna

There is little point in ignoring the fact that the medical challenge of limiting the spread of the novel corona virus has been superimposed on an India in the throes of a struggle against the communal NPR NRC CAA project. A lockdown was abruptly imposed on the country to limit the spread of the disease, and though there are questions on and widespread suffering due to the method of locking down, people are maximally cooperating with the govts., to the extent of putting up with semi starvation.

However, when the top-heavy method of imposition is carried on rather than explaining and winning the confidence of the people for what is essentially a public health issue, the results are unhelpful. Journalists have reported that where door to door surveys are being undertaken to determine spread of infection, there are hitches due to imposing of drives rather than soliciting the cooperation of the people. This is then mistakenly attributed to backwardness or social media disinformation rather than the faulty approach, and valuable time is lost.

The idea of community survey in lockdown conditions is to find out how many are in the house, how many are in vulnerable age group etc. However, apparently in many places the volunteers or primary health workers of various types are being sent to gather

details supposedly about the probable ill but along with a form which asks for name and phone numbers of head of households along with similar details of other family members and sometimes even the Aadhar cards. Most of these details are utterly useless as far as tracking the footprints of the illness are concerned. This sort of form is being used in an atmosphere where there is widespread opposition to anything which might even be remotely tied to the process of NPR documentation. There is little need medically of a form taking such details which the NPR form needs. This is bound to create apprehensions among the people.

Such problems have been clearly articulated in reports from Panipat and from some areas of Uttar Pradesh. In Delhi, The Hindustan Times dated 12th April quoted an Asha worker as saying, 'Many think we are surveying for the NPR. We have to show our ID cards to show we are the COVID-19 team'. She was narrating the problems she faced when surveying various containment areas in Delhi and spoke about hostile reactions which could only be set to rest by intervention of local people.

This raises an important question. There is even less reason why community leaders are not being enlisted in a health survey. There has to obvious difference between detecting a 'spy' in a household and detecting patients there. The most vital difference is, this is a step to help and protect people and must solicit their happy participation. Medical Health officers of various districts in the country do not seem to be taking charge of carrying out these surveys for potentially ill, though the purpose is clearly containment of a disease. The primary health workers or volunteers doing the house to house survey are not even being accompanied by community leaders. The whole thing apparently is being executed like a police operation rather than a medical or

epidemiological survey. Going with the police, when there is the recent history of communal attacks in which police role has been so dubious, obviously is not helpful in soliciting co-operation. Rather it is ending up pitting the medical personnel of any level against the people. In fact the whole containment exercise is a police rather than a civic exercise.

Doctors and health personnel must keep matters in their hands and act for the citizens and act by involving them. Execution of such surveys are acts in the interests of safeguarding health of the people. These must be controlled by doctors not police. With these steps taken, people should be and will be willing to cooperate which is in their own interest and interest of the whole people.

Medical personnel must also reckon with the other types of attacks they themselves are facing. Rather than sympathy for the sick and social involvement in containing the virus a sort of stigma is being linked to the illness. That is also why doctors and nurses are being targeted by neighbours and landlords- because they are seen as potential spreaders in an illness which is inviting police action. There is burning need to stress social bonding and link it to illness detection and physical distancing for prevention. For this the Health and Science Departments and not the Home and Police Ministry must now lead the charge against the epidemic. The role of the latter ended when it dithered in regulating the entry of virus into the country.



Delhi: State Repression Against Anti CAA Protestors & Minorities Misusing Corona Lockdown

Following the violence in North East District of Delhi in February this year, in which the majority killed, injured and dispossessed were Muslims, there was a widespread demand for an Enquiry by sitting Judges into the sequence of events leading to the violence as well as the various aspects of the violence itself. This became urgently necessary because it was evident that the violence began within hours of a prominent BJP leader standing next to the DCP of the area and threatening violence against anti CAA protestors. While many people of that district gave narratives of armed outsiders unknown in the area provoking the violence, raising Hindutva slogans, the Police maintained that the violence was provoked by the anti CAA protestors. Among those killed were also a policeman and an intelligence officer. Several FIRs were registered on these issues and also very many complained of police failure to register FIRs. Meanwhile, a special investigating team (SIT) comprising 16 inspectors was formed to investigate the “larger conspiracy” (as quoted in Indian Express page 4 of 14th April) As the questions over the participation of the Delhi police in the violence were widespread, the need for an urgent and fair enquiry was center stage, when the Corona lockdown took over.

However, the urgent need to devote all energies to facing the pandemic challenge unitedly seems to be lost on the Central Government. In the name of investigating the violence in North east Delhi, in the period of lockdown the SIT and the police have been calling minorities to police stations, harassing and detaining them and have also shown some arrests. Two of those arrested are

current students of Jamia. Following is the statement issued by several organizations after the arrests of the students.

Joint Statement of Mass Organizations

We the undersigned would like to draw the attention of all compatriots who believe in democracy and secularism towards a very important issue. You are quite aware of the anti CAA movement. This was an historic movement in which Jamia students and community women had come forward in defence of their constitutional rights. This movement had a major impact and significance all through our country.

After the peaceful withdrawal of this movement in the wake of the global Corona Virus pandemic, the Delhi Police has begun a retaliatory revengeful action against those who were active in this movement. In this process the Delhi Police has arrested the media coordinator of the Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) for movement against CAA, Shrimati Safoora Zargar, and another active member Meeran Haider on trumped up charges relating to the North east Delhi riots and other baseless allegations. What is particularly worrying in this entire context is that Shrimati Safoora Zargar is pregnant and in this condition she requires proper care and medical supervision. This kind of action during the lockdown due to the Corona virus is a violation of their constitutional rights. We register our strong protest in this context and demand that the constitutional rights of the two arrested leaders, Shrimati Safoora Zargar, and Meeran Haider be respected and they be released forthwith.

CPI(ML) - ND Opposes Jail to Navlakha & Teltumbde

In a judgement delivered on 7th April 2020, the Supreme Court has rejected the plea of Anand Teltumbde and Gautam Navlakha to extend period of stay on their arrest. The SC had earlier stayed the arrests after Delhi High Court had quashed the FIR against Gautam Navlakha. But in a judgement last month SC had asked them to surrender by April 6, 2020. The plea for extension of stay was made also in view of the threat of corona virus especially to their vulnerable age group. SC has asked them to surrender within a week.

The Supreme Court had earlier ruled to release prisoners on parole to de-congest jails, but even at that time SC did not order to extend this to political prisoners. Both Navlakha and Teltumbde are known and respected pro-people intellectuals. They have both unhesitatingly offered to cooperate with the investigations. They are not even named in the FIR under which they are being investigated. In all these circumstances, the application was a logical one.

CPI(ML)-New Democracy expresses grave concern at the insensitive attitude adopted by the SC on this issue. CPI(ML)-ND calls for participating in all opposition on this issue. We call upon the Court to review this decision.

April 11, 2020

Statement

COORDINATION OF DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS (CDRO)

Protest against the fascist onslaught on democratic rights activists and curbing of democracy On 14th April, 2020, Anand Teltumbde and Gautam Navlakha surrendered and were arrested by the NIA, pursuant to order of the Supreme Court rejecting interim protection. This order paved the way for the arrest of two more scholars under the draconian laws for their exercise of the right to free speech and dissent. We believe the arrest of these two intellectuals not only infringes their constitutionally protected rights but is a larger reflection of the fast ceding of the political, social and public space in the country.

The first five-year rule of the NDA witnessed non-state actors propelling the divisive agenda qua violent means with impunity. The tacit governmental support was visible by the absence of any legal action, let alone public condemnation. On the contrary, the second term of the government has witnessed a more direct attack on the democratic aspirations of the people. Emboldened by a massive electoral victory, the BJP-led government has orchestrated draconian crackdowns on citizens, minorities, students, lawyers, intellectuals and activists.

The coercive and malicious prosecutorial power exercised by the present regime becomes clear on a perusal of the Bhima-Koregaon case, which led to the filing of a bail petition by Teltumbde and Navlakha. Nine democratic rights activists and public intellectuals, besides Teltumbde and Navlakha, who were vocal

about and against any attempt to subvert democratic rights by the governments in power have been falsely implicated and linked with Maoists in the case where a group of Hindutvaadis clashed with the Dalits. The bails and appeals of all nine activists, lawyers and intellectuals, namely Arun Ferreira, Mahesh Raut, Rona Wilson, Shoma Sen, Sudha Bhardwaj, Sudhir Dhawale, Surendra Gadling, Varavara Rao and Vernon Gonsalves, have been continuously rejected based on secret evidence offered to courts in sealed envelopes to which the accused have no access.

The leaders who orchestrated the said riot, Milind Ekbote, and Manohar Bhide, still roam around scot-free while these intellectuals have been arrested on flimsy charges based on files present in the computer seized from one of the activists and co-accused in the case, Rona Wilson. It is now established that the computer had a malicious program which allows the control of the system from outside. The anti-democratic measures of the state reached a new low when the government was caught red-handed using Israeli spyware (Pegasus) against its citizens, who happened to be all human and democratic rights activists and lawyers. This selective targeting by the government was yet another attempt to silence those who continue to speak against the poor and the marginalized. Further, the untimely and sudden transfer of the case from state police to National Investigation Agency (NIA) when the Government of Maharashtra was considering withdrawal of the false cases against the activists reeks of bad faith and abuse of power.

This is a testing time for the country. Since its inception, the Coordination of the Democratic Rights Organisations (CDRO), has been committed to uphold and strengthen the democratic values and fight against undemocratic laws. In continuing our resolve, we,

unequivocally condemn this witch hunt, suppression of democratic rights of the activists and illegal acts of snooping and surveillance. We urge all citizens who are committed to rule of law and democratic rights to be aware of the concerted and systemic efforts undertaken by the government against human and civil rights defenders. We stand against the arrest of Teltumbde and Navlakha, demand the release of all eleven lawyers, scholars and activists falsely implicated in the Bhima Koregaon violence, and the release of all political prisoners.

14TH APRIL, 2020

CPI(ML) New Democracy Call

Observe 14th April to Dedicate to the Struggle against Caste Oppression & Discrimination and for Constitutional Rights

Birth Anniversary of Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar on April 14 this year comes at a time when the rights enshrined in the Constitution are facing unprecedented attacks from the RSS-BJP ruling dispensation. RSS-BJP have launched an all-round attack on the democratic rights of the people in their drive to impose fascist dictatorship over the country. Through their CAA-NRC-NPA project they seek to change the constitutional framework and legal status of minorities, to begin with of Muslims. They select issues for attacks against Muslims but these are just pretexts for the attacks. Any concession to these fascist forces emboldens them, make them more reckless and violent. Appeasement has no other result.

`Hindutva is a political chauvinist mobilization for the defense of existing class rule of big capitalists and big landlords and social, economic and political domination of upper castes. It seeks to rally masses following Hindu religion to consolidate its most oppressive part i.e. caste hierarchy. While upper caste landlords have traditionally dominated the rural areas, new economic policies have strengthened upper caste economically. This has enlarged the base of Hindutva in face of challenge by oppressed sections particularly Dalits and other oppressed castes. RSS-BJP talk of “social harmony” which means every caste living in harmony with its traditional role and place in society. They are sworn enemies of social justice.

While caste oppression is part of present society, atrocities against Dalits have been increasing under RSS-BJP rule, hence especially in RSS-BJP ruled states. In last two decades of RSS-BJP rule in Gujarat, most of the period under Narendra Modi, there has been 72% increase in the registered cases of atrocities against Dalits. On the other hand, conviction rate in cases of atrocities have been less than 5% in the state (figures of 2014-16).

Land reforms have been bid a good bye and with that the hope of landless poor peasants, most of whom belong to Dalits and oppressed castes, of getting land through legal means have disappeared. People of SCs, STs and other oppressed castes are mostly in casual and contract employment. On the other hand, vacancies in the govt. are not filled while different ploys are adopted to deny or dilute reservation for these sections. It is well known that RSS is opposed to reservation and RSS activists have always been among the main activists of the movements against reservation. Under RSS-BJP, bureaucratic conspiracies against reservation have increased and higher judiciary is increasingly tolerant of such

conspiracies. Discrimination against students and employees from these sections is on the rise.

Dr. Ambedkar had taken up the task of fighting against caste oppression and division as his principal task though he has made significant contributions to other fields as well. When we assess the status of Dalits and other oppressed castes it is obvious that these sections are continuing to face exploitation, oppression and discrimination. While reservation does give an entry to some from these sections to educational institutions and govt. jobs, there also they face humiliation and casteist slurs. Foremost, they still by and large lack ownership of means of production which is the main reason for their continued lower social status. The struggle against caste oppression has to be an overall assault against caste oppression both in base and superstructure as one reinforces the other.

Several parties which claim to base themselves on the social base of these oppressed sections have used them to be part of ruling structure but their becoming such a part has not meant any significant improvement in the conditions of Dalits and other oppressed castes nor it has meant support to their struggle against caste oppression. Rather they themselves become appendages of the ruling structure which patronizes them only to wean them away from struggle and discards them once their utility is over. The approach that holds that let some get raised first while the rest rot in the earlier conditions is not correct because when the condition of overwhelming majority continues as earlier, it also breeds a defensive approach among those raised while ruling classes get emboldened to intensify repression and suppression.

This experience underlines the need to link the different arena of movement and coordinate different forms of struggle which

mobilize Dalits and oppressed castes against caste oppression and division and unite them with other sections of toiling masses.

Dr. Ambedkar represented a continuity of the struggle against oppression of Dalits (Depressed Classes). This struggle constituted part of the main struggle of the Indian people against feudalism and also during colonial rule when these feudals acted as a social base of colonial rule. Dr. Ambedkar expressed his appreciation of the struggle of Jyotiba Phule against caste oppression and Brahmannical system institutionalizing it. He carried on this struggle particularly in the period after First World War. While Phule concentrated on the spread of education, Dr. Ambedkar concentrated his energy on securing share of political power along with jobs and higher education.

We have to carry this struggle forward in the present concrete conditions. We have to expose the pretensions of the ruling class parties of opposition to caste oppression while developing movements both in the field of base and superstructure. At present, ruling RSS-BJP pose an increased threat to even the existing rights and unity of Dalits.

On the 129th Birth Anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar we have to intensify the struggle against caste oppression and make it an integral part of the struggle against the ruling classes to end exploitation and oppression i.e. an integral part of the New Democratic Revolution. We must carry forward the efforts of Dr. Ambedkar.

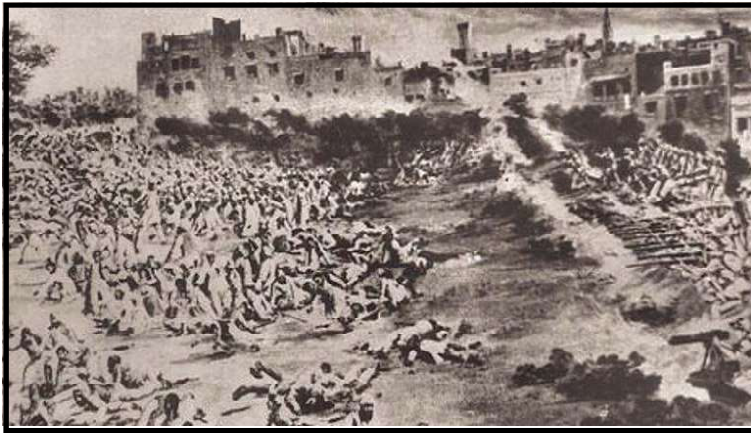
The ruling dispensation pays lip service to Dr. Ambedkar. But they do so while negating what all Dr. Ambedkar stood, strived and struggled for. In brief, they pretend to uphold Ambedkar while undermining the core values he upheld. It did not bother the rulers that it is on the Birth Anniversary of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar that a

member of his family and renowned democratic intellectual Anand Teltumbde has been asked to surrender along with the other known fighter for democratic rights, Gautam Navlakha. The choice of the date might not have been accidental.

April 14, 2020

101 Years of the Brutal Massacre

Jallianwala Bagh Continues to be a Pole Star for the Struggle of People of India



13th April, marks the 101th Anniversary of Jallianwala Bagh massacre which still reminds everyone of Indian people's struggle against colonial yoke and sacrifices made by the people in the course of that struggle. It had a profound impact on the course of the movement of Indian people's freedom.

Jallianwala Bagh continues to remain relevant. Rulers subservient to imperialism came to power after its transfer in 1947.

Their compromising approach kept Jallianwala relevant not only as a historic event of great sacrifice but also a reminder of what the people of the country had been struggling for and how that struggle was still unfinished. With compromising giving way to open betrayal, ascent to power was of the forces who had worked in favour of colonial rule over the country and who had opposed every aspect of peoples' agenda which came to the fore and got articulated and established in the course of the freedom movement. Anti-colonialism, democracy, secularism, social justice and federalism in their various aspects and expressions had been the driving forces for Indian people's struggle for freedom. These also defined the contours of the new India struggling to be born.

Jallianwala Bagh was an open defiance of Indian people against the colonial rule, precipitated by repressive Rowlatt Act brought by colonial rulers to crush Indian people's movement for freedom. It has entered the folklore of the courage and sacrifices of Indian people against colonial rule. Jallianwala Bagh was also a shining example of the unity of people belonging to all religions and social communities against the colonial rule. It was truly secular. Its secularism was based on common aspirations of Indian people. It was not Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs just tolerating each other but striving together for freedom as one people and seeking a national destiny based on such unity.

RSS-BJP rulers of the day have been opposed to all that Jallianwala Bagh stood for. Rather they have made this opposition the cornerstone of their ascent to power. Rather they glorify their betrayal of the values of the freedom movement. That this could happen only because of compromising attitude on these issues of those in power earlier goes without saying. It is also a self-evident fact that this serves the interests of major part of the dominant

sections of society. RSS-BJP have not only increased the imperialist penetration of Indian economy, they are doing so shamelessly and brazenly. The recent decision to revoke ban on export of a drug which is being touted as useful in the treatment of Covid19 after a threat from US President, is only just one more evidence of subservience of RSS-BJP rulers to imperialism. That this shamelessness and brazenness is not brought to the people owes also to the control corporate exercise over mainstream media. Serving imperialist powers has become a badge of honour for the rulers!

JallianwalaBagh symbolized the unity of the people including those belonging to different religious persuasions. RSS-BJP are doing everything to destroy this unity completely and thoroughly. Their CAA- NRC-NPR project is to remove secularism from even the Constitution and to enshrine religious nation theory in its place.

The words of homage of RSS-BJP rulers for the martyrs of Jallianwala Bagh are mere lip service to camouflage the dagger they are thrusting into the ideals of Jallianwala Bagh martyrs.

RSS-BJP's Hindu Rashtra represents rejection of all that martyrs of Jallianwala Bagh stood for. On this 13th April let us pledge to advance the struggle of the people for the India dreamt of by immortal martyrs of Jallianwala Bagh; the ideals for which they offered supreme sacrifice. Draw inspiration from Martyrs of Jallianwala to walk fearless on the road to overthrow the rule of elite opposed to ideals of freedom movement; for a New Democratic India.

CPI (ML)-New Democracy

April 13, 2020

Bernie Sanders' withdrawal from
Democratic Primary Race

Limits of Articulation of People's Concerns within Ruling Class Politics

**“Bourgeois socialism attains adequate expression when,
and only when, it becomes a mere figure of speech.”
(Manifesto of the Communist Party)**

On April 8, Bernie Sanders announced suspension of his campaign seeking to be the nominee of the Democratic Party in the coming November 2020 US Presidential election. His campaign started collapsing soon after he emerged a front runner after first three state primaries in Iowa, New Hampshire and Nevada. A number of his rivals, who had crowded the field, started dropping out one after one, even those who had done relatively well in the first primaries. All except one i.e. Elizabeth Warren, who shared several points of the platform on which Sanders was contesting, dropped out of race before Super Tuesday (so named as a number of states hold their primaries on that day). Before that, South Carolina's Democratic primary, dominated by African American voters, had given a sweeping victory to former Vice-president, Joe Biden, who had abysmal showing in the earlier primaries. In recent memory, a candidate who had won first three primaries has not lost nomination to a candidate who had contested and dismally lost all

three first primaries. At times, a high point is the beginning of decline. So has happened with Bernie Sanders. So long he had been running second, his services were used to bring into the fold of Democratic Party those sections, particularly the youth and white workers, which were distancing themselves from Democratic Party for its association with corporate establishment. But once he had emerged as a presumptive nominee, the real powers behind the throne pulled all strings to bring him crumbling down. Obama, Clintons, even Carter, all worked overtime to see that Bernie is forced out. Candidates started pulling out, community leaders and law makers were egged on to endorse Joe Biden, all orchestrated into a campaign to bring down Sanders. The Democratic Party establishment showed who pulls the strings of power. Once more the truism was reinforced that Parties are representatives of classes; in the case of Democratic Party of USA, of the big bourgeoisie of USA. And the classes have their interests defined by the current needs of the class; in the instant case, big capitalists of USA.

Sanders had run his campaign this time as well as in 2016 on some issues. These included single payer govt. funded Medicare for all, no tuition fees, minimum wage @ 15 US\$ an hour, etc. These reformist steps are well within the paradigm of capitalist system and are already to varying extent in practice in some European countries, yet the corporate US does not want to have anything to do with these. Putting all these steps into practice would entail govt. expenditure which will have to be made good by raising taxes. Sanders had proposed raising taxes on the extremely rich who now have very low rate of taxes. These steps put forth by Sanders are to an extent a part of redistributive policies, Sanders used to label himself as a Democratic Socialist. He was labelled as communist,

Stalinist and the like in US mainstream media. In fact, he at best is a bourgeois socialist i.e. who thinks and works for some pro-people measures within capitalist system and labels his efforts as socialist. That his efforts failed, has more to do with the present drive of monopoly capitalism in USA and not because these steps are theoretically impossible in a capitalist system. It is the corporate who summoned the combined might of Democratic Party establishment, past Presidents who hold their constituencies and the local leaders who are backed by big money, to stop the Bern lest it burnt.

Unlike last time i.e. in 2016, when the Democratic Party earned many black points for scuttling the chances of Bernie Sanders, this time the game was played more systematically and with more finesse. The whole issue was centralized on the personality of the incumbent, Donald Trump. Defeating him, and not the policies pursued by him in so far as they affect the common people in USA directly, became the battle cry, the only game in the town. This was crystallized into question of electability. It was articulated in unison by all his rivals, thereby establishing through sheer noise an impression about in-electability of Sanders come November. With Sanders leading the other contenders in the opinion polls, beating Donald Trump in the polls rather more comfortably than other Democratic Party contenders, the question of electability was further narrowed to who can best unite the Democratic Party. With the question thus formulated, it was inevitable that a candidate of the establishment i.e. so-called moderate wing, would be the natural choice. It is the moderate wing backed by corporate which is the core of the Party. One is entitled to question everything, even white supremacy, but questioning corporate profits is a different kettle of fish. The indiscretion cannot

and has not been forgiven. It is obvious, as we had observed in our comment on 2016 elections, that Democratic Party would rather win corporate backing than the White House if the choice narrows down to that i.e. if they cannot have both. This is the class character of the Democratic Party.

With Sanders suspending his campaign and endorsing Joe Biden, the hopes of some who saw in his proposed measures the realization of their socialism, have been dashed. These are generally the forces and sections of intelligentsia aligned to revisionists who hope against hope that socialism will emerge outside the framework of class struggle, the struggle led by working class overthrowing the rule of reactionary ruling classes. For long these sections had been flaunting public sector as socialist, different variations of structural socialism.

Sanders' entire movement, despite the issues he took up, grew around registering members, taking out voters and the like, all revolving around electoral calculus. There was not even an attempt to directly organize the workers though many issues concerned them. There was no attempt to address the social oppression, so acute a problem relating to African Americans. He of late made attempts in that direction but it was too little too late. On the other hand, the social leaders of these groups are aligned to the leaders of Democratic Party and it is not easy to break their stranglehold without rousing common members of the social groups and linking it with class issues. Otherwise stranglehold of identity politics keeps delivering mass of voters to the very forces promising some superficial reforms. Sanders stood up against Democratic Party establishment but did nothing substantial to challenge the matrix in which this establishment operates and wields its influence.

Earlier defeat of Corbyn in the recently held general elections in UK had been the earlier let down for such forces i.e. forces wanting socialism without working class coming to power. Causes of his defeat are somewhat different though ultimate outcome same. Corbyn emerged as the leader of Labour Party in UK as the Labour's rank and file's disillusionment against Blairite New Labour grew. Disastrous aggression in Iraq had been widely unpopular among the workers in UK. New Labour's fully embracing neo-liberal policies had led to deterioration in its conditions. There had been gradual but steady decline in the industrial working class as more and more labour intensive industries were located abroad and mineral extraction declined. With the decline of the strength of working class, Labour Party increasingly undermined the importance of trade unions, a key constituency of Labour Party. After the explosion of world financial economic crisis from 2008 onwards, adverse impact on the working class became serious. New Labour having fully embraced neo-liberalism, and with big bourgeoisie launching further attacks for increasing their profits, New Labour lost control of Labour Party. Before Corbyn it was Id Miliband. After Miliband lost elections, Corbyn came to leadership in avowed attempt to bring Labour close to working class articulating their concerns. Corbyn was brought from Labour fringe to Centre. Some Trotskyite circles also played their role having long renounced the working class revolution in their visceral hatred of Stalinism.

Corbyn roused the rank and file of Labour on the basis of his rejection of neo-liberal prescriptions. His platform was similar to Sanders. Waiving of tuition fees and student loans, increase in expenditure on health and education, increase in minimum wage and all these to be met by increasing taxes on the super rich. Corbyn

stood for something more also. He advocated nationalization of some industries and services. Corbyn had been active in support of progressive causes in third world countries, an issue on which Sanders had not been so active. Corbyn had supported those issues even going against Labour or any significant section of Labour. Corbyn had long been a Labour back-bencher but was brought to the front.

In wake of deteriorating conditions of working class and decline of industries in UK, the ruling bourgeoisie faced a split on the strategy to be followed. With contradictions and trade rivalries growing among imperialist powers and becoming particular sharp after 2008 world financial economic crisis, big bourgeoisie was sharply divided on either aligning with continental Europe or America. A section of the big bourgeoisie tilted towards aligning closer of USA and carving out its place in a US dominated world market. It created images of UK capturing the old times when the sun never set on its empire. They spread hatred against immigrant workers which was also directed against workers from East European countries who had a right to come to UK being members of European Union. This move crystallized in the drive to come out of EU (Brexit). Workers in UK, hard pressed by declining standards of life, supported Brexit, being fed this as a solution to their woes. A significant part of middle classes opposed leaving EU. Backed by the working class, Brexit won the referendum called on the issue winning 52.1% of the vote. It was the situation when Corbyn came to the leadership of Labour Party. He had been a supporter of Brexit besides articulating some policy prescriptions mentioned above. While his leadership won increasing support among workers, he was openly opposed by important leaders of the Labour Party. There was a concerted campaign about un-electability of Corbyn (a

la Sanders) in an attempt to undermine his leadership. However, in the election called by Theresa May to secure her Brexit Deal through Parliament, Corbyn's Labour performed much beyond expectations; depriving Conservatives of their majority. Despite open sabotage from important Labour functionaries (well known, but also substantiated in recently released dossiers), Labour under Corbyn came close to capturing power. This election ended the propaganda about un-electability. Hence the battle shifted to another plane. Sections of Labour Party threatened to leave Labour unless it endorses platform against Brexit i.e. of calling another referendum to cancel the first one. The plan of anti-Corbyn New Labour acolytes was to prevent Corbyn from coming to power even at the expense of undercutting their own party. The plan was to divert a chunk of anti-Brexit voters to Liberal Democrats. Anti-Corbyn sections had in the meantime launched a vigorous campaign of anti-semitism in the Labour Party targeting Corbyn and his supporters for their support to Palestinians.

All this put Corbyn on the defensive. He sought peace with his detractors, New Labour leaders. But most suicidal was his back-tracking from Brexit which had taken firm hold of the workers and where Parliament was seen to be frustrating the will of British people expressed in Referendum. Probably scent of power inebriated him. Corbyn supported the Call for Second Referendum little realizing that by such back-tracking he had made the election itself a Second Referendum. He was given a sound thrashing forcing his exit. Big bourgeoisie had been successful in keeping Brexit at the Centre relegating Corbyn's platform to obscurity.

While Sanders paid for his standing up to the establishment in his adopted Party, Corbyn paid for surrendering before it. In both the cases class character of the parties through which they wished

to pursue their agenda came in the way. All parties of ruling classes, particularly large ones, and especially at times of being out of power, keep a wing articulating people's concerns (also called 'left' wings of these rightist parties) but only in a subordinate position. To an extent it also means recognition of people's concern but basically aiming to emasculate the opposition to their policies. While all bourgeois parties throw about election promises just as salespersons selling their ware, the presence of a 'left' wing gives authenticity to their ware.

Before rise of Sanders and Corbyn as standard bearers of the people's opposition to neo-liberal economic policies, in particular the hardships heaped on the people in the wake of explosion of World Financial Economic Crisis from 2008 onwards, there were some other articulations in Europe. Articulation by Sanders and Corbyn has been from within the main ruling class parties in their countries. The earlier articulation in Southern Europe was in the form of setting up new parties or strengthening of some parties which were not the main political parties in their countries. With the condition of people worsening in Greece post-2008 crisis, Syriza rose in that country, becoming a dominant party from a small party earlier. Post 2008 crisis, ruling classes adopted austerity measures reducing expenditure on welfare measures, reducing wages and social security benefits of workers, pensions of retirees, generally reducing expenditure on the people.

The main thrust was to meet the debt obligations of the state by reducing expenditure and making exports rise again by producing cheaper. While big bourgeoisie had profited in the earlier period, the burden of crisis was heaped on the shoulders of working masses. Capitalists, the creators of the problem, were projected as saviours and protected. In Eurozone countries the austerity

measures were enforced as monetary policies i.e. currency was under the control of European Central Bank (ECB). Besides the austerity measures, the other option was a bailout by ECB controlled by Germany. Bailouts were granted conditional to implementation of the abovementioned austerity measures. In Southern European countries where the pain of crisis was more acute for the people, austerity measures evoked sharp opposition from the people.

Syriza rose to prominence opposing the austerity plan. But the path shown and propagated by Syriza was to renegotiate the bailout package with EU. Opposition to austerity was hitched to EU agreeing to it for leaving EU was ruled out to start with. But it needs two to tango. EU refused to climb down, a premise on which castles of Syriza were built. Though Syriza enjoyed near total support among workers in Greece, it relied not on workers but on the munificence of big capitalists dominating EU. Syriza was not among the main representatives of ruling bourgeoisie in Greece, it rose to be one by promising the moon i.e. getting rid of austerity plan but remaining within Eurozone; getting the bailout but without conditions. They overestimated or rather created illusions among the people of Greece that EU big capitalists can be persuaded to abandon their class interests, only good persuaders like Tsipras are needed. Needless to add Syriza failed and dominance of earlier dominant party was restored. Syriza, in which Trotskyites played an important role, thus acted to deceive the people. They deliberately wasted an opportunity to let the working people chart out their own course. It once again proved Trotskyites' lack of faith in the revolutionary potential of working class, of their ability to lead other sections of working people, a lesson that needs to be reinforced again and again in every country, in every age.

Once again, the lesson was driven home that there can be no workingclass movement without a working class party leading it. Some ML organizations who supported Syriza soon realized it. The positive side of the development was that the working masses were willing to come out of the influence of the main ruling class parties. Revolutionary politics however, entails not only rejection of the given ruling class parties but ruling class politics itself. Syriza articulated its positions within the ruling class framework. It created illusions about the efficacy of parliamentary institutions as vehicles of addressing people's growing frustrations in the present system.

Fortunes of Pedemos in Spain, a much larger country than Greece, rose and fell following Syriza. They too tried to articulate people's concerns outside the main parties of the ruling classes but within the ruling class framework. They gained electoral successes but with Syriza capitulating in Greece, its main platform collapsed i.e. of addressing people's concerns within ruling class framework or specifically to get rid of austerity while remaining in Eurozone. When it came to a crunch, they betrayed their petty-bourgeois philistinism, obviously they did not have proletarian courage. Pedemos in Spain and Syriza in Greece do retain some electoral bases but this is ruling class politics as usual, their loud mouth phrases notwithstanding, reminders of the essentially deceptive nature of their programme.

Sanders, Corbyn, Syriza, Pedemos, all these and their lesser known versions only highlight the fact that people's concerns cannot be addressed in the present crisis ridden capitalist imperialist system. Their utility to the present system primarily lies in the fact that they create illusions among the working people about the present system and restrain the people taking to path of struggle and going over to revolutionary parties who alone can lead the

struggle of addressing people's concerns to its logical conclusion i.e. of overthrowing the present system dominated by imperialism and reaction. As the crisis of the present system deepens, the ability of rulers to carry out meaningful reforms gets limited even as the need for such reforms continues to grow. The resultant of the interplay between these two is determined by the intensity of class struggle and people's movements and the outcome conditioned by the state of the revolutionary forces, their preparedness and most importantly, the depth of their relations with working masses. Forging these relations is among the most important tasks of the revolutionary forces.

However, rise of these forces and the need of the ruling classes to allow some space to these forces stems from the growing contradictions of the present system. The accumulation of capital has gone much further and much faster. This accumulated capital demands ever increasing share of the values created by the working people as its profits. On the other hand, the realization of these profits is dependent on markets i.e. on sale of produce, which needs increasing of effective demand i.e. demand backed by purchasing power. Cornering of increasing part of the value by capital however, leaves lesser and lesser share for the working people who constitute bulk of the demand. Capital will not produce without securing profit, and capital cannot remain idle i.e. not securing profit. This is giving rise to the increasingly rapacious nature of capitalist imperialism. It is at the root of the growing contradictions of the system i.e. contradiction between imperialism and oppressed nations, contradictions between labour and capital in capitalist countries and contradiction among imperialist powers and monopoly groups.

Neo-liberalism is a vehicle of maximizing profits of capital in the period of relatively stagnant markets. It is a vehicle of

delivering more and more part of the created value to the coffers of capital in the form of profits. It does so by reducing other claimants to the share of the created value i.e. wages accruing to workers (attacks on wages and benefits), interest accruing to suppliers of capital i.e. banks etc. (reduction in interest rates), taxes accruing to govts. which results in withdrawal of govt. from social welfare schemes) to name a few. Besides, it continues the drive to take its products to all corners, crushing producers outside its pale and/or subordinating them and bringing all resources under its control. This drive is further intensified under neo-liberal regime. But by reducing share of other claimants to the value produced, the capital under neo-liberalism undercuts the conditions of the realization of its increased demands for profits thus making the whole system increasingly rapacious, and also instable. It results in ever increasing growth in inequality as it reduces the shares of all other participants in the economy and depresses their living conditions and makes their working conditions increasingly precarious. Growth of inequality is not an accidental but inevitable result of the policies being pursued by the rulers at the behest of the big capital (corporate).

The system riven with increasingly deepening crisis, is pregnant with immense possibilities for the revolutionary forces. Converting these possibilities into realities i.e. growing people struggles under the leadership of revolutionary forces is the main challenge of the situation. The realization of these possibilities will obviously have to counter the ruling class attempts against them. They are coming across and have to come across the ruling class conspiracies as well as limitations of different other classes. Class struggle is the sole vehicle of conversion of possibilities into reality though its course is bound to be zig zag, each turn must make for the advance.

Organ of the Central Committee, CPI(ML)

NEW DEMOCRACY

RNINo. 63838/95

April - 2020

Price : Rs.20

Editor : Com. Y. S. Rao

Published, printed and owned by Dr. V. K. Patole from Balmukand Khand, Giri Nagar, New Delhi
- 110019 and printed at Star Offset Printers. 1-215/8-A-2 New Patel Nagar. New Delhi - 8

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