

Vol. 27, No. 12-1
January, 2021



Organ of the Central Committee, CPI (ML)

New Democracy

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Nature, Background and Prospects of Present Peasant Struggle in Punjab

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A valiant peasant struggle is surging in Punjab. This struggle started with the Central Government of fascist RSS issuing three Ordinances which were passed by parliament in its monsoon session in 2020. In the Lok Sabha BJP has a clear majority but it lacks one in Rajya Sabha. However, bulldozing the majority opinion against Bills, these were passed by voice vote. President of India readily and speedily granted his assent. Thus these Bills, first issued as ordinances, were made law with lightning speed. Why was government of India in such a hurry to enact these laws? Government was acting under the direction of two authorities, was working under their pressure. One was the pressure of World Trade organization which came into existence on April 25, 1994 by signing a treaty at Marrakesh (known as Marrakesh treaty), by Indian government led by Narsimha Rao of Congress and Dr. Manmohan Singh as his game changer Finance Minister. This treaty provides that to facilitate free trade and open market, assistance provided to agriculture by government in any form, be it subsidy or any other form, shall cease. It also provides that governments shall stay away from agricultural trade except for the sake of food security. At that time there was a serious debate on this treaty, particularly in Punjab. Captain Amrinder Singh was one politician who openly supported this Treaty. He wrote an article in Punjabi Tribune supporting World Trade Organization. Now Congress party is taking a posture of opposing these anti people Acts and its state governments in Punjab, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh have passed resolution and parallel Acts rejecting the Acts of Central governments but the fact of the matter is that it is Congress which is primarily responsible for these policies and consequently for these Acts. World Trade Organization, in its meeting held in 2013, gave five years to abolish government procurement of agricultural produce and all agriculture related subsidies by December 2018. US government had gone to Dispute settlement mechanism against India for continuing “free trade distorting subsidies”. So, this was the pressure on Indian government to pass these Acts to ward off the US pressure, whose dictates Indian government is faithfully following and also to avoid the action by Dispute Settlement body of WTO. Second, world capitalist system is in a serious crisis which is essentially crisis of demand. Present crisis, which set in since 2008, is continuing to deepen and corporate is unable to find a solution to this crisis. So international and Indian corporate are trying to bring the agrarian sector under their control. Corporate pressure was the other factor to force these acts.

This is not something that has dropped from the sky. Indian ruling classes are trying to implement these policies since mid nineties and Dr. Manmohan Singh is (dis)credited with these policies. He appointed an expert committee headed by Dr. Sardara Singh Johal to prepare a report for “Making Indian agriculture competitive in the era of globalization.” Essence of the report submitted by this committee was that small farmers must be ejected from Agriculture and large farms of thousands of acres should

be created to make Indian agriculture competitive. One proposal was to establish a land market on the lines of share market and other was to abolish government procurement of agricultural produce. It made another proposal to introduce contract farming. But this report could not be implemented because of political compulsions and people's resistance. Amrinder Singh, during his first stint as Chief Minister, appointed an expert committee headed by same Sardara Singh Johal and which, among others, made a proposal to open private markets alongside government markets. During Modi I, Union government appointed a committee headed by Shri Shanta Kumar, a Minister in Vajpayee cabinet, which gave its report, proposing downsizing (virtually abolishing) Food Corporation of India, and stopping purchase of agri-produce beyond food security needs.

According to a Peasant leader of Punjab, in 2017 Niti Aayog called a high-level meeting which was attended by nearly 150 persons including government officials, agriculture and economic experts, representatives of corporate and three farmers' leaders, including this one. Government officials presented the issue that growth in agriculture sector is stagnant rather going down, how to accelerate growth in agriculture was the agenda and issue before the meeting. Experts were invited to give their opinion. They opined that this sector needs large investments which farmers are not in a position to undertake, hence the corporate should come forward to invest in this sector. Corporate are ready to invest but government should provide them farms of ten thousand acres and peasants shall not interfere, they may work on the field but only as wage labour. According to this leader, he warned them that this will result in a massive social upheaval. Now this policy is being implemented through these Acts.

So, a consistent effort is on by both main ruling class parties to implement WTO and corporate dictated terms on agriculture. Sanghi fascist government, blinded by its bulldozing majority in Lok Sabha and using the artificially created corona scare and fascist restrictions imposed in the name of corona, has fully implemented this imperialist dictated policy, throwing the farmers before the corporate wolves. Act on contract farming facilitates the entry of corporate in this sector. Act on marketing of agriculture produce facilitates corporate in agri-trade and, by removing the assured price by government withdrawing from procurement, the peasant will be forced out.

Present struggle started from below. First, district level protests against these Ordinances were held by individual organizations in month of July, immediately after the promulgation of the Ordinances. Then, constituents of AIKSCC held five big rallies at Moga, Barnala, Patiala, Phagwara and Amritsar. BKU (Ekta-Ugrahan) held Dharnas at Patiala and Badal village. AIKSCC constituents gave a call for Punjab bandh and appealed to other farmers' organizations to come together to fight out these Ordinances. Meanwhile some factions of BKU and some local organizations came together to form a platform of 13 organizations and they decided to support the bandh call. A meeting of all organizations working in Punjab was held at Moga at the initiative of AIKSCC, attended by all organizations and a joint platform of 30 organizations was formed but Ugrahan group later stated that they will have only coordinated action but not be a part of this platform. Punjab Bandh on 25th Sept. was unprecedented and complete. All sections of population not only supported but actively participated in this Bandh. This gave a big

boost to the struggle. After this, the joint platform decided to block rail traffic indefinitely, gherao the offices of Bhartiya Janata Party and the houses of their leaders, businesses of Ambani and Adani and toll plazas. Dharnas are going on at nearly 150 places in Punjab. This struggle is directed against BJP government, BJP party and corporate, particularly against Ambani and Adani.

This is the third largest mobilization since the land struggle of PEPSU tenant peasants in late forties and early fifties of last century. First was the struggle against the "betterment levy" imposed by Pratap Singh Kairon, then Chief Minister of Punjab. This was a struggle led by Kisan Sabha in 1959 in the form of Jail Bharo. Such was the sway of the movement, Akali workers at local level were forced to join with their yellow flags. Thousands were jailed and fines imposed. Police tried recovery by confiscating their property. People resisted and clash with police took place. Police resorted to firing and lathi charge. Two peasants were killed and hundreds were injured. The second largest mobilization was 1983 -1984 under the leadership of BKU in Malwa region and under the leadership of KKV in Majha and Doaba regions. This started with issues related to electricity but included almost all issues regarding land-owner peasantry. This is the third largest mobilization since 1947 which, though it is on peasants' issues, but whole Punjab, except the city section of BJP, is supporting this struggle.

Why do we call it is a struggle of Punjab and not simply of farmers only? First, Punjab is already facing a problem of high unemployment because (1) The over mechanization in agriculture has reduced the scope of employment in this sector (2) Punjab is industrially a backward state rather, it has witnessed the phenomenon of de-industrialization particularly since the period of Khalistani movement and concessions being given to the neighbouring hill states and (3) Migrant labour from other states has flooded the labour market. With the implementation of these laws, the whole marketing apparatus will be mechanized with the advent of Corporate in this field. So whatever employment is there, will also be finished. Secondly, with corporate capturing Agriculture, large farms will come into existence which will be wholly mechanized. Thus, employment still available in certain operations of agriculture will be finished and with this phenomenon, peasants employed will be pushed into the army of unemployed. Apart from this, with the withdrawal of government from procurement of agriculture produce and removal of stock limit, traders will be free to hoard the stock and artificially raise prices, which will affect the whole population. When there will be no government procurement, public distribution system will be thrown to the winds. Lastly Punjab is an agricultural state, agriculture is the mainstay of the economy of this state. Whatever affects agriculture is bound to affect the whole state. That is why it is not a struggle of peasants alone but the struggle for Punjab.

Why are mainly peasants of Punjab mobilized on such a scale compared to other states? Some people say that government procurement is on mainly in Punjab, Haryana and parts of west Uttar Pradesh. This is not the main reason, because such large-scale mobilization has not taken place in Haryana and west Uttar Pradesh. Moreover, it is not simply a question of minimum support price and government procurement, though this is also one issue. Act on contract farming is more dangerous from the peasant point of view. The very existence of this class is in danger with the entry of Corporate in

Agriculture. After Modi's ascent to power for the second time in 2019, the Central govt. vigorously unleashed fascist offensive against the people for which it had prepared the ground in its earlier stint in power from 2014-2019. In first phase, offensive was mainly political i.e. on political issues like removing special status and dismemberment of Jammu & Kashmir, criminalizing triple talaq, manipulating by carrot and stick, Supreme Court decision on Babri Masjid, which is a shame in the judicial history and bringing Citizenship Amendment Act and National Register of Citizens. Struggle against this offensive on political issues was going on when came Corona. Corona could have been prevented by banning the entry of all foreigners and compulsory quarantining of Indians coming from abroad. But government did not take these steps because it wanted corona to spread. On the other hand, Government spread an unnecessary scare of corona. Using corona as a weapon for fascist offensive government locked the whole country in homes. Punjab Chief Minister, going a step further, imposed curfew.

In Punjab we tried to understand the nature and different aspects of this disease i.e. Covid19 during the first lockdown period. We tried to understand and educate our cadres about difference between taking the required care of elderly and sick and the scare being created by the Govt. During second lockdown, ZPSC and Pendu Mazdoor Union gave a call to protest in the villages, in the streets, in front of houses. This was to gauge the mood of the masses. We came to the conclusion that the scare is largely in the urban areas especially middle class but rural poor are largely free from it. Front of eight political parties and organizations formed at the initiative of CPI (M-L) ND gave a call for protests and paying homage to the martyrs on 13th April 2020 and also to celebrate May Day. We did mass mobilization on May First in rural areas. Then we decided to break curfew, mobilize masses on their burning issues and without following the government guidelines issued by Centre and State governments. We educated the ranks on Corona that what is the disease and what is the scare. First large-scale mobilization took place in Bhawanigarh town of Sangrur on 15th May 2020 where hundreds of workers marched two kilometres to a factory gate without any distancing and without wearing any masks, led by ZPSC. On 22 May five hundred people came on the roads without any precautions, breaking curfew and led by Indian Federation of Trade Unions. This was on the issue of relief for the workers and arranging return journey of migrant labour. Demands were met but case was registered against two hundred people. In June 2020, Comrade Nirbhay Singh Dhudike was arrested along with youth and student leaders fighting against the displacement of fish market in Moga and were put behind bars. To protest against the arrest and demanding release of comrades a state level protest demonstration was organized by KKV in Moga mobilizing three thousand people. After this many mass mobilizations took place. Nearly 1700 cases were registered against leaders and activists of mass and party mass organizations, but without bothering about the cases and jails, mass mobilization continued without fear. Thus, scare of Corona and government restrictions was thrown to the winds. Then all other parties and organizations started mass mobilization and state government had to reconcile with this trend. This laid the ground for such a large surge of the peasant struggle.

People of Punjab, being in lead in this struggle and in multifaceted attack on Union government, ruling party and corporate, have had to pay the price. Union government

has created a situation of confrontation and encirclement of Punjab. Modi government has not released the state's share of GST, it has blocked the rural development fund on the flimsy ground of Punjab government not furnishing the accounts of its expenditure. Though Central government is entitled to ask for accounts but it is not entitled to block the funds on this ground. This is completely illegal and unethical. Because of the rail blockade by peasant organizations arose a situation of scarcity of essential goods, specially coal and fertilizer, resulting in constraints on supply of fertilizers for sowing of wheat and potato and large cuts in electricity supply. It also created the problem of lifting of paddy purchased. It was also affecting industry in supply of raw material and lifting of finished goods. Seeing this, farmers' organizations decided to allow the plying of goods trains, vacated the railway tracks and shifted Dharnas to railway stations. But Railway Board refused to run the goods train on the plea that large number of people on the platform is a security risk. Then organizations vacated the platforms too and shifted dharna to the parks in front of railway stations. But Modi government refused to run the trains unless passenger trains are allowed. Now peasants' organizations have allowed the running of both types of trains. But it reflects the anti Punjab and venomous attitude of Modi government. Modi government issued an Ordinance providing fine of one crore rupees and five years in jail for stubble burning; this is obviously to penalize the struggling peasantry. RBI has decided to waive certain type of interests for overdue loans. But next day RBI held a special press conference to announce that this facility will not be available for the farmers. This is nothing but revengeful attitude of fascist Modi government.

Fascist Central government targeting Punjab is not only because of present farmers' struggle. Punjab has emerged as a hub of mass resistance against fascist offensive. When fascists attacked Jammu & Kashmir by robbing it of its special status, dismembering it and downgrading the state to two union territories, a front consisting of eight parties and political organizations was formed against offensive on Kashmiri people. Massive protests were held by this front and mass organizations. Such massive protest did not occur in any other part of the country. Massive and continuous protests were held against CAA and NRC till the lockdown was imposed. Then mass protests started defying the curfew. So fascists think that Punjab is in front of resistance to their fascist offensive and they want to suppress it.

With this has emerged the issue of centre-state relation and attack on federalism or what little exists of it. Added to the people struggle, Punjab Assembly, in a special session passed a resolution rejecting three Acts and formulating its own Acts. This was followed by Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh Assemblies doing the same. MLAs from Punjab led by the Chief Minister and barring Akali Dal and AAP, staged a dharna at Jantar Mantar in Delhi demanding running of goods trains, release of GST dues and Rural Development Fund. Chief Minister requested for a meeting with President of India, which was refused. This has pitted the Punjab government and Union government against each other, reflecting the Centre state contradiction. CPI (M-L) ND held a state level convention on "Encirclement of Punjab and Centralization of powers". Fascism entails concentration of power, so attack on federalism, whatever little exists, has emerged as an issue. Constitution of India is essentially unitary with some federal elements; now even that is under attack. As Agriculture is a state subject according to

the Constitution, the Centre is not entitled to enact any law, but the Centre has enacted these three Acts on Agriculture, which is a violation of “federal structure” provided in the Constitution. So, the present peasant struggle has this aspect too.

This is struggle of farmers but has support among entire cross sections of Punjab. Whole political class is in support of this struggle. Congress has openly taken a stand in support of the struggle. Initially, Akali Dal tried to support the bills saying that Congress is misleading the farmers whereas bills are in favour of peasantry. Its President, Sukhbir Singh Badal, brought a letter from Union Agriculture Minister, N. S. Tomar, to show that Union Government is committed to continue minimum support price mechanism. Seeing that their standpoint is further isolating their party among the peasantry, Akali Dal changed its stand and its lone Minister in Union Cabinet, Harsimrat Kaur Badal, resigned from the Cabinet and Akali Dal was forced to walk out of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and was forced to support the agitation. AAP is also taking the position of opposing these Acts but both these parties, Akali Dal and AAP, are directing their fire against the state government of Congress party instead of directing it against Modi and his government. All these parties are trying to use this agitation for capturing power in Chandigarh in 2022 elections. As far as BJP is concerned it has a divided approach. Leaders based in rural areas, though not opposing the Acts and supporting agitation directly, are positive towards farmers and urging the farmers and the government to sit at the table and try to solve the issue through talks. They were instrumental in arranging meeting between peasants’ organizations and the government. But the main leaders of BJP, based in cities, are dead against the struggle and are spitting venom against the struggle. They are branding peasants’ leaders as middlemen and urban Naxals. Similar is the attitude of All India leadership and government of BJP. Modi himself, during his election campaign in Bihar, has been branding the struggle as the agitation of middle men, and declaring loud that these Acts and decision on Jammu Kashmir will never be rescinded, thus comparing this agitation with struggle of Kashmiri people.

But people of Punjab are with the struggle. Industry associations in different cities and their Punjab body have declared open support to the struggle. State Vyapari Mandal and that in different cities have come out in support. Various organizations of transporters have pledged support in all forms including free supply of vehicles. Actors, Directors and other artists of Punjabi films have been continuously participating in dharnas and singers perform in dharnas. Punjabi music was promoting gangs, gang wars, weapons, drugs etc. but now songs on exploitation of peasants and repression on them are in currency. Those people who are unable to participate in struggle directly, are contributing in different ways in form of logistics, as giving flour, dal, milk and other food materials, sound systems, tents and funds etc. It is a real people’s movement.

People are determined to fight to finish. Peasants feel their very existence is in danger. But organization is the weapon of struggle. Unorganized masses cannot achieve the goal. This struggle is under multiple class leadership. It includes the representatives of poor peasants, middle peasants, rich farmers and even landlords. There are some leaders who have nothing to do with peasants or farmers, their main concern is to highlight that they are in command. Main leadership is of middle peasants and poor peasants and rich

farmers are in minority. Feeling that this movement cannot achieve its goal without mobilizing peasants on all India level, efforts were made to unite organizations active in different states. But result of these efforts has been that rich farmers and landlords have taken the lead. This is not a very favourable situation for the struggle. Rich farmers are always prone to a half way compromise and middle farmers mostly tend to follow these rich farmers. Organizations representing the interests of poor and small peasants are a small section. So, a danger of half way compromise is looming large. Hence a very sharp struggle is on the card. Revolutionary forces in this struggle have to remain very vigilant. They should base themselves on two things. One, people want to fight to the finish and secondly, they want this fight to be unitedly fought. So revolutionary forces in this struggle should never be seen as breaking unity, being against unity and violating it. Secondly, they should never be seen as not willing to fight till end, should be unwavering and always ready to take risk for struggle. This struggle has to be carried forward very deftly and wisely. Motto should be to fight to win.

Two Journeys

- SK

The recent times have witnessed two countervailing journeys across India, one of an 'exodus' where one saw heart wrenching scenes of hundreds of thousands of migrant workers taking a route to home by walk; the other where peasants were marching to storm the bastions of power in Delhi, stomping the barricades erected by the state en route. The first journey reminded one of the lines from Bob Marley's song, The Exodus, 'We're leaving Babylon'. The peasants' march braving the water cannons and crossing trenches dug out on the highways reminded one of the song, 'Dilli door nahin hai yaaro, Dilli ke asli haqdaroo'.

The two journeys appear to be in opposing directions, one away from the cities and the other toward Delhi, the seat of power. They also appear to be taken up by two different social forces, migrant workers from rural areas and the peasants from the villages. Yet, they are much closely linked to the direction that the country is going to take.

The first one, the march of the migrant workers, was a pointer to the journey of people who came into the cities in search of a life and livelihood. The pandemic has only

exposed the cruel workings of the economy and the heartless abandonment of the state. That they were forced to walk back to the place where they started is also a pointer to the journey of the Indian economy at large. During the Lockdown, there was the image of one person weeping inconsolably on the Nizamuddin bridge across river Yamuna as he was desperate to reach home to see his ailing son 1200 km away. It captured the desperation and grief. Yes, it was a silent journey along the bleeding pathways afflicted by the economy of apathy. It seemed like a journey into despair, yet it was also a journey which showcased the perseverance to reach the destination, the home in the village. The question of their return, whether out of compulsion or on their own volition, is a question of the development models.

The second one, a journey instigated by the state as it formally abdicated its hither to nominal role in supporting agriculture and aims to firmly foist the corporate at the helm. There is the image of a youth jumping on to a police vehicle to turn off the water cannon. It symbolized the resistance to the brutish attempt to block the march to Delhi. Keen observers also can notice the fact that the centres of once green revolution are now in the forefront in voicing opposition notwithstanding the claims about Green Revolution 2.0. Yes, it was a daunting journey braving the water cannons in the cold winter and blockages imposed by state at every level. Yet, it is a march determined to make the deaf hear the voice.

We now have a situation where workers were driven home to villages and the farmers in the villages are marching to Delhi as they perceive the risk to their lives and livelihood as the threat of corporatization of agriculture looms ahead. Thus, we have reached a full circle.

Imagine a situation when these journeys converge, and other social classes join forces. Delhi appeared a formidable city, turned into a fortress, and a very far place for the journey in a gloomy environment. Yet the current incidents prove that it is not too far even as the journey still appears to be arduous. It is riddled with challenges and blocked with barricades and deep trenches dug out by the state. Yet what was originally planned as a blockade to the marching farmers turned the city into a besieged one choking the supply lines. The mighty will crumble as their feet are made of clay. One must thank farmers for showing the way forward. A long battle still lies ahead...

Peasants of India Rise to Challenge Increasing Neo-colonial Plunder, Complete Corporate Control over Agriculture & Fascist Attack on Right to Protest

Aditya Prakash

Farmers from Punjab and Haryana came marching to Delhi on October 26, 2020 for the repeal of three Acts rammed through the Parliament by the RSS-BJP Govt. Besides, withdrawal of Electricity Bill, 2020 was also demanded. All efforts were made by the Union Govt. and RSS-BJP led Haryana State Govt. to stop the farmers from reaching Delhi. However, the determination of the farmers got the better of police lathi-charges, obstructions in the form of digging of roads or putting obstacles on the roads. Police barricades fell by the wayside and farmers reached Haryana border with Delhi. Farmers' organizations had called initially for two days protest demonstration at Parliament to protest against these three laws, demanding their repeal. Farmers from parts of UP and Uttarakhand too started their March to Delhi on the same Call. However, the Govt. did not permit them to enter Delhi to go for demonstration. Govt. proposed to make them sit in Burari ground which was rejected by farmers who viewed this as an attempt to put them in an open jail. Hence began the historic sit-ins at two border points – Singhu and Tikri at Delhi Haryana border. So powerful was the determination of the farmers that some organizations which had no plan to reach Delhi on 26th also felt compelled to reach Delhi border. From UP, farmers reached Gazipur border point where they were prevented by the police from entering Delhi. There began another sit-in at Delhi border. Some farmers who had gone to Burari ground on the call of their leaders too came back after a few days. Gazipur, the site at Delhi border with UP, drew farmers mainly from western part of UP and Terai region of UP & Uttarakhand. Besides these, a number of other sites too came up where farmers in thousands started their sit-ins demanding repeal of these three laws and granting MSP as a legal right. Before the determination of the farmers, the Govt. retreated for the time being from repression, instead trying to barricade them and create difficulties in several other ways. Thus began the historic struggle of Indian peasantry which continues for the last month and a half. History is seldom recognized when it is being made and this struggle is no exception. This struggle is unprecedented in Indian history, may be in world history, both by its tenacity and mass character; both in its aims and its forms of struggle.

This determined march of peasantry drew the attention of the whole country. It pit the farmers of the country against the ruling RSS-BJP Govt. The trigger of this struggle has been the enactment of three laws, namely Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation), 2020, Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020 and Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020. These three Acts, from the subject matter they deal with, are being referred to as

Mandi Bypass Act, ECA and Contract Farming Act. These three Acts aimed at changing the very nature of Indian agriculture and at sounding the death bell of Indian peasantry, at least as we know it and these were perceived by farmers as an existential threat for themselves and Indian agriculture. These three Acts were pushed through at a time when the whole country, except the Govt., was battling Corona. RSS-BJP saw in this an opportunity to ram through its pro-corporate agenda. They considered Corona time to be opportune as big protests would not materialize. But farmers, faced with threat to their very existence, could not bother about this medical danger. So powerful was the anger of the peasants that all India Bandh against these three Acts called on September 25, 2020 was a huge success and was unprecedented in several parts of India including Punjab and Haryana. Govt. however, did not read or did not want to read the anger of the peasantry even after this Bandh and counted on its fascist state machinery and weapon of communalism to disrupt and suppress the movement. That these cherished weapons of fascist rulers were smashed to the ground by the agitating farmers has been shown by the period gone by. This is beginning to open space for democratic protests closed for long by the fascist rulers.

The peasantry is fighting the battle for its very existence. What is at stake is not just this or that change but the whole gamut of agrarian scene that is sought to be transformed and peasantry exited from their land and Agriculture and the whole control of agricultural production, transportation, storage and processing of agricultural produce and trade of the agricultural produce, being handed to foreign and domestic corporate. The Govt. is trying to entangle the farmers' leaders into suggesting amendments and the aim of the Govt. behind this is to preserve the architecture for the complete control of the Agriculture, which is sought to be handed over to the corporate through these Acts. A few amendments will be of no avail. Hence, farmers' organizations have rightly rejected Govt. insistence on suggestions of amendments and stuck to repeal of these Acts. This agitation has pitted the peasantry against the corporate and the Govt. backed by them and backing them.

Three Agricultural Acts: Deathknell of Indian Agriculture

Detailed critique of these Acts has been made by the farmers' organizations collectively and individually and there is no need to go into that. The three Acts are interconnected and their impact can be seen through reading them together. It is not the case that Agriculture was earlier free from the corporate infiltration and peasantry was earlier free from exploitation by the corporate. Supply of agricultural inputs was being controlled by them. Similarly, agricultural trade was also under their influence through Govt. and financial linkages. However, there were gaps and the wholesome control on all points of the chain was not in the hands of the corporate. Hence, these Acts have been brought by the RSS-BJP Govt. which has used Corona pandemic period to advance pro-corporate economic agenda through these Acts, through four Labour Codes and a host of changes in environmental laws permitting handing over control over the mineral and forest resources to the Corporate.

The Contract Farming Act gives corporate opportunity to contract land from the peasants. Through these contracts, which cover inputs including agricultural services, their cost, type of crop to be sown, sale of produce, in fact the whole chain of agricultural operations is to be handed over to the corporate. A farmer is to be reduced to a labourer on his own land who nonetheless will bear all the risk of doings of corporate. Worse, with handles of cost of inputs and prices of produce in the name of quality in the hands of the corporate, the farmer is reduced to a serf who is at the mercy of the corporate who, everybody knows, know no mercy. Even worse, even the land of the farmer comes under the danger of alienation, though formally not as a part of this contract but for raising money for the inputs, This could be even from the same corporate under the contract for that. All these dues are to be recovered as land revenue. Besides, land is the only valuable asset with a peasant and how can he/she raise large loans without pledging the same. There is no scheme of guarantee free loan by the Govt. and corporate are any way not in this business. It is a recipe for perpetual degradation of peasantry, ultimately forced out of the land and rendered landless and helpless. All talk of peasants taking recourse to legal proceedings is humbug with a common peasant not being in a position to take on the might of the corporate with their huge money and influence in Govt. and judicial machinery. Contract Labour Act is a recipe for changing the pattern of agriculture and dispossessing peasants from their land. No wonder, peasants are fighting with the energy and determination to preserve their land, the primary means of their livelihood.

Mandi Bypass Act provides for private mandis run by the corporate where there will be no regulation, no MSP, no protection to peasants. In fact these will become slaughter houses for the peasantry. Govt. sanctioned mandis will die under this Act if not abolished by the Govt. at some point. The Act is in fact a recipe for their liquidation, which is so necessary to finish off any say that peasants may have had in the APMC (Agricultural Producers Marketing Committees) mandis. Govt. is talking about greater opportunity to peasants to sell their products but this is utter non-sense. With fragmented markets and APMC mandis unable to stand the govt. supported corporate, there will in fact be no opportunity at all except to surrender to the will of corporate. Govt. is talking about peasants being made free to sell anywhere in the country, but a common peasant cannot take his produce to even any market except the nearest one, to another district what to talk of another state. This will also be done by traders who will monopolize the trade and these traders will be nobody but corporate. Hence, with Mandi Bypass Act peasants will be forced to sell their produce at the prices forced upon by the corporate. This Act is good-bye to agricultural marketing as is prevalent. No wonder even the traders associated with marketing of agricultural produce are against this Act. The Govt. talks of abolition of middlemen but this Acts provides for their mushrooming as FPOs, PAS, i.e. Pr. Agri Societies, etc.

Essential Commodities Act is an essential part of corporate control over agricultural produce. Elimination of Govt. intervention in agricultural trade, even of essential

commodities, is important for the corporate. Hence, the price triggers have been kept so high that no occasion is likely to arise for the Govt. intervention. A price trigger of 50% for the dry food (cereals and pulses) and 100% for vegetables and fruits on year to year basis will virtually eliminate any possibility of Govt. coming in. It is vital for the corporate who wish to make a killing over their purchases. If the price trigger for the Govt. intervention is kept at reasonable level, the corporate designs will be hampered. This amended law is not only against the peasants but all the poor people who suffer from high prices of food items in the market. With PDS being dismantled and price trigger for the food items kept so high, the lot of the poor is going to be insufferable. But the corporate friendly RSS-BJP leaders have no regard for the concerns of the poor. They are falsely propagating that these Acts will make food items cheaper. This is not an experience anywhere. All countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America who fell for this trap of the corporate saw food prices sky rocketing and have witnessed food riots like in Philippines etc.

Another aspect covered by the Acts (first two) is that limit on the storage of agricultural produce has been scrapped. It means they can store/hoard as much food grains and other agricultural produce as they like. It is a necessary for them for their requirements of their large-scale operations and greed for huge profits will not be met if they could not store the produce in huge quantities and sell at higher rates. Common peasant has rightly read his death warrant in these Acts while Govt. apologists and corporate controlled media experts are talking of their benefits.

MSP as a Legal Right

Minimum Support Price (MSP) for all the crops at the rate recommended by Swaminathan Committee has emerged as another main demand of the peasants. Remunerative prices for agricultural produce have been a longstanding demand of the peasantry of the country. Peasants have been agitating on this issue since 1980s and the belt of 'green revolution' in North India and commercial crop sowing areas of Maharashtra and Karnataka became its centres. However, the successive govts. have failed to honour this reasonable demand of the peasants though the very parties leading the govt. made this very promise when they were in opposition. Peasantry have been seen by them only as votes. For a long time, different formulae were there as to what constitutes remunerative price. Under UPA Govt. Swaminathan Committee recommended a formula of cost (referred to as C2 for its method of calculation of the cost including inputs, all labour, rent and interest) + 50%. Since then this, i.e. Swaminathan formula, has become a demand of all farmers' organizations. In 2014 campaigning for Lok Sabha elections, RSS-BJP leaders including Modi himself, had promised to implement it but after coming to power RSS-BJP Govt. has submitted an affidavit in the Supreme Court that it was not possible for the Govt. to implement Swaminathan recommendation. Earlier, UPA Govt. to whom this report was submitted, had refused to implement it.

Why do the Govts. refuse to implement $c2+50\%$ as MSP? The reason lies in their subservience to foreign and domestic corporate. Agriculture produces food items – both perishable and non-perishable and raw materials for the industry. Any rise in the cost of raw materials impacts corporate profit as it raises the cost of production. Rise in the prices of food items has an impact on labour wages which also increases cost of production. Wage rates in India are any way abysmally low but they cannot be depressed beyond a point though that point is quite flexible, however relatively less so in corporate owned industries and enterprises. Corporate will definitely try to pass on these increases in cost to the consumers but there is a limit to it as there is a danger of shrinkage of demand due to operation of price flexibility of demand. Reduction in production due to this shrinkage of demand leads to further rise in cost of production as many factors of production cannot be proportionally shrunk if they are operating at optimal level. It is a vicious cycle which may play havoc with corporate profits and capitalist production, with prices going up and demand traversing a downward spiral. So, the main reason for the Govt. refusal to accept Swaminathan formula is to serve the interests of the corporate.

To hide this real reason behind refusal of the Govt. to implement Swaminathan formula and generally to give remunerative prices, Govt. dishes out fake reasons of rise in prices for the poor consumers. This has not been true in large measure. Govt. has been making purchases at MSP only in select areas and of limited amount. As per Shanta Kumar committee report (2015), only 6% of the peasants avail it. Even otherwise, only 40% of the paddy and wheat marketable surplus gets to be sold at MSP, the figure is less than 5% in case of coarse cereals and there is no MSP for a large number of crops. Govt. purchases are used, besides distribution through PDS, for keeping emergency reserves and make interventions when the prices of food grains rise sharply. Prices in the market are abysmally low during the harvest season when peasants sell their produce and exorbitantly high out of this season, when many of them become consumers as they are unable to keep their produce for the whole year due to several pressing needs e.g. debt repayment, social functions, medical emergencies, children's educational needs, etc. Hence there are a number of factors operating which determine the prices of food items in the market; mostly they are under the control of big players controlling their trade.

In fact, grant of MSP to peasants for all crops will, by enhancing the purchasing power of this large section of Indian populace and spur demand. It will also contribute to enhancement of wages. Though it may not directly translate into it but nevertheless it will be a contributing factor in the face of rise in non-agricultural employment in the rural areas. It will help spur industrial production by helping overcome demand deficit. But the Indian ruling classes, subservient to imperialism, have refused to take this route. Their plan of development is attracting imperialist capital. Their 'ease' of doing business is to open the whole country for loot and plunder of Corporate- imperialists and their compradors big capitalists.

Modi and RSS-BJP Govt. has repeatedly asserted that MSP is not being given up. But they are not ready to make a law on it, nor are they ready to build it into all purchases of agricultural produce. The assertions are only to fool the peasants.

Subservience to Imperialism and their tool, WTO

Modi had promised to double the income of peasants by 2022. However, his RSS-BJP Govt. has attacked the peasants in a big way. Modi's promise had envisaged reducing the number of peasants whose income is to be 'doubled' and to change the crops to produce what can fetch better prices in the international market. Production of these 'high value' crops were at the core of the promise. Not to omit, even Sharad Pawar and P. Chidambaram had been talking of high value crops during UPA term. This policy is rooted in the design of imperialist countries and their tool, the WTO, which is heavily tilted in their favour, and sounds death knell of Agriculture in India and several other third world countries. They wish to increase neo-colonial plunder by refashioning Agriculture in India. No wonder, imperialist countries including USA, China, Canada and members of European Union, have supported these Acts.

Imperialist countries especially United States, Canada and the European Union (EU) have a huge surplus of food grains and dairy products while their climate is not suitable for production of crops grown in tropical regions like India and which have big demand among consumers in their country. They must find export markets for their surplus grains and dairy products. For this they have been pressurizing backward countries to give up govt. procurement of food grains. On the other hand, by diverting agricultural land in India to crops grown in only tropical regions, they wish to lower their prices which will in turn lower the prices for their consumers and afford their companies huge profits in trade. This diversion of land away from the food grains obviously at the expense of their availability to Indian people is at the root of the *mantra* to lure the peasants to diversify and produce 'high value' crops. The corporate who will take on contract farming will produce these crops. The experience of peasants of Punjab and Haryana of contract farming for fruits etc. has been an eye-opener to this false promise of 'big income'.

While the imperialist countries had been pressurizing backward countries for changing the crops they grow, they built in grossly unfair terms in the WTO regime that they have imposed on the world. In its section "Agreement of Agriculture" they have imposed such conditions as to make growing food grain crops non-viable on WTO's terms. It is these heavily tilted terms that have caused immense sufferings to Indian peasants. These grossly manipulated prices in international markets have played havoc with Indian peasants who have become debt ridden and many of them have been driven to suicides. There should be no doubt that Indian peasants are among the most hardworking people and producers at the lowest cost in the world. Imperialist tricks in collaboration with the subservient rulers of India, cannot obfuscate this fact.

It is not that the Indian peasantry gets more subsidies than their western counter-parts. Opposite is true. Prior to WTO agreement and in preparation to its Agreement on Agriculture, imperialist countries converted support to their own peasants and Agriculture into massive subsidies as direct cash transfers and kept them in Green and Blue boxes which are not subject to “reduction commitments”. This support, huge in amount, is given in the name of environmental concerns and for not cultivating some lands. Support measures like reduction in prices of fertilizers, power and the like inputs were termed as trade distorting and have been kept in amber box which are subjected to “reduction commitments”.

They tilted the scale further against countries like India by making average prices in international market in 1986-88 as reference price for calculation of support. With the decline in the value of rupee to dollar these figures have become astronomical without any relief to Indian peasants. (By calculating this difference and applying it to the yearly output) This trick was obvious in the Agreement on Agriculture but subservient govts. could not go against their imperialist masters!

The meagre ‘subsidies’ given by backward countries and their Govt. procurement on fixed prices has been the target of the Agreement on Agriculture to pave the way for changing the crop patterns of these countries. Though many organizations had pointed out these aspects at the time prior to signing of WTO, but the Govt., subservient to imperialism, had gone ahead to sign it ignoring the protest of peasant organizations and several political parties. The then Congress Govt. led by P.V. Narsimha Rao did not even take approval of parliament nor they held a public debate on WTO provisions.

At that time as well, it was pointed out that WTO’s Agreement on Agriculture will kill the public distribution system which is a survival kit for a large number of poor people. By its attack on govt. procurement and provision for phasing it out (and in the meantime mandatory imports of items to a certain percentage at international prices whether countries need them or not) the attack on Public Distribution System was obvious built in. Since then successive govts. have systematically tried to demolish PDS including its reduced coverage and implemented cash transfers to an extent.

There has been pressure in WTO meetings to end government procurement. In the Ministerial Meeting held in Singapore (2015), there was concerted pressure on India and other backward countries and ultimately four years grace period was agreed upon. This ended in 2019. Hence, timing of these laws (2020) should be no surprise. Further, with demand in the world getting compressed, in which Corona also played a role, grain stocks of imperialist countries are very high and they are desperate to sell their grain abroad. Hence, their pressure is high. Indian rulers only beat their chest before the oppressed and suppressed but meekly purr before the imperialist countries. They are endangering availability of basic food grains to the vast multitude. Present farmers’ movement is thus to save the whole people and thereby the country.

While agitating peasants have rightly identified some Indian corporate, namely Adani and Ambani as the main culprits and they are certainly among them, the beneficiaries include many imperialist firms. Even these big capitalists are compradors and their linkage to imperialist countries' capital is well documented.

Corporate Contract Agriculture: Is This Capitalist Development?

We have analyzed one aspect of the imperialists' drive to tailor Indian Agriculture completely to the needs of western markets and make it part of the chain where India produces, that too cheap, what is needed in western markets and imports what is produced there, namely food grains and dairy products. Another aspect also needs to be dealt with as some quarters are painting this complete corporate takeover of Agriculture as 'inevitable capitalist development.' However, this is neither inevitable nor is this capitalist development. Just for reference, we should keep in mind that India, with a population of nearly 121 crores (2011 Census), had 68.9% of the population living in villages i.e. roughly 84 crores living in villages. Current estimates are much higher. Of these nearly 51.5% of the workforce is directly engaged in agriculture. It works out to be nearly 65 crores (including family members) directly dependent on agriculture. We may add other rural population i.e. 17.4% dependent on agriculture though not directly working in it. It is well known that Indian peasants are producers at one of the lowest costs in the world. In fact, whole families remain engaged in agriculture and even those engaged in other vocations in villages, work extra time on agriculture. All this labour, if taken into account, what is drawn by peasants, especially small peasants – poor and even a section of middle peasants- does not account even for legally sanctioned minimum wages. That they still cling to it is largely due to the sense of independence (though it is only operational because in fact they are oppressed by corporate and big capital by their dominance on prices of inputs as well as trade of agricultural produce) and also because they know only this vocation. That the youth is not very interested in agricultural operations is largely due to its non-remunerative nature. But the real point here that if corporate have to carry out agricultural operations and earn their high profits they will have to mechanize it to great degree and move a large population away from agriculture. This is variously estimated to be quite high. Different ministers in UPA times have been saying that peasants have to be moved away from agriculture. 2006 Report of the Planning Commission talked of creating large employment opportunities to absorb the surplus working population in the agriculture. Agriculture absorbs large portions of unemployed population, making them underemployed and thus camouflaging the real unemployment. This absorption has stood Indian people in good stead recently in Corona times, when tens of millions, left jobless, shelter-less, hungry and abandoned by the govt., walked to their villages. When rendered jobless, like in great recession time, they went to their villages. With Agriculture being taken over by the corporate, of the 65 crores (including family members) nearly 50 crores may be

driven out of the rural areas. There may be no work for them. What will happen to them? Those who talk of capitalist transformation on the lines of Europe in earlier centuries totally ignore that it was possible due to rise of industries there which absorbed the labour rendered surplus. Recently, the move away from agriculture in China came in the backdrop of China emerging as a factory of the world with the help of large-scale foreign investment. There is no rise of industrial activity in India though Indian ruling classes are dreaming about emerging as the new destination of foreign capital in view of growing contradictions with China of western imperialists led by US imperialists. However, many countries are ahead of India even in that race. As a matter of fact, employment in industries in India is at a low point and has not even recovered to pre-Corona level. Reports from various industrial areas around metropolitan centres indicate that employment is at best nearly two third of what it was prior to Corona.

In this abysmal situation, where will the labour rendered surplus go? It will not result in capitalist India but a lumpen India. It may suit the ruling fascists who may find many foot soldiers to target those who oppose them & to unleash large-scale violence against select sections and further deepen parochial divisions among unemployed, destitute and hungry. However, the design of the imperialists and their compradors is more nuanced and directed at change in crop pattern to serve their neo-colonial plunder.

Characteristics of the Movement

There is a general agreement that what we are witnessing is a historic movement. However, all its aspects are not properly understood and grasped. Through these three black laws, RSS-BJP Govt. has launched an all out attack on Agriculture and Peasantry. The movement has MSP as a legal right as one of the main demands but what is propelling the peasant anger is the centrality of the issue of fear of losing land. Plain reading of these laws makes it clear that the fear is not misplaced, it is genuine. The claws of corporate will strangle the Peasantry, with the state machinery standing with corporate. It is this fear that has largely shaped the present character of the movement.

Because of the centrality of the land question, we are witnessing an unprecedented unity among all sections of landowning peasantry. In this respect it is different from the peasant struggles before 1947 and after 1947 transfer of power. Those movements were targeted against landlords (and the Govt. serving them) on the question of land, tenancy rights and social oppressions. Those movements aimed to transform the agrarian relations as then existed. In those movements landless and poor peasants were the main force with tribals also constituting an important part of struggling peasant masses, they saving their land from the Govt., contractors and landlords and braving repression of police and foresters.

Present movement, though raising the issue of MSP as a legal right, is different from the movements of 1980s and 1990s. Those movements were limited to demanding better terms of trade for agricultural produce. Though different sections of peasantry

participated to differing levels, these were mostly led by big landowners as they had maximum to benefit from realization of demands. In that movement, the participation of small and even medium peasants was only as followers. But in the present movement, small and middle peasants and the organizations representing them are among those playing leading role. This is also partly responsible for the tenacity and determination of the movement, the main factor being the peasants' perception of this being a struggle for existence. We must take into account that marginal and small holdings constitute the overwhelming majority of agricultural holdings. Holdings of up to 1 hectare i.e. roughly upto 2.54 acres, constitute 68.45% of the total holdings while holdings between 1 to 2 hectares constitute 17.62% of all holdings. Thus, agricultural land holdings of up to 5.08 acres (2 Hectares) constitute 86.07% of all holdings. With the threat looming on their land, their only means of livelihood, and no prospects elsewhere, these overwhelming sections of peasantry are fighting vigorously and their presence is showing both in participation as well as in the leadership of this movement. While many rich farmers have other means of income, it is these peasants who are most militant in this movement.

If we have to see a historic parallel, with a lot of caveats though for being far separated in time, it has some features of Indian people's war of independence of 1857. That too was largely peasant uprisings (soldiers too being uniformed peasants), that too targeted change in agricultural practices, largely rent then prevalent. It targeted Raj of East India Company and the present struggle is targeting companies (corporate). That also challenged the Govt. in Delhi i.e. East India Company. An unprecedented unity of different strata of the peasantry against a foreign company (which also doubled up as ruler) was seen. It is not to detract from a number of differences with that heroic struggle- that too important ones, due to time and conditions of Agriculture- but the attempt is to point out some similarities.

It is this unprecedented unity of all sections of peasantry that has held the hand of the Govt. from unleashing repression, despite that being their weapon of choice. Any large-scale repression, they fear, will revolutionize vast sections of peasantry and even presence of ruling class agents in the rural areas will become difficult. This will have long term implications for the country as India still lives in its villages. That a good part of the central and state forces is also drawn from these peasant sections may also have been a consideration for the Govt., for its long term impact. The movement does not directly aim to change the system but has an important role in the emerging people's struggles, as it is targeting Corporate, in whose interest the Govt. has made these laws and also other policies affecting all sections, like Labour Codes, changes in Environmental regulations etc.

North India - Epicentre of the Movement

As this movement is unfolding, North India has emerged as its epicentre. Though the impact of the movement is all India i.e. farmers all over India are affected, North India is witnessing big mobilizations and display of determination of the peasants. It is not accidental that this is so. There are several reasons for it. The impact of these laws is being felt directly more by the owner peasants. Such owner peasants should be producers of marketable surplus so that liquidation of APMC mandis would directly affect them. This marketable surplus should be in quantities that plays an important role in their family income i.e. in their standard of life. Such areas where commercial cultivation is prevalent among middle and small peasants are the areas where productivity is high, water including for irrigation is in abundance. These factors came together glaringly in parts of North India. It is these areas of North India which were selected for Green Revolution precisely for the preponderance of owner peasants and easy availability of water. Green Revolution, which was launched with inputs from the companies of imperialist countries, led to growth of production but for quite some time has resulted in deepening crisis. The increasing outlay in Agriculture is not resulting in proportionately higher yield, thereby indebting the peasants. Water tables have receded, leading to increasing expenditure in irrigating the land. High and indiscriminate use of fertilizers and pesticides has resulted in polluting the land and water, these chemicals entering the food chain and ecosystem thereby increasing the risks of serious diseases including Cancer.

The model of Green Revolution is in serious crisis. It is most apparent in Punjab, where Green Revolution had the maximum impact. But this crisis is also quite acute in major parts of Haryana and Western UP as well as Terai regions of UP and Uttarakhand and also parts of Rajasthan where such cultivation was preponderant. It is not that such methods are not used elsewhere in India but their quantitative scale is much more in this belt. It is also so in certain belts in other states like Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Telengana, Gujarat, even parts of Madhya Pradesh, parts of coastal and western Odisha as well pockets in almost all states including Bihar, West Bengal and other states. These pockets have also seen large mobilizations against these black Acts and for MSP and attempts are being made there as well for building the movement on the pattern that has emerged in North India. While level of the movement is varying in different parts of the country but the peasant participation in all states proves all India character of the movement. This aspect needs to be developed with determined as well as creative application of the experience gained in this movement till now, and applied to the concrete conditions of every region/area.

It is in the backdrop of this crisis, expressed in shrinking income and increasing indebtedness of peasantry, rising unemployment and general insecurity facing the youth, that the Govt. has launched this attack. Anger of the Peasantry, which was any way on the brink, boiled over and is being witnessed in the movement.

Impact on all Sections of Agrarian Society

While the owner peasants are in the forefront of this struggle, the impact of these laws encompasses all sections engaged in agricultural production and commerce. The latter includes grain traders, traders in other agricultural produce and retail traders including shopkeepers. Hence, all these sections are supporting the farmers' movement. Corporate wish to fully control processed food markets which is currently valued at Rs 30,000 crores and expected to grow to Rs 2.1 lakh crores.

These black laws' impact on different sections engaged in agricultural production should be understood and explained to involve all sections in this historic movement. There is a vast section of tenant peasants though tenancy is largely hidden. There is no documentation of the tenant peasants and they work as tenants at will. Even Operation Barga in West Bengal during initial period of Left Front rule, documented only a part of tenant peasants. While there has been demand for ownership over land to the tenants who till the land, these laws threaten the very tenancy, though time period may vary from state to state and region to region depending upon the Corporate. Once Corporate take the land on contract, there is no scope of tenancy on that land and tenants will not have any right on the produce or in the payment of the contract. Already this hardship was faced by tenant peasants; though they do all the agricultural work, they are not entitled to compensation when the land is acquired. There were many struggles on that issue. Though tenancy involves sucking up of virtually all the surplus by the landowners and suppliers of inputs and purchasers of produce and tenant is left only with equivalent of his labour, sometimes even not that, it gives him employment and relative operational freedom besides raising fodder for cattle which may be raised side by side. That is why poor peasants and agricultural labourers choose tenancy over work as labourers when the situation permits and terms are not onerous. Further depression of the rates of produce at the time of harvest will make them suffer existential threat and push them deeper into debt. While there is a need to extend right to sell on MSP to these peasants as well, now there is a plan to end the very MSP and the resultant depression in the rates when they sell. These laws will end tenancy; not grant them land but free them from all relations with land, pushing them into ever-burgeoning army of unemployed. If impact of these laws is explained, tenant peasants may join the movement in larger numbers and influence of contradiction between land owner and tenant may be lessened in the struggle against onslaught of big capital.

Agricultural labourers will also suffer from operation of these black laws. The corporate takeover of the Agriculture will further reduce rural employment. Already agricultural labourers get work only for a few months in a year, most of the days they remain idle. With further increase in unemployment, there will be further reduction in the number of days they can find employment and there will be downward pressure on agricultural wages as well, with many more vying for fewer days of work. With downward pressure on the prices of agricultural produce during harvest time, even the farmers' ability to pay wages will be

reduced. Agricultural labourers will hardly be in a position to avail of these reduced prices and buy for the year on electronically managed private mandis. And the prices for the rest of the year will skyrocket as corporate hoarders of food grains will extract maximum profits. Dwindling wages and rising prices will play havoc with the lives of agricultural labourers.

Liquidation of PDS is one of the sinister impacts on the rural poor including poor peasants and agricultural labourers. With no govt. procurement, there will practically be no PDS. Govt. is taking to cash transfer to limited sections of people. All the talk of corruption in PDS is irrelevant because it is inherent in all bureaucratically executed schemes in which people and their organizations have no say. There is already large-scale corruption in making of BPL cards and cuts are already in vogue in cash transfers. Cash transfers will not be enough to neutralize the impact of the rise in prices. Besides, a large number of the poor and needy will be left out of its ambit. And to top it all, it will be a good earning opportunity for ruling party leaders who will partake portions of it along with bureaucrats.

Changes in Essential Commodities Act with its high price triggers practically rule out any govt. intervention when essential commodities go out of the reach of the poorer sections. This will affect poor sections including agricultural labourers the most.

There are existing contradictions between owner peasants and agricultural labourers which have to be overcome to make the latter see the dangers of these laws. For this farmers' organizations should make added efforts to make these sections participate in the movement. Some of them are already participating but there is a need to do much more. Social factors like caste system also play an important role in mobilization of the people because there is not only economic contradiction between owner peasants and agricultural labourers, they also belong to different caste groups. Hence, the effort to mobilize them entails a determined struggle against caste oppression in all forms including sexual exploitation of Dalit women. The present struggle, where owner peasants are struggling against the corporate and their Govt., affords better atmosphere to fight against social evils like caste oppression and oppression of women as need is felt to mobilize these sections into struggle in greater numbers. That this struggle should be coordinated with the struggle of peasantry is necessary and attempts to counter-pose them will only help the corporate and the present fascist govt., serving their interests. One should not be sacrificed for the other rather these struggles reinforce and strengthen each other. All sections must grasp that their main enemy is the fascist govt. backed by imperialists and domestic reactionaries.

Anti-Fascist Character of the Movement: Opening the space for Democratic struggles

This peasant struggle has challenged the might of the fascist rulers. Though the ruling RSS-BJP had timed this attack with the Corona outbreak and imposition of curbs in that name, peasants stomped them under their tractors and feet. The fear of fascists lay by the side as did the barricades they had put up. Trenches were filled, obstacles were

removed and vehicles put in the way were thrown by the way side. For the first time since its advent to power, specially its return to power in 2019, RSS-BJP Govt. was pushed on to the back foot by this struggle. For the first time this fascist Govt. offered to talk to the protesters. For the first time, reins of repression were restrained. This struggle has obviously opened the space for democratic struggles of different sections of the people. And this is also a worrying aspect for the fascist rulers. It is apparent from what Union Home Minister Amit Shah had told a delegation of farmers' leaders that if the Govt. were to repeal the Acts, there will be pressure to take back many other steps which the Govt. had forced on the people.

The farmers' movement has changed the template for the fascist rulers that they can ram through whatever they want and people dare not protest. This movement has also challenged the communal narrative of this fascist Govt. as the Govt. cannot use that narrative against this movement. It has forged unity across religious communities, with Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Christian peasants participating in it. If we find less presence of Muslims among the protesters it is due to two factors. One the number of Muslims among the landowning peasantry in North India is less than their proportion of the population, they being mostly artisans and labourers. Second, through successive waves of repression targeting them, the fascist govt. has been able to instill a sense of fear in some sections among them, due to which they support the struggle but hesitate to participate. However, this is being overcome. This movement has also dampened the 'nationalist' narrative in which this majoritarian fascist ruling section camouflages its sectarianism and service of corporate.

Besides, this movement has shown the fascist RSS-BJP in its true colour i.e. of serving the interests of foreign and domestic corporate. 'Nationalism' of RSS-BJP has been denuded to its core essence i.e. service to imperialism and domestic reactionaries; serving the interests of foreign corporate and their compradors- domestic corporate.

This movement has two basic characters- anti-corporate and anti-fascist. The two are interlinked. The first is embodied in the content of the struggle and second is in the conduct of struggle; the first is the aim of the movement and the second is its product. There can be no fascism in India without backing of foreign and domestic corporate.

The farmers' movement has created a situation in which people are challenging the might of the fascist rulers. Opposition sections of the ruling classes and various institutions of the state which had earlier totally caved in are also able, to an extent, to find their voice. This will help shape the coming events when the fascist rulers will not enjoy unlimited sway over political life and over the state institutions as they have had till now.

Challenges and Prospects

The movement thus far has demonstrated two things clearly. Anger among farmers against these laws and their determination to get these repealed, runs deep. It is a

movement driven by farmers and leaders are relevant only to the extent that they articulate and advance the farmers' movement. It is no ordinary struggle where partial success is targeted. Farmers clearly understand that if these laws remain, they will not. It was amply demonstrated when farmers broke down the barricades and rejected the Burari Plan of some leaders. On the other hand, the Govt. is determined not to go back on these laws. Its plan is to lure the farmers into accepting basic formats of these laws while making some changes here and there. Their offer of suspension of the operation of these laws for some time is also in the same vein, to administer this poison gradually, which the farmers have seen through and rejected. Such movements are not built at will but are products of accumulating factors propelling the people into struggle of this dimension. Large-scale repression may not be unleashed so long as the movement remains united and farmers are rallied in support of the movement. RSS-BJP will try to hang the carrot before wielding the stick. However, RSS-BJP Govt. is not easily going to take back these laws and foreign and domestic corporate will not allow them to do so. However, if the movement develops to pose a sufficiently strong challenge to the Corporate, they will be forced to come down and their Govt. will also be forced to accept demands of peasants.

This is a joint movement where forces of different hues and persuasions are participating. But before the joint effort of the organizations, it is a joint movement of the Peasantry, where farmers are united to achieve a common objective. While joint nature of this movement is vital, it involves continuous struggle against the forces which are least capable of struggle and least inclined to take it to a victorious end, looking for compromise at every turn in the movement.

From what has been the trajectory of the movement thus far, farmers know that they are in this movement for a relatively long period. Hence, the need to expand and intensify the struggle. Expansion of the movement can be both geographical i.e. to other states and regions where struggle takes a further leap. Expansion may also be sectoral i.e. involving greater involvement of other sections especially of agrarian society. That expansion is very much necessary and will strengthen the movement in a big way. This is a task which must be taken up till success is achieved.

The solidarity of different sections of people, especially working class, is very important. Working class is facing thoroughgoing attack in the form of changes in labour laws through enactment of four Labour Codes. Their struggles against these attacks will be of great help to the fighting peasantry and will pave the way for jointly confronting the fascist government.

Farmers' movement has already dealt blows at fascist rulers. Farmers are determined to prevail over foreign and domestic corporate.

Peasants United Will Not Be Defeated!

‘Love Jihad’: Pushing Muslims out of Socio-political life and Forcing Women to bow to patriarchy

Pushing ahead on its agenda of communally dividing the country which would also divert the people and facilitate selling it to Corporate while intensifying the Hindutva drive, the UP Govt. of Yogi has brought a law against “Love jihad” with the BJP RSS govts. of Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat promising to follow suit. Already several cases have been lodged in UP, prominent among them being one of a marriage which predates the law coming into existence. The couple booked in this case are both adults; the three months pregnant woman gave a categorical statement in the Court that she wanted to live with her husband’s family. She has also held that the state welfare home in which she was placed after her arrest is guilty of jeopardizing the life of the child she is carrying.

In 2014, ND published the following article on the phantom of love jihad created by the RSS to further their ‘bahu beti izzat project’. Their project amounts to, in a nutshell, a drive to restrict and regulate the right of choice of primarily upper caste women. The article addresses most of the issues being raised by the UP Govt. and by RSS to explain their redundant and regressive legislation.

NO RIGHT OF CHOICE TO WOMEN – DIKTAT OF SEMIFEUDAL INDIA

Aparna

Many changes have occurred for the young in India. Some happened slowly over the years. The rise in access to television and radio leading to spread of information, to rise of knowledge about consumer products including appliances to lighten household work. Young women and girls opting for education and careers and professions, initially as pioneers. Rising prices and the need for a double income increasing the demand for working girls for marriages. In the background, the comparative falling income from agriculture, making it necessary for some sons of a family to leave home for education and jobs. And over the past two decades the tremendous increase in jobs in IT sector and in call centres and in scope of higher education due to privatization, and the crisis in agriculture fueling seekers of such

opportunities. Girls go to schools in tremendously increasing numbers, not just to make better marriages but for careers, for higher education and jobs. The phenomenon has penetrated rural India and girls are increasingly coming to small towns and even living in large cities in hostels, in rented accommodation in groups, to acquire education with potential for jobs and also to do these jobs in bigger cities and in the metros.

Simultaneously has come an explosion in communications primarily the mobile phones and internet. This has made it very much simpler for youth to develop contacts and maintain communication overcoming several barriers that the patriarchal norms impose as also barriers of caste and religion.

Almost throughout the country, uniformly girls are doing much better than boys in education, topping all India school leaving examinations consistently with rising presence in front rankers of professional entrance examinations like in engineering and medicine and other courses. Interesting figures have been reported by Kerala (Hindu, 4th Oct.2014) Among students entering the medicine course in the State, the sex ratio has gone up from 1420 girls in 2000 to 2214 girls in 2011. ('Rising feminization among students of Kerala medical colleges' by Praveenal K., Principal of Govt. Medical College, Ernakulam). The sex ratio of medical students in Kerala is much more in favour of women than the sex ratio of the general population. This sharp rise is a recent phenomenon. Similarly, in Punjab there has been a recordable rise in the number of girl students seeking higher education as compared to boys. The figures of boys leaving the country or the state for higher education will need to be compared for any accurate conclusion in both states, but the rising trend of women studying well and going for higher education and for careers cannot be denied.

All this is also marked with changes in the expectations of the girls and young women, to their exposure to different types of people, to different cities and their increasing assertiveness about the kind of future they want, the sort of life they wish to lead and importantly, their choices in marriage. All these aspects have the potential to disrupt the patriarchal clamps on marriage with their dos and don'ts designed for maintaining the caste system.

English newspapers and magazines have been publishing surveys of youth of large and small cities, more so in the aftermath of the 16th December incident and the protests thereafter. They maintain that while there is free mixing of girls and boys in campus interactions, friendships between the two sexes, rising acceptability of live in relationships but still a majority of respondents says they would marry the partner their parents choose. In assessing this, scope must be left for the fact that very many parents now try to ascertain whether the son especially has any particular preference and then pursue the lead if there are no other very negative factors. Inter-state marriages within similar castes, inter-caste marriages between two upper castes are no longer so taboo that families would not indulge such preferences. Given all these features, the fact remains that these surveys

bring out the fact that despite the changes noted above the youth of India is not making marriages for love as a norm, and on this issue is quite conservative. This is one feature to remember regarding current marriages.

However the fact is increased interactions, increased economic independence of women and their ability to take their own decisions about their future has increased. There definitely are cases of women and men exercising their right to choose their partners, defying the social diktats including the parental ones as also those of male siblings. Their number in actual terms is small but as an example they have far reaching value, being quoted throughout the community and the district. They send out alarm signals that women and also the men have ignored the barricades built by patriarchal society including its caste and religious diktats and dared to decide for themselves.

This basically is the background to the activity of the khap panchayats on this score which has been much in evidence over the last decade. These are traditionally landlords of the upper castes in West UP, Haryana and Punjab but there are similar configurations among the upper castes in other parts of the country. They decree intra village, inter caste and intra gotra marriages as void and dictate dissolution of the same with more severe penalty to the girls. But some khaps also decree death and this is usually implemented through the family of the girl. In addition are the murders of couples and girls who choose to marry according to their own choice. These are initiated by either or both of the families involved, usually executed by the girl's family and along with khap decreed murders, were christened 'honour killings' by the patriarchal national press until, somewhat restrained by the outcry from various sections, they put the word into inverted commas.

Into this scenario in Western UP was tipped in the term love jihad by the Hindu communalists a year or so earlier to polarize on communal lines landed upper castes of the area which were already besieged with the issue of loosening of patriarchal diktats in the face of rising education and recourse to careers by women of their community and which already had functional khap formations for social issues. The actual issue of these sections was much better expressed in the parallel coinage of 'bahu, beti izzat andolan'. This phrase encapsulated the real dilemma of these patriarchal landlord upper castes on how to rein in the women of their own families.

LOVE JIHAD-RSS coinage used in 1990s in Gujarat

In 1998, the marriage of Hanif of Bardoli (Gujarat) with Varsha in Surat after a love affair of many years was used by RSS in Bardoli to launch a communal campaign against Muslims. It is another matter that reports established that six Muslim girls of the area had earlier married Hindu boys and none of these became an issue. Hanif was a businessman and flourishing, leading no doubt to much jealousy among the Hindu communalists. Hanif was jailed and the communalists took over Varsha's life issuing all sorts of statements in her name. Similar incidents occurred in Randikpur and Sanjeli. What is interesting is that objection to these marriages were raised by Hindu

communal elements in an atmosphere where they were using every conceivable issue to target the Muslims. A team of PUCL and other organizations noted among their conclusions that 10% of Sanjeli's Muslims are rich and are either shopkeepers or land owners; that there is a class based tension between this 10% and local adivasis, and that adivasi and Hindu girls of the area have eloped with Hindus also but this had never excited this frenzied sort of comment. But in the instance of Muslims there was a full-fledged theory of how they marry Hindu girls at the instance of ISI and Pakistan and convert them to Islam so that the Muslim population can increase. The Report of the Nishant and POW, 'Minorities in the storm of Communal Attack' observed that in cases where Hindu girls went with Muslim boys, when the police brought back the girls they were taken over by Hindu communal elements before being able to give their statements in courts. The Gujarat Govt. joined the hysteria, so to speak, and State Home Minister, Hiren Pandya, set up a Special Investigating Agency in the last week of July 1998 for all such marriages. All such marriages need permission from this agency. All India Joint Secretary of VHP announced in Ahmedabad in August 1998 that Durga Vahinis would familiarize the college going girls about 'Hindu traditions'. A squad would be formed by VHP to keep control on the behaviour of Hindu girls. Thus the whole point was that Hindu girls were neither being kidnapped nor abducted nor fooled but were voluntarily marrying the Muslim boys, from where arose the issue of 'teaching them' traditions. The last relevant issue is that the actual number of such marriages over years also is very small and is directly related to the two communities historically coexisting, children growing up in the same areas. Varsha and Hanif, for instance, had a long standing love affair before they took the step of marriage. In fact, when the news of their marriage in Surat provoked a communal campaign in Bardoli, Hanif's parents asked them to return and took the two to the Bardoli police.

2009- Kerala and Karnataka

In late 2009, the propaganda by Hindu communal organizations about love jihad began in Kerala and in Mangalore, a town in northern Karnataka. The Govt. of Karnataka even ordered a CID enquiry into this alleged phenomenon. In 2009, an interfaith couple eloped and married. The woman, who had converted to Islam, was restored to her parents by the police. Later she was allowed by the court to return to her husband because she appeared in court to deny any pressure to convert and to demand that she be allowed to live with her husband. In late 2009 the CID in Karnataka gave a statement that they could find no evidence of such a phenomenon though they would keep investigating (Wikipedia) The Ram Sena in Karnataka later took to dragging by the hair those Hindu girls who happened to have interfaith interactions with Muslims. In 2011 Dec. the RSS in Karnataka began propaganda that girls must be stopped from using cellphones.

In Kerala too, from 2009 there was propaganda by Hindu communal organization against a supposed love jihad by Muslim boys. The catholic

priests also started talking about their girls marrying Muslim boys; whether to deflect pressure or not is another matter. They claimed that 3500 of their girls have been so converted to Islam; the Hindutva forces spoke of 30,000 Hindu girls. In 2009, the Kerala Catholic Bishop Council actually issued an alert about such conversions. On 25th June 2014 Chief Minister Chandy issued a statement that since 2006, 2667 women had converted to Islam and not one was a forcible conversion.

Muzaffarnagar 2013- Love Jihad returns

In order to effect communal polarization especially in Western UP for electoral dividends in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP brought in Amit Shah to coordinate their campaign. Western UP is a social mix with a significant Muslim population. While the main landlords are the Jats, a middle caste but dominating the area, the Muslims are not only agricultural workers, but have diversified, work as artisans in towns or are employed in jobs in other parts of the country. Their incomes come home and result in prospering of their families in the villages. Such families purchase land, send children for higher education and altogether there is enough reason for jealousy given the fact that income from agriculture is stagnant. In this area there is a long standing composite culture which the BJP and brother Hindu communal forces have now systematically torn apart. There have been inter caste, intra gotra, intra village marriages in Western UP off and on in the past ten years at least (and sporadic cases must have occurred earlier too) leading to the activity of the Khap Panchayats in the area with their patriarchal decrees. The cases are still countable on fingertips. The violence against their own girls and the non Muslim boys who went with them, as recorded by the Verma Commission for six years up to January 2013 was as follows: cases of 'honour' killings took place in UP in Meerut, Baghpat and Muzaffarnagar apart from cases in Haryana, Delhi and other states. 560 couples filed FIRs for threat to life over 4 years sprinkled over these areas. Of the 121 persons thus killed, UP headed the list with 48 murders. Another set of figures help to establish the patriarchal antecedents of the area. The overall sex ratio in Muzaffarnagar district is 871 females to 1000 males while the average for the state of UP is 898 females for 1000 males. The child sex ratio in this area is 863 girls to 1000 boys as against the all India figure of 919 girls for 1000 boys as per the 2011 census. All in all it is quite clear that while 'honour' killings are less frequent than selective sex abortions and female infanticide, but all the methods taken together make it obvious that the *bahu beti izzat* campaign may not be as important as an urgent anti bahu beti murder campaign directed against their own community itself.

Into this milieu the BJP and other Hindu communal organizations threw the theory of 'love jihad' on the steps of the violence against Muslims that broke out following an alleged incident of eve-teasing in Kaval village in the district. The actual instances of marriages between Hindu girls and Muslim boys is very small and no Hindu communal leader has quoted any figure for this very reason, but the propaganda around any one case and more so the

looming threat of Hindu women refusing the patriarchal diktats is what the communal forces use. How small are the actual figures can firstly be gauged from the responses elicited by the all India surveys mentioned earlier. Recently Hindustan Times ran a feature on newly married Hindu Muslim couples all of whom had to run a 'jihad' to simply remain alive. And as Azam Khan brought out, there are some cases of such 'Love jihad' of Muslim men marrying Hindu women even among BJP leaders. However, the communal campaign of BJP in this district definitely resulted in the looting of 'bahu beti izzat' of Muslim women in the district with some gang raped by long standing neighbours. There have been no arrests and no hope of justice is there either, before these women.

The issue of conversions

An important issue brought out by the newspaper feature on inter religious marriages is how the laws and the state are against love marriages. How the police in Gujarat allowed Hindu communal organizations access to the Hindu girls has already been mentioned. The other feature is the Special Marriage Act 1954 which insists on a month's notice. It is thus easier to marry quickly under the various religious marriage Acts leading to the propaganda regarding 'conversions'. In Bangalore, journalists hid one such couple for one month till the period of notice expired but not every couple can have such intrepid and committed supporters. In 2012 there was a proposal in UP to remove the column on religion in the marriage registration form so that interfaith marriages are also encouraged to register. It obviously did not go through. The one month notice is a relic of the Victorian British laws allowing 'objections' to be raised against the marriage as also is the provision of notifying both sets of parents.

While BJP makes a show of not entertaining the term of 'love jihad' (reference to the meeting of its UP Council in August 2014) and Home Minister Rajnath Singh has never heard of the same (shows how deaf he is to the concerns of his partymen) the RSS propaganda continues and the ABVP is going to spearhead the campaign against this in Lucknow mainly targeting Hindu girls to 'educate' them. This is the same task which was set before the Durga Vahini by the VHP in late 1990s and dangerously targets Hindu girls. It is surprising it does not target BJP's elected representatives like Hema Malini and Dharmendra for converting to Islam in order to marry, thus violating 'Hindu traditions.' In 2014 the Akhil Bharatiya Vaishya Ekta Parishad in UP said that they would stop all use of cell phones by young girls. In the election campaign to the UP by-elections recently Aditya Nath called for converting 100 Muslim girls each time a Hindu girl marries a Muslim boy.

In the recent by elections to the Vadodara constituency in Gujarat (vacated by Modi) in September 2014, there was circulation of a pamphlet on 'love jihad' issued by the VHP. Though the pamphlets were in circulation for 4-5 days (Statesman, 12th Sept. 2014) the police ignored them. It warned the parents of Hindu girls against 'minority conspiracy' to entice their young

daughters. It described in Gujarati the 'modus operandi' of 'well dressed Muslim boys on motorbikes lurking around schools, colleges and hostel gates' to lure Hindu girls. These 'warnings' against love jihad had been printed by the VHP at Rajkot, Ahmedabad and Surat.

One comment on the issue of love jihad was (First post .com) 'Bodies of women are a more potent polarizing and organizing tool than the Ram Temple'.

Communal, Casteist and Patriarchal Contortions- Some Recent Cases

The Verma Commission had recorded that of the cases of harassment of couples recorded, 88% were in inter caste marriages. In the recent case of Badaun in UP where two Dalit sisters, both minors, were found hanging from a tree, there are two different stories. One states that they were pursued by two boys of landlord and upper caste who killed them after violating them. The other is that they were friendly with the two boys which was objected to by their parents who killed them. It is totally unlikely that the truth will be ever established though it must be well known in the village. The police initially arrested the boys but then veered towards the girl's family as the guilty while the medical examination did not establish rape. Given the pro upper caste bias of the police, and the ability of the rich to manipulate investigations as well as the fact that killings of recalcitrant girls are not the monopoly of upper castes, the only fact established is patriarchal values.

In a case in 2012 in Tamil Nadu, a girl of the backward (Vynavar) caste married a Dalit boy of the same village. The social uproar provoked by backward caste politicians so pressurized the father of the girl that he died. The girl then gave a statement to the court that she was willingly going back to her mother and she was escorted back by police. The boy was found dead on a railway track the same day, and three postmortems later the verdict remained suicide. The girl did not attend the cremation despite being invited by the boy's father. This was the fate of two consenting adults. Additionally, there are off and on many reports of killing of couples in upper caste bodies' decreed deaths in Maharashtra and other states.

In a recent case in Meerut, the Hindu communal organizations were frenzied over what they claimed was the gang rape of a Hindu girl by Muslim men including the village pradhan, her being taken to a madarsa for conversion, her abortion etc. The girl was a teacher in the madarsa. She was helped by her parents to file a case of gang-rape against some Muslim men and she gave interviews to the press confirming her statement and saying that 150 women were being held captive in the madarsa. Then some different facts emerged. The girl had been admitted to Meerut Medical College Hospital in her own name for an ectopic pregnancy (baby in the tube) and the name of the man who accompanied her was a Kaleem who was not named in the gangrape though the police arrested him as his name was in the hospital records. She left hospital the next day as the ectopic was removed but as this procedure

requires aftercare, she developed severe infection. She also had a scar on the abdomen due to the surgery. This must have made her condition obvious hence the complaint of an abortion. But the tremendous pressure on the girl to explain her condition is clear. She had been readmitted to Meerut Medical College but was discharged from there and taken away by her parents as soon as the medical facts were brought to light by the police. The case abruptly faded away from the media and from the high pitched campaign of RSS and BJP. No doubt the pressures on a gang rape victim are tremendous but the rest of the facts were not explained by her. The village in which she lives has an interfaith divide and it is not routine for a Hindu girl to seek employment in a madarsa. (Two months later the girl told the truth). In response to the propaganda of love jihad and misuse of Hindu women, the police stated that of the cases of gender violence in the district, only in 19% cases were the accused boys Muslims and anyway not all complainants were Hindu girls.

The statement of sharpshooter Tara from Ranchi that she was a victim of love jihad came as a shot in the arm for Hindu communal forces after the Meerut fiasco. She alleged she had married her husband, who had a Hindu name and Hindu (some reports said the father was a Sikh) named parents, after getting to know him locally, according to Hindu rites. Few weeks later, she alleged her husband was actually a Muslim and was forcing her and physically beating her to convert to Islam. Neighbours said the man was known only by the Hindu name and it turned out he had also worked with a BJP leader and was well known to several police officers of Jharkhand and a judge from Bihar. Much hue and cry later the husband and his mother (the father was dead) were arrested. The fact then emerged that the mother Kaushalya Devi was a Muslim (Kauser Parveen) who converted to marry the boy's father and she also took on a Hindu first name. It is even probable that she or both the parents had also given the boy an informal Muslim name. It is also possible that her interaction with her natal family may have increased after her husband's death. As for the man, one does not have to be of any specific religion to be a wife beater and guilty of domestic violence. But the love 'jihad' the sharpshooter spoke of would have to start with her father in law. Thus do the Hindutva forces lead to belittling of the love between two individuals. The victim of domestic violence may have mistakenly hoped to get more attention with this phraseology, but the facts of the mother in law's background took the steam out of the national media's coverage. The Jharkhand police said that no papers or documents have been found in which the man has used any name other than his own. The senior police officers who knew the man were called in for questioning. The husband was charged with 'terrorism' and with physical violence against the wife and sent to jail. Later the Jharkhand CM handed the case over to the CBI. Kaushalya is also in jail.

Conclusions

The essential issue at stake is the freedom of women to right to choose partners, lifestyles and careers. The last has been made easier by the

stagnation in agriculture, the rising priceline and the need of a second income in the household. Women are preferred in jobs due to more sincerity, less trend to organize and willingness to work for comparatively lesser wages. All surveys of youth show that by and large they wed by parental choice, but that tiny minority that makes its own choices has set patriarchal India afire. Thus the first issue is that women's right to choice must be asserted. Marriages face problems and breakups even in arranged marriages and it is quite possible that some love marriages do not work out. Such cases are no comment on such marriages. *Bahu beti izzat* worries, love jihad and khap panchayat decrees are all part of the response of patriarchal India to enchain women, to keep caste and faith lines 'pure'. If the Hindu Muslim marriages are seen they are between partners who grew up in the same localities, or studied together or worked in one establishment. So too for inter caste and intra-gotra marriages. The version of the RSS pamphlets of Muslim boys luring girls by going around on motorcycles is not substantiated. Regarding eve teasing and boys on motorcycles and actually now even cars as well as on foot hanging outside women's colleges and hostel gates –any survey will show that no religion has a monopoly on this particular activity. Stalking as an offence, gender teasing to be punished more severely, special punishments for acid attacks, attacks on women who spurn unwanted advances-these were discussed as crimes by the Verma Commission on the demands of women and they were directed at no particular faith but at the patriarchal values of Indian society.

Second, on the issue of love jihad, it should be remembered that the Nazis too would not let the 'aryan' women cohabit with Jews or others in order to protect the purity of the Aryan race. On 10th August 2014 the RSS announced a rakhi drive throughout UP to protect the Hindu religion. Again around mid and late 2000s, there was a hue and cry in Britain about love jihad and 50,000 conversions or so were alleged.

Indian women definitely need new democratic revolution to break the basis of patriarchal values and provide the structure to ensure progressive values and right to equality and freedom for all women. Now progressive movements must uphold the women's right to choice and demand proactive police and state support for such couples and to safeguard the right to choose. Laws should be changed to meet these needs. There must be adequate safeguards for protecting the lives of such couples. Justice must be demanded and fought for, for victims of communal sexual violence, caste based gender violence, apart from justice for all victims of caste and communal violence. And especially women of all communities must be reached to understand the issues of anti-patriarchal struggles. Women form a reservoir of backward feudal values but they are the victims of these values too and they must be reached by the progressive women's movement.

From **ND**, October 2014

The fascist offensive and present Indian Farmers' Movement : A cursory Look

Amitabha Chakrabarti

Dimitrov said working class unity is the fortress against fascism. In India for last several years we find peasantry is the main social force who is trying to resist Indian fascism.

We must understand the socioeconomic policies of these fascists and the social forces which are being worst affected.

It is true that organized working class is also attacked by these feudal comprador bureaucratic fascists of Indian subcontinent but their social base is narrow. Organized working class is involved in strategic economic sectors and if it fights back, it can paralyze the lifeline of Indian state. But, over the years trade unionism and influence of revisionist politics have severed out their militancy.

The unorganized working class forms the bulk of our working class, contrary to the European counterparts as seen during emergence of fascism. This force is flabby, politically and socioeconomically they are not integrated. Most of them are contractual, temporary and seasonal workers with lack of job security. They constitute a bulk of work force in towns and cities but not organized enough to fight back. Moreover, most of them have their rural roots intact unlike their European brothers. They have their one foot in town and the other foot in their villages. Unorganized workers have tremendous potential of getting organized and fighting back. This includes contractual workers in organized industry. The new labour codes have attacked this section mostly but still due to the abovementioned weaknesses they are yet to fight back the fascists.

The Indian peasants are mostly marginal farmers, landless. They are impoverished and indebted. In the last few decades neoliberal economics has affected them worst. The parasitic forces of rural India, the moneylenders and traders in connivance with the comprador capital and multinationals are sucking their blood. Withdrawal of MSP, three new farm bill and electricity law has sent a signal to Indian peasantry including the affluent with some amount of surplus that fascists are trying to make the whole peasantry into captive of compradors and multinationals and their rural stooges. The peasantry of India, with their great legacy since 1857, have understood the strength of their unity and now resisting the fascists onslaught against their survival. The peasants from whole of Punjab, Haryana and part of UP, Rajasthan and many other states have united to fight this fascist offensive. From their experience of last three decades of neo-liberalism they have taken lesson. They have been threatened by the new farm laws. They are apprehending loss of their land by contract farming and dictating of price of their crops by multinationals and their Indian compradors. The peasantry has encircled Delhi- centre of India's state. For the last one and half months they are occupying the NHs and other roads to Delhi, freeing toll plazas. The RSS-BJP govt. which claimed to be invincible is now trying to negotiate with the peasants.

The fascists had been confronted by students, youth, Muslim women, Dalits and secular democratic sections in preCorona phase on the issue of NRC-CAA but this time the participation and mobilization of farmers has surpassed all the previous movements. It has created rift among BJP allies, even BJP leaders are also threatened by this movement. This is for the first time the anti people BJP government at the centre has agreed to discuss the laws whose repeal the agitators are demanding. This is not happening by defeating BJP in parliamentary elections; rather by the might of fighting spirit of farmers.

Definitely there are different opportunist trends and vacillations in this movement but till date in the undaunting spirit of these farmers against farm laws, denying all threats and false propaganda against them we find a silver lining.

The steam roller of RSS BJP government has been stalled at Delhi border. The wave of farmers, their tractors, has challenged the fascists with full might. The farmers are determined to win. Fascists are trying to create rift in the movement but till date they have failed and are being forced to negotiate.

The form of movement is protracted. The demand is not revolutionary but anti neo liberal which is essentially anti fascist and has a revolutionary potential. It is the Indian farmers who are leading the struggle against most important fascist neoliberal offensive against Indian people.

Those Communists who think to concentrate to work in cities is the primary task should take lesson from this experience. Communist international has denounced their understanding in 1920s.

In point no 5 of conditions to join Communist International it has been stated that "communist activities in the rural areas in the current phase are of primary importance." (Lenin, July 1920) Moreover in the Second Congress of third international it has been mentioned that "The Communist Party arises almost everywhere as an urban party, as a party of industrial workers who for the main part live in towns. For the easiest and quickest possible victory of the working class it is necessary for the Communist Party to become not only the party of the towns but also the party of the villages. The Communist Party must develop its propaganda and its organizational activity among rural workers and the small and middle peasants. The Communist Party must work with especial care on the organization of Communist cells in the countryside." (Theses on the Role of the Communist Party in the Proletarian Revolution)

Those communist groups who take pride in announcing 'centre of gravity' of work among workers and criticize ML organizations for their activities among peasants should take lesson from the present movement as well as from the stand of Communist international.

The communist parties of India must be more serious and creative in this phase of fascist onslaught to work among peasants in the countryside to resist the fascist offensive of course not ignoring their work among the industrial workers who remain the political and ideological leader against this offensive.

Homage to Veteran Communist Revolutionary Leader, Com. K.D. Sethi

Veteran Leader of the Communist Revolutionary Movement Com. K.D. Sethi breathed his last on January 28, 2021 at his residence in Jammu. He was 93 years old and not keeping well for last few months. He is survived by his son, Achal Sethi and daughter Dr. Poonam.

Com. K.D. Sethi has been a well-known leader of the revolutionary movement in India. He was a member of the Central Committee of CPI(ML). Com. K.D. Sethi was also renowned for his role in the struggle of people of Jammu & Kashmir for their democratic aspirations including right to self-determination. He was the last surviving member of J&K Constituent Assembly which framed Constitution of the state of J&K. He was also a member of the first state assembly of J&K from Nowshera assembly constituency. He was a very good orator.

Com. K.D. Sethi had a long history of participation in the people's movement in Kashmir. Com. KD was jailed during the "Quit Kashmir Movement" during the regime of Hari Singh. Due to his differences with Sheikh Abdullah owing to his communist convictions, he left National Conference and joined CPI (then united). He was a supporter of revolutionary line and had consistently opposed revisionism and neo-revisionism including their manifestation, parliamentarianism, and individual terrorism in the communist movement.

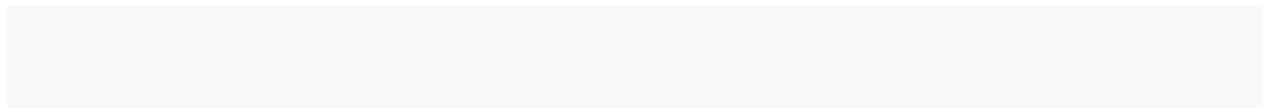
Com. K.D. Sethi formed Democratic Conference for work in J&K and edited and published Urdu newspaper 'Jadojahad'. He joined Central Committee of CPI(ML) led by Com. S.N. Singh and later became a member of the Politburo in the CPI(ML) led by Com. C.P. Reddy.

Central Committee of CPI(ML)-New Democracy pays its homage to this veteran leader of communist revolutionary movement. We rededicate ourselves to the victory of New Democratic Revolution in India.

Central Committee

CPI(ML)- New Democracy

January 30, 2021



Delhi Govt. Mocks At Its Own Support To Agitating Peasantry

In a shocking move the Delhi Govt. has chosen this time to make public its outright support to the BJP RSS Central Govt's pro corporate anti-peasant thrust under pandemic cover. It has notified one of the three farm Acts to repeal which the peasantry of India is not only struggling, lakhs of farmers are at the very borders of Delhi since 26th Nov against the sinister attack on Agriculture. Several state govts have moved or announced that they will enact laws to nullify these Central Acts, most others have done nothing overt. But the AAP Govt., in a despicably weak move, has, while the CM assures peasantry of support on one hand and his Govt. says peasants have right to fight, moved fast to reassure both Corporate and Central Govt. of its commitment to both.

The people of Delhi have seen this sort of duplicity from the Delhi Govt. in February last year too, in the AAP Govt's conduct in the Delhi riots. The move is totally condemnable and a gross show of choice being flung in the face of the fighting peasantry. It is one step to try to undermine the confidence of the fighters that the fight can't succeed.

This signal will not have the desired effect; what has been achieved is exposure of AAP's pro-corporate position. It is anyway clear that ruling classes are one on pro corporate agenda of New Economic Policies; different formations are ready to stampede people's resistance to sale of India to different extents. The issue right now is that the same Central Govt. is stampeding federal rights of state govts, milking them dry for funds. The united struggle of the peasants is specific- to push back the anti Agriculture three Acts and the EB. AAP in Punjab and other parts of the country is claiming to support the peasant struggle.

Delhi Committee of CPI(ML) New Democracy calls on Delhi Govt. to immediately withdraw its notification of one of the farm laws. It is anti farmer, anti agriculture and pro corporate.

Mrigank

Spokesperson, Delhi Committee

CPI(ML)ND

1st Dec 2020

Answering Modi Govt. and BJP's lies on Farmers' Demands: AIKMS

REPEAL The THREE FARM ACTS AND ELECTRICITY BILL 2020

Govt's Arguments for not Accepting Peasant Demands of Repealing three Farm Acts and Electricity Bill 2020 are Deceptive and Untruthful. Govt.'s claims of having addressed specific problems in the Acts are bogus. It is propagating falsehood to claim that the laws help Peasants.

Since, June 2020, the peasantry of India has been agitating for repeal of the 3 New Farm Ordinances, passed into Acts in September, and the EB 2020. Despite massive mobilizations in several states and now the indefinite dharna by several lakh peasants at the borders of Delhi, the Govt. through its ministers and experts and BJP leaders are continuously trying to belittle the peasant problems, giving out arguments based on wrong facts, complete misreading of the 3 Acts and deliberately ignoring reference to the clauses being objected to. Their arguments are diversionary and pretentious and their claim that specific aspects have been addressed is bogus. The Govt. as is its character, has also issued an online publicity document "Putting Farmers First", to show how much Modi Govt. has done for peasants. It is aimed at misguiding the country.

We attempt here to put the facts straight. We wish to inform, that the Delhi sit in has been preceded by strong mass protests in Punjab and all India protests on August 9, September 25, October 14, November 5 and others, all of which were ignored. Even Punjab govt. tried to suppress the movement with arrests, but had to retreat as the present upsurge encompasses all sections of people of Punjab. Agriculture continues to constitute an important aspect of the economic life of not only the land owning small, middle and rich peasants, but also affects large number of traders, small industry, workers, intellectuals, professionals. They feel that these laws will destroy the agricultural economic landscape of the country by handing over controls to the Big Indian and Foreign Corporate.

While it is being argued by pro Corporate lobbyists that this movement is only of rich farmers, it is motivated by unscrupulous Arhatiyas, it is sponsored by foreign funds and foreign powers, it is organized by opposition parties, this is all wrong propaganda. The middle, small and marginal peasants constitute the main force of the agitation.

Claim 1: a) The govt. reforms are aimed at increasing private capital, infrastructure and development to reach villages and farms and that will benefit peasants. Govt. has allotted Rs. 1 lakh crore for helping private investment in ware-housing and other infrastructure. This will make villages Atmnirbhar.

b) Peasantry itself had asked for reforms. Now why oppose the laws?

Ans:a) -The two Acts, FPTC and Contract Act, clearly state that their aim is to promote private traders, corporate to establish private mandis and engage peasants in contracts. Now Corporate houses will have legal right to do so.

- The Laws say that the govt. will promote private companies. Automatically the functioning of govt. mandis, supply of fertilizers, seeds, electricity, and irrigation will be getting de-promoted. Existing Govt. sector is easily bribed into dysfunction in order to serve Private and Corporate interests. This has happened to Public Sector Industries, Airlines, Insurance, Telecom Services, Health Care, Schools, Clean water supply and other civic facilities and is now happening in Electricity supply, Railways, Banking, etc.

- Govt. Welfare schemes are being largely undermined under the guise of handing over to Corporate Social Responsibility, whose performance is zero, but is never questioned. Wherever Corporate has entered any service, govt. sector suffers further losses, while the Corporate makes huge profits.

- In all sectors, once govt. facility becomes sick and nonfunctional, its assets are sold to the Corporate. This will happen to agriculture infrastructure also, viz the mandis, the irrigation facilities and FCI warehouses, amongst others. For last 20 years there have been attempts to privatize irrigation via Self Help Groups. Water from big Dams built for irrigation is being supplied to industry and cities. FCI suffers a loan of more than Rs 3 lakh crores, because over last 8 years its expenses have not been cleared by the govt. from the food subsidy budget. All its assets will get sold.

b) - The peasants had demanded improvement in mandi functioning, not 'mukti' from mandis. Now these mandis will perish.

- Peasants have clearly stated they are opposed to any direct and further penetration of corporate, MNCs, International Grain Traders in agriculture because they will raise input costs, depress crop rates, which will be decided through e-NAM and not the Govt. declared MSP (Section 5b of Contract Act) and will control the entire food chain. This will lead to higher cost of farming, higher losses, higher debts and displacement from land. Peasants will be ruined.

- The new Acts will legalize entry of Corporate and allow them to control farming process, input supplies, marketing of crops, food storage, food processing, processed food industry, etc. This will make all aspects village life Corporate Nirbhar.

Claim 2: a) Govt. has improved mandis. Farmers are being made a 'market force'.

b) These private mandis are only an alternative and there is no compulsion to sell over there. Farmers have the option to sell their crop anywhere now. They can take their crop to any state and sell it. Laws provide freedom of choice.

c) Govt. has brought parity between APMC and private mandis by proposing to allow state govts to tax private mandis, register all purchasers and contracts.

d) In several states, like Bihar, there were no APMS mandis, there the farmers have no problem.

Ans: a) - The actual improvements claimed in Mandis are only computerization and e-NAMs, which hardly bring any meaningful benefit to common peasants. The reforms sought by peasants in Mandis were for better storage, transport, infrastructure, procurement assurance for all crops at MSP, end to corruption, more democratic functioning of Mandi Samitis, better Institutional low interest credit facilities to save them from private credit of Arhatiyas, etc.

-Govt. claim of making farmers a market force cannot benefit the peasants if they are exposed to big traders and Corporate. They will only become victims of Corporate loot. Freedom of choice between a goat and a tiger is only for the tiger. APMC mandis were legally set up to protect them from big traders, who depress crop prices, knowing that the farmer cannot retain his crop and it is his compulsion to sell, as he has debts to clear and has to buy inputs for the next sowing. It was also to prevent excessive difference between farm and retail prices, as big traders tend to hoard and do black marketing.

b) Private mandis will become the only option with a vast network of middlemen in all villages. Peasants never dictate prices, as their only option is the nearest available mandi and the available buyers there. They cannot bear the burden of transporting their crop to another mandi. Can sell anywhere is being stated only to fool those who may not be aware of the problems of farming, particularly those of urban middle class.

c) These Central Acts give legal freedom to big corporate to control all aspects on agriculture. As per the govt's latest proposal, the onus of even minor checks on these companies will be fulfilled by the state govts, who will decide depending on which parties are ruling. If all powers to check are with the state, then why is there a Central Act? Obviously, the role of Central Govt. and Central Acts is to promote corporate and MNCs in agriculture, which can easily undo the checks by state as per need. Once companies gain access, it will be very difficult for the next govt. to undo it.

d) Bihar and several states have had no APMC mandis. But no state has given license to Corporate to establish their private mandis, which is the main problem with these Acts. Because Punjab has APMC, farmers there got the MSP rate of Rs 1868 per quintal. In most of UP and Bihar it is selling at Rs 900 to 1200 per quintal to traders. They then sell it to big buyers and Corporate. When Corporate Mandis will get established in all states, these prices will be depressed further.

Claim3: Govt. document, PFF claims that during Modi's rule in Gujarat it transformed lives of farmers.

Ans: During Modi period Narmada Dam water, which was meant to irrigate agricultural land, was largely diverted for industry and Sabarmati River Water Front. Every year farmers hold big protests for water supply which is cut off before the crops are ready. The real picture of Gujarat's Modi Model is revealed by several facts including the case of Missing Farmers in 2011 NSSO report which revealed that between 2001 and 2011 3.55 lakh farmers had gone missing in Gujarat and there was a massive rise of 17 lakh

agricultural labour. Studies report that this landlessness increased due to promotion of export driven corporate farming. And workers' wages were amongst the lowest in Gujarat, with urban labour getting Rs 144 against a national average of 170 and of rural labour from Rs 113 against a national average of Rs 139. Female labour was paid only Rs 69 per day.

Claim 4: a) Farmers will not lose their land. Section 15 on Contract Act clearly states that farmer will not lose land. The law can be strengthened.

b) Govt. document, PFF says the laws create 'better lives for farmers and jobs for rural youth', referring to private investments for this.

Ans: a) - The contract with the sponsor company does not include mortgaging of peasant's land. But Sec. 9 of Contract Act provides for peasants to take loans from other 'debt instruments', as separate and parallel deals. For making payment to the sponsor company for the inputs provided by it to the peasants, the latter will have to take loans and their land will be mortgaged.

- Section 14(2)(b) of Contract Act provides that where the "order is against the farmer for recovery of the amount due to the Sponsor", which may be on account of "any advance payment or cost of inputs", "such amount shall not exceed the actual cost incurred by the Sponsor". So, apart from cost of inputs or advance, the actual costs 'incurred by the Sponsor' will be recovered from the farmer! All recoveries will be made of arrears and land revenue as per Sec. 14(7) of this Act.

b) - Land of the peasants can only be saved if the govt. gives an unsecured loan which no private company will give. With no provision for that in the Contract Act, it is likely that a parallel structure of money lenders serving these companies, but formally independent of it, like rise of mahajans during East India Company, will develop. If the peasant cannot get an institutional loan, then the burden on him/her to pay for services provided by the company will force him to take recourse to borrowing from other sources and in the process have to part with their land. Though this will formally not be part of the Contract agreement, but in reality, it will be very much essential part of it. Linkage between companies and money lenders can be multifaceted.

-While creating conditions of peasants losing their land and becoming landless, Govt. says it is 'creating more avenues for income generation' and private investments will generate employment. How can there be better lives when land is lost? When companies invest in rural area, they do not create infrastructure to help farmers to earn. They take over land for real estate, industrial use, in which only handful of jobs are created while thousands lose their land and livelihood. Most land taken in the name of industries is not developed and remains idle for long.

Claim 5: a) Govt. is claiming that it will give written assurance that MSP and Govt. procurement will continue. It also claims that Modi govt. has already implemented Swaminathan Formula.

b) They also say acceding to demand for MSP will raise food costs.

c) They claim that 'farmers can fix prices for produce even before growing it'.

Ans: a) - Modi govt. has failed to implement Swaminathan formula C_2 cost + 50%. C_2 cost is total cost of cultivation (including full labour cost, cost of depreciation of equipment, land rent, interest). Modi govt. itself claimed that in 2017 and 2018 the MSP declared was $A_2 + FL + 50\%$. For many crops the MSP declared was even less than this. A_2 cost is payments made by the peasant and Family Labour of 8 days. Modi govt. gave an affidavit in Supreme Court that it cannot pay $C_2+50\%$ because food cost will rise.

- Peasantry's demand is to increase MSP at $C_2+50\%$ for all crops and ensure that all peasants get the MSP rate for their crops. Presently govt. declares MSP for only 23 crops, only few peasants get its benefit as implementation is only in some areas and is tardy.

- Govt. spokespersons and experts are claiming that the country has excessive food stock, more than 2.5 times than what is required. There is no space to store food. It cannot buy so much wheat, paddy, pulses, etc. Obviously, the govt. does not want to buy and its claim of continuing MSP and procurement is a complete hoax.

- Govt.'s lie is further nailed by its own document, PFF which says 'ensure proper prices for produce'. It does not even ensure MSP is given.

b) Govt. is trying to deny MSP at $C_2+50\%$ in the name of keeping food prices low for the poor people. Giving $C_2+50\%$ as MSP will not make food costly if input costs are decreased proportionally. This will afford savings for farmers and agriculture will become sustainable. But govt. wants to allow corporate to sell costly inputs and keep the food costs low by depriving peasants of remunerative MSP. Thus, at both ends the peasant is squeezed and corporate profit is secured. The Govt.'s this logic of not giving MSP is to pit workers against peasants and serve the interest of corporate. They will reap the benefit of selling inputs to peasants at high cost as well as buy cheap crops which keep both industrial inputs and wages cost low.

c) Monopsony i.e. one buyer and many sellers cannot create condition for peasants to bargain and fix prices. To say that the peasant can dictate at the time of the Contract is absurd, because the Companies always have a better idea of prices and they fix what is profitable to them. Moreover, at the time of purchase, there are many provisions for the company to deny the price fixed in the contract.

Claim 6: Govt. is increasing farm income and it will double by 2022. Input costs have been decreased by this govt.

Ans: Diesel price has been increased tremendously by Modi govt., even though international prices of crude oil have fallen from \$ 110 per barrel in 2014 to \$ 40-50 per barrel now. Today total tax on diesel and petrol is around 50 rupees, which is about 65% of the price of fuel. Ready to sell petrol in India was Rs 24.62 while diesel was Rs 26.02 in May end this year. The tax includes central excise duty of Rs 32.98 on petrol which was only Rs 9.20 in November 2014 and Rs 31.83 on diesel which was only Rs 3.46 in November 2014. Fuel prices in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Srilanka are cheaper than in India.

Diesel affects tilling, irrigating, harvesting and transports costs. Though there is little variation in increase in different fertilizer prices, seeds, insecticides and farm equipment are sold by companies at very high costs. It is not regulated by the govt. Every year the prices are raised and peasants have to take loans to pay for these.

Claim: 7: The old system of APMC was brought in when there was food shortage. Now we are food surplus and we need to change and move ahead.

Ans: Food surplus is a big lie. Every year India is falling in the list of world hunger index. This year it is 94 out of 107 countries, which is below Srilanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan. More than 68% of deaths in under-five children in India are due to malnutrition (Lancet). The most recent National Family Health Survey released two days back shows that since 2015-16, percentage of under-five children who are stunted remains at 36%, showing no improvement at all. Stunting in under-fives is almost entirely due to poor nutrition and reflects status of food availability in society. There is also no improvement in Infant Mortality Rate during these 5 years, which also reflects status of nutrition and health care.

Claim 8: a) The new system is revolutionary as it does away with middlemen who exploited farmers, charged commission to raise prices. Fragmented structure of markets also led to high cost for consumers and depressed prices received by farmers.

b) FPOs, Farmer Producer Organizations are a revolution as they empower the farmers.

Ans: a) Farmers' complaint was against high interest private usurious loans. Solution was cheap inputs and cheap loans. The govt. has not done that. It is tricking the people by saying middlemen's commission charges raised food prices. The difference between what a farmer gets and what the consumer buys is at times in multiples and is mainly due to high transport costs, illegal taxes extracted by the officials and due to hoarding and black marketing. Commission charges are only a maximum of 8.5%, which is relatively nothing. Farmers always receive very low prices when the market is monopolized by big buyers, even when there is shortage in the market. High cost to consumers too is driven by monopoly control by companies.

b) Farmer Producer Organizations, FPOs were made to empower farmers, but this can happen only if they function as farmers cooperatives with govt. support. Section 10 of the Contract Acts lists FPOs and Agriculture Cooperative Societies to function as "aggregator and farm service provider". That is a middlemen or bichauliya for companies to aggregate crops; to supply inputs and services (Section 2, Contract Act); to operate private mandis; to determine "quality, grade and standards for pesticide residue, food 16 safety standards, good farming practices and labour and social development standards" and certify the (crop assayer - Section 4 Contract Act); and Section 5 of the FPTC Act provides for FPOs, to own and operate the private mandis and to decide rules and guidelines for fair trade practices, decide mandi charges, etc. They will become middlemen of the corporate to exploit farmers, with no Govt. control.

Claim 9: In the Contract Act if market prices go up, farmer can sell outside the contract. If market prices fall the sponsor company will have to give the contracted rate. Central Govt.'s document, PFF claims 'contractors cannot end agreement without full payment'.

Ans: Both claims are total lies and baseless. Sections 4 and 6 of Contract Act clearly state that at the time of purchase quality and rate of crop will be assessed by an 'assayer' who can be notified when the contract is signed or appointed later. Obviously, companies will have a larger say in such appointment. It will be his job to assess and settle the payment to be made and will not be the 'full payment' as per the rate in the contract.

Claim 10: Govt. document, PFF claims that 'buyers must pay on time or face legal action'.

Ans:- This also is wrong. Section 6(3) of the Contract Act 17 allows taking the crop by only by issuing the receipt slip, while the mode and manner of payment can be decided by the state govt. It also grants 30 days' time for payments for seed production. FPTC allows buyer to delay the payment by 3 days after taking the crop and issuing a receipt. It also allows delay in payment till such time as the FPO or Agri Coop receives payment from the person he further sells the crop to. Section 4 (3) states that "Central Government may prescribe a different procedure of payment by farmer producer organization or agriculture co-operative society, by whatever name called, linked with the receipt of payment from the buyers". We know how Sugar Mills delay payments for years.

Claim 11: Govt. document, PFF that 'Farmer can end agreement in any time'

Ans: This claim is a blatant lie and the law is clear. The peasant is bound by the contract terms and will be prosecuted under the Act. Moreover, when the first step in the implementation of the agreement is that the farmer pays the company for inputs, how can he end it?

Claim 12: These Contracts are only an alternative and if the farmers choose, they can refuse to enter a contract.

Ans:- The farmers are and will be lured into these contracts and will learn about them only when they suffer losses. Entire experience of contract farming with some commercial crops like flowers, oranges, potatoes, tomatoes, eucalyptus plantations, etc. in Punjab, Gujarat, Karnataka, UP and other states has been of some initial gains to farmers. Invariably this has led to growth in contracts and invariably farmers have suffered heavily later and many have lost their land. This happened on a big scale in Punjab. In Gujarat, 9 farmers were sued for Rs 1 crore rupees, for using the FC-5 potato seed, without permission from Pepsico. Secondly, the govt. has been claiming all along that these Acts are creating a new system for benefit of farmers. Question arises that while the old inadequate system which failed the farmers will perish, and the new system 'may not be opted for by the farmer', then what new system/ opportunity/ have these laws given the farmer?

Claim 13: Exports will help farmers. They will become part of value chains.

Ans: Exports will help traders and companies. Tied to Giant value chains and exporters, it is these companies who will benefit from cheap and assured purchase from the farmer who will be contracted to sell. The farmer will neither sell directly to the consumer, nor will he/she export. The companies will do that. Moreover, freedom to export and import given to these 19 companies means they will source cheapest food from international markets and refuse to buy Indian farmers' produce, thus affecting production here and jeopardizing food production and security of the country. The Govt. gives slogan of AtmaNirbharta of farmers will increase, actually meaning thereby that their dependence on the Govt. support will end. Design is to make Agriculture, Agro Processing and Marketing completely Corporate Nirbhar.

Claim 14: These laws will 'see India's agriculture and food processing industry being reformed'. 'Private investments will pour in across entire cold chain, providing efficient and cheaper resource supply, reducing losses and ensuring better prices for farmers'.

Ans:- While it is correctly said that these laws have been made for agro processing industry to grow and for better private investments, this is precisely the fear of farmers. Although the Govt. says it is to provide more opportunities to farmers, page 16 of the Govt. document, PFF, confesses who these reforms are meant for :

- 'Just imagine the kind of new avenues that are going to open up for agri business with these reforms'. The private investor giants will invest to make profit, not to give better prices to peasants.

- The demand of farmers and rural youth is that govt. should provide for cost-based technology and inputs directly to the peasants or through the Cooperative sector. In Punjab there is a big demand that since every peasant has to own a tractor, other machinery and pumps, these should be supplied by the Govt., to bring down input costs, i.e. providing efficient and cheaper resources. If companies provide resources, they will do so at very high cost, which will ruin the farmers.

- Rural transformation does require among other things development of Food Processing Industry. The Farmers demand is that the govt. must provide its infrastructure and structure for marketing and allow peasants to earn from food processing. Only then can it improve farmers' income, not by asking Corporate to invest.

Claim15: Govt. has removed food items from the Essential Commodities Act to make farmers benefit from high prices.

Ans:- Food is the most Essential Commodity for survival. Unchecked, traders and companies indulge in unscrupulous hoarding and black marketing, raising cost of food and leading to starvation and hunger deaths. During last two decades India has witnessed large number of hunger deaths. Some facts on food insufficiency have been noted above.

- Having removed food grains from list of Essential Commodities, hoarding, black marketing and other unfair trade practices will rise. It will benefit only agro processing companies and big traders. How PM Modi feels farmers will benefit from this immoral,

anti-people change is not clear. This will harm both the farmer and the consumer and help only the Corporate and MNC food giants.

- The changes in EC Act allow for 50% hike in annual dry food (cereals, pulses) prices and 100% hike in vegetables and fruits. This is the new written law now.

- The EC Act also raises doubts about continuation of the Targeted PDS rules, for which it states 'for the time being in force'. Winding up of PDS will force more than 75 crore beneficiaries to buy from open market controlled by the Corporate.

- This logic of the Govt. is again to pit farmers against workers. While Food costs will tend to rise high, farmers will not benefit as they will be bound by contracts and Corporate control over mandis.

Claim 16: Modi govt. has done a lot for farmers in terms of PMKISAN, PMFBY, rural credit growth, pension schemes, loan waivers, Mnrega funds, etc.

Ans: Each scheme of the Govt. has been planned only under pressure of farmers' movement. Each has been saddled with large propaganda, poor performance and large-scale corruption. The fact is that the farmers have still become the most powerless citizens in India. They are on the streets today to save their land and retention of some old privileges in law, which are going to be undermined by these new 3 Farm Laws and EB 2020. The govt. must withdraw them. Only then can there be any dialogue on what changes to make which will benefit the farmers.

All India Kisan Mazdoor Sabha appeals to you to come out and support the peasants in their struggle against the Corporate and Govt.

**Central Executive Committee,
All India Kisan Mazdoor Sabha (AIKMS)**

28.12.2020