

# Liberation

MARCH 2021

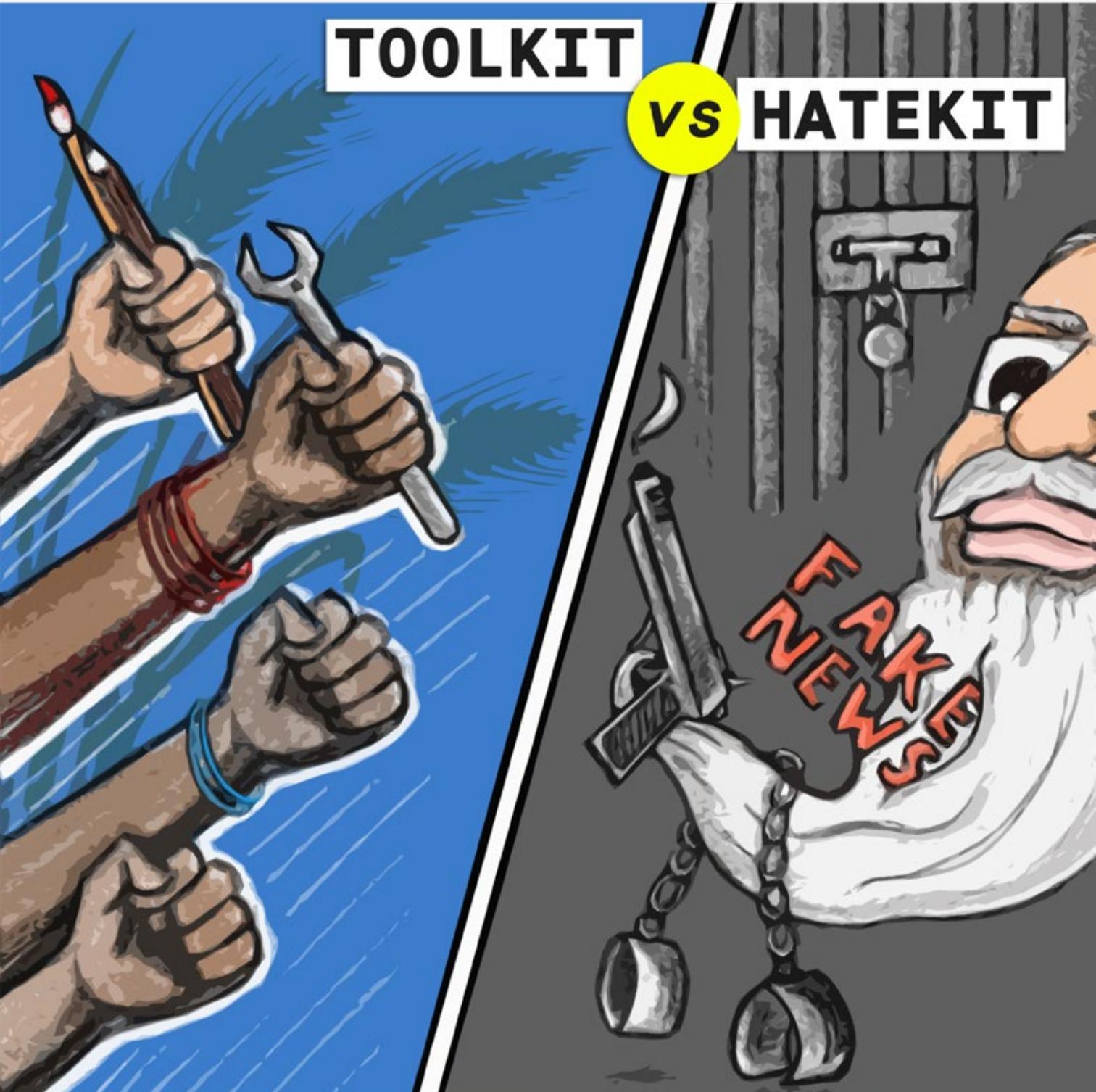
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**TOOLKIT**

**VS**

**HATEKIT**



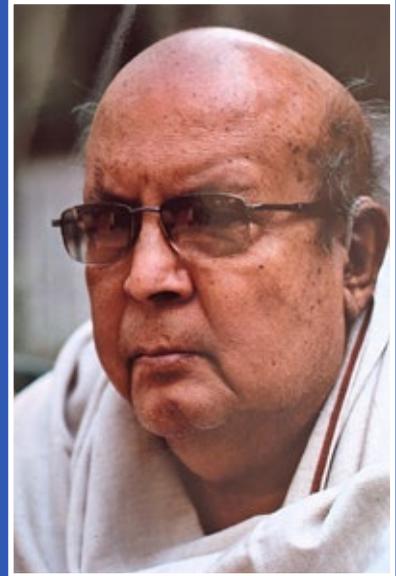
# TRIBUTE

## Professor DN Jha

Professor DN Jha passed away on February 4, 2021. He was a fearless colossus of a historian, who refused to be quiet on historical facts (such as evidence of beef-eating in the Vedas) even in the face of death threats by Hindu supremacists.

In an introduction to his book *The Myth of the Holy Cow*, he wrote that an Indian publisher developed cold feet on the eve of publication. “Shortly afterwards, I began to get threats from unidentified callers asking me not to go ahead with the publication. Undeterred by all this Matrix Books, a new enterprising publishing house based in Delhi, mustered enough courage to publish the book promptly in the first week of August 2001. But some right-wing politicians and groups of religious fanatics, without reading a single page, termed it ‘blasphemous’, demanded my arrest and succeeded in obtaining a court order restraining the circulation of the book, and a self-appointed custodian of ‘Hinduism’ even sentenced me to death. The book was therefore published abroad by Verso (London).”

In Dr Jha, India has lost a public intellectual with the mettle to fight the fascists who are assaulting free speech and scholarship today. But his work is still with us, and will continue to shine the light of reason for us all.



## Justice PB Sawant

Retired Supreme Court judge, Justice PB Sawant passed away at the age of 91 on 16 February 2021. At a time when the judiciary in India, especially the Supreme Court, is passing through a crisis of credibility, Justice Sawant’s legacy must be cherished even more. Inspired by Ambedkar and Phule, Justice Sawant was hailed as the “Satyashodhak judge”. He was an advisor to the Peasant and Workers Party (PWP) of Maharashtra and closely associated with the peasant movement in the state. He was among those who, as part of the Elgar Parishad, convened the gathering at Bhima Koregaon in 2017 which has since become the pretext for the arrest and incarceration of a host of human rights defenders. Justice PB Sawant will be sorely missed at this crucial juncture for India’s democracy.



# Liberation

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## Defeat the Modi Regime's War on Farmers and Democracy



**T**he farmers' movement in India for the repeal of the disastrous farm laws of the Modi government has now entered the fourth month.

In these three months the movement has demonstrated limitless creative energy, courage, imagination and resilience. The regime had tried to nip the movement in the bud by blocking the farmers' entry into Delhi, but the farmers fought back by occupying the borders and setting up huge protest sites. By stopping farmers from pitching their tent on Delhi's Ramlila Maidan, the Modi government made sure we got four protest sites surrounding the capital.

The protests reached a pinnacle on the Republic Day, with Delhi denizens lining up on two sides of roads to applaud the protesting farmers holding their unforgettable tractor parade. But the regime and its lapdog media reduced the parade to the stray incident of a few people hoisting the Sikh religious flag on an empty pole in the Lal Qila ramparts. With massive media blitzkrieg discrediting the movement as anti-national anarchy and conspiracy, the regime unleashed its trademark weapons of fabricated charges under draconian laws and the tango of police repression and orchestrated attacks by organised

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thugs. For a few hours it looked like the regime had managed to overpower the unprecedented upsurge of India's farmers.

The farmers movement overcame that juncture of crisis with remarkable resilience. It has now come back stronger with wider and deeper support across North India and louder resonance than before in other parts of India. The rise of Rakesh Tikait as a powerful face of the movement and the massive participation in Kisan Mahapanchayats in Western UP, Haryana and Rajasthan have once again put the government on the backfoot. The unity and strength of the farmers has once again blocked the option of crushing the movement through sheer repression. To counter the emotional impact of Tikait's tears Modi has gone back to shedding crocodile tears for small farmers and spinning a deceptive narrative about the 'harmlessness of the farm laws'.

Modi devoted his long speeches in both chambers of Parliament to this mission. He claimed that MSP and APMCs would continue as before, the laws are only empowering farmers with additional options regarding the sale of their crops. In Rajya Sabha, he targeted farmer leaders and others supporting the farmers' movement as 'andolanjeevi' (surviving on struggles) and 'parjeevi' (parasites). Obviously, he considers struggles as trouble, and organisers and leaders of struggles as troublemakers. This is just another way of presenting his case for making India's democracy 'opposition-free', or turning democracy into dictatorship by killing dissent. In Lok Sabha, he called the farmers'

movement sacred but chastised it for raising 'impure' demands like release of political prisoners.

Clearly, the regime does not want farmers to talk about non-

**The farmers' victory will be the victory of all Indians who are fighting for their rights against corporate aggression and fascist offensive.**

farm issues or non-farmer citizens to talk about farmers. In other words, the idea is to isolate the farmers and intimidate others who are supporting the farmers. This strategy is already being pursued to the hilt. The Modi government's ridiculous response to the tweets by Rihanna and Greta Thunberg and the arrest of climate change activist Disha Ravi in connection with the so-called Thunberg Toolkit Case are just two terrible examples of this strategy at work. By arresting Disha Ravi, the government is probably trying to kill several birds with one stone. It is a warning to India's own environmental movement, against making common cause with the farmers and against challenging corporate interests.

We must remember that the new labour codes, the farm laws and the subversion of environmental safeguards are all of a piece, they constitute the government's latest legal package to promote corporate interests at the cost of India's workers, farmers and environment. And looking at the way the Delhi Police violated all norms to arrest an activist from Bengaluru to put her in a Delhi prison, we can clearly say the central government is making it a habit to override all constitutional restrictions and federal norms. The Disha Ravi arrest is intended to be a message for all concerned that the Modi government is ready to go to any length in its war on India's farmers and India's Constitution.

For all of us supporting India's farmers and defending the constitutional foundations of rule of law in a secular democratic republic, the challenge is to defeat the Modi government's diabolical strategy. If the government is trying to weaken the solidarity for farmers, the response must be to build more active solidarity. If the government is trying to bombard small farmers with fraudulent propaganda about the farm laws, our job is to take the message of the movement to all sections of small and marginal farmers and agricultural labourers. If the government is hoping to project the movement as an expression of Jat power to alienate other social groups, our job is to bring the broader social composition of the movement to the fore. The farmers' victory will be the victory of all Indians who are fighting for their rights against corporate aggression and fascist offensive. □

# Budget 2021:

## Promotes Company Raj and Betrays the Demands of Economic Revival and People's Survival



The first post-Covid budget of the Modi government makes no attempt to arrest and reverse the dangerous down slide of the economy, and provide immediate relief to the most affected sections of people who have lost jobs and suffered major erosion in income and livelihood. Instead, the budget follows the direction of transferring the burden of the crisis to the people while providing India's big corporations with increasing opportunities for wealth accumulation.

The economy needs increased public investment and expenditure, but the budget has focused on wholesale disinvestment and privatisation.

The budget needed to focus on job creation and direct transfer of income and purchasing power to the common people. Such a focus is conspicuously missing.

India's top 100 billionaires saw an enormous increase in their wealth (nearly 13 lakh crore rupees) during the pandemic and lockdown. The budget makes no attempt to tap into this wealth by way of measures like wealth tax or transaction tax.

Instead of reforming India's revenue policy by ensuring increased revenue collection from the super rich and granting some relief to the middle class through reduction in GST and income tax relief, the budget continues to follow an extremely regressive revenue policy.

The longstanding farmers' demand for legal guarantee of fair MSP for all crops has once again been denied by the government. Indebtedness is a pressing problem for India's small farmers and Microfinance loanees. The need for a universal waiver of all

small loans is being acutely felt across the country and the budget has betrayed this key demand

### Job Crisis

- MNREGA is a lifeline for the millions of migrant workers who returned to their villages during the pandemic lockdown. Budget 2021-22 allocates Rs 73,000 crore for MGNREGA. This amount is Rs 38,500 crore less than, and 34.52 per cent below the Revised Estimate of Rs 111,500 crore for 2020-21. Clearly the allocation is inadequate and cannot address the demand for rural jobs.
- The Budget did not introduce any urban jobs scheme on the lines of MNREGA as advised by many experts.
- The Ministry of Labour

and Employment has been allocated Rs 13,306.5 crore, Rs 413 crore less than the revised estimate for 2020-21. Of this, the allocation for existing social security schemes for workers is down 3.4% to Rs 11,104 crore.

- The MSME (micro, small and medium enterprises) sector that employs nearly 40% of the country's informal workers, was worst hit by the lockdown with many small units going bankrupt. India Spend found that "While the allocation for the MSME ministry in 2021-22 doubled from the current financial year's budget estimate of Rs 7,572 crore to Rs 15,700 crore, 64% of the allocation is for the Guarantee Emergency Credit Line (GECL) facility, a scheme for providing fully guaranteed and collateral-free credit to MSMEs, business enterprises, individual entrepreneurs and Micro Units Development and Refinance Agencies (MUDRA) borrowers."
- No allocation for social security for informal and unorganised workers.

## Agriculture: Farmers' Budget?

In the midst of a raging farmers' movement the 2021 Budget claimed it was a "kisan budget" (farmers' budget). Is this true?

- Overall, the budget for agriculture and allied sectors was cut to Rs 1.48 trillion in 2021-22 (budget estimates) from Rs 1.55 trillion in 2020-21.
- PM-Kisan spending has fallen by Rs 10,000 crore -

from Rs 75,000 crore to Rs 65,000 crore

- There are two schemes meant to ensure MSP: MIS-PSS (market intervention scheme and price support scheme) and PM-AASHA scheme. On both of these only Rs 1,900 crore have been allotted (Rs 1,500 crore for MIS-PSS and Rs 400 crore for PM-AASHA).
- Agriculture infrastructure fund used for APMCs augmentation has been allotted only Rs. 900 crore.
- Out of a budget of Rs 34 lakh crore, a mere Rs 1.5 lakh crore was allotted to farmers. This is 4.4% of budget. Percentage wise is even lesser than the last budget (around 5%), and even in absolute terms it is marginally lesser.
- The Budget announced an Agri Cess of Rs 30,000 crore. A CAG report shows Rs 94,000 crore worth of education cess went unused. 90% of Nirbhaya funds cess collected remained unused according to government data. If the Government did not keep its promise in education and women's safety, why will it do so in agriculture infrastructure? As it is, Agriculture Research and Development spending is just around 0.3% of Agricultural GDP in India (one of the lowest in the world!). Moreover, this number has declined from 0.31% in 2011-12 to 0.24% today.

## Healthcare

- The Budget 2021-22 fudged accounting to inflate the health budget on paper.

- The finance minister claimed an increase of 137% over the 2020-21 health budget. But this figure was derived by adding Water and Sanitation to the health budget (unlike in previous budgets). It is also derived by adding a one-time expenditure of Rs 35,000 crore on vaccines. Also, the finance commission grants to states are added to pad up the health budget. The actual expenditure on Department of Health and Family Welfare has risen from Rs 62,000 crore to just Rs 71,000 crore.
- The 2021 Economic Survey showed that an increase in public health expenditure from the current levels in India to 3% of the GDP can reduce out-of-pocket expenses (OoPE) from 60% currently to about 30%. The Economic Survey therefore makes a case for increasing public spending on health from 1% to 2.5-3% of GDP, as the National Health Policy (NHP) 2017 states. But the Budget does not in fact deliver on this recommendation.
- Despite facing the biggest health crisis in recent history, the actual government spending on health has increased by only 10%. For 2021-22, India's health ministry has been allotted Rs 73,931.77 crore (\$10.12 billion). This is up 10.16% from the budget estimate for 2020-21, but down 10.84% from the revised estimate for the current financial year.
- Spending on nutrition-related schemes fell from around Rs 28,000 crores to Rs 20,000 crores. □

# Modi's Rajya Sabha Speech: A Rattled Regime Resorts to Lies and Intimidation



DIPANKAR BHATTACHARYA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 8 February address from the Rajya Sabha platform is a classic textbook example of fascist propaganda. The occasion was the PM's reply to the debate on the motion of thanks on the President's inaugural budget session speech. The President's customary inaugural address was of course all about congratulating the government for all its claimed successes. The PM's reply to the debate is however meant to respond to the points raised by MPs in the course of the debate, but Modi's speech evaded all the points of debate, repeated the government's claims and rubbished all opposition, saying the country would appreciate his steps when it celebrates the centenary of freedom in 2047! Today's protests are all misled, and people who are opposing today will appreciate in future, only Modi knows what is best for India - the characteristic defence of a despot who loves to project himself as a benevolent patriarch.

Modi devoted a lot of time in his speech trying to justify his disastrous farm laws as being beneficial for small and marginal farmers. It is indisputable that average land holding is declining and the number and proportion of small and marginal farmers is steadily on the increase. The point is successive governments have abandoned

the agenda of progressive land reforms and cooperative farming to assist small and marginal farmers. Growing corporate control over agriculture and the entire economy, which is the essence of the three farm laws, will in no way benefit these small farmers by either boosting their income within agriculture or reducing the load on agriculture by absorbing a section of agriculture-dependent population in manufacturing or service sector.

While the PM shed crocodile tears for small farmers in his speech, his government has reduced budgetary allocation on agriculture and allied heads. Even the allocation for the much trumpeted Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN), which only transfers Rs 6,000 in three instalments to small land-owning farmers who have land records in their own names, has been slashed by Rs 10,000 crore in this year's budget. Landless peasants, small farmers cultivating their family-held land or tenant cultivators operating on leased-in plots are all denied even this paltry assistance doled out in the name of kisan samman. Prime Minister ridiculed the question of loan waiver as 'election agenda' and not 'farmer agenda'. He also lamented that small farmers did not get bank loans. If small farmers are not getting loans that only exposes the government's much professed concern for small farmers.

The problem of indebtedness and the concomitant coercion

for loan repayment has been the biggest factor driving hundreds of thousands of farmers to suicides in India. The demand for loan waiver has emerged in this tragic situation. Only a cruel despot can ridicule a life-saving demand as an 'election agenda'. And if loan waiver is an election agenda, PM-KISAN is even more so. In poll-bound West Bengal, Modi linked it explicitly with the BJP coming to power in the state, much the same way his party had predicated the issue of Covid19 vaccination in Bihar on its poll victory. The farmers' movement never demanded a token monthly assistance of 500 rupees, its core demand has been fixation and guarantee of a fair MSP as recommended by the Swaminathan Commission.

PM's empty assurance 'MSP tha, hai aur rahega' (MSP was there and will be there) sounded only as convincing as his statement after the India-China LAC clash, 'na koi ghusa tha, na ghusa hua hai' (there has been no intrusion into our territory). What the farmers demand is a legal guarantee for all farmers to be able to sell their crops at fair MSP. The government knows that farmers in most States, especially small farmers in whose name Modi is trying to push his disastrous farm laws, are subjected to distress sale. The prevailing market price in most cases is way below the MSP declared by the government, and by pitting the small and deprived farmers against the beneficiaries of the MSP and APMC framework, the government is actually trying to render the MSP-APMC framework increasingly redundant. This is just yet another area of the government withdrawing from its responsibilities and sacrificing the interests of the common people at the altar of corporate profit and power.

The most diabolical point in Modi's Rajya Sabha address has of course been the demonisation of dissent, the characterisation of protesters as 'parasites' and 'conspirators', the instigation of a witch-hunt against democratic struggles by portraying the battle for justice and democracy as a conspiracy driven by 'foreign destructive ideology'. These are words of a rattled regime which has failed to bamboozle

the farmers with its laws, whose concerted propaganda against the farmers' movement has failed to hoodwink the common people, and whose fear of the farmers and the growing democratic solidarity around the farmers' movement has been graphically exposed before the global gaze. A regime which seeks to shelter itself by erecting concrete barriers and barbed-wire fences, by digging

up roads or studding them with nails, by deploying a whole battery of ministers, filmstars, cricketers and other celebrities to face just a couple of tweets by internationally acclaimed singers and activists, is a regime living in fear. It is trying to transfer its crisis and fear to the farmers and the wider public. We, the people of India, must tell the rattled regime that it has lost the plot. □

## Pampering Corporates At The Cost of Farmers and Workers

An Oxfam report titled the 'Inequality Virus Report' found that big corporations flourished even during the pandemic, even as workers' incomes plummeted and jobs disappeared. Yet, the Government continues to waive taxes and loans for these same moneybags, and then claims to have no funds for education, agriculture, health, nutrition, and social security.

Here are the facts about corporate profiteering during the pandemic:

- It would take an unskilled worker 10,000 years to make what Ambani made in an hour during the pandemic and three years to make what Ambani made in a second.
- Mukesh Ambani made 90 crore per hour during the pandemic at a time when around 24% of the people in the country have been earning under Rs. 3,000 per month during the lockdown.
- The wealth of Indian billionaires like Kumar Manglam Birla, Uday Kotak, Gautam Adani, Azim Premji, Sunil Mittal, Shiv Nadar, Laxmi Mittal, Cyrus Poonawalla, and Radhakrishan Damani increased by 35% during the lockdown.
- Those earning less than Rs.20,000 a month saw their incomes drop to 37% of their pre-pandemic income. Those earning more than Rs.60,000 a month saw a 10% drop in their incomes. 1.7 lakh people lost their jobs every hour in April 2020.

In this backdrop, take a look at budgetary allocations in the last couple of years for essentials like food and farmers.

**Nutrition vs NPA:** Budget 2020-21 allocated around

Rs 35,600 crore for all nutrition-related schemes. Contrast this with the fact that Non-Performing Assets (NPAs – i.e defaulting bank loans) caused by a single CEO Anil Ambani alone, amounts to Rs 49,000 crore! Anil Ambani alone has looted almost 1.5 times the 2020-21 budgetary allocation for nutrition in one of the most impoverished nations in the world.

**Farmers MSP vs Corporate Tax Cuts:** The additional cost for providing MSP for all crops would be from 1 to 1.5 lakh crores annually (Harsh Damodaran, 'Explained: The cost of guaranteed minimum support price', Indian Express. The government says it does not have this kind of money. But the government gave a "historic" tax cut of 1.44 lakh crores in 2019-20 which mainly benefited the top 0.9% of corporations! If the Government were to stop foregoing revenues from corporate taxes, it would have more than enough to fund MSP. Are the top 0.9% corporates (several of them cronies of the PM) more important than 14 crore farmers of the country?

The "historic" tax cut was supposed to revive the economy, according to PM Modi, who said it would attract investors from abroad and generate jobs. That has clearly not happened. Yet, the government continues with the same policy.

**Bad Loans (NPA):** Public Sector Banks (PSBs) wrote off bad loans worth Rs 6,83,388 crore in the last six years of Modi rule, a massive rise from Rs 32,109 crore incurred in the UPA period from 2008 to 2014. In 2016, an India Spend analysis found that if the unpaid loans made by India's public-sector banks were recovered, they would be enough to pay for India's 2015 spending on defence, education, highways, and health!

**Cess Unspent:** According to CAG report 94,000 crores education cess is kept unused with the government. This is enough to fund higher education for 3 years. Moreover, government has cut education funding by Rs 6,000 crores in the latest 2021-22 budget.

# In Modi Regime: Protest Toolkit Is Sedition, But Hate Toolkit Is Not



**T**he arrest of Disha Ravi, a 21-year-old activist working for environmental and social justice, is evidence that the Modi regime has all but thrown away democratic pretences and has openly embraced authoritarianism. Disha and other young women are the victims of a Delhi Police witch-hunt because they sought to mobilise domestic and international opinion in favour of India's farmers protesting Modi's three pro-corporate farm laws.

The farmers movements – as one of the world's largest mass movements - gathered much international support. The pretext for the Delhi Police crackdown is a Google document tweeted out by 18-year-old Swedish climate change activist Greta Thunberg. The document in question is a "toolkit" – a very common tool of protests all over the world, explaining the key issues, and suggesting ways in which the global community can support the movement. Simply put: protesting is not a crime, and WhatsApp groups and documents which are tools of organising

campaigns, are not crimes. Any regime which equates organising protests with sedition, is not a democracy but a dictatorship.

In the manner of its arrest of Disha Ravi, the Delhi Police violated every rule intended to protect the constitutional rights of citizens. Men in plainclothes took Disha from her home in Bangalore, ostensibly for questioning, and then brought her to Delhi and produced her before a magistrate without informing her family or her lawyers. With no lawyer present to represent her, the magistrate abdicated his duties, failed to provide state-appointed counsel, and instead sent her to five days of police custody.

Not only is Disha Ravi's arrest unconstitutional and shameful – it is unconstitutional and shameful for the Delhi Police to file an FIR based on the toolkit. If constitutional safeguards like the Courts do their job, the FIR should be quashed and Disha Ravi, released with apologies.

What needs to be acknowledged and curbed by the same Courts is the Modi regime totalitarian toolkit, which it uses over and over again to curb dissent and people's movements. In the JNU students' movement, the Bhima Koregaon case, the anti-CAA protests, and now the farmers' movement, the Modi regime has deployed the same tools from its totalitarian toolkit. These tools include: using its pet "Godi" media houses to demonise protesters and brand them seditionists; using either planted documents or innocuous tools of organising protests (such as WhatsApp groups, emails, and protest toolkit documents) as a flimsy peg on which to hang a fantastic tale of conspiracy against the state; and then launching a campaign of interrogations, arrests and prolonged incarceration of seasoned, senior activists as well as young student activists; and invoking draconian laws like UAPA under which it is, with the help of some dereliction of duty by Courts, possible to indefinitely jail prisoners without bail or trial.

The Modi regime's toolkit also contains several tools to suppress facts and retain control of the narrative in the public sphere. First, they cultivate a large, willing tribe of propagandist media actors masquerading as "journalists" and occupying much of the space of electronic and print news media. Then, they deploy sedition and defamation charges against journalists who investigate either the regime or its corporate masters (the cases against the editor of the Wire, and various journalists investigating the death of a farmer protestor who is suspected to have succumbed to police bullets on Republic Day, and the defamation case filed by the Adani corporation against journalist Paranjay Guha

Thakurta are recent instances). The latest instance of open intimidation and assault on the freedom of the press by the Modi regime has been the Enforcement Directorate raid on the offices and the portal Newsclick and the homes of its editors. Newsclick's editor is a Marxist who, in his student days, was imprisoned during the Emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi. Newsclick is a portal which distinguishes itself by its sterling reportage on people's movements.

The manner in which the Delhi Police deals with organisers of peaceful, democratic protests is in stark contrast to its approach towards those politicians and organised Hindu-supremacist groups that incite and carry out armed violence against Muslim minorities and critics of the Modi regime. Komal Sharma, the ABVP leader who, last year, led a mob to enter the JNU campus and crack skulls of students and teachers, has not been arrested or charged by the Delhi Police. BJP leader Kapil Mishra, infamous for stoking the Delhi riots last year with his abusive calls to "shoot traitors" was never interrogated, let alone arrested by the Delhi Police. A recent investigation by Newslandry has revealed that Mishra heads a "Hindu Ecosystem"

group which systematically radicalises Hindus by spreading Islamophobic hatred and fabricated content. This group also uses Google documents, to spread conspiracy theories and train its followers to amplify hateful and false messages. If a news portal could infiltrate and investigate this nationwide ecosystem of Hindu-supremacist terror, surely the Delhi Police too is aware of it? Why, then, has the Delhi Police failed to act against Kapil Mishra and his hatekit that actively stokes misinformation and hatred, while it acts against persons who run WhatsApp groups or edit Google documents to support non-violent movements against the Modi regime's policies?

The police force that answers to India's Home Minister believes non-violent dissent and protest against the Modi Government is unlawful and seditious, while violent Islamophobia and Hindu-supremacist thuggery is lawful and patriotic. This means that the Modi regime can no longer claim to be a democratic one: it must be counted amongst the world's bigoted, fascist totalitarian regimes. It is not just the right, but the duty of every Indian citizen to speak up and stand up against this regime with all its might. □

## Protests and Protest Toolkits Are Essential To Democracies

### What Is A Toolkit?

A protest "toolkit" is a set of materials a) explaining the key issue succinctly and addressing doubts and misinformation; b) suggesting

what an individual person can do to support the cause; c) suggesting reading materials; d) offering drafts for letters to authorities asking them to support the cause or heed the demands of the protest;

e) suggesting hashtags and so on for social media campaigns.

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests in the US for instance used a toolkit with material about the hashtags, process, and slogans related to the protest. Similar toolkits have been used successfully in the Occupy Wall Street protest (2011), and the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong (2019). In fact, many Indian celebrities also tweeted using hashtags in support of Black Lives Matter, following the killing of George Floyd.

Governments and NGOs also use similar toolkits to popularise their campaigns (like Swachh Bharat or Beti Bachao for instance).

### What Was In The Greta Thunberg Toolkit?

The toolkit tweeted out by 18-year-old climate change activist Greta Thunberg is the latest pretext for a crackdown by India's Home Ministry and its Delhi Police on activists like Disha Ravi and Nikita Jacob. According to the Delhi Police, this "toolkit" is sinister and seditious because "The main aim of the toolkit was to create misinformation and disaffection against the lawfully enacted government. The toolkit sought to artificially amplify the fake news and other falsehoods and also sought to precipitate action on 26 January, that is, India's Republic Day." They accuse Disha Ravi of conspiring with Khalistani outfits and Greta Thunberg to prepare and disseminate the toolkit. They have invoked the draconian sedition law - Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code – against Ravi. This law defines sedition as an offence committed by whoever "attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards the

government established by law in India".

### What exactly is in the "toolkit" tweeted out by Greta Thunberg?

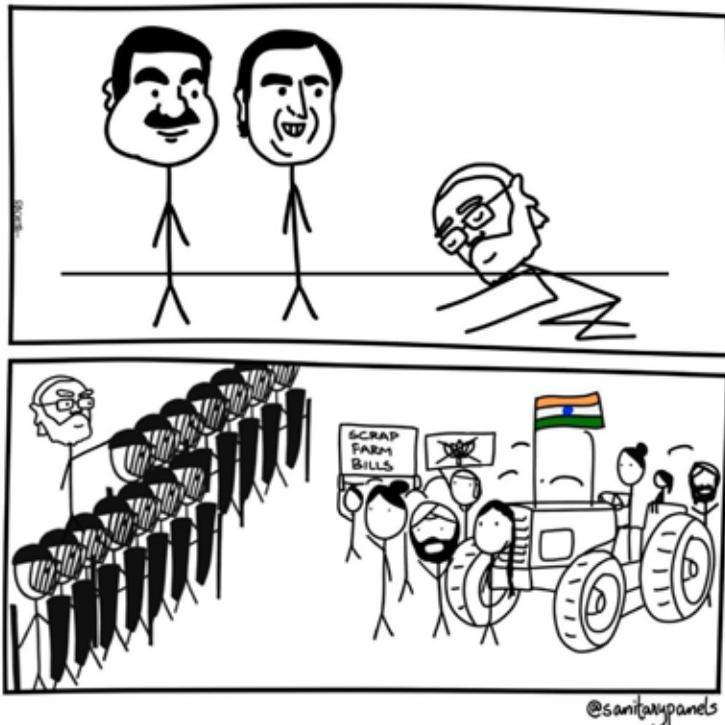
The toolkit described itself as "a document meant to enable anyone unfamiliar with the ongoing farmers protests in India to better understand the situation and make decisions on how to support the farmers based on their own analysis."

It offered a background note on India's agrarian crisis, and explained why farmers in India are protesting the new farm laws. In a section on "Urgent Action", the toolkit asked people to organise a 'Twitter storm' on 4 and 5 February, using hashtags they suggested, share solidarity messages in photo/video format, call/email their local representatives to take action or sign online petitions to "divest from

oligopolies like Adani-Ambani".

The toolkit stressed that global attention on the protests is important for "preventing more State-sponsored violence in India". In a section entitled "How Can You Help", the toolkit said:

*"On 26 January, a major day of globally coordinated actions, show your support at local physical locations, wherever you are. Either find protests happening in our city/state/country and participate in large (or small) numbers or organise one. In addition to the options below, you are encouraged to organise solidarity protests either at/near Indian embassies, near your local govt. offices or offices of various multinational Adani and Ambani companies. While we are focusing on the 26th, you are encouraged to continue organising gatherings as and when possible — for this is not going to end anytime soon."*



## Is The Greta Thunberg Toolkit Illegal?

The toolkit merely suggests social media campaigns peaceful protest demonstrations to support farmers. How can this be illegal, let alone “sedition”, in a democracy? The Modi Government is equating any form of dissent, or protest, with “sedition”.

Moreover, there is no link between the toolkit and the incident involving a small group of protestors at Red Fort during the Tractor Rally on Republic Day. The toolkit makes no mention of any ‘tractor rally’ or ‘diverting route towards the Red Fort’.

The “toolkit” is like any social media post or leaflet creating awareness about an issue, encouraging people to get involved, and suggesting how they can do so.

In Modi’s India, WhatsApp groups and other basic forms of organising protests in support of the anti-CAA movement and the farmers movement, are being outlawed.

## Nothing Seditious About It: Former Supreme Court Judge

“Every citizen of this country has a right to oppose the government so long as the opposition is peaceful. I have gone through the documents of the toolkit, and I see that there is nothing in the toolkit which says anything with regard to violence or anything with regard to inciting people. It does support the farmers’ protests. The toolkit is much before the agreement before the farmers’ leaders and the police. I don’t see what is seditious about this document. There is the Balwant Singh case, where slogans were

raised in Chandigarh – “Khalistan Zindabad” and “Raj Karega Khalsa”, but the Supreme Court held that just raising the slogans did not amount to violence as long as there was no incitement to violence.

“One may or may not agree with the protestors, that is a different matter. But to say that this is sedition is totally not understanding the law.

“The sedition law was framed by the imperialistic, colonialist ruler, the British empire, who wanted to rule over India. Even at that time, the law made sedition a grave crime, punishable with life imprisonment...I was hoping that with our experiences of Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi being sent behind bars for sedition, we would have abrogated this law, or at least toned down this clause. But, unfortunately, this law is being misused.

“I’ve seen many cases where they (judges) seem to have forgotten that bail not jail is the rule. At this stage, they don’t even read the documents. They just see what the police asks them. I know a detailed scrutiny at this stage is not required, but at least they should apply their mind. The police may not have read the Supreme Court judgement, but I would have expected the judge to have at least read it.” - Justice Deepak Gupta, former judge of the Supreme Court to NDTV

## Disha Ravi’s Arrest Is Illegal

It is in fact the manner of Disha Ravi’s arrest that is illegal.

As pointed out by Justice Gupta above, the police and the magistrate violated clear Supreme Court guidelines on

use of the sedition law.

The Delhi Police violated the law by barging into Ravi’s home in plainclothes, taking her away on pretext of interrogation, and then bringing her to Delhi without obtaining a “transit remand” after producing her before a Bangalore judge; and by hiding her whereabouts from her lawyer. All these acts flouted a 2020 Delhi High Court division bench ruling on inter-state arrests.

The Delhi judge who remanded her to five days police custody also violated the “spirit of the law” – failing to ensure that Ravi was legally represented; and failing to do due diligence in enquiring if the sedition law could indeed apply.

Senior advocate Rebecca Mammen John pointed out:

*“Magistrates must take their duties of Remand seriously and ensure that the mandate of Article 22 of the constitution is scrupulously followed. If the accused was not being represented by counsel at the time of the hearing, the magistrate should have waited till her counsel arrived or in the alternate, provided her with legal aid. Were the case diaries and the arrest memo examined? Did the magistrate ask the Special cell why she was being produced directly from Bangalore without a transit remand from Bangalore courts? If you are a duty magistrate, sitting on a Sunday, you should at best remand for a day, so that the regular court takes up the matter the next day. Duty magistrates should never send an accused to 5 days police custody.”* □

# Why No Action Against Hindu-Supremacist Toolkits and Organised Violence?

The NewsLaundry portal did an investigative story on a “Hindu Ecosystem” group on Telegram formed on November 16 2020 by BJP leader Kapil Mishra, notorious for inciting the February 2020 Delhi violence with his hate-speech, including calls to “shoot the traitors” (“traitors” being code for Muslims and anti-CAA protestors). Two journalists infiltrated the group and studied how it worked. They gathered proof that the group systematically prepared and disseminated materials inciting hatred against Muslim, Christian, and Sikh minorities, amplifying the hatred through toolkits producing automated Twitter storms with divisive hashtags, and spreading fake conspiracy theories designed to poison minds. Mishra recruited members for his hate ecosystem on Twitter – openly. The hate-

filled Twitter storms also aired openly, repeatedly. Yet, why did Home Minister Amit Shah’s Delhi Police which filed an FIR based on a tweet by Greta Thunberg sharing a farmers’ protest advocacy document, not act against the vile, violent, dangerous ecosystem?

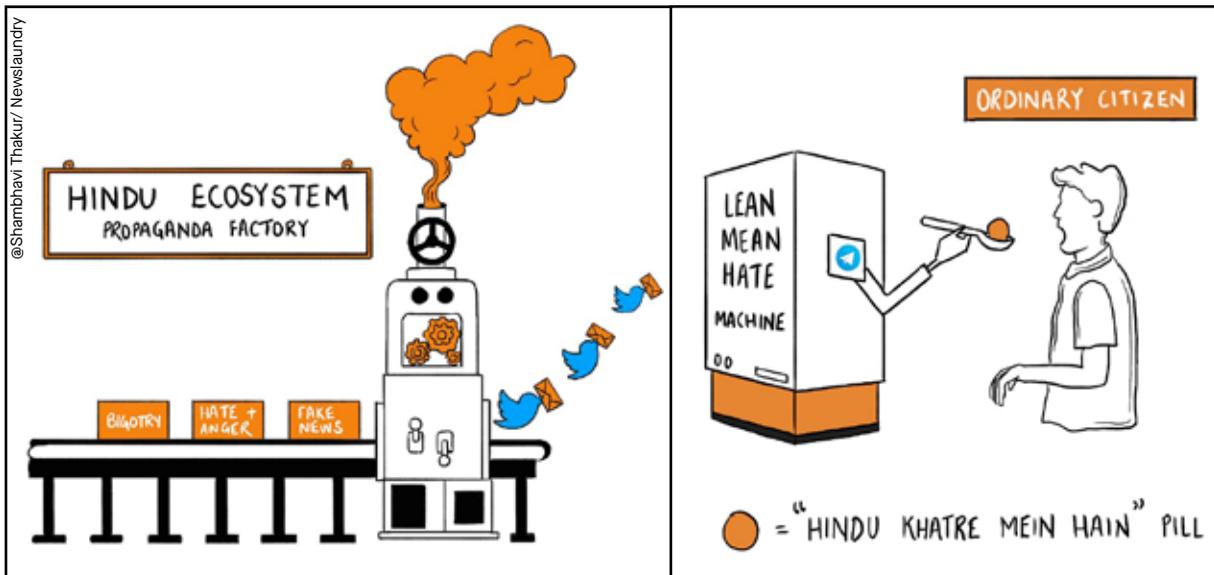
The NewsLaundry report observed:

“A key point that is being made to denounce the Greta toolkit as an “international conspiracy” against India is that it contained dates for when to conduct online and offline activities to draw attention to the farmer protests. The Hindu Ecosystem does the same, but where Greta shared one document to support a legitimate cause, Mishra’s group shares multiple documents a day to increase hate towards different minority communities....

“If you don’t yet fully grasp the gravity of what’s being done through groups such as the Hindu Ecosystem, allow us to spell it out: they are fountains of misinformation, propaganda, directed hatred. They create and spread, in an organised way, Hindu supremacist and anti-minority bile, and incite communal hatred.

“Over 20,000 people are working in a coordinated way to incite communal hatred; it doesn’t matter what event pops up on their radar they quickly give it a hateful spin and turn it into a conspiracy theory, complete with readily shareable images, videos, and forwards to tap into the hate-network effect.”

Kapil Mishra’s is just one of thousands of such hate factories run online and offline by the Sangh outfits. An investigative report by the Article-14 portal exposed direct links between online hate and the February 2020 Delhi violence targeted against Muslims. The story (Shweta Desai, ‘The Hateful Facebook Adventures of Ragini Desai and Friends’) says, “The Delhi police claim there is no evidence Hindu groups allied with India’s ruling party were part of the



*February riots ‘conspiracy’. Our investigation found widespread evidence of incitement and planning by Hindutva groups on Facebook in the days leading to the riots. The incendiary messages and videos stream on, as Facebook India drags its feet about implementing its own policies.”* In particular, the story focused on videos by one Ragini Tiwari, boasting of having instigated murderous violence against Muslims in Jaffrabad and Maujpur areas of Delhi. The Delhi Police has not taken any action against Tiwari in spite of the ample evidence of her leadership of rioting mobs. Instead, it has booked anti-CAA protestors and feminist activists under the UAPA, claiming that their WhatsApp group supporting non-violent women-led protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act amounted to anti-India conspiracy.

Likewise, the Delhi Police has, a full year after an ABVP mob launched a murderous attack on JNU teachers and students, failed to arrest a single one of them. The mob had been escorted out of JNU by the police after they had completed their violent assault, and the police had not stopped or sought to arrest any of them. When students and investigative journalists exposed the identity of Komal Sharma, an ABVP leader in the act of rioting inside a hostel, Delhi Police looked the other way. □

## Sedition Law To Suppress Dissent

The Article-14 portal maintains a database on the sedition law for the last decade. Its analysis of the data is revealing. It found:

- 65% of nearly 11,000 individuals in 816 sedition cases since 2010 were implicated after 2014 when Modi took office. Among those charged with sedition: opposition politicians, students, journalists, authors and academics.
- 96% of sedition cases filed against 405 Indians for criticising politicians and governments over the last decade were registered after 2014, with 149 accused of making “critical” and/or “derogatory” remarks against Modi, 144 against Uttar Pradesh (UP) chief minister Yogi Adityanath.
- A 28% increase in the number of sedition cases filed each year between 2014 and 2020, Modi’s time in office, compared to the yearly average between 2010 and 2014, the second term of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) administration.

- Much of this increase is due to a surge in sedition cases after protest movements, such as those against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019 and the rape of a Dalit teen at Hathras in UP.
- During the anti-CAA protests, 22 of 25 sedition cases involving 3,700 people were filed in BJP-ruled states. After the Pulwama attack, 26 of 27 sedition cases involving 42 persons were filed in BJP-ruled states.
- Of the five states with the highest number of sedition cases, a majority were registered during the BJP’s time in power in four of them—Bihar, UP, Karnataka and Jharkhand.
- In UP, 77% of 115 sedition cases since 2010 were registered over the last four years, since Yogi Adityanath became the chief minister. More than half of these were around issues of “nationalism”: against those who protested the CAA, for shouting “Hindustan Murdabad”, allegedly celebrating Pulwama attack and India’s loss in 2017 ICC Champions Trophy.
- In Bihar, between 2010-2014, the majority of sedition cases related to Maoism and counterfeit currency. After 2014, 23% of sedition cases were against those who protested the CAA, against celebrities who spoke up against lynching and intolerance and those who allegedly raised “pro-Pakistan” slogans. □

## Sedition Charges On Environmental Activists to Serve Adani?

It is not just Modi’s Home Ministry and various BJP State Governments that are assaulting free speech and the right to protest. Modi’s crony Adani serially files defamation suits against journalists who report on its many corrupt and dodgy dealings.

But in late January 2021, the Adani group issued an “open letter” in which it made the mistake of explaining in Orwellian language, exactly what it meant by “freedom of speech.”

Titled ‘An Open Letter on the need to act against false propaganda’, the document was tweeted out by the Adani Group’s blue-ticked Twitter handle.

It began, “Dear Fellow Citizens, Freedom of speech

is a fundamental right of any well-functioning democracy.” So far, so good. But the next sentence could not have been more revealing of the Adani Group’s heavy-handed authoritarianism, if it had been written by a satirist. It reads, “Adani Group believes in the free speech that promotes truth and serves the national interest.”

The next paragraph explained that “the national interest” is basically equivalent to the Adani Group’s interests. India is Adani and Adani is India, more or less. The letter says the Adani Group runs “critical assets essential for our country’s progress”. It then goes on to say that the local and international financial institutions that have “demonstrated faith and invested in the Adani Group”, have by doing so, displayed a “demonstration of faith in India.”

In the next section titled “Falsehoods

cause immense harm”, the letter waxes on about how fake news does great harm, and how the Adani Group has been a “victim” of “false propaganda” and “manufactured online campaigns”. Naturally, it then states that those who run campaigns against the Adani Group are of course enemies of India. The online campaigns against Adani operations, it claims, are “mounted by vested interests to sabotage India’s strategic interests.” Is this beginning to ring a bell? Does it sound like the FIR against Disha Ravi and Fridays For Future activists?

It then goes on to say that it respects the media fraternity very much, but is forced to take legal action “if, under the pretext of free speech, we see damage to our strategic interests.”

Not only is the Adani Group filing defamation suits to silence journalists – its letter is also exposing the mind

of the Modi regime. The reason why the Modi Government will not back down on the farm laws, and will instead file sedition and UAPA cases against farmers’ movement activists and supporters and environmental activists, is because these activists and their toolkits are exposing how the farm laws serve Adani and its ilk; and launching effective campaigns against various Adani projects that harm the forests and environment in India and abroad.

In Modi Raj, it is clear that the entire regime and its police force encourage crony corporate loot and anti-minority hate, discrimination, and violence and criminalise any dissent or resistance to the above. We must fight back with all our might, exposing this pro-corporate, pro-Adani-Ambani, pro-hate toolkit of the Modi regime. □

	
<p><b>An Open Letter on the need to act against false propaganda impacting our Shareholders</b></p>	
<p>Dear Fellow Citizens,</p> <p>Freedom of speech is a fundamental right of any well-functioning democracy</p> <p>Adani group believes in the free speech that promotes truth and serves the national interest</p> <p>The Adani Group generates and distributes energy, operates seaports and airports, and runs many other critical assets essential for our country’s progress. We reach out across many remote parts of the country and we are proud that we are a source of direct and indirect employment to hundreds of thousands of people. We are proud of the opportunity to build some of the world’s best infrastructure in India. Our six listed companies have consistently delivered exceptional gains to our shareholders. We have a responsibility to them and the local and international financial institutions that have demonstrated faith and invested in the Adani Group. This is also a demonstration of faith in India, especially in a post-COVID world where every economy in the world needs to make up for a lost year.</p> <p><b>Falsehoods cause immense harm</b></p> <p>“Satyamev Jayate” (Truth alone prevails) is our national motto. History shows that even if truth ultimately prevails, lies and fake news can inflict enormous harm in the interim. The challenge that all free societies must contend with is how to deal with falsehood based on the accelerated information revolution that provokes violence or compromises national security. In this context, our constitution prohibits speech that can cause damage to sovereignty and integrity of India, or is prejudicial to the public order, or amounts to defamation.</p>	<p>Adani Group is impacted by the malicious campaigns by forces inimical to our national interest</p> <p>Accuracy, objectivity and impartiality are the core principles of fair and balanced journalism. But on numerous occasions, Adani Group has been targeted through false propaganda. We have also been a victim of manufactured online media campaigns aimed at spreading malicious lies about our operations and inflicting harm to our shareholders. Some attacks had been mounted by vested interests to sabotage India’s strategic interests.</p> <p>We have mostly countered such false propaganda by putting out facts and releasing verifiable data. On occasions where the attacks were especially vicious and sustained, we have taken the legal recourse by approaching the courts under the law of the land. Even then there are instances where we have withdrawn cases filed by the Group on the simple assurance that the author would hear our side of the story as well before printing an article about us.</p> <p><b>Our necessary actions</b></p> <p>We have great respect towards the media fraternity and have accepted contrary opinions. But if, under the pretext of free speech, we see damage to our strategic interests as well as impact on our shareholders that put their trust on us, we are left with no option but act to protect our interests. As a responsible corporate group, we have filed cases in the courts only when the final resort we are left with is to seek protection under the law.</p> <p>We have complete faith in the Indian judiciary and total acceptance of the decision they make.</p> <p>Yours sincerely,</p> <p>Adani Group</p>
<p><i>Adani Group’s Letter. (From Twitter/ Adani Group)</i></p>	

## Teachers Against the Climate Crisis (TACC)

19 February 2021

We demand that Disha Ravi be immediately and unconditionally released, and that the government stop victimizing environmental activists.

We are shocked by the arrest by the Delhi Police of Disha Ravi, a 22-year-old member of the environmental organization Fridays for Future, on charges of sedition and criminal conspiracy while raising support for the ongoing farmers' protests. Non-bailable warrants have been issued against two others. Nikita Jacob and Shantanu Muluk. To mobilize support for the farmers' protests is their basic political and constitutional right. In addition, the manner in which Disha Ravi was arrested and taken to Delhi violates detention norms laid down by the Supreme Court, and reflects disregard for basic democratic rights.

Attempts by the central government to cast youth-led climate organizations, or their members, as a threat to national security defies sanity. These organizations have been raising issues regarding the climate and other environmental crises, which in fact constitute the gravest threat to the security of the people of this country. The government's own report, Assessment of Climate Change Over the Indian Region by the Ministry of Earth Sciences, details many grave changes already taking place, such as a weakening monsoon, accelerating sea level rise, and more frequent droughts. It warns of longer and more intense heat waves, more extreme rainfall events, and that a large part of the Indus and Ganga river basins will become unliveable by the end of this century if global greenhouse gas emissions are not reduced urgently.

The government has weakened environmental protection by diluting Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) measures, potentially damaging carbon sinks, the forests on which millions depend. To support forest-dependent and agrarian communities in their struggles is simply an extension of the movements for environmental justice. Youth-led movements have campaigned against dilutions of the EIA, have spoken out against the destruction of ecosystems, and the expansion of coal use. This is the context in which they are now being targeted.

Our young activists have stood up for issues that will affect millions of today's youth in the decades to come. They must be celebrated for the courage of their convictions and for speaking truth to power, not persecuted, intimidated, and criminalized. Expressing support for the farmers' struggle or any other social and environmental justice issue, or for peaceful protests seeking change, is not just a fundamental right but a fundamental duty of a conscientious citizenry. Yet, these activists – and numerous others in recent months – have been targeted for exercising those very rights.

This is the most serious attack on the climate movement in this country. It has led to a lot of fear and anxiety among youth activists, students, and other young people. As a group of teachers, writers, and researchers from across the country engaged with the climate crises and other environmental challenges, we are not just proud of our conscientious youth, we draw inspiration from them. We unequivocally stand by them in their demand for more urgent climate and environmental action, and a safer, more just, and sustainable future. We forcefully condemn the Indian government's unlawful and misguided attempts to criminalize the youth and environmental activists of the country.

### **We demand:**

- » the immediate release of Disha Ravi.
- » that all charges be immediately dropped against Disha Ravi, Nikita Jacob, and Shantanu Muluk.
- » an unconditional apology by the Indian government to these young activists for the trauma to which they have been subjected.
- » that the government stop criminalizing dissent of all kinds, including environmental struggles and groups, and instead dialogue with them about the future of this country.

## “Ms. Disha Ravi is one of the best among us” The Alumni of Mount Carmel College



@AratiGujar/Arre

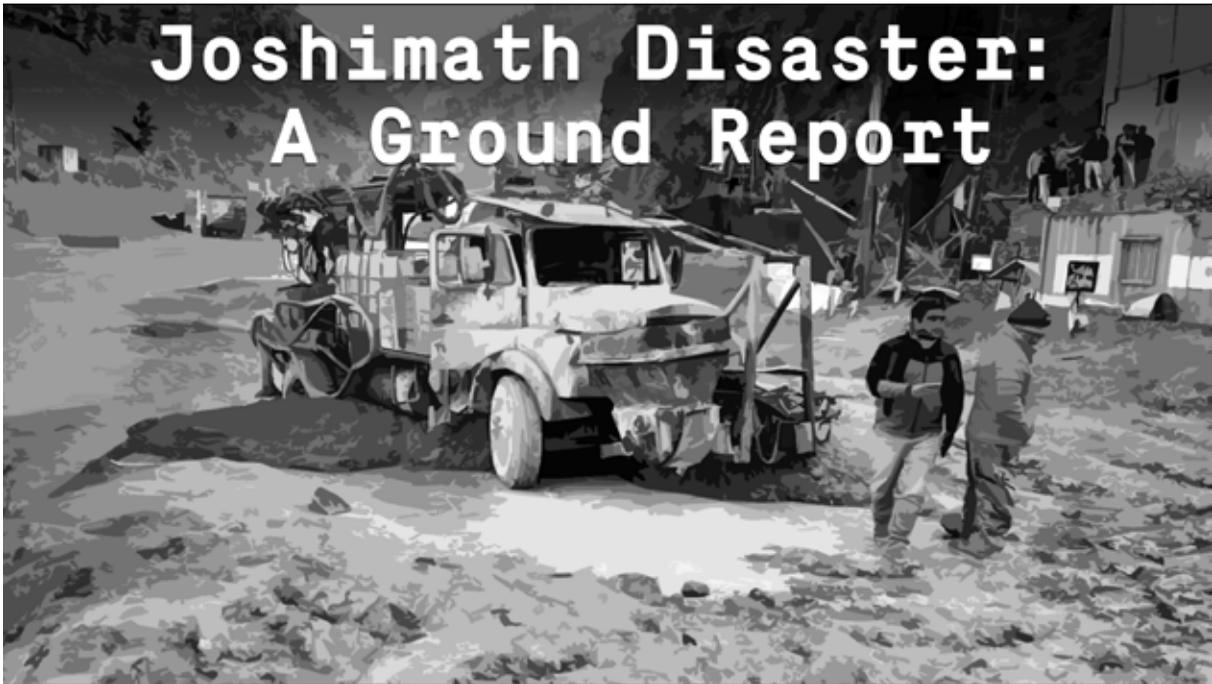
330 alumni members of the Mount Carmel College have issued a statement of support to Disha Ravi who is an alum of the College. Ms. Ravi was arrested by the Delhi Police on February 14, 2021 and now she is facing charges of sedition against her, reportedly for supporting the ongoing farmers' movement.

We, the alumni of Mount Carmel College, condemn the arrest of our fellow alum Disha Ravi by the Delhi Police. The blatant targeting of a young woman citizen expressing her support with the nation's protesting farmers is horrifying and completely unacceptable.

We demand that the Delhi Police release her and the Bangalore police and Karnataka government act to protect the constitutional rights of a woman resident of the state of Karnataka. Ms. Ravi is one of the best among us, fulfilling her duties as a citizen of India, and indeed of the world, through her activism in the field of climate change. As co-founder of Fridays for Future in India, she has coordinated with climate activists across the world to get politicians and corporations to act and undertake measures to prevent the world from getting worse.

Her participation as a young woman of colour in climate change activism has been important in bringing attention to the vulnerabilities faced by marginalised communities in countries of Global South. As we all know, the terrible impact of climate change cannot be ignored as evidenced by the ongoing disaster at Uttarakhand where hundreds of people are believed to be buried dead. It is these kinds of environmental disasters, enabled by the weakening of the provisions of the Environment Impact Assessment, that Ms. Ravi has worked to bring to public attention. Her sense of history is remarkable as she has drawn not only from her personal, familial history of farmer-grandparents and the difficulties they suffered due to the impact of climate change on agricultural practices. She has also drawn her inspiration to protest and lend her voice to farmers' protests in the country from the greatest of people's movements in India—the Independence struggle.

Through her work, Disha stands as a model to emulate. Her arrest, we believe, is a way to browbeat young, articulate women—which Mount Carmel College has produced for generations—into silent submission. We unconditionally express support to her and her family in this time of distress and are proud of the work she has undertaken in the field of climate change activism.



*Atul Sati, CPIML State Committee member and leader of sustained agitations in the Chamoli region against a disastrous “development” model, was among the first to report from ground zero of the latest disaster. Below is his first anguished report.*

## Fact Finding Report

 ATUL SATI

**B**etween 9 am and 10 am on 7 February 2021 a glacier with debris rolled down to Raini village situated 20 km from Joshimath at the confluence of Dhauli and Rishiganga rivers, immersing the Rishiganga Power Project in the river and taking with it 30 workers working at the site. Some workers were able to flee and save themselves. One of them, Kuldeep Patwal who works on the machines, told us that when they saw the huge cloud of dust rolling towards them they fled. As we are hill people, he said, we were able to run up the hill, but others who were from the plains could not climb up and got caught in the debris and carried away by the river.

A local villager grazing his goats near the river was

also carried away with his goats, as were two police personnel doing security duty. Two other security men managed to run and save themselves. The bridge at Raini that connects the border area with the rest of India was also washed away though it was 30 ft above the river level. As far as eye can see there is nothing but debris in Raini and the River Rishiganga. The washing away of this bridge has cut off road access to the soldiers stationed at the China border as well as to the village population on the other side, and soon there will arise the problem of supplying provisions to them.

Rishiganga flowed on full of debris to Dhauli Ganga, destroying nearby buildings and temples, and proceeded towards Tapovan where another hydel project is under construction. This is the 530 megawatt Tapovan Vishnugarh project. The barrage site of this project has also been reduced now to a heap of debris. Some workers were working in a tunnel here and are trapped inside. Efforts to rescue them are on. Some workers were working on the barrage site. They are either missing or have been washed away. The total number is currently said to be 150.

At Tapovan also nothing but debris can be seen in place of the Dhauli Ganga. The debris has risen about 20 ft above the river level. The bridge on the river Dhauli Ganga connecting Tapovan

with Bhangyul village has been washed away.

In 2013 also the Kafar Dam of the Tapovan Project was washed away. The Rishiganga Power Project was also washed away once in 2013 and was re-started only one year ago. During construction indiscriminate

blasting and cutting of forests was done despite consistent pleas and warnings by common people which remained unheeded in the clamour for 'development'.

Ten days ago I was here and saw the blue-white Rishiganga flowing quietly. Today she lies lifeless smothered by debris. □

the country who have reached Joshimath want the missing persons to be found as soon as possible. But the ruling powers want that whatever else happens, there should be no talk about the hydel projects and their shortcomings. Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Rawat tweeted the day after the disaster on 8 February, "Let not this disaster be turned into a reason for propaganda against development". Union Energy Minister RK Singh has stated his intention to re-start the Tapovan-Vishnugad project as soon as possible.

Taken together, it is clear from the above two statements that the governmental machinery is not prepared to learn any lesson from a tragedy which has left 200 people missing even after one week. The governments are not willing even to review the reasons why disaster safety measures were not put in place despite the horrific disaster of 2013.

Raini village is known nationally as well as internationally for the Chipko movement and its leader Gaura Devi. This is where the 13 megawatt project was situated on the River Rishiganga, which has been completely washed away. The Nanda Devi biosphere reserve is located in this region, which has been declared a protected area by UNESCO. Due to biosphere reserve restrictions, the local people are forbidden even from picking up a stick of wood or grass from this area. But in an area with such restrictions, large scale tree felling and dynamite blasting has been done for construction of hydel projects despite opposition from local residents.

The other project which has been destroyed by the recent avalanche of water is the 530 megawatt Tapovan-Vishnugad project under

## Putting Power Projects Over People's Lives?



**INDRESH MAIKHURI**

*CPIML's Garhwal Secretary and State Committee Member*

**T**he latest disaster in Uttarakhand has once again raised questions about the indiscriminate construction of hydel projects ignoring geographical conditions, scientific studies and opposition by local citizens.

A week has passed since the horrific disaster on 7 February in the Joshimath region in Uttarakhand. During these 7 days the BJP governments at the Centre and in Uttarakhand have been eulogized for their speed and efficiency. Hearing these eulogies it appears that this is indeed the double-engine promised by Modi Ji. Alas, the reality is that even after 7 days reaching the 35 people trapped in a tunnel remains a far cry. Moreover, other people missing from the barrage site have still not been traced.

Two days ago Uttarakhand Governor Baby Rani Maurya visited the tunnel in Tapovan where 35 people are trapped. When a family

member of one of the trapped persons requested the Governor that 10 JCBs be deployed for removing debris from the tunnel, she replied, where will 10 JCBs come from? She then said that the machines are on their way from Mumbai and Himachal Pradesh. The Governor is the constitutional head of the State. She must have visited Badrinath. But she seems unaware, and no competent officer was around to tell her, that the Joshimath region is rife with hydel projects and the number of JCBs and loading machines here is more even than the number of spades, pickaxes and shovels!

Similarly, the managed media glorification of the Delhi-Dehradun double-engine government is in its place but the ground reality of the double-engine's snail's pace is also in its place. It is a different matter that eulogies cannot save lives and with every passing second this snail's pace reduces the possibility of finding alive the people trapped in the tunnel.

These 7 days have also clarified priorities. Local people as well as people from various parts of

construction by NTPC. People protested against this project from the time it started in 2003-04. The protests were so strong that the inauguration program of the project had to be cancelled 2 or 3 times. Finally the then Chief Minister ND Tiwari had the project inaugurated at the hands of Union Minister PM Sayeed in Dehradun

300 km from Joshimath. According to CPIML State Committee member Atul Sati, who has consistently led protests against the project since its inception, the construction of the project has wilfully ignored scientific studies on Joshimath's geographic conditions and turned a blind eye to geological complexities.

For this project, a 12 km long tunnel was to have been dug to take the river water from the Tapovan barrage site below Joshimath city to the power house site in Animath. In 2011 the digging of the tunnel by a tunnel boring machine (TBM) was started from the power house side. After a short distance the digging operations caused a

## **CPIML Demands Prosecution of NTPC Authorities For Negligence**

***Below is the text of the letter written to the Inspector In-Charge, Kotwali Joshimath, District Chamoli. This letter was sent by registered post to Joshimath Thana because the Thana in-charge was away in disaster-affected Tapovan and the Deputy Inspector who was present in the Thana expressed his inability to accept this letter in the absence of the in-charge.***

Sir

A disastrous flood occurred at Rishiganga in Joshimath on 7 February 2021, due to which the Rishiganga Hydel Project in Raini was washed away and workers and local residents became victims of the disaster.

Sir, it took this horrific flood 15 to 20 minutes to reach from Raini to the barrage of the Tapovan-Vishnugad Project being constructed by NTPC at Tapovan. In emergency conditions, this time is sufficient to give the necessary warning and save people's lives.

However, it is extremely unfortunate that the project construction company in Tapovan NTPC had made no arrangements to handle such an emergency. Indeed, there was not even a siren or hooter to give warning of danger. There were no ladders or ropes at the barrage site that could have been used by people to save themselves. There were also no emergency safety arrangements or oxygen supply inside the tunnel. If such arrangements had been in place, the lives of workers and other staff could have been saved and the Uttarakhand government need not have spent huge amounts on search operations. Uttarakhand suffered a huge natural disaster in 2013 also in which the Vishnuprayag Project barrage in the Joshimath region was totally destroyed. In Tapovan itself NTPC's Kafar Dam has been washed away twice earlier.

Not making emergency arrangements or installing an early warning system despite the earlier disasters is grave negligence on the part of NTPC for which workers and other staff have paid the price with their lives. It is a serious crime not to have made safety arrangements despite knowing from previous experience that this would cost lives of workers. The special committee constituted by the honourable High Court after the 2013 disaster had also directed early warning systems and other safety measures to be arranged, but the honourable High Court's orders were blatantly flouted.

Keeping the above facts in mind, we request that a case under the relevant sections (304 IPC) be registered against the Tapovan-Vishnugad Project construction company NTPC for the crime of causing the death of workers.

*Thanking you,*

*Atul Sati  
State Committee member  
CPIML*

*Indresh Maikhuri  
Garhwal Secretary  
CPIML*

huge cascade of water to spout, and the machine got stuck in that place. That waterfall is still running at that spot. Initially we were told that the water was flowing at 600 litres per second; later we were told that the flow speed has reduced to 200 litres per second. Thus, a geological water-source was unscientifically meddled with and hundreds of litres of water per second are being allowed to flow away wasted. For the last one decade no one has seen fit to worry about this. Currently the tunnel was being dug from the barrage side and is now completely filled with debris from the 7 February disaster.

Despite repeated natural disasters, the ruling powers are neither bothered neither about nature nor about lives lost due to these disasters. When the CM tweets about 'not turning the disaster into a propaganda against development' and the Union Energy Minister emphasises the need to re-start the project instead of rescuing the trapped workers, it is clear that the destruction of nature and human lives are not important to them. The profit gained through the project is the only thing that matters to them. □

*Following the devastating floods of 2013 in Uttarakhand, the Supreme Court of India formed a committee which in April 2014 recommended scrapping of at least 23 hydropower projects to save the ecologically sensitive and fragile mountainous region. Yet, the projects have continued unabated – leaving a series of disasters in their wake.*

## From Liberation Archives:

# Protesting Locals Predicted Disasters

The June 2005 issue of *Liberation* carried a report on the protests against the Tapovad-Vishnugad project. The report makes it clear that if people's concerns about the project had been heeded at the outset, the latest tragedy could have been prevented. The report noted:

*“Run of the river’ projects like the Tapovan Vishnugad Hydro-electric project of the NTPC in Joshimath were once presented as an alternative to the notorious Big Dams – but these are proving to be equally anti-people. Under this project of 520 megawatts, a twelve-kilometre long tunnel, cutting through the mountain, starting from Tapovan, will pass underground through thirteen villages and Joshimath town. Most of the local inhabitants of the affected villages will be displaced from their lands. And most importantly, this project is a danger for the very existence of this seismic, landslide-prone region. According to a high-power Committee constituted in 1976, under the Chairmanship of the then Commissioner of Garhwal Region, Mahesh Chand Mishra, “Joshimath is inhabited on an old landslide...it is a heap of sand and stones, so it was not a fit place even for establishing a township”. The risks involved in digging such a tunnel beneath this fragile ‘heap of sand and stones’ can be imagined. What makes it doubly dangerous is that, already, construction of the Vishnuprayag Hydroelectric Project just below Joshimath town is underway. And*

*because of the project-related blasts, all water resources in neighbouring villages have dried up and around 4000 sheep are dead.”*

In October 2005, *Liberation* interviewed Comrade Atul Sati. He said:

*“During the agitation for a separate state, I recall that we raised the slogan: “Pahad ki jawani, pahad ka pani, pahad ke kaam nahin aa raha” (pointing out that the hills’ resources – its water, its youth – were being exploited and the hill people themselves were deprived of these resources). But now, in the new state too, Uttarakhand’s precious rivers are being handed on a platter on contract to private companies whose only priority is graft, quick loot and quick profit.*

*Uttarakhand’s electricity needs can be met with small projects (of one or two megawatts) on the ghats, which would not endanger the hill ecosystems and inhabitations, and by which, more power could be generated with less cost. In Uttarakhand, simple panchakki generators were commonly used to generate 1 to 3 megawatts of power, for a very low cost. Today, it is clear that Uttarakhand simply doesn’t need huge amounts of power to be generated from the 93 proposed projects. The purpose of these projects is to generate power for the rest of the country (Tehri water, for instance, is to go to Sonia Vihar*

in Delhi ) – a totally unsustainable proposition because they can rapidly destroy the very rivers that are Uttarakhand's precious resources!

Asked about the experience of other projects that had already been completed, Comrade Atul, in 2005, replied:

*At Dharchula, after completion of a run-of-the-river Project, the tunnel developed a rift when water was released and a village of 300 families was destroyed. At Maneri Bhali, part of the Tehri Project, 14 villages have been affected by drought, since the river has drained off into the tunnel. It is not enough for technology to be the 'latest'; the real test: does it suit the specific needs of this region? The people at Dharchula asked the authorities, how come a rift developed in the tunnel? The NHPC Director admitted on record that though the technology used is the most modern available, it didn't work because the region is landslide prone! Remember that the entire Chamoli region (where these projects are located) is a seismic zone, prone to landslides.*

*We contacted one of the geologists on the WAPCOS EIA panel and asked him what was the likely fallout of blasts. He replied that Tunnel Boring Technology would be used to avoid blasts. But, off the record, he admitted that in case of very hard cliffs, blasts*

*would inevitably be needed. The 1976 Mishra Report clearly warned against any blasts, pointing out that the land here shifts daily by 0.002 millimetres. Also note that the cliffs are part of the Himalayas – the youngest mountain range – full of layers of sedimentary rocks. If you dig one layer, another replaces it. Blasting and digging tunnels here will endanger the very existence of these mountains, and with them, the people who inhabit them.*

*A report in December 2013 in The Hindu on protests by villagers against the Lata-Tapovan project quotes Comrade Atul explaining that deposits of debris from road and project construction near the Dhauliganga river would "elevate the level of the riverbed and result in flash floods during the next monsoon."*

*In the wake of the 2013 flood disaster, an article in the 2013 July issue of Liberation by Radhika Krishnan titled 'Uttarakhand's Himalayan Tragedy', offered a detailed critique of the development paradigm being adopted in the hills – a paradigm that was designed to cause disasters. The article ended with these observations:*

*"The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) had warned three years ago that the spate of more than 200 hydropower projects in the state could be catastrophic in the event of*

*a flash flood. But, such reports have rarely had an impact on the state's aggressive promotion of its model of 'development'. And as Engels puts it, nature takes its revenge on us.*

*"Moreover, it is impossible to ignore the ominous role of climate change in this disaster. Several experts have correctly located the Uttarakhand catastrophe in the depressingly long list of 'extreme' climate events with their links to climate change.*

*"The Uttarakhand disaster is indeed an ominous reminder to us. It is important not to see this disaster merely as an administrative failure, as the mainstream political 'opposition' in Uttarakhand as well as in Delhi is trying to do. The likes of BJP, deeply committed as they are to the 'development' paradigm in Uttarakhand – the paradigm of unregulated tourism, of big dams and unfettered mining, of construction of roads, bridges and townships everywhere in the fragile hills – are equally implicated in this disaster. It is high time that we wake up to the need of an entirely new model of development, in the hill regions, and also the rest of the country."*

*In 2013, the Congress was in power in Uttarakhand. Our observations then, hold true now when the BJP is in power instead. □*



Protest against NTPC Tapovan hydroelectric project in 2005 (L). A graffiti painted on a wall—"We don't want the dam. Dams destroy mountain (R).



# EXPOSING GOLWALKAR

## In His Own Words

“

On February 19, the Ministry of Culture in the Modi regime, tweeted from its official handle: “Remembering a great thinker, scholar, and remarkable leader #MSGolwalkar on his birth anniversary. His thoughts will remain a source of inspiration & continue to guide generations.” It is true that Modi and his Cabinet and party are guided by RSS founding father Golwalkar’s ideas alone. But those ideas are neither scholarly nor inspiring – they are Hindu-supremacist, bigoted, fascist, casteist, patriarchal, and openly opposed to democracy and the Constitution. Golwalkar was among those arrested for the assassination of Gandhi, and acquitted only because some witnesses recanted. There is, on record, evidence that he instigated his followers with the idea of assassinating Gandhi.

But there is no need to take our word for any of this. It is best to know Golwalkar in his own words – from his two works, *We, or Our Nationhood Defined* (1939); and *Bunch of Thoughts* (1966).

### Admiration and Emulation of Nazi Germany’s Purge of Jews

“German race pride has now become the topic of the day. To keep up the purity of the Race and its culture, Germany shocked the

world by her purging the country of the Semitic Races—the Jews. Race pride at its highest has been manifested here. Germany has also shown how well-nigh impossible it is for Races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindusthan to learn and profit by.” - *We, or Our Nationhood Defined* (Bharat Publications, Nagpur, 1939)

Note: Golwalkar wrote Hindusthan, by which he meant Hindu (supremacist) Nation, which is distinct from Hindustan, which is derived from the Persian name “Hindu”, which meant the Sindhu/Indus river. Hindustan thus means “land beyond the Sindhu/Indus river”. The Latin name “India” is also derived from the same Persian name.

### Treating Muslims, Christians As Non-Citizens

“The foreign races in Hindusthan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of the glorification of the Hindu race and culture, i.e., of the Hindu nation and must lose their separate existence to merge in the Hindu race, or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment -not even citizen's rights.” - *We, or*

*Our Nationhood Defined* (Bharat Publications, Nagpur, 1939)

In 2006, the RSS claimed to disown *We*, with former RSS spokesperson M G Vaidya saying, “We is not the RSS’ Bible as everyone would like to believe. If it was the Bible then every Sangh worker would have read it and it could have been found in every house. But it is not the case. The book that is central to us is Golwalkar’s *Bunch of Thoughts* since it consists of his views after he became *sarsanghchalak* on June 21, 1940.” (Akshay Mukul, *Times of India*, March 2006) The RSS did this to try and shake off the embarrassment of Golwalkar’s openly Nazi views. But *Bunch of Thoughts* (henceforth *BoT*) expresses, in fact expounds and elaborates, the same ideas as *We*. We asked minorities to “merge in the Hindu race”; *BoT* asked minorities to “merge themselves in the common national stream”, which *BoT* defined as “Hindu”.

### Hindu=National; Any Non-Hindu Identity= Divisive, Communal

Modi is fond of repeating in his speeches that Hindus can never be terrorist, and that is an affront to suggest that any Hindu has ever committed an act of terrorism. This implies that from Godse to Pragya Thakur to Gauri Lankesh’s assassin, Hindus who commit politically-motivated assassinations

or bombings of unarmed civilians are not terrorists, since such violence is always to be considered patriotic to the Hindu Nation.

This notion is actually derived directly from Golwalkar who elaborated on it in BoT.

“The Hindu in Bharat is national, can never be termed “communal”.”

“Communal” in Golwalkar’s usage is equivalent to what his followers today brand as “*Tukde Tukde Gang*” or those who seek to “break up or divide India”. Who, then, was communal (i.e. divisive), according to Golwalkar? The answers may surprise some.

*Muslims and Christians*, of course, were by definition communal, but so were all non-Hindus: “The non-Hindu groups arraying themselves against the Hindu people - in whose life-stream the Bharatiya nation finds its true expression - are in a way communal.” Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, Part II.X

*Sikhs and Buddhists*: “There are communalists in Hindu Society itself, who originally came into existence in the form of creeds as a manifestation of the many-sided Hindu genius, but who later on forgot the source of their inspiration and creation and began to consider themselves as being different from Hindu samaj and dharma, and who on that premise demand separate and exclusive political and economic privileges, and to achieve those demands proclaim themselves to be different from Hindu Society and take to various agitations. Neo-Buddhists and Sikhs are of this type.” - (ibid)

*Tamil, Assamese, Manipuri, Naga etc*: The third form of communalism is of groups like Dravida Kazhagam and Davidra Munnetra Kazhagam who, on the fallacious assumptions of racial distinctness, claim

separation, and who to achieve their ends spread hatred, enmity and violence against the rest of society. (ibid)

*SC/ST/OBC groups fighting for reservation and other rights*: “The fourth type (of communalists) consists of those who rouse controversies in the name of “touchability” and “untouchability”, “Brahmin” and “non-Brahmin” and fan hatred, enmity, selfishness, and demands for special privileges.” (ibid) He called SC/ST/OBC movements “separatist”: “Separatist consciousness breeding jealousy and conflict is being fostered in sections of our people by naming them Harijans, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and so on and by parading the gift of special concessions to them in a bid to make them all their slaves with the lure of money.” (ibid)

*Linguistic minorities and language-based identities and movements*: “There is the fifth type, the communalism of linguistic groups, who indulge in spreading aversion, rivalry and hatred against other linguistic neighbours. The term “linguistic minorities” is born out of this tendency.” (ibid)

*Assertion of distinct regional culture or statehood*: “The sixth type of communalism is one of narrow provincial feelings and of adopting unhealthy attitudes towards people from other provinces. South and North, Punjabi and non-Punjabi, Marathi, versus Kannada, Gujarati versus Marathi, Bengal-Bihar-Orissa difference are of this type.” (ibid)

*Political Movements To Assert the Above Identities or Interests*: “There is the seventh type of communalism which aggravates differences of caste, creed, language, etc., and fans mutual hatred to achieve

electoral ends. This is the most dangerous type rampant all over the country, of which many political parties, including the party in power, are guilty. So long as this - the political type of communalism exists, it is well-nigh impossible to eradicate any other form of communalism.” (ibid)

To the above, Golwalkar added feminism and assertion of women’s equality as another divisive tendency: “There is now a clamour for ‘equality for women’, ‘emancipation from man’s domination’! Reservation in positions of power is being claimed on basis of their sex, thus adding one more ‘ism’-‘sexism’!- to the array of casteism, communalism, linguism, etc.” (ibid)

*India must be Hindu*: Golwalkar in BoT was unequivocal about this. He wrote that even Hindus who embraced a secular identity rather than a singular Hindu identity were enemies: “Hindu society, whole and integrated, should forever be the single point of devotion for all of us. No other consideration whether of caste, sect, language, province or party should be allowed to come in the way of that single-minded devotion. Those who do not love Rama, i.e., the object of devotion, and who come as an obstacle must be considered as ten million times an enemy, though they may be extremely near and dear to us.” - Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, Part II.X

## Opposed SC/ST/OBC Reservations

“We must cry a complete halt to forming groups based on caste, creed, etc., and demanding exclusive rights and privileges in services, financial aids, admission in educational institutions and all such other fields. To talk and

think in terms of "minorities" and "communities" should be totally put an end to." - Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, Part II.X

## **Hindi Or Sanskrit As Official Language of India**

Golwalkar wanted Hindi or Sanskrit (never English) as the only "official language": "Until Sanskrit takes that place, we shall have to give priority to Sanskrit-based Hindi as "official language" based on the score of convenience. We must not allow ourselves to be swept off our feet by slogans like 'Hindi imperialism' or 'domination of the North'." - Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, Part II.X

## **Denied A Distinct Tamil Culture, Equated "Tamil" With "Hindu"**

Golwalkar did not hold Tamil to be a distinct language and culture: "These days we are hearing much about Tamil. Some protagonists of Tamil claim that it is a distinct language altogether with a separate culture of its own. They disclaim faith in the Vedas, saying that Tirukkural is their distinct scripture. Tirukkural, like Mahabharata, is purely a Hindu text propounding great Hindu thoughts in a chaste Hindu language." - Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, Part II.X

## **Internal Threats: Minority Identities and Transformative Ideologies**

Golwalkar considered minority faiths (Muslims and Christians) and revolutionary activists (Communists) to be "Internal Threats" in his *Bunch of Thoughts*.

## **Hindu-Muslim Unity = Treason**

Golwalkar called "Hindu-Muslim unity", treason, and counted 1947, not as the day India achieved freedom from British rule, but as an imaginary "defeat of Hindus at the hands of Muslims": "Those who declared 'No swaraj without Hindu-Muslim unity' have perpetrated the greatest treason on our society. The direct result was that Hindus were defeated at the hands of Muslim in 1947." Golwalkar, Part II.XII

## **Mocked India's Constitution As UnIndian**

"Our Constitution too is just a cumbersome and heterogeneous piecing together of various articles from various Constitutions of Western countries. It has absolutely nothing, which can be called our own. Is there a single word of reference in its guiding principles as to what our national mission is and what our keynote in life is? No! Some lame principles form the United Nations Charter or from the Charter of the now defunct League of Nations and some features form the American and British Constitutions have been just brought together in a mere hotchpotch. Theodore Shay in his *The Legacy of the Lokamanya* says, "Strangely absent from the Preamble is reference to concepts like *Swaraj*, *Dharmarajya* and the integration of the purpose of the state with the purpose of life. In other words, there is no reflection of Indian precepts or political philosophy in the Indian Constitution." - Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, Part III.XIX

What did Golwalkar mean by "Indian precepts"? He meant the Manusmriti (which Ambedkar

as a document of slavery of the oppressed castes and women). After the secular-democratic Constitution was adopted on Nov 26, 1949, the RSS English organ, *Organiser*, in an editorial on November 30, 1949, complained:

"But in our constitution there is no mention of the unique constitutional development in ancient Bharat. Manu's Laws were written long before Lycurgus of Sparta or Solon of Persia. To this day his laws as enunciated in the Manusmriti excite the admiration of the world and elicit spontaneous obedience and conformity. But to our constitutional pundits that means nothing".

## **Golwalkar Mocked The Tricolour Flag**

"Three stripes therefore held a sort of fascination for our freedom fighters also. So, it was taken up by the Congress. Then it was interpreted as depicting the unity of the various communities-the saffron colour standing for the Hindu, the green for the Muslim and the white for all the other communities. Out of the non-Hindu communities the Muslim was specially named because in the minds of most of those eminent leaders the Muslim was dominant and without naming him they did not think that our nationality could be complete! When some persons pointed out that this smacked of a communal approach, a fresh, explanation was brought forward that he 'saffron' stood for sacrifice, the 'white' for purity and the 'green' for peace and so on. All these interpretations were discussed in the Congress Committees during those days. Who can say that this is a pure and healthy national outlook?" - Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, Part III.XIX

## Opposed Federalism, States' Rights, Panchayat Elections

"We are one country, one society, and one nation, with a community of life-values and secular aspirations and interests; and hence it is natural that the affairs of the nation are governed through a single state of the unitary type. The present federal system generates and feeds separatist feelings." - Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, Part II.XV

Likewise, Golwalkar wanted the Constitution

amended to ensure that "elections to Panchayats shall be unanimous, or that there shall be no elections at all." (ibid)

The Modi regime, by working towards achieving Golwalkar's values, is seeking to undermine India as we know it. It is seeking to undo India's Constitution, democracy, and the equal rights and status of all irrespective of caste, creed, faith, gender. It seeks to create a Nazi Manuvadi authoritarian rule instead. Golwalkar's dream is India's nightmare. We must know it, and fight it, will all our might. □

# International Women's Day 2021

## The Historic Farmers Movement And IWD 2021

 CHAITALI SEN

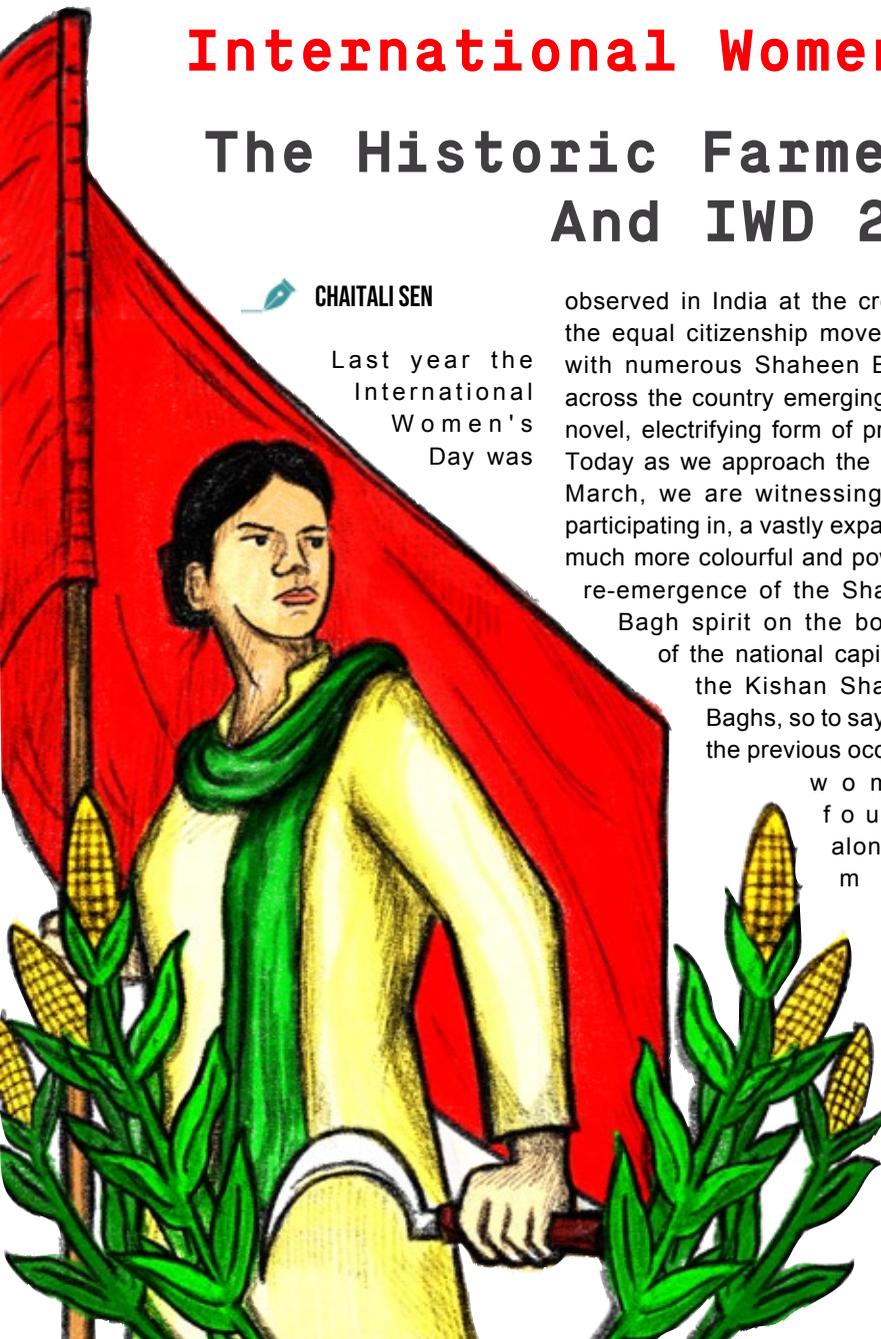
Last year the International Women's Day was

observed in India at the crest of the equal citizenship movement, with numerous Shaheen Baghs across the country emerging as a novel, electrifying form of protest. Today as we approach the 8th of March, we are witnessing, and participating in, a vastly expanded, much more colourful and powerful re-emergence of the Shaheen Bagh spirit on the borders of the national capital - - the Kishan Shaheen Baghs, so to say. If on the previous occasion

w o m e n  
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against three black laws/projects concerning citizenship, this year peasant women are on the warpath, hand in hand with their male counterparts, against three devastating farm laws. Both instances mark new milestones in the struggle for emancipation of women as well as the broader people's movement against the multiple onslaughts of the fascist RSS-BJP regime.

So impressive are the mobilization of women in the outskirts of Delhi and in the numerous rallies, that even the *godia media* could not ignore the stunning visuals. In many cases two or even three generations are present in the battlefields. Preparing food, dusting and cleaning the camps and roads, taking care of children - - including their studies - - in almost all types of work women from diverse backgrounds and belonging to all age groups are busy from dawn to dusk and beyond. In their talks with journalists and other visitors - and



of course in their speeches from the stage -- one could easily discern a deep self-realisation and a strong determination to go on fighting till the black laws are repealed. Stepping out of the daily drudgery of domestic chores and patriarchal restrictions, and enjoying a more vibrant community life in an open space, they are visibly happy -- very happy. This, and the granite resolve of a protracted struggle, make them stay put in the biting cold and sundry other discomforts.

But real life is harder than what we see on our TV screens. Farmers on the protest sites cannot forget for a moment the fields and the crops (whether harvested or still on the fields), the cattle and the homestead, and the younger and older members of the family they have left behind. So in many villages they, especially women, form small groups between themselves and take turns in attending the border camps for a week or so, while neighbours look after whatever

the outgoing group

l e a v e s

behind.

In all

these

arrangements they usually get full cooperation from the menfolk: after all, it is a common battle for a common cause. In fact the entire movement comprising both the forward posts on Delhi border and the supply lines from other towns and villages has emerged as a spectacular illustration of -- or, if you will, a vast, vibrant, creative workshop on -- gender parity and cooperation.

The spontaneous, independent and highly visible assertion of women farmers is certainly an eyesore to the patriarchal power structures embedded in our society and state. So the Chief Justice of India took upon himself the task of advising the farmer leaders, in the protective tone of a kind guardian of Indian women, not to "bring" women to the protest sites because they are, like old people and small children, too weak to bear the biting

cold and other hardships out there. But the learned CJI should know that it is not leaders and husbands who "bring" women along: the latter join the protests on their own simply because they too are peasants toiling on the fields

in extreme weather conditions and they are as knowledgeable and concerned about the disastrous impact of the farm laws on agriculture and therefore on the whole people of India as their male counterparts. He should also accept that the supermen of the Judiciary simply have no business

lecturing Indian women on where and when they should go or shouldn't go and exercise their constitutional right to protest. Women are not a 'weaker sex' in need of benevolent patriarchal protection: they are born free and everywhere they are now breaking free from the chains thrust upon them over the ages. Their energetic and conscious participation in broader political movements like the farmers' agitation is objectively a major means to this end.

The AIKSCC took the CJI's advice with the same contempt with which it had earlier rejected the blatantly pro-government, anti-farmer mediation panel. More, in recognition of the equal share of women in agriculture and in the movement, it went on to observe the 18th of January as Mahila Kisan Diwas or Women Peasants' Day (WPD). On that festive day women peasants and agrarian workers reached the protest sites on tractors, other vehicles and on foot in great numbers. They conducted the day's proceedings on the stages and enthralled the huge gatherings with their speeches and songs. The audience responded with loud slogans and attractive placards in several languages, the central message being "Women's place is in the resistance" -- a rebuff to the patriarchal adage that "women's place is in the home." Many activists including AIPWA leaders like Kavita Krishnan, Meena Tiwari, Krishna Adhikari and others joined the assembled farmers and addressed them. Comrade Jasbir Kaur Natt, who has been active on the Tikri border and contributing to the movement's organ *Trolley Times* from the very beginning, also addressed the assembly. Effigies of IMF and WTO were consigned to flames because these agencies had been



batting for the highly contentious farm laws even as Indian farmers were up in arms against these Acts. Interestingly, the Government of India saw the agencies' intervention as a certificate of merit even as it condemned the observations of Greta Thunberg on the same Acts as interference in India's internal matters!

The WPD was observed in other places also. In West Bengal for example, a "Women Peasant-Agrarian Labour Assembly" was organised in Kolkata under the joint initiative of the AIKSCC, AIPWA and many other women's, peasants' and agrarian labourers' organisations. Among the resolutions unanimously adopted in the Assembly, the most notable ones are: the CJI must apologize for his observation on women protestors; women farmers must be accorded due recognition as farmers and women agrarian labourers must be paid fair and equal wages; the three farm laws must be repealed and replaced by pro-farmer laws that guarantee joint ownership of all agrarian properties; mandatory MSP for all agricultural produce and government-run Mandis/procurement centres at

Panchayat level; small loan waiver for all women. The Assembly was followed by a spirited 500-strong torchlight procession from Esplanade to Sealdah station.

The WPD was also observed in Panduah and Dhaniakhali, both rural areas in Hooghly district. Women agrarian labourers and poor peasants including Dalits and adivasis as well as activists in the loan waiver agitations participated in these meetings.

The enthusiasm of WPD was carried forward on the occasion of the grand Republic Day Parade by peasants in the national capital. Women farmers loaded their tractors with *sathins* and sisters and took part in the parade in large numbers. Sitabai Ramdas Tadvı (56), an Adivasi peasant from Maharashtra who had been active in various agitations during the last 25 years including the march against Reliance Industries in Mumbai on 22 December last year, participated in the parade till late in the night. She fell sick from exposure to severe cold and died on her way back home, adding one more name to the long list of martyrs in the current movement.

The fighting spirit of protesters remained intact even after the post-26 January crackdown. The following report, based mainly on a story in *The Wire*, 11 February 2021, reveals how women coped with the ordeal let loose on farmers by the authorities at the Singhu border.

A daily supply of water tankers from Delhi had been the most important lifeline of the sprawling protest site. When the vindictive authorities cut off that lifeline by blocking all entry routes, essential services like cooking food, cleaning utensils and supplying water to the bathrooms and washrooms came to a grinding halt. To further punish the protesters, power lines were also cut off. Toilets became unusable. While men somehow managed, women were at great difficulty, especially at night. For menstruating women, the situation was even more horrible. However, within a day or two people in nearby villages - - workers from Kundli Industrial Estate, sports persons, wrestlers and their coaches, and the youth in general - - joined hands with the volunteers to gradually restore water supply with hundreds



Women Peasants' Day: Visuals from New Delhi and West Bengal

of bucket and a few hose pipes. The volunteers even dug three borewells, installed motors and laid water pipes and taps near the mobile toilets within five days. In this Herculean exercise the camaraderie extended by people of Kundli village deserves special mention. 23 year old Nodeep Kaur hails from this village. Since early January this year she has been behind bars under charges of extortion and attempt to murder. Her real 'crime' was that she had been mobilising workers of the industrial estate in support of the agitating farmers and she must be very happy to learn that her mission was successful -- the workers did help the distressed farmers in a big way.

The camp volunteers, including female ones, managed to clean up the toilets pretty quickly. They also took special care to ensure that no miscreant could enter the camp and harass the ladies under cover of darkness. Even in the face of enormous difficulties and unhygienic conditions, women protesters did not flee from the battlefield. They stood by one another, took care of children and the elderly and continued the fight.

As we write this report, women peasants and agrarian labourers are also vigorously participating in the numerous Kisan Mahapanchayats being held in adjacent states and gradually also in other states.

Like every genuine mass movement with a grand vision - - the best case in point being the last leg of our freedom movement - - the current farmers' agitation too has mobilised the young and old, the higher and lower castes and classes, and men and women solidly together in the fight against a very clearly identified enemy: the Adani - Ambani Company

Raj in cahoots with the cunning, treacherous, authoritarian Modi government. A vast war front like this provides the women's movement with the required space to spread its roots and branches, gain strength and advance towards the attainment of its own specific goals as part of a wider socio-political transformation. In addition to the current farmers' movement, the months preceding IWD 2021 also witnessed massive militant movements by other sections of working women - - notably various scheme workers (think the long-run agitation of ASHAs in Haryana, Bihar and other states) and microfinance loanees despite Covid restrictions. This reminds us once again that downtrodden working women still remain as basic a powerhouse of women's movement as in the initial years of celebrating the International Working Women's Day (as it was called then).

At the same time, the courageous role played by girl students and minority women as well as women journalists, lawyers, intellectuals and activists in the recent past (think Disha, Nikita and many others) clearly demonstrate the growing synergy between the women's movement and other progressive movements. On 8 March 2021, while raising our voices on critical issues like growing violence against and patriarchal restrictions imposed on women, 'Love Jihad' and anti-conversion laws, the just demands of scheme workers and microfinance loanees etc., let all women groups and activists take a special pledge to further consolidate this synergy, to strengthen people's united struggles against the increasingly aggressive fascist regime in India and to make the world a better place to live in. □

## The Priya Ramani Verdict Vindicates Sexual Harassment Survivors

 KAVITA KRISHNAN

*(This article first appeared in the Indian Express on February 20, 2021 under the title 'The right to her testimony').*

It was a relief to see Priya Ramani, a victim of sexual harassment, acquitted of the charge of defamation laid on her by former editor and BJP leader M J Akbar in a brazen attempt to silence women's testimonies of being molested by him. But the acquittal

verdict, achieved by the courageous testimonies of Ramani and Ghazala Wahab, and the stellar feminist lawyering by Rebecca John, is pathbreaking because it did much more than refuse the attempt of a perpetrator to punish his victim. The verdict went beyond a mere refusal to convict Ramani for criminal defamation. The verdict vindicated Ramani and, by implication, the other women who had variously come forward to accuse Akbar

of sexual violence, by accepting Ramani's truth as a defence to the charge of defamation. The verdict's reasoning for accepting Ramani's and Wahab's testimonies as truthful is vindication for scores of women.

Women speaking up against sexual harassment are often disbelieved, often asked, "what proof do you have?" Other questions women face include: "Why did you not speak up immediately after it happened?" and "Why did you take to media or social media to tell your story, instead of filing a criminal case?" The Ramani judgement is worth celebrating because for once, a court of law took on the burden of offering a definitive answer to these questions. Survivors and feminist activists will now find their burden a little lighter: They will be able to ask all questioners to find the answers in this landmark judgement.

The verdict urged society to "understand that sometimes a victim may for years not speak up due to mental trauma," and underlined that a woman has a right to speak up about the abuse, even after decades. It pointed out that since sexual harassment typically takes place in private, women's testimonies cannot be dismissed as untrue or defamatory simply because they are unable to provide other witnesses to back their allegations.

Institutional mechanisms have systemically failed to protect women or provide justice, the verdict reasoned, and, therefore, survivors are justified in sharing their testimonies on media or social media platforms as a form of self-defence. This insightful reasoning is possibly the most significant and precious part of the verdict.

Men from privileged classes, when accused of sexual violence,

are quick to accuse women of injuring their reputation and status. There have even been campaigns (across political aisles) claiming that the amendments to India's sexual violence laws in 2013 are "draconian" when applied to privileged men. The unspoken (and sometimes outspoken) assumption has been that these laws were meant to be used only to convict slum or street-dwelling "thugs" like the accused in the 2012 Delhi bus rape case. When women professionals seek justice against "respectable" and even celebrated men, their influential friends raise a cry of outrage, and promptly accuse the complainants (and their feminist supporters) of injuring the reputations of such men. (The reputations of the women are held as too puny to count).

The Ramani verdict cuts the "injured reputation" argument to size, pointing out that sexual abuse violates the constitutionally recognised rights to dignity (Article 21) and equality (Articles 14 and 15), and that (a man's) right to reputation cannot be protected at the cost of (a woman's) right to dignity. Akbar had argued that Ramani's public testimony had harmed his "stellar reputation". Citing the testimonies of Ramani and Wahab as convincing and truthful, the court "accepted the contention of the accused (Ramani) that the complainant (Akbar) is not a man of stellar reputation."

The Ramani verdict is a huge moral vindication of the #MeToo movement, and will, hopefully, serve to deter powerful men from using the defamation law to silence survivors. But we are still very far away from ensuring workplaces free of sexual harassment for every woman, every transperson.

In the media and social media, it

is the cases involving well-known individual men that tend to receive attention. But sexual harassment is a problem of institutions rather than of individuals alone. The world over, employers deploy sexual harassment as a means to discipline and control women workers.

In India and Bangladesh, at least 60 per cent of garment factory workers experience harassment at work. In Guangzhou, China, a survey found that 70 per cent of female factory workers had been sexually harassed at work, and 15 per cent quit their jobs as a result. Dina Siddiqi, writing about women garment workers in Bangladesh, notes that "a highly sexualised regime of verbal discipline, as well as more overt forms of sexual harassment, also serves to keep women in their place." Many studies have established that this is equally true of India.

In November 2018, the All India Progressive Women's Association, along with other trade unions, organised the event, "#MeToo: Working Class Women Share", in Bengaluru. For factory workers, domestic workers, street vendors, sanitation and waste workers, construction workers, sex workers, labour laws or laws against sexual harassment exist only on paper. Calling out their boss as a perpetrator means an instant loss of job and pay. The women who spoke were unanimous that individual complaints were not an option: They needed unions to fight collectively. The Labour Codes passed by the central government make it all but impossible for workers to unionise. Women workers fighting sexual harassment, who stand to be silenced by these codes, need more support and attention. □

# Report From States

## Public Libraries in Bihar

*(Text of a letter by Bihar MLAs calling attention of the Bihar Assembly to the state of public libraries in the state, followed by a letter to one of the MLAs, Comrade Sudama Prasad, by a student, responding to his calling-attention motion.)*

To  
The Secretary  
Bihar Vidhan Sabha, Patna

I hereby give notice for a calling attention motion under the Bihar Vidhan Sabha procedure and rule No. 104 in the conduct of proceedings manual.

Sincerely  
Sudama Prasad  
Member, Bihar Assembly

In the fifties there were 540 public libraries in the state of Bihar but today there are only 51 libraries remaining. Similarly, till 1970 there were more than 4000 village level libraries in the state but that number is now reduced to 1004.

In 2012 the state government gave Rs 1 crore to libraries for purchasing books, after which libraries have received no grant.

Meanwhile, the condition of village libraries is quite appalling. They have a shortage of basic reading and study material, necessary basic infrastructure, and professional and qualified librarians. Indeed, they lack money even for purchase of newspapers. As per Planning Commission directives, there should be one library per 1000 persons.

Kerala State (with a literacy rate of 95%) spends 3% of its Budget on libraries, while in our State this expenditure is 0.01%.

Therefore, we draw the attention of the government through this motion for allotting 3% of Bihar's education budget to libraries, revitalization of the 51 existing libraries, opening new libraries at District and Block levels, and appointment of librarians, cataloguers and library publicists.

Signed  
Sudama Prasad  
and other MLAs □

## A STUDENTS' RESPONSE

*Respected Shri Sudama Prasad Ji*

I saw a letter of yours which has gone viral on Facebook, in which you have called the attention of the Bihar government to issues related to libraries.

As a student, I am amazed to see this letter. Once in a while we get to hear ruling party and opposition leaders' statements on issues related to education, though there may be no action or decision taken later. But this is the first time in my life that I am seeing a leader discussing the issue of libraries seriously. After reading your letter I was astounded that even in the days when our country had relatively fewer resources compared to today, Bihar had thousands of libraries whereas currently the well-known libraries in Bihar are practically on their death-bed.

Presently I am on a scholarship from the Russian government and am studying Russian Literature and doing research work at the St Petersburg State University. Libraries have been a very important part of my life's journey. Our government schools and colleges in those days used to have libraries. We used to do hours of self-study in the library. I studied for a few months at the Sinha Library in Patna. In fact, it was after I saw some Russian language books in that library that I started learning Russian by myself. We used to prefer libraries to teachers because whereas teachers taught us only their particular subject, we could choose and read books of our choice in the library. Also, many of our friends were from poor families whose homes did not have suitable study place. As such, they used to spend long hours in the Patna University library from where they studied and secured good posts in life.

It is my belief that the more the culture of reading is developed in people, the more progressive they will become, understand their responsibility to society, and become aware of their rights. At the same time this give also strengthen democracy in our country.

I have been in Russia for about two years and have seen many states and various libraries here. I like the libraries here very much and often wish that such libraries existed in our Bihar also. The population of Russia is only slightly more than that of Bihar and Jharkhand put together. Russia had 62,700 public

libraries in 1985 and the number of public libraries today is 39,800. People are also using digital libraries these days. In comparison, Bihar-Jharkhand have only 213 (192+21) public libraries. Reference: Raja Ram Mohan Rai Library Foundation, Government of India.

From this we can get an idea how committed our government is towards developing libraries. I have found that as a result of this reading culture not only the middle class in Russia but also the working class and sanitation workers have a deep understanding of literature, culture, society and science. The miserable condition of the government education system and dearth of libraries in Bihar is the reason for the abject lack of education in the working-peasant class due to which they are unable to write or speak against the exploitation to which they are subjected. It is pointless to expect adequate libraries in Bihar government schools when there is a dire shortage even of teachers.

The questions you have raised for the betterment of libraries fills me with enthusiasm. I have full confidence that you will succeed in bringing education and library culture back on track in Bihar, so that progressive consciousness will awaken in the people of our State, youth will understand their responsibility to society and become the voice for marginalized and oppressed people.

Nowadays it is even possible through technology to make e-libraries reach the villages. A revolutionary step can be taken in education by making available e-book readers (like Kindle) to children and youth at low cost. Bihar has an ancient tradition of libraries. The libraries of the ancient Nalanda and Vikramshila Universities were world-famous. My wish is that you are successful in bringing back the culture of learning and libraries in our land.

**Gautam K**

## Chakka Jam Across Bihar

A statewide chakka jam was held across Bihar on 18 February 2021 in response to the call given by AIKSCC for a countrywide chakka jam in support of the ongoing farmers' struggle. The demands made through the chakka jam are: repeal of the 3 farm laws, withdrawal of Electricity Bill 2020, guarantee of MSP and arrest of RSS-Bajrang Dal members who attacked farmers sitting on dharna at Muzaffarpur.

At Ara in Bhojpur hundreds of activists led by CPIML leader and AIKM National Council member Raju Yadav blocked the Sasaram-Patna Intercity Express. RYA-AISA leaders Shivprakash Ranjan, Sabir Kumar and Pappu Kumar also led the protest. Thirteen persons including Raju Yadav were arrested by the GRP Thana. State Secretary Kunal strongly condemned the arrest of kisan-student-youth leaders. The protesters remained firm on not paying a fine.

Rail traffic was stopped at Patna Junction Platform No. 1. Defying police obstruction a meeting was held in the station complex led by AIKM, AIARLA and other farmers' organization leaders Rajendra Patel, Manikant Thakur and others. A meeting was also held at the Patna Secretariat Halt. Protests were also held at Bihata Station and Masaurhi Station led by Rajesh Gupta and Kripa Narayan Singh.

Rail traffic was obstructed and a protest meeting held at Jehanabad led by Ramadhar Singh. Protest meetings were also held at Shekhpura, Nawada, Muzaffarpur, Vaishali, Lalganj Station and rail traffic obstructed at various places led by Jitendra Yadav, Vishveshwar Yadav, Ramchandra Rai and Dr Prema Devi. Farmers held dharnas at various Blocks in Bxar District. The dharna at Dhansoi Block was led by AIKM leader Alakh Narayan Chaudhuri. □

## Hindutva Goons Attack Kisan Dharna in Muzaffarpur

CPIML Bihar State Secretary Kunal strongly condemned the attack by goons affiliated to Hindutva organizations on farmers sitting on dharna under the AIKSCC banner on 16 February at the Shaheed Khudiram Bose Memorial in Muzaffarpur. He said that these days organizations in Bihar associated with the BJP have become so bold that they indulge in naked goondaism. If the Bihar government has even a shred of respect for democratic processes all the attackers must be arrested immediately and such incidents must be stopped.

Muzaffarpur District Party Secretary Krishna Mohan cited the party enquiry report and said that around 3 pm on 16 February some 15-20 goons affiliated to communal organizations came to the dharna spot, tore down banners and posters and broke the mike. When

the farmers protested, they started pushing and shoving. The farmers' organizations then blocked the road and sat on dharna in protest. CPIML members immediately reached

the spot. Later, the police also arrived. An FIR has been registered against unknown attackers. Farmers organized a protest march under the AIKSCC banner from the Shaheed

Khudiram Bose Memorial on 17 February against the attack. The demand for arrest of the attackers was raised during the chakka jam protest on 18 February. □

## Ekusher Daak: Bengal Fights Back Against Fascist Offensive, For Democracy- Diversity- People's Rights

 MADHURIMA BAKSHI

Ever since the BJP came into power in 2014, our Constitution, democracy, human rights and freedom of expression are under continuous attack. Common people of the country have been denied their fundamental rights and struggling for survival. Systematic assaults are designed against minorities, dalits, farmers, workers, students, women, activists, intelligentsia and dissenters. When the entire country is suffering from Covid outbreak, lockdown disaster and economic crisis, Modi Government is busy in looking opportunities for the Ambanis and Adanis. Anti people labour codes, farm bills, education policies have been introduced meanwhile to serve the new Company Raj. RSS – BJP's machinery of hatred and communal politics backed by the corporate can only be challenged by people's movements. Bihar elections

had shown us the utmost need to be united against this fascist force and shift the narrative from the divisive agenda set by BJP and Sangh to the agenda of common people.

Bengal elections are approaching and BJP is desperately trying to achieve electoral gains at any cost. The legacy of freedom struggle and successive left democratic movements in Bengal had shaped its progressive, broad and inclusive atmosphere. BJP and RSS is vehemently trying to ruin this rational and diverse cultural fabric of Bengal and co-opting Bengal icons by their false propaganda. On the other hand, there have been many genuine demands of the people of Bengal for their lives and livelihoods, citizenship, health and education, jobs and social security

especially after successive attacks of Covid and cyclone Amphan.

To champion the people's voice in the upcoming 2021 Bengal election against the powerful fascist force, a 'Peoples Charter' of citizens of West Bengal 'Ekusher Daak Manusher Dabi' (Peoples Demands: Clarion Call for 2021) has been formulated in continuity with demands raised in the course of long struggles by the people of Bengal. The charter was drafted by the inputs from vast cross sections of society including grass root people, farmers, workers, students, representatives of various mass movements, civil rights activists, artists, writers, environmentalists, academicians etc.

For a month, conversations were held about what people's issues need to be raised to turn the elections into a movement asserting the people's agenda. These conversations



Ekusher Daak Manusher Dabi event held on Feb 9 at Kolkata (L). A poster displayed at Feb 21 Ekusher Daak event held at Esplanade Y Channel (C). CPIML General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya speaking at Ekusher Daak event on Feb 21 (R).

resulted in the final charter of demands which was officially released in the Citizens' Convention on February 8 at Kolkata Yuva Kendra Auditorium. Kumar Rana, Kaushik Sen, Dipankar Bhattacharya, Moushumi Bhowmik, Amit Bhaduri, Tanika Sarkar, Gautam Bhadra, Maroona Murmu, Shamim Ahmed, Naba Datta, Punyabrata Goon were among the many conveners of this convention. The charter enumerates the demands for health- food security- education- dignified employment for all, workers rights, rights of farming and farmers, equal citizenship, forests and forest dwellers, people's empowerment and autonomy, social justice and equal rights, environment, federal structure, rights to language and culture. On a day when PM Modi demonised dissent and instigated his followers to launch a witch-hunt against 'andolanjeevi' activists, several hundred progressive citizens met in Kolkata to adopt the people's charter and save Bengal from the BJP's fascist expedition.

The convention was inaugurated with musical performance by Naihati Agnibina Sanskritik Sanstha. Kumar Rana greeted the participants and briefly discussed about this timely initiative amidst the alarming rise of the BJP and RSS in Bengal. Veteran leader Sanat Roy Chowdhury read the condolence note in memory of the martyrs of farmers' movement and victims of lockdown, Cyclone Amphan and Uttarakhand disaster. A set of ten resolutions were then placed by Shamim Ahmed and greeted with enthusiastic approval from the participants. The convention demanded withdrawal of the farm laws, labour codes, NRC- NPR- CAA, NEP, EIA draft Notification 2020. The convention also took firm stand against privatization of public sectors, against divisive communal politics of RSS BJP, against all draconian laws imposed on activists and dissenters;

and upheld the Constitutional rights and secular democratic fabric of our country.

Addressing the Convention, CPIML General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya explained how BJP's majoritarian and communal politics is the biggest threat for our democracy. He emphasized on Bengal's historical legacy as a bastion of progressive values and democratic movements and the need to build a united strong resistance against fascist penetration in Bengal. He also said that we must take lessons from ongoing farmers' movements and recent Bihar election.

Upholding the charter of demands, the convention was addressed by Samirul Islam, Maroona Murmu, Alik Chakraborty, Naba Datta, Hafiz Alam Sairani, Pallab Kirtania, Kapil Krishna Thakur, Abhijit Basu, Swapan Ganguly, Punyabrata Goon, Moushumi Bhowmik, Anuradha Deb, Sujato Bhadro, Sharadindu Uddipan and Ashok Biswanathan. Noted social scientist Partha Chattopadhyay sent his note in solidarity with the initiative. Songs presented by Moushumi Bhowmik, Pallab Kirtania and Abhijit Basu set the spirit of the convention on a high note. The house resolved to organize a mass gathering at Esplanade on 21st February.

Taking ahead the message of 'Ekusher Daak Manusher Dabi'; vigorous campaigns, meetings and conventions were organized at sub urban and rural areas of South Bengal. Com Dipankar Bhattacharya addressed mass conventions at Uttarpara and Dhaniakhali in Hooghly and Burdwan town followed by Bethuadahari, Nakashipara and Dhubulia in Nadia district during the period of 13-18th February.

On the International Mother Language day 21st February, 'Ekusher Daak' meeting was held at

Esplanade Y Channel with a pledge to save Bengal from fascist offensive, to save democracy- diversity- people rights. Two colorful marches starting from Subodh Mallick Square and Howrah Station reverberated with slogans and songs reached to the meeting place beautifully decorated with colorful banners, festoons and placards. Different civil society activists, mass organizations, progressive democratic citizens, cultural platforms, political activists, artists, writers joined the march and participated in the meeting. Noted actor and director Kaushik Sen, CPIML General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya, Naba Datta from Nagarik Mancha, Professor Maroona Murmu, Dalit activist Sharadindu Uddipan, director and editor Arjun Gourisaria, leaders of left democratic movement Hafiz Ali Sairani and Alik Chakraborty, student activist Mrinmoy Sarkar, trade union leader Asish Kusum Ghosh, Simanti Ekka from Tea Garden workers movement, Ruma Ahiri from debt relief movement, NREGA activist Jubi Saha and Mehboob Mandal from SSC movement were among the speakers. The speakers strongly argued that we must resist the Sangh and BJP's ploy to replace the heterogeneous and diverse culture of India (multiple languages, cultures, food habits, faiths) with 'one nation- one religion- one language- one party' theory. Nitish Ray, Babuni Majumdar, Meghna Majumdar, Maroona Murmu, Mahasweta Samajdar along with Progressive Cultural groups Jonogonomono, Tha, Riddhi presented songs, play and recitation in solidarity with peoples struggle to defend democratic ethos of our country. The meeting ended with singing 'We Shall Overcome' longing hope and resolves to fight back against fascist offensive. □



## CONDEMN MILITARY COUP IN MYANMAR

CPIML condemns the February 1 military coup in Myanmar, the detention of Aung San Suu Kyi and other leaders of the NLD which swept the elections last year, and the fatal firings on protesting people.

In 2015, openly contested elections were first held in Myanmar after 25 years of military rule. Between 2015 and 2021, the military never relinquished control to the civilian government headed by Suu Kyi.

The CPIML has been critical of the civilian government led by Suu Kyi, especially on its complicity with and silence on the disenfranchisement and genocide of the Rohingya people. We hope that the mass movement against the military coup will seek to build solidarities and unity with the Rohingya people, and strive not just to regain electoral democracy, but to democratise the entire social and political fabric of Myanmar, with justice for the Rohingya and other minorities.

We demand that the Government of India sever its ties with the Myanmar military regime. The Indian people must stand in solidarity with the mass movement against the military coup.

- CPIML Central Committee

# REPEAL ALL FARM LAWS

## Rail Roko, Feb 18



### EDITORIAL OFFICE

CHARU BHAWAN, U-90, SHAKARPUR, DELHI - 110 092 PH.: 91-11-22521067

email : [liberation@cpiml.org](mailto:liberation@cpiml.org) ; website : [www.cpiml.net](http://www.cpiml.net)

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram & YouTube: @cpimliberation

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