

Observance of 138th Memorial Day of great Karl Marx



Comrade Provash Ghosh,
General Secretary, SUCI(C),
at Shibpur Party Centre, West Bengal



Comrade Sankar Saha, Polit Bureau member, SUCI(C),
at Central Party Office, Kolkata



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Assembly Elections

PEOPLE'S VICTORY LIES IN MAKING GENUINE LEFTISM VICTORIOUS

Amidst pandemic situation, assembly elections in four states of West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Union territory of Puducherry are going to commence from end of this month and continue throughout April. The moment the poll bugle has been blown, all vote-oriented parties, counting their political existence in the number of seats they might grab by any means, have begun their customary campaign of giving fake promises, vending spurious dreams and self-certifying themselves as helmsmen of 'development'. While the parties in power are providing lists of their 'achievements' in the bygone years and seeking a fresh term for 'devotedly serving the people', particularly the downtrodden and underprivileged, those in opposition are brushing aside all such claims as bogus and instead projecting themselves as

"...deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to misrepresent the people in Parliament, ...individual suffrage serves every other employer in the search for the workmen and managers in his business. And it is well-known that companies, like individuals, in matters of real business generally know how to put the right man in the right place, and, if they for once make a mistake, to redress it promptly." ---Marx (Civil War in France)

superior candidates for being in service for the people. What is being seen is that hardly any people's issue is featuring in the campaign. Instead, the parliamentarian rivals are calling each other each by names often in filthy languages, giving personal attack and character assassination precedence over desired political debates and behaving as if they are at loggerheads with each other. As usual, the mainstream media is busy in giving widest coverage to such semantic quibbling and generally ensuring that only those who have

unenviable record of duping the common people and duly buttressing the class interest of the ruling monopolists alone come to the fore as choices for the people in the hustings. So, with the all hustle-bustle of election, it is poised to be another defrauding exercise with the interest of the increasingly pauperized toiling millions thrown to the winds.

Prevailing socio-economic-political scenario

It beggars description as to how devastating is the socio-economic-political life of the misery and penury-stricken countrymen in the last few years of the BJP rule at the Centre and some of the states including Assam which is also going to the polls. On the economic front, all fiscal and monetary policies are so framed that the rich becomes richer and the poor poorer and there is growing economic centralization. Prices of essential commodities are soaring beyond limit. Cost of petrol-diesel-LPG-kerosene have become unaffordable with progressive rise in excise duties and cess. While prices are spiralling, income of the people is rapidly dwindling giving rise to market crisis--endemic of the capitalist system. One after another industries are closing down throwing lakhs out of jobs. Cost of agricultural inputs have gone up tremendously. Poor peasants are not receiving remunerative price. Hoarding and black-marketing are rampant. Demonetization and GST have worsened the situation further. Increased privatization and commercialization of key sectors including railways, banks, education, healthcare and other service industries as well as

FACT SHEET OF BJP RULE

1. Wealth concentration and inequality

- Wealth of Indian billionaires increased by 35% during lockdown as per Oxfam
- India's 100 top billionaires saw their fortunes increase by Rs 12,97,822 crore since March last year when the Covid-19 pandemic hit the country and this amount is enough to give 14 crore poorest Indians a cheque for Rs 94,045 each.
- If India's top 11 billionaires are taxed at just 1 per cent on the increase in their wealth during the pandemic, it will be enough to increase the allocation of Jan Aushadi Scheme by 140 times, which provides affordable medicines to the poor and marginalized. (Business Standard 25-01-21)
- The concentration of wealth in India is "beyond comprehension" and its economic inequalities "are out of control," said the latest Oxfam report.

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Hardly any people's issue is featuring in the campaign

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savage fiscal and monetary policies are wreaking havoc in people's life. More is the privatization, more is the exploitation entailing escalated peril of the people. Unemployment has ascended to a new height. Already over 3.5 lakh peasants have committed suicide, officially. Even the number of suicides by retrenched workers or unemployed youth are not short in number. And the toiling pauperized millions are bearing the brunt of this capitalist crisis by bleeding white. While 83 crore Indians survive on less than Rs20 a day, Mukesh Ambani, India's richest industrialist, earned Rs 90 crore per hour even during pandemic. Though India ranks 94 out of 107 countries in Global Hunger Index and 23 crore Indians go hungry every day, just two industrialists -Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani have doubled their wealth during the BJP rule. This glaring inequality is the hallmark of Indian capitalist economy which the BJP as well as other ruling parties are wedded to defend and work as custodians of.

But lest the people should raise their voice against such perennial oppression and repression, the government has been taking one after another notorious political steps. All legitimate democratic movements are being brutally crushed. Draconian black acts have been brought to muzzle the voice of protest. Anyone daring to show dissent against any government policy or measure is being squarely accused of sedition and of being anti-national. Even any upload on the social media criticizing the government is viewed as treason. The instances of human right violations by the government-administration are growing at such an alarming proportion that not only domestic onlookers but even international observers and some jurists are expressing serious concern. Also there is a concerted attempt to create a committed judiciary and the judges are often accused of delivering judgments 'in favour of the government' by violating due juridical process so as to get some plum posting after retirement. More and more power is concentrated in the hands of the bourgeois state to undertake political coercion at will.

Attack on the socio-cultural front is also mounting in various forms. In order to blunt rational thinking process, all kinds of old obsolete thoughts, religious

backwardness, obscurantist ideas and bigotry are being fostered in every possible way. The whole education system is being so revamped that no scientific bent of mind and spirit of enquiry develops among the students. Myth and history are being synonymized. Coupled with it is the concerted effort on the part of the ruling quarters to divide people along religious-casteist lines by fanning up communal-

"A democratic republic is the best possible political shell for capitalism, and, therefore, once capital has gained possession of this very best shell it establishes its power so securely, so firmly, that no change, either of persons, of institutions, or of parties in the bourgeois-democratic republic, can shake it....To decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament -- such is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism, not only in parliamentary-constitutional monarchies, but also in the most democratic republics."

-Lenin (State and Revolution)

fundamentalist-chauvinist-parochial fanaticism. Persecution of religious minorities and so-called lower caste people is a common phenomenon. Even riots and murderous attacks against religious minorities are engineered frequently to keep the atmosphere surcharged with tension and terror. The RSS-BJP are known for using their infamous IT Cell to circulate fake news and morphed pictures to whip up communal passion and orchestrate fratricidal bloodbaths. Secondly, there is harrowing spurt in crime rate particularly crime against women. Rape, gang-rape, murder, dowry deaths, honour killings, female foeticide and infanticide, domestic violence, eve-teasing etc. have become the order of the day. Widespread obscenity, growing objectification of women, rapid proliferation of pornographic material, sex-perversion and intoxicants like liquor, drugs etc. are polluting the social atmosphere and breaking the moral backbone of the nation, particularly the youth.

NRC, Black Farm Laws and killing Labour codes

That is not all. To widen social divide based on religion, exacerbate torture and harassment of religious minorities and polarize people along communal line, the BJP government floated an idea of creating a National Register of Citizens (NRC) and initiated the exercise in Assam. The whole purpose was to fraudulently brand bona fide Indian citizens belonging to religious minority community as "illegal foreigners" and thereby rob their citizenship through a slew of manipulative exercise. In course of that, the oppressed toiling people would be divided into two parts-the "citizens" and the "stateless" which would come handy for the oppressive rulers to resort to the infamous 'divide and rule' tactics and divert attention from the burning problems of life bred by this decrepit capitalist system. The initial exercise finally located 19 lakh names to be people excluded from the final NRC. But contrary to the expectation of the ruling quarters, 12 out of these 19 lakh people were the Hindus. This proved to be a spoilsport for the ruling RSS-BJP who then brought a new most uncalled for Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) saying that all non-Muslim refugees from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan would be granted citizenship under this Act. Naturally, there was countrywide protest against NRC as well as CAA and a historic Shaheen Bagh movement in Delhi epitomized the wrath and rejection of such heinous ploys by the right-thinking conscientious countrymen. When such movements were surging forth in almost all parts of the country, the RSS-BJP engaged armed storm-troopers to break the Shaheen Bagh movement.

Then the country was gripped by Covid 19. Though the first case was detected in India on 27 January 2020 and the World Health Organization (WHO) who declared the disease to be a pandemic on 6 March 2020, the ruling BJP leaders did not take any measure to prevent spread of this deadly virus as they were busy greeting the then

around 12 crore people lost jobs. The whole country was moved by the tragic spectacle of millions of migrant workers rendered jobless shelterless overnight, trudging alongside highways at night with barrows, bundles and children in their arms and some dying midway without food and water and because of fatigue.

When it was incumbent on any civilized government to come to the rescue of the suffering countrymen with appropriate relief and rescue measures, the BJP rulers gave a big bluff by announcing a so called economy revival package which was in fact a prescription of granting loans to big enterprises and their smaller ancillaries and did not care to give any cash assistance to the misery and penury-stricken citizens to buy items of bare necessities. Not just that. It was during the pandemic that the government went on increasing tax on petrol-diesel heftily to mop up additional revenue of over Rs 2.3 lakh crores. Even there was steep rise in the prices of LPG and Kerosene to imperil the pandemic-hit poor people.

But that was not all. Since during lockdown and even on rolling out of unlocking process, it was not possible to convene parliamentary session or organize any protest movement, the government in a crafty manner brought three black Farm Laws through the ordinance route. The Essential Commodities Act was amended to remove the existing restrictions on stocking food produce. And the other two laws have paved the way of eventual corporate takeover of agriculture to the total detriment to the peasants' interest. Hence lakhs of peasants including women from the neighbouring states of Delhi congregated at different places and began a march to the capital. But the government arrayed its entire arsenal to prevent them from entering Delhi by creating barricades through boulders, trenches, spike beds and wired barbs. So the peasants have camped at three border points and have been continuing their demonstration with every passing day weathering chilly cold followed

"Only scoundrels or simpletons can think that the proletariat must win a majority in elections carried out under the yoke of the bourgeoisie, under the yoke of wage slavery and must then win power. This is the height of stupidity or hypocrisy; it is the substitution of elections, under the old system and with the old power for class struggle and revolution."---Lenin ('Greetings to Italian, French and German Communists, 'Against Revisionism')

American President Donald Trump and toppling Congress-led Madhya Pradesh State Government by engineering defection. Once these two assignments were accomplished, the BJP Prime Minister declared total lockdown in the country without any preparation or notice. By one stroke, normal life came to standstill and

by scorching sun and batons-bullets-water cannons of the police. This movement has sprouted spontaneously with no specific leader at the helm. But it has already shaken the BJP government. Had it been steered along a true leftist line, it could have sent chill down the spine

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FACT SHEET OF BJP RULE

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- Mukesh Ambani, the richest Indian, has added Rs 1, 357.5 billion to his fortunes, which stood at Rs 5,752.5 billion at last count. He was worth Rs 4,395 billion at the end of last year. (Economic Times 14-12-20)
- Between March and October 2020, Mukesh Ambani's wealth has more than doubled to Rs 5,872.5 billion, and he rose from 21st to sixth in the world's largest fortunes," notes the latest Oxfam report. "During this period, Mr. Ambani's average enrichment over just over four days was more than the combined annual salaries of the entire Reliance Industries workforce of 1,95,000 employees." (uca news.com 01-02-21)
- As per International Labour Organization (ILO), the increase in the wealth of the Mukesh Ambani during pandemic could keep 40 crore informal workers out of poverty for at least 5 months. (unmid.com 25-01-21)
- Gautam Adani has seen his wealth swell by some Rs 157.5 billion so far in 2020. He is now worth Rs 2,430 billion compared with Rs 847.5 billion at the end of last year .i.e. 3 times more. (Economic Times 14-12-20)

2. Industries closed down

- On 1 July 2019, it was stated in Parliament by the government that as high as 6.8 lakh establishments have closed down in the country. This is 36.07% of the total registered companies. (Economic Times 01-07-19)
- During lockdown, shutters have reportedly been downed in as many as 2.7 lakh industries and 6 to 7 crore small and cottage industries. This is over and above declared closure of 6.8 lakh industries in the pre-lockdown period. (unmid.com 25-01-21)
- Unemployment and job loss
- CMIE report says India's urban unemployment rate soars to 30.9% even as overall rate rises to 23.4%, indicating covid-19's impact on the economy. Early estimates of jobs data indicate that the coronavirus effect may have left a devastating impact on the economy, sending urban unemployment rate soaring to 30.9% . Overall unemployment rose to 23.4%. (live mint 07-04-20)
- Only in the last three months of lockdown, over 11 crore people were estimated to have lost jobs. Of these, 9 crore were daily wagers and around 2 crores were salary earners. Assuming that each person now having lost job was spending at least Rs 8,700 per month less than they were earlier, the crash in demand from them was close to Rs 100,000 crores a month.
- 12 Crore Indians lost jobs and 84% Indian households saw their income falling in just one month. (Business Standard 16-05-20 and NDTV 28-05-20)

3. India's national Debt

- India's total debt-Rs 86, 50,268 crore. Interest Payments Per Year Rs 4,81,906 crores. Interest Payments Per Second Rs 1,52,812. National Debt Per Citizen Rs 65,285. (commodity.com 18-02-21)
- In 2021-22, interest payments are estimated to be 15% higher than the interest obligations in 2019-20. Interest payment is estimated at 45% of revenue receipts in 2021-22, up from 36% in 2019-20. (prindia.org 01-02-21)

4. NPAs in banks

- As of 31 March 2019, India's scheduled commercial banks had gross NPAs worth Rs 9.49 lakh crore. (The Wire 01-07-19)
- In a "very severe stressed scenario", the gross non-performing assets of the banking sector could rise to as high as 14.7% of total loans by March 2021, the RBI stated. (Bloomberg quint-24-07-20)
- Loans worth Rs 8 lakh crore written off by Indian banks in the last decade. (money control 31-12-20)
- India's industrial production dropped sharply in April when the country went into lockdown and most factories were not in operation. The index contracted by 55.5% compared with the same period a year earlier. That includes sectors such as mining, manufacturing and electricity. Manufacturing of consumer durables saw the sharpest decline for the month. (CNBC 22-06-20)
- The RBI claimed that as much as Rs 5.2 lakh crore had been released by it to the banks by way of bringing down the borrowing rates. But there have hardly been any borrower from the banks. The Industrialists admitted in ASSOCHAM conference that there is no scope for taking bank loans because of absence of demand. the commercial banks were left with no option but to park all of that money in the RBI's reverse repo account, which swelled from Rs 3 lakh crore on 27 March to Rs 8.4 lakh crore by the end of April. Neither the PM nor the FM made this truth public. (The Wire 18-05-20 and Ananda Bazar 29-07-20)
- In 2019, 84,545 cases of bank frauds came to light. Amount involved is Rs1,85,772 crores. 2.14 lakh complaints have been lodged with the Ombudsman. RBI has informed this in reply to a query under RTI ACT. (ABP 28-07-20)
- Indian banks have technically written off a staggering amount of Rs 68,607 crore due from 50 top wilful defaulters, including absconding diamantaire Mehul Choksi, according to a reply under RTI from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). (CNBC-28-04-20)

5. Tax concessions and waivers granted to corporate houses

- Revenue forgone by the government in the form of incentives and tax exemptions to corporates in 2019-20-Tax exemptions--Rs 99,842.06 crore. Revenue foregone on account of 'accelerated depreciation' was to the tune of Rs 50,251.56 crore. Revenue foregone on deduction of profits of undertakings engaged in generation, transmission and distribution of power was to tune of Rs 14,326.23 crore. Revenue foregone on deductions of profit of industrial undertakings derived from production of mineral oil and natural gas stood at Rs 1,418.12 crore. TOTAL--Rs 1,65, 837.97 crore. (Economic Times 01-02-21)
- During its first term at the Centre, the Modi-led BJP government provided tax exemptions to corporate entities amounting to a whopping Rs. 4.32 lakh crore, according to Budget documents of various years. The amount of concessions increased every year from Rs. 65,067 crore in 2014-15 to about Rs.1.09 lakh crore in its last year, 2018-19. On an average, these concessions amounted to about 7.6% of the net tax revenue of the central government. If one adds Rs 1.46 crores of tax loss due to slash of corporate tax rate to 22% in 2019-20 and the estimated loss of Rs 1,65 , 837.97 this year, it would be a whopping Rs 7, 32 lakh crores. (News click 09-07-19, and prindoa.org 01-02-21)

6. Tax Revenues

- Indian tax revenues remain largely dependent on indirect tax collections, which include all taxes on spending (such as GST). These indirect taxes account for over two-thirds of total tax revenue in India. (live mint-17-02-20)
- **Disinvestment of Public sector units and banks**
- As per Budget 2021, disinvestment of Air India, IDBI Bank, and Pawan Hans will be completed in 2021-22. Legislative amendments will be introduced to privatise two public sector banks and a General Insurance company. The IPO for LIC will also be completed in 2021-22. The government has approved a strategic disinvestment policy under which CPSEs will be maintained only in four sectors, with the rest being privatised. States will be incentivised to disinvest their public sector companies. A Special Purpose Vehicle will be used to monetise government owned land.
- The disinvestment target for 2021-22 is Rs 1,75,000 crore. This target is 3.5 times higher than the disinvestment of Rs 50,304 crore in 2019-20. (Budget Speech 2021)

7. Slash in subsidies

- Food
- Revied Budget 20-21-Rs 4,22, 618 crores

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While 83 crore Indians survive on less than Rs 20 a day, richest Indian earns Rs 90 crore per hour

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of the government.

Just like the way these out and out anti-peasant black Farm Laws have been pushed through, three downright anti-labour bills were also hurriedly passed in the midst of rising Covid-19 pandemic and at a time when the opposition had boycotted the parliament to register protest against the said Farm Bills. These new legislations would give a free hand for hiring and firing workers snatching away existing labour protections and infringing upon their right to strike. Fixed term employment has been introduced under which the employers are given the absolute right to hire workers for a fixed term by denying them continued service even when the job is perennial in nature. Further under this act the managements are not mandated to provide any social security benefits to the workers. This is typical hallmark of a fascist autocracy in power.

Planned privatization of Education and Healthcare

And the BJP government has already rolled out the process of establishing corporate takeover of both education and healthcare through the provisions of National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) and National Health Policy (NHP) respectively. NEP is also designed to strip education of its essence and wipe out whatever little of secular, scientific and democratic education is still existing in the country. Similarly, without caring for improving Primary and Secondary Healthcare infrastructure under the aegis of the government as well as the facilities in government hospitals for extending necessary medical assistance to the common people, the government has been creating much hype centered around health insurance as if 'Boost to Universal Insurance' is guarantee of 'Universal Healthcare'. And during the pandemic, the mutilated skeleton of government healthcare system has tumbled out of the cupboard.

People's issues are relegated to the back

But if one carefully looks at the electoral campaign of the BJP, Congress, TMC, AGP,

seats are oriented towards mudslinging, personal attacks, mutual bickering, character assassination, vulgar comments and surfeit of lies and deceptions. While the authorities are trying to pose compliances with various procedural paraphernalia as summum bonum of election, ideological-political campaign, which is supposed to be the very quintessence of adult franchise even in

“*Election is bourgeois politics. If the masses lack political consciousness, if the working class is not in the midst of struggle and does not have its own class organization, if there is no mass movement and if the people are not armed with the strength of a conscious organization, the big industrialists, businessmen and the reactionary forces create such a hype with the help of money and media power that the common masses get swayed by that just like the way a sheaf of thatch-grass gets swamped by rush of water.*”

—Shibdas Ghosh (from an unpublished speech)

bourgeois parliamentary democracy, has been made the worst casualty. In fact, ideological-political campaign and debates have been reduced to redundancy because floor-crossing, horse trading, shifting allegiance, internal squabbles, factional feuds etc. have been dominating the election market. So, there is no commitment to any ideology or principle. Only consideration is lure of lucre and power.

On the other hand, as our Party has been pointing out for long, the bourgeois media is also compelled to admit that election is now controlled by money-muscle-media power. Our Party has also added administrative power as the fourth controlling tool. People have also been seeing how by bending the rules of elections and manipulating the results with the help of money-muscle-media power, a bunch of self-seekers, notorious elements, arch criminals and rank opportunists have been entering the House with the backing of the ruling bourgeoisie. And not just entry, they are also forming governments, enjoying pelf and power and chronicling the tale of escalating misery and penury of the people. For example, in the current parliament, nearly 50 per cent MPs in the current Lok Sabha cutting across parties have criminal

criminal charges. As many as 440 of the 536 MPs in the Lok Sabha are crorepatas, including .265 from BJP and 43 from Congress. Similarly, in present West Bengal assembly, 90 MLAs have serious criminal charges against them. 35% of the MLAs are crorepatas. 33% sitting Tamil Nadu MLAs have criminal cases against them.

Hoax of 'development'

And what is the most sickening is that all the vote-based parties are harping on 'development'. While the ruling parties are dishing out a tall list of developmental work they have undertaken like laying roads, constructing flyovers, illumining the streets with LED lights, giving doles, supplying tarpaulins to cover hutments, giving cheap rice and wheat through public distribution system etc., the opposition is claiming that it is only they who can usher in the desired development if voted to power. The BJP is also highlighting GDP growth figures to claim how the country is surpassing many other countries in development. But are these real indicators of development? Surely not. Development means fast decrease of unemployment, rising income of the common people, dipping price line, availability of all basic necessities from food to shelter, education and healthcare to everyone without any hassle or constraint, alleviation of poverty and reducing inequality. In other words, the sole yardstick is to see if the standard of life of common people is improving or not. When judged in this yardstick, can it be said that there has been any semblance of development? Does pushing the have-nots and underprivileged, destitute peasants, workers and jobless millions to the precipice of ruination symbolize development? Some cosmetic face-lifts here and there is no testimony of development.

Rather, on all counts, there is fast degeneration in every sphere of life, and the wails of the deprived multitudes are renting the air. So, bypassing these issues, the showcasing of achievements by the ruling parties is a hoax. Equally farcical are the tall promises of the bourgeois opposition many of whom have similar track-record of sham development while in power.

Mischievous slogan of double-engine growth

Now the BJP has raised another bogey of "double-engine" meaning that if the same party rules at the Centre and in the states, development would be faster. But while saying so, the BJP leaders are not referring to the "development" of Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh—the states under their rule. For example, the UP chief minister himself admitted in the assembly on 14 February 2020, that number of unemployed educated youth in Uttar Pradesh, has grown by over 12.5 lakh in last two years to 34 lakh. In December last, 62% of households reported incomes lower than pre-lockdown period. In just four years, crimes against women increased in Uttar Pradesh by over 66%. National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) which works under the Ministry of Home Affairs, has marked Uttar Pradesh as the most unsafe state for women. In regard to Dalits, the number of harassment cases registered by NHRC in Uttar Pradesh saw an increase of nearly 41 per cent. Same is with Gujarat. More than 2000 industrial units have closed down, the state government admitted in the assembly. The Gujarat government in February last told the state Assembly that 4.58 lakh educated youth are registered with various state employment exchanges. The highest spike in the urban

"When people get disgusted and resentful against the government, another government steps in through elections. The common people hold some persons to be dishonest, they think that it will bring them good if only the dishonest were removed and in their place honest men were installed. Bourgeois parliamentary politicians resort to this type of propaganda with the object of confusing the people under cover of a 'principle' or 'ideology'. So, I would caution the workers, peasants and the common people not to be swayed by this type of deception. Because, only through a change of government the basic problems of the common people had never been resolved, will never be resolved.....the emancipation of the people from the capitalist yoke and the oppressive capitalist system will be impossible to achieve through change of government a thousand times, through elections, or through attempts to rewrite the letters of the laws. The only way to achieve emancipation is to gradually build up the invincible revolutionary united strength of the people through conduct of democratic movements on the correct base political line and to accomplish socialist revolution under the leadership of the revolutionary working class party."—Shibdas Ghosh-- Independence on 15th August and Problems of Emancipation of People, SW Vol III]

DMK, AIADMK as well as the CPI (M), CPI, one would find that due emphasis on the people's issues, pressing problems of people's life is strikingly absent. Instead, the contending parliamentary parties in their desperate vying for

records. It is an increase of 44 per cent in the number of MPs with declared criminal cases since 2009. 116 of the 303 lawmakers from the BJP have criminal charges, including one for terrorism. Twenty-nine of the 52 Congress MPs also have

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Four States and one Union Territory on the eve of assembly elections

We give below a brief outline of the pre-election scenarios in the poll-bound four states and one Union Territory.

West Bengal

West Bengal has been ruled by Congress for around three decades. Then the CPI (M) had run the government for 34 long years. Now the TMC is on the throne and the BJP is making a desperate attempt to come to power. For that, all central leaders including the Prime Minister, Union Home Minister, BJP President and other central leaders are frequenting the state at shorter intervals. Also they have succeeded in netting many disgruntled ministers, MPs, MLAs, councillors and panchayat functionaries of the TMC, Congress as well as the CPI (M) and its front partners into their fold. Equally desperate is the CPI (M) and its associates to remain afloat in the corridor of power. So, they have joined hands with the Congress and the self-proclaimed Indian Secular Front (ISF) headed by Pirzada Abbas Siddiqui, a Muslim cleric of the shrine of Furfura Sharif, to launch a so called third front. Before joining hands with the CI (M), Siddiqui, in fact, had a detailed discussion with Asaduddin Owasi, head of arch Muslim fundamentalist All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMM), which is alleged to have helped the BJP win recently held Bihar election by a slender margin by cornering Muslim votes along religious lines. But the CPI (M) holds that both the Congress and ISF are secular democratic allies. In fact, by this act, the CPI(M) has opened a Pandora's Box.

It revolves upon a basic question. What is meant by secularism? Is it that religious tolerance meaning not possessing any negative attitude towards or hatred for any other religion is secularism? Or encouraging all religions is secularism? In our country, the vote-birds and quarters of vested interest tend to define secularism like that. And a section of the masses under their influence also are prone to such belief. But neither of this is true. While religious tolerance stands for liberal view, cheering all religions, as most of the vote-monger bourgeois petty-bourgeois leaders do in our country, is, in fact, multi-theocratism. Philosophically, secularism means non-recognition of any supernatural power and recognition of only nature and material world as reality. Politically secularism means the state, political affairs, social life and education remains outside the purview of religious practices. State would neither encourage any religion nor curb the freedom of religion. State would neither encourage any religion nor interfere in the religious activities. Religion should remain a personal affair.

But as the BJP is an open advocate of arch

Hindu communalism- medieval anachronism, and has, of late, been repudiating secularism, its parliamentary rivals have opted for flaunting their self-styled secular credential to pretend as crusader against communalism-fundamentalism-medieval anachronism. So, the Congress, which always peddled soft-Hinduism, orchestrated communal riots in various places, opened the lock of Babri Masjid to allow worship of Ramlala there and brought a number of black acts, brutally crushed democratic movements and went to the extent of clamping emergency, suddenly appeared to be a trusted secular democratic ally of the CPI (M). Everyone knows that out of their grudge against the TMC which ousted them from power in 2011, the CPI (M) leaders during the last parliamentary election surreptitiously voted for the BJP by whispering that "first it would be Ram, and then bam (leftists)". What they meant was that let the BJP defeat the TMC first. Then, as people would be disgusted with the BJP, they would come back to the CPI (M). What an incredible analysis! Equally fascinating is the imparting the crown of secularism on Abbas Siddiqui's ISF. While interacting with the journalists, Biman Basu, veteran polit bureau member of the CPI(M), held that those who are branding ISF as non-secular have no proper understanding. ISF would not field religious minority candidates only. Their list would comprise nominees from Hindu, scheduled caste, scheduled tribes and other backward communities (OBCs) as well. [Ganasakti, Bengali organ of the CPI (M), 2 March 2021] Great! By that logic, the BJP too is secular party since the BJP also field Muslim, dalit and OBC candidates.

Ruling TMC is also in discomfort because of desertion of a host of its legislators, leaders and important functionaries and allegations of large scale corruption and nepotism at grassroots level. So it is banking on the personal charisma of its supremo, Mamata Banerjee and also cunningly trying to play on Bengali sentiment. To counteract, the BJP also is singing peans in favour of Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Netaji Subhas and others. But the irony is that all these great personalities preached exactly the opposite to what the doctrine of Hindutva and Hindu nationalism the RSS-BJP propagate. While Vivekananda though a believer in Vedanta was an exponent of liberal views and decried any hatred towards any religion, Rabindranath, primarily a humanist, also ridiculed the view that the interests of the Hindus and Muslims are different. Vidyasagar, an ardent proponent of true secular humanism, rejected the Sankhya-Vedanta as 'false systems of philosophy' while Netaji Subhas advocated for keeping religion out of the purview

of politics and social relations and even warned people of traitors like Hindu Mahasabha (ancestral organization of RSS-BJP) who had come to seek vote with tridents (symbol of Hinduism) in hand. The BJP leaders including the Prime Minister have never cared to say if they had honoured any of their pre-election promises. Only they are harping on Atmanirvar Bharat (self-reliant India), a euphemism for Corporate-nirvar Bharat (corporate-reliant India) and banking on jumlas (A term used by Union Home Minister Amit Shah to denote pre-election gimmicks) like creating 'Sonar Bangla' (Golden Bengal). All their boasting of modernity and development are grounded in simulation and falsehood. The verbal duels between the TMC leaders and the BJP top brass have become a saga of slugging out on the rostrums or TV screens with indecent words, venom-spewing, raised decibels and innuendos. Not only are these accompanied by virulent social media war, but by daily physical attacks and counter-attacks, finger-pointing, claims and counter-claims.

Moreover, there is a celebrity (Sportsmen, TV and film stars) tug-o-war between the BJP and TMC. Both the BJP and TMC have been parachuting in these celebrities knowing fully well that these glamour-birds are "guest politicians" and treat parliamentarism as a sabbatical. They are simply crowd-pullers. Moreover, fielding these so called celebrities also help them to defuse local intra-party fights because these fancy-candidates normally do not belong to any particular faction. The BJP has also given tickets to almost all turncoats from the TMC, Congress, CPI (M) and CPI and has thus virtually become an abode of the aggrieved and abandoned. What a caricature of electoral battle!

Kerala

The governmental power has so far been alternating between the CPI (M) and the Congress. This time also, it is between the ruling CPI (M)-led LDF and the Congress-led UDF. As was in the case of West Bengal in 2011, the CPI (M) is not seeking vote, based on any leftist line, but, like any other bourgeois -petty bourgeois parties, highlighting 'developmental' activities undertaken by its government. The CPI (M) leaders are openly exhibiting their pro-capitalist, pro-globalisation leanings and proclaiming their intention to make Kerala an "investor friendly" state. The CPI (M) government had entered into a clandestine contract with a US-based company named EMCC international to allow them to extract the coastal sea and deep sea marine. The company was given a huge area of government land as well. Though the CPI (M) government which initially claimed that it had "nothing to do with the deal" was caught red-faced after more details of the deal got leaked. Ultimately the

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Assembly Elections

Floor-crossing, horse trading, internal squabbles, factional feuds and lure of lucre and power dominating election market

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unemployment rate was seen in Gujarat. 20.6 per cent households sometimes skipped meals due to lack of food while 21.8 per cent said they sometimes slept without a single meal, as per Hunger Watch survey. Data on crime tabled by the state home ministry in the assembly stated that a total of 14,702 cases of suicide were registered in Gujarat in the last two years, suggesting that on an average nearly 20 persons took their lives every day. Gujarat reported nearly four rapes every day in the two years beginning 1 January 2018. The list is endless. So, if the BJP 'double engine' runs in other states, one can imagine where the country would head to.

BJP's self-arrogated credential of nationalism and patriotism

Another point needs to be discussed in brief. The BJP and its mentor RSS have been arrogating to themselves the credential of being true nationalist and patriotic. So, anyone who dares to criticize the RSS-BJP or show dissent against any of its policies, preachings or acts is squarely branded as anti-national. Similarly, by patriotism the RSS-BJP means occasional fulminations against Pakistan or China and undertaking so called surgical strikes against the neighbouring countries. But what they try to suppress is that they never supported Indian freedom movement and the concept of Indian nationalism born of it. Rather they opposed it as reactionary and co-operated with the British imperialist rulers. It was V D Savarkar of Hindu Mahasabha, now an idol of the RSS-BJP, who first mooted the idea of religion-based nation - an unhistorical flawed proposition which the Muslim League endorsed later as a result of which, the country was vivisected after a shameful communal riot. When the countrymen were aroused in demand for ouster of the alien rulers and Netaji Subhas declared war against the British rulers with his Indian National Army, the Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim League based on Savarkar's theory of "responsive cooperation", had formed coalition governments in Bengal, Sind and North-West Frontier provinces of undivided India. Savarkar gave an undertaking of helping the British rulers with all servility and in fact, exhorted the Indian youths to join British Army. Similarly, M S Golwalkar, another ideologue of the RSS-BJP, who was effusive in praise for Hitler and opposed Indian

Renaissance and freedom struggle because it was not a Hindu national struggle and directed only against the British rulers. He also denounced 'territorial nationalism' and mooted the proposition of 'Hindu Rashtra'. He further held that equating Indian freedom movement with anti-Britishism was a reactionary idea and thus branded the revered leaders of freedom movement as reactionary.

ingoism, ancient traditionalism and inculcating blind faith among people so that truth remains ever elusive. Alongside, they are pretending to be overwhelmed by patriotic feelings presuming that this past history would not be unfolded before the people.

Corruption and crime

Further, corruption and crime have become commonplace concept

"So long as revolution is not accomplished, whether people want elections or not, like it or not, they get dragged into it, involved in it. Revolution means that people have realized that there is no need for elections, when they are all organized and boycotting elections in an organized manner; not negatively but have positively reached the stage of seizure of power and are saying: 'No more election; capture power.' Only at that point does taking part in the election become infructuous, unnecessary. Or else the people do get time and again enmeshed in the election. And in order to stay with the masses, both revolutionaries as well as non-revolutionaries - all have to participate in the election. The genuine revolutionaries too have to do that. Everybody has to participate in the election. Only those who practise sectarian truism, those who do not really practise revolutionary politics may want to fight shy of it and remain out, otherwise everyone has to participate. But does it mean that all those taking part in the election are having the same outlook? So you have seen outwardly everyone takes part in the election, I do, we the revolutionary Marxist-Leninists do, the social democrats, the genuine forces, the sham elements, the bourgeois parties, the pseudo-socialists - outwardly viewed, it all appears to be the same. And everybody would say that he only is right, the opponent parties are wrong. So, any tactics or move to defeat the opponent party is justified, because I am right. If this is your line of argument, then there remains no difference in terms of outlook between you and the bourgeoisie. As a matter of fact, an in depth analysis will prove your approach to be erroneous.... The main objective of the bourgeois parties is to grab maximum number of seats by any means and ride to power. Having captured power, to protect the existing system they undertake some reforms and raise slogans on false pretents. To take recourse to whatever propaganda helps them to don a progressive cloak, to confuse and befool the people for some time in order to prolong the existing system itself - this is their purpose. Hence, their main objective becomes securing maximum number of seats in the elections by hook or by crook. when the party of the proletariat participates in the election with the object of revolutionary purposiveness, being compelled by the necessity to remain with the people, it does so on the basis of mass revolutionary political line. It also tries utmost to win seats. But the essence of its objective is never to anyhow grab maximum seats. The revolutionary party's focal point is to educate the people as to how to fight the election on the basis of a mass revolutionary line and in doing so, if we can win maximum seats; all the better. If we cannot, not even a single seat, so be it. If we can retain ten seats, then be it so. But the central, the focal point can never be to anyhow grab some seats... I will take this message to the people: since you are taking part in the election, you should do so from the perspective of people's interest, based on revolutionary politics... So, the essential task is to politically educate the people to distinguish between those who merely talk and those who actually practise it." ---Shibdas Ghosh-(On Preserving Unity and Establishing Revolutionary Leadership in Workers' Movement' SW Vol IV)

This was the kind of 'patriotism' and 'nationalism' they stood for which was going against the aspiration of freedom-seeking Indians. As inheritor of this sinister doctrine, the RSS-BJP is now promoting Hindu

in capitalist societies. The entire capitalist world is virtually suffocating from the fuming fire of corruption and crime; the human society from top to bottom is turning blue from the poison of the two. Like any other

party in servitude of the ruling bourgeoisie and anchored in bourgeois parliamentarism as main plank of politics, the BJP, notwithstanding all tall talks of its leaders, is also mired in corruption, criminal activities and afflicted by all kinds of filths and rots bred by the outdated stinking capitalism. For example, it is not yet known who were behind the mega VYAPAM scam in Madhya Pradesh involving as high as Rs 36,000 crores and 48 unnatural deaths of accused persons, witnesses, government approvers, probing officials- professors- deans or investigating journalists, media persons and whistle-blowers. Even the BJP chief minister and his wife's names featured in the list of the suspects. Likewise, the alleged scam over acquiring Rafael warplanes from French company Dassault at exorbitant price ignoring objections from CAG and placing offset contracts to a non-existent Anil Ambani-owned company instead of experienced Government-owned HAL is now quietly shifted under the carpet. And finally the BJP government informed the Supreme Court that documents related to the Rafale deal were stolen from the Defence Ministry. Crimes like undertaking fake encounters, secret assassination, lynching over cow vigilantism, open provocation to perpetrate violence on the minority people, letting armed storm-troopers on peaceful democratic movements etc. are also not in short supply.

Election reduced to farce

When the election time comes, To capture power by any means, they do not hesitate to resort to anything starting from limitless manipulations in the voters' lists to terrorization, intimidation and forcible capture of polling booths. The ruling parties of the capitalist class have been doing these year after year undeterred right under the nose of the law, using the bureaucracy and the police for the purpose. In this way, the whole election system, having lost its democratic dignity, its tradition as a medium to reflect and exchange opinion, has been reduced to a mere trade circle for crass 'give and take', a vile business and a farce. In this way, money of the capitalist class is flowing in a flood in the election. As if, it has become a competition as to who can purchase whom. And to implement this, they are destroying the moral backbone of the students and the youth, trying to destroy their conscience. At the same time, it is

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Assembly Elections

Pushing have-nots and underprivileged to the precipice of ruination does not symbolize development

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also seen that if a ruling party, even after resorting to all these, is ultimately dislodged from power in the face of intense mass wrath, another party of the capitalist class replaces it and comes to power. This two-party parliamentary system of politics is also another ploy of the capitalist class to preserve the exploitative capitalist system by confusing the people. So, though many parties take part in the poll, the monopoly-controlled media at the behest of the ruling bourgeoisie cunningly pitchfork two parties or combinations as contenders and try to influence the electorates in such a way that they are forced to restrict their choice between those two. So it is TMC-BJP in West Bengal, CPI (M)-Congress in Kerala, DMK--AIADMK in Tamilnadu and BJP-AGP alliance vs Congress-A I U D F - C P I (M) combination in Assam.

Another most disquieting fact is that with the election turning into a farce, frustration of the common people assailed day in and day out by deception and deprivation has been soaring. So when the power-monger parliamentarian parties appear with a bagful of money, offer one or two square meals and massively distribute liquors, the hapless destitute people feel that since nothing tangible is going to happen in their life no matter which party wins,

time is ripe to grab whatever is thrown to them as crumbs. So, they rally behind this or that vote-based parties which give them more doles. This feature is very pronounced in the elections nowadays indicating how people are being defrauded and dehumanized by the power-brokers.

Responsibility of genuine leftists in such murky situation

What is most distressing that when it was necessary to build up a powerful moment against the misdeeds and oppressive measures of the

"If we have chosen the position in life in which we can most of all work for mankind, no burdens can bow us down, because they are sacrifices for the benefit of all; then we shall experience no petty, limited, selfish joy, but our happiness will belong to millions, our deeds will live on quietly but perpetually at work, and over our ashes will be shed the hot tears of noble people." --Marx (On the Choice of a Profession)]

RSS-BJP and simultaneously launch an intense ideological struggle against communalism-fundamentalism, all other bourgeois petty bourgeois parties are busy calculating electoral arithmetic and forming unprincipled opportunistic alliances to reap benefits in the hustings. So, the pre-poll scenario is dominated by opportunistic power-greedy vote-oriented parties whose whole and sole job is to betray people's cause, mislead the wretched populace and stage a mockfight in public as well as media glare to capture seats. The obvious question is what then is the task enjoining the genuine Marxists-leftists who represent the alternate pro-people politics,

embody higher ideology and culture, never compromise with principled stand and ethical standard and bear the urges and aspiration of the oppressed millions? Can they allow the toiling masses to become innocent victim of the nasty immoral power-politics and be led astray? Or they need to discharge the crucial revolutionary responsibility to place before the people the genuine leftist alternative upholding the teachings of great Lenin that the real strength of a genuine Marxist-Leninist party, the torchbearer of true leftism, does not lie in the number of members in assembly or parliament but in the warmth and fervour of class and mass struggles which would finally lead to bring about cherished emancipation of the suffering humanity from the tentacles of

"In this situation, the fissiparous groups and religious fundamentalist like the Jana Sangh (forerunner of the present day BJP) are waiting in the wings. They are waiting for opportune moment. As soon as whatever attraction the people still have towards left movement destroys, they would come out in the open. The ruling CPI (M) leaders are not conscious of this danger. Throwing to the wind the communist ideology and its quintessence, they are going on misleading the people with tall talks and sweet words, just as the Congress did. Thus they are maligning down the prestige of communism."
-Shibdas Ghosh (UF Politics and Party Work, SW Vol. III)

people from various segments and various communities would develop in course of a strong united struggle for common cause and against common enemy. The ongoing historic peasants' movement is a classic example of that.

The SUCI(C), as is known to all discerning persons in the country, has been developing such class and mass struggles based on higher proletarian culture over various burning problems of life. SUCI(C) activists are always amidst the vortex of any legitimate democratic movement with an objective of channelizing those in the right

direction to reach logical culmination. In the process, many SUCI(C) leaders and workers have embraced martyrdom. Many are serving life terms being slapped with false cases by the quarters of reaction. The SUCI(C) is always calling upon the exploited countrymen to acquire necessary political consciousness to decide between right and wrong, distinguish between friends and foes. To the SUCI(C) workers, revolutionary politics, as taught by Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, the Founder General Secretary of the Party and one of the outstanding Marxist thinkers of the era, is perceived as nobler feeling

of heart which steel them in their resolve to enable people to get rid of the grime of the rotten capitalist society and make proletarian revolution a reality.

As per the teachings of great Lenin, communists cannot shy away from taking part in election till the time the people are positively disillusioned about bourgeois parliamentary democracy and mentally prepared for revolution. While the lone objective of all bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties is securing maximum seats by hook or by crook, a true revolutionary party fights election based on definite principles with the principle aim of imparting necessary political education to the people. It also tries to win as many seats as possible to reflect the voice of extra-parliamentary movements inside the House but not by sacrificing ideology and principle, moral and scruple. So, in course of its relentless effort to build up class and mass struggles, if an election comes by, it takes part in that with its distinct revolutionary line and views the electoral battle a part of the ongoing democratic movements.

With that aim in view, when the fascist autocracy is frantically trying to take its root deeper into the country and right-wing reactionaries are virtually ruling the roost, when communal-fundamentalist-chauvinist-parochial-casteist-racist wolves are howling, the SUCI(C) made an utmost effort to unite all left forces to spearhead democratic movements in leftist direction and place before people a struggling alternative to opportunistic deceitful right reactionary vote-oriented politics. With that clear leftist line and outlook, the united left forces could contest election also. The SUCI(C) wanted a left unity for movement and not just an electoral pact. In fact, some progress could be made by forging an alliance of six left parties. But once the bell tolled for election, the CPI (M) and its associates preferred to shun the line of movement and instead hold the hands of the Congress for petty electoral gains. So, they quietly broke the unity with the SUCI(C).

Since then, the SUCI(C) has been waging struggle singlehandedly throughout the country to uphold the prestige and glory of genuine leftism and organizing people on the platform of movement. In this election also, the SUCI(C) has fielded tried and tested soldiers of democratic movement as its candidates to fight the battle based on true leftism. In course of a discussion, our great leader, teacher and guide, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh had said: "Although outwardly there appear to be many opposing forces in politics, and the press projects so many contending forces, but viewing the situation from the context of ultimate struggle, I hold, only two contending forces are there in politics - one for revolution, the other opposing revolution - in whatever nomenclature might it be posed. One is the politics of countering revolution...And the other is the politics of organizing revolution." (SW Vol III p 532) This is being clearer with every passing day. We fervently appeal to the suffering people to imbibe the truth, identify who is a power-broker and who is their spokesmen and make the SUCI(C) candidates victorious.

FACT SHEET OF BJP RULE

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- Budget estimate of 21-22- Rs 2, 42, 836 crores
- Fertilizer
- Revised budget 20-21 -Rs 1,33, 947 crores
- Budget Estimate of 21-22- Rs 79, 530 crores-
- Petroleum
- Revised Budget 20-21- Rs 39, 055 crores
- Budget Estimate 21-22-Rs 14, 073 crores (prsindia.org -01-02-21)

8. Hike in petrol-Diesel-LPG prices

- During BJP rule, excise duty on petrol-diesel has increased 12 times allowing government to mop up Rs 24 lakh crores as oil revenue. Quantum of excise on petrol and diesel have increased by 258 and 820% respectively. Price of LPG has gone up by Rs 175 in last 2 months and a half. (ABP-16-02-21, 22-02-21)
- Central excise duty makes up for 39% of petrol and 42.5% of diesel. After considering local sales tax or VAT, the total tax incidence in the price is about two-third of the retail rate. (The Hindu 17-01-21)
- Just during pandemic, the government further hiked excise duty on petrol and diesel by a record margin of Rs 10 and Rs 13 per litre respectively in May last amidst lockdown. Special additional excise duty on petrol was increased by Rs 2 per litre and road cess was hiked by Rs 8 a litre. In case of diesel, special additional excise duty was hiked by Rs 5 per litre and road cess raised by Rs 8 per litre. With this, the total incidence of excise duty on petrol rose to Rs 32.98 per litre and that on diesel to Rs 31.83. In a week, from 7-14 June, the government could mop up Rs 44,000 crores as additional revenue from raised excise duty and cess. (india.com 06-05-20)
- In the current budget, subsidy on LPG and Kerosene has been slashed by about 66%. (ABP 16-02-21)

9. Black Money

- India's black economy is estimated to be 62% of GDP - generating about Rs 93 lakh crore of revenue (or USD 14 trillion). It is larger than the income generated by agriculture and industry put together, which is about 39% of GDP. It is larger than the size of the government (Centre plus states) spending, which is about 27% of GDP. (Data furnished by Economist Arun Kumar)

10. Poverty and fall in income

- More than 80 crore people in India are considered poor. As per International Labour Organization (ILO), with a share of almost 90 per cent of people working in the informal

economy, about 40 crore workers in the informal economy are at risk of falling deeper into poverty during the crisis. The poor hygiene conditions are the cause of diseases such as cholera, typhus and dysentery, in which especially children suffer and die. (<https://www.soschildrensvillages.ca/news/poverty-in-india-602> downloaded on 31-01-20)

- At least 84 percent of Indian households saw their income drop during the health crisis.
- Many ordinary Indians are not able to access the health care they need. 6.3 crore of them are pushed into poverty because of healthcare costs every year - almost two people every second.
- It would take 941 years for a minimum wage worker in rural India to earn what the top paid executive at a leading Indian garment company earns in a year. (Oxfam Report)
- Weighed in terms of calorie consumption (i.e. minimum food intake which is dependent on earning level), two-thirds of people or 67-68% of Indians lives on less than Rs 140 (\$2) a day. Over 30% even have less than Rs 98 (\$1.250 per day available - they are considered extremely poor. This makes the India one of the poorest countries in the world; women and children, the weakest members of Indian society, suffer most. (First Post 20-12-14 and www.soschildrensvillages.ca/news/poverty-in-india-602)
- On 15 April 2020, when the 21-day national lockdown imposed by the government ends, it is very likely that the bottom 47 percentile of India's population will run out of cash. Estimates are based on the World Bank's poverty line of \$3.2 a day for a lower middle-income country such as India, assuming people are spending just to survive. What this means, in real terms, is that the poorest 50 crore Indians would be out of cash reserves completely by 15 April 2020 and another 50 crore will be left with just half their reserves. These findings are part of my ongoing research on mapping inequality in India using demonetization data. ((The Hindu-07-04-20)
- 83 crore Indian survive on less than Rs20 a day. (Reuters)

11. Hunger and Starvation

- India ranks 94 out of 107 nations as per Global Hunger Index 2020.
- 1/3rd of world's 82 crore hungry people live in India
- 230 million (23 crore) people go hungry every day. (Times of India 15-01-12).
- There are 820 million chronically hungry people in the world. 1/3rd of that live in India. (Hunger Factsheet bhookh. com)

- More than 7,000 Indians die everyday due to hunger though according to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), despite India wasting food worth about \$14 billion a year, according to government figures. (snehan.org 04-01-19 and Thomson Reuters Foundation)
- Over 3,00,000 children die every year in India because of hunger. And for many children who escape death, the poverty of their parents means that hunger remains an unremitting part of their lives. (Indian Express-26-07-18)
- More than 20 crore people don't have sufficient access to food, including 6 crore 78 lakh infants were found to have a birth weight of less than 2.5 kilograms - alarming figures for a country commonly referred to as the emerging market. (<https://www.soschildrensvillages.ca/news/poverty-in-india-602> downloaded on 31-01-20)

12. Suicide rates

- The NCRB data shows that 10,159 students died by suicide in 2018, an increase from 9,905 in 2017, and 9,478 in 2016. Every hour one student commits suicide in India, with about 28 such suicides reported every day, according to data compiled by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). (The Hindu-29-01-20)
- Every day, 28 people dependent on farming die by suicide in India. People in the farm sector accounted for 7.4 per cent of the total suicides in India, according to the latest NCRB report. (Down to Earth 03-09-20)
- At least 10,281 persons involved in the farm sector ended their lives in 2019, accounting for 7.4 per cent of the total number of suicides in India which was 139,516, suggests the Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India report 2019 by the National Crime Records Bureau. (Down to Earth 03-09-20)
- The farmers suicide rate in India had ranged between 1.4 and 1.8 per 100,000 total population, over a 10-year period through 2005, however the figures in 2017 and 2018 showed an average of more than 10 suicides daily. (Gruère, G. & Sengupta, D. (2011).
- Over 42,000 workers from informal sector allegedly die by suicide, As the NCRB presented the latest data on suicide deaths revealing highest number in last three years, SabrangIndia spoke to experts about the rising suicide rates among farmers, labourers and daily wage workers. (sabrangindia 08-09-20)
- The share of daily-wage earners among those who died by suicide has been steadily rising, doubling to 23.4 per cent in 2019 as compared to six years before. (Indian Express-06-09-20)

Pre-poll scenario

CPI (M) is opposed to Congress in Kerala but alliance partner of Congress in West Bengal, Assam and Tamil Nadu

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government was forced to step back from any association with the deal. Also, of late, the CPI (M) chief minister, three other ministers, the assembly speaker and the family members of CPI (M) state secretary have featured in a gold smuggling case. Hence, as far as economic agenda and sprawling corruption are concerned, there is hardly any difference between the CPI (M), the Congress and the BJP. The competition is now as to who could be a better political manager of the ruling bourgeoisie in the state.

What is most unfortunate is that despite the CPI (M) being in power periodically in the state, its abandonment of leftist line has allowed casteist-religious divides to not only stay but gain strength over time. Now, with the exacerbation of anti-Muslim hatred and fomenting of Hindu communalism by the RSS-BJP, this divide has come into the open so much so that even the CPI (M) leaders are unable to remain out of it. It bears recall that when the Supreme Court allowed entry of women in Sabarimala temple, there was a huge commotion among the devoted Hindus who regarded it as an act of sacrilege. The RSS-BJP also whipped up this issue based on blind religious faith. But the CPI (M) in deference to the Court order allowed two women to enter the temple. It even filed an affidavit in the court in support of that. But this backfired and the CPI (M) leadership admitted in a post-Parliamentary poll evaluation report in 2019, excerpts of which were published in party mouthpiece "Deshabhimani", that its routing in the election had been due to this decision and a sizeable part of its vote bank eroded because of it. In fact, in 2020, the BJP captured the Pandalam Municipality in Pathanamthitta district, where the Sabarimala Temple is located. Now on the eve of assembly election, the Congress announced that it would withdraw all the cases slapped for violence on the protesters against the Supreme Court verdict if it came to power. Compelled by the exigency of vote politics, the CPI (M) withdrew all the cases and virtually gave in to Hindu religious sentiment. The BJP demanded that CPI (M) should apologise to the people for the "sins committed" by its government. Now, there is a growing anti-Muslim sentiment spurred by the heinous Hindutva campaign of the RSS-BJP and both the CPI (M) and the Congress, afraid of losing Hindu vote, are acquiescing in it. As a result, counter Muslim communalism is nurtured by the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) which is part of the Congress-led UDF and has considerable following in northern Kerala. Shamelessly, the CPI (M)-led LDF is trying to harness the support of the majority community by capitulating to the growing hatred against minority Muslim

community among a section of the society. They openly declare that minority communalism is the most dangerous communalism. If that be, what prompted the CPI (M) to combine with the IUML in 1969 and then continue association with AAJML, a split faction of the IUML? Is it leftism or raw opportunism? The LDF is also appeasing all the caste and religious communities to secure their supposed vote banks. Taking full advantage of the situation and making use of the eroding leftist mindset, the BJP is steadily increasing their support base in the state.

Assam

No different is the spectacle of Assam where chauvinist-communal-parochial forces have been thumping around for long, inciting sectarian passion among people and polarizing them along divisive lines much to the glee of the ruling capitalist class. Right now, the BJP in alliance with Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), an arch chauvinist force, is in the government. But there are deep cracks appearing in their unity-something quite natural in any opportunistic self-serving alliance. Moreover, while the BJP, driven by its anti-religious minority bias, is all for implementing CAA hatched by its central leadership, the AGP driven by anti-linguistic minority bias is against CAA. However, during last parliamentary election, AGP maintained unity with the BJP by agreeing not to speak against CAA. What could they do because not any viewpoint but seats is all that matters for them. Taking on the BJP-AGP coalition is a grand alliance of the Congress, AIUDF (a Muslim-oriented sectarian party), CPI(M), CPI, CPI(ML) Liberation, Anchalik Gana Morcha and Bodoland People's Front. Here also the CPI (M) and even the CPI (ML) Liberation have no problem in joining hands with communal-parochial forces besides the Congress whose leaders first whipped up chauvinist-communal frenzy and squarely passed the onus of the rising plight and poverty of Assamese-speaking people on the so-called 'outsiders' and 'illegal' meaning the Bengali-speaking Hindu people and then the immigrant Bengali-speaking Muslim community. Earlier, the CPI (M) and CPI felt no compunction to join hands with chauvinist AGP in forming government. Now they are in the opposite camp. CPI (M) in Assam had supported NRC, a fact they are cunningly shielding now outside Assam. Clearly, there is no principle, no ideology-nothing. Only craving is to anyhow grab seats.

Tamil Nadu

Parliamentary politics in Tamil Nadu has of late been confined to two major Dravidian parties -DMK and AIADMK. All other parties including

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Who have been caregivers to PM Cares

'Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund' (PM CARES Fund) had been set up in 2020 with the Prime Minister as ex-officio Chairman and Minister of Defence, Minister of Home Affairs and Minister of Finance, Government of India as ex-officio Trustees. The declared objective of the fund dealing with any kind of emergency or distress situation, like posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, and to provide relief to the affected. It was also declared that the fund would be audited by independent auditors and not by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG). Since then, it was unknown what has been the corpus of the fund and how it has been utilized so far.

Now, some details of who had contributed to the fund has appeared in the media. According to the Indian Express dated 11 March 2021, the Fund has received "Rs 500 Crore from Reliance Industries; Rs 500 crore from Tata Group; Rs 400 crore from Aditya Birla Group; Rs 100 crore from Adani Enterprises Limited; and, Rs 175 crore from three leading private sector banks.... ICICI Bank tops the list for private banks with Rs 80 crore followed by HDFC Bank with Rs 70 crore and Kotak Mahindra with Rs 25 crore. The donors include Yes Bank, which was rescued from the verge of collapse last year by an RBI plan, with Rs 10 crore - and an additional Rs 1.9 crore from a day's staff salaries...38 PSUs used their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds to together contribute over Rs 2,105 crore to the fund....educational institutions, from Navodaya schools to IITs, IIMs and Central universities, together contributed Rs 21.81 crore. Among the other corporate groups that contributed to PM CARES are: Larsen & Toubro (Rs 150 crore); Infosys (Rs 50 crore under destitute care and rehabilitation); Hero Motors (Rs 50 crore); Mahindra & Mahindra (Rs 20 crore); Tech Mahindra (Rs 20 crore); Dabur India Ltd (Rs 11 crore); Asian Paints (Rs 35 crore to PM Cares and other state-run programmes)... Private banks have also chipped in. IDFC First Bank pledged Rs 5 crore to the PM Cares fund and, additionally, its employees voluntarily contributed a day's salary amounting to Rs 3.29 crore.... IDBI Bank Ltd said that its employees including officers and Class 3 & 4 staff, "from their salary have contributed Rs 5.11 crore in April 2020"...Axis Bank's annual report said it set aside Rs 100 crore for fighting Covid-19 and that the bank's employees have "contributed a part of their salaries towards the PM Cares."

International Women's Day marks protest, determination, struggle, sacrifice

Dreaded Covid-19 pandemic wreaked havoc over the entire capitalist world, still lurking on the horizon. Yet another 'virus' continues to haunt mankind to no less an extent. This pertains to the onslaught on the life and security, dignity and honour of women which is, so to say a worldwide phenomenon. International Women's Day on 8 March occurs this year on this backdrop.

It is a pathetic tale, more so for India. Well known as a country where a host of goddesses, varying in name and prominence from state to state, are recipient of ardent worship with devotees bowing their heads in veneration before Devi Ma that is, Mother Goddess. But not a day passes here, when in one part of the country or the other the fatal cries of a girl child, a young woman or one old violated, assaulted, raped and brutalized are not throttled down: be it in rural or urban set-up, involving the poorer section of the womenfolk or the better off; the educated and those without it, a minor or a septuagenarian: it can take place anywhere to any female. Narratives of gory incidents fill pages of print media almost daily, it is superfluous to reiterate. But what needs mention is that all these take place where and when, the BJP-led Union government, led by its prime minister Narendra Modi, have made 'Empowerment of women' a catchword in common parlance, has turned *Beti bachao* (Save the daughters) and *Beti parhao* (Let daughters study) into almost a parrot-like rhetoric.

Those are revamped louder when there is some election on the cards, as it is evident right now. With several states going to the polls, the prime minister goes in his favourite 'digital' mode to comment on the occasion of the Women's Day: "...saluting our indomitable Nari Shakti (women's power) on International Women's Day! India takes pride in the many accomplishments of the women of our nation. It is our Government's honour to be getting the opportunity to work towards furthering women empowerment across a wide range of sectors." He continues: "Women are playing a leading role in India's quest to become 'aatmanirbhar' " (self-reliant) (Times of India-09-03-21). Yet not a word did he spare on the atrocities on women which go on unabated nor did he express his concern over the safety and security of women! He felt no compunction at all. But can this silence gloss over the facts?

Reports are revealed late. So we have to be content with India recording as many as 4,05,861 cases of crime against women in 2019 with an average of 87 rape cases reported daily and figure recording a 7.3 % rise from 2018 to 2019 (PTI and the Wire, 29-30 September 2020). While 20 women die, murdered or compelled to commit suicide, every day on infamous dowry issues, other crimes range from domestic violence, stalking and abduction, harassment at work place, 'honour-killing', 'love-jihad' etc. comprising a list, never to end! In keeping with these, India presents 32.1% of the total number of 142.6 million missing females in the world, nearly 45.8 million females missing in the year 2020 alone. How efficiently daughters are being saved! And then over 30% of girl students drop

out of schools when they get to just class/ grade IX and the number rises to 57% in class/ grade XI - according to the report *Children in India 2018*, released by union Ministry in last December. An equally efficient drive for letting daughters study!

Facts also betray typically patriarchal misogyny underlying brutalities meted out to women, in the spread of obscenity on the media, or in undeterred sale of drugs-liquor etc., that drive men towards barbaric acts and all the more in the influential personages of the 'Saffron Brigade' making public comments that add fuel to the fire. While the RSS Chief declares that peace to prevail in society, women should keep to their homes, the UP chief minister, a Yogi by name, makes aspersions, in an election meeting in West Bengal, about the miserable state of law and order there, alluding also to the plight of women in the state. On the same date, his own state was experiencing a fresh ghastly incident of gang-rape, latest in an unending series of worst crimes as reports galore in media and even in the records of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) working under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The point is, what makes such a galloping rise of atrocities against women possible during the BJP rule and despite the prime minister advocating women's empowerment etc. One needs not go far. It is implanted in the philosophy of RSS-BJP itself. Golwalkar, their mentor, the Guru himself spoke against women enjoying right to property and education as that would deprive men of their mental peace. In the chapter 'Call to the Motherhood' of his book 'Bunch of Thoughts', he unambiguously asked women not to be modern, because if they become conscious of concepts of women's liberty and equality with men, they will be eager to make a display of their body! And when Yogi Adityanath, the UP chief minister comments that women should not be given freedom, if they are not kept under control of men, they turn into destructive forces (Indian Express.com 17-04-2017), he simply harps on the same tune of Golwalkar.

So the International Women's Day address is no more than an election gimmick, *chunaoi jumla*, from the prime minister, which the BJP is quite apt in dishing out. But the Day stands out in human history as a mark of women's struggle, well above this petty gimmick. And that fact is also borne out even this year.

The more women's struggle, part and parcel of toiling people's struggle grows in intensity, the more the rulers, the ruling monopolists, the ruling capitalist class become panicky and desperate. How heartless and nonchalant to humanity can they become are again evident from the more-than 100 days of protests by peasants on the roads and highways at the borders of the capital of India,

Delhi. Hundreds of thousands of kisans, the peasants, of all economic positions, speaking different languages, coming from different states, holding different religious beliefs have stood like rock-wall against all oppressions, atrocities, criminal indifference, from the BJP-led Union government, demanding repeal of three nakedly pro-corporate farm laws which are sure to spell doom in the life of not just the peasants, but the common people of all sections across the country. And this huge mass of people include a remarkable section of children and women, from infant to nonagenarians, who stayed firm on their stand of protest on equal footing with their men, with fullest safety, security, honour and courage. They braved all odds, of nature from chilling cold to the scorching heat that threatens to usher in a few days. They braved all odds coming down from the government. It is the united well-guided people's movement that has proved once again that the battlefield of protest is the way that upholds humanity even higher than the height the prevailing system may allow for.

On this 8 March, the International Women's Day, this message of struggle is highlighted against the gimmicky election pledge for women's empowerment. The message is conveyed to the humanity by the hundreds of thousands of unnamed fighters who did not and do not hesitate to give out their voice of protest all through the human history, without caring for life, in the past, at present or in future. They are venting out this message at the borders of the Indian capital. It was vented out by Kyal Sin 19 years of age and popularly known as Angel, who, among others, was shot to the head and dead by the security forces, read Myanmar army while taking part in the protest demonstration against the unwarranted military coup in Myanmar that overthrew elected government. With millions of others, they make their place as the icon of protest and hold high the banner of women's struggle.

Long Live International Women's Day!



Comrade Satyawan, President AIKMS, addressing peasants' mahapanchayat in Kolkata on 12 march 2021.

Remembering great Stalin on his 68th Memorial Day on 5th March



Comrade Provash Ghosh at Shibpur Party centre



Comrade Mobinul Haider Chowdhury, General Secretary, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (Marxist)



Comrade Asit Bhattacharyya, Polit Bureau member, SUCI(C), at Party Central Office. Comrade Gopal Kundu, Polit Bureau member (third from left)

SUCI(C) protests 3-fold rise in Railway Platform ticket

Comrade Provash Ghosh, General Secretary, SUCI (Communist), issued the following statement on 6 March 2021:

We strongly protested against the decision of the Central Government to raise again the rate of railway platform ticket from Rs.10 to Rs. 30. In our country railway stands as the main transport of the common poor and lower middle class people. Already by opening railway transport to private corporates, Modi government is creating ground for passenger fare hike. This increase of platform ticket price is also aimed at wooing the private corporates at the peril of public interest. We strongly condemn this decision.

Pre-pollscenario

Raw opportunism, slugfest and reducing ideological-political debates to redundancy mark the electoral battle

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the BJP, Congress, CPI (M) and CPI are just adjuncts to either of these two parties. Right now AIADMK is in power. The BJP is in alliance with it. But after death of AIADMK chief Jayalalithaa, AIADMK is ridden with internal conflicts and power struggle. AIADMK's relation with the BJP is also under strain. It was apparent that the AIADMK Chief Minister's decision to take a few steps against the BJP's over-reach in the State had not gone down well with the BJP's staunch cheerleaders within the AIADMK. One step was the Tamil Nadu Cabinet rejecting the three-language formula as envisaged in the New Education Policy and decreeing that Tamil Nadu will follow only a two-language policy. Secondly, on August 17 last year, when BJP leaders met the Chief Minister and requested him to allow the Vinayaka Chaturthi procession, he plainly declined permission. But efforts for a patch-up is on. Just like West Bengal and Assam, no real people's issue is being addressed by the ruling party. Unemployment is mounting. Thousands of government posts lying vacant for years remain unfilled. Alcoholism is growing bringing in its wake disastrous effect on the socio-cultural life of the people particularly the impoverished. Tirupur hosiery industry, Coimbatore engineering industry, Karur and Erode power looms have been badly hit by demonetisation. Scheme of opening Amma mini clinics in rural areas is a ploy to allow entry of private players in health. But such questions are conveniently parried. Instead, the focus is on some gratis-like measures viz. promise of waiving farm loans, payment of Rs 2, 500 as Pongal aid, cheap Amma canteens, Amma health insurance scheme, Amma clinics, giving free 20 kg rice through PDS outlets etc. The BJP knows that the best course for it is to cobble an alliance with the smaller parties and a faction of the AIADMK,

along with a popular face. That is why the BJP tried to rope in Rajinikanth, a matinee idol. But Rajinikanth backed out citing health reasons. Finally, the BJP has settled for 20 seats with AIADMK-PMK alliance.

On the other hand, the DMK aspiring to be saddled in power is counting on the drubbing of the AIADMK in last parliamentary election. It is raising questions of corruption of the AIADMK though it is like 'the pot calling the kettle black' as a DMK minister in the former central ministry was jailed for 2G scam. After multiple rounds of negotiations, DMK has finalized the seat-sharing pact with ally Congress. DMK also inked the seat-sharing agreement with CPI(M) and CPI besides other smaller regional parties.

While the compulsion of the BJP and Congress to tie knots with the principal Dravidian parties is understood, it is the height of opportunism on the part of the CPI (M) and CPI to opt for continued tailism of the DMK just for seats. Earlier, the CPI (M) and CPI were seen combining with AIADMK. In fact, the CPI General Secretary went to Rajya Sabha with the blessings of late Jayalalitha. For just one or two seats, there is no hesitation on their part to go to anyone with a begging bowl.

Puducherry

In the Union Territory of Puducherry, the Congress-led government collapsed a few days back after some of its MLAs switched to the BJP. In fact, in its usual way the BJP had been trying for long to topple the government with the help of its trusted Governor Kiran Bedi which materialized on the eve of the election. Though under public pressure, the BJP as a face saving measure removed the Kiran Bedi a few days back, it has achieved what it wanted by using the Governor's office. Now the BJP is aggressively

trying to fish in troubled water and troubling the waters to fish more. In Puducherry also, industries like renowned AFT Mill, Swadesi Cotton Mill, Bharathy Mill of Puducherry, Jayaprakash Mill have closed down and thousands of workers have lost jobs and their pension, gratuity and other benefits are pending. Neither the erstwhile Congress government nor the BJP-nominated Governor have shown any interest to reopen these mills or provide jobs to the ever increasing lakhs of educated unemployed. Instead, it is learnt that the mill lands would be handed over to real estate companies. Significantly, after Prime Minister Modi's visit to the state on 25 February 2021 -- in a very short span with missile speed, have been speaking volumes of the game plan of the BJP leaders to turn Puducherry also into a hunting ground for them in implementation of its heinous communal-racist agenda in South India.

Support SUCI(C), the lone flag-bearer of struggling leftism

It is against all these brazen vote-oriented opportunistic policies of the power-greedy bourgeois petty bourgeois parties and pseudo-Marxists, the SUCI(C) is contesting in all the four states and the union territory steadfastly holding aloft the banner of struggling leftism. While others are luring the voters with a basketful of sham promises, the SUCI(C) is exhorting people to support its candidates so that voice of people's movement reverberate inside the legislatures and in the process, legitimate movements also gain further momentum. With this approach and on a clear principled stand, the SUCI (C) is contesting 193 seats in West Bengal, 37 in Kerala, 29 in Assam, 5 in Tamil Nadu and 3 in Puducherry to foster people's interest against the interest of the ruling bourgeoisie.

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