

# Liberation

JUNE 2022

CENTRAL ORGAN OF CPI(ML)

Rs. 25



# SASG Confronts Karnataka Education Minister in London on Hijab Ban and Bajrang Dal Arms Training

---

On 19 May, 2022, the Higher Education Minister of Karnataka who has enforced the Hijab Ban in educational institutions in his state and is responsible for the exclusion of Muslim girls and women from education and their subsequent targetting, was the keynote speaker at the Commonwealth Education Conference organised by Bridge India and sponsored by Birmingham City University among others. His speech consisted of shamelessly gaslighting claims about the equity and inclusivity of Karnataka education policy which will soon become national policy of the Modi regime in India. He said, "We as philosophy and culture embrace 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', we stand for universal human values. India is known for tolerance, inclusiveness, there's no question of discrimination of any person, we live in communal harmony."

In response, Kalpana Wilson of South Asia Solidarity Group asked him:

"You spoke about equity and inclusion being at the heart of your policy on education and in particular women from marginalised communities, I wonder if you see any contradiction with what we are seeing under your leadership..."

We've seen young Muslim girls being systematically excluded from their colleges purely because they're expressing their faith by wearing a hijab. Under your watch we've seen these students being taunted and harassed by gangs shouting Islamophobic abuses empowered by the ruling party – your party.

Under your watch, we've seen Muslims women teachers being humiliated at school gates and compelled to uncover simply to pursue their employment. And most recently we've seen an educational institution in Karnataka being used for an arms training camp by Bajrang Dal, which is a violent militant organisation responsible for many mob lynchings and murders of Muslims, Christians, Dalits, so I wonder, Mr. Minister, whether you see a contradiction there with what you've just said."

The Minister was left floundering for a convincing answer.

# Liberation

New Series Vol. 28 No. 02  
JUNE 2022

## CONTENTS

### COMMENTARY

- ★ Resist Repeat of Babri At Gyanvapi 5
- ★ US Abortion Issue 6
- ★ Karnataka 'Religious Conversion' Ordinance 9
- ★ On Recent Court Judgements 10

### ARTICLE

- ★ Marx 204 12
- ★ Remembering Rammohan Roy 13

### FREEDOM 75

- ★ First War Of Independence 15

### UPDATES

- ★ Campaign Against Bulldozer Raj 22

### REPORTS

- INTERNATIONAL 29

### Editor-in-chief

Dipankar Bhattacharya

### Editor

Arindam Sen

### Editorial Board

Kavita Krishnan

V. Shankar

Sanjay Sharma

### Editors' e-mail:

liberation@cpiml.org

Art: V Arun Kumar

### Manager

Prabhat Kumar

Phone: 7042877713

Website: [liberation.org.in](http://liberation.org.in)

E-mail: [manager.liberation@gmail.com](mailto:manager.liberation@gmail.com)

36 pages including covers

### Annual Subscription Rates

India Rs. 300

Abroad US\$ 60

Online Payment: [liberation.org.in](http://liberation.org.in)

Pay By Bank transfer:

Account Name: Liberation Publications

Account No.: 90502010091855

IFSC Code: CNRB0019050

MICR Code.: 110015388

Bank: Canara Bank

## LESSONS FROM SRI LANKA FOR INDIA

# Check Prices, Provide Jobs, Stop Communal Conspiracies!



India's southern neighbour Sri Lanka is reeling under a terrible economic crisis. The crushing debt burden of this island nation has landed it into an unprecedented chaos marked by skyrocketing prices and massive shortages of basic necessities. The people of Sri Lanka are up in arms and are seeking an end to the reign of the Rajapaksa brothers who have been running the show in Sri Lanka as President and Prime Minister for more than a decade. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa is desperately trying to save his chair by dropping his brother Mahinda from the Prime Minister's post, but the popular unrest is continuing unabated.

The Modi government tells us that Sri Lanka is paying the price for economic mismanagement, but what it seeks to hide is that the Indian economy is showing similar signs of crisis. The wholesale price index has been registering double-digit rise continuously for last thirteen months and in April it crossed 15%, the highest since September 1991. Along with rising prices, the common people are also hit hard by vanishing jobs and falling income. On top of it, the Indian rupee has plummeted to its lowest level which means an ever-growing burden on account of imports and repayment of external debts.

The debt-GDP ratio of Sri Lanka has crossed 100%, in other words Sri Lanka is borrowing more than it produces, and Sri Lanka has just defaulted in debt repayment for the first time. In the case of India the debt-GDP ratio is only a little less, hovering now between 85 and 90%. By next March, the Modi government will have added a massive 100 lakh crore to India's total debt since Modi's ascent to power in 2014. The only cushion that India

has, compared to Sri Lanka, is in terms of forex reserve but that too has already started eroding. Since the beginning of Russia's war on Ukraine, India's forex reserve has already been depleted by about 36 billion dollars, bringing the overall reserve below 600 billion dollars. These forex reserves, besides paying for a growing trade deficit, will need to be used for 256 billion dollars of debt repayment by this September, bringing it down to dangerous levels.

Let us remember that Sri Lanka's per capita GDP is still nearly double the Indian figure, and in terms of most indicators of socio-economic development Sri Lanka has been significantly ahead of India. If Sri Lanka has today landed in this massive mess, it was not caused by some sudden economic disruption triggered by the pandemic and compounded by the Ukraine war. It has been rooted in years of neglect of small-scale domestic production and consumption needs of the common people while the regime went for big borrowings for big infrastructure projects, all underpinned by the pro-corporate, pro-imperialist and anti-people neoliberal economic model which Sri Lanka was the first in South Asia to adopt.

India too is trapped in a similar trajectory. An orchestrated blitzkrieg and vacuous hype in the name of big projects define the Modi model of development. But in reality, very few new assets are being created, while existing public assets, built over decades with people's money, are being cornered by the likes of Adani and Ambani for a pittance. As key assets and infrastructure get concentrated in the hands of chosen cronies,

the medium and small sector stands decimated, pulling down industrial growth and employment to an abysmal low. As per the Government's own admission in Parliament in December 2021, a total of 8,81,254 Indians have given up their citizenship since 2015. This includes a large number of HNIs (high net-worth individuals) as well. This mass exodus can only be explained as a consequence of the climate of economic gloom accompanied by rising communal hate: another milestone of the Modi era.

Agriculture was the only sector which had escaped the noose of complete corporate control and yielded some positive growth even during the lockdown and pandemic when every other sector came to a grinding halt. But even though the farmers' resistance has compelled the government to repeal the three laws designed to facilitate a total corporate takeover of agriculture, the restructuring of agriculture in favour of corporate interests continues unabated. There is an alarming shift away from food grains to cash crops, thereby posing a grave threat to India's food security.

The people's upsurge has meant that the Rajapaksas can no longer take the Sri Lankan people for granted and divert the people's attention away from the basic issues of survival and needs and rights of the common people through campaigns of violence and persecution against Sri Lankan Tamils and Muslims. In India, the government not only continues to live in denial mode, it is busy inflicting more injuries and adding more insults by imposing a divisive and destructive agenda

on the people. While the economy deteriorates rapidly and prices of food and fuels and other basic necessities go through the roof, the government is busy bulldozing the homes and livelihood of the poor, Muslims in particular, and digging up mosques and monuments in the name of discovering and building temples.

This divisive and destructive campaign has escalated alarmingly since the BJP's renewed victory in Uttar Pradesh. Festivals have been turned into spectacles of aggressive communal mobilisation, and bulldozers have been let loose on Muslim homes and shops in state after state. From Kashi and Mathura to Taj Mahal and Qutub Minar, the vandals of the Sangh brigade are getting ready everywhere to hijack history. After excluding hijab-wearing Muslim women students from accessing higher education, the BJP government in Karnataka is now allowing open arms training camps for Bajrang Dal goons in educational institutions of the state.

The judiciary, the supposed custodian of the constitutional rule of law in our democratic republic, appears increasingly inclined to side with the executive at this crucial juncture of Indian democracy. The onus is therefore on 'we, the people of India', who had resolved to constitute India into a sovereign democratic republic by adopting the Constitution, and to uphold it against all odds. It is time to tell the government loud and clear to either check prices and provide jobs or quit office. Time to say a firm no to the conspiracy of raking up an imaginary past to wound us in the present. ■

# The Sangh Must Not Be Allowed To Repeat Babri Demolition At Gyanvapi

**T**he Sangh brigade is planning a repeat of the Babri Masjid demolition by raking up a dispute over the Gyanvapi mosque. This is a clear violation of the Places of Worship Act, 1991 which protects the status of every place of religious worship as on 15 August, 1947.

This also violates the spirit of the Supreme Court's Ayodhya verdict which even while considering the demolition as an egregious criminal act chose to uphold the Ram Mandir claim in the title suit with the hope that this will put an end to all other controversial claims. The verdict had implied that future litigants could not use the Ayodhya verdict as a precedent to convert Muslim religious sites into Hindu ones, stressing that the Ayodhya resolution was an exception.

The Sangh brigade is however working on the oft repeated aggressive slogan 'Ayodhya sirf ek jhanki hai, Kashi Mathura baki hai' (Ayodhya is only a glimpse of what will happen in Kashi and Mathura). Unfortunately the Supreme Court's initial response does not inspire confidence that it will nip this conspiracy in the bud. The Supreme Court bench (comprising two of the judges who were part of the Ayodhya verdict) have ordered the Varanasi DM to secure the "shivling" site while allowing namaz to continue at the Gyanvapi mosque. This order raises concerns, since there is as yet no evidence of any shivling at the mosque. The Sangh alleges without evidence that an ancient shivling has been found in the pond which is used for *wazoo* purification rituals before the namaz prayers.



In passing the Ayodhya verdict, the Supreme Court had admitted that the Muslims were indeed wronged by the demolition, and had even admitted that there was no evidence of a historical Ram Temple that had been demolished to build the Babri mosque, but had still settled the land dispute in favour of the Ram Janmabhoomi Trust. At the time, many had raised the apprehension that such an order allowing Hindu supremacists to profit from an act of fascist violence would embolden them to carry out their threats to demolish mosques at Kashi (Varanasi) and Mathura, not to mention the Taj Mahal and other historical Muslim structures. Many others, eager to trust the Supreme Court's wisdom, had hoped that the verdict would bring closure to a painful and divisive chapter in Indian political and social life, and allow India to move on. But does the latest Supreme Court in the Gyanvapi case once again open up a new "dispute" manufactured by the Sangh? If the highest court appears to legitimise Hindu supremacist claims to another ancient Muslim mosque, will it not open up exactly the same dangerous and destructive

path that the same court's Ayodhya verdict was supposed to close forever?

This matter must not be left to courts alone. All peace-loving Indians must unitedly assert against the BJP's Gyanvapi expedition, and declare 'never again' to fresh hate and violence in the name of demolishing mosques and mausoleums that are our collective Indian heritage.

Prices of essential commodities are soaring sky-high, the economy is in a terrible mess and the overwhelming majority of Indians are worried about their jobs, livelihood, housing and other basic necessities of life. The Modi government offers no solution to this crisis, no relief to the people, all it does is to seek opportunity in crisis and inflict more injuries on the people.

Diversity and harmony are the two legs on which India can stand united and firm to weather any storm. Attack on these foundations is not just a blow to the religious right and heritage of Muslim community, it is an outright assault on the shared historical legacy and the very spirit of India. ■

# Autonomy and Abortion: Potential Reversal of Roe v Wade

▲ AVANI CHOKSHI



“The first division of labour is that between man and woman for the propagation of children”, wrote

Marx and Engels in an unpublished manuscript. Indeed, the bearing of a child imposes a heavy burden on a woman, even when the pregnancy may not have been a matter of choice for her. In this view, the recognition of her agency to choose to terminate the pregnancy is a matter of utmost importance in the upliftment of women and the realization of gender equality.

As per a recently leaked draft of a USA Supreme Court majority opinion, the landmark judgment of the USA Supreme Court in *Roe v Wade* (1973), which upheld the

*Protesters wearing the iconic green scarf (symbol of abortion rights movement in Latin America) hit the streets in the US in response to the news that US Supreme Court could be poised to overturn a landmark 1973 abortion rights case. YUKI IWAMURA*

constitutional right to abortion is to be overturned. The judgment, if effectualised will have a host of repercussions across the world. In fact, even the draft is indicative of the rise of the global right.

*Roe v. Wade* was hugely significant in that it decided that a foetus has only a potentiality of life, and not life itself. It recognized that abortion was a constitutionally protected right, and derived this from the rights to privacy and liberty of the woman. The court decided that there could be no state regulation for the first trimester of the pregnancy except as per the judgment of the woman's

doctor. Thereafter, in the interest of maternal health, certain regulations were made permissible. However, it would only be at the stage of viability [defined by the court as the stage when the foetus developed the capability of meaningful life outside the mother's womb] that the State regulations in the interest of the protecting the life of the foetus could arise.

The case again came up before the Supreme Court in 1992 in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*. The Court upheld the “essential holding” of *Roe v Wade* including the recognition of a woman's right to choose to

have an abortion before foetal viability and to obtain it without undue interference from the State. However, the trimester framework was replaced by an undue burden standard, that meant that any regulations brought in by the state could not place an undue burden/or a “substantial obstacle in the path of a woman seeking an abortion before the fetus attains viability.”

Now, the draft opinion holds that explicitly that “Roe and Casey must be overruled. The Constitution makes no reference to abortion, and no such right is implicitly protected by any constitutional provision.” The opinion holds that “Liberty” is a capacious term”, and would not give guidance to the interpretation to the term Liberty in the US Constitution. The court went further to hold that the court must be reluctant to read in rights not mentioned in the Constitution, and broad interpretations “sometimes led the Court to usurp authority that the Constitution entrusts to the people’s elected representatives.” The opinion states “The inescapable conclusion is that a right to abortion is not deeply rooted in the Nation’s history and traditions” and “There is ample evidence that the passage of these laws was instead spurred by a sincere belief that abortion kills a human being”. Finally, the Court held that the viability line “makes no sense”, and overrules the decisions in Roe and Casey, while stating that elected legislative bodies must have the power to regulate abortion.

The draft judgment destroys the fundamental rights of dignity, autonomy, and liberty that every constitutional person is entitled to. To grant a conservative/patriarchal state the power to legislate on the right of women to choose abortions is to hold that if the people so choose, then the violation of these rights are

justified. What then differentiates the so-called Constitutional State from majoritarianism?

The draft judgment is an abdication of the court’s duty towards the rights of women, but more, it reflects a dangerous disintegration of the separation of powers doctrine that is supposed to insulate the judiciary from the political executive. With the rise of the global right, so too, we are seeing a rise of the conservative judiciary and politically motivated judicial decisions.

Importantly, Roe v Wade has been used in Indian courts, most notably by the nine-judge Supreme Court decision in K.S. Puttaswamy vs. Union of India (2017) whereby the fundamental right to privacy of each citizen under Article 21 of the Constitution of India was recognised. In this judgment, the court noted “Hence, it would be an injustice both to the draftsmen of the Constitution as well as to the document which they sanctified to constrict its interpretation to an originalist interpretation. Today’s problems have to be adjudged by a vibrant application of constitutional doctrine and cannot be frozen by a vision suited to a radically different society.” The court went on to hold that “Privacy includes at its core the preservation of personal intimacies, the sanctity of family life, marriage, procreation, the home and sexual orientation. Privacy also connotes a right to be left alone.” Along with the adoption of the idea of a transformative constitution, courts have held that the doctrine of progressive realization of rights, as a natural corollary, gives birth to the doctrine of non-retrogression, which sets forth that the State should not take measures or steps that deliberately lead to retrogression on the enjoyment of rights either under the Constitution or otherwise.

India has a relatively progressive legal regime in the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971, permitting abortion in certain cases up to 20 weeks including failure of contraceptives (in cases of married couples). The recent amendment made in 2021 allowed termination of pregnancy up to 24 weeks in case two medical practitioners so advise, and even thereafter by the diagnosis of any of the substantial foetal abnormalities diagnosed by a Medical Board. However, the Act remains an exception to Section 312 on the Indian Penal Code, 1860, which makes causing of miscarriage a penal offence. Moreover, even as it stands, the MTP Act places the final decision of autonomy in the hands of doctors and not of women.

In reality, abortions are both highly stigmatic and highly prevalent in India. There is an acute shortage of qualified professionals – the most recent District Level Household Survey under the Govt. of India showed that up to 62% gov. hospitals don’t have gynaecologists on staff. Other reports show that in a country of 1.36 billion, there are only around 50,000-70,000 OB-GYNs (obstetrician-gynaecologists). In 2015, *The Lancet* conducted a large scale study on abortions in India, and released perhaps the first report of its type titled “The incidence of abortion and unintended pregnancy in India, 2015” in 2017. The report estimates “that 15.6 million abortions (14.1 million–17.3 million) occurred in India in 2015. The abortion rate was 47.0 abortions (42.2–52.1) per 1000 women aged 15–49 years. 3.4 million abortions (22%) were obtained in health facilities, 11.5 million (73%) abortions were medication abortions done outside of health facilities, and 0.8 million (5%) abortions were done outside of health facilities using methods other than medical abortion...

Abortions accounted for one third of all pregnancies, and nearly half of pregnancies were unintended.”

Appalling statistics also emerge from the recent National Family Health Survey -2019-21 (NFHS -5) conducted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India. The report shows that more than one-third of men believe that contraception is women’s business and that men should not have to worry about it. Twenty percent of men believe that a woman who uses contraception may become promiscuous. Moreover, female sterilization is the most popular method of contraception, with 37.9% use, as opposed to male sterilization with 0.3% use. Other contraceptives less commonly used are condoms (9.5%), the Pill (5.1%), IUD (2.1%) and Injectables (0.6%). The NFHS 5 also shows that more than one-quarter (27%) of the abortions were performed by the woman herself at home. So, the burden and blame of contraception and abortion is on the woman.

It is no surprise that pregnancy and child bearing results in mass exclusion of women from the workforce. After giving birth, a woman is relegated to the household as a wife and mother and immersed more deeply into the spaces of patriarchal household oppression. The US draft opinion noted the arguments of those anti-abortion that “laws ban discrimination on the basis of pregnancy, that leave for pregnancy and childbirth are now guaranteed by law in many cases, that the costs of medical care associated with pregnancy are covered by insurance or government assistance; that States have increasingly adopted safe haven laws, which generally allow women to drop off babies anonymously; and that a woman who puts her new-born up for adoption

today has little reason to fear that the baby will not find a suitable home.” However, accurate or deceptive such a characterization is in the American context, there is no doubt that the same is not true in the Indian context. Here, there is an overload of unwanted babies and children who are brought up, if they live, in conditions of horrifying poverty and abuse. If pregnancy results in a child, then the burden of rearing the child is disproportionately on the woman.

Having considered the parallel regimes on paper and on ground in respect of abortion, we must also account for the rise of the rightwing Hindutva in India, as part of a trend of increasing global conservatism. The ruling dispensation represents majoritarian Hindutva sentiment, which is nothing but a reflection of age old Manusmriti. The Manusmriti institutionalises of male control over the female body was in a caste framework, which is now expanded to a caste/class/religion framework. Society has proved to be well equipped to enforce Manu diktats through both the most violent and the most insidious mechanisms. So too, the energies of the State are towards the curbing of autonomy of that majority of society that is not Hindu upper caste male.

Thus, in India, women are underrepresented in all sections – in all organs of state, in all leadership positions and effectively in all decision making positions. Chauvinist tendencies prevail across the board – from the Supreme Court, to the Parliament to the individual households comprising our nation. The duty on the State to ensure the development of the rights of women is not only ignored, but actively violated in the implementation of Hindutva politics. Who can forget the brutal burning by the police of a Dalit woman’s body gang-raped

by upper caste men in Hathras? Or the whole-scale snatching away of Muslim women’s right to education in the guise of standardization in uniform?

In this framework, any dilution of reproductive rights would result in the further subjugation of women through the instrument of pregnancy. As early as In 1792, in her ‘A Vindication of the Rights of Woman’, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote:

*“Consider.. whether, when men contend for their freedom, and to be allowed to judge for themselves respecting their own happiness, it be not inconsistent and unjust to subjugate women, even though you firmly believe that you are acting in the manner best calculated to promote their happiness? Who made man the exclusive judge, if woman partake with him the gift of reason? In this style, argue tyrants of every denomination, from the weak king to the weak father of a family; they are all eager to crush reason; yet always assert that they usurp its throne only to be useful. Do you not act a similar part, when you force all women, by denying them civil and political rights, to remain immured in their families groping in the dark?”*

The principle of non-retrogression now accepted by the Supreme Court lays the framework for a robust rejection of dilution and attempted rollback of rights by State actors. Today the role of a revolutionary women’s struggle in seeking for civil and political equality must embrace reproductive freedom, as a core aspect in achieving unconditional autonomy of woman, which is the sole route to her emancipation. ■

# On Karnataka Protection Of Right to Freedom of Religion Ordinance

**C**PI(ML) Liberation condemns the bulldozing of the Karnataka Protection Of Right to Freedom of Religion Ordinance, 2022 by the BJP government in Karnataka. This law is brought in with a clear intent to criminalize and terrorize non-Hindu communities, particularly the Christian community. This comes on the heels of the organised attacks by Hindu supremacist organizations, with the backing of the BJP government, barging into churches/prayer halls and homes of Christians, physically assaulting them and even desecrating and vandalizing Churches/Prayer Halls.

The right to choose one's faith is intrinsic to the right to life protected under the Constitution under Article 25, and the Ordinance is an attack on the fundamental right to privacy and the decisional autonomy of individuals to choose their own faith, and exercise their freedom of choice with respect to their faith. It must be remembered that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar himself championed the freedom to convert and had declared that he was born as a Hindu but would not die as Hindu.

There is a serious question of the propriety and legality in using the ordinance route. Ordinance-making power can be used by the executive to promulgate a law only when there is such urgency provided the legislature is not in session. Where is the urgency here? The Karnataka Protection Of Right to Freedom of Religion Bill, was introduced in the State Legislature in December 2021, but was not tabled in the State Legislative Council. Instead, the BJP Government has promulgated the ordinance in a clear blow to

democracy and a fraud on the Constitution. The BJP government has taken every opportunity to undermine the Constitution and democratic decision-making, whether it was in the passing of the Farm Laws or even the Labour Codes. In state after state, BJP governments are using the law as an instrument to undermine the equal status of the Muslim and Christian communities. Indeed, the BJP has consistently exposed its commitment to its core Hindu majoritarian ideology than to the Constitution. Yet again the BJP government has subverted democratic institutions and parliamentary processes and sacrificed the Constitution promise of secularism and equality.

The Ordinance is blatantly unconstitutional and violates the secular fabric of the Constitution and violates the fundamental right to practice, profess and propagate religion protected under Article 25 of the Constitution and the right to privacy that forms an intrinsic part of the right to life protected under Article 21 of the Constitution. The criminalization of conversion by allurements, and its broad sweeping definition would include anything from talking about one's religion, critiquing religious practices that are an affront to the Constitution, running educational institutions, to offering charitable work, employment, or social service and has been made with a clear intent to terrorize the marginalized community. By mandating that a person who wishes to convert give a declaration in advance and providing for the publicity to the same, and calling for objections from the general public allows for a clear trespass into the privacy of the individual and

violates the freedom of conscience and privacy of an individual.

Between 2020 and 2021, Karnataka has witnessed an increase in 54% in atrocities committed against Dalits. The Ordinance by criminalizing the act of converting one's religion will now be used to further target Dalits. The past year has seen state-sanctioned heightened communal attacks on Christians and Muslims by Hindu supremacist organizations. This is accompanied by systematic efforts at radicalizing youth and filling them with communal poison. Only last week, arms training was given by Bajrang Dal to young men at a school in Kodagu!

Prices of essential commodities are soaring sky-high, the economy is in a terrible mess and the overwhelming majority of Indians are worried about their jobs, livelihood, housing and other basic necessities of life. Neither the Modi nor Bommaji governments offers any solution to this crisis, no relief to the people, all it does is to seek opportunity in crisis and inflict more injuries on the people.

Diversity and harmony are the two legs on which India can stand united and firm to weather any storm. Attack on these foundations is not just a blow to the religious rights of Minorities; it is an outright assault on the shared historical legacy and very spirit of India.

CPI(ML) Liberation demands that the Karnataka Protection Of Right To Freedom Of Religion Ordinance, 2022 be immediately withdrawn. We call upon the citizens of Karnataka to stand up to this fascist assault on the Constitution and society and give a fitting reply to the communal and corporate policies of the BJP and RSS. ■

## Split Verdict on Marital Rape

**D**elhi HC delivered a split verdict on a case challenging the marital rape exception in India’s rape law. Justice Rajiv Shakdher, who headed the division bench hearing the case, said that the right to withdraw consent forms the core of the woman’s right to life and liberty; and the marital rape exception (MRE) violates this right. The right to withdraw consent at any given point in time forms the core of the woman’s right to life and liberty which encompasses her right to protect her physical and mental being. Non-consensual sex destroys this core by violating what is dear to her, which is, her dignity, bodily integrity, autonomy and agency, and the choice to procreate or even

not to procreate, he said. The fact that the rapist is the husband of the victim does not make the act of sexual assault any less injurious, degrading, or dehumanizing and emphasised that marital rape leaves not only physical scars but also much deeper scars on the psyche of the victim. He also observed that far from the existing laws on violence against women being misused, they are vastly underused.

He noted that the data of the National Family Health Survey, which was carried out under the aegis of the central government for 2015- 2016, had found that 80% of married women reported non-consensual sex forced on them by their husband. He also noted that

NFHS data showed that 9.9 out of 10 cases of sexual assault in India go unreported.

Justice Hari Shankar however delivered a verdict upholding the marital rape exception. His opinion ignored legal precedent on the understanding of consent. He stated that “If the wife refuses, and the husband, nonetheless, has sex with her, howsoever one may disapprove the act, it cannot be equated with the act of ravishing by a stranger. Nor can the impact on the wife, in such a situation, be equated with the impact of a woman who is raped by a stranger.” This notion that stranger rape is more damaging than rape at the hands of an intimate partner is a widespread fallacy and is inexcusable coming from a judge. ■



## Cyberabad Police Fake Encounter

**T**he Justice VS Sirpurkar Commission has submitted its report to the Supreme Court on encounter murders on December 6, 2019 against four accused of raping and murdering a young doctor in Hyderabad. The commission confirmed four teens were shot intentionally by the police with the clear understanding that it would lead to their death. She also said the accused did not grab any weapons from the police party, hence the argument that the shooting was for ‘self-defense’ was false.

The four boys - Mohammed Arif, Chintakunta Chennakesavulu, Jollu Shiva, Jollu Naveen – two of them 15-year-olds, three of them minors from a backward Valmiki Boya tribe – were picked up from their homes,

and killed. There is no evidence to link them with the crime of rape and murder. Their murder was committed only to cover-up the crime of the rape and murder, and protect the real culprits, including the police officers who refused to act the previous night to rescue the woman while she was making distress calls.

We congratulate the 15 feminist and civil rights activists from Telangana who approached the court for justice and Advocates Vrinda Grover, Vasudha Nagaraj, Sautik Banerjee who voluntarily argued the case on behalf

of social activists before the Supreme Court, Telangana High Court, and the Commission of Inquiry.

AIPWA had, in December 2019 itself, strongly declared that the fake encounter can only be counterfeit ‘justice’ for the crime of rape. The concerns raised by AIPWA and other feminist groups then stand vindicated now. ■



# SC Order On Sedition Law

**T**he Supreme Court order to put Sedition law in abeyance is a victory to the long standing struggle by people's movements against state repression on democratic rights and the right to dissent. The said order dated 11.05.22 was passed in response to the petition filed by Army veteran Major-General SG Vombatkere (Retired) as well as PUCL and a range of other petitioners challenging the constitutional validity of Section 124-A of the Indian Penal Code, 1860.

A PUCL statement noted: "As a study by online portal Article 14 indicates, sedition cases have been filed against 13,000 people between 2010 and 2021. While

all governments have used the sedition provision to target their opponents and dissidents, however, with the coming to power of the BJP government the misuse of the sedition law has only become worse, thereby criminalizing and silencing voices of dissent. According to NCRB data, the number of sedition cases increased by 160% from 2016 to 2019, meanwhile the rate of conviction fell to 3.3% from 33.3%. An Article 14 study indicates that since 2014 when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power, there has been a 190% increase in the number of women charged with sedition. Among these women were artists, filmmakers, academics,

Adivasis, activists, students, homemakers and politicians.

"96% of sedition cases filed against 405 Indians for criticising politicians & governments between 2010 & 2021 were registered after 2014; 149 were accused of making "critical" and/or "derogatory" remarks against Prime Narendra Modi, and 144 against Uttar Pradesh (UP) chief minister Yogi Adityanath."

But the verdict still falls short of scrapping the colonial law. The SC should not further delay the striking down of this unconstitutional and anti-democratic law. Draconian and anti-people laws like UAPA, AFPSA & NSA, which are used by the state to trample democratic voices must also be scrapped. ■



# SC Release Of Perarivalan Significant For Federalism and States' Rights

**T**he Supreme Court invoked its extraordinary powers to declare on Wednesday that Rajiv Gandhi assassination case convict AG Perarivalan's life term would be "deemed to have been served" and ordered his immediate release. He was 19 in 1991 when he bought two batteries that, unknown to him, were used in the bomb that killed the former Prime Minister. He has since spent 31 years in jail. Sentenced to death under TADA, the Supreme Court had commuted his sentence to life after his mercy petitions to the governor and later the President were rejected.

In 2018, the Tamil Nadu government recommended remission of his sentence by the governor under

Article 161 of the Constitution. The governor did not take a decision on this for two and a half years and referred the case to the President for his consideration after Perarivalan moved the top court for relief. After the court sought an explanation on this, the Centre claimed that the powers of remission would lie in this case with the President as the offence was tried by the Central Bureau of Investigation under central government statutes.

The Supreme Court, in remitting Perarivalan's sentence, reiterated the position strongly that "The Governor occupies the position of the head of the executive in the State but it is virtually the Council of

Ministers in each State that carries on the executive Government." In a harsh reprimand, the SC said that "Given petitions under Article 161 pertain to the liberty of individuals, inexplicable delay not on account of the prisoners is inexcusable as it contributes to adverse physical conditions and mental distress faced by a prisoner, especially when the State Cabinet has taken a decision to release the prisoner by granting him the benefit of remission / commutation of his sentence."

To place such reprimands by the SC of "inexcusable delay" on part of the Centre in context, however, we must remember that the same SC has inexcusably delayed hearing challenges to the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir. The double standards when it comes to federal rights, even in the apex court, is glaring and jarring. ■

# Marx 204: The Challenge For Today's Marxists

▲ DIPANKAR BHATTACHARYA

## *Tribute to Karl Marx on his 204th birth anniversary.*

“Constructing the future and settling everything for all times are not our affair... (what) we have to accomplish at present (is) ruthless criticism of all that exists, ruthless both in the sense of not being afraid of the results it arrives at and in the sense of being just as little afraid of conflict with the powers that be.”

This slightly paraphrased sentence is quoted from a letter a 25-year-old young man had written to a friend way back in 1843. The young man had lived for another forty years and he lived precisely by this maxim, applying it to not just the external world around him, but also to his own ideas as he set about analysing the world and changing it.

History continues to remember the young man as Karl Marx, the ruthless critic of capitalism and brilliant visionary of an egalitarian and libertarian social future described commonly as communist or socialist. For his views and activities he indeed incurred the wrath of several European states of his time and while London gave him refuge for the latter half of his life, he was never granted British citizenship for his revolutionary track record. Born German, he died stateless.

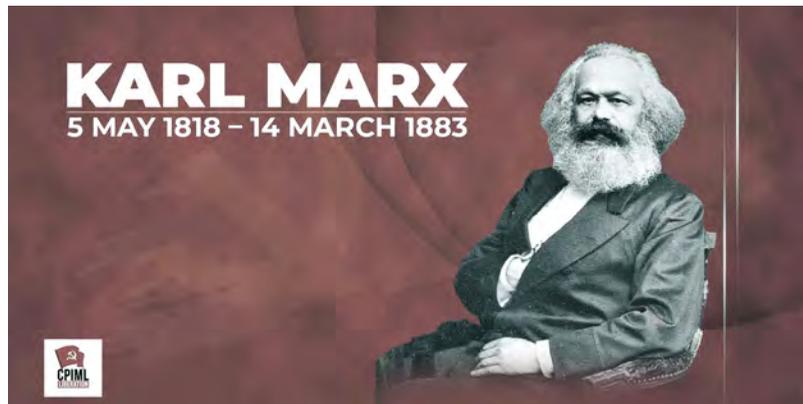
Marx had made the British Museum library in London his laboratory for his epoch-making research on capital. Britain then was the most advanced capitalist country, the home of industrial revolution and also the biggest colonial power. Capital could not have grown without

colonial plunder. In Marx's words, "If money, according to [Marie] Augier, 'comes into the world with a congenital blood-stain on one cheek,' capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt". No wonder, Marx's battle against capital grew intertwined with the growing worldwide battle for freedom from colonialism.

The Communist Manifesto written in early 1848 pulsed with the hope of an immediate revolution in Europe. But that did not happen, and capital consolidated its rule by crushing the 1848 revolution. Marx focused on the study of capital and establishing ties of unity among the incipient waves of working class struggle on one hand and anti-colonial uprisings on the other. In the 1850s, Marx used to write for the American journal New York Herald Tribune as its London-based European correspondent. The hypocrisy and barbaric plunder and torture of British colonialism in India used to figure prominently in his despatches.

In the summer of 1853, before the outbreak of Adivasi revolts in India, Marx brought up the agenda of the Indian people throwing off the yoke of British colonialism. In the wake of the outbreak of the great revolt of 1857, when the European discourse revolved around the alleged anti-English 'racist barbarity' of Indian soldiers, Marx and Engels greeted the revolt as an emerging platform of united anti-colonial resistance of the Indian people. In 1858, in a letter to Engels, Marx described India 'as our best ally' (in the battle against the twin enemy of British capitalism and colonialism). It was not easy for Marx and Engels to gather real-time information from India in those days, but readers will clearly see that their sympathies lay entirely with the Indian fighters. The mischief and malice with which RSS ideologues and propagandists bracket Marx with Macaulay to present him as an apologist of British rule in India must be thoroughly exposed and condemned.

Marx began his journey with the communist dream and his analysis of history gave him the confidence that this was an achievable dream.



But beyond this innate confidence in the forward motion of history and the power of the people to write their own history, Marx was not bothered about predicting, let alone designing, a perfect future. For him the battle was always to be waged here and now, and one could therefore only rely on the historically given situation and available materials. The dream of 1848 revolution, for which the Communist Manifesto was commissioned and written, was never fulfilled. The event that most powerfully reignited that dream in Marx's lifetime was the Paris Commune of 1871. But it too folded up after seventy-one days. The Soviet Union which emerged as the first definitive socialist model in early 20th Century too collapsed and disappeared after seven decades.

If 20th Century socialism failed to live up to its promises, how is

capitalism faring today? In Marx's time, capital had a close relationship with production and circulation of goods and services which was a prerequisite for realisation of profit. The accumulation of capital, howsoever plunderous and primitive, had to ensure the social reproduction of labour, if only at the level of bare subsistence. Today capital is threatening to become increasingly delinked from any engagement with production, and driven as they are by increasing application of automation and artificial intelligence, production processes are threatening to render large sections of people superfluous or dispensable. And authoritarianism is threatening to dislodge democracy from being the standard political form of capitalism. The gentleman who cheered about the 'end of history' after the collapse of the Soviet Union is complaining about the 'end of end

of history' after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

In short, capitalism today is encountering its deepest crisis rooted in an unsustainable present and staring at an uncertain future in a Covid-ravaged climate-endangered chaotic world. Rather than feeling demoralised about the 'crisis of socialism', can socialists fight back harder to overcome the teething troubles of socialism to build a humane alternative to the sufferings being inflicted by the capitalist behemoth? Socialism in the 21st Century must mean superior democracy and more comprehensive negation of capitalism and a more engaging conversation with nature as Marx had suggested. That is the challenge that should drive today's generation of Marxists. ■

.....

## Remembering Rammohan Roy The Rationalist Fighter for Modern India

▲ DIPANKAR BHATTACHARYA

**A**s India observes the 250th birth anniversary of Rammohan Roy, one of the earliest and greatest campaigners for modern India, on May 22, 2022, we are faced with one of history's cruel ironies. The incumbent regime is pushing 21st century India into revenge fuelled mass violence by distorting history and using the perceived wrongs committed by the Mughal dynasty that ruled India some three centuries ago. This paradoxical backdrop should help us appreciate the true significance of the battle that Rammohan and his contemporary reformers had to wage in the early nineteenth century to popularise the vision of a modern India in the face of aggressive colonial

rule on one hand and fierce social and ideological resistance from within India on the other.

Rammohan was born in 1772, fifteen years after the East India Company had grabbed Bengal by defeating Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah in the battle of Palashi and consolidated its control over the whole of India. In the words of Rabindranath 'the trader's scales had turned into the ruler's scepter'. During the first forty years of his life, Rammohan mastered the scriptures and key texts of all major religions, often reading them in their original languages as he was a polyglot with excellent command over a range of languages including Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian, to English, Latin and Greek. He also

worked as a revenue official for the East India Company before giving up his job and settling in Kolkata in 1815 to focus on his writing and organising work.

Rammohan is best remembered for his historic contribution to the abolition of Sati, the so-called 'voluntary' act of self-immolation of Hindu widows which was in fact an act of religiously sanctioned lynching of women on the expiry of their husbands. With polygamy being a common practice in those days, it could even mean simultaneous sacrifice of several women. Rammohan had seen it first-hand in his own family when his sister-in-law became a victim of this abhorrent custom. His spirited, bold and

persuasive campaign for the abolition of this system, through a series of articles on the pages of *Sambad Kaumudi*, the Bengali weekly paper launched by Rammohan primarily for this purpose, eventually forced Governor-General William Bentinck to outlaw the Sati system in 1829.

The abolition of Sati was the first historic legal step in support of the rights of Hindu women, the importance of which could only be compared to the subsequent Widow Remarriage Act of 1856 pushed by Vidyasagar and the Hindu Code Bills in 1952 and 1956 legislated under the leadership of Ambedkar and Nehru. The fact that nearly one hundred and sixty years later India needed another anti-Sati legislation (in the wake of the 1987 Roop Kanwar sati case followed by an aggressive RSS-BJP campaign to propagate sati) explains the historic significance of Rammohan's campaign. For Rammohan, the anti-Sati campaign was an integral part of a wider progressive agenda of rationalism and modernity which saw him as a religious and social reformer, educationist and journalist. He also demanded property inheritance rights for women – which gains greater significance in light of the fact that till 1870, women in England could not retain control of property inherited from a parent after their marriage. Eventually he moved away from Hinduism towards the idea of a universal religion and the foundation of Brahmo Sabha and Brahmo Samaj in a bid to rid Hinduism of the caste system and reform it on monotheistic lines.

While engaging with the British administration for social reforms, modern education and justice, Rammohan also had close ties with the descendants of the Mughal empire who were his contemporaries. The nineteenth Mughal emperor Akbar Shah II who occupied the Mughal throne from November 1806

to September 1837 had conferred on him the title Raja, which has since become the well-known honorific prefix of his name. It was as an envoy of the Mughal emperor that Rammohan went to Britain in 1830 where he fell ill and passed away three years later. While the idea of India's independence was yet to arise during his lifetime, Rammohan was deeply influenced by the emancipatory ideas of the French Revolution of 1789 and felt greatly elated by the attainment of independence by the countries of South America from Spanish colonialism in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

Two decades after the passing of Rammohan, India was on the path to a definitive national awakening for freedom. After a series of Adivasi revolts from the late eighteenth century onwards, we had the first war of independence in May 1857 when Azimullah Khan penned that ever inspiring anthem 'hum hain iske malik, hindostan hamara' (this land Hindostan belongs to us) and large parts of North India rose in revolt. To the horror of the colonial rulers, Hindus and Muslims joined hands and scripted the unprecedented saga of shared valour in a united resistance. It was this shared legacy of Rani Lakshmibai and Begum Hazrat Mahal, Kunwar Singh and Maulavi Ahmadullah Shah Faizabadi, fighting under a common umbrella that laid the foundation of India's subsequent protracted fight for independence.

Rammohan died in Britain as the envoy of the 19th Mughal emperor Akbar Shah II. The fighters of 1857 chose his son and the last Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar as the leader of the revolt. On November 8, 1862 Bahadur Shah Zafar breathed his last in exile in Rangoon. Contrary to the sinister Sangh-BJP attempt to define 21st century Indian nationalism in opposition to the Mughal dynasty, the freedom fighters



of eighteenth and nineteenth century India had no problem in accepting the Mughal emperors as allies and even leaders in the shared quest for a free modern India.

Rammohan Roy may not have articulated an explicit vision of freeing India from the British colonialists, but he had begun to argue against the colonial drain of resources and surplus away from India. Like Rammohan, all the dreamers and makers of modern India who fought for social and religious reform and cultural and educational progress should be seen as heroes of India's freedom movement. From Rammohan and Vidyasagar in Bengal to Jyotiba and Savitribai Phule and Fatima Sheikh in Maharashtra, we have a very rich legacy of Indian awakening in the nineteenth century. There was a vision of a diverse, plural and democratic India free from sectarianism, Brahminical patriarchy, superstition and tyranny, where reason and harmony would be the pillars of human development with dignity. Today that inspiring legacy and vision of India should help us rebuff those who would rake up the past to destroy the present and vitiate our future. ■

# First War Of Independence

**O**n the 10th of May, 1857, the soldiers of the British East India Company at Meerut began the historic uprising against colonial rule. The Company Raj called it the “sepoymutiny”, but history remembers it as India’s first war of Independence. Indeed, it was the first dawn of an Indian national consciousness: where people in the Indian subcontinent united for the very first time across the divides of religion, caste, community, and language against a common enemy – the colonial Company Raj. It was the wide participation in the Revolt by the peasantry and the artisans which gave it real strength as well as the character of a popular revolt. The peasant rebels attacked moneylenders and some pro-British zamindars, the British-established law courts, revenue offices (tehsils) and police stations.

Today, the Indian PM Modi, true to the Hindu supremacist vision of his organisation the RSS, uses the occasion of the 75th year of Indian Independence to peddle the false notion of thousands of years of Hindu enslavement to “Muslim rule”. The 1857 rupture challenges that false narrative: why, after all, was there never that kind of uprising against Mughal rule?

1857 happened precisely because British rule was so qualitatively different from that of the Mughals or any other previous rulers. The Mughals may have arrived from a different geographical terrain and culture, but their rule was simply not perceived as ‘foreign’. Mughal rule did not involve a huge drain of wealth to other shores; it was no more or less oppressive than that of various Hindu rulers before them. Further, there was no major difference in the lives of ordinary

Hindus and converts to Islam. And above all, there simply was no sense of ‘national’ identity – not even a sense of ‘Hindu’ identity. True, some kings who happened to be Hindu, did war with the Mughals, but so did Hindu kings do war with other Hindu kings. There were Hindu generals in the Mughal armies and Muslim generals in Hindu armies. Nowhere in the wars between various rulers was there any evidence that these wars were perceived as wars between nations, let alone religions-as-nations.

In sharp contrast, we find the intellectuals of the 1857 uprising sharply articulating a collective national sense of belonging and ownership over the land – and the need to free the land from the plunderer from afar. The best instance of this, is what can well be called India’s first national song – penned the 1857 revolutionary Azimulla Khan:

*Ham hain iske malik,  
Hindustan hamara.  
Pak watan hai kaum ka,  
jannat se bhi pyara...  
Ye hai hamari milkiyat,  
Hindustan hamara.  
Iski ruhaniyat se roshan  
hai jag sara...  
Kitna kadeem, kitna naeem,  
sab duniya se nyara.  
Karti hai jarkhez jise  
gango-jaman ki dhara...  
Upar barphila parvat,  
pehredar hamara.  
Neeche sahil par bajta,  
sagar ka nakkara...  
Iski khanein ugal rahi hain,  
sona-heera, para.  
Iski shan-o-shaukat ka  
duniya mein jaykara...*

*Aya phirangi door se,  
aisa mantar mara.  
Loota donon haath se,  
pyara watan hamara...  
Aj shahidon ne hai tumhein  
ahle watan lalkara.  
Todo ghulami ki zanjeerein,  
barsao angara...  
Hindu-Muslim-Sikh,  
hamara bhai-bhai pyara.  
Yeh hai azadi ka jhanda,  
ise salaam hamara...*

(Page 1266, *Samajik Kranti ke Dastavez, Vol II*)

*[We are its masters,  
this Hindostan of ours,  
Pure land of our people,  
dearer than Paradise...  
This land is ours,  
this Hindostan of ours,  
Its spirituality lights up  
the whole world...  
How ancient, how wise,  
unique in the whole world,  
Made fertile by the  
streams of Ganga-Jamuna...  
Above, icy peaks guard over us,  
Below, on the coastline plays  
the sea’s mighty drums...  
Its mines brim with gold and brilliant  
gems,  
The entire world hails its glory  
and fame...  
From afar came the foreigner,  
cast such a spell,  
Greedy ransacked this dear land of  
ours...  
Today the martyrs call out to you, the  
people of this land,  
Break the shackles of slavery,  
rain fiery embers...  
Hindu-Muslim-Sikh,  
all are our beloved brothers,  
This is the pennant of our freedom,*

we offer it our salute...

(*Freely translated from the original - Ed.*)

This song, sounding fresh and modern even today, identifies the enemy clearly as the colonial ruler who ransacked and plundered the land. The “We” who are declared to be the “owners” of the “beloved Hindostan” are “Hindu-Muslim-Sikh, all our beloved brothers.”

## The Spectre of 1857 Haunted British Raj...

No wonder this clear anti-colonial national consciousness, free from sectarian and communal sentiment, haunted British colonialists throughout their rule over India. Historian Kim A Wagner, author of a book on the Jallianwala Bagh massacre published this year (*Jallianwala Bagh: An Empire Of Fear And The Making Of The Amritsar Massacre*, Penguin Random House, 2019), observes in his very first chapter that “In the British colonial imagination, the ‘Mutiny’ never ended and in India, the ruling class were surrounded by constant reminders of the potential dangers of ‘native rebellion....the very notion of the ‘Mutiny’ did not refer simply to a historical event as much as a particular colonial outlook - a cause of persistent panic but also a blueprint for maintenance of colonial control in the form of exemplary punishment and indiscriminate violence.” Just the presence of Muslims distributing sherbet or dancing alongside Hindus in Ram Navami processions in Amritsar in April 1919 were enough to call up the spectre of 1857 where Hindu-Muslim unity had first manifest itself into national anti-colonial sentiment, and cause British administrators of the city to demand military resources like machine guns and troops ready to repeat the slaughter of Indians that followed 1857. How important



At Meerut University, wall murals of some of the Muslim leaders of the 1857 uprising – Khan Bahadur Khan Rohilla and Bahadur Shah Zafar – were blackened by Hindu supremacists .

to remember this in these times when Ram Navami processions have become demonstrations of Hindu-supremacist hate and violence against Muslim homes and mosques!

### ...As It Haunts Modi Raj Too

Just days ago, at Meerut University, wall murals of some of the Muslim leaders of the 1857 uprising – Khan Bahadur Khan Rohilla and Bahadur Shah Zafar – were blackened by Hindu supremacists with the lettering “Not a freedom fighter”.

It was the Rohilla chieftain Khan Bahadur Khan who established Bareilly as a leading centre of the uprising, where Nana Saheb and other leaders could take refuge after the British recaptured Lucknow. After Bareilly, too, was captured by the British, Khan Bahadur Khan escaped to Nepal where the King of Nepal had him captured and turned over to the British. He was sentenced to death and hanged in the Kotwali (Police Station, Dhaka) on 24 February 1860. It is a shame that the followers of the RSS which never participated in the freedom struggle, can insult his memory because of his Muslim identity.

The legacy of 1857 is something that Hindu supremacist politics would like to erase from public memory – a feat that is not so easy to achieve

since the legacy survived the ruthless and brutal British attempts to stamp out its memory through oral history narratives, where every village has its own specific memories of that first battle for freedom. Subhadra Kumari Chauhan’s poem immortalised how the oral storytellers/singers of Bundelkhand passed on the story of how Rani Lakshmi Bai died leading the freedom fighters’ army: “*bundele harbolon ke munh hamne suni kahani thi – ki khoob ladi mardani vo to jhansi vali rani thi.*”

And it is impossible to erase Muslims from the story of 1857: they are to be found among every layer of the freedom fighters – from kings to commoners to the intellectuals.

The 1857 uprising had forged a strong unity amongst Hindus and Muslims alike, and it took more than 7 decades of British machinations to disrupt that unity. The rebels of 1857 established a Court of Administration consisting of ten members six from the army and four civilians with equal representation of Hindus and Muslims. The rebel government abolished taxes on articles of common consumption, and penalized hoarding. Amongst the provisions of its charter was the liquidation of the hated Zamindari system imposed by the British and a call for land to the tiller. All proclamations were issued in popular languages. Hindi and Urdu

texts were provided simultaneously. Proclamations were issued jointly in the name of both Hindus and Muslims.

## Savarkar's 1857 Troubles

Savarkar's place in history is, of course, tainted by his advocacy of the two-nation theory, his communal fascist view of Hindu Rashtra, his craven apologies to the British and his role in the murder of Gandhi. This is why even Lal Krishna Advani, writing about Savarkar on 10 May 2007 on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the 1857 war of independence, (LK Advani '150 yrs of Heroism, via Kala Pani', Indian Express, May 10, 2007), conceded that "Savarkar's views on several issues in the latter half of his life were problematic." However, Advani argued that Savarkar stood redeemed by his 1907 publication - *The Indian War of Independence 1857*.

Marx and Engels had already chronicled the 1857 uprising as a war for 'national independence'. Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-98) was the first Indian who wrote a tract (*Asbab-e-Baghawat-e-Hind*, 1858) recognising 1857 as a "Indian rebellion" not a "mutiny"; however he later wrote another tract seeking to allay the British rage which was concentrated against the Muslims, by showing them that there were "loyal Muslims" in 1857. But, as Biswamoy Pati notes, "Khan's was perhaps the first Indian viewpoint to be presented that critiqued imperialism and its policies as constituting causes of the Rebellion, and most importantly, locating 1857 as a 'Rebellion' (viz. Baghawat)." (*The Great Rebellion of 1857 in India: Exploring transgressions, contests and diversities*, ed Biswamoy Pati, Routledge 2010).

After Khan, Savarkar's tract was

perhaps the first Indian to reject the term 'mutiny' and call 1857 a 'war of Independence', and as such, for the Gadar Party, for Bhagat Singh and Madame Cama, and others, it was a source of great information and inspiration.

But even in this early avatar, we can see Savarkar struggling to reconcile his Hindu supremacist view of history with the actual facts of history, and specifically with the Hindu-Muslim unity that suffused the 1857 uprising.

It is true that the book devotes several pages to recounting the deeds of heroic Muslim patriots and warriors - any book on 1857 could hardly avoid doing so. But Savarkar, in his attempts to reconcile the facts of Hindu-Muslim unity against the British in 1857 with his vision of Indian history as a long saga of Indian (Hindu) resistance to 'outsiders' and against 'foreign Muslim rule', comes up with tortuous, forced explanations. This is a pervasive thread that runs throughout the whole book. In his author's introduction, he writes, "The feeling of hatred against the Mahomedans was just and necessary in the times of Shivaji, but such a feeling would be unjust and foolish if nursed now..." (*The Indian War of Independence: 1857*, Rajdhani Granthagar, New Delhi 1970, p IX-X)

Here is yet another passage where Savarkar ties himself in knots over the question of Hindus' relationship with Muslims and Muslims' place in the nation: "He (Nana Sahib) also felt that the meaning of "Hindusthan" was thereafter the united nation of the adherents of Islam as well as Hinduism. As long as the Mahomedans lived in India in the capacity of alien rulers, so long, to be willing to live with them like brothers was to acknowledge national weakness.... after a struggle of centuries, Hindu

sovereignty had defeated the rulership of the Mahomedans... It was no national shame to join hands with Mahomedans then, but it would, on the contrary, be an act of generosity... Their present relation was one not of rulers and ruled, foreigner and native, but simply that of brothers with the one difference between them of religion alone...." (1857, p 75-76)

None of the leaders of 1857, even the Hindu ones, seem to have needed to offer such defensive explanations for Hindu-Muslim unity. It is Savarkar, not the leaders of 1857, whose imagination is obsessed with a mythical 'past hatred', and who therefore is hard put to reconcile it with the historical fact of 1857's anti-colonial unity.

What is the source of Savarkar's discomfort? It arises from a theoretical confusion - from a tendency to conflate religion with nation. His first chapter title says it all - "Swadharma and Swaraj", in which he asks, "In what other history is the principle of love of one's religion and love of one's country manifested more nobly than in ours?" He makes no mention whatsoever of colonialism and its impact on the lives of peasantry or common people; the horrors of British rule, for him were all about the humiliation of "foreign" rule.

And foreignness is also much to do with religion - he asserts that for "orientals", "Swaraj without Swadharma is despicable and Swadharma without Swaraj is powerless." (1857, p 9-10). Savarkar strives to read back his theory of religious nationalism into 1857, and that is what blinds him from perceiving the true significance and content of 1857. Savarkar's comment that to live like brothers with Muslims was "national weakness" shows that he bought into the orientalist theory that the

Hindus were “weak and effeminate” because they did for the most part live like brothers with Muslims. Full of his imaginary vision of “Hindu-sthan” (a term he uses in this early work well as the later ones), Savarkar is unable to see the Hindostan envisioned by Azimullah and the warriors of 1857.

Savarkar is able to accommodate 1857 in his Hindu-supremacist historic schema by making it seem like a temporary truce, fancifully decreed by the motherland. Describing five days of the 1857 war, he writes, *“These five days will be ever memorable in the history of Hindusthan for yet another reason. Because these five days proclaimed...the end for the time being at any rate of the continuous fight between Hindus and Mahomedans, dating from the invasion of Mahmud of Ghazni. ...Bharatmata who was, in times past, freed from Mahomedan yoke by Shivaji, Pratap Singh, Chhatrasal, Pratapaditya, Guru Gobind Singh and Mahadaji Scindia – that Bharatmata gave the sacred mandate that day, ‘Henceforward you are equal and brothers; I am equally mother of you both.’...”* (1857, p 126)

He also feels compelled to offer a contorted apologia for the restoration of Bahadur Shah Zafar to the throne of Delhi: *“...the Mogul dynasty of old was not chosen by the people of the land. It was thrust upon India*

*by sheer force...by a powerful pack of alien adventurers and native self-seekers...It was not this throne that was restored to Bahadur Shah Zafar today...it would have been in vain that the blood of hundreds of Hindu martyrs had been shed in the three or four centuries preceding. ...For more than five centuries the Hindu civilization had been fighting a defensive war against foreign encroachment on its birthrights....the conqueror was conquered and India was again free, the blot of slavery and defeat being wiped off. Hindus again were masters of the land of the Hindus...”* (1857, p 283-84)

Savarkar in his work on 1857 documented the heroic battles and sacrifices of Muslims. Yet, he went on later to argue for an India purged of Muslims just as Hitler had purged Germany of Jews. In 1944 Savarkar told American journalist Tom Treanor that Muslims in India should be treated “as Negroes are in the US” – i.e segregated, prevented from access to ‘white’ spaces on buses, schools and other public spaces, deprived of voting rights, and other civil rights.

The vision of the 1857 warriors was as far removed from Sarvarkar’s as can be. They were not fighting merely for a restoration of the old order of kings and princes: they were drawing up a blueprint of a new society in which

peasants and people from the various oppressed and marginalised castes would have dignity and recognition.

## A Democratic Revolution

When the 1857 fighters held power, what did their rule look like? Talmiz Khaldun, in his essay ‘The Great Rebellion’, (The 1857 Rebellion, ed Biswamoy Pati, New Delhi : Oxford University Press, 2007), writes that the Mughal ruler was in essence a constitutional monarch alone. The revolutionary democratic nature of the uprising is clear from the measures adopted by its Court (its highest decision making body in Delhi). Khaldun observed: “Necessity forced the Court to heavy and arbitrary taxation. This cannot be denied, though, that the incidence of taxation fell almost entirely on the classes which could pay. Tax measures left the man-in-the-street untouched. On the contrary, the Court tried to give him relief. It passed orders for liquidating the zamindari system and giving proprietary right to the actual tiller. It is evident from the orders passed by the Court that it had intended to overhaul the system of revenue assessment. Its authority was, however, too short-lived to accomplish the task.” ■

# ..... A Profile Of Some Of The 1857 Revolutionaries

### Veer Kunwar Singh

Kunwar Singh was born in Jagdispur of the Shahabad (now Bhojpur) District of Bihar to a landed family. Remarkably, he led the armed uprising of 1857 at the age of 80, not caring for his failing health. Oral history maintains that he said he had been waiting for the uprising, and

was sorry only that it had come when he was so old. He was an expert in guerilla warfare, baffling the British forces with his military tactics and expelling them from Shahabad on 23 April 1858. He died a few days after – but only after having routed the East India Company troops.

Bhojpuri folk songs commemorate

him thus:

*Ab chhod re firangiya hamar deswa ! Lutpat kaile tuhun, majwa udaile kailas, des par julum jor. sahar gaon luti, phunki, dihiat firangiya, suni suni Kunwar ke hridaya me lagal agiya! Ab chhod re firangiya hamar deswa!*

(Now quit our country oh Britisher!

For you have looted us, enjoyed the luxuries of our country and oppressed our countrymen. You have looted, destroyed and burnt our cities and villages. Kunwar's heart burns to know all this. Now quit our country oh Britisher!")

Kunwar Singh's correspondence with 1857 leader from Jehanabad Qazi Zulfikar Ali show clearly that they were comrades and the best of friends. In these letters dated 1856 they discuss plans to march to Meerut – even before the uprising broke out in 1857. In the letters, they plan to divide the freedom fighters' army into two wings, one under the command of Kunwar Singh while the other under Zulfikar's command.

On 23 April 2022 however, Home Minister Amit Shah attended an event organised by the BJP at Jagdishpur, with the clear intention of pushing a communal rather than an anti-colonial narrative. The same BJP is erecting a statue of 1857 traitor Dumraon Maharaj to whom the British gave a large portion of Babu Kunwar Singh's property as a reward after the latter's death! BJP cannot claim to revere both traitors and martyrs of the freedom struggle: both Dumraon Maharaj and Kunwar Singh; both Godse and Gandhi!

Ironically, on the same day that Amit Shah was garlanding a statue of Kunwar Singh, the district administration had locked Kunwar Singh's grand daughter-in-law into her home to prevent her being able to raise the issue of the police and administration's complicity in the cover-up of the recent murder of Kunwar Singh's great grandson Bablu Singh.

## Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah

Maulvi Ahmadullah of Faizabad was an outstanding leader of the 1857 uprising. British officer Thomas Seaton described him as "A man

of great abilities, of undaunted courage, of stern determination, and by far the best soldier among the rebels." G. B. Malleson, another British officer who wrote a history of the 1857 uprising, wrote that "The Maulvi was a remarkable person. His name was Ahmadullah and his native place was Faizabad in Oudh. In person, he was tall, lean and muscular, with large deep eyes, beetle brows, a high aquiline nose, and lantern jaws. It is beyond doubt that behind the conspiracy of 1857 revolt, the Maulvi's brain and efforts were significant. Distribution of bread during the campaigns, Chapati Movement, was actually his brainchild."

Malleson paid this tribute to the Maulvi Ahmadullah on recording his death in battle: "If a patriot is a man who plots and fights for independence, wrongfully destroyed, for his native country, then most certainly, the Maulvi was a true patriot."

## The Adivasis of Chhotanagpur

Historian Shashank Sinha notes that "While the creation of a new district of Santhal Parganas (after the brutal suppression of the Santhal Hul or rebellion of 1855–56) did give some respite to the Santhals of the immediate region, their brethren in Hazaribagh and Manbhum (which also formed a part of the Hul) did not get any ameliorative benefits." As a result the Santhals in these regions joined the 1857 uprising to settle accounts with moneylenders, and acted jointly with the soldiers to attack feudal forces who were collaborators of the British.

Sinha notes that "The Santhals continued their activities even after the defeat of the sepoy at the Battle of Chatra. Around 10,000 people burnt a thana (police station), looted Esmea Chatti (at

Hazaribagh) and attempted to cut off communications between Hazaribagh and Ranchi. Later, a group plundered Gomea and burnt government build-ings and records. Like the Santhals, the dispossessed Bhuiya Tikaits, in the north of Hazaribagh district, saw in the 1857 disturbances an opportunity to recover their lands from old purchasers."

Sinha cautions: "In areas such as Hazaribagh, Singhbhum and Palamau where tribals participated, they defied stereotypical imagings. Besides being mobile, one witnesses adivasis uniting with non-adivasis and regional elites to fight against their local enemies and/or imperialist forces."

(1857 and the adivasis of Chotanagpur', Shashank S Sinha, *The Great Rebellion*, pp 16-31)

## 1857 in Andhra Pradesh

(Excerpted from the chapter by B. Rama Chandra Reddy in *The Great Rebellion*).

It is often mistakenly assumed that the 1857 uprising was confined to North India. In fact, the fire spread all the way to Southern India.

Reddy notes that "*The immediate precursor to the Great Uprising was a mutiny on 28 February 1857 of the 'native' sepoy of Vizianagaram belonging to the First Regiment 'native' Infantry.*"

On 17 July 1857, two rebels, Turabaz Khan and Moulvi Allauddin, led an attack on the British residency at Hyderabad. They were supported by a 'crowd' of 5,000 people, including the Rohillas and the civil population. Then again, about a month later in Cuddapah, on 28 August 1857, one Sheik Peer Shah tried to 'incite' the 'native' officers and men of the 30th Regiment 'native' Infantry.

Korukonda Subba Reddy, who

belonged to the Konda Reddy tribe and was the hill chief of Koratur village situated on the banks of the River Godavari led a protracted guerilla war, forcing the British troops to follow them into the malaria-prone hill regions. On 7 October 1858, the tribal rebel leaders Korukonda Subba Reddy and Korla Setharamaiah were finally hanged at the village of Buttaya Gudem. Korla Venkata Subba Reddy and Guruguntla Kommi Reddy suffered a similar fate at the village of Polavaram; and Korukonda Tummi Reddy was hanged at Tudigunta.

According to oral tradition, the dead body of Korukonda Subba Reddy was kept on display in an iron cage, later termed the 'Subba Reddy Sanchi' (bag), and was left hanging for a long time by the British for public viewing in order to create terror in the people's minds about the fate of a rebel.

Uprisings were also seen in the Gudem tribal area (Vizagapatnam district).

## Azeezun Bai

*(The sections on Azeezun Bai and Begum Hazrat Mahal are excerpted from the chapter by Lata Singh in The Great Rebellion).*

Most of the accounts mention how Azeezun used to be on horseback in male attire decorated with medals, armed with a brace of pistols as she joined the Rebellion.

Azeezun lived in the Lurkee Mahil, in Oomrao Begum's house in Kanpur. Her mother was a courtesan in Lucknow. Azeezun's mother died when she was very young and she was brought up by a courtesan in Lucknow. So Azeezun must have left the city of Lucknow and settled in Kanpur. ...one of the probable reasons for Azeezun going to Kanpur may have been her strong passion for independence. She probably did not want to stay under someone's

patronage, being the kind of person that she was, as is reflected in her role in the 1857 Rebellion.

Azeezun was very close to the sepoys of the 2nd Cavalry, who visited her house. She was particularly close to the sepoy Shamsuddin Khan of the 2nd Cavalry. Shamsuddin played a very active role in the 1857 Rebellion in Kanpur. Meetings of rebels would take place in his house to work out plans for the Rebellion. Shamsuddin visited Azeezun frequently.

Besides the fact that Azeezun, who had been known to both Nana Sahib and Azimullah Khan, and whose house had been the meeting point of sepoys, she was looked upon as one of the key conspirators in the 1857 Rebellion. It seems that she was aware that the rebellion in Kanpur was planned for 4 June 1857. Her role is seen as that of informer and messenger. Some accounts also mention that Azeezun had formed a group of women, who fearlessly went around cheering the men in arms, attending to their wounds and distributing arms and ammunition.

According to Nanak Chand, 'it shows great daring in Azeezun that she is always armed and present in the batteries owing to her attachment to the cavalry, and she takes her favourites among them aside and entertains them with milk etc. on the public road'. Another eyewitness wrote that 'it was always possible to see her, armed with pistols in spite of the heavy fire, in the battery, amongst her friends, the cavalymen of the 2nd regiment, for whom she cooked and sang'.

Although this chapter discusses the role of Azeezun in the 1857 Rebellion, there are bound to be hundreds of stories about the role of these women in the Rebellion, but most of them seem to have gone unrecorded. There are unsubstantiated accounts of girls taking to the streets in

a battle with British soldiers. Kothas (houses of courtesans) became centres of conspiracy, and many of these women joined in the Rebellion of 1857. Their role is documented as covert but generous financiers of the action. These women, although patently non-combatants, were penalized for their alleged instigation of and pecuniary assistance to the rebels. The British officials were aware that their kothas were meeting points for the rebels, which were looked upon with suspicion as places of political conspiracy. In fact, their role in the Rebellion can best be judged from the ferocity of the British retribution that was directed against them. There was large-scale appropriation of their property. In Lucknow, the centre of courtesans, the British, after quelling the Rebellion of 1857, had turned their fury against the powerful elite. Their names were on the lists of property confiscated by British officials for their proven involvement in the siege and the Rebellion against colonial rule in 1857.

## Begum Hazrat Mahal

Begum Hazrat Mahal emerged as an important political figure who began her profession as a courtesan. She married the Awadh Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, and when the latter was exiled, she agreed to the suggestion by the freedom fighters that she crown her minor son Birjis Qadr and name herself as regent. Interestingly, the other Begums were approached before her, but none agreed to crown their sons as king, fearing the repercussions of such an action. After a long siege, Lucknow was recaptured by the British, forcing Hazrat Mahal to retreat in 1858. She refused to accept any kind of favours and allowances offered by the British rulers. She spent the remaining years of her life in Nepal.

## Foundation Stone Laying of Jeevdhar Singh-Hetam Singh Park

CPIML General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya participated in a massive program in Khabhaini (Arwal) organized under the banner of 'Freedom 75: People's Campaign' on 10 May 2022 to commemorate the anniversary of the 1857 freedom struggle. Khabhaini village was the centre for the 1857 struggle in Magadh. One of the chief revolutionaries of the struggle Jeevdhar Singh hailed from this village. A park is being constructed in this village in memory of Jeevdhar Singh and Hetam Singh. Jeevdhar Singh's family has donated land for this park.

The foundation stone for the Jeevdhar Singh-Hetam Singh park was laid by CPIML General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya on 10 May. The 1942 revolutionary Babulal Sinha was also remembered on this day. He addressed the memorial meeting attended by a large number of people including senior party leaders and MLAs.

## 1857 in Tamil Nadu

*(Excerpted from 'Uprising In South', N Rajendran, Frontline, June 2007)*

In what is now Tamil Nadu, as in other parts of India, the earliest expressions of opposition to British rule took the form of localised rebellions and uprisings. Chief among these was the revolt of the Palayakkarars (Poligars) against the East India Company. The notable

Poligars who raised the banner of revolt deep south in the Madras Presidency were Puli Thevar, Veera Pandiya Kattabomman and the Marudu brothers of Sivaganga. There were two major campaigns undertaken by the British against the Poligars in the late 18th century.

Ghulam Ghouse and Sheikh Mannu, two activists, were arrested in February 1858 for pasting wall posters "of a highly treasonable character", that is, in favour of the 1857 Revolt, and urging the people of Madras to rise against the British.

Coastal regions such as Madras and Chingleput (Chengelpet) and interior areas such as Coimbatore were considered "disturbed" during the 1857 Revolt, according to reports of the period. In Thanjavur in southern Tamil Nadu, a revolutionary by name Sheikh Ibrahim was apprehended in March 1858 and convicted on charges of sedition.

Similarly, in North Arcot, in anticipation of the Revolt of 1857, plans and secret meetings were held for organising a war against the British, from as early as January 1857. It is on record that one Syed Kussa Mahomed Augurzah Hussain held talks in this connection with the zamindars of Punganur (in Chittoor district, now in Andhra Pradesh) and Vellore. Syed Kussa was apprehended by the British in March 1857 and a security was demanded of him.

In 1857, the 18th Regiment of the British army was quartered at Vellore. Some sepoy of the Regiment revolted in November 1858. In the armed struggle, Captain Hart and Jailor Stafford were killed. The Sessions Judge of Chittoor tried a sepoy of the Regiment on charges of wilful killing and sentenced him to death.

In Salem, the news of the start of the 1857 Revolt was met with much

commotion as it was rumoured that the patriotic army would march to the area soon. On the evening of Saturday, August 1, 1857, a crowd consisting of a large number of weavers assembled on Putnul Street near the house of one Ayyam Permala Chary, saying that the Indian soldiers would be coming and that the British flag would fall. Hyder, a thana peon, told the assembled people that "about this time of the day, a flag (of India) will have been hoisted at Madras".

During the revolt, a sanyasi called Mulbagalu Swamy in Bhavani, an industrial town near Coimbatore, started preaching that British rule should be brought to an end. "Let all the Europeans be destroyed and the rule of Nanasahib Peshwa prevail," he would tell his devotees during his daily puja. He was finally apprehended at Bhavani by the British and brought to Coimbatore.

Chengelpet became a hotbed of secret gatherings and revolutionary activities in the early period of the outbreak of the Revolt. Sultan Bakhsh went from Madras to Chengelpet in July 1857 to help organise the anti-British uprising there in cooperation with his local associates, Aruanagiry and Krishna, two leaders who were already leading a revolt in the area.

On July 31, an uprising took place in the Chengelpet area. The movement started spreading. On August 8, 1857, the Magistrate of Chengelpet informed the Government of Madras about this serious insurgency.

## 1857 in Madras And Malabar

*(Excerpted from 'Impact Of The Revolt Of 1857 In South India', Shumais U, Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, Vol. 77 (2016), pp. 410-417)*

Hindu and Muslim religious leaders also played important role in the revolt in the Madras Presidency.

Gulam Ghose and Sheikh Mannu arrested from Madras city were sentenced to transportation, Sheikh Ibrahim from Thanjavur in March 1858, three Bengali fakirs, Narasimha Das, Damodar Das, and Nirguna Das in August 1857, Baldev Rao from Salem in October 1857, Mulbagu Swami arrested near Coimbatore were some of the religious leaders arrested from different parts of Madras Presidency in connection with the revolt.

K N Panikar argues the Mappilas of Malabar resisted against the landlords and British through out the colonial period and the main reason was agrarian greivences and the religion played as inspiration for oppressed Mappila peasantry. Eight Mappilas were arrested at Ponmalla Village in Ernad Taluk for singing a ballad praising the martyrs of 1843 outbreak and calling for the overthrow of British rule in India.

In September 1857 at Thalassery or Tellichery, another Mappila named Vanji Kadavath Kunji Mayan was arrested for giving a speech on the revolt in North India and the scarcity of rice in Malabar. Kunji Mayan died of diarrhoea at a Trichinopoly Jail hospital.

The colonial rulers in the Malabar used laws like the 'Moplah Outrages Act' or 'Moplah War Knives Act' of 1854 to racially profile the Mappila community as a particularly criminal and dangerous one. They tried to show that these Mappila rebels were not really political rebels at all, but were 'fanatics' or madmen due to their community background. ■

# Campaign Against Bulldozer Raj

**O**n May Day 2022 (May 1) CPIML launched a month-long all-India campaign to inspire people to resist Bulldozer Raj – the BJP's vicious anti-poor and anti-Muslim campaign to target and raze down homes and shops of Muslims and the working poor by branding them 'Bangladeshis' and 'rioters'. A brief report of highlights of the campaign follows.

## Bihar: Bulldozer Raj, Eviction Of Poor Will Not Be Tolerated



Hundreds protested under the banner of CPIML on 13 May 2022 in front of DM Patna against the diktat to evict the poor families long-settled in the Son canal char in Shabarinagar (Khagaul). After the protest a delegation led by Phulwari MLA Gopal Ravidas met DM Patna and demanded an immediate stay on the order to evict the poor and dalits.

The protest rally which started from Kargil Chowk was attended by CPIML leaders as well as a large number of people from the Mahadalit community in Shabarinagar. The participation of women was notable. The delegation comprised MLA Gopal Ravidas, Patna City Secretary Abhyuday, State Standing Committee member Ranvijay Kumar, State Committee member Jitendra Kumar, District Committee member Satyendra Sharma and Shabarinagar residents Baleshwar Paswan and Ratnesh Kumar.

Gopal Ravidas said that the these poor dalit families have been settled for a long time in the Son canal char (sandbank), some living in the lower part and some in the upper. Builders and dominant caste people have their eye on this land. They filed a PIL in the High Court citing obstruction of the water source and misled the High Court. Under direction from the High Court the Sub-Divisional Officer issued a notice to vacate the land.

Gopal Ravidas pointed out that the Son flyover has been constructed but that does not pose any problems; only the poor being settled there is being seen as a problem. This is nothing but a conspiracy by builders and the land mafia to grab the land. During the talks the DM acknowledged that a survey has been conducted and the administration has no problem with the poor being settled there. The DM has issued instructions to the CO that any kind of action against the poor is wrong.

In 2001 when this area was under Gram Panchayat 53 people were given occupancy papers but afterwards the area went to the City Council and the matter still hangs in limbo. The CPIML MLA said that *bandobasti* (arrangements) for all the poor should be made as per the earlier basis.

The protest march was addressed by Shashi Yadav, Anita Sinha, Pannalal, Rakhi Mehta and AISA-RYA activists. The speakers said that Nitish Kumar must answer why he is silent when bulldozers are set to wreak havoc in Bihar. The orders of the court are that no poor should be evicted without prior alternate arrangements; why then are the poor being thus attacked? We demand that a new housing law be passed for the urban poor.

### Statewide Protests in UP

Earlier, statewide protests were also organized on 10 May under the CPIML-AIPWA-AIARLA banners against the Yogi government's Bulldozer Raj and growing violence against women in Chandauli, Lalitpur, Ferozepur as well as other places in Uttar Pradesh.

In Lucknow a march was organized from Parivartan Chowk to the Collectorate which was stopped midway by the police-administration. A meeting was held on the road and a 10-point memorandum addressed to the Governor was submitted to the Kesarbagh Thana Head. The meeting was addressed by leaders including Ramesh Singh Sengar, Kamla Gautam, journalist Sarojini Bisht, Kumari Anjali, Kaleem Khan, Madhusudan Magan and others.

The protest in Robertsganj Tahsil, Sonbhadra was attended by State Secretary Sudhakar Yadav. Addressing the dharna Comrade Sudhakar said that women are not at all safe even in police custody. The Yogi regime is creating communal hatred and

also unleashing bulldozers against minorities and dalits. The CPIML will under any circumstance carry forward the fight to protect minorities, dalits and the poor.

Protests were also organized in various Districts including Mirzapur, Ballia, Ghazipur, Chandauli, Devaria, Gorakhpur, Azamgarh, Basti, Banaras, Bhadohi, Rae Bareilly, Sitapur, Lakhimpur Kheri, Pilibhit, Jalaun, Mathura and Moradabad.

### Citizens' March in Delhi Demands an End to Communal Bulldozer Politics

On 9 May, Shaheen Bagh once again shone bright as its residents poured out on the streets to send the MCD bulldozers back empty handed.

On 11 May, hundreds of people from across the Delhi gathered at the Delhi's Kashmiri Gate on May 11th to take part in the protest march to Lieutenant Governor's House calling for an end to communal and fascist Bulldozer politics run by BJP ruled MCDs. The protest was jointly called by CPIML, CPIM, CPI and various students and civil society groups, including organisations representing people whose houses had been razed during the previous demolition drives.

Sucheta De, Central Committee member of CPIML and leader of AICCTU warned that working class and toiling masses of Delhi will not allow the communal venom the BJP is trying to spread in Delhi in the name of anti-eviction drives. "Like

Jahangirpuri and Shaheen Bagh, the people will give a befitting response against such politics of hate." said Sucheta De.

Ravi Rai, CPIML Delhi State Secretary said that "like the Babri Masjid demolition, the demolition drive is a staging of fascist terror by BJP against the minority Muslim community – this time on a more sustainable, local scale."

Since the Jahangirpuri violence in April this year, the BJP ruled MCDs in Delhi have embarked on aggressive campaign threatening Muslim majority areas with bulldozers and demolitions under the veil of anti-encroachment drive. In Jahangirpuri, the demolition drive went on despite the stay order by Supreme Court and it was only stopped after the intervention by left parties' leaders and cadres. On May 9th, the Bulldozers were brought in at the Shaheen Bagh. Clearly, the attempt was to intimidate the residents of Shaheen Bagh the site of historic anti-Citizenship Amendment Law protests. Once again, the residents of Shaheen Bagh resisted the fascist onslaught and the bulldozers were forced to go back.

Members of Hawkers and Vendors association and Dhobighat Jhuggi Adhikar Manch also condemned the targeted attack on the Muslim community in the name of anti-encroachment drive. Feminist groups Saheli, AIDMAM, NFIW, AIPWA, AIDWA, AIMSS, and many others stressed the fact that women vendors bore the brunt of the demolitions at Jahangirpuri. ■



# Lohari: First Deceived, Then Submerged

▲ INDRESH MAIKHURI

**O**n 26 April 2022 CPIML State Committee member Atul Sati, former Mahila Samakhya state director Geeta Gairola, senior journalist Trilochan Bhatt and Seema Sati and I went to Lohari. On one side are some ruined houses; houses on which the whitewashing still appears fresh, but everything else is in ruins. On the other side empty-eyed men and women sit hopeless in the courtyard of the Middle School. This is the scene that greets us in Lohari village. Lohari village was submerged for the Uttarakhand Hydro-electric Corporation's Vyasi Hydel Project. This village is at a distance of about 80 km from Uttarakhand's temporary capital Dehradun.

The Vyasi Hydel Project is a project with a capacity of 120 megawatts (MW). Adjoining this, another project the Lakhwad Hydel Project has been recently constructed. Both these projects are on the River Yamuna; therefore they are commonly jointly referred to as the Lakhwad-Vyasi Hydel Project. The concept of the project dates back to the 1960s. According to the villagers of Lohari, the first survey for the Vyasi Project was done in 1967. They tell us that the proposal for the Vyasi Project at that time was for three turbines of 40 MW. In other words, between 1967 and 2022 the proposal changed from 3 turbines of 40 MW to the construction of 2 turbines of 60 MW each. Perhaps if 3 turbines of 40 MW had been constructed instead, there would have been no need to submerge Lohari village.

The history of the struggles of the people of Lohari with the project is as old as the history of the project itself. The villagers tell us that compensation was for the first time

given in 1972 by the government. The elders objected at that time, asking for land in return for land. From 1972 till date the villagers' demand has been land in return for land.

The present phase of construction of the Vyasi Hydel project started in 2014. Then also the villagers of Lohari demanded that as their land was being taken away from them they should be rehabilitated in an equal portion of land. According to the villagers, the Congress government in its last Cabinet meeting in 2016 passed a resolution to rehabilitate the villagers of Lohari on 11 hectares in the government silk farm at Jeevangarh near Vikasnagar. It should be noted that out of the total 17 hectares of land in Lohari village, 08 hectares have been acquired for the Vyasi project and the remaining 09 hectares will be used for the Lakhwad project.

In 2017, the BJP government came to power in Uttarakhand. In the very first Cabinet meeting the Trivendra Singh Rawat government stayed the previous government's decision to rehabilitate the villagers of Lohari on 11 hectares of government silk farm land.

The villagers tell us that when the construction work for the project started gaining speed, they started dharna protests in 2018 for the rehabilitation of the village. According to the villagers, Vikasnagar BJP MLA Munna Singh Chauhan asked them not to protest, assuring them that all their demands would be met. He came to Lohari along with officials of the administration and hydel corporation and told them not to agitate, as he would do their work within 15 days. The villagers kept in constant contact with the MLA who kept assuring them that he was attending to their work.

Once he even assured them that it has been decided to allot the government silk farm land to the Lohari villagers. This phase of assurances continued for about 3 years.

Meanwhile in March 2021 the BJP changed its own government's Chief Minister in Uttarakhand. Tirath Singh Rawat was made Chief Minister in place of Trivendra Singh Rawat. After becoming CM when Tirath Singh came to Vikasnagar, MLA Munna Singh Chauhan raised the issue to Lohari evacuation from the stage. Stage, garlanding, applause, everything happened...the only thing that did not happen was evacuation and rehabilitation.

Finally, the people of Lohari came to the end of their patience with the rattle-toy of assurances, and they again announced a dharna from 05 June 2021 which continued till October 2021. Early in the morning of 03 October 2021, the protesters were driven away from the dharna spot by heavy deployment of police and PAC and 17 people were sent to jail. The peaceful protesters were sent to Saddowala Jail in Dehradun under sections like 'disturbing the peace'. The villagers had to go to the High Court in Nainital for getting bail in a case where the charges were so minor.

The villagers of Lohari were cheated not only politically but also in the matter of compensation. The villagers who worked for a private company in the hydel project construction work had their compensation money cut in the name of employment. Say, a person worked in a company doing hydel project construction work, if their compensation money amounted to Rs 5 lakhs, they would be given Rs 1 lakh and Rs 4 lakhs would be cut saying that they have been given

employment. Nobody is willing to tell the villagers from which fund came the money that has been forcibly paid into their account in the name of compensation. One woman says that she was told Rs 10 lakhs have been paid to her as compensation, but only Rs 3 lakhs have come into her account.

It seems as if this is legal tokenism, rather than compensation, which is why at 5.30 pm on 05 April, an amount was put into their accounts through RTGS, and at 6 pm a notice was issued for them to vacate the village within 48 hours. According to the villagers they were issued 48 hours' notice but a JCB was ready on stand-by after 24 hours in order to put fear into them. In a hurry they vacated their homes. They broke their homes on the verge of submersion with their own hands to salvage whatever construction material was salvageable, and then their homes were drowned in the

waters rising up to produce electricity in the hydel project. After some days when the waters subsided, the ruined houses have again appeared on the surface. The sight of the drowned homes once again come to surface is as if the knife is being twisted afresh in the wounds of the villagers of Lohari.

News reports are appearing that the 2nd turbine of the Vyasi project is not able to start due to insufficient water. One report said that operating even one turbine is very difficult. If so, then it seems as if the purpose of the whole exercise to evict the villagers of Lohari was to capture the land and not to start the project. The villagers say they were not even allowed to harvest standing crops of wheat, rajma and garlic. One woman said that while the fields were flourishing they often did not have to purchase even onions and garlic from the market. One villager says half his fields were acquired; the

other half remains, but what can he do with the remaining half now?

The villagers' demand is very simple, that they should be given land in lieu of land. The Uttarakhand government chose to jail the villagers and submerge them instead of listening to this small and just demand. The minutes of a meeting on this project show that Uttarakhand Hydel Corporations opposed the demand for land in lieu of land saying that if this demand is acceded to, then people in other places will also start making similar demands. Just think, what kind of an objection is this? If people make similar demands, where is the crime in that? But the way the Uttarakhand government has treated the Lohari villagers shows that they took the objections of the Hydel Corp. officials seriously. They forcibly submerged the village, but did not give land in lieu of land. ■

.....

## Stop Burning Workers Alive Inside Factories

**M**ore than 27 people are dead and 29 are missing in a fire to a commercial building in Delhi's Mundka area 13 May. It is becoming clear that the fire was a result of the criminal negligence of the Labour department of the Govt of Delhi and the BJP-run MCD. This has also been corroborated by a fact finding team of trade union activists from AICCTU which visited the site and adjoining areas. The building was being used as a unit to assemble CCTVs and routers as well as for storing them. In complete violation of various labour laws and factory safety regulations there was only one entry and exit point in the whole four storey building. The whole building did not have any fire extinguishers or smoke alarms to issue a fire warning. The team from AICCTU also found that workers working there were not

being paid minimum wages and were being made to work for more than 12 hours per day.

AICCTU State Secretary Surya Prakash and other leaders met the injured workers and also spoke with the families of missing workers on 14 May morning. They reported that nearly 200 workers were working in the factory which has only one path for entry to as well as exit, this is against the rules of the Factory Act 1948. Also due to the exit path being full of cardboard, plastic and other materials, the workers were unable to come out and escape from the fire. Due to scorching heat and smoke, many workers jumped from the 2nd floor and got badly injured in the process.

Many workers injured in the fire accident did not go to hospital out of fear. The injured workers whom

the AICCTU team met were from Bihar, some from Siwan and some from Bhagalpur. No safety rules were being followed inside the factory. Men and women were being paid Rs 9000 and Rs 7500 per month respectively for 12 hours of work daily. This is far less than the minimum wage fixed in Delhi. None of the workers had an I-card from the company and ESI and PF are not implemented in the factory.

Two more factories in Narela also caught severe fires in two consecutive days following the tragic Mundka fire. The Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia who came to the accident site had to face protests from trade unions. AICCTU maintains that the present Delhi government, the Central government, the Labour Department and other government agencies are accountable for the

recurring fire tragedies in Delhi. Governments have given factory owners license to kill workers out of greed for donations that the factory owners give to the ruling political parties. On 20 May, workers from all over Delhi marched to the Chief

Minister's camp office to protest the series of factory fires at Bawana, Narela, Peeragarhi, Karol Bagh, Sultanpuri, Jhilmil, Anaj Mandi and Mundka. They said that Delhi's workers are being killed daily in factories, sewers, construction

sites, and domestic workers are killed even in the homes of the privileged – while the Delhi CM refuses to take measures to protect their lives and ensure safe living and working conditions for them. ■

.....

## Protests Escalate Against Police Murder Of Woman In UP

▲ LIBERATION DESK

**I**f the last phase of Yogi 1.0 government is notorious for the infamous Hathras rape case in which the deceased rape victim's body was clandestinely disposed off by the UP Police in the darkness of the night, the Yogi 2.0 regime has added more blood on its hands.

On May 1st, when the workers of the world unite with the call to end exploitation, the police of Uttar Pradesh ganged up and attacked 2 young sisters, Nisha Yadav (23) and Gunja Yadav (20) in Chandauli district of UP, when they were alone in their home. After the police fled from the scene of crime, the injured younger sister found the dead body of her elder sister hanging from a hook in a neighbouring room, with her feet touching the floor. The pretext of the police raid was to get the whereabouts of Kanhaiya Yadav, the father of the girls, who had been expelled from the district by the Chandauli district administration after invoking Goonda Act against him a few months ago. Kanhaiya had refused to pay Rupees 10000 per month as bribe to the local police station for running his business of selling sand for which he had a license and GST number.

As the news of this incident become public, Sudhakar Yadav, state secretary of CPI(ML) along with district secretary Anil Paswan and AIPWA state secretary Kusum Verma visited the bereaved family and assured their

support in their fight for justice. The action of suspension of 6 policemen by the district administration under section 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) was termed inadequate by the family members and they demanded that the accused policemen should instead be arrested and charged under Section 302 (attempt to murder).

The first political initiative on this issue by any organization was independently taken by CPI(ML) on 6th May in form of a sit-in at the district HQ. This initiative was welcomed by many organizations working in the district and instilled in them a sense of confidence to challenge the state government. A state-wide call was given by CPI(ML), AIARLA and AIPWA on 10th May demanding that - (i) the suspended policemen should be arrested and charged under Section 302 of IPC (ii) the whole incident should be probed by a sitting judge of high court instead of CB-CID, as ordered by UP government (iii) employment benefit and compensation to the family of the deceased. This was followed by a meeting by some organizations on 12th May in which it was decided to form a front called 'Justice for Nisha Yadav' and carry out future campaigns under this banner.

CPI(ML)'s initiative at the ground level played a catalytic role in galvanizing various social- political

forces in the district. The electoral victory of BJP in the recently concluded state elections and its 'bulldozer' brand of politics had created a sense of fear, frustration, anxiety and resentment in a large section of the population. When a political force was seen fighting against BJP's police Raj, it attracted diverse forces such as Samajwadi Party, a faction of BKU, a few Dalit organizations and also the Bheem Army and the Azad Samaj Party. The joint meeting of many organizations held on 12th May endorsed the decision of CPI(ML) that a 50 hour fast should be launched at the district headquarter beginning from 14th May. It was to be led by Com. Sudhakar Yadav. Along with him, Mani Dev Chaturvedi (spokesperson of BKU), AIARLA leader Vijay Ram and 3 BKU leaders also decided to observe a fast.

Their fast which continued for two days in scorching heat, ended with a militant march which was attended by leaders of Samajwadi Party and Azad Samaj Party as well as the father of Nisha Yadav. Addressing a mass-meeting prior to the march, Com. Sudhakar accused the Yogi government of converting UP into a police state. He said that revolutionary forces will not be cowed down by such actions and will mobilize the masses against the BJP government.

Sensing the enthusiastic response to the ongoing agitation as well

as to step-up the pressure on the government, it was decided to extend the fast indefinitely, and to continue it with different activists and mass organizations participating in it. On 18th May, the Chandauli district secretary of AIPWA, Com. Pramila Gond sat on fast. In a show of solidarity and resistance, leading AIPWA leaders from neighbouring districts also reached the site and joined the fast. Addressing a gathering on the site of fast, Com. Kusum Verma, the state secretary of AIPWA said that instead of protecting the daughter (Beti Bachao), the double-engine government of Modi-Yogi was protecting its police (Police Bachao). She added that the UP police is wrecking havoc on women by torturing them on the pretext of curbing crime of the men folk of their families. To express solidarity with the ongoing movement, the gathering

was also addressed by Ramkishun Yadav, ex- MP from Chandauli as well as a present MLA of Samajwadi Party. The district secretary of Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party (SBSP) also lent support to the movement.

A general consensus is emerging that this movement should be made more broad-based and sustained till the arrest of the policemen. Marches in the local markets are being planned with the slogan- "Justice for Nisha Yadav". Pamphlets are being printed for wider circulation of the issue.

Even as the struggle for justice for Nisha continues, another incident came to light where a woman Roshni (50) w/o Akbar Ali died when she was shot in the neck during police action on the night of 14-15 May in Islamnagar Tola in Kodra village, Siddharthnagar District, Uttar Pradesh. A 4-member CPIML enquiry team visited the

village on 17 May 2022 to find out the facts. The team met with the victim's family, and were told by eyewitnesses that Roshni was shot by the police who were taking away her son with them. The person Jitendra Yadav whom the police are naming as the accused is a police informer now being made a scapegoat by the police. The story of cow slaughter being touted by the police is false and a figment of imagination. A local youth Rajkumar told the team that there has never been any talk of cow slaughter in the village. Islamnagar Tola is a predominantly Muslim locality and populated by the Banjara community. They are mostly workers and some earn their living in Mumbai.

The UP police under Yogi Adityanath in his second term is all set to outdo their reputation for murderousness that they acquired in his first term. ■

.....  
**POOJA SINGHAL EPISODE**

## **Jharkhand Governments Consistently Protected Corrupt Officials**

*[CPIML MLA from Bagodar, Comrade Vinod Singh, recounts how he had flagged the corruption of bureaucrat Pooja Singhal way back in 2011 – and had pursued the issue since. Now that Pooja Singhal's corruption has emerged as an issue that the Government can no longer avoid, the people of the state must ask current and previous governments why for over a decade the repeated warnings by MLAs like Vinod Singh from CPIML and Arup Chatterjee from MCC were ignored to allow a corrupt bureaucrat to flourish.]*

**I**t was, perhaps, in 2011. I had gone to Chatra for the Vidhan Sabha committee site inspection. Also with me in the committee were Arup Chatterjee and Janardan Paswan. During the district review I saw that 2 NGOs had been paid crores of rupees as advance payment in the MNREGA scheme by Pooja Singhal, whereas this picture was not visible in

the work report. Something appeared fishy and incomplete. I spoke to the local MLA Janardan Ji about this. He also expressed doubts. The 3 of us then decided to visit some villages for inspection. Some schemes were not there at all on the ground; where we found some half-dug wells, the workers had not been paid wages. One farmer showed us his head and told us angry workers had cracked his head because they had not been paid wages, whereas funds for all those schemes had been withdrawn. We came back and submitted a brief report in the Vidhan Sabha and demanded a high level enquiry. Of course, the report was consigned to the shelf, but I raised the matter in the Assembly based on the facts of our investigation and finally the then Commissioner Hazaribagh Nitin Madan Kulkarni was appointed to enquire into the issue. In

his probe he held Pooja Singhal fully responsible. Meanwhile reports of a MNREGA scam came from Khunti, from the time when Pooja Singhal was the Deputy Commissioner there. As a result of our raising the question an FIR was registered against Ram Vinod Sinha but no action was taken against the senior officer.

By that time complaints of purchase irregularities had also come in from Palamu. Once again I raised the question why no action had been taken on the Hazaribagh Commissioner's report. The government replied that the Personnel Department was reviewing the matter. I remember the 2 final Assembly sessions of 2010-2014 as clearly as a screenshot. Whenever our question on this scam was listed, a furore was created on some excuse or the other before our question could be taken up and the Assembly was

adjourned. In the previous Assembly during CM Raghuvir Das' term also Arup Chatterjee (MLA from MCC) tried to raise the matter but the

government kept avoiding the issue and finally now after this raid it is clear that governments have always worked to protect corrupt officials and taken

action only as per their needs and convenience. The present government should even now become alert and take action on pending cases. ■



## 12th CPIML West Bengal State Conference

**T**he 12th West Bengal State Conference of CPIML was held on 13-15th May 2022 in Kolkata with the call to resist communal fascist onslaught of BJP and RSS, to fight against TMC's political terror, corruption and attacks on democracy and to strengthen the left and democratic movements.

The city was named after revolutionaries of Indian freedom struggle Batukeshwar Dutt and Kalpana Dutt. The Conference hall was named after student leader and activist Anis Khan who was murdered by the Police recently and the dais was named after Subimal Sengupta, former member of CPIML state standing committee who passed away in a tragic road accident last year. The conference began by commemorating revolutionary poet Sukanta Bhattacharya and eminent theater personality Badal Sarkar on their death anniversary (13 May). Veteran Naxalbari leader comrade Siril Ekka hoisted the red flag. Comrades paid tribute to all martyrs and departed comrades of the Party.

The inaugural session started with welcome address by the secretary of the outgoing state committee Abhijit Mazumdar followed by a series of vibrant cultural performances of recitations and songs. CPIML General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya addressed the open session elaborating the present political situation of the state and the country. He said, the BJP and RSS are carrying out communal fascist attacks on our democracy and history with the aim to achieve their dream of 'Islam se azadi' within their centenary

year in 2025. In the 2021 elections, the BJP had to back down a bit due to electoral pressure in several places including West Bengal, as well as the anti-CAA, anti-NRC movements and the massive farmers' movement. But after winning elections in four states, including Uttar Pradesh, in 2022, they are again in full swing to fulfill their agenda. Bulldozers are coming down in various places including Jahangirpuri, Shaheen Bagh and Muslims in particular are being targeted on the occasions like Ramnavami or Hanuman Jayanti.

If BJP can succeed by turning 'Jai Shri Ram' into a war cry, then we have the popular slogan like 'Inquilab Zindabad', which has risen from the womb of the freedom movement.

The 'No Vote to BJP' slogan in last Bengal election was successful to thwart their desperate attempt to come in power. Although the BJP is now facing challenge in Bengal politics after the electoral defeat, the RSS continues its activities to the fullest. On the other hand, the mandate given by the people of Bengal against BJP went in favour of TMC and they are now using it to spread rampant political terror, corruption and an all out attack on democratic rights. Our call against this misrule is 'No Concession to TMC'. We need the Left to emerge as the main opposition in West Bengal. And this calls for a broad and fighting unity of Left forces and simultaneous struggle against the BJP's fascist offensive and TMC misrule. The 2024 Lok Sabha election will be significant in this context. A grand alliance of all anti-BJP forces is needed which must be

based on struggles and movements on peoples agenda. Let us move forward with courage, determination and organizational strength to face this realm of fear and terror.

Renowned health and human rights activist Dr. Binayak Sen was present in the open session of the conference and greeted by Comrade Dipankar. Comrade Dharendra Jha was the central observer. Politburo member Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya and Central Committee member Comrade Sucheta De were also present. Sucheta De also addressed the open session sharing her experiences of recent movements of contractual sanitation workers in JNU for their wages and rights.

An 11 member Presidium and 5 member steering committees were formed to conduct the delegate session hereafter. The presence and participation of more than 400 delegates and observers including women and youth delegates from Adivasi, Muslim and various marginalized backgrounds from different districts of the state was remarkable. Abhijit Mazumdar presented the draft report on the party works of last 4 years along with political scenario of the state. More than 80 delegates actively participated in the discussion. Abhijit Mazumdar addressed the house by summarizing the deliberations. After incorporating all relevant points and suggestions raised by the delegates the draft report was passed by the conference unanimously. The concluding session of the conference was addressed by Dipankar Bhattacharya after which a new state committee of 61 members

was elected which re-elected Abhijit Mazumdar as the state secretary. Comrades Swadesh Bhattacharya and Dharendra Jha addressed the conference with encouraging notes towards upcoming Party Congress in 2023.

The conference took resolutions to protest against soaring price hike, inflation and unemployment on May 25-31 on the call of five left parties; to demand withdrawal of Deocha Pachami Coal project; to generate movements against increasing

cases of violence against women in the state; to demand justice for the murder of Anis Khan; to demand investigation of SSC corruption and fair recruitment; and to hold protests throughout the month of May against bulldozer raj of BJP-RSS. ■

.....

## SRI LANKAN CRISIS

# Capitalism, Authoritarianism and Nepotism Under One Roof

▲ SAUROBIJAY SARKAR

**T**he island nation of Sri Lanka is swept by a relentless wave of people's anger. Faced with the most severe economic crisis since its independence, Sri Lanka is witnessing a complete shortage of all essential commodities. Long queues for essential items have become the everyday reality for people in Sri Lanka, so has the mass mobilization by the people against those responsible for the current crisis.

In order to silence the protest, the Sri Lankan government used repressive tactics, including declaring a state of emergency and deploying military on the streets. But all of this failed to stop the protests. On May 6, a general strike was organized by public and private sector unions, the largest since 1953. There were demonstrations outside parliament, and police tried to use water cannons and batons to attack the protesters.

The month long protest by Sri Lanka finally brought down the head of the Rajapaksa clan that had been running the government since a decade with the motto- 'Sri Lankan government as executive committee of Rajapaksa family.' The Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa resigned on May 9, with only his younger brother Gotabaya

Rajapaksa remaining in the state structure as the President. The Mahinda Rajapaksa cartel had long clinched to power after walking over the bodies of thousands of Tamils who were massacred under his orders during the final Eelam War (2006-2009). Though Mahinda resigned and took refuge in Trincomalee Naval base, he was replaced by his friend-in-the-opposition Ranil Wickremesinghe. With the foreign reserve crisis and hyperinflation, Wickremesinghe is considered to be the man who "has experience to deal with International Monetary Fund (IMF)," as the government looks towards IMF to bail it out. Not only the government, IMF is also very keen to spread its tentacles in Sri Lanka as the Island country still has an intact public-funded education, health and social welfare system.

### So, how did Sri Lanka reach at this crisis?

Since its independence in 1948, Sri Lanka had heavily invested in public welfare systems, such as public-funded education, health, and food distribution. This helped it to have much higher social and human development indicators compared to the rest of the South Asian countries. The IMF first entered Sri Lanka in

the mid-1960s as the country faced a balance of payment crisis. The institution provided support as the government agreed to implement some of the structural changes including slashing subsidies and government spending on welfare. The door to market-oriented and liberalization policies were opened in 1977 under the Presidentship of JR Jayawardene. The successive governments further liberalized and privatized the economy, but the public education and health system to some extent remained intact.

After the Eelam War in 2009, Mahinda Rajapaksa government approached IMF for a \$2.6 billion loan. And as with every bailout, IMF wanted a cut in public spending by the government (a cut in fiscal deficit to 5 per cent of the GDP by 2011).

Later, Ranil Wickremesinghe pushed for neoliberal economic model and grand plans like the Western Region Megapolis, megacity and economic hub. Under the Rajapaksa regime over the last decade, a neoliberal economic path was steadily consolidated. The mega projects, which were being planned were heavily dependent on credits and loans from various countries and Institutions, including China, India, Japan and Asian Development Bank.

The final shock came in the form of the Easter Day bombings of 2019 and the government's decision to cut taxes. In November 2019, the government reduced VAT from 15 per cent to 8 per cent. Direct taxes were also reduced. Though this populist policy was supported by many, it failed to create any mitigating mechanism to the decrease in revenue, like increasing taxes on the super rich. The above developments, combined with the COVID 19 pandemic, which crushed the country's tourism sector, led to plummeting of country's foreign currency reserve and revenue. As the crisis deepened and unemployment rate reached 5.2%, many Sri Lankans attempted to venture into agriculture. But the lack of state support and a sudden ban on importing of chemical fertilizers in 2021 broke the back of the agricultural sector in the country. The state-sponsored ambitious project of establishing 100 percent organic farming failed severely, leaving millions of farmers with failed crops. The Sri Lanka government had to pay \$200 million in compensation to the farmers under the botched organic farming scheme. Agriculture production was severely affected, endangering the country's food security. For example, the productivity of paddy in the Maha season (one of the two crop seasons; the other is Yala) of 2021-22 was lower by 40-45 per cent compared with the previous Maha season of 2020-21.

In March 2022 itself, the entire world especially Asia came to know that Sri Lanka is in utter economic crisis. The crisis took a concrete shape in April, when government announced that Sri Lanka would be defaulting on all of its external debt - \$51 billion - after running out of foreign exchange for imports, which further had a disastrous effect on common people especially the poor, with acute shortage in food, electricity and all necessary items for daily livelihood, some of which are imported.

Economic mismanagement and wrong

policies of successive governments, the world economic condition, the tight coupling with loan systems, which although not a very big factor for Sri Lanka, all contributed towards this crisis. Massive inequality is taking shape. The crisis is putting more and more burden on poor, where some privileged elite and corrupt industrialists and the puppet politicians are still enjoying lives of luxury. The military budget also continued to increase post-war amid Rajapaksa's policies of silencing any form of dissent. The unnecessary burden of the the Rajapaksa regime's ambitious infrastructure projects aimed to project Sri Lanka as 'London' or 'New York' landed Sri Lanka even deeper in the debt trap.

## The IMF Trap

The IMF and Sri Lanka are in talks to finalize a bailout. And any IMF loan comes with conditions called "structural adjustment," which had been the primary mechanism to push a country towards complete neoliberalism and privatization. With the severity of the current crisis, observers are warning that IMF would move towards dismantling Sri Lanka's public welfare systems. This would lead to ending of universal and free education, health and food security, which will be replaced by cash-transfers.

The Sri Lankan situation reminds us of Argentina, which defaulted in 2001-2002 and later Greece as well. To overcome its crisis and hyperinflation, Argentina was forced into a "convertibility regime" - a legal commitment was introduced to exchange the Argentina peso for US dollars at 1:1. This was done to reduce hyperinflation and stimulate economic growth. Initially it was yielding a minor improvement, but the overvalued Peso and the massive borrowing needs led to negative consequences and increasing costs. In December of 2001, after two years of recession and increasingly

desperate attempts to forestall a debt crisis through IMF financial support, fiscal adjustment and debt management operations, Argentina defaulted on its external debt. The Rajapaksa brothers came to power on the strength of their image of being "strong leaders" who had "conquered" the rebellious Tamils. The continued humiliation of the Tamils was then compounded by Islamophobic politics (bans on halal meat and hijabs, that the RSS and BJP are now echoing in India, as well as patronage of hate-mongering Buddhist monks) and violence against both the Muslim and Christian minority populations. For Indians, what is most significant about the current uprising is the united participation of Sri Lankan citizens across ethnic and religious divides. The people of Sri Lanka have been able to see the disaster that the Rajapaksa regime has wrought on them under cover of hate-based politics.

In India, Sangh-backed hate-mongers keep threatening the genocide of Muslim minorities; and Muslims and Christians too face daily state-sponsored violence at the hands of Hindu-supremacists. Sri Lanka actually witnessed a civil war that ended with the genocide of the Tamils. Since then, Sri Lankan rulers have not only evaded all accountability for their crimes against humanity, they have tried to capitalise on that genocide to hold on to political power and popularity. And they also continued to fuel new waves of hate against other minorities - Sri Lankan Muslims and Christians, also pitting these minority communities against each other. The rhetoric of war against Tamil "separatism", and of Sinhala-supremacist nationalism is now coming undone, revealing that the "defeat" of the oppressed inevitably brought in its wake the defeat of all. This is the lesson that Indians must take from the people of Sri Lanka. ■

# The Return of Marcos in the Philippines: A Challenge to Peoples Power

**T**he result of the May 8 presidential elections in the Philippines was an unimaginable tragedy for many who survived the decade long brutal dictatorship regime of Ferdinand Marcos (Marcos Sr). Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr or simply known as Marcos Jr, son of Marcos Sr managed to win the elections by securing nearly 30 million votes in his favor. He received backing from the outgoing authoritarian regime of Rodrigo Duterte through his daughter Sara Duterte who has been elected as the vice president.

The United States-backed Marcos Sr’s regime from 1965 to 1986 (with martial law in place from 1972 until 1981) had been one of the most brutal period in the history of the Philippines. The period was marked by widespread torture and extrajudicial killings of

political opponents, trade unionists, Muslims and anyone who questioned his dictatorship. Furthermore, corruption and extravagance was at his peak with more than US\$5 billion–\$10 billion stolen from government treasury by his family.

On 25 February 1986, Marcos was forced flee the country to Hawaii with his family after the People’s Power Revolution, a series of mass demonstration against his regime. Never Again! became the rallying cry of the 1986 revolution.

The Marcos family came back to the Philippines after 1990s to face the corruption charges and his family started involving themselves once again in the political landscape. Today, decades later, with victory of Marcos’ son, the Marcos family is once again regaining impunity and power and

wriggling out of paying its dues.

Though the result is a shock, but not completely a surprise. According to observers, for three decades the family have been taking advantage of the information vacuums left by uncritical history textbooks about the martial law period. Marcos Jr’s campaign was focused on historical negation of the dictatorship crimes and whitewashing his fathers’ brutal regime.

The Philippines under the outgoing Duterte regime has already been witnessing rampant state sponsored attacks on democratic voices, red-tagging (term of witch-hunt against communists) and widespread extrajudicial killings under the name of ‘war on drugs’ campaign. The emergence of Marcos-Duterte regime in Philippines now threatens to push the country back to dictatorship. ■

.....

## Presidential Elections in France

**T**he recent presidential elections in France witnessing the re-election of Emmanuel Macron of *La République En Marche* (Republic Forward) defeating far-right Marine Le Pen of the National Rally. Macron received 58.6% of the votes while Le Pen grabbed 41.4% votes during the second round of the elections held on April 24.

**Liberation talked to Nicolas Jaoul, a researcher based in France regarding the presidential elections and its implications.**

**In recent elections, Emmanuel Macron has managed to**

**defeat Le Pen. How do you read the results?**

**Nicolas Jaoul:** The defeat of Le Pen is actually misleading. The far right has achieved its best historical results ever since the foundation of the National Front in 1972 by Jean Marie Le Pen, father of Marine Le Pen. In 2002, Jean Le Pen, for the first time managed to come second at the first round of presidential elections, with 17.8% votes. A huge antifascist demonstration took place before the second round, testifying of French people’s determination to oppose the far right. When his daughter Marine Le Pen took over the leadership of the party in 2011, she adopted a populist

strategy to increase National Front’s acceptability. This attempt paid off. In 2018, she changed the party’s name to a less aggressive, “Rassemblement National” (National Rally) and sought to dissociate from her father’s far right, Petainist legacy [Philippe Pétain was the Chief of State of Vichy France from 1940 to 1944, who collaborated with Nazi regime].

Since 2017, she reached the second round of the presidential elections (the major election of French electoral system) and constantly progressed. In 2017, she obtained 34% of votes and in 2022, she reached 41.5%, reflecting a massive jump in her support. She has managed to become the most popular candidate among the popular classes, especially those facing economic hardships. An opinion poll regarding the first round of 2022 elections showed that 31% of the latter voted

for her, as against 24 % for the left candidate, Melenchon, and 19% for Macron.

**What would the rise of Le Pen’s National Rally in recent elections mean for the future of France?**

The biggest surprise from the current presidential elections was also that in the Antilles island in the Caribbean, where the population is mostly black, Le Pen managed to secure first position with 60 % in Martinique and 70% in Guadeloupe Islands respectively. This shows that to a large extent with still holding to right wing policies, she managed to make in road by dissociating herself from her father’s openly racist credentials. She has mostly managed to benefit from the popular classes’ resentment against Macron’s neoliberal and arrogant personality.

However, as per the opinion surveys,

in the legislative elections that will be held in June this year, Le Pen’s National Rally is credited with less voter support, while Melenchon of La France Insoumise (France Unbowed) emerges as the strongest opponent to Macron. Melenchon has emerged as the undeniable leader of the left section, thanks to his prepoll alliance with the socialist and communist parties and the Green party.

It remains to be seen if the left alliance, Nouvelle Union Populaire écologique et sociale (the New People’s Ecologic and Social Union or the NUPES) will be able to convert the encouraging dynamics (it seems to have a slight edge over Macron’s party right now) into a sufficient number of seats to be able to form the government. This would create a situation of cohabitation, with Macron as the President and Melenchon as Prime Minister.

So for the moment we can only continue to hope and try to convert

the optimism reflected in the recent voter surveys for NUPES for upcoming legislative elections into a popular wave of support for the left. Macron however still manages to retain an advantage from the division of his opponents between the Left and the far right. ■

*“A Le Pen victory would have been a disaster. Though she was defeated, the anti-fascist and anti-racist forces have no reason to feel relieved because the xenophobic ideas of the extreme right have spread, including the ideas of Éric Zemmour (an Ultra far-right French politician with anti-immigrant, sexist, racist and Islamophobic ideology.)”*

**- Catherine Samary, author and political activist from France**



**ASEAN-India Navy Exercises Must Not Invite Myanmar Navy**

An ASEAN Defense Senior Officials’ Meeting (ADSOM) took place on May 17 at the Cambodian Defense Ministry in Phnom Penh, to pave the way for the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) in Phnom Penh next month which the Myanmar junta Defence Minister is also expected to attend in person. The meeting, attended by Myanmar junta representative Zaw Zaw Soe discussed and decided in principle on the request for ASEAN-India Maritime Exercises to celebrate the 30th anniversary of ASEAN-India ties.

Myanmar’s Navy must not be invited for these joint naval exercises. An invitation would legitimise the military junta and the military coup it carried out last year, along with all the brutalities it is carrying out against pro-democracy protestors as well as Rohingya minorities.

**Bush Admits To War Crimes In Iraq**

Former US President George Bush, speaking at an event at the George W Bush Presidential Center that examined the future of American elections, made a Freudian slip of the tongue. He said, “[The] decision of one man to launch a wholly unjustified and brutal invasion of Iraq... I mean, of Ukraine.” What followed this gaffe, however, was even more significant.

Realising his mistake, he said under his breath, “Iraq, too”, adding ““Anyway, 75” in an attempt to blame the embarrassing moment on his age. What does that “Iraq, too” admission mean? Two decades ago, the whole world was out on the streets in protests declaring that Saddam Hussein had no WMDs and that Bush’s decision to invade Iraq was “wholly unjustified and brutal”. At the time, Bush was telling all those opposed to his war, that if they were not with him, they were with the terrorists.

After Bush’s impromptu admission, his audience burst into tolerant and kind laughter. There was no outrage expressed at his lack of remorse for the Iraqi lives lost thanks to his brutal invasion and occupation (not to mention lives of US soldiers). No outrage that he could only admit the truth after it slipped out inadvertently. No demand that his admission to war crimes face real consequences – such as a trial for war crimes. No comment on the sheer hypocrisy of war criminal Bush righteously condemning war criminal Putin.

Bush’s slip is no joke, no laughing matter. It is a grim reminder of that callous disregard imperialists have for the humanity of their victims.

# Shireen Abu Akleh

On May 11, Israeli occupation forces deliberately targeted and killed veteran Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh in Jenin Refugee Camp in occupied West Bank. Shireen was working as a journalist with Al Jazeera Arabic and was in Jenin to cover a raid by Israeli forces.

She, along with another journalist Ali al-Samoudi were deliberately shot by Israeli soldiers despite clearly identifying themselves as members of the press. They were wearing bulletproof jacket and helmets with PRESS markings. Ali managed to survive, but Shireen was shot near her ear, an area of her body that was not protected.

Shireen had become a prominent

household name in Palestine with her daring coverage of Israeli crimes. Jenin, where she was killed, had been a place close to her heart and her journalist career. She had extensively covered the 2002 Israeli aggression in Jenin, and about which she later wrote:

“To me, Jenin is not a one ephemeral story in my career or even in my personal life. It is the city that can raise my morale and help me fly. It embodies the Palestinian spirit that sometimes trembles and falls but, beyond all expectations, rises to pursue its flights and dreams.”

Shireen’s killing bring out the harsh reality of war crimes on everyday basis committed by Israeli occupation forces

against Palestinians. She was killed just after the international journalist groups like The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate (PJS) filed a formal complaint with the International Criminal Court against Israel for the systematic targeting of Palestinian journalists. The Israeli military also attacked her funeral.

Earlier in 2018, journalists Ahmed Abu Hussein and Yasser Mortaja were shot and killed by Israeli snipers during the Great March of Return protests, despite them being clearly marked as journalists.

CPIML strongly condemns the assassination of Shireen Abu Akleh by Israeli occupation forces. We also reiterate our solidarity with the Palestinians in their struggle for liberation. ■



# Adieu, Comrade Dina Ji!

CPIML expresses deep condolences on the demise of former Bhojpur District Secretary Comrade Dina Ji who passed away on 15 May after a long illness. Originally from West Bengal, he was Bhojpur Secretary in 1990-92.

The news of Comrade Dina Ji’s death plunged the party into grief. Tributes were paid to him on 16 May at the party State office and Bhojpur District office. The condolence meeting at the State office was attended by Politburo member Swadesh Bhattacharya, State Secretary Kunal, former Control Commission Chairman Rajaram, Kamlesh Sharma, Umesh Singh, Prakash Kumar, Vibha Gupta, Sudhir Kumar, Kumar Divyam and many other party leaders.

77 year old Comrade Dina Ji (Arup Sen Gupta) breathed his last in Kolkata. He had been suffering from kidney cancer for a long time and was on oxygen support for the last 24 hours due to a lung infection. He is survived by his wife, son and daughter.

Before becoming a party full-time activist Comrade Dina Ji was working

at the Bokaro Thermal Power plant as a technician. He was a first generation party leader and discharged various responsibilities and held the post of the then Central Bihar Zonal Secretary, Bhojpur District Secretary and Central Committee member. He was part of the delegation to China led by Comrade Vinod Mishra. He went to jail twice during his party life, first in 1971 and then in 1977. After the special party conference in 1979 he was fully involved in implementing party line changes. He emerged as a leading organizer of anti-feudal struggles in Bihar in the 80s and the revolutionary peasants’ struggle in Central Bihar. He is remembered in Bhojpur and Bihar as a calm, creative and committed comrade and a cheerful and affectionate human being.

His mortal remains were brought to the West Bengal state party office in Kolkata where tributes were paid by senior leaders including Comrades Kartik Pal, Partho Ghosh, Abhijit Majumdar, Jayatu Deshmukh and Atanu Chakraborty. CPIML conveys

deep condolences to the bereaved family in this hour of grief.

A condolence meeting was organized on 15 May at the Bhojpur party office in Ara to mourn Comrade Dina Ji’s passing with 2 minutes’ silence and floral tributes. The condolence meeting was attended by Comrade Dina Ji’s comrade-in-arms senior party leader and former State Secretary Comrade Nand Kishore Prasad, Central Committee member Santosh Sahar, CC member and Agiaon MLA Manoj Manzil, CC member Raju Yadav, State Committee member Shiv Prakash Ranjan, senior party leader Meera Ji, Ara City Secretary Dilraj Pritam, District Standing Committee member Jitendra Singh, Chandan Kumar, Rajnath Ram, Gopal Prasad, Ramanuj Ji and other leaders and activists. Comrades of Bhojpur fondly remember him as Comrade Dinaji who led the victorious election campaign in 1989 when tens of thousands of oppressed landless labourers succeeded in exercising their franchise for the first time overcoming feudal domination and electing Comrade Rameshwar Prasad as the MP from Ara.

**Red Salute to Comrade Dina Ji!** ■

# Ghulam Mohammad Jaula

CPIML dips its flag to pay its respects to veteran farmers’ movement leader and founder of the Bhartiya Kisan Union, Ghulam Muhammad Jaula, who passed away on 16 May 2022.

A close associate of Mahendra Singh Tikait, Ghulam Muhammad Jaula stood firm during the Muzaffarnagar communal violence orchestrated by

the Sangh brigade in 2013 as a pillar of Hindu-Muslim unity and champion of sugarcane growers. CPIML had contributed to his sterling relief work for poor Muslims affected by the communal violence in 2014 in Muzaffarnagar, and the All India Kisan Mahasabha had worked closely with him for years.

During the historic farmers’ movement against the corporate takeover of agriculture, he played a leading role in overcoming the BJP’s politics of communal polarisation and rebuilding the Hindu Muslim unity in the farming community across religious divides in Western UP. The true tribute to him would be to honour the legacy of Hindu-Muslim unity and the rights of farmers and workers and India’s people. **Salute to Ghulam Muhammad Jaula! ■**



# Comrade Rakesh Diwakar

Comrade Rakesh Diwakar of Pratappur (Bhojpur) died in a tragic accident in the morning of 18 May. A high school teacher in Pavna village, he was making his daily trip to school on his bike with his friend and colleague Rajesh Kumar, when their bike was run over at Tetariya Mod by an overloaded tractor carrying sand. Both died on the spot. Tractors speed in this area to evade corrupt police who extort bribes.

The deaths of Rakesh Diwakar and Rajesh Kumar and others in various incidents is a result of the anarchic situation created by the greed and selfishness of the sand mafia, police

and administration. Rakesh Diwakar enriched art with Bhojpur’s revolutionary spirit and the values of justice and social equality. When innocent children, women, dalits and rural workers were being massacred, Rakesh Diwakar formed artists’ associations like ‘Art Commune’ and organized painting and poster exhibitions across Bhojpur in protest. The struggles and aspirations of toiling people were the themes of his art. Through his deep study of modern art he acquainted people with such contexts at a time when artists of the world made painting a medium

for people’s struggles and people’s protests.

Rakesh Diwakar and his fellow artists linked their painting to people’s issues and took initiatives in movements and agitations. Be it an issue of road construction, incidents of crime and oppression or war hysteria, Rakesh Diwakar always made his art a medium for resistance. Rakesh Diwakar was a National Councillor of Jan Sanskriti Manch for a long time. He also acted in plays staged by ‘Yuvaniti’.

His family and the entire Bhojpur and Bihar party are devastated by his untimely demise.

**Red Salute to Comrade Rakesh Diwakar! ■**



# Comrade Ramdeo Varma

Comrade Ramdeo Varma is no more. One of the tallest communist leaders from Bihar, he represented the Bibhutipur constituency of Samastipur from 1980 to 1985 and then uninterruptedly from 1990 to 2010 as a CPI(M) MLA. His differences with the CPI(M) started growing from the late 1990s and on 18 December 2020, he joined the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation along with Comrade Manju Prakash, two-term CPI(M) MLA from Buxar

and former chairperson of Bihar Women’s Commission and scores of other communist activists from Samastipur.

By this time he had been afflicted with cancer, but despite his falling health he remained completely immersed in his writings and meetings with comrades to advance the communist movement in the Samastipur belt. He was one of the most experienced legislators in Bihar and took keen interest in guiding the CPI(ML)

legislature party. He was also highly hopeful about the whole range of ongoing struggles from the equal citizenship movement to the farmers’ agitation against corporate takeover of agriculture.

CPIML extends heartfelt condolences to Comrade Manju Prakash, their only son Rohit, and Comrade Ramdeo’s all comrades and friends. Comrade Ramdeo Varma’s legacy will always inspire us at this critical juncture of modern India.

**Red Salute to Comrade Ramdeo Varma! ■**

# W.H.O: India's Covid-19 Death Toll Ten Times What Gov Admits

---

Exactly a year ago, in April-May 2021, India was gasping for breath, bodies were floating in the Ganga, crematoria were choked and cemeteries overflowing. Yet, soon, the Modi regime denied that there had ever been any oxygen shortage or any unusual or avoidable number of Covid-related deaths.

A new World Health Organization (WHO) report has made an assessment of country-wise Covid-19 deaths based on “excess deaths”. All over the world, Governments undercount Covid-deaths (not always on purpose). Actual Covid death tolls are being calculated by comparing the number of deaths in a given period in 2020-2021, with the number of deaths in the same period in 2018-2019. The difference - called “excess deaths” – gives a fair idea of the actual scale of Covid deaths. Many countries have prepared their own excess death assessments. But the Modi Government in India has instead, tried to bury information and data.

The Government of India had made such calculations difficult by refusing to make death data transparently available, compounding the already existing problem of low registration of deaths in India. It made no mortality data for 2020 or 2021 available to the WHO. Data journalist Rukmini S writes, “However Indian journalists had accessed official monthly mortality data for 18 states and UTs and made this data publicly available on a free and open portal, following which several researchers used this data to write academic papers. Owing to the inaccessibility to any data, the WHO used these numbers (which covered 70% of the country's population) and extrapolated them for the rest of the country using a documented methodology.”

WHO notes that 50% of the excess deaths occur in April-May 2021 – again confirming that it is the Covid-19 second wave that is accounting for the excess deaths in India in the relevant period.

The Government is rejecting the WHO report on spurious grounds, including that the compensation claims are nowhere near the Covid death figures. But as a CPIML survey in Bihar had shown, most Covid deaths had not even been backed by Covid tests – and since Covid tests were demanded for compensation, most victims' families were unable to claim the compensation.

CPI(ML) comrades in Bihar took up the task of mapping every death in April-May 2021 in 1904 villages, based on an “oral autopsy”, seeking to know symptoms of the deceased from their loved ones. Of the 7,984 deaths that occurred in these villages in that period, 7,200 showed clear symptoms of severe Covid-19 including respiratory distress. Of these 7,200 deaths, 80.81% had never been tested for Covid, and so were ineligible to claim compensation. The official deaths registered in this period was a mere 4,612 – about half the actual number. The Covid deaths admitted to by the Government were a fraction of this number. The official Covid death fatalities figure for January-May 2021 for the whole of Bihar was 7,717 – less than the number of deaths CPIML counted in just 1,904 villages in April-May 2021 alone.

The CPIML's Bihar survey indicates that even the WHO estimate – and any estimate based on registered death data – is bound to be a conservative one, falling far short of the actual number of deaths.



**EDITORIAL OFFICE**

CHARU BHAWAN, U-90, SHAKARPUR, DELHI - 110 092 PH.: 91-11-42785864

Email : liberation@cpiml.org ; Website : www.liberation.org.in

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram & YouTube: @cpimliberation

Printed and published by Dipankar Bhattacharya for the Central Committee, CPIML  
from Charu Bhawan, U-90, Shakarpur, Delhi - 110 092 and

Printed at Divya Offset, B-1422, New Ashok Nagar, Delhi - 110 096

**EDITOR : Arindam Sen**