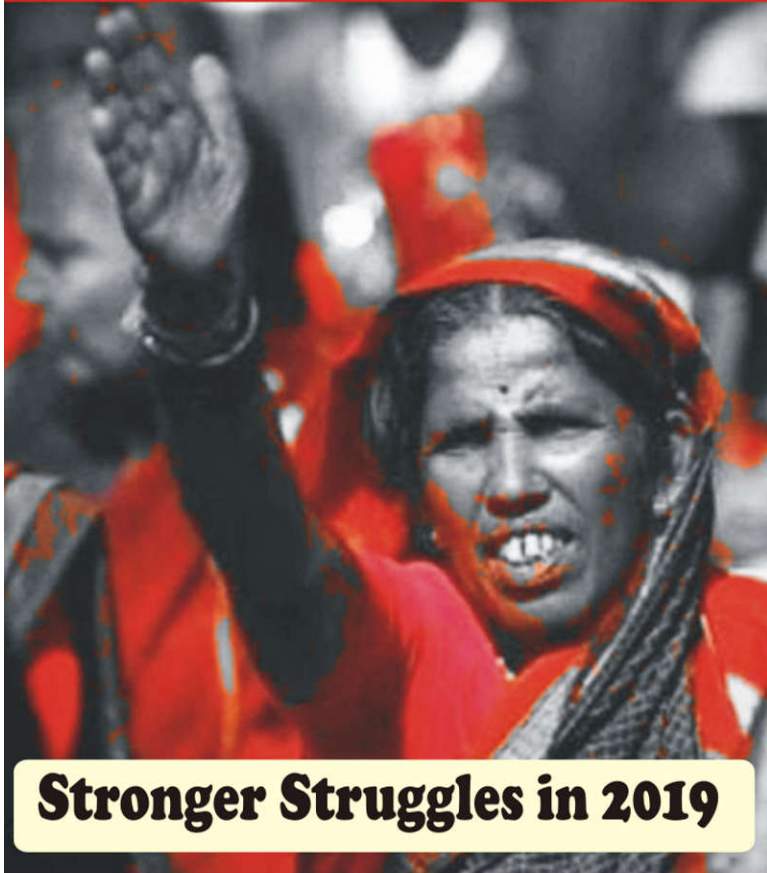


Monthly Journal of the AICWW(CITU)

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The Voice of the Working Woman



Stronger Struggles in 2019

All India General Strike 8-9 January 2019

The two day General Strike called by the central trade unions on 8-9 January 2019 will be a rural bandh in addition to the workers' strike. It is going to be a bandh like situation in most parts of the country with the transport workers joining the strike.

The AIKS and AIAWU have also decided to extend full support and solidarity to the all India General Strike on 8-9 January 2019 called by the joint platform of central trade unions and federations through organising rasta/rail rokos and other programmes to make it a rural bandh.

Worker Peasant Solidarity Day 19 January 2019

The joint meeting of the leadership of CITU, AIKS and AIAWU held recently discussed the observance of the Solidarity Day on 19th January 2019 in addition to the details of the all India General Strike on 8-9 January 2019.

It noted that our consistent struggles could partially succeed in bringing the peoples' issues, particularly the issues of the peasantry, on the national agenda. In view of the ensuing Parliament elections it is all the more important to keep the momentum of the independent and joint movements of the working class and the peasantry. As the first action programme coming after the General Strike, the worker-peasant solidarity day on 19 January 2019 must be fully utilised to further consolidate our movements.

It decided that the Worker Peasant Solidarity Day in 2019 will be observed by organising massive rallies/demonstrations at district headquarters throughout the country.

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A New Year of Hope, Struggles and Achievements

The Voice of the Working Woman wishes the working people of the country and the entire world, a New Year of Hope, Struggles and Achievements.

The recently held elections to the state assemblies have thrown up a situation where, out of the two major national parties that were contending for power, the BJP has lost but the Congress has not won a decisive victory, except in Chattisgarh.

Out of the five states that went to elections, the BJP was in power in the three major states in the Hindi heartland, Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. BJP governments have been ruling Chattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh since the last fifteen years. These elections indicate the growing discontent among the people against the impact of the neoliberal policies being implemented by the BJP governments in these states. Large sections of the toiling people were angry about their deteriorating conditions of life, against rising unemployment, attacks on labour laws and workers' hard won rights, agrarian crisis and rural distress, the grave impact of demonetisation on small and medium enterprises, unorganised sector workers and the poor peasants. All the three state governments faced serious allegations of corruption.

This discontent and anger were visible not only in these elections. They were visible in the struggles throughout the year by all sections of the working people – the workers in the industrial and service sectors, the peasants and agricultural workers – in their huge mobilisations at the national level as well as in various states.

Conscious of the rising discontent among the people, the BJP and its mentor and guide, the RSS, as usual tried their tricks to divert people's attention from their burning livelihood issues. The Ram Mandir issue was revived with vigour. However, they could not succeed in their game plan. People have rejected the BJP in its strongholds.

At the same time, people did not give a decisive majority to the Congress. They could not totally trust the Congress which has been implementing the same policies at the centre and in all the states wherever it was in power. The attempts of the Congress to project itself as a 'Hindu' party, and competing with the BJP on issues of cow shelters, cow urine etc could not cut much ice with the people. In fact the people voted for the Congress because they wanted to defeat the BJP; not because they trusted that it would implement pro worker, pro peasant and pro people policies.

It is this situation that must be noted and united struggles for a pro people, pro worker and pro peasant alternative intensified. This requires the strengthening of unity and united struggles for reversal of the neoliberal policies. The momentum gained through the unprecedented joint trade union 'Mahapadav' in November 2017, and the 'Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally' in September 2018 should be carried forward through the two day country wide general strike called by the joint trade union movement on 8-9 January 2019. All attempts to divide the working class on the basis of religion, caste, region etc must be defeated

The mutual solidarity of workers and peasants displayed in the recent campaigns and struggles of workers and peasants has to be further cemented through effective campaign and mobilisation on 19th January 2019 which is being observed as Workers Peasants Solidarity Day. Such joint campaigns and struggles of all sections of toiling people alone can achieve a reversal of the neoliberal regime and facilitate taking the struggle for an alternative to new heights.

The New Year of Intensified Struggles

A.K.Padmanabhan

2018 is fading into history and 2019 is ringing in. As usual, a New Year brings in hope and expectations. For the people of India also, 2019 is a year of hope. The new year, from day one, is going to be days of determination, resistance and hope towards changes for the better.

Before we go into the days of future, let us look very briefly into the days that have passed away. Five years ago, in 2014, the situation was the same. 2014 being a year of General Election, our festival of Democracy as they claim, there were a lot of expectations.

The government at that time at the centre, UPA-II, failed to curb prices, to provide employment, to take steps to limit corruption. People were angry and protesting. They were angry against the policies of the Government, policies of enriching the corporates at the expense of the toiling masses. What happened at the General Elections then is now a part of history.

Now, with another General Election knocking at the door, what is the situation? What were the promises made by those who are now, for the last four and half years, at the helm of affairs? Is there any area where the policies and programs of the present government have helped the ordinary people? Be it Workers, Employees, Peasants, Agricultural Workers, Rural Artisans, Small Traders, Small entrepreneurs – is there any one section among the toiling masses, who have something positive to show? There have been a lot of things in the air – Literally they remained in the air.

What have we witnessed during this period? Almost all these sections suffered and were forced to come to streets.

There is no section of the workers and employees who have not been on struggle. Be it Industrial workers, unorganized workers, scheme workers of various categories, employees of banks, insurance, telecom, transport, electricity, defense, railways, state and central government employees.

It was an all out attack on the workers and employees. Labour laws were amended, with more amendments on the agenda; social security schemes, including the existing pension schemes were curtailed; Ministerial assurances to central government employees, Telecom and various other sections proved to be just words of deceit; even the recommendations of pay commissions that were favorable to employees were rejected; court orders in favor of workers coming after decades are appealed against.

The labour department and enforcement machineries have been put on leash, bringing to an end, whatever little they were doing. Everything these departments have been doing are all part of the 'reforms', to get the 'ease of doing business' ranking improved!

In the centenary year of the formation of the first formal trade union in the country – Madras Labour Union, considered as the first formal trade union in the country was formed in April 1918 - the right to form a union of the workers' choice is being denied. Large scale victimization in the major industrial centers has been done just for initiating the formation of a trade union, which is a statutorily guaranteed right of workers. Collective bargaining is being denied. Referendums, verifications and secret ballots, which came into existence in certain sectors and departments after long drawn struggles, are put on hold, withdrawn or annulled by the government, just because the workers are not in favor of leaders or organizations who are in the good books of the government.

The tripartite machinery, which our governments used to boast about, have not been functioning and whenever held out of compulsion, have become a farce. Think of the situation now, where the central trade unions, of course with the exception of the BMS, have been boycotting the tripartite meetings called by the labour ministry. The only reason being that the government does not want to listen to anything the trade unions are suggesting. Even the BMS has been forced to create records of criticizing many of the government decisions, but by putting the blame on the officers and advisors of the government!

Many state governments, some of them led by opposition parties also, continue to follow the same path of anti worker, anti employee policies. The only exception now is the LDF Government in Kerala, which continues to follow pro worker policies and initiatives.

The economic policies and their impacts are not being detailed here. The assets of the country are put on sale. The loot and plunder of the PSUs including banks, Insurance and others are continuing. Even the Railways, Defence establishments and Ports are being handed over to corporates.

The overall impact has been that of steeply increasing inequalities. The wage share of workers has been coming down, while more and more exploitative innovations are being made in the working conditions. Contract, casual, outsourcing, trainee, apprentice, internship and various new schemes in the name of empowerment and skill development have not only taken away job security but also enforced production work on the trainees.

The situation is no different in rural India. Agricultural workers, poor and middle peasants are being looted and exploited cruelly. All the talks about increasing income of peasantry are nothing but a cruel farce, when over 12000 kisans are forced to commit suicide every year.

The resultant crisis and the struggles of peasantry in many states and at the national level have resulted in huge mobilizations of the peasantry in various struggles and also in the parliament marches.

As seen among the workers, for the last few years, many joint platforms of kisans and social organizations working in rural India, are organizing struggles.

On the whole, be it the struggles of workers, employees or the peasants, we are witnessing new upsurges. States where such struggles of the peasantry and the workers and employees were not seen earlier, have been the arenas of the recent struggles. Kisan struggles in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Haryana, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Telengana in the recent period have brought out newer sections into the struggles.

We have also witnessed newer sections of workers coming out on struggles. More and more solidarity actions are being seen now. Where the trade unions and other organizations are able to bring out the disastrous policy issues among the masses in a systematic manner, the common people have also come out in support of struggles of these sections.

As more and more united struggles are breaking out, some of them spontaneous, the ruling classes and their organizations are now busy diverting the attention of the masses. On one side, the communal card is used to polarize the masses and gods and temples used as symbols to energize their activists. On the other side the government machinery is being used to strengthen authoritarian and undemocratic attacks on the masses and also on various institutions.

It is in such a situation that the working people, workers, employees and the rural toilers are conducting struggles.

The Mazdoor-Kisan Sangarsh Rally on 5th September, the women's march on 4th September, the youth rally on employment on 3rd November and the Kisan Mukti March on 29th and 30th November were culminations of country wide campaigns on various policy issues. Simultaneously there were many sectoral, regional and local strikes and struggles in various states.

The election scene in five states were also occasions, at least in certain parts of the states, to raise policy issues that are affecting the toiling masses.

The Two-day Strike in January

While the year 2018 is coming to an end, the whole country is witnessing enthusiastic preparations for a 48 hour country wide General Strike on 8th and 9th January 2019. This call for the strike, in continuation of the two strikes on 2nd September in 2015 and 2016, 3 day Mahapadav by lakhs of men and women in November 2017, was given by all the central trade unions (of course with the exception of the BMS), and the independent National federations of employees. Many organizations of the struggling people like

those of kisans, agricultural workers, women, youth, students and also small traders and entrepreneurs have expressed their solidarity and support to this country wide strike.

The charter of demands adopted at the national level and those of the various sectoral organizations are aimed at the policies of the government. These policies have been taken to the masses and explained. The general strike demands a change in policies. Working people will carry on these struggles all through the coming year. The period of the General Election campaign will also be an opportune time to discuss all these issues with the masses, in an extensive manner, targetting a change of government and also to ensure a change in the policies.

The year 2019 will surely be a year of intensive class struggle.

Women in Chile Spur Widespread Revolt

Students organize against sexual abuse and privatizing education

In January, the hemispheric #MeToo revolt blew up in Chile. Outrage over sexual abuse by Catholic priests and university professors catalyzed mass demonstrations against Pope Francis, corrupt college administrations and the government's wholesale neo-liberal privatization of education.

Primarily initiated by women students, young, feminist men jumped in and joined their crusade to stop relentless violence against women. Latin America has the dubious distinction of having the world's highest rates of misogynist violence. Restricted access to abortion is a cause of poverty and domestic abuse. In Chile, femicide increased 30 percent between 2016 and 2017. Too often, the Catholic Church and its anti-female stances dictate public policy.

The Chilean students are part of a tidal wave of female-led protest sweeping Latin America. In Argentina demonstrations for abortion rights brought out millions. In Brazil tens of thousands marched against a ban on abortion. In Chile there was uproar over Pope Francis' visit.

U.S. coups in Latin America. Chile's current problems stem from 1973 when the Chilean military and right-wing businessmen collaborated with the U.S. government to overthrow duly-elected President Salvador Allende. The CIA organized a so-called "anti-communist" coup and the murderous General Augusto Pinochet was put in power.

Pinochet destroyed Chile's publicly-owned education system. Schools were made into private entities, traded on the stock market like cars and oil. A free college education became a thing of the past.

A galvanizing trip. Students erupted again in 2018 when Pope Francis visited Peru and Chile. Protest broke out again in April and continued for months. These current actions denounce violence against women and demand the end to draconian laws against abortion. Women are outraged and mobilizing.

When sexual harassment charges against a prominent law professor at the University of Santiago were dropped, the students occupied the law faculty offices. They hung bras across gateways and painted slogans on the walls.

Student demands included: addressing sexual harassment and abuse; hiring more female professors; and putting women authors on reading lists.

The rebellion spreads. In October, 100,000 students marched against new right-wing President Piñera to protest his role in getting a law tossed that banned for-profit schools.

Workers went out after the students, to protest a pension system that was privatized under Pinochet. Currently, retirees get starvation-level benefits while banks rake in the profits.

Only time will tell what happens next, but the students have pledged to expand the movement's reach to other sectors!

(Courtesy: FSP)

‘CONCENT’ is Fake Consent

‘CONCENT’ – a political tool to manufacture consent to the anti worker policies of BJP government

‘CONCENT’, the so called ‘Confederation of Central Trade Unions’, which is set to function from the BMS office, is nothing but a political instrument forged in a desperate attempt to manufacture consent to the anti worker policies of the BJP led government at the centre.

It is yet another attempt to disrupt the unity of the working class and the joint trade union movement, which the BMS deserted and got isolated from after BJP, the political wing of the RSS, to which the BMS is affiliated, came to power at the centre in 2014.

The discontent and anger of the working class was reflected in the recent period in the huge participation of workers from all over the country and from all sectors in the joint trade union **‘Mahapadav’** in November 2017 and in the sectoral joint struggles that have been taking place in almost all sectors. Lakhs of workers, peasants and agricultural workers participated in the **Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally** and vociferously demanded reversal of the neoliberal policies pursued by the BJP led Modi government. Tens of thousands of peasants participated in the **Kisan Mukti March** to the national capital, led by the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee, comprising over 200 peasant organisations across the country. Now preparations for the 2 days’ joint trade union country wide general strike on 8-9 January 2019 are on in full swing. The workers are all set to stage another historic general strike against the anti worker policies, the 18th after the advent of these policies in our country.

It is clear that not only the workers but also all sections of toiling people are angry at their deteriorating conditions. Employment, price rise and agrarian distress are major issues troubling the people. They want this BJP government, which was doggedly pursuing anti people policies, to go.

It is in this background that the BMS affiliated to the RSS, of which the BJP is the political arm, wanted to bail out the Modi government by creating confusion among the workers. Already such attempts are going on in various sectors. Recently it formed a so called ‘alliance of non political central trade unions’ by bringing together the breakaway groups and factions of a couple of central trade unions. A meeting of representatives of BMS, NFITU and the breakaway groups of INTUC and TUCC was held at BMS office on 8th December in which this so called confederation was formed. With the incumbent BMS president as chairman, this will function from the BMS office. They will draft a charter of demands, hold a ‘national conclave’ on 31st December and present the demands to the ‘group of ministers’ immediately for negotiations. Thus, this platform is claimed to give ‘solutions to the issues related to all Indian workers’.

It is to be recalled that BMS was part of the joint trade union movement which included all the central trade unions, since 2009. It was a party in drafting the common charter of demands of the joint trade union movement. It was part of the joint national conventions of workers held between 2009 and 2015 which gave unanimous calls for campaigns and struggles including jail bhara programmes and strikes. It participated in the two days’ strike in February 2013.

It had no problem in joining the joint trade union movement and participating in struggles on common demands as long as the Congress led UPA government was in power. But its discomfiture

started when the BJP led government came to power in 2014. Even when it became clear that the BJP led Modi government was pursuing the same anti worker policies as the Congress led UPA government, it tried to postpone joint calls against it by the central trade unions. Though it participated in the joint national convention of workers in May 2015, it backstabbed the joint trade union movement and withdrew from the country wide general strike on 2nd September 2015. This was done just a few days before the strike, after discussions with the 'group of ministers'.

Even when the government made no concrete assurance on any of the demands and all the other central trade unions decided to go on strike as decided earlier, the BMS announced that the '*government was positive to the demands of trade unions*' and withdrew from the strike. Since then it has deserted the joint trade union movement. Obviously this was under instructions of its 'political bosses'. Before the countrywide general strike on 2nd September 2016, the same 'group of ministers' constituted by the BJP government invited the BMS, which had not given any call for the, and staged a show of having discussions. The government did not call the other central trade unions that had called for the strike for discussions.

Of course, the working class of the country gave a fitting reply to its deceptive ploys, by rejecting its arguments. Both the strikes saw an unprecedented participation of workers. In several states even the workers belonging to the BMS unions joined the strikes. It is to be noted that the BMS is now again resorting to a similar exercise of submitting a charter of demands to the same group of ministers at a time when the working class of the country is in the midst of serious preparations for the two day strike against the arrogance of the BJP government in pursuing the policies detrimental to the interests not only of the workers but also of all sections of common people and against the interests of the nation.

People of the country are today are not only angry about the neoliberal policies of the BJP government. They are also disgusted with its open support to the communal agenda of the RSS and the damage it is doing to the secular fabric of our society and harmonious coexistence of people belonging to different religions, castes, languages, cultures etc. They are restless against the growing authoritarian tendencies and the attempts to suppress all resistance and opposition. It is significant that the slogan repeatedly heard in the peasants rally was '*Ayodhya nahin, karz mafi chahiye*'. The poor peasants, unable to sell their old cows and forced to feed them by spending at least Rs 3000 per month per cow, are facing the brunt of the affect of '*gau raksha*' imposed by '*gau rakshak*' gangs.

In the wake of such growing discontent, the RSS obviously felt it necessary to buttress its communal divisive machinations with such dubious exercises to divide the workers, disrupt their unity and weaken the intensifying struggles against neoliberal policies of the BJP led government. But the RSS promoted ill designed "CONCENT" to confuse working people and disrupt the united movement must not and will not succeed. The working class will surely defeat all such machinations by yet another unprecedented country wide general strike on 8-9 January 2019.

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Maharashtra State Conference of Anganwadi Karmachari Sanghatana

The 9th state conference of Anganwadi Karmachari Sanghatana, Maharashtra was successfully held on 24th and 25th November 2018 at Com. Ahilyatai Ranganekar Nagar (J P Naik Centre for Education & Development) Kothrud Pune. The Conference started with a rally from the famous Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Statue which culminated in an open session held at the venue. Nearly 500 Anganwadi workers from the district participated in the rally.



The CITU flag was hoisted by the AIFAWH President Usharani at the venue. Vasant Pawar, Pune District Secretary of CITU started the open session. Shubha Shamim conducted the session. Ajit Abhyankar, District President, CITU and Chairperson of the Reception Committee welcomed the guests and spoke about the progressive tradition of Pune.

The conference was inaugurated by AR Sindhu, General Secretary, AIFAWH who criticized the anti people, anti worker policies of the Modi Government, which adverse effect on the ICDS and astressed upon mobilizing more anganwadi workers for the joint struggles against such policies. M H Shaikh, CITU State General Secretary called upon the Anganwadi workers to take more initiative to organize Scheme Workers in CITU Unions to reach the common people and bring them into the democratic movement by campaigning about our struggles and our goals.

Dr D L Karad, CITU State President attacked the anti worker policies of Modi and Fadanvis governments in his fiery speech. He called upon the workers to join the 2 day All India General Strike planned on 8th and 9th January 2019 and make it a success.

In the afternoon the delegate session started in Com. Sumantai Sanzgiri Manch. The Presidium consisted of Shobha Bogawar, Ujwala Undirwade, Sajeda Begum, Chanda Mende and Sneha Sawant. The report was placed by Shubha Shamim, which she detailed the sufferings of the people due to rising inequalities, unemployment and privatisation; efforts of the ruling class to divert people's attention from the basic issues of their livelihood; the crisis faced by the ICDS due to the Central and State government policies strengthening the organisation by rectifying the weaknesses future organisational tasks and struggles; need of mobilising ourselves 100% and also to mobilise the working class in our area in the 2 days all India strike. Armaity Irani, state Treasurer placed the accounts. 25 delegates took part in the discussion on the report. Shubha Shamim replied to the discussions. The Conference unanimously adopted the report and accounts.

The Conference passed 6 resolutions. They were: Strictly implement the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act; Take strict measures to control rising atrocities on women; Control price rise by controlling the prices of petrol, diesel and strengthening the PDS. Resolution on Demands; Take effective measures on Drought, scarcity of water and fodder and Agrarian Crisis; Make the 2 day All India General Strike of 8 & 9 January 2019, 100% success.

Usharani, President and A R Sindhu, General Secretary of AIFAWH addressed the conference which was attended by 159 delegates from 16 districts.

The conference elected R C Dahiwade as President, Shubha Shamin as General Secretary and Armaity Irani as Treasurer.

Conference of ASHA Workers Union Haryana

The Fourth state conference of the ASHA Workers Union Haryana was held on 17, 18 December at Bhiwani.

The conference started with an open session in which speakers detailed "Government Policies in the Health Sector and Public Health Care". Ranjana Nirula, Convenor of the All India Coordination Committee of ASHA Workers (CITU) and Dr R S Dahiya, leader of the Haryana Gyan Vigyan Samiti and Jan Swasthya Abhiyaan were the main speakers. They said that the healthcare infrastructure in our country is most inadequate and the government is handing this over, step by step, to private players. The Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Swasthya Yojana is designed to help private companies and not the people. This yojana will in all likelihood be a failure like the RSBY. Women's household work is not recognized or valued in the home or in society and is unpaid labour. The government also considers women as cheap labour and refuses to give ASHAs working in the National Health Mission wages despite their crucial work in the health sector. Now the women have recognized the exploitation perpetrated on them and they are ready to fight against it.

The delegate session began with the flag hoisting. Out of the 22 districts in Haryana, 150 delegates from 21 districts participated in the conference. Surinder Singh, Haryana State Vice President of CITU and State Secretary of CPI(M) inaugurated this session. He spoke about the national and state socio-political scenario and the ongoing attacks on the rights of workers, women and weaker sections of society by the BJP government at the centre and in the state.

Surekha, General Secretary of the union, placed the organizational report, detailing the numerous struggles by the ASHA Workers Union. These have earned them recognition from the people of Haryana. The union has grown stronger through these struggles and also been able to get several demands fulfilled from the government. The Treasurer, Sunita, placed the accounts. A total of 18 delegates took part in the discussion on the report, which was passed unanimously.

A cultural programme was organized at night in which the Action Theater Group performed a play based on women peasants titled 'Atm katha'.

The conference decided to participate in the 8,9 January countrywide general strike in a big way. It also decided to continue their agitation even after 9 January to demand immediate payment of all arrears to ASHA workers, and for implementation of the Prime Minister's announcement of Rs 1000 increase in ASHA workers incentive.

The CITU state General Secretary, Jai Bhagwan, made the concluding remarks. He lauded the ASHA Workers Union Haryana as the foremost fighting and well organized union of the CITU in Haryana. He urged the delegates to reach all the people in the urban and rural areas to alert them to the communal, casteist, divisive tactics of the state and central governments and the Hindutva brigade and the need to counter these.

Satvir Singh, Haryana state President of CITU; Shankuntala Jakkhar, state President of the Janwadi Mahila Samiti; Saroj, state President of the Mid day Meal Workers Union and Shakuntala state General

Secretary of the Anganwadi Workers and Helpers union and other leaders also greeted the conference.

The conference unanimously elected Pravesh as President, Surekha as General Secretary, and Sudha as Treasurer of a 53 member state committee which also elected a 13 member Secretariat. Neelam, Kamlesh, Rani, Ram Rati were elected as Vice Presidents and Sunita, Sarabjit, Meera, Amita and Manju as Secretaries.



ICEU Media Response Committee

A meeting of the Media Response Committee of the Women's Sub-Committee, of ICEU, Chennai Division II, was held at AIEEA Illam on 10.11.2018, in which about 60 comrades participated.

A debate on the topic 'Ethics of Media and our Responsibility' was organized by the Committee. T. Sigamani, Research Head, News 18 Channel was the Chief Guest.



G.Anand, Gen. Secy, GIC Southern Region was also present.

V. Anuja, Convenor, Media Response Committee, presided over the meeting. In her address, she expressed concern over the way in which the news media is trying to sensationalise issues to increase their viewer ship. Some news channels do not even focus on genuine and important issues which the people should really be concerned about.

A question-answer session was organized in which those who participated in the event raised a lot of questions on the ethics followed by the media in reporting news. They asked why false news is propagated, why matters which truly need to reach people are kept in the dark, why unimportant and trivial news is sensationalised.

T.Sigamani, while answering the questions, admitted that the channels these days are influenced by materialistic goals like gaining more commercials, TRP ratings, political affiliation, etc. This is the reason for the lack of genuineness or authenticity of the news published. Some channels often curtail the freedom of their reporters for obvious reasons.

G. Anand spoke at length about the experiences he had while participating in political debates in TV shows. He recalled that during the days of the Congress rule, the representatives of the ruling party were tolerant of any sharp criticism raised by the opposition parties. They had a positive approach towards all remarks made at the debates. Now the ruling BJP has adopted a highly intolerant attitude towards the opposition. The debates now are one-sided and biased and do not allow the viewers to get a holistic view of the subject matter of discussion.

He also spoke about the role that we, as members of an organized forum, should play, in regulating the news media. We should react strongly and promptly in matters of concern and send a strong message to the media that the viewers are well-informed and cannot be taken for granted. All forums of social media – Whatsapp, Facebook, Twitter, etc. should be utilized to spread our message and create opinions.

R.Sarvamangala, Jt. Secy., ICEU, Chennai Divn. II, proposed the vote of thanks.

Odisha ASHA Workers Demonstrate

The Odisha ASHA Karmee Association CITU, organized a demonstration in front of the Odisha Assembly on 26th November 2018. Around 2000 ASHA workers participated in a procession which started from the Bhubaneshwar Railway station and culminated in a demonstration at Lower PMG.

The demonstration was presided over by the Association president Radha Raman Sarangi and addressed by Nalini Sahoo, General Secretary, Lovakanta Swain and others.

Later a delegation met the Mission Director of the NHM Odisha and discussed the 20 point Charter of Demands. The Director assured the delegation that the monthly remuneration will be enhanced to Rs 2000 and all the other demands will be looked into.

Kerala Anganwadi Union Conference

The tenth conference of Kerala Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Association (KWAHA)(CITU) was held in Comrade Padmini Nagar (Town hall) Palakkad from 7-9 December 2018.

On 7th afternoon a seminar on “Whether women are to be kept away from public life” was held as part of the conference. The seminar was inaugurated by K K Shylaja, Minister of Women and Child Development, Kerala. She explained the current situation in Kerala where the RSS led communal forces are trying to bring the obscurantist practices which the Renaissance movement had fought much earlier, in the name of religious sentiments about ‘Sabarimala’ temple. She also explained the efforts by the Kerala LDF ministry to bring as many pro-women policies and schemes as possible. A R Sindhu, General Secretary AIFAWH, spoke about the importance of linking class issues with social oppression to build a sustained resistance movement against the efforts of the communal fanatics to bring back the retrograde practices against women. The seminar was attended by more than six hundred women including the conference delegates.

On 8th morning the delegate session started with K P Mary, president, KWAHA hoisting the AIFAWH flag. M B Rajaesh MP, Chairman, Reception Committee, welcomed the delegates. The conference was inaugurated by Elamaram Kareem, MP, General Secretary, Kerala state CITU. He narrated the anti labour policies of the central government and the importance of the national general strike on 8-9 January 2019.

VC Karthyayani, General Secretary, KWAHA presented the report. The Union had many achievements including increase in remuneration from the state government during the period after the last conference. Mary Jobe, Treasurer placed the accounts. A R Sindhu placed the report on organization.

22 delegates took part in the discussion. After the reply by the general secretary, the report and accounts were adopted.

The conference was addressed by Usharani, President AIFAWH.

The conference adopted resolutions in support to the general strike on 8-9 January 2019. The conference also decided to mobilize all the employees in support of the ‘Women Wall’ on 1 January 2019 for the values of renaissance.

The conference elected a 53 member committee with Mary Jobe as President, K K Presennakumari as General Secretary and Susan T B as Treasurer.

A special session was held to felicitate of the comrades who were being relieved from the state leadership. K K Divakaran, secretary, CITU inaugurated this session. Apart from V C Karthyayani and K P Mary who got relieved from the leadership of the union, the conference felicitated Unniparvathy, a worker who has done excellent work among the tribal area where her centre is

located for the upliftment and better infrastructure for the population and Shyja , worker from Ernakulam who saved many lives during the floods.

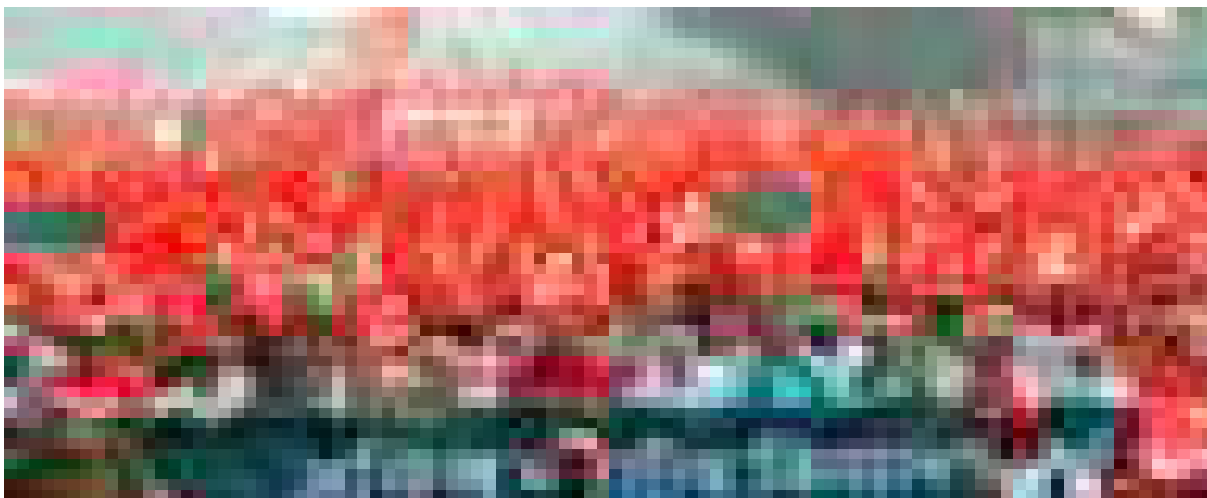
A colorful rally of around five thousand anganwadi workers and helpers from 23 projects of Palakkad district held on 9th December evening which reached the ground after passing through the city, showed the strength of the union. In a public meeting held after the rally, A K Balan, Minister for electricity addressed the gathering. National and state leaders of the union addressed the gathering.



The Voice of the Working Woman

Massive Kisan Mukti March in Delhi Makes Powerful Political Impact

Ashok Dhawale



They came. They marched. And they captured the hearts and minds of millions of their countrymen all over India.

They comprised tens of thousands of farmers and agricultural workers – women, men and children – from almost every state in the north, south, east and west.

They came with a rainbow of thousands of flags and banners that mingled in unity – red, green, yellow, blue, white – all except saffron.

They hailed from every caste, creed, language and religion – surmounting all these barriers. They truly symbolized the unity in diversity that is the idea of India.

They mobilised the economically exploited and the socially oppressed peasantry, the working class and the middle class, and most important, the young, to their cause.

They came with a proud legacy of struggles – for liberation from debt, for remunerative prices, for land, for irrigation, for wages, pension and rations. They came for justice.

They demanded a special session of Parliament not only to pass the two key bills that they had prepared, but also to discuss the grave agrarian crisis and its related aspects.

They brought farmers' issues to the centre stage of the national agenda, forced the media to focus on their struggle and united the left and secular opposition to support their cause.

Finally, **they constantly intensified** their resistance, in huge numbers, and now called for the resounding defeat of the most anti-farmer, pro-corporate and communal BJP regime.

Kisan Mukti March

These were the nine major achievements of the Kisan Mukti March to Delhi on November 29-30. It was held under the banner of the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC), an umbrella platform of over 200 Kisan organizations in India.

Parallel to this Kisan Mukti March in Delhi, another 10,000-strong march led jointly by the AIKS and AIAWU from Singur to Kolkata in West Bengal began on November 28 and culminated on November 29 in a massive 50,000-strong public meeting.

The Kisan Mukti March began from five points near Delhi on November 29. Around 10,000 farmer volunteers walked a distance of 15-20 Km to the Ramlila Maidan from these points. In the evening they enjoyed an impressive cultural nite – 'Ek Sham Kisanon Ke Naam'.

The police had refused permission for the main March on November 30 from Ramlila Maidan to Parliament Street. AIKSCC leaders argued with the police for three hours around midnight on November 29 and finally declared that the March would proceed, come what may. The police were forced to relent.

On November 30, around 50,000 farmers began a massive march from Ramlila Maidan. It reached Parliament at noon. It was a microcosm of rural India. It was a heart-rending sight to see widows and daughters of farmers from Telangana who had committed suicide due to indebtedness, walking in the rally with framed photographs of their husbands and fathers. Farmers from Tamilnadu had come with the skulls and bones of farmers who had been forced to commit distress suicides. Poor and middle farmers, tenant farmers, agricultural workers, fisherfolk and even some rich farmers were part of this rally. Women farmers, adivasi farmers, dalit farmers, minority farmers were also present in large numbers. Every single participant had his/her story of hardship – and resistance – to tell. These anecdotes were well captured by many sections of the print, electronic and social media.

The entire route of the march was decorated with AIKS flags and Parliament Street was full of AIKS/AIAWU buntings, along with flags of all the other AIKSCC organizations. The massive rally culminated in a huge public meeting at Parliament Street.



The first session of the public meeting was addressed by AIKSCC working group members. They included Raju Shetti, MP, Hannan Mollah, Ashish Mittal, Pratibha Shinde, Atul Kumar Anjan, Rajaram Singh, Medha Patkar, K Chandrashekhar, Sunilam, Ayyakannu, Kiran Vissa, Kavita Kuruganti, Tejinder Singh, Yogendra Yadav and convenor V M Singh. It

was also addressed by P Sainath on behalf of the *Nation for Farmers* and by Maj Gen Satbir Singh on behalf of the *Indian Ex-Servicemen Movement*. All the leaders dwelt upon various aspects of the farm crisis and stressed the need to defeat the thoroughly anti-farmer Modi government. Avik Saha proposed the vote of thanks.

The second session of the public meeting was addressed by various political leaders of parties that had supported the two key bills prepared by the AIKSCC – the ‘Farmers’ Freedom from Indebtedness Bill, 2018’ and the ‘Farmers’ Right to Guaranteed Remunerative Minimum Support Prices for Agricultural Commodities Bill, 2018’. These two bills were placed in the last Parliament session as private member bills by Swabhimani Shetkari Sanghatana leader Raju Shetti in the Lok Sabha and by CPI(M) leader and AIKS joint secretary K K Ragesh in the Rajya Sabha. Leaders of 23 political parties including the Congress(I) and CPI(M) extended support to these bills and addressed the gathering.

Culmination of series of struggles

This Kisan Mukti March was a powerful culmination of the constantly rising upsurge of peasant struggles after the Modi regime came to power. Starting with the struggle against the draconian Land Acquisition Ordinance introduced by the Modi regime, the AIKS took the initiative in 2015 to bring several peasant and social organisations together to form a broad platform called the



Bhoomi Adhikar Andolan (BAA). It has also taken up issues related to the killing of farmers by cow vigilantes.

The AIKSCC was formed in June 2017 after the Mandsaur police firing in BJP-ruled Madhya Pradesh, which killed six farmers. It took up the two key issues of the vast mass of the peasantry of India today, viz. loan waiver and remunerative prices as per the C2 + 50 per cent formula of the

National Commission on Farmers (NCF) headed by Dr M S Swaminathan. A series of struggle including the two day Kisan Sansad in New Delhi on November 20-21, 2017 were held.

The AIKS took the independent initiative of organising four nationwide jathas, culminating in an AIKS Delhi Rally of several thousand peasants on their burning demands on November 24, 2016. A large Delhi Rally was also subsequently held by the AIAWU. The struggles spearheaded by the AIKS in Maharashtra, the Kisan Long march and struggle Rajasthan from 2016 to 2018 contributed greatly to building up the resistance of the peasantry at the All India level. The struggles in Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Jharkhand and elsewhere succeeded in wresting concessions from the BJP and Congress-led governments in these states. All these struggles also helped to carve out an important space for the AIKS in the united movement.

Running parallel to these peasant struggles were the series of working class struggles led by the CITU and other trade unions throughout the country. They included the two massive All India Strikes on September 2 in 2015 and 2016 and culminated in the huge three-day sit-in struggle of lakhs of workers at Parliament Street in Delhi in November 2017.

On August 9, 2018, well over five lakh peasants and workers under the leadership of AIKS, CITU and AIAWU courted arrest at over 610 centres in 407 districts in 23 states across the country on August 9, 2018. The mammoth September 5, 2018 Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally in Delhi of over two lakh workers, peasants and agricultural workers led by CITU, AIKS and AIAWU was another major step forward towards worker-peasant unity in action. It was also another blow under the leadership of the Red Flag that was aimed at the BJP-RSS-led central government. Working people in huge numbers from across the country participated in this Delhi Rally.

Within three months of this huge action came this Kisan Mukti March on November



29-30, 2018. Preparations are now on for the success of the All India Strike by trade unions on January 8-9, 2019, which will be fully supported in action by the peasantry of India. With this rising wave of worker-peasant struggles, the stage is being set for the defeat of the BJP-RSS regime in the general elections that are due next year. The stage is also being set for a change in policies in favour of the working people and for the advance of the Left and democratic forces in our country.

The five kisan marches to ramlila maidan

On November 29, five Kisan marches under the AIKSSC banner began from the outskirts of Delhi and they all came together at the Ramlila Maidan in the evening.

The largest march from Nizamuddin comprised farmers from the southern and central states of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra, Telangana, Tamilnadu, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. It was led by leaders of AIKSSC including Hannan Mollah, P Sainath, Medha Patkar, Ashok Dhawale, P Krishnaprasad, Vijoo Krishnan. The second large march began from Anand Vihar and it comprised farmers from the eastern and northern states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand. The third march began from Majnu ka Tila and it comprised farmers from Himachal Pradesh and Haryana. The fourth march began from Brijwasan and it comprised farmers from Haryana, Delhi, West Bengal, Odisha and some other states. The fifth march began from Sabji Mandi and it comprised farmers from Punjab. In several of these places, the Delhi chapter of the *Nation for Farmers* and CITU workers welcomed the marchers, served them snacks, tea and water, and hundreds of them actually participated in the marches themselves.

Tapan Sen, General Secretary CITU walked all the 14 kilometers from Anand Vihar to Ramlila ground in solidarity with the Kisan Mukti March. M L Malkotia, (Treasurer), J S Majumdar (Vice President) Swadesh Devroye, A R Sindhu, Usharani (Secretaries), Anurag Saxena, Satvir Singh, Jaibhagawan (CITU leaders of Delhi and Haryana) also marched in the rally. As per the decision of the CITU working committee, nearly two thousand CITU activists from Delhi, UP, Haryana and Punjab participated in the two marches from Nizamuddin and Anand Vihar. More than three thousand CITU activists participated in the March on 30 November. Solidarity mobilizations were held in state/district capitals by CITU committees in many states.



Seminar at P.R. Bhawan

After inaugural programme, this was the first organised programme at P. R. Bhawan, CITU's education and research centre in Delhi, on 5 December. A seminar was held, attended by all CITU leaders at the centre, the presidents and secretaries of Delhi and neighbouring states and national leaders of federations in the national capital region.

The seminar was an occasion to felicitate CITU veteran leader Kanai Banerjee, who worked at the CITU centre at BTR Bhawan in New Delhi for 30 years as one of its national secretaries, and to thank him for his contribution of his lifetime collection of books to the P. R. Bhawan library.

CITU general secretary Tapan Sen introduced the subjects and speakers of the seminar. CITU president Hemalata felicitated Kanai Banerjee and presided over the proceedings. Kanai Banerjee responded by saying that a dream has come true for him, through the setting up and functioning of the P. R. TU Education and Research Centre.

The first session in the seminar was 'Contemporary Capitalism and the Role of the Working Class'. Prof. Prabhat Patnaik was the speaker. This was followed by a question answer session. The post launch session of the seminar, on 'Impact of Neoliberalism Change in Employment Profile in India: Challenges and Opportunities' was presented by JNU Professor of Economics Surajit Majumdar. This was also followed by a question and answer session.

The CITU centre has decided to publish the presentation on both the subjects with questions and answers for their educative value among CITU cadres.



40 Years of Alma Ata Declaration: 'Health for All' Still a Far Cry

Addressing root causes of health inequity and investing in society, especially in primary health care, is the only way that 'Health for All' and sustainable development can be achieved.

Amit Sengupta

The International Conference on Primary Health Care at the Lenin Convention Centre in Alma-Ata in September 1978.

"Primary health care is essential health care based on practical, scientifically sound and socially acceptable methods and technology made universally accessible to individuals and families in the community through their full participation and at a cost that the community and country can afford to maintain at every stage of their development in the spirit of self-reliance and self-determination." (Declaration of Alma-Ata)

The Primary Health Care (PHC) principles affirm health as a human right based on equity and social justice, implemented through community engagement, health promotion, the appropriate use of resources, and inter-sectoral action based on a "New International Economic Order" with the vision of health for all by the year 2000.

The [Alma Ata] Declaration, which completes 40 years in 2018, however, came at a time of major global economic changes, including the economic slowdown of the 1970s, the debt crisis and structural adjustments. Shortly after Alma Ata, UNICEF and the Rockefeller Foundation declared "Selective Primary Health Care" instead of "Comprehensive Primary Health Care", which under structural adjustments became the dominant paradigm and model of PHC. Structural adjustment programmes led to a reduction of staff, narrow benefit packages and a lack of resources in the public sector and weakened already weak health systems.

In 2010, the World Health Organisation (WHO) introduced the concept of Universal Health Coverage (UHC), which was defined as access to health services without financial hardship. While in general, the notion of UHC seems consistent with the concept of Health for All, a key issue that remains unresolved is the primacy provided to public or non-for-profit services under PHC and conversely the larger role envisioned to private for-profit providers while implementing UHC. Hence, in many countries public services are being replaced by private for-profit providers. Especially concerning is the increase of corporate chains of providers, mainly supported by private insurance.

While impressive medical and technological advances have taken place around the world, improvements in the health status of the people have been moderate and inconsistent between and within countries. The biomedical and technical approach to health has its limitations in actually improving health, especially among marginalised and poor populations and has contributed to a neglect of other determinants of health.

Health systems must be built on the principles of comprehensive primary health care that includes community engagement, adequate healthcare infrastructure, skilled, supported and motivated health workforce, access to essential drugs of good quality that are rationally used in addition to new advancements and technologies that must be accessible to all.

Communities as Owners and Partners

"The people have the right and duty to participate individually and collectively in the planning and implementation of their health care." (Declaration of Alma-Ata)

Communities are at the heart of PHC and must be the owners and partners in making Health for All a reality. They must not be reduced to mere consumers of health services and health systems must be accountable to people and the communities they serve. Strong people's organisations and movements are fundamental to more democratic, transparent and accountable decision making processes in health. Community health workers are an important link between communities and the formal health system. They play an essential role in order to strengthen local health services and make them accessible to all.

Therefore, community health workers must be recognised in their specific role, supported, trained and remunerated accordingly.

Community health workers must become part of a skilled and motivated health workforce. In the light of changing demographics globally, global health worker migration and a gap in trained health workforce, health systems must ensure an environment that will enable and retain skilled and motivated health workers at all levels.

Justice, Cooperation and Solidarity

“The existing gross inequality in the health status of the people particularly between developed and developing countries as well as within countries is politically, socially and economically unacceptable and is, therefore, of common concern to all countries.” (Declaration of Alma-Ata)

Health is not only a matter of human rights, but also of justice. Governments who are not making provision for decent health care are denying justice to their people.

The Alma Ata declaration recognised the need to restructure the global economic order to address inequalities and enable countries to generate resources for decent health care and tackle the root causes of poor health. This still remains a critically important task today.

In contrast to the New International Economic Order referred to in the [Alma Ata] Declaration the dominant contemporary paradigm of export-led development has contributed to loss of tax receipts at country level because of the competition for investment which drives reduced tax rates and constant pressure to reduce the cost of production or extraction. These have led to a deterioration of people’s living circumstances and contributed to ill health, instability or even war.

It is vital that we build solidarity between people within and across nations and regions. The existing system of international aid and the associated charity narrative legitimise an unfair economic framework which prevents national self-determination and weakens the building of strong and resilient local health systems. Health for all requires the redistribution of wealth nationally and globally.

Public financing is essential for health for all. This requires tax justice that will clamp down on tax avoidance and control tax competition between countries. The regulation of transnational corporations through appropriate agreements is essential.

Addressing Root Causes of Health Inequity

“The attainment of the highest possible level of health is a most important world-wide social goal whose realization requires the action of many other social and economic sectors in addition to the health sector.” (Declaration of Alma-Ata)

The WHO’s Commission on Social Determinants of Health in 2008 demonstrated that poor health is not randomly distributed, but rather follows a predictable pattern with systematic differences among social groups (i.e. gender, class, race/ethnicity) caused by unequal exposure to, and distribution of, social determinants of health (SDH). Social justice is a matter of life and death. Addressing root causes of health inequity and investing in society, is the only way that health for all and sustainable development can be achieved.

The broader context, shaped since the late 1980s by neoliberal economic globalisation, has profoundly influenced our health situation today. This can be seen in the impact of globalisation on social justice, the effect of climate change on livelihoods; the loss of biodiversity, the detrimental effects of agribusiness on peasant farmers and small-holder farmers, who provide most of the world’s food; the impact of land grabbing and the grabbing of water bodies by big business; the influence of patriarchy on society; tax evasion leading to the lack of public funds; the unbridled growth of the arms trade; and the effects of migration to name only a few. All these issues require collaboration across sectors and policies that will address the root causes of illness and the determinants of health inequity.

As in the Alma Ata Declaration, a new global economic order is needed to facilitate a safe and just space for humanity.

We call upon governments and people from across the globe to take forward the principles of Primary Health Care that are so clearly articulated in the Alma Ata Declaration.

Amit Sengupta

We have lost a notable and relentless fighter for the cause of people's health. As an active rebel from his SFI days to the end he theorised, mobilised and stood in the forefront of the movement for people's health. After completing his medical education he opened a clinic in Delhi in the Okhla industrial complex, serving poor working class people. Gradually he became a health activist and then a leader in the world steering committee of the Peoples Health Movement.



He had an excellent capacity to analyze the neo-liberal assault on the health system from a working class perspective. We saw him debating with policy makers and private health care tycoons, countering them with satire and humor along with presenting enormous evidence which he had maintained meticulously in his data base. In a meeting with the then Chairman of Bureau of Industrial Cost & Pricing who asked "What is the need of a List of Essential Medicines?" Amit responded by saying "I am surprised why you have been chosen to determine list of drugs for price control". Frequently while debating with pharmaceutical corporations in meetings of the World Health Assembly he outsmarted them by placing vital information.

On the issue of the global health situation, he was the global coordinator and editor of Global Health Watch, proving himself as an authentic analyser and authority on health politics. He contributed to major medical journals like The Lancet, British Medical Journal, etc. on issues relating to medical science. He wrote frequently on health and medicine issues for popular journals and websites. He worked for the formation of the All India Peoples Science Network and as a true follower of science popularisation he produced many booklets. He had even worked with Safdar Hashmi on a much admired film on the health situation in India.

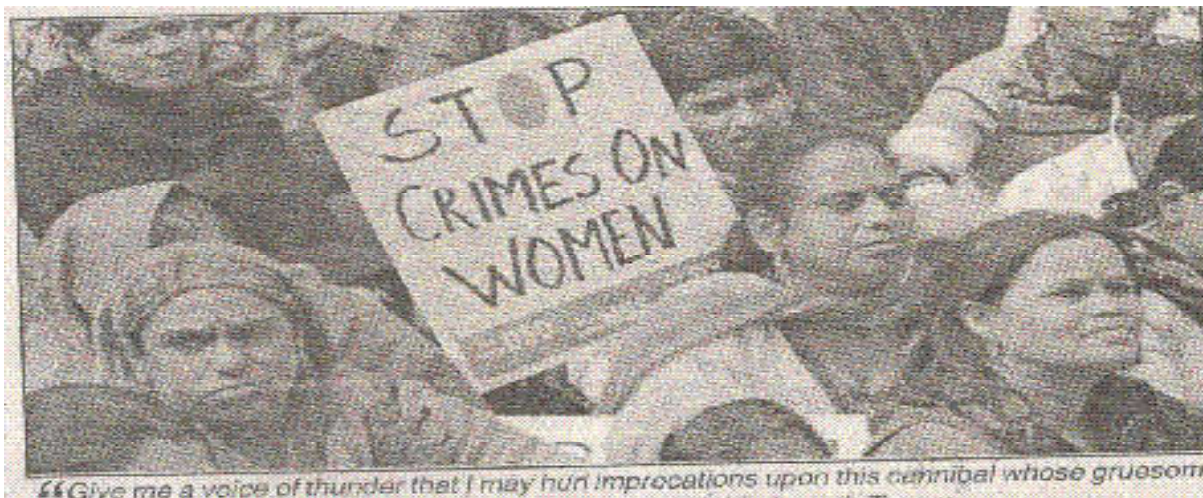
His contribution in the Peoples Health Assemblies was incomparable. From the initial phase of preparation to the completion Amit always worked so hard even across nights. At the conclusion of every PHA he was pulled onto the stage for acknowledgment of his tireless efficient work. In the last PHA at Dhaka, we had to counter many threats and challenges, and had worked many days and nights despite every possibility of cancellation of the Assembly. Amit used to say that we will do it whatever happens and this was really done to the full. That was greatly due to Amit's hard and excellent capacity of mobilisation. The other important area he never compromised with under any circumstance is ideology. He had a remarkable capacity to convince people who were in opposition yet he was very flexible. In several meetings even when someone in the leadership had a strong bias to the political ideology, he politely said that if we fail to convince you let us separate, yet nobody had separated because Amit was inseparable.

He always used to say "*I depend on people- they can do the impossible if you show them the right track and can generate confidence.*" He spent his whole life doing the impossible himself.

Red Salute Comrade Amit Sengupta!

Haryana, No Country for Women, Old or Young

The recent spurt in crimes against women and the less than ideal response of the state machinery, underlines the urgent need for a strong social movement.



“Give me a voice of thunder that I may hurl imprecations upon this cannibal whose gruesome hunger spares neither the mother nor the child.” - Rabindranath Tagore

Slogans like ‘Beti Bachao’ and ‘New India’ are a mere rhetoric, at least in Haryana, which recently witnessed a spate of attacks on women across age groups, ranging from a three-year-old to a 50-year-old woman.

While people, by and large, are shaken by these incidents, the knee-jerk reaction of the Bharatiya Janata Party-led state government is alarming. But, what is most disconcerting is the ‘business as usual’ attitude that prevails in the state – after some symbolic protests, mainly by women.

Following a series of incidents of gangrapes-cum-murders reported in the state within the first few weeks of this month, the question that arises is: How has our society reached a point where a small section of men feels they are exempted from facing any legal or social repercussions? This should set the alarm bells ringing for the government and civil society. For, if immediate action is not taken, it may well be too late.

But, first, we need to understand this dreadful phenomenon .

What we are witnessing in Haryana today is a cultural decline, which has been fuelled by a cocktail of rampant economic liberalisation and feudal values, best expressed in the slogan of the day – “*looto khao, haath na aao* (rob and run)”.

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data for 2016 has indicated that Haryana has acquired the top spot among all states in terms of gangrapes. According to the data, over 1,000 incidents of rape – of which 200 were gangrapes – were registered in the state in the span of one year. For those of us who live in the state, it is fairly well known that several more cases have gone unreported.

While there has been systematic dehumanisation of the vulnerable sections of the society over the years, the total collapse of legal machinery has added to widespread criminalisation of

youth. Day-to-day crime in the state is not limited to petty theft anymore. There are kidnappings, murders and highly disturbing cases of sexual abuse of minors where the autopsies conducted have indicated spine-chilling acts of violence.

The Manohar Lal Khattar government has failed in its duty to ensure public safety and must be held accountable. Ironically, the chief minister accused the opposition parties of politicising these incidents on January 17, and the very next day, the body of Mamta Sharma, a folk singer, was found in the fields of Baniyani village in Rohtak district, which happens to be Khattar's village. Sharma had been missing for three days before her body was found.

Earlier, the chief minister had drawn flak for blaming sexual violence on how women dressed. The display of such a regressive mindset by the highest political functionary in the state sends a wrong signal to the administration and only emboldens criminal elements.

However, there are several questions that stare us in the face today – how do we collectively as a civil society articulate this socio-cultural degeneration? Why are women and minor girls being made victims of such brutality?

Some of answers pertaining to the dehumanisation of youth can be attributed to the decadent values being unleashed by neo-liberal market forces that thrive on pushing blind consumerism on the one hand, and the near-total absence of both formal and informal spaces of engagement with the youth, be it family, community or educational institutions. Deepening agrarian crisis and alarming joblessness is adding its bit to create a whole generation of disgruntled youth, highly prone to drug addiction and resorting to different kinds of crimes. The skewed sex-ratio in Haryana makes matters worse. Already groomed in a regressive cultural milieu of patriarchy and male chauvinism, this youth is easily attracted to warped and violent instant sexual gratification. Charged with the constant need to prove their masculinity, high on immunity from previously committed incidents of abuse, along with the mindset of seeing women as mere commodities at men's disposal, they seek the most vulnerable targets, who are then killed in the most gruesome ways.

While Dalit women happen to be the easier targets, women from other communities are also among the victims of growing sexual violence. And, when women as a whole are unsafe, how can the scourge of senseless violence inflicting society not touch ordinary citizens?

We have reached a stage when neither the police nor the law is proving to be a deterrent. The only thing that has checked the violence to some extent is the unflinching courage with which women are still fighting and asserting their independent identities, be it the case of those raped by Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh, or that of Varnika Kundu or Ruchika Girhotra. Theirs is really the kind of resilient struggle that the entire society needs to be a part of.

A piecemeal approach and rhetoric, like death sentence for rapists of minor girls, can prove to be counter-productive rather than a deterrent. What is needed is a broad-based initiative and a sustained movement to counter this violence in society.

The women of Haryana have been bringing laurels to the country in sports and other various fields. The least that we owe to the women in the state is zero tolerance towards violence.

While the law enforcing agencies will have to be made accountable and the Haryana government must be made answerable, what Haryana needs is a social movement to create a society based on equality and social justice. Therefore, all social movements, including those of Dalits, women organisations, civil society groups and individuals must come together and fight for dignity of women and the basic rights of all citizens.

Jagmati Sangwan is a women movement activist based in Haryana.

Bulandshahar Violence

A mob rampaged through a Bulandshahar neighbourhood on December 3 against alleged cow slaughter, during which a police officer, Subodh Kumar Singh and a youth were killed. Police carried out multiple raids through the intervening night of December 3 and 4. As many as six police teams raided 22 places in the city but were unable to locate Singh's firearm and mobile phone.

A senior official, who is part of the probe, said that the circumstances which led to the violence suggest that the conspiracy was hatched earlier. *"The cow's skin, meat was kept in a way as it's been hanging for showcase. Few hours before the incident, no one saw it and suddenly it appeared. It seems that someone purposely put it out to create such situation,"* said a local. Rajkumar Pradhan, on whose land the cow-carcasses were found said he did not want violence but in no time crowds collected and took away the carcasses in a tempo. Premjeet, the owner of the adjacent land said Yogesh, a Bajrang Dal activist, was there in the mob, taking a lead role.

The police had registered a case but several hundred people came and attacked the police station and then went on a rampage. The violence appears to be a pre-planned conspiracy. There was a peaceful Muslim Samagam being conducted some distance away, which was attended by around two lakh Muslims. The intention was obviously to create a major incident. The police officer, Subodh Kumar Singh, who was attacked with rods and then shot in the head, was the investigating officer in the Akhlaq lynching case that rocked the nation in the early days of the Modi government. A mob had barged into the house of Mohammad Akhlaq in Dadri, on September 28, 2015, dragged him and his son out of the house and beat him to death while critically injuring his son. Akhlaq was accused of killing a calf and keeping the meat in his fridge. The local BJP leaders of Bulandshahar had earlier written to their Member of Parliament, Bhole Singh, asking for the transfer of Subodh Kumar, alleging that he was hindering the Hindus from performing their religious activities. A case against the lynched officer was systematically created. The main accused, Yogesh, who is allegedly affiliated to Bajrang Dal in Bulandshahar, was absconding for several days, though he was very active on social media after the violence, asserting his innocence and spreading communal venom. The police has named 27 people in an FIR registered following the violence, while cases have been lodged against 50 unidentified people. Of the 27 named accused at least four are allegedly affiliated to right-wing organizations. There are names of 11 and 12 year boys in the FIR, who were away from the village during the violence. One of the accused, Sharafat, does not live in the village for last 10 years, say some locals.

On the day of the incident Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was attending an entertainment programme in a nearby district. He continued with his election meetings as well. In a press release issued after finally meeting with concerned officials he ordered an enquiry into the cow-slaughter and ordered that strict action be taken in this matter. The slain police officer was not even mentioned in the press release.

At a later stage the Chief Minister said that the inspector's murder was just an accident.

A Bajrang Dal leader from Bulandshahr, Balraj Dunger, while talking on TV unabashedly and unapologetically defended the cow vigilantes resorting to violence.

Abhishek, son of the deceased policeman, said in a TV interview: *"My father wanted me to be a good citizen who doesn't incite violence in society in the name of religion. Today my father lost his life in this Hindu-Muslim dispute, tomorrow whose father will lose his life?"*

The young law-student has urged the youth of the country to decry and overcome the communal hatred and mob-lynching culture that is being spread in the country.

1/3 of World's Stunted Kids are from India



India is among the countries accounting for the highest burden of stunted, wasted and overweight children, the new Global Nutrition Report, 2018 reflecting the growing concern around child nutrition in the country. With 46.6 million stunted children, India accounted for nearly one-third of the world's 150.8 million children who are stunted, the report shows warning against a major malnutrition crisis. India is followed by Nigeria (13.9 million) and Pakistan (10.7 million). The three countries

together are home to almost half of all stunted children in the world.

This is despite the improvement made by India in reducing stunting since 2005-06. According to the latest National Family Health Survey-4 data, India recorded a 10 percentage point decline in stunting from 48 per cent during 2005-06 to 38.4 per cent in 2015-16. Stunting, or low height for age, is caused by long-term insufficient nutrient-intake and frequent infections.

Underlining the variation in stunting within the country, the report said India is so diverse from state to state, it is important to understand how and why stunting prevalence differs. *"The mapping showed that stunting varies greatly from district to district (12.4 per cent to 65.1 per cent), with 239 of 604 districts having stunting levels above 40 per cent,"* it said.

Apart from stunting, India also accounts for the largest number of wasted children in the world with low weight for height. India recorded 25.5 million children who are wasted, followed by Nigeria (3.4 million) and Indonesia (3.3 million). In fact, this is more significant because unlike stunting, percentage of wasted children has increased in India over the years. According to NFHS-4, percentage of wasted children under five years increased from 19.8 per cent in 2005-06 to 21 per cent in 2015-16. Share of severely wasted children also rose from 6.4 per cent to 7.5 per cent during the same period.

Wasting, usually caused by acute food shortage or disease, is a strong predictor of mortality among children under five years of age.

"Wasting still affects a greater proportion of rural children than urban, though the contrast is far less pronounced," the report said. It added that more boys than girls are stunted and wasted. Of the 141 countries analysed in the report, 88 per cent (124 countries) experience more than one form of malnutrition, the report said.

"The figures call for immediate action. Malnutrition is responsible for more ill-health than any other cause." Corinna Hawkes, co-chair of the report and director of the Centre for Food Policy said.

Though the report acknowledges that significant steps are being taken globally to address malnutrition, the burden remains *"unacceptably high, and progress unacceptably slow."*

Women have a higher burden than men when it comes to certain forms of malnutrition: one third of all women of reproductive age have anaemia and women have a higher prevalence of obesity than men. Millions of women are still underweight.

Women and maternal health is considered crucial to tackle overall malnutrition because the seeds of child malnutrition are often sown in the womb. NFHS-4 data shows Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh are the major three problem states with very low full ante-natal care (ANC) coverage of mothers. Apart from these three, Jharkhand, Meghalaya, Rajasthan and Gujarat were the states with highest incidence of stunting. *(Courtesy: The Times of India)*

CITU Condemns Government Move to Privatise Air India and Airports

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions condemns the desperate bid of the Government of India to privatise Air India piece by piece in favour of the private corporates, foreign and domestic. As reported in the press, the Government has decided to go for strategic sale of 100% stake in Air India's ground handling subsidiary, Air India Air Transport Services Ltd (AIATSL). The government has been pushing through privatization of this profit making subsidiary unit of Air India, which has earned a profit of Rs 334 million in 2016-17 with a revenue generation of Rs 6.2 billion. The government has embarked on privatizing its profit making subsidiary AIATSL after its hell-bent effort to privatise Air India as a whole failed to get any response. Similar moves of privatization in respect of its other profit-making subsidiaries cannot be ruled out in the days to come, since the government of the day is desperate in outright sale of strategic public assets and infrastructures by any means and at any cost, totally unconcerned about its disastrous impact on national interests.

The same desperate move of the BJP government at the centre to transfer public assets and infrastructure to private hands on a platter is also revealed by the government's move to privatise six major Airports of the country at Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Lucknow, Guwahati, Thiruvananthapuram and Mangaluru. All these airports were modernized with huge expenditure of hundreds of crores of rupees from the national exchequer through the Airport Authority of India. And now these modernized airports, all in the state capitals, are being sold out to private corporate, empowering them with unfettered rights and authority also to utilize the huge land assets under these airports for commercial purposes including building hotels, shopping malls etc. It is nothing but a design of loot on the crucial infrastructure but also the exploitation of huge land assets at their disposal for private profit.

CITU denounces such desperate move of the BJP government to sell out public assets and infrastructure on a platter to private entities particularly when it is having couple of months left for its present tenure. CITU asserts that such a desperate bid of all out privatization of everything by the BJP government in a hurry must be resisted and CITU calls upon the working class to unite and fight such anti-national move of sell out and privatization.

CITU is confident the working class will give a befitting reply to such a retrograde move of the government through the massive countrywide general strike on 8-9 January 2019.

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Mary Kom Wins Gold Again!

Mary Kom, 35 years young, won a Gold Medal on November 24 in Delhi in women's world Boxing Championship 2018 Final, beating Ukraine's Hana Okhota.

India's iron lady is one of the top sportswomen and will remain proud mentor to boxing lovers forever. She is a six-time World Amateur Boxing champion, and the only woman boxer to have won a medal in each one of the six world championships.



She became the first Indian woman boxer to get a Gold Medal in the Asian Games in 2014 in Incheon, South Korea. MC Mary Kom won her fifth gold medal in Asian boxing Championship in the summit clash on 8th November 2017 at Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam. She is the first Indian Woman Boxer to win Gold at the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

Since boxing is considered unsuitable for women by many, Mary Kom hid her passion and interest from her family and her family only came to know about her interest through a newspaper when she won the Manipur State Boxing championship in 2000.

Mary Kom started boxing at the international level at the age of 18, which is considered old by several standards. However, she did not lose faith. She proved to the world that age is nothing but a number. Her determination to succeed in the world of boxing won her many medals, including a bronze medal in the 2012 Olympics.

Mary Kom was born in Kangathe, Manipur, to Mangte Tonpa Kom and Mangte Akham Kom, who used to work in jhum (shift cultivation) fields. She completed eight years of education in Moirang and proceeded to Imphal for her ninth and tenth standards. Unfortunately, she could not pass her examinations. So, she quit school and gave her examination from NIOS and graduated from Churachandpur College. Although she was not brilliant academically, she did not give up on life. Not everyone is good at studies; some are good at sports.

From a young age, Mary Kom was interested in athletics, but the success of Dingko Singh, an Indian boxer born in Manipur, in the 1998 Asian Games ignited passion in Mary Kom and propelled her to enhance her boxing skills and become a professional boxer.

The Indian government bestowed her with a number of awards for her contribution to sports, including the Arjuna Award in 2003, Padma Shree in 2006 and Padma Bhushan in 2013. In 2016, Kom was nominated by the President of India as a member of the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of the Indian Parliament. In March 2017, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India, appointed Mary Kom as national observer for boxing.

Today, Mary Kom is happily married and has two sons. Her accomplishments are remarkable and a source of inspiration for women everywhere.

After she won the Gold this time, Mary Kom has written an open letter to her sons, aged 9 and three, about sexual crimes against women in India, and about how she too had been molested. The letter brings out her anguish over reports of molestation by so called eminent Indians that include a Union Minister, prominent film actors, producers and directors and many more. The letter also states her experience of being called a 'chinky' and her reaction to such a slur is that of being a proud Indian. The level of her social consciousness can amply be understood from this letter.

Demands of General Strike

8-9 January 2019

1. Arrest Price rise. Universalise PDS, Ban futures trade in food items
2. Generate decent employment. Lift ban on recruitment
3. Strictly implement all labour laws. Punish the violators
4. Universal social security for all workers
5. Minimum wages of not less than Rs 18,000 per month for all workers including scheme workers
6. Pension not less than Rs.6,000 p.m. for the entire working population
7. Stop disinvestment / sale of Public Sector Units
8. Stop contractorisation in permanent perennial work. Equal pay for contract workers. No fixed term employment in any sector
9. Removal of all ceilings on payment and eligibility of bonus, provident fund; increase gratuity.
10. Compulsory registration of trade unions within a period of 45 days from the date of submitting application. Immediate ratification of ILO Conventions C 87 and C 98
11. Stop anti worker Labour Law Amendments and codification
12. No FDI in Railways, Insurance and Defence

The central trade unions are also raising the demands of the peasantry

- Minimum support price for farmers as per the Swaminathan Commission Recommendation
- Loan waiver for all peasants

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Worker Peasant Struggles WILL Change the Policies



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