

# The Voice of the Working Woman



# Tasks set by CITU General Council

**23 May 2018 – “NDA Sarkar ki Char Saal, Phol Khol- Halla Bol”**

**“4 years of NDA Government, Expose- Protest!”**

Joining State and Lower Level Demonstrations by Jan Ekta Jan Adhikar Andolan

16-22 May - Weeklong campaign among workers exposing the anti worker policies of Modi Government

**30 May, 2018 - CITU Foundation Day: All India Pledge Day**

All members of CITU will take pledge on same pledge declaration throughout the country

**9 August, 2018**

Quit India Day: Joining AIKS' Courting Arrest Programme in Districts

- On demands of workers and peasants

**14-15 August, 2018 Night - Independence Day: Nightlong “Samoochik Jagaran”**

- To imbibe and propagate the vision of freedom struggle

**5 September, 2018 - “Worker Peasant Sangharsh Rally”**

by CITU, AIKS and AIAWU

Not less than 2 lakh workers mobilisation from across the country

## **Time Frame**

**For States in June:** ■ Reporting of Updated Document on Organisation focused on democratic functioning of the unions, consolidation and expansion; ■ Detailed planning for Independent Campaign in districts with concrete target of workers to be approached and mobilized unionwise;

**For States in July:** ■ Campaign at the lowest level – gate meetings, group meetings, family meets, residential area meetings; ■ Discussion on Talking Points – Cultural Forms, Leaflets, booklets, banners, posters etc; ■ Reach upto remotest village using scheme workers, construction workers, panchayat workers etc;

**In August All India and Regional Jathas:** ■ Jathas to be led by Central leadership / all India office bearers; ■ Participated by State leaders; ■ State Sub-Jathas to be planned to cover all major district headquarters and major industrial clusters / areas; ■ Wherever possible, district sub-jathas to cover all blocks.

*The Voice  
of the  
Working Woman*

*Monthly Journal of the AICCW(CITU)*

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# New Low in Democracy

The Karnataka assembly elections have once again brought to the fore how the rules of Parliamentary democracy are interpreted and bent to suit those in power. They have also shown how the major and burning issues of the workers and other common people, which should actually have been the focal point of the campaign, are totally sidelined in the entire process.

The campaign touched new lows with the Prime Minister himself, totally oblivious of the high office he holds, stooped to using threats, lies and abusive language against his opponents. Given the four years' track record of his government, it was natural that he wanted to avoid any discourse on his past promises. Instead the BJP campaign focussed on communal polarisation.

None of the political parties in the fray, neither the Congress nor the BJP got majority in the elections. Though the BJP has emerged as the single largest party it fell far short of a majority. By drastically reducing the number of seats for Congress, the people of Karnataka have clearly expressed their discontent against the Congress. But, at the same time they were not enamoured by Modi and his policies to give his party, the BJP, a clear majority.

Congress promptly decided to support Kumaraswamy of the JD (S) as chief minister. The two parties together, having a majority with 115 MLAs, staked claim to form the government. BJP leader Yeddyurappa also staked claim though it was clear that he was not in a position to muster the necessary numbers through constitutional means.

But the Governor, an RSS man, disregarded Constitutional norms and rules and invited Yeddyurappa to form the government. He was sworn in as chief minister and given 15 days' time to prove his majority, adequate to resort to 'Horse trading' by offering bribes and positions. The Bellary mining mafia which was active in using its money and clout during the election campaign was reportedly at BJP's service to manufacture majority. As per reports in the media, the Congress and JD (S) had to huddle their MLAs into groups, shift them from one place to another. The media was full of reports of one party trying to protect their MLAs from 'poaching'; other party was trying to 'poach'.

Despite all its efforts, Yeddyurappa was not able to muster majority in the time given by the Supreme Court. He had to resign two days after being sworn in as chief minister.

This is not the first time that the governors are being utilised as political representatives of the ruling parties at the centre. The Congress did the same earlier. This is also not the first time that the ruling class parties thought it necessary to protect the 'elected representatives' of their own parties from getting tempted by allurements offered by their opponents. This sordid practice has become so common that it is being treated as natural!

The only way to come out of this dirty state of affairs and ensure people's burning issues constitute the focus of discourse during elections is to develop powerful struggles that no political party can ignore them. It is by uniting all sections of toiling people and intensifying united struggles against the neoliberal policies being pursued by the BJP government alone, that the BJP government and its communal agenda be defeated.

The massive 'Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh rally' on 5<sup>th</sup> September this year and the campaign before that are intended for strengthening such unity of the toiling people and forging strong struggles.

# Modi's 'Nationalism' Sale of Country's Assets

Savera

One of the biggest swindles carried out by the Narendra Modi government is that it proudly claims to be 'nationalist' and 'patriotic' but simultaneously it has set a record for sale of national public assets to private tycoons. According to the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) under the finance ministry, the Modi government has sold off a staggering Rs.1.96 lakh crore worth of public sector assets till end of March 2018.

But this is not all. The Modi government is so intoxicated with power that it is trying to sell off mineral resources, land, rivers and lakes, forests and even schools, health centres and hospitals, to private companies. From defence production to oil production, from medicines to school education – everything may become privately owned if this government continues. Such is its commitment to helping the private corporate class that even historical monuments are being handed over to companies for so called 'maintenance'!

Never before has any country seen so much talk of 'nationalism' and 'Motherland' accompanied by shameless sale of the same motherland to profiteers, both domestic and foreign. And this drive is accompanied by touting India's young and cheap labour as another commodity that is so freely available for the same profit hungry corporates. Modi and his ministers have been touring the world trying to convince global capitalists that cheap Indian labour will boost their profits, so as to entice them to come and 'Make in India'.

## Sale of Public Sector

The preceding Congress-led UPA govt. had in its ten years of rule sold off some Rs.1.08 lakh crore worth of public sector assets. Modi has beaten them in just four years.

How Public Assets Were Sold Over the Years		
Period	Party in Central Govt.	Disinvestment (Rs. Crore)
1991-1996	Congress	9,961.83
1996-1999	UF	6,660.78
1999-2004	BJP+	28,284.48
2004-2009	Congress+	8,515.94
2009-2014	Congress+	99,367.46
<b>2014-2018</b>	<b>BJP+</b>	<b>1,96,367.80</b>

Source: DIPAM, GOI quoted by JAF, Bengaluru

Central public sector enterprises have gross assets worth over Rs.2 lakh crore, employ over 12.3 lakh workers and had a total declared dividend of over Rs.7095 crore, according to the latest available CPSE Survey for 2015-16, published by the govt.

Besides these enterprises, the government is also selling off shares of public sector banks and insurance companies which together employ close to 15 lakh employees. Such dilution will not only allow foreign companies to grab shares of highly profitable government companies but also lead to job losses. This is in addition to permission to private (including foreign) banks and insurance companies to operate in the country, that was given earlier under the UPA regime.

Selling off public sector shares (or outright sale) has various implications for the people of the country. It means that private companies start sucking out profits through the functioning of the industrial units they

acquire. As long as they were with the government, these units would be contributing to the country's good through their earnings. Now all of that will go into the pockets of individual industrialists. But there is more. The public sector was also set up in key strategic sectors because the country's sovereignty needed to be protected. For example, in defence production, can you allow private companies like Reliance to take over, in collaboration with foreign companies? Will this not endanger the country's independence and self-reliance?

Then there is the important question of employment and other public policy needs. The public sector not only gives employment to a large number of people but also provides much better wages, social security and other benefits than the private sector. It also follows the Constitutional mandate of reservation for SC/ST. All of this goes out of the window once the unit is privatised.

There is no real economic or management related reason for disinvestment of public sector. So why is Modi bent upon pushing it? The answer is two-fold. One, the govt. gets a whole lot of money with which it pads up its treasury. There is a desperation today because the government has been unable to create healthy industrial growth, or jobs, agriculture is in crisis and foolish policies like the demonetisation and GST have further ruined the economy. The Modi government thinks that it can tide over this all round crisis by generating revenue through sale of the public sector.

Secondly, the Modi government is brazenly committed to the well being and prosperity of the big industrialist class – whether domestic or foreign. In fact it is working solely to enrich this class and protect its interests. 'Nationalism' and 'patriotism' are just for the consumption of common people, so that they forget about the distress caused by the government.

It is not just the public sector enterprises that are being sold off to private hands. A quick look around the country will show that practically everything that the government owns – or should be running - is up for sale. From water to mineral resources, from roads and bridges to ports and docks, from schools and colleges to hospitals and dispensaries, everything that was always a government function is now available for the private sector.

### **Natural Resources**

The Modi government has pushed ahead with privatising the exploitation of several natural resources of the country ranging from ferrous and non-ferrous minerals, coal, oil and gas, to forests, water bodies and of course power production including hydro-power. Huge profit making public sector bodies like Coal India and National Hydro-Power Corporation (NHPC) are on the block for privatisation. This means that coal mines will now be owned and exploited by greedy private companies, which take away profits, convert regular jobs to casual and contractual jobs, violate environmental laws and indiscriminately displace people in order to expand their profits. Coal workers have gone on strike protesting the move.

Oil and gas fields have already been sold off to big corporates like Reliance by the earlier regime and the Modi government continues to push this anti-national policy further. Last year it was proposed that 18% of stake in ONGC will be sold off, potentially getting the government Rs.41,000 crore.

Not satisfied with this, the new forest policy proposes to 'develop' forest lands through a public-private partnership (PPP) model which essentially means letting private contractors and real estate developers grab forest land. The destruction of forests would follow. There is even a proposal to lease out rivers and lakes/ponds to private companies so that they can 'maintain' and 'develop' them!

### **Schools and Hospitals**

Take the example of elementary schools (class 1 to 8). Between 2010-11 and 2015-16, the number of students in these classes studying in government schools went down by about 10% while those studying in private schools shot up by 26%! This happened because government schools are being starved of funds, leading to a decline in quality of education but private schools are given free rein, with relaxed conditions for opening such teaching shops. Fees in such private schools are sky high yet parents are forced to send their children to these schools willy-nilly because they want them to get a better education.

Hospitals and health centres too have gone down a similar path with government hospitals outsourcing services like tests etc. to private parties or forcing patients to buy expensive medicines from private establishments. While the government system from primary health centres to tertiary hospitals is suffering due to lack of equipment, infrastructure and personnel (including doctors), more and more private hospitals are opening and charging exorbitant fees. Just as in schools and colleges, people are forced to go to private hospitals because they want the best services and government centres often cannot provide them because of lack of funds.

The Modi government has in fact gone a step further and declared that it will be forcing an insurance based healthcare system on the country. Giving up its own responsibility of providing free healthcare to people, this model will mean that people will pay a premium to private insurance companies and the government will also pay a hefty premium on its part to the same companies. The government paying means in effect people paying because the government will raise resources from the people. So, who will benefit from this crazy scheme? The private companies, with crores of rupees flowing into their coffers! This is another way of privatising what was essentially a duty of the government – to provide healthcare facilities to all.

### **Railways to Red Fort**

The cunning brains that are at work advising the Modi Sarkar have devised bizarre ways of generating profits for private companies. For instance 23 major railway stations are set to be privatised. Private companies will manage these stations and in return they will get full rights to use the space for their promotion, rent out shops and other services, etc. The government has already approved Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in building railway infrastructure.

Another example of this madness is the decision to handover the management of monuments like the Red Fort and Taj Mahal to private companies for maintenance and management. Delhi's famous Red Fort has already been handed over to the Dalmia business group. Various historians and archaeologists have objected saying the company has no previous experience or expertise in preserving historical monuments. The list of this kind of insane privatisation is endless in the Modi regime.

### **Even cash is privatised**

The Modi government has even tried to privatise one of the key functions of any government – making available cash currency for the people. Through the disastrous demonetisation of November 2016 when 86% of the circulating cash currency was suddenly declared illegal, the Modi government tried to push Indians to start using cashless methods like PayTM or net banking or other e-payment systems. In essence, this meant that Indians will have to pay a small amount of commission to the service providers (like PayTM) for every transaction they did through them. For each user the charges are not too much but all added up, it runs into crores of rupees. It has been reported that PayTM recorded a 700% rise in users immediately after demonetisation. In normal circumstances, the government bears the cost of printing currency and distributing it through banks to the people. There is no cost for the people. Cashless systems mean each user is paying the service provider. This profit for the e-payment companies and banks was one of the key reasons behind Modi's demonetisation. It should be noted, however, that after about one and a half years, cash is back as Indians feel more comfortable using cash. The Modi government is still trying to push people into cashless transactions, as was evident from the recent artificially created cash shortage.

### **Most anti-national government**

The brief description of the Modi government's policy of all embracing sale of national assets and resources to private corporate bodies and adopting policies that help corporates – both domestic and foreign - boost their bottomlines at the cost of common Indians. It clearly shows that this government is barefacedly acting against the interests of the country and its people. This stands in marked contrast to the BJP-RSS claim that they are the sole upholders of patriotism and nationalism. This clearly exposes that all the talk of '*Vande Mataram*' and dubbing of all opponents as anti-national is pure hogwash.

# Karl Marx: Philosopher who Changed the World

Karl Marx was born 200 years ago, on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1818. He died 135 years ago, on 14<sup>th</sup> March 1883. The bicentenary of the birth of Karl Marx is being observed across the world. International and national conferences, seminars and symposiums are being organised to discuss his writings, methods of analysis and his thoughts. These are being held not only in Germany and Europe, the country where he was born and the continent where he lived and worked, but in more than a hundred countries all over the world.



It is natural that the working class and their organisations committed to Marx's thoughts have been observing the bicentenary of his birth by organising discussions, study circles and classes to enrich their understanding of his teachings, to learn how to apply his methods of analysis to the contemporary phase of capitalist society with a view to change it. But those who are avowedly opposed to his ideology, the representatives of the capitalist class, are also active in writing articles and participating in debates to malign his works and confuse the working class and the people through falsification and misrepresentation.

It is indeed remarkable that such worldwide attention is being paid today from all over the world and from different angles and sections to a person and his ideas which have been declared dead and irrelevant so many times, particularly after the set back to socialism.

But the fact is that Marx's ideas on evolution of society, political economy etc, which are based on scientific analysis, can never become outdated. International finance led neoliberal globalisation has proved yet again, the prediction of Marx to be correct. The 'Communist Manifesto' that Marx wrote 170 years ago, when he was just 30, in collaboration with his close friend and comrade in arms, Frederick Engels, talks about "*The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe*". Capital, they wrote, "*must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere*" in its relentless search for markets, cheap labour and natural resources. This is what we see today.

The recurring crises of the capitalist system, each resulting in increased attacks on the living conditions and rights of the working class, are leading to growing discontent. This discontent is increasingly being manifested not only against neoliberalism but against the capitalist system itself. More and more workers, particularly the young are searching for alternatives. They are seeking this alternative in the works of Marx. Because they know that it is by further developing his analysis and applying it to the concrete conditions in Russia that the working class, through the Great October Revolution, under the leadership of Lenin was able to overthrow the capitalist system and establish socialism one hundred years ago, in 1917. The centenary of the Great October Revolution, an event that changed the course of the world, was observed across the globe last year.

That is the reason for the ire of the capitalist class and their pen pushers. They are no longer in a position to ignore Marx, as they did 150 years ago, when his magnum opus 'Das Kapital' which analysed the working of the capitalist system and explained its inherent exploitative character, was first published. For Marx, theory was not just for the sake of theory. Analysing a society and interpreting it was not merely an intellectual exercise. He famously proclaimed "*The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in*

*various ways; the point is to change it*". True to this belief, he actively participated in organising the workers, learning from them and teaching them, trying to put theory into practice. Along with Engels, he founded and actively took part in the activities of the International Workingmen's Association, the predecessor of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU).

With his family background, his education and qualifications, Marx could have become a lawyer or a public servant or been employed in any such profession with a decent income that ensures a comfortable life. But he chose otherwise. As a seventeen year old student, Marx wrote an essay on choosing a profession. In this essay, he wrote *'the chief guide which must direct us in the choice of a profession is the welfare of mankind and our own perfection'*. *'If we have chosen the position in life in which we can most of all work for mankind, no burden can bow us down, because they are sacrifices for the benefit of all; then we shall experience no petty, limited, selfish joy, but our happiness will belong to millions, our deeds will live on quietly but perpetually at work...'*

It is this commitment that guided his entire life. He spent almost all his life studying whatever subjects he considered necessary to evolve a scientific way to help people to come out of poverty and miserable conditions under the capitalist system that was not yet fully developed at that time. In addition to various branches of law he studied in depth politics, economics, history, mathematics and several other subjects. Whenever he came to know that a book on any relevant subject was available in a foreign language he embarked upon learning that language to be able to study that book. Never for a moment did he waver from his aim despite facing innumerable difficulties. He spent most of his life in poverty. Four of his children died in infancy or at a very young age because he could not afford good food and effective treatment for them. Jenny, his wife as well as his intellectual companion had to mortgage whatever little they had including clothes and furniture to meet their day to day expenses.

It is through such a commitment to serve society, through such sacrifices that Marx provided the working class with the ideological and theoretical weapon to fight exploitation, to change society, to establish an exploitation free society where human beings can enjoy the fruits of their labour, the scientific and technical advances achieved through their labour; a society where all humans can fully develop their creative and cultural talents. His sacrifices were for the benefit of the toiling people; his deeds are perpetually at work, as he visualised as a young boy.

On the bicentenary year of the birth of that great human being Karl Marx, let us pledge to understand, further develop and utilise the ideological weapon handed over by him, to emancipate society from all exploitation.

## **Karl and Jenny Marx**

Behind what Marx has done for the emancipation of the exploited lies a history of endless suffering at a personal level. While celebrating 200 years of his birth, let us look at this.

Karl Marx married Johanna Bertha Julie Jenny von Westphalen in Germany in 1843, and after a few months of their marriage, the couple moved to Paris in September 1844.

Marx stayed in Paris for over a year during which he wrote for the German newspaper *'Vowarts'* that was published in Paris and had connections with radical socialists of the Christian communist group *'The League of the Just'*. The radical writings and reviews of the newspaper garnered a lot of criticism and opposition. The Prussian king requested the French government to shut down *'Vowarts'*. Poverty then began to creep in, as Karl was unable to hold a job and there was no fixed income. Marx was expelled from France.

Marx moved to Brussels, Belgium where his family joined him. He was permitted to stay in Brussels on



the condition that he would avoid speaking on current political issues. However he maintained his association with the radical thinkers.

From 1845 to 1848 Marx wrote many books, including the Communist Manifesto. During this time, a revolution began to erupt in France, and Europe was engulfed by protests, rebellion and demonstrations. The eye of suspicion fell on Marx and he was ordered to leave Belgium within 24 hours. He found his next home in Cologne, Germany.

As time passed and Marx's communist thoughts were published, it created a difficult situation for him and he was ordered to leave the country in 1849. He then moved back to Paris, from where he was soon expelled, as he was considered a political threat.

His wife Jenny was expecting for the fourth time, but Marx had no safe place to go. They then sought refuge in London. Poverty crept into their household and during these trying times, Jenny gave birth to their fourth child. With the bare minimum family income, supporting a family of six became difficult and Jenny's health began to deteriorate. Karl's daughters also suffered from illness. To make ends meet, Jenny had to resort to selling the family's valuables and furniture. The constant threat from moneylenders and landlords left the family poverty stricken.



The Marx family rented two small rooms and lived in the utmost poverty and filth, to the extent that Karl would pawn his clothes to collect money for tobacco. This poverty led to the death of his son who succumbed to illness in 1850, just a year after he was born. It was only the invaluable help and support from Engels, that kept their family going.

Marx continued to with his writing, despite the fact that grief and troubles never left their side. Sorrow struck again when their year old daughter died in 1852. The financial crisis was so grave that Jenny could not even afford a coffin for the little girl and had to borrow money for one.

Karl loved spending time with his family and especially his daughters. In the 1860's, while playing the Victorian parlor game, '*Confessions*', when asked once, what his idea of happiness was, he replied, "**To Fight,**" and then, when asked about his idea of Misery, he replied, "**Submission.**".

Illness came knocking again in 1861, when Jenny was struck with small pox. While she was still recovering, Karl found himself ailing, and in the 1863, Karl suffered another loss when his mother expired.

Despite all this in 1866 Marx began work on the final version of the first volume of '*Das Kapital*'. By 1872, the authorities suspected Marx as "**the Chief of the Red International**" and police kept a watch on him. Marx applied for British citizenship, but it was denied. He faced rejection, tragedy and illness from all sides but he never deviated from his path and engrossed himself in completing the second and third volumes of *Das Kapital*.

His health deteriorated and he suffered from depression and insomnia. His wife got cancer and passed away in 1881. It did not stop here. In 1883, Karl's eldest daughter Jenny also died of cancer. This was the final blow. He had endured tragedy after tragedy and finally he died a stateless person, at the age of 64, in London.  
( *Input from the Internet*)

## Education Programme for Scheme Workers in Haryana

In Haryana ASHA workers, Midday Meal workers and Anganwadi workers have been on the march and agitating continuously for their demands. Under the CITU leadership they intensified their movement and went on strike during the period from January to March 2018. The state government was forced to arrive at settlements with the workers and agree to an increase in their emoluments as well as to some other demands.

A large number of activists emerged during the course of these movements and struggles and many were identified from amongst them for further education and training. A syllabus was prepared for this purpose, which included the following:

1. The Development of Nature
2. The Development of Society
3. The Situation of Women: Historical perspective
4. The Aims and Perspective of CITU and Democratic Functioning
5. The Situation and our Tasks in the Schemes and our Union.

The first three subjects were dealt with on the first day by 3 speakers. The first subject was an audio visual presentation in which the members of the Gyan Vigyan science movement had helped and it was received very well by the participants . In the evening on the first day the Bollywood film Piku was screened and it was very successful in linking up these issues.



On the second day the last two subjects were dealt with.

This syllabus was formulated for the state level schools, with the districts divided into three zones for these. 160 ASHA workers participated in the 3 zones and around 100 Anganwadi workers participated in 2 zones. There was a very positive response from the participants in these schools.

The sessions on the Development of Nature were dealt with by Savita, Haryana state secretary of the Janwadi Mahila Samiti, and the Search **nideshak** Shishpal. The presentations on the Development of Society and Status of Women were made by Ranjana Nirula, CITU Working Committee member, Savita, Shubha and Haryana CITU state Secretariat member Surekha. Jai Bhagwan , CITU state General Secretary spoke on the Aims and Perspective of CITU. Surekha took the sessions on Organizing ASHA Workers while the sessions on the Anganwadi organization were taken by Usha Rani and AR Sindhu, the national President and General Secretary of the Anganwadi Federation.

Before this state level schooling the ASHA workers had already attended district level classes on the Aims of CITU, Democratic Functioning and Union Functioning. These classes were held in 18 districts and over 800 activists attended them.

*(Report from Jai Bhagwan)*

## Workers Oppose Mid-Day Meal Scheme Privatisation in Andhra Pradesh

When the state government proposed that from June 2018 onwards the Midday Meal Scheme will be handed over to private contractors, the Mid-Day meal workers opposed this and a struggle was launched on the issue by the **A.P. Madhyana Bhojana Padhakam Workers Union (CITU)**.

Rallies, dharnas and unique forms of protest and demonstrations were organized in the districts. In Vishakapatnam, a rally was taken out from Maddilapalem to M.V.P.Colony Sector IV to the residence of Minister for Human Resource Development Ganta Srinivasa Rao, and the participants sat on dharna there.



Slogans were raised against the state government policies and also against the Chief Minister Mr. Chandra Babu Naidu as the government is giving only meagre wages to the midday meal workers and is also making them work like bonded labour. To add insult to injury the government now wants to privatize the scheme itself.

A stern warning was issued that if the privatization goes ahead the TDP government will have to pay a heavy price for this. The state General Secretary of the union K.Swaroop Rani, addressing the gathering, spoke at the dharna about how during the election campaign Shri Chandrababu Naidu promised to give a job for every household and now the government is trying to retrench the workers, through privatization of the Midday Meal Scheme.

The government has been making the midday meal workers work in the most difficult conditions and paying them only a pitiful Rs.1000 per month, and that too for only 10 months in the year.

This, when the midday meal workers put in at least 5 to 6 hours of work a day, and have no social security benefits of any kind despite often suffering burns etc. while cooking the meals.



The workers are demanding a pay hike of Rs. 5000. However, due to the unavailability of the minister Mr.Ganta Srinivasa Rao, the workers were not able to get any assurance on this issue on the day of the rally and dharna. Later, the Minister spoke on the telephone with K. Swaroopa Rani and said that he would try to resolve the matter.

## Strike by ASHA,USHA Workers, Facilitators in Madhya Pradesh



In Madhya Pradesh, thousands of ASHA,USHA Workers and Facilitators went on strike from 7 to 11 May, 2018 under the banner of CITU, to press for their demands for minimum wages and an increase in their incentives. During the strike they organised demonstrations in front of the District Head Quarters and Block Development offices. There they handed over their memoranda to the authorities. They also gave memoranda to the Ministers and local MLAs.

On the last day of the strike, huge rallies were organised by the striking workers in the districts of Sihor, Raisen, Indore, Nimoch, Mandasaur, Ratlam, Rewa, Jabalpur, Narsingpur, Gwalior, Sheopur, Shivpuri, Guna, Ashoknagar, Singroli, Siwani and many other districts where they again handed over their memorandum of demand for a living wage to the Chief Minister through the Collectors and Directors of Health. The union has resolved that it will continue and intensify the struggle for the demands, until these are accepted.



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# Is Death Penalty the Right Solution?

Dr Manjeet Rathee

THE huge public outcry and resentment at the increasing incidents of rapes and sexual offences against women today can well be understood and appreciated. In a country where a woman is reportedly raped every 15 minutes (this, despite many rape cases still going unreported), and where a woman is a victim of crime every two minutes, such outrage is a natural reaction, particularly when law makers and law protectors become accomplice to such heinous acts, as demonstrated in Kathua and Unnao rape cases.

This alarming situation raises many questions about the status and condition of women in India which boasts of modernity, socio-economic growth and development. More than anything else, this growing 'culture' of rape within the larger ambit of violence against women, is a reflection of growing concentration of power in the hands of patriarchal and retrogressive sections of society and increasing vulnerability of women, especially belonging to poor and marginalised sections.

Any kind of communal and fundamentalist outlet, as also the growing hate crimes in recent years, tends to target women's body and dignity as a part of taking revenge on a particular caste or community. Further, in any repressive and regressive setup, women or girls exercising their own choice in matters related to mobility, dressing up, career/employment or most importantly on the issue of marriage, are seen as great threat to the 'given' social norms and 'morality' and become an easy provocation for sexual assault.

Can any hasty and impractical amendment in the form of the present ordinance of the cabinet introducing death penalty for rape of children below 12 years, address such deep rooted inequalities, socio-cultural caste and gender prejudices and patriarchal mindset?

The history and experience of death penalty in various countries proves that death penalty has failed to act as a deterrent for obvious reasons related to very lengthy trials and appeal processes, uncertainty or lack of adequate and proper evidences, many of which in case of sexual offences tend to be destroyed, complex jury selection and shoddy police investigations. The amendments in the Indian Penal Code made after the Nirbhaya case, leading to the provision of very harsh punishments, did not, in any way, lead to decrease in the crimes against women in our country. In fact there has been an increase in rape cases after that and the nature of violence has been far more heinous, where little girls have been most brutally raped and many of them, even been mercilessly killed after rape. A report by National Research Council in 2012, after a careful examination of various studies related to death penalty and deterrence, came to the conclusion that death penalty does not, in any credible way, impact crime.

Let us not forget that the conviction rate for rape has been as low as 24 per cent (2014) and abysmally low in case of rape of children, as is shown by statistics of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). With the introduction of POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) Act, 2012 till the year 2014, the number of crimes related to child sexual abuse, according to the Bureau, increased from 38,172 to 89,423. However, conviction rates were as low as 2.4 per cent. This is because of glaring defects in the manner in which the crimes are investigated and the trial is conducted. Important evidence is not collected and the protocols which are supposed to be followed by the police during investigation are often bypassed.

A study by the National Law School of India University (NLSIU) on special courts established under POCSO reveals that there is not much change in the behaviour of police, doctors, lawyers

since the law has been passed, meaning thereby that the system dealing with criminal justice continues to remain insensitive. The same report also confirms the extremely low level of conviction under POCSO, where within a period of six months last year, only one in six cases resulted in conviction. If that is the situation in the special courts set up for the purpose of delivering speedy justice to children, one can well imagine the fate of such cases in ordinary courts.

There is no denying the fact that the rape of a child constitutes the most abhorrent and outrageous of crimes, and it deserves very serious punishment, yet **it is the certainty of justice to critical masses that counts more than the severity of punishments to a selective few.** With a close look at the terrible overburdening of court systems in India, and majority of sexual offence cases pending for years together due to dismal shortage of appropriate infrastructure and lack of trained manpower, with almost no police station that can properly store and transport various biological samples and evidences, these selective few too, are more liable to go scot free. In the absence of any kind of punishment, NCRB data shows high figures of repeat sexual offenders. Under the given circumstances, the death penalty, rather than proving a deterrent to perpetrators of violence against women, is on the contrary, more likely to act as a deterrent on the judges, who, due to the fear of unreliable testimony, could be extremely hesitant and even guilty to deliver such a verdict. There is also the additional risk of death sentences being given in an arbitrary manner and studies have shown that it is often the marginalised and poor sections of society who are more likely to be penalised with death sentence. The rich and the powerful often manage to escape due to their political influences or alliances.

There is also a strong cultural element associated with child sexual abuse in India. With the majority of those implicated in the crime being either family members directly related by blood or friends and neighbours or in some way known to the family, there is a strong element of hesitancy/ conflict to reveal their identity out of fear, intimidation or various socio-cultural pressures. Families might further be discouraged to report if the death penalty is going to be awarded. All kinds of pressures on the victim, concerned family, as well as the witnesses, continue to mount once the case is registered to compel them to withdraw the case or to compromise.

According to the above mentioned NLSIU report based on five states of India (Karnataka, Maharashtra, Assam, Andhra Pradesh and New Delhi), as many as 67 per cent of the child rape cases do not reach their final stage of conviction and are withdrawn inbetween due to threat or intimidation from the family of the accused.

Above all, there is every probability that introduction of death penalty might encourage the perpetrators to take away the lives of the victims since sparing her life would increase the possibility of her testimony against him. Since the quantum of punishment for rape and murder is now same, the perpetrator would not like to leave behind any traces of evidence. We, as civilized society, can ill afford to put the lives of rape victims at such a menacing risk. Many lawyers and intellectuals have expressed the same apprehensions.

Hence **it is the strict and proper implementation of existing laws and certainty of punishment for the perpetrator, irrespective of caste, class or community,** that can help in putting some checks on such brutal acts of violence and crime against women, along with a host of other reformative and reparative measures. In aggravated forms of violence, the period of life imprisonment could be increased from 14 years or 20 years to lifetime without remission. Such strict implementation of laws can only be ensured when political patronage of criminals is nipped in the bud and politics is separated from all kinds of anti-social alliances. The acquittal of

the accused after prolonged trials leaves the victim and the family in a state of utter shock and despair and many times even more vulnerable than before to physical and sexual assaults.

In a society beset with huge disparities and hierarchies of caste, class and gender, neither the logic of 'instant' vigilante justice nor that of retributive justice would serve any purpose. Fear and punishment alone can never act as a deterrent in a society where there is such large scale discrimination and acceptance of violence against women and the poor in various forms. What is really needed is to strengthen the systems and due processes of justice that can work in favour of restoring a dignified life to the disadvantaged sections, especially women. Any knee-jerk and populist measure would further dent the already fractured faith of the saner public in delivery of justice and provision of a safe and secure environment. Even the lawyer of the 8 year old victim of Kathua has questioned the validity of the death penalty and expressed fear that it might not work as a deterrent for rapists. She, instead, has stressed upon the need for society and system to be more sensitive to victims.

What is needed is overhauling of the existing criminal justice system. Police and judicial reforms should be initiated without delay so as to enhance the rate of conviction. This fear of conviction and surety of punishment would certainly ruffle some feathers and make the perpetrators of crime uneasy. The whole process of registration of FIRs, conducting of medical examination in the hospitals, manner of questioning of the victims in court, repeated visits of the child to the court, is often too hostile at present and needs sensitive and respectful handling. Justice Verma's recommendations for setting up of one-stop crisis centres in all states need immediate implementation so as to minimise the harassment of the seekers of justice from one place to another. What is absolutely essential is that the victim is treated with respect and her right to life is ensured by all means. It is torture for a child to repeat her statement related to sexual offence again and again for months and years together. It is also crucial to augment various measures of counseling, compensation and rehabilitation of the victim, which requires adequate allocation of funds. Restoration of dignity of the rape survivor through delivery of speedy justice and supportive attitude of the society are central.

Along with the above judicial reforms, long term measures to curb violence against women are also necessary. **It is imperative to address the roots of inequality against women.** It is high time to look critically into the discriminatory upbringing of male and female children and resort to equal gendering right from birth. Youth in particular and society in general, needs to be educated about how to treat women as equal human beings and not to reduce them to 'bodies' 'wombs' and sex objects. Women's access to all kinds of social spheres and spaces, along with their rightful claim and ownership of resources, would enhance their self-image as well as social image. The conditions leading to poverty, unemployment and disillusionment, feminisation of poverty and demeaning portrayal of women in media, which tend to become a fertile ground for crime, also need to be interrogated and reformed.

Let the genuine emotional outlet of the outraged public not be manipulated into providing easy, evasive and untenable solutions to a complex problem.

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# Savarkar's Sanction to Use Rape as Political Weapon

Sangh Parivar's silent support to accused in Kathua case derives from their icon Savarkar's exhortation.

Subodh Varma

The barbarism of the eight Kathua accused who conspired to abduct, rape and murder an eight year old girl, hiding her in a temple for three days, has shocked India. There have been widespread protests across the country and outraged calls for speedy justice. One fact that seems to be getting slowly air-brushed out of the picture is this: the conspiracy to abduct the Bakerwal (a Muslim nomadic tribe) girl was planned and executed by these men with the express purpose of getting rid of the Bakerwals from that neighbourhood.

However you slice and dice it, the fact remains that it was a Hindu fanatic conspiracy against a Muslim community. It was the ultimate expression of the poisonous hatred sown and fostered by the Sangh parivar in the minds of the Hindu community in the Jammu region over the years.

It was because of this connection that RSS/BJP supporters, in the garb of the Hindu Sena, held protests when the accused were arrested, that lawyers prevented the chargesheet being filed in the Sessions Court in Kathua, that a Jammu bandh call was given (though it flopped), and that two BJP ministers attended a rally in support of the accused.

There is a similarity between Kathua to the other case in Unnao, where the victim was not a Muslim but the accused is an elected MLA of the BJP. The similarity lies in this immediate rallying of support to rapists and murderers, attempts to disrupt the due course of law, diversionary tactics and use of political power to shield the guilty.

But it would be doing injustice to Asifa – and the rape victim in Unnao – if this is merely seen as some perverted, power-crazy men acting with impunity, some kind of lunatic fringe gone wild. The ideology of rape as a tool of exercising power over political or other opponents, or as a weapon to advance one's ideology through force has been imbued in the Sangh Parivar by none other than their adulated icon 'Veer' Savarkar. He is referred to every so often by RSS and PM Modi himself went to lay flowers at his portrait that now adorns the Central Hall of Parliament thanks to Atal Bihari Vajpayee who got it installed back in 2003 when he was the prime minister.

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, in one of his books *Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History* clearly explains why raping of Muslim women is justifiable and not to do so when the occasion permits is not virtuous or chivalrous but cowardly. (See Chapter VIII of the online edition made available by Mumbai-based Swatantryaveer Savarkar Rashtriya Smarak)

Savarkar explains at length that Hindus in the past had suffered from a 'suicidal' (para 452) sense of virtuousness and chivalry in showing mercy towards Muslim women by letting them off easily. He gives examples (para 450) of such famous figures as Chhatrapati Shivaji who reportedly let off the daughter in law of Muslim governor of Kalyan, and Peshwa Chimaji Apte who similarly allowed the wife of Portuguese governor of Bassein to leave unscathed.

In passionate tones Savarkar argues that since Muslim oppressors had been punishing Hindu women, the same treatment should be meted out to vanquished Muslim women by Hindu victors. "*Once they are haunted with this dreadful apprehension that the Muslim women too, stand in the same predicament in case the Hindus win, the future Muslim conquerors will never dare to think of such molestation of Hindu women,*" he writes (para 451).

He argues that had Hindus adopted this policy of ravishing Muslim women from earlier times, their condition would have been far better than today:

*"Suppose if from the earliest Muslim invasions of India, the Hindus also, whenever they were victors on the battlefields, had decided to pay the Muslim fair sex in the same coin or punished*

*them in some other ways, i.e., by conversion even with force, and then absorbed them in their fold, then? Then with this horrible apprehension at their heart they would have desisted from their evil designs against any Hindu lady.” (para 455)*

Apart from the erroneous notion which “every Hindu seems to have been made to suck, along with his mother’s milk” (para 429-430) that religious tolerance is a virtue, Savarkar also identifies the “foolish notion” among Hindus that to have “any sort of relations with a Muslim woman meant their own conversion to Islam” (para 453) as the reason for avoiding raping them. He writes that this notion restrained Hindu men from punishing “Muslim feminine class” (para 454).

In case somebody starts feeling sympathetic towards Muslim women, Savarkar takes us on an unsubstantiated ride through all the wrongs that Muslim women have committed which include enticing Hindu girls and sending them to “Muslim centers in masjids and mosques” and generally supporting Muslim men in their violence against Hindus.

This is the kind of stuff RSS and its fronts have been propagating over the years and Veer Savarkar remains a much admired hero among Sangh parivar followers. It has inspired Hindu rioters to commit horrendous atrocities on Muslim women in Gujarat (2002) and Muzaffarnagar (2013), and many others.

So, for the rapists and murderers of Kathua or Unnao, whatever be their psychological compulsions, the ethical and ideological sustenance is drawn from none other than Veer Savarkar. Small wonder that it becomes so difficult for the Sangh Parivar to condemn them or take action. Small wonder that the list of BJP/Sangh members committing crimes against women goes on extending.

*(Courtesy: Newslick)*

## **AIDWA on Conviction of Asaram**

AIDWA welcomes the verdict of the Jodhpur court in the case against Asumal Harpalani, the self-styled godman “Asaram Bapu,” in which he has been convicted and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for life. It is noteworthy that the trial court found him guilty on many counts, including the heinous crime of having raped a minor in his ashram, and awarded the maximum punishment available under the POCSO Act. Two other accused have received sentences of 20 years each.

The verdict comes at the end of a long drawn out fight for justice by the survivor and her family. Over the past five years, since the 16 year old girl filed the case against the self-styled godman in August 2013, she and her family members have been subjected to threats and coercion of every kind. The girl has been forced to live with police protection, fearing for her life and she and her siblings have suffered severe educational and social setbacks. Asaram applied for bail 12 times, but his application was rejected each time. Witnesses in the case have been attacked, and three of them were killed in a cold-blooded attempt to destroy evidence and intimidate the complainant and witnesses. AIDWA lauds the determination and courage displayed by the girl, her family, and their supporters, despite the trauma and suffering that they have undergone.

The AIDWA Uttar Pradesh State Committee was associated with the case from the beginning and has been in regular contact with victim and her family. AIDWA also assisted the Complainant in filing appropriate applications and contesting Asaram’s bail application in the Supreme Court. AIDWA demands that the survivor, her family, and witnesses continue to receive protection, as Asaram supporters are still accusing them of a conspiracy. At the same time, efforts should be taken to ensure to rehabilitate the girl and her family so that they can lead a normal life.

It has appeared in the news that Appeals will be filed by Asaram’s trust against the verdict, as also against the acquittal of two aides. There are also several other cases pending against the godman and his aides. AIDWA demands that, in the interest of justice, the appeals and remaining cases be expedited and Asaram be brought to justice in toto.

“NDA Sarkar ki Char Saal, Pol Khol- Halla Bol”

# “4 years of NDA Government, Expose- Protest!”

**Protest action at State Capitals on 23 May 2018  
Nationwide Campaign 16-22 May 2018**

**“Unite to struggle for pro-people alternative policies, to defend democratic rights  
and secularism”**

The four years' rule of NDA Government has proved that all its promises including “*achhe din*” and “*sab ka vikas*” were wrong and only to aid the ruling classes. Surveys say a handful of rich, precisely 1% of the population has amassed to the tune of 58% of the entire wealth of the country. The Modi rule has intensified the policies of imperialist globalization such as liberalisation and privatization that was initiated by the Congress but voted out by the people in 2014 and thus the common people have been subjected to ruthless exploitation and loss of income and livelihood.

Not to say of the promised 2 crore employments per year, Narendra Modi government did not provide even 2 lakh employment per year. According to the Labour Bureau, the unemployment rate among the graduate youth (18 to 29 years) increased from 28%, which was already high, to 35% between 2014 and 2015. Demonetisation and GST resulted further in a big loss of 90 lakh jobs between October 2016 and October 2017.

Other glaring reneged promises to the peasantry were MSP at 50% above cost of production for all crops as well as comprehensive loan waiver. Peasant suicides still continue on a large scale. PMFBY has been made an instrument of loot, aiding private insurance companies which had amassed Rs 15500 crore out of the 21500 crore collected as premium amount for the year 2015-16 as their profit.

The NDA government too has taken recourse to amending the labour laws in favour of employers. Workers are made to work for more than 8 hours a day, reminding us of the days prior to Chicago movement of 1886. The Contract system has been introduced even in jobs of perennial nature. There is no job security; jobless growth has become the order of the day.

For the first time since independence, NDA has allowed 100% FDI in agriculture, retail trade, industries railway and even in the defence sector. FDI will endanger the very existence of the innumerable petty traders in retail trade. BJP was against allowing FDI while in the opposition, exposing its duplicity. The contract farming policy will facilitate large scale takeover of cultivation by Multi-National agro business companies, thus making farmers mere contract cultivators on their own land.

Prices of essential commodities are skyrocketing and the PDS has been almost dismantled, collapsed with no funds. The NDA did not reverse deregulation of petroleum prices as promised, which resulted in unprecedented price rise despite the drastic fall in international price of crude oil. It is the highest in South Asia. Modi government is looting the people by enhancing excise duty on petroleum since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 from Rs. 9.48/litre to Rs. 19.48/litre and on diesel from Rs. 5.36/litre to Rs. 15.33/ litre.

The high profile promise of eliminating corruption and bringing back black money from abroad has become the joke of the day with results of demonetization and daily exposes of many banking scams. The patronage extended to corporate tycoons like Neerav Modi to loot Rs 11,200 crore of public money from PNB is a glaring example. Lalit Modi and Vijay Mallya are other examples of corporate loot. Rs 11 lakh crore of NPA is due with industrial and corporate giants whereas bad loans of wilful corporate defaulters amounting to more than Rs 1.91 lakh crores were written off during the last 3 financial years under Modi regime. Allowing foreign and domestic corporate funding for political parties institutionalises corruption. Disinvestment of the public sector is continuing on a massive scale. Despite all talk of nationalism, even strategic and key sectors like defence, railways, banks, insurance, BHEL and other govt department services are sought to be handed over to the foreign and domestic corporates. In the name of ‘Make in

India' and 'Ease of Doing Business', corporates -both domestic and foreign- are being invited to exploit natural resources as well as cheap labour. FRDI bill pending in the parliament is going to be a worst attack on the interests of the depositors, banks, insurance etc.

Promoting privatization and commercialization of education and health sectors has made them out of the reach of the common people. Continued distortion of the concept of science and history is the worst one.

The rule of the BJP-RSS combine has been unleashing terror by spreading caste and communal hatred and violence. The democratic institutions and educational institutions are being taken over by RSS elements and there is a systematic assault on democratic space within such institutions and across the society.

In BJP rule, mob lynching by cow vigilantes has crushed more than 40 innocent lives to death. Criminals are scot free. The murders are being committed to suppress the voice of dissent and rationality. The united movement could successfully expose the corporate agenda behind the cattle trade ban, forcing the Government to withdraw and exposing the RSS for communalizing the issue. Cruelty against dalits and adivasis and marginalized are continuing. The Kathua incident is a glaring example of fascistic trait of using rape as a hate crime against minorities. Atrocities against women and children are at an all time high with the BJP leaders and ministers publicly protecting the culprits. Nobody feels secure under Modi rule, even judges are not spared.

The judiciary is also being manipulated to suit the ruling class ideology and safeguard vested interests. The recent judgments on atrocities against SC Act, justice Loya case etc are clear examples. Even the Supreme Court judges are forced to come out in the open to protest such manipulations.

The people of India- having a rich tradition of freedom struggle- time and again have launched powerful democratic movements. BJP led Union Government controlled by fascistic RSS can't silence them. The last four years witnessed innumerable and successful struggles by the toiling people and oppressed sections like two general strikes in 2015 and 2016 in which 18 crore workers participated, three days workers mahapadav, many successful sectoral struggles and strikes including transport, electricity and scheme workers as well the movements of the dalits and tribals, united movement of the peasantry emerged the first time in the recent past which forced the NDA government to go back from its land acquisition ordinance and the splendid Kisan Long March of Maharashtra and massive peasant strikes in Rajasthan.

In this situation all the Left and Democratic mass, class and social organizations, groups and progressive individuals have come under the banner of **Jan Ekta Jan Adhikar Andolan** to fight the neoliberal anti people policies and the communal divisive agenda.

JEJAA, representing more than 100 organisation covering 20 crore members, has decided to reach out to each citizen of the country to expose this communal and anti national agenda of the NDA government through the week long 'Phol Khol- Halla Bol' campaign from 17-22 May, 2018 with the slogan "**Unite to struggle for pro-people alternative policies, to defend democratic rights and secularism**". Lakhs of people will assemble in rallies to 'halla bol' this government on 23 May 2018 in all state capitals. This will not only mark the beginning of the end of NDA government but also the launch of a countrywide peoples movement to end all sorts of exploitation and oppression on the working masses, peasantry and petty traders.

We request all the toiling people to support and join widespread campaigns and protest actions to expose the NDA Government and to advance united struggles.



**Change the anti-people polices  
-or the people shall change the government  
Jan Ekta Jan Adhikar Andolan (JEJAA)**

**(National platform of mass, class, and social organizations, groups and progressive individuals)**

**Jan Ekta**

**Jan Adhikar**

**Jan Pratirodh**

The Voice of the Working Woman

23

June 2018

# Green Berets & 'White Helmets'

B Arjun

A Fresh round of imperialist bloodletting is on the cards in the Middle-East. They caused complete destruction of Fallujah in Iraq, they bombed hospitals in Afghanistan, and virtually flattened Mosul and Raqqa in Iraq and Syria. Trump and Netanyahu, backed by a set of reactionary monarchical Arab regimes, is out to devour one more nation to feed its insatiable imperial appetite. The US-Israeli war drive against Iran has assumed dangerous proportions.

According to the UN's secretary general the Middle East is "in chaos" and the Cold War is "back with a vengeance". The Trump-Netanyahu combo wants to blow up the 2015 Iranian nuclear accord. Under the agreement, Iran accepted to redesign, convert, and reduce its nuclear facilities while agreeing to inspections in return for an end to all economic sanctions. Trump, wants sanctions to be waived only if Iran agrees for greater curtailment of its nuclear ambitions. He wants to curb Iran's access to ballistic missiles. Iran has warned the US that abandoning the nuclear deal would be a "historic mistake." Many European leaders are also against quashing the deal but all suggestions and recommendations to salvage the agreement are falling on deaf ears.

The dirty-duo is indulging in theatrical performances to prove that Iran has violated the terms of the nuclear agreement. The irony is that Israel, that illegally holds nuclear weapons, is talking of Iran's nuclear weapons programme. It is sheer mockery of international norms that Israel, a non-signatory to the NPT, is standing up to accuse a State that is a member of the NPT. But such is the hold of the Jewish lobby in America that Netanyahu and Trump can utter lie after lie with impunity.

According to Asgar Mitha, the "*American nation has morphed into a destructive empire fed by the neocon lies and foreign policies formulated by the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) in 1997 that has included Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, John Bolton and Paul Wolfowitz among the 25 people responsible for the founding principles.*" According to some analysts "*Bolton's bellicosity has catapulted him into the most important foreign policy position in the White House.*" Incidentally, last month, United States, France and the United Kingdom launched 105 cruise missiles at Syria, giving yet another false pretext of chemical weapons attack by President Bashar al-Assad's force.

## The Hybrid War

Washington's protracted war in the Middle East, launched at the end of the Cold War, has shattered regional and global peace. The US has engineered a perfect paradigm for civil war in the region. "*The civil war is intended to provide a wall of security for the state of Israel*" and make profits for the American military industrial complex. On one hand, America supports Shias in Iraq and some Arab states; on the other it encourages Saudi Arabia to form a Sunni coalition. It has added a fresh dimension to its lethal arsenal by spearheading Hybrid War, which basically stands for externally provoked identity conflicts (ethnic, religious, regional, political, etc) within a targeted transit state. The coloured revolutions that CIA launched in various parts of the Middle-East have now transformed to unconventional wars to destabilise country after country.

The US military has perfected the hybrid warfare techniques that they learnt in Afghanistan when they used the Taliban to counter the Soviets. Syria offers a perfect example of how Washington is using Hybrid War to achieve its military objectives. The seven-year-old war for regime change in Syria is being fought by the US and its allies by fomenting instability in its domestic affairs; giving overt and covert support to opposition groups. Spreading disinformation through black propaganda and encouraging criminal activity have been the hallmark of American hybrid wars.



America has also used the covert deployment of their regular troops. Recently *The New York Times* reported that US Special Forces - Green Berets - are clandestinely operating in Yemen, supporting the genocidal war that Saudi Arabia has unleashed on the Yemeni people. For long, America has been denying any direct involvement of its troops in Yemen. However, the latest revelation has shown that not only is it providing Riyadh with weapons, and intelligence inputs but it is also directly fighting the war. The Yemen war which began in 2015 has consumed the lives of thousands of people. The war is a larger part of the geopolitical game and took over the capital, Sanaa. The US has ensured that the crisis has escalated into a multi-sided war, aiding the growth of al-Qaeda and ISIS.

There are more than 2,000 US troops presently deployed inside Syria. However, one of the important elements of Hybrid War is use of unmarked troops. If Green Berets represent the regular US forces, then 'White Helmets' officially known as the Syria Civil Defence is their undercover agents masquerading as a rescue force. The United States has provided over \$33 million to the 'White Helmets' since 2013. According to Max Blumenthal, *'The White Helmets were founded in collaboration with USAID's Office of Transitional Initiatives – the wing that has promoted regime change around the world. USAID supplies the White Helmets through Chemonics, a for-profit contractor based in Washington DC that has become notorious for wasteful aid imbroglios from Haiti to Afghanistan.'*

The White Helmets were nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 2016. Netflix recently released a special 'documentary' movie about the White Helmets. The group was the cover story of *Time*, in October 2016.

The Western aggressors of Syria love the group and celebrate its so-called 'life saving' work. The Russian government, calls the White Helmets "terrorists," and accuses them of staging recent chemical attacks in Syria. Not only Russia but the former Pink Floyd Roger Waters has called the White Helmets as "a fake organisation that exists only to create propaganda for the jihadists and terrorists". The liberal Western media that stands shoulder to shoulder with the war-mongering conservatives has shamelessly called Roger Waters as "conspiracist crank". It is shocking how *The Guardian* newspaper has been supporting the White Helmets and the imperialist war in Syria. The same *Guardian* also reports that Trump and his team "hired an Israeli private intelligence agency to orchestrate a "dirty ops" campaign against key individuals from the Obama administration who helped negotiate the Iran nuclear deal." Now if dirty tricks are so brazenly employed within America to defeat opposition then it is hard to believe that such nefarious activities are not a part of American set-up in war-torn Syria? The liberal Western journalists must ask why the US and UK governments are supplying funds to White Helmets? Why does the West have to interfere in every country? A conflict minus Western interference has become unimaginable in the modern world.

The Western liberals should ask for employment of humanitarian agencies to save Julian Assange's life. A United Nations report has clearly indicated that Assange's detention in the Ecuadorean Embassy in London is illegal. The same UN group has highlighted the illegality of Assange's detention that had earlier influenced the release of Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi and *Washington Post* journalist Jason Rezaian, who was held by Iran for 18 months. Yet, the WikiLeaks founder continues to remain confined within the embassy compound.

The dubious human rights record of the West needs to be exposed. Let us try to have one West-free conflict in the world and see how far it goes and how many days it lasts. The US has blatantly used non-proliferation to support its interventionist policy. The world must develop as much aversion to the political use of nuclear weapons as it has for their military use. The political use of nuclear weapons by the United States has proved to be lethal for the Middle East region. War is a business, it's a habit with the imperialist powers. It is imperative for global peace that the world keeps unipolarity in check and makes a smooth transition towards multipolarity.

## **HOMAGE to Dr. Ashok Mitra**

Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) pays respectful homage to renowned Marxist economist Dr. Ashok Mitra. He passed away on 1 May 2018 at Kolkata. He was 90 years old.

He was the Finance Minister in the first Left Front government in West Bengal and served in the position for 10 years till 1987. He was an MP (Rajya Sabha) and was the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Industry and Commerce. He was also the Chairman of the Agricultural Prices Commission of the Government of India.

He also received the Sahitya Academy award for his contributions to Bengali literature.

An eminent Marxist economist, ideologue, scholar, writer, columnist and teacher, he was deeply committed to the cause of the working class and the downtrodden.

A staunch fighter against neoliberalism, his demise is a loss to the working class movement of the country. He will always be remembered for his uncompromising political and ideological contributions in the fight against neoliberal imperialism.

CITU pays its heartfelt condolences to the family and comrades of Dr. Ashok Mitra.

## **CITU Opposes Government Plan for PPP mode in EPF and ESI**

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) expresses serious concern at the plans of the government, reported in the media, to usher in public private partnership mode in the administration of EPF and ESI schemes.

The issue of running EPF in PPP mode was never discussed with the central trade unions. The proposal of the government to involve private insurance companies with ESI was strongly opposed by the trade unions and the government had to keep it in abeyance.

CITU and other central trade unions have also strongly registered their opposition to the proposals in the government's Draft Code on Social Security to merge 15 existing Acts related to social security including the funds under EPFO, ESIC, Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Fund etc and giving the responsibility of administering social security benefits through the state social security boards.

CITU once again reiterates its opposition to the reported moves of the government of India to run EPF and ESI under the PPP mode and calls upon all the workers irrespective of their affiliations to resist any such measures.

## A 16 year old Girl gives a Voice to Players

It's a white winter morning in Srinagar, and a 16-year-old girl has set out from her cramped home on the city's outskirts to help a group of badminton players prepare for a tournament at the indoor stadium.

Arwa Imtiyaz Bhat is not a coach, or a player. But this Class X student performs a more important role. She translates the sound of silence.

The players are among the 250 sportspersons registered with the J&K Sports Association for the Deaf, and Arwa, who is well versed in sign language, is their voice, their mentor. Often giving up classes at school, she's accompanied J&K teams to tournaments across the country, from Delhi to Chennai, fielding calls from worried families, helping liaise with organisers and officials.



She says the reward is not money - she's not paid any - but moments such as those last December when the J&K team won four gold, three silver and two bronze medals in the National Games for the Deaf in Ranchi.

*"My mother Rehana can't speak or hear. Her brother Mohammad Saleem, a good badminton player, is also deaf and mute. And ever since I can remember, I have seen them struggle, facing discrimination outside and within our family. I could not stand that, and decided to do whatever I could to help anyone in that situation... I learned how to communicate in sign language from my uncle who had undergone training in Delhi,"* says Arwa.

It hasn't been easy, she admits, especially convincing parents of deaf and mute children to let go. *"When the J&K deaf team was planning to go to Ranchi, the parents sought an assurance from me that they would be safe and secure. I had to finally give them a guarantee. At times, I have had to fight with the families of players for permission to let them play,"* she says.

According to Waheed ur Rehmad Parra, secretary, J&K Sports Council, Arwa is an inspiration. *"I am surprised by the dedication of this girl. And I try my best to help out and speed up paperwork of any team with which this girl is involved. She is an inspiration for all of us, and she should never feel that she has been let down by the system,"* he says.

*"There are very few people in the world who really care about deaf and mute children such as mine,"* says a father from Baramulla, whose two sons Mohammad Ashraf and Showkat Ahmad are sportspersons. *"Whenever my children go for any sports activity, Arwa keeps me informed, even when they are outside the state. At times, we call her so many times every day for information about my sons, she never loses patience"* he says.

But for Arwa, who dreams of becoming a doctor, and her family, all of this has come at a cost. *"Last year, I had to accompany these players to different parts of Kashmir and various offices of sports organisations. I missed a lot of classes and was reprimanded by my teachers,"* says Arwa.

At home, Arwa's parents say it's time someone showed similar concern for their daughter.

*"I am an autorickshaw driver, and I want to provide my children, especially Arwa, with a good education. But I struggle to do that because I find it very difficult to keep my house running,"* says Arwa's father, Imtiyaz Ahmad Bhat.

*"I don't think my dream of becoming a doctor will ever come true because I belong to a very poor family. At times, my father doesn't have money to even deposit my school fees. But I will still try to complete my education,"* says Arwa.

(Courtesy – The Indian Express)



**Accumulation of wealth**  
is at the same time acc  
of misery, agony of toil  
ignorance, brutality, m  
degradation, at the opp

- **Social Progress can be measured by the social position of the female sex.**
- **Democracy is the road to socialism.**
- **The history of all previous societies has been the history of class struggles.**
- **Workers of the World unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains.**
- **Revolutions are the locomotives of history.**
- **Religion is the impotence of the human mind with occurrence it cannot understand.**
- **The Ruling ideas of each age have been the ideas of its ruling class.**
- **Let the ruling classes tremble at a communis  
The Proletarians have nothing to lose but the  
They have a world to win.  
Workingmen of all countries, unite!**