

The Marxist

Volume XXIV, No. 1
January-March 2008

RAJASTHAN 19TH STATE CONFERENCE

Extracts from the Political-Organisational Report

THE SCENARIO OF THE STATE: REAL INDICATOR OF VASUNDHARA GOVERNMENT'S MISRULE

Rajasthan is geographically the largest state in the country. Spread across 3,42,239 square kilometers, it forms one-tenth part of the country (10.4% of the total land area). Five districts of the state – Ganganagar, Bikaner, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer and Barmer – form the long border with Pakistan. The residents of these districts have to face many hardships due to wars or regular military exercises. In times of military exercises along the border, people have to leave their homes and they do not even get compensation for the damages. Five years ago, our party led a struggle to get compensation for damages in Sri Ganganagar; however adequate compensation has not been given till date. Recently people in 45 villages of Bikaner have been given eviction notices as it has been decided to make these villages part of a military zone. We should give full support to the struggle of these villagers. According to the 2001 census, the total population of the state is 5, 65,07,138 out of which the urban population is 1,32,14,325 whereas the rural population is 4,32,92,813. This is 5.5% of the total population of the country. The sex ratio in the state is 922 females per 1000 males, whereas the national ratio is 933 per 1000 males. This is an outcome of female foeticide and ill treatment of women in the state. Such illegal foeticides have become a business among the doctors in the state hospitals. Recently the Medical Council has decided to reinstate doctors involved in such crimes against which there has been a sharp reaction and agitation as well.

The density of population in the state is 165 persons per sq km as compared to the national figure of 324. The state consists of 41,353 villages, 222 cities, 216 small towns, 33 districts, 241 tehsils and 188 sub-divisions.

Despite the claims of chief minister Ms. Vasundhara Raje that the state is no longer 'BIMARU' (sick) but has attained the category of 'developed state', facts suggest that Rajasthan is still an economically backward state. More than 70% of the state's population is dependent on agriculture. Since a large part of the state is covered by desert, there is a lot of dependence on monsoon. Droughts have become a regular feature for the people owing to irregular and scanty

rainfall. Only 40% of the cultivable land in the state is actually covered under irrigation. Owing to good monsoon, the agrarian growth in the decade of 1990s was 8.3% which witnessed a steep fall later because of recurrent droughts. The growth rate of the state in 2005-06 was 5.97%, which was almost half of the national average of 9.14%. The state economy is marked by the instability in people's income. The pace of industrial development in the state is also very slow. The annual per capita income in the state is Rs.16,606 in 2005-06, whereas the national per capita income is Rs.26,299/-. Rajasthan is 7th among the poorest states in the country, falling in the category of 'Bimaru' (sick) states like Bihar, UP and Madhya Pradesh. After 2000-01, even small states like Chhattisgarh and Manipur have gone ahead of us. Recently, according to the new benchmark of the Planning Commission, 15.31% of the state population is below the poverty line, though in reality the number of people below the poverty line is much more. Leaving aside the agrarian, the commercial and the service sectors, the industrial growth rate of the state is merely 3.57% which is less than the national growth rate of 4.8%. Only 2.49% of the people managed to get employment in these sectors. Out of the total 4907000 hectares of irrigated land in the state 1420000 are by the canals, 2653 hectares are by tube wells, and 47,000 hectares by other sources. However for the last three years, owing to less water released by the canal zones, peasants have launched movements in the first phase of the Indira Gandhi Canal project, the Panchna dam i.e., the Bisalpur project in Tonk and also in the Chambal region. The problem has become serious owing to less power to tube wells and steep fall in water level. The foodgrain production per acre in the state is of low yield. The production of foodgrain per hectare in the state is only 1036 kg whereas the national average is 1738 kg. Many factories in the state are closed and the government has not been able to open any of them. J. K. Synthetic factory in Kota is closed once again thanks to the myopic vision of the owners and the government. Though the government has signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to open 2789 industries, only 1302 of these could be made operational. 7.57% of the small-scale industries in the state come in the sick category. At present the contribution of the service-sector has gone down from 8.50% in 1995-96 to 7.15% in 2001-05. The state is backward even in the sectors of road and transport. The road density in the state is 387 per 1000 km whereas the national figure is far superior at 776 per 1000 km. The roads in Rajasthan connect only 41.97% of the villages whereas the remaining 58.03% villages are not linked to any road; 61.64% villages of the entire country have been linked to roads. The railway network in the state is only 5835 km which amounts to only 17.22 per 1000 km.

If human resource development is the yardstick of economic programmes, then Rajasthan is far behind. The health service in the state is completely in shambles. As a result the infant mortality rate in the state has gone up to 67 per 1000 as compared to the national average of 58 per 1000. Vaccination has been achieved only among 25.4% of children between 12 to 36 months which is almost half of the national figure. Only 42% children are born under the

supervision of mid-wives. These facilities are not available in the rural sectors and even if hospitals are opened, there are no doctors or nurses. Though there are facilities of 'Anganwadi' and "mid-day meals' in schools thanks to the assistance of the Central government, they have not yielded maximum results owing to corruption.

There is a massive economic disparity between the urban and the rural populace in the state. Compared to the villages, the cities enjoy far better civic amenities. 57.7% families in the cities have proper sanitation facilities compared to merely 5.2% of rural households. 61.2% of urban population has access to potable water whereas the same is available to only 5.2% of the rural populace. Even the poor slum-dwellings in the cities are denied clean drinking water. In the last month many people have died and thousands have been hospitalized right in the state capital owing to unhygienic drinking water. Often tankers are the only means to address the water supply for people in rural areas.

Even after 60 years of independence, only 62.3% households in the state have access to electricity whereas the remaining 37.7% families are still in the dark. The per capita power consumption in the state is 335 kilowatt whereas it is 835 kw in Gujarat, 531 in Haryana and 351 kw even in Madhya Pradesh, not to mention the national average of 531 kw. Power consumption forms one of the major development indices in the state as well as country.

FOUR YEARS OF BJP RULE

Since the last state conference, the BJP rule in the intervening period (2 years 9 months) is marked by its feudal character, barbaric atrocities on people's movements, communalism, casteism and encouragement to religious obscurantism. Chief Minister Ms. Vasundhara Raje, in her 'parivartan yatra' before the 2003 assembly polls, made basketful of promises to the people which are as follows:

1. 8 hour power supply to the farmers.
2. No hike in power rates.
3. Restore the problems of the farmers in the canal region
4. Re-open factories which are closed down.
5. No fee-hike for students
6. Remove the ban on recruitment
7. Provide employment to one lakh people annually
8. Waive off the debts of the farmers.
9. Make separate provisions to provide employment to women.
10. Give reservation to the Jats, Gujjars and other communities in the state.
11. To provide a clean administration in the state free of fear, hunger and corruption.

This long list of promises ensured an unprecedented victory for the BJP by securing 120 seats (out of 200) in the 2003 assembly polls followed by winning 21 seats (out of 25) in the Lok Sabha 2004 as well as impressive wins in the local elections for corporations and panchayats. After the elections, the

promises made to the people were blissfully forgotten. Vasundhara Raje's government completed 4 years on December 8, 2007, which was celebrated as "achievement day". However, if an assessment is made of all these promises one can conclude that the government has done nothing to write home about except raising the retirement age of the government employees from 58 to 60 years, releasing an installment of Dearness Allowance for employees and to appoint teachers for the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan run by central government's assistance. Otherwise the BJP government in its 4 year tenure has been an absolute failure in all fronts in the state: administrative, economic, social, educational and political. Immediately after coming to power, this government came out with its communal agenda by implementing the controversial NCERT textbooks of the NDA regime in the state. This is in contravention with the order of the present UPA government at the centre which has asked to replace these books. Both the ministers of education in the state are RSS members who give voice to the communal agenda of the government in the following manner:

1. Chanting gayatri mantras' in schools and official prayer-meeting
2. Singing religious hymns and Vande Mataram in student hostels instead of national anthem.
3. Massive official expenditure on religious occasions.
4. Extravagance in pujas at mandirs.
5. Allowing distribution of trishuls.
6. Withdrawing criminal cases against the accused in communal riots.
7. Not appealing in the Higher Court against the lower court judgment acquitting the accused in cases of sati.
8. Initiating actions against the madrasas of the minorities.
9. Appointing rabidly communal people in universities and education boards.
10. Introducing the writings of Deen Dayal Upadhyay and Guru Golwalkar in school curriculum in the state,
11. Writing the history of Rajasthan in a communal manner.
12. Abuse of administrative machinery by the CM and other ministers to participate in religions, casteist and communal programmes.
13. Allocating lands to RSS controlled schools on a token money of one rupee.
14. Direct intervention of the RSS in government and administration.
15. Transfer of thousands of teachers and other employees at the direction of RSS.
16. Appointing advocates of Hindutva even in non-governmental organisations.

In the last 4 years, the RSS created an atmosphere of communal polarization by targeting the Muslim community in the state, especially dubbing Islam as source of terrorism. The centenary celebrations of Guru Golwalkar became an excuse to create a division within the Muslim community between nationalists and anti-nationalists and also to harp on increasing number of

Muslims vis-à-vis Hindus. Now, even a minor skirmish between the two communities in the state assumes a communal colour, as evident in the increasing number of communal riots in the state. Especially, the districts of Udaipur, Bilwara, Ajmer, Jaipur, Kota, Pali etc have been the hotspots of communal tension. Now there is a conspiracy to spread communal hatred between the tribals and the Muslims in order to vitiate the atmosphere in the otherwise tension-free tribal zones as well as in the Shekhawati region. The BJP government has not only attacked the Muslim community but has also targeted the Christians whose number in the state is very limited. Violence against Christians include violent attacks on social and educational institutions affiliated to Immanuel sect, in presence of the police and the administration as well as the attacks of the VHP and the Bajrang Dal hooligans on churches and schools in Kota, Udaipur, Jaipur, Pali and Tonk. These acts of violence against the minorities not only encourages religious fanaticism in the state but it also exposes the fascist character of the government. The chief minister and her cabinet colleagues themselves are active participants in promoting religious obscurantism and feudal traits which have transported the state not to the 21st century but to the medieval 12th century at the level of consciousness. The scenario of the state would have been different, had the CM spent more time in looking after the administration rather than wasting time and money on all such fraudulent religious malpractices. The government has passed an ordinance in the state banning religious conversion which has not secured the consent of the governor. Our party has consistently struggled against this draconian law.

The government has initiated a program of privatizing education in blind imitation of the neo-liberal policies. It has allowed the opening of privately owned schools and colleges in thousands without any infrastructural provisions. More than 1000 colleges, almost 400 B.Ed colleges, many medical, nursing and technical institutes in the private sector have been allowed to operate. Now, even 6 private universities have been given permission to be opened in the state, where they are given a free hand to loot the students in the name of fees. Though such educational institutions are opened in large numbers, they have no place for poor students. Even the government run universities have witnessed massive fee-hike in the recent years. SFI organized a massive agitation in Bikaner University to force a rollback of fee-hike. This was followed by demonstrations, rallies, road jams etc against fee-hike in Ajmer and Rajasthan Universities.

The biggest programme of the students this year was the 'Mahapanchayat' in Rajasthan University. Major agitations have taken place in the districts against hike in admission and tuition fees. These private institutes not only fleece the students but also exploit the teachers and other employees by giving them very less salary. Many schools have been upgraded from secondary to higher secondary states, but there is an acute shortage of subject teachers. Owing to shortage of teachers in schools, the students and parents have participated in action programmes all over the state protesting

against this prevailing chaos in the education sector, even inviting police lathicharge at many places. There has been a visible and major decline in the quality of education all over the state owing to lack of basic infrastructure and also appointment of under-qualified teachers. The government has tried to ban elections of students, teachers and employees in schools, colleges and universities to crack down on people's democratic rights.

In the last 4 years, the BJP government, as part of its neo-liberal policies, has given a free hand to the industrialists to exploit the workers, and has also privatized the public sector undertakings. Provision of basic amenities to the citizens like drinking water, health and education etc is being leased to private contractors. RTDC Roadways and other public sector enterprises are given to private hands. The government has sold total 64744 acres of land to national and multi-national companies at minimum prices in the name of Special Economic Zones(SEZ). It has also announced to sell lakhs of acres of land to multinational companies for retail farming. The workers in the SEZ are deprived of labour laws. They are being blatantly ignored in the last 4 years as compared to open favouritism and exemptions to the capitalists in all forms. The government has never initiated any dialogue with the workers' organisations though it has always consulted the industrialist lobby. It has gone back on its promise to link the minimum wage of the workers to the price index of commodities – a promise made before the elections. The government has disbanded the tripartite committees as a result of which the factory-owners and the management no longer participate in any negotiations. It has imposed section 144 in factory zones to ban all rallies, demonstrations and dharnas of workers. No effort has been made to resume the operations of closed factories. Big capitalists have sold off factory lands to property dealers without giving any compensation to the workers. The workers are denied even minimum wages and it is quite common to pay only Rs.1000-1200/- monthly for daily duty of more than 12 hours. The hire-and-fire policy is rampant in the factories all over the state. It has now become very difficult even for registration of trade unions in the state. CITU has always fought against these anti-worker policies of the government either independently or jointly with other trade unions.

There has been a steep decline in the situation of the farmers and agricultural labourers in the last 3 years. Before the 2003 assembly polls, the BJP made various tall promises which include releasing full water in the canal zones, repairing the canals, continuous 8 hour power supply to farmers, reducing power rates, provision of cheap loans, organizing purchasing centres in retail market for foodgrains etc. However the anti-farmer policies of the government has ensured the destruction of the peasants' life in the state in the last 3 years. In 2004, when the farmers launched a struggle to demand the release of 5.3 cusecs of water per 1000 acre along the Indira Gandhi canal, the government tried to suppress the movement through barbaric means. 6 comrades died in police firing whereas leaders including Com. Hetram were imprisoned under RASUCA. Thousands of people were either jailed or they

suffered injuries from police lathi-charge. The entire region was handed over to the army. At last, on December 11, 2004, the government was compelled to make an agreement with the jailed peasants' leaders to release 58% water in the first phase and 42% in the second phase along with withdrawing the cases against the agitating farmers. However, it went back on the agreement and tried to suppress the peasants later. The police brutally assaulted Com. Hetram Beniwal because of which he suffered serious injuries in his legs. Many peasants leaders were imprisoned once again and they were treated very harshly in jails. The police brutally assaulted their naked bodies and also spat on their face, even women and senior citizens were not spared. As the peasants struggle became a statewide agitation, more than one lakh peasants assembled together to protest against rising power rate. The government was forced to make an agreement with the agitating peasants leaders to release those in jails, to rollback hike in power rates and also to release water in the canal zones. Meanwhile police opened fire on agitating farmers in the Sauhela town of Tonk district who demanded irrigation facilities from Bisalpur dam, killing 6 farmers. The government again betrayed the peasants of the canal zone who were forced to resume their agitation in 2006.

The government adopted suppressive and brutal measures, leading to be killing of Com. Chanduran and Parmeshwari Devi. The farmers were again jailed and were subject to inhuman torture. On February 22, 2006, 50 thousands farmers marched to Jaipur; the High Court ordered the release of Com Hetram Beniwal which marked the conclusion of this phase of the peasants movement.

Again, the peasants in these regions have begun the fourth phase of their struggle against the anti-farmer policies of the government. The agitation is sharpened by massive public meetings along with measures to paralyse the administration. Moreover thousands of peasants have assembled at Panchna Dam for the last one month; even farmers in the Chambal region have launched their struggle. The government has forced the farmers not to produce wheat to facilitate import of wheat from foreign countries. The agricultural tube-wells are provided with only 4.5 hours of power supply. Harvests are being damaged in the name of feeder improvement; peasants are being fleeced in the name of development. No relief work has been initiated in the regions affected by scanty rainfall. No arrangement is made to purchase foodgrains at the minimum support price determined by the central and state government in the retail market, as a result of which the peasant is forced to sell his produce at a very nominal rate. In the last years, owing to absence of government purchase in the production of onions, the peasants sold their goods at the rate of 1 or 2 Rs. per kilo, and the same onion was later sold in the open market at Rs.20/25 a kg. The peasants are completely debt-ridden, forced to pay exorbitant interests on loans and also ruined by the Kisan Credit Card. Rural unemployment has grown phenomenally, coupled with problems, of cultivable land. Owing to fall in water levels in the rural area, drinking water has become a problem. Major areas of the state are

dependent on animal husbandry; however in the last 3 years, the farmers dependent on animal resources have faced major crisis. They are forced to sell milk at Rs. 7/8 a kg. The price of animal fodder has gone up continuously. The farmers suffer heavy losses owing to the ban on export of calves to other states. The farmers in the state are disturbed by the rampant malpractices in the form of fake fertilizers, seeds and insecticides. 15 peasants have been brutally killed in the last 3 years. The present BJP rule in the state will be remembered for its cold-blooded murder of agriculture and farmers. The state is reeling under a severe agrarian crisis and the farmers are on the verge of suicide.

THE STRUGGLE AND RESISTANCE OF THE PARTY

In the last three years, the Party and the mass organisations organised prolonged struggles against the neo-liberal, anti-people economic policies of the UPA government at the centre and the fascist, communal policies of BJP government in the state which are against the peasants, workers, students, dalits, women and minorities. According to its strength the party has tried to implement its national-level struggles at the state level, along with building big struggles. The political and organisational report of the 18th Party Congress observes thus:

“It is important for the party to raise immediate and burning issues and to always launch a struggle on them so as to expand its mass base.”

The political resolution of the Party Congress had noted the experience of the peasants movement in Rajasthan in the following manner:

“The peasants of Bikaner and Ganganagar in Rajasthan have unitedly fought on the issue of making provisions for water in the Rajasthan canal. Many people were jailed and six were killed in police firing in this three month long protracted struggle led by the Party and the Kisan Sabha. The struggle in Rajasthan underlines the fact that popular movement can be developed by raising important issues and also to launch continuous struggle.”

Meanwhile in the state, a farmers struggle was launched to demand the implementation of the agreement between the state government and the peasant leaders. This agreement was signed on December 11, 2004 in Ajmer jail where many peasants were imprisoned after the first phase of their agitation on the Indira Gandhi Canal Project. In the second phase of the agitation, thousands of peasants were jailed once again, led by Com. Hetram Beniwal who suffered inhuman torture in police custody. This was followed by a massive assembly of one lakh peasants in Jaipur between September 1 to 8 which compelled the state government to release the jailed peasant leaders and to roll back the hike in power rates. Even after this, the peasants continued their agitation in the third and fourth phase, which made it a historic peasants struggle not only in the state but in the whole country. In this phase,

the agitation was limited not within Gharsana but had become the centre of the peasants struggle in the entire Indira Gandhi Project. Chaiya village of Rawatsar tehsil, Hanumangarh district became another nerve centre of the peasants agitation. In this struggle lasting for more than three years, thousands of peasants were jailed and serious legal charges were snapped on more than 5000 people. Com. Chanduram became a martyr in the struggle whereas a woman named Parmeshwari Devi succumbed to injuries caused by police brutalities. The police assault led to the miscarriage of a pregnant woman. The General Secretary of the state Mahila Samiti, Com. Durgaswami suffered serious injuries because of police lathi charge. Many important leaders of the agitation including Pawan Duggal were subjected to inhuman torture and humiliation. However, the government could not suppress the struggle which is still going on. The people have shown exemplary courage and commitment throughout this struggle which is historic. At every level, the government had to impose section 114 or curfew and also had to call the army. The Chief Minister tried to malign the leading leaders of the struggle by calling them members of the land/liquor mafia. This report in a few words cannot articulate the sacrifice and the courage of the struggling peasants evident in the Indira Gandhi project or the historic assembly of farmers in Jaipur. The state committee should publish a detailed and separate report of all these struggles.

Other major achievements during this period were the *Kisan Chetna Rath Yatra* to Jaipur from February 5 to 22, 2007 on the demands of the farmers and also the *Adivasi Chetna Rath Yatra* between May 5 to 20, 2007 to demand the operationalisation of National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and the Forest Bill. These two rath yatras covered more than 10,000 kilometers across the state to reach lakhs of people in thousands of villages and communicate the programme of the party and the kisan sabha. Apart from that, the Party has also implemented its political programmes in 2006 and 2007 at the call of the Central Committee in an effective manner. In 2006, three public rallies were organised in Sikar, Udaipur and Ganganagar where massive public participation gave evidence to the influence of the Party and the mass organisations. The Jaipur march on February 22, followed by the gherao of the capital by 50,000 peasants have become historic precedents of mass struggle. Apart from these, various other movements were launched by the mass organisations in different districts. Important among these were the movements organised by the district committees of Sikar and Ganganagar which are mentioned in the mass organisations reports.