



Communalism and Neo-Liberal Policies
--Prakash Karat

Fake in India: BJP's Pseudo Nationalism
--Kiran

RSS Approach to the Working Class
--Dr. K.Hemlata

Introduction

The CPI(M) is bringing out a series of six booklets entitled RSS Against India.

The booklets contain essays written by eminent intellectuals, political leaders and activists which have been grouped together to bring out different aspects of the retrograde and divisive role the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has played throughout its history and continues to do at present.

They include (1) The RSS role in India's freedom movement and its communal role in independent India (2) the RSS concept of Hindu Rashtra and its approach to caste, gender and adivasis (3) The "beef" politics of the RSS (4) the RSS understanding of neo-liberal economic policies and of the working classes (5) the RSS distortion of Science and History (6) speeches of General Secretary Sitaram Yechury and Polit Bureau member Md. Salim in the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha respectively during the debate in Parliament in November 2015, on "Constitution Day" and on "Growing Intolerance."

Several of the essays in these booklets quote from the published writings of RSS founders particularly from the writings of M.S.Golwalkar, the second Sarsanghchalak of the RSS. It may be asked what relevance do these writings have to an analysis of contemporary activities of the RSS. These are texts which remain the fountainhead of RSS ideology, and continue to determine its world view and practice. Three quarters of a century may have passed since Golwalkar's *We—or our Nationhood Defined* and a *Bunch of Thoughts* were written, but

their toxic concepts have been articulated by RSS Chiefs throughout this period including the present RSS Chief, Mohan Bhagwat's statement that Hindustan is for Hindus. In all these years not in a single statement, writing or text in any of the publications of the RSS or its political wing the BJP has there been even a semblance of a distancing, leave alone a rejection, of any of the formulations made by RSS founders. On the contrary, the present Prime Minister has written a biographical profile of Golwalkar in his book "Jyotipunj" describing Golwalkar as one of his inspirations. Therefore the quotations used in the booklets to illustrate RSS ideology, some repeated, are relevant to an understanding of the "core" of this organization, which has been inspired by videshi fascists--Hitler's Nazis and Mussolini's Blackshirts.

The question may also be raised that are these exposures of the RSS at all necessary and do they not inadvertently enhance its importance? The RSS, as many of the essays in these booklets show, appeals to the lowest denominator in human behavior in inciting violence against "the other." In doing so it seeks to exploit religious feelings and utilises traditions and beliefs based on social and gender inequalities that still influence a substantial section of our people. Hindutva as preached by the RSS is a political concept coined by V.D.Savarkar, far from the world of ordinary Hindu believers. Those fighting against the utilization of religion for political ends need to be conscious of the dimensions of the battle.

Religion as a political tool is used by fundamentalist forces of various hues and in the name of various religious faiths. The role of Muslim fundamentalist forces who are increasing their reach among sections of Muslim youth are a matter of deep concern and they need to be isolated and fought back.

These forces are encouraged by majoritarian Hindu fundamentalists who falsely claim to represent the nation. These apparently opposing forces strengthen each other and divert attention from the basic problems of the people.

With the advent of the BJP Government led by Narendra Modi at the centre, the RSS not only has free access to the levers of power, which it also in large measure enjoyed during Atal Behari Vajpayee's time, but

it actually is in a position of control in this Government. When a roll call of Ministers is taken for the presentation of a report card to RSS leaders, it is clear who is calling the shots. It is therefore necessary to expose the RSS, its links to the Government and the extra constitutional power it wields today.

Further, Narendra Modi was a pracharak, a full time worker of the RSS owing total allegiance to its ideology, its theories and practice. For a pracharak to become the Prime Minister of India is a big step forward in the RSS project. Gujarat 2002 was a result as well as an experiment of the Hindu rashtra project under his leadership in which he was fully backed by the RSS. In 2013-2014, when differences arose in the BJP as to who should lead the party's bid for power in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, it was the RSS which not only backed Modi's candidature but directly intervened to silence the opposition of L.K.Advani and other senior leaders. The Prime Minister's refusal to take any action against those who are his colleagues in the RSS and are now in positions of power in the BJP in spite of their repeated communally provocative actions and statements is a reflection of his loyalty to the RSS. For India's Prime Minister it is RSS first.

It is thus necessary to provide the facts, the deeds and the analysis of what the RSS actually represents. We hope this series will be useful in the struggle to safeguard and strengthen the principles of secularism, democracy and equality.

On behalf of the central publications team we express our gratitude to the authors of these essays, and to the comrades and friends of the Party who helped bring out this series. We also thank the cartoonists for permission to use their work.

Brinda Karat

Polit Bureau Member

Communalism and Neo-liberal Policies

Prakash Karat

The advent of the Modi government at the Centre has brought into focus the growing authoritarian communal danger. To understand what is happening, one has to go into the roots of authoritarianism in India. These lie in the neo-liberal phase of capitalism which is transforming the political system and the use of Hindutva communalism by the ruling classes as an instrument to consolidate a form of authoritarian rule.

This tendency of the bourgeois ruling class to curb and erode bourgeois democratic rights gets accentuated and enters a qualitatively new phase with the advent of imperialist globalisation, the hegemony of globalised finance capital, and the imposition of the neo-liberal order.

What is developing in India is a form of authoritarian political rule. The anti-democratic trends and the narrowing of democracy should be seen as an authoritarian response emerging from within the constitutional-democratic framework and from forces without. What needs to be considered is how neo-liberalism is reshaping the existing political system by whittling down its bourgeois democratic features and bringing about an authoritarian version of constitutional democracy.

With regard to the transition in advanced capitalist countries from bourgeois democracy to authoritarian forms of rule, Ralph Miliband in

his book “The State in Capitalist Society” writes of less extreme alternatives than fascism, “which do not require the wholesale dismantling of democratic institutions, the total subversion of all liberties, [and] certainly not the abandoning of democratic rhetoric.”

I

Hindutva communal forces, with their attacks on minorities and fascistic methods of suppressing democratic rights and dissent, have emerged as a major source of authoritarianism. The vicious identity politics spawned by the impact of globalisation and neo-liberalism have infused them with a new vigour. The rise of Hindutva communalism coincides with the advent of liberalisation in India, and these twin forces have fuelled authoritarian trends. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) believes in an authoritarian Hindu Rashtra.

The six-year rule of the BJP-led government in 1998-2004 saw concerted efforts by the RSS to infiltrate institutions of the State and to reshape educational and cultural policies. With the BJP acquiring an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha a decade later, the RSS has begun a calibrated plan to refashion the educational, cultural, and social set up and different institutions on majoritarian lines. The soil for authoritarianism is being cultivated not only in the political sphere but also in the social and cultural arenas. The ban on beef consumption; moral policing; the denunciation of artists and cultural productions as anti-Hindu; attacks on elite educational institutions, demanding that they conform to Hindutva values; censorship of the arts and intimidation of artists – all of these are features of this authoritarian onslaught. Above all, there is the weapon of communal riots, which are getting institutionalised in various parts of the country.

The axis between neo-liberalism and communalism is the most potent stimulant for authoritarianism. The pace of authoritarianism has speeded up since the Modi regime took office in May 2014. The fight to defend democracy and bourgeois-democratic rights has to be waged by Left and democratic forces. The classic Marxist position has been that when the bourgeoisie trample upon democracy, it is up to the working class to defend bourgeois democracy.

II

In India, where capitalist development occurred within a context where the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution remained incomplete, the tendencies to constrain democracy and curb the democratic rights of the people were always immanent in the social formation. But with the global changes brought about with the hegemony of finance capital and the resultant attacks on national sovereignty and the weakening of the capacity of nation-states to defend national and popular interests, the erosion of democracy and democratic rights are manifested in the degradation of formal democratic institutions, in the hollowing of democracy, in the transformation in the role of political parties, and in the political system itself. The ruling classes’ inherent interest in accession to the demands of finance capital and in privatising all spheres of the economy have been primary motives for the State to serve market forces.

As far as the rights of the people are concerned, the parliamentary democratic system adopted under the republican constitution represented a major advance. The parliamentary democratic system acquired its legitimacy and validity through popular acceptance of and participation in the electoral process, through the associated mass mobilisation by political parties. Political parties have had constantly to keep the people’s democratic aspirations in mind when shaping their programmes and political positions.

Neo-liberalism and the sway of finance capital in the domestic sphere has led to a growing homogenisation of bourgeois political parties. It has widened the gap between what parties profess and what they actually do. The pre-eminent demand of the neo-liberal regime is that governments may change but the “reforms” process must go on. This understanding has been in effect over more than two decades. Ever since the Narasimha Rao Government unleashed the neo-liberalisation policies in 1991, successive Governments — whether Congress-led coalitions, BJP-led coalitions or a non-Congress secular coalition (United Front) — have shown striking similarities and continuity in the economic policies they have pursued.

Protecting the interests of finance capital, and ensuring hospitable

conditions for capital flows and investment, became the *sine qua non* of any government in power.

All bourgeois political parties have taken a more or less uniform stand in support of issues vital to the interests of finance capital and imperialism; these include financial sector liberalisation, the disinvestment of shares in public sector enterprises, and the privatisation of basic services. Bourgeois political parties have unquestioningly embraced the macroeconomic policies dictated by neo-liberalism. The neo-liberal regime has further been consolidated by the suborning of the bureaucracy and the support of the corporate media.

The political consensus on neo-liberal policies is accompanied by changes in the role and character of the bourgeois political parties themselves. The compulsion for all political parties to respond to popular aspirations for a better life, for food, housing, education, employment, health and basic services gives their election manifestos and promises a peculiar two-facedness. While bourgeois parties adhere to neo-liberal nostrums in their economic policy platform, they promise also to meet the people's needs and aspirations. If elected to State government, a bourgeois party has to undertake a certain number of social welfare measures and hand out doles in order to maintain the façade that it is responding to people's needs. At the same time a free run is given to big capitalists and the rural rich to accumulate capital, while the nexus of big business-ruling politicians-bureaucrats ensures that some of the spoils are distributed to the political rulers too.

The vocation of politics is increasingly seen as a business — and persons in business themselves join politics. This intertwining starts at the level of the local bodies and extends up to parliament. Increasingly those who get elected to district local bodies, assemblies and parliament are themselves businessmen or capitalists. The rural rich, liquor merchants, contractors, and big traders are well represented at all levels in the bourgeois parties. This has brought about a change in the composition of the bourgeois parties and their class interests. While the big bourgeoisie is still mainly represented by the BJP and the Congress, significant sections of big business at the regional and State levels support and utilise the regional parties too.

These changes in the neo-liberal regime have accelerated the process of homogenisation of bourgeois parties and are a reflection of the ruling class consensus that there is no other option but the neo-liberal path. The role of political parties as representatives of various sections of the people is getting steadily eroded. The absence of inner-party democracy in most bourgeois parties undermines their representative character. Many parties are becoming family-run outfits, reflecting the overall orientation of politics as a business. Party leaders seek to protect and bequeath the properties and assets earned through their political positions to their family members by appointing them or grooming them to be successors to political leadership.

The degeneration in the political system is manifested in parliamentary institutions too. Pervasive high-level corruption fostered by the neo-liberal order strikes at the root of the democratic system. Corruption subordinates public policy-making to private interests. In the neo-liberal polity, more and more businessmen and entrepreneurs of all sorts are becoming Members of Parliament and legislators. Several ministers in the Central government have been businessmen-politicians, and conflicts of interest and corrupt practices stemmed from this nexus.

Important areas of the economy and policy-making are outside the purview of parliament. To begin with, international treaties and agreements with foreign countries do not require the approval of parliament. A government can barter away bits of sovereignty of the country through treaties, and parliament has no say in the matter. The WTO agreement, the Indo-US nuclear deal, and the Indo-US Defence Framework Agreement were all signed without parliamentary approval. Vital economic policy decisions, such as opening multi-brand retail trade to foreign capital, are taken by the executive without parliamentary sanction.

The importance of Parliament has declined. Between 1952 and 1972, the Lok Sabha worked for an average of 120 days a year. In the decade 1991-2010, the corresponding figure fell to 70 working days a year. And this is not only due to disruptions of proceedings: the executive has consciously tried to curtail Parliament, the increasing resort to ordinances being just one example of such curtailment.

The hollowing out of democracy and the denuding of political parties of programmatic content has been witnessed in western Europe under neo-liberalism. Some of these trends have become visible in India's parliamentary democracy and party system as well.

III

The authoritarian thrust emanating from the neo-liberal process has found expression in the demand to change features of the political system by amending the Constitution. "Stability" and "strong government" have become major preoccupations. The demand for a presidential form of government arose more sharply in the 1990s than before; the proposal was backed by the BJP and articulated most vigorously by L. K. Advani.

The Speaker of the Tenth Lok Sabha, Shivraj Patil, circulated a discussion paper on reviewing the system. Among the changes suggested were a guaranteed term of five years for the Lok Sabha, with no dissolution of the house mid-term; and the formation of a government with a two-third majority by means of a coalition of parties, failing which the President was to form a government with persons outside parliament or with the help of "constitutional authorities." The thrust of these proposals was to undermine a parliamentary system based on political parties. The essence of the Presidential form of government is a more authoritarian set up which would be inherent in the executive authority of the President.

A decade of efforts to alter the parliamentary system through constitutional means did not make headway. Having a person like Narendra Modi as the President of India with executive powers would have been ideal for the RSS-BJP combine. But the deep-rooted parliamentary democratic system and its capacity to accommodate vast diversities has thwarted moves for an authoritarian replacement. The efforts for a Constitutional exercise to install authoritarianism were given up for the time being. Instead, there began a multi-pronged effort to incrementally introduce authoritarian measures in multiple spheres, including the political system.

The architecture of a national-security state has also been taking shape. The growth of terrorist activities in the 1980s provided further

justification for a strong national security state. Provision for preventive detention already existed in the Constitution (Article 22). Legislation was enacted immediately after the Constitution was promulgated. Since the Preventive Detention Act (1950), there have been a series of Acts prescribing preventive detention and imposing curbs on safeguards and legal rights provided in the criminal justice laws – the NSA, TADA and POTA. The latest being the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act in 2008. These laws have been used to arrest trade unionists and opposition party activists. Thousands of people have been detained under these laws and very few of them were eventually tried and found guilty by the courts. Sedition clauses in the Indian Penal Code (that is, in respect of acts of waging war against the state) are routinely used to arrest people protesting against state policies or projects that affect the lives and livelihood of the people.

Authoritarian laws have targeted Muslim youth and tribal people. Hundreds of Muslim youth have been rounded up in terror cases and falsely implicated, or kept in detention for long periods and then released. In the name of combating Maoist violence, Adivasis are taken into custody and then detained under such laws. The authoritarian ethos has strengthened so much that police and security forces act against the people with impunity. In the name of tackling terror and Maoist violence, false encounters, illegal detention and torture in custody have become commonplace. The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), which is in force in Jammu & Kashmir and parts of the North East, gives the armed forces powers outside the purview of the penal code and has enabled the armed forces to act with impunity, killing several innocent civilians.

The demand for "flexibility of labour" has been a priority of the neo-liberal regime. Its corollary is the weakening of trade unions. As part of the authoritarian thrust of the Modi government, proposals to amend labour laws to curtail the rights of workers and restrict trade unions have been mooted. The BJP State governments of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh have already legislated these changes.

The space for public protests and political mobilisation has been shrinking steadily. There has been a drastic increase in curbs on assembly, protests,

and political campaigning with the advent of the neo-liberal regime. And it can be said that where the executive does not intervene, the higher judiciary has been active in placing curbs on people's rights. In 1997, the Kerala High Court declared bandhs illegal, a decision endorsed by the Supreme Court. A year later, hartals were prohibited. Courts have banned assembly and demonstrations in many public spaces that were traditional venues for mass mobilisation. Courts of law invariably issue injunctions against strikes and assembly near work-places.

The overall result has been the curbing of democratic rights, erosion of civil liberties, and a shrinkage of the space for public protests. These measures go beyond the exercise of the repressive powers legally vested in a bourgeois democratic state. Authoritarianism provides the legitimation for the repressive measures *beyond* the normal repressive apparatus of the State.

IV

The critical question is how to link the struggle against communalism, and authoritarianism, for democracy with the struggle against neo-liberal capitalism. In India, the corrosion of the representative form of democracy, i.e., the parliamentary system, is well under way. With the influx of big capital in the electoral system, neo-liberalism is strangling the democratic space for the Left.

It would be wrong, however, to conclude that all democratic potential in the parliamentary electoral system has been exhausted. The struggle for democracy has also to be waged in the formal parliamentary system. The defeat of the Indira Gandhi regime in the 1977 elections, after the imposition of internal emergency, is a reminder that people will not easily give up their rights in a parliamentary democratic system, however restricted these may be. But it would be a major mistake and a reformist illusion to restrict the fight for democracy to the confines of the parliamentary system, especially at a time when formal parliamentary democracy is getting hollowed and delinked from the people's expectations.

The struggle against neo-liberalism – that is, to rally the working people around an alternative programme that is a radical departure from the

neo-liberal path is a major arena of struggle. This will be the terrain on which authoritarianism can be fought and defeated, since neo-liberalism provides the essential wellspring for authoritarian power and ideology.

The fight against the other source of authoritarianism, mainly Hindutva communalism, requires the integration of the struggle in defence of the livelihoods and rights of the working people with the fight against communal forces. Severe social and economic inequalities and unemployment provide cannon fodder for communalism. To advance the popular mobilisation against disruptive communalism, the real economic problems of the people have to be addressed.

The electoral battles to isolate and defeat the BJP, while necessary, are inadequate to combat communalism, which is active in the ideological, social and cultural spheres. It is in these spheres that more determined interventions are called for. The neo-liberal and Hindutva dispensation is inimical to the interests of all socially oppressed sections. The rights of Dalits, Adivasis, women, and minorities are under siege, and their right to equality, in particular, is denied. There is a vital link between class-based struggles and social struggles, and this link must be strengthened.

The Left, being the only consistent force against neo-liberal imperialism and communalism, has to play the crucial role in the popular-democratic mobilisation against Modi-style authoritarianism.

Fake in India: BJP's Pseudo Nationalism

Kiran

The RSS goes to great lengths to portray itself as a “nationalist” organization. Indeed, much of its jingoist propaganda is aimed at showing how superior it is to others on this count. What exactly is the content of this “nationalism”? Scholars have demonstrated that the RSS had no role to play in the struggle for Independence. What has been less focused upon and needs to be highlighted is that in the realm of economic policy too, the Sangh Parivar has played anything but a nationalist role.

Since 1991, successive governments have pushed an aggressive neoliberal economic policy agenda, one of the key pillars of which has been the opening up of India’s markets and industry to foreign goods and capital. This happened primarily through dramatic cuts over time in customs duties, thereby facilitating imports, and through progressively expanding both the number of sectors in which foreign capital can invest and the extent to which it can invest in each of them. For nearly eight of these 24 years and a few months, a government led by the BJP has been in power, first from 1998 to 2004 under Atal Bihari Vajpayee and for the last year and a half under Narendra Modi. In both these tenures, the BJP has been at least as enthusiastic as the Congress in pushing the neoliberal agenda.

The difference, if there is one, has been in the periodic use of the rhetoric of “swadeshi”, which has been no more than a concession to popular opinion and a recognition that the people at large are not enamoured of the reforms. It is important to recognize the hypocrisy of the Sangh Parivar on the question of swadeshi. The Swadeshi Jagran Manch was set up by the RSS in 1991 in a bid to tap into popular resentment against the reforms then being initiated by the Congress government of PV Narasimha Rao. Through the SJM, the RSS sought to project itself as a ‘nationalist’ force in the realm of economic policy. But if the proof of the pudding is in the eating, the actual practice of both the Vajpayee government and the Modi government have established beyond doubt that the BJP, the political arm of the RSS, is quite content with paying lip service to the swadeshi or nationalist agenda.

Modi’s Hard Sell

Indeed, Modi’s more than two dozen visits abroad as PM have been characterized by his exhortations to the world to invest in India and his fervent promises that his government would make it easy for foreign firms to do business in India. The recent liberalization of foreign direct investment (FDI) across 15 sectors is only the latest example of this government’s desperation to woo foreign investors. Even sectors like defence and railways, despite their obvious strategic importance, have not escaped this rush to open India’s doors to foreign capital.

To prove its bonafides, the Modi government has taken several specific measures to convince international capital that it actually is making it easier for them to do business in India. For instance, the joint statement issued by US President Barack Obama and Modi after his US visit last year said: “The leaders committed to establish an annual high-level Intellectual Property (IP) Working Group with appropriate decision-making and technical-level meetings as part of the Trade Policy Forum.” This set alarm bells ringing through the developing world, because the US is well known for using such fora to push for more stringent patent laws that favour its pharmaceutical multinationals at the expense of much costlier drugs for the people. By agreeing to make what is a multilateral issue part of a bilateral deal, the Modi government signaled its willingness to accommodate the interests of Big Pharma. The

composition of the intellectual property (IP) think tank, set up by the government to draft a new IP policy for India, was loaded with lawyers who have represented MNCs in Indian courts while completely excluding civil society groups or academics working on IP issues. Little wonder that the draft IP policy has raised concerns with its obeisance to the idea of IP protection (a euphemism for patent laws that help the manufacturer but hurt the people) as the only way of ensuring innovation in India.

Another major plank of the Modi government in attracting foreign investors is “flexible labour laws”. The BJP government in Rajasthan has shown most clearly what that means. Its anti-labour reforms are to serve as a blueprint for the Centre, according to some reports. Among the most damaging changes would be allowing units with less than 300 employees to fire people at will, a bitter pill sweetened by the promise of higher retrenchment compensation. Studies show that some 84 per cent of Indian manufacturing units in 2009 employed 50 people or less. The number of units employing over 300 would thus be a minuscule fraction of the total. In short, a reform of this kind would mean a body blow to labour and an enormous shot in the arm for capital. Yet, this policy that works directly contrary to the interests of a majority of the people of this nation is being pushed by this government as part of the drive to woo foreign investors.

Finance minister Arun Jaitley spelt out the new government’s approach towards foreign capital when he said in his maiden budget speech, “FDI in several sectors is an additionality of resource which helps in promoting domestic manufacture and job creation”. While asserting that FDI would be selectively promoted, he went on to announce that the cap on foreign investment in the defence manufacturing sector and in the insurance sector would be raised from 26% to 49%. Measures to liberalise FDI in other sectors were also announced by him.

But the Modi government’s recent forays in these areas are not a new direction. They are in keeping with what BJP and Congress-led governments have been doing since 1991, even if the vigour with which the neoliberal agenda is pursued has varied over time. The net result of the policies followed by these governments has been that foreign

institutional investors (FIIs) or international finance capital now control about 30% of the shareholding of the top Indian firms. Their control over the stock markets is such that they determine the direction in which the markets move. We need not lose sleep over market movements, but a dominant presence for finance capital has a far more pernicious effect on economic policy making. Since they are by definition fickle, ready to exit at short notice, they acquire the ability to blackmail governments since any move perceived as negative by them can lead to a quick exit of capital putting pressure on the exchange rate and destabilising the economy. That is why several economists have cited finance capital as the biggest danger to a country’s sovereignty in economic policy making. The BJP despite its nationalist pretensions has contributed to creating a situation where the imperative of keeping foreign investors in a favourable mood has become the key objective of policy. It is not as if this policy of appeasing foreign investors has even delivered the promised windfall in investment in sectors of importance for India. Till March 2015, India had received cumulative foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows of \$368.4 bn, including reinvested profits of foreign firms in India. The single biggest chunk of this, about a sixth or nearly \$43 bn, was in services, primarily financial services like banking, insurance and non-banking financial companies.

The BJP’s contribution to opening up India for foreign investors, in complete contrast to its swadeshi rhetoric, has been considerable, both through the budgets presented by its governments and through policy decisions taken outside the budgets. We will look first in detail at how each budget presented by a BJP-led government has stuck to the pattern of nationalist rhetoric combining with a sell out to foreign interests in practice and then at some key reform measures that furthered the same agenda.

But why, some may ask, should an agenda that pushes for a greater role for foreign capital in India be necessarily seen as anti-national? The answer lies in what that means for India’s sovereignty and for the people at large, in particular the working class. As we have already seen, hot money flows from finance capital can, and do, erode the ability of governments to adopt policies that are seen as inimical to the interests of “investors” even when such policies are obviously necessary in the

interests of the people. For example, it might make a lot of sense for governments in the course of an economic crisis to increase spending, including on welfare programmes, to boost demand and to provide some relief to those worst hit. But the mantra of “fiscal discipline”, so dear to the oft-cited investors, constrains the government in doing so.

Now think of FDI. What does a multinational investing in India want? It could be here to tap the huge Indian market, given the sheer size of the population, or it could be here to tap cheap labour to produce for other markets or a combination of the two. To the extent that it taps into the Indian market, it is displacing an Indian producer which would otherwise have made and sold the same goods in the domestic market. The profits from the process flow to the foreign owner, while they otherwise would have remained in India. To the extent that it is looking to tap India’s cheap labour, it is in the interests of the investor to ensure that labour remains cheap in India. And if you have an economic policy premised on attracting FDI and keeping the investor happy, as the Modi government has with its Make in India programme, then it follows that the government must not do anything that could raise the cost of labour from the investors’ point of view or the real wage from the point of view of the working people. Notice, for instance, how even a modest job creation programme like the MGNREGA is rubbished as “populist” by pro-reform commentators and held up as something that has raised costs in Indian agriculture. Notice also how the same reformers will plead earnestly for what they euphemistically call “removal of rigidities in the labour market”. Simply put, what they want is the ability for employers to fire people or to retrench in bulk at will. That’s important from the point of view of the investor because an insecure labour force is one that is less likely to organize and fight for higher wages and one in which the jobless can be played off against those who have jobs but can lose them at short notice.

Budgets by BJP-led governments

Just reading through the budget speeches of successive BJP finance ministers since the party first headed the government in 1998 is revealing of the extent to which the party has kowtowed to foreign investors while spouting the rhetoric of ‘nationalism’.

In his very first budget speech in 1998, Yashwant Sinha made it clear that boosting private investment including FDI would be a “high priority” and also facilitated the further penetration of the Indian market by foreign institutional investors (FIIs). In 1999, Sinha announced that FDI in the pharmaceuticals sector would be allowed up to 74% of equity under the automatic route despite his acknowledgement that India had a comparative advantage in this sector. He expanded the list of sectors with automatic approvals for FDI and speeded up approvals. In 2000, Sinha eased the path for foreign venture capital funds to invest in India and raised the limit for FII investments. He also cut the peak customs duty from 40% to 35%, thereby easing the way for foreign imports. In 2001, Sinha raised the ceiling on FII investments in companies from 40% to 49% and put FDI in non-banking financial services on the automatic route. In 2002, Sinha declared that FII investments would not be subjected to sectoral FDI caps, except in a few sectors and allowed FIIs to trade in all stock-traded derivatives.

In the same budget, Sinha decided that the disparity between the rates of corporate tax paid by Indian and foreign firms needed to be corrected and hence reduced the rate on foreign firms from 48% to 40%. In 2003, Jaswant Singh announced that FDI in banking companies, then capped at 49% through the automatic route, would be permitted up to “at least 74%” to facilitate the setting up of subsidiaries of foreign banks and to help investments in private banks.

Off-budget sell outs

Here are some key off-budget measures taken by BJP-led governments to further the interests of foreign big business and erode India’s economic sovereignty.

The New Telecom Policy of 1999 allowed telecom operators to renege on the licence fees they had bid under the earlier policy of 1994 and instead settled for a share in their revenues. It also truly opened up the fast growing telecom sector to foreign companies like never before. The FDI cap in the sector was raised to 49% for basic services, 74% for long distance network providers and internet service providers (ISPs) with gateways and 100% for ISPs without gateways. This allowed

MNCs to enter what was and remains the fastest growing telecom market in the world.

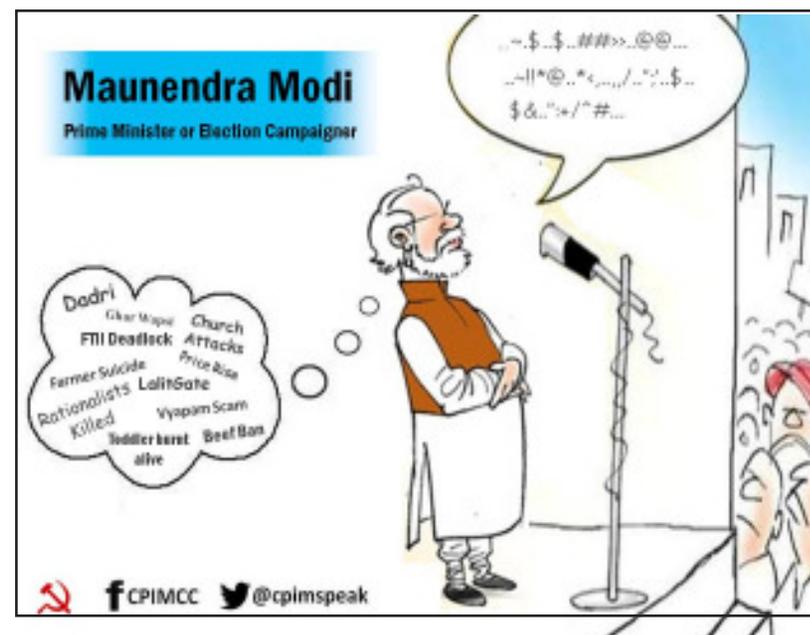
Again, in 1999, the Vajpayee government opened up the insurance sector to private firms, both Indian and foreign with the result that by 2013-14, private firms, almost all of them joint ventures with foreign insurers, had about a quarter of the life insurance segment and half of the non-life insurance segment of the market under their control. As for the specious plea that the ‘global best practices’ of foreign insurers and the efficiency of the private sector would improve services, data from the Insurance Regulation and Development Authority (IRDA) gives the lie to these claims. It shows that the LIC has a claim settlement rate of 98%, a clear 10 percentage points higher than the 88% rate achieved by private insurers. Despite this evidence, the Modi government has further eased FDI norms in the sector. As in telecom and insurance, so also in roads and civil aviation, BJP-led governments have helped pave the way for the entry of foreign capital into India.

The case of Maruti Udyog Ltd is illustrative of how the BJP had no qualms in handing over control of a big, profitable firm to an MNC. MUL was set up as a joint venture between Suzuki Motor Corporation of Japan and the Indian government with both being equal partners in the venture. In May 2002, however, the NDA government decided that Suzuki would be allowed to gain majority control in return for a meager “control premium” of Rs 1,000 crore.

While not a decision of a central government led by the BJP, the saga of the fraudulent US energy giant Enron in India is also illustrative of the saffron brigade’s utter hypocrisy when it makes claims to economic nationalism. The Dabhol power project in Maharashtra, set up by Enron in the early 1990s, was widely condemned as a brazen sweetheart deal in which the governments in Delhi and Mumbai had colluded with the foreign firm to give it extremely favourable terms to the detriment of the state electricity board which would have to pay nearly five rupees per unit to the power plant at a time when it was charging consumers less than two rupees per unit. At the time the initial deal was being signed, the BJP and Shiv Sena, then in opposition in Maharashtra, thundered against the scam and promised to throw Enron in the Arabian

Sea when they came to power. When the Sena-BJP combine did come to power in Maharashtra in 1995, they scrapped the contract with the Dabhol Power Corporation. However, they were soon persuaded to form a committee to work out a new contract. It took all of 11 days for the committee to submit its report and the Sena-BJP government signed a new contract with DPC which was hardly different from the earlier one. It is another matter that Enron soon collapsed globally and the plant remains a white elephant for Maharashtra to deal with.

What emerges from this narrative is that all of the nationalist pretension and rhetoric of the RSS and its front organizations, the BJP included, on economic policy (as indeed in other spheres) is little more than a posture calculated to lull the suspicions of the people while they go ahead with an agenda that leaves India at the mercy of foreign capital.



RSS Approach to the Working Class

Dr. K.Hemlata

In any society, it is the workers, men and women, working in the fields or factories, who produce wealth. It is their toil, their labour that creates wealth. Work thus deserves to be recognised and respected. Workers deserve due share in the wealth that they produce. When denied such respect and recognition of the dignity of labour, they have every right to unite and struggle against such injustice and to ensure that they get their due place in society.

But the approach of the RSS to the rights of workers and their role in society is totally different. RSS denies that there is any conflict of interest between the employer and the worker in the present capitalist society.

RSS Against Workers Rights

In RSS leader, Golwalkar's book, *Bunch of Thoughts* considered a kind of bible by the RSS workers, he writes.

“Another advantage of the Indian view of society is that it eschews class-war. It postulates social harmony as a potentiality, if not as a full actual order of law and custom, observances and enforcements.

Dharma as determinant of the conduct of groups and individuals

lays down a synthesis of the claims of conflicting parties. A study of the conflict impartially from the standpoint of the service involved, the function performed in society by the conflicting parties, will reveal the elements of the truth and justice in each party's claims.

Dharma will come to mean an expression and crystallisation of the synthesis of interests and values revealed by the panchayat. This is the source of the long-standing Indian faith in the panchayat way of setting disputes. It is democratic, scientific and moralistic at the same time. The destructive idea of class-war or irreconcilable antagonism between different functions and classes irreconcilable antagonism between different functions and classes is therefore, successfully avoided in the Indian scheme.” (Introduction, p. 11)

Even when these words were written when India was still a colony of the British, the plight of the workers at the hands of the British and India's employers made it clear that mill owners would prefer to take the help of the British to suppress workers legitimate demands for better working conditions. The historic strike of the Bombay textile mill workers had to face severe repression at the hands of the police under British command called in at the behest of Indian owners.

In all these decades, can the RSS point out a single example when employers have willingly shared their profits with workers? Can the RSS show from their own history in which industrial dispute have they intervened in favour of workers? In the name of social harmony, they want to equate those with power, economic, political and social with those who have no power, except the power of their unity and organisation and it is precisely this which the RSS wants to destroy.

Profit Above All

It cannot be denied by anybody that the driving force in a capitalist society is the profit motive. What is the major source of profit? It is the exploitation of the labour of the workers. In India since the advent of neo-liberal policies, the main effort of employers and successive Governments at the Centre, have been to change the nature of work contracts from permanent to casual and contractorised jobs. While profits

have increased, inequalities have intensified, wages of workers as a share of net value added have sharply fallen.

Golwalkar believes that "man is unable to muster his will and capacity to work where he is not able to secure profit for himself. We have to take into consideration this factor also". So it is perfectly justified for employers to seek more profit in the RSS point of view, but not if the workers organise to fight, which according to him is not the "Indian way."

Golwalkar ridicules the demand of the workers for their 'rights'. He says *'Today, we hear everywhere the clamour for 'rights'. All our political parties too are rousing the ego in our people by constantly speaking of their 'rights'. Nowhere is there any stress on 'duties' and the spirit of selfless service. The spirit of cooperation which is the soul of society can hardly survive in a climate of assertion of egocentric rights. That is why we are finding conflicts among the various component parts in our national life today, between ... the labourer and the industrialist.'*

RSS leaders today still believe in these injunctions. You will never find Bhagwat speaking in favour of workers.

Increased Exploitation

Look at the situation today. Total employment in the organised sector, which was 28.2 million (2.82 crore) in 1998 stood at 27.5 million (2.75 crore) a decade later. In the organised sector of the manufacturing enterprises (as per the Annual Survey of Industries) wages as share of net value added, which was close to 30 per cent in the 1980s, declined to around 20 per cent in the 1990s and has gone down to its historical low of 10 per cent by 2008-09.

On the other hand, the share of profits in net value added was lower than the share of wages throughout the 1980s, around 20 per cent. After liberalisation in the 1990s, it went above the wage share and was around 30 per cent for most of the 1990s. Since 2001 it started increasing and the profit share reached 60 per cent by 2008.

The share of contract workers in the total workforce in the factory sector increased from 20 per cent in 1999-2000 to 32 per cent by 2008-

09. These contract workers are not only deprived of security of tenure but also of social security benefits.

This clearly shows the heightened exploitation of the working classes and the myth of the RSS view of what society actually is.

Labour "Reform"

To ensure social harmony, RSS style, the Modi Government is bringing a set of laws which dilute and in some cases eliminate workers rights. The RSS supports these anti worker labour law "reforms." But, it supports low taxes on corporates.

Against Taxes

Where are the resources for India's development to come from? In every country in the world, taxes from corporates play a very important role in providing the resources to Governments for development. India has one of the lowest tax rates in the world. In addition huge tax concessions are given in various spheres. Whether it is the UPA or the Modi Government the tax concessions are over five lakh crore rupees every year, more than that for all the social sector programmes.

The RSS considers this patriotic. It believes that taxes on corporates will be a deterrent. The language may differ but the essence of what a Modi or Jaitly articulate is almost exactly what Modi's "guruji" said all those years ago. He says "Government has taxed so high that after a certain slab is crossed, the man who produces will be able to retain hardly Rs 2.50 out of 100. Under such conditions the producer would naturally feel that there is no use in producing to that pitch..." Who is the producer in the eyes of the RSS? Not the actual producer, the worker, but the capitalist! And since taxes are a deterrent for the margin of profit, regardless of what it is, the RSS wants low taxes.

Temples as RSS Solution

But what is the solution, according to the RSS? While talking vaguely about 'human touch', 'wiping the tears of sorrow and suffering arising out of both economic and social debilities', the RSS has however, has a concrete bit of advice to the employers. Golwalkar writes '.. they should

build a temple in each estate or labour colony and arrange for weekly bhajan and worship, religious discourses and Harikathas'

This advice is something most employers religiously follow. In a large number of industrial premises, owners have built temples. Religious festivals are observed within the industrial premises, pundits are duty bound to ensure that workers attend the pujas organized. Religious faith and practices are personal matters. But what is the result of an employer who is Hindu having a place of worship where workers of different religions may be working? What was the aim of Golwalkar's advice? Factories may have workers of different religious belief. At one level to have a place of worship for only one particular religion, is discriminatory for workers who belong to a different religious faith. But more importantly this leads in a way to religious segregation and division of workers on religious lines. The work in the factory unites, but religion can become the instrument within the factory to divide workers. This is the RSS aim.

RSS Ideology in Practice: Betrayal of Sept 2 General Strike

In line with the RSS ideology, Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), a proud member of the Sangh Parivar, declares that it "deprecated the theory of class conflict and emphasised that all the constituents should act and work in unison. This can be achieved by developing the concept of 'family' in the industry". BMS also claims that it 'propagates produce maximum and consume with restraint'. So the workers have to produce maximum for the employers to make higher profits but should consume with restraint so there would be no demand for higher wages on the employers.

The editorial in the BMS journal 'Vishwakarma Sanket', on the occasion of 60 years of BMS, claims "Thengdi ji (former BMS General Secretary) successfully changed the basic thinking of the trade unions and their approach towards management, problems and ways to find solutions to them. He dismantled the theory of class conflict and propounded a relation of partnership between the management and the workers where one could not do without the other."

The recent All India countrywide general strike on 2nd September 2015,

from which BMS withdrew in the last minute, demonstrates this approach to struggles by the BMS. At the same time, the fact that all the other central trade unions that gave the call for the strike went ahead with it, also prove the falsity of the claims of the BMS that it had 'changed the basic thinking of the trade unions'.

The same approach is echoed in the election manifesto of the BJP in 2014, which says: "For the organised labour, we propose to encourage industry owners and labour to embrace the concept of 'Industry Family'. This concept, in which industry owners and labour bond as a family, is guided by the principles of efficiency, skill development and up gradation, productivity, appropriate wages and perquisites and security". No guarantee for the rights of organisation or collective bargaining for the workers!

Communal Approach

According to the RSS Hindutva ideology, workers and employers belong to one family, but workers and workers do not! All this talk of 'family', 'harmony' etc. vanishes into thin air when it comes to developing unity of the workers. It is strange that while the RSS considers the employers and workers as 'family', workers, who irrespective of whether they belong to the same religion, caste, region or gender as the employer, are exploited by the employers are not considered as one family. In its attempts to create communal polarisation to achieve its 'Hindutva' project, the RSS and its various outfits create communal divisions among the working people.

There are many incidents of communal violence, where Hindu workers, particularly those in the unorganised sector, were provoked to attack their Muslim brothers with whom they had no personal enmity or quarrels. Shiv Sena, a close ally of BJP, the political wing of the RSS, is well known to have been promoted to serve the interests of national and international capital to crush the once powerful trade unions in Bombay in the 1980s and has operated a protection racket even since (Partha Bannerjee). It has led several attacks on the workers coming to Maharashtra, be it the workers from Kerala and other southern states or those from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar or Assam etc on the pretext of jobs for the sons of the soil.

Thus, workers are divided in the name of religion, region, etc. and are made to fight each other while the employers can freely continue with their exploitation of workers belonging to all religions, regions, castes, languages etc. Whose interests does this serve? What the RSS actually does in the name of rejecting 'class conflict' is to serve the interests of employers, the big national and multinational corporations.

Social Dimension

More than 94% of the workforce in our country belongs to the unorganised sector. A vast majority of these workers, whether in agriculture or in industry, comprise those belonging to the socially oppressed sections. What is the attitude of the RSS towards these so called 'Shudras' and women? As a staunch supporter of Manusmriti, what is its attitude towards the dalit workers, the most socially oppressed sections of the society?

It will be sufficient to recollect here the views of Narendra Modi, a former RSS pracharak, now holding the high Constitutional post of Prime Minister of India. In 2007, a collection of his speeches to IAS officials, when he was chief minister of Gujarat, was published as a book named 'Karmayog'. In this book, he calls manual scavenging as an 'experience in spirituality'. Discussing manual scavenging by people belonging to the Valmiki caste, Modi writes, "I do not believe that they have been doing this job just to sustain their livelihood. Had this been so, they would not have continued with this type of job generation after generation. ...At some point of time, somebody must have got the enlightenment that it is their (Valmiki's) duty to work for the happiness of the entire society and the Gods; that they have to do this job bestowed upon them by Gods; and that this job of cleaning up should continue as an internal spiritual activity for centuries. This should have continued generation after generation. It is impossible to believe that their ancestors did not have the choice of adopting any other work or business'. Again, in 2009, addressing a meeting of safai karmacharis, he likened the safai karmacharis' job of cleaning up others' dirt to that of a temple priest. He told them: 'A priest cleans a temple every day before prayers, you also clean the city like a temple. You and the temple priest work alike'. Is it not a cruel joke to compare the safai karmacharis, dalits who are not allowed even to enter temples in most parts of the country to the

priests who perpetrate this crime on them? As a Dalit poet pointed out, it never occurs to Modi or his RSS, why the upper castes do not get this enlightenment that they too could experience such internal spirituality by taking up such jobs.

The most repugnant and discriminatory preaching about women and their role in society, by Manu whom Golwalkar held as the 'first and greatest law giver of the world' are well known. These are spread through the different wings including the women's wings of the RSS. According to them the notion of gender rights itself cannot be tolerated because it leads to unhealthy competition with male family members, domestic discord, unhappiness, broken families etc. It is the sole cause of male oppression. According to them women should not take up jobs except in dire economic compulsions. Can the RSS, which is against women's employment, against equal rights for women, ever support the demand for equal wages, equal opportunities for promotion etc for women?

Today, in its attempts to mobilise support for its project of 'Hindu Rashtra', in its attempt to polarise society on communal lines, and strengthen the stranglehold of Hindutva over the country, the different wings of the RSS are trying to spread their influence among different sections of the people and mobilise them against the minorities projecting them as the 'enemy'. They are trying to organise different sections of the toiling people including workers, dalits, adivasis etc by mobilising them not against the real enemy but making them to fight with their brothers and sisters.

This is nothing to divert the attention from the real enemy of the people, the exploitative 'capitalist' system and policies being pursued by the BJP led government at the dictates of the national and multinational corporates and international finance capital.

The working class must be vigilant about these machinations of the RSS and defeat its attempts to disrupt their unity. Unity of all the workers, of all the toiling people irrespective of religion, region, caste, gender, and united struggles against the neoliberal policies being pursued with much more vigour by the present BJP led government are the only way forward to achieve a society free from exploitation; a society where the workers can live a life of dignity.



Neo-Liberal Policies and the RSS-BJP Combine

CPI(M) PUBLICATION

December 2015

Price : 10/-

Published by Hari Singh Kang from AKG Bhawan, 27-29 Bhai Vir Singh Marg, New Delhi-110001 on behalf of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and Printed at Progressive Printers, A-21, Jhilmil Industrial Area. G.T. Road Shahdara, Delhi-110095 (Phone : 22119770)