

Editor's Note

The opening article in this issue is dedicated to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre on its centenary. On April 13, 1919, hundreds of innocent Indians of all religious denominations – men, women and children – were brutally murdered by the British army. This was one of the most barbaric events of British colonial rule and unprecedented action by any colonial power across the world in the early decades of the 20th century.

The 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), in April 2018, adopted a special resolution calling upon all CPI(M) units across the country to observe this centenary throughout the year culminating on April 13, 2019. This resolution specifically called for using the centenary observations “to revisit the lessons of the struggle and to understand the people’s resolve to free India from the colonial yoke.”

On the day of the *Baisakhi*, April 13, every year, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs jointly celebrate in Punjab, particularly in Amritsar, drinking water from the same glass and sharing food from the same plates. This multi-religious unity was something that the British were assiduously seeking to break through their insidious divide and rule policy. These efforts intensified after the 1857 first war of independence that saw people belonging to all religions act in unison against the British and declaring the then Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar as free India’s Sovereign. The cementing of such unity was seen at Jallianwala Bagh. This was a cause for panic for the British.

Professor K L Tuteja recalls the developments around the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and the significance it held for the freedom movement. He notes that this massacre deeply influenced

subsequent course of anti-imperialist struggle in the country and contributed in its own way to the strengthening of the forces which posed a challenge to the British rule in India.

The national Civil Disobedience Movement called by Mahatma Gandhi against the draconian Rowlatt Act was the first all-India anti-colonial struggle launched on April 6, 1919. This spread in different parts of India, but Punjab was its major centre.

Professor Tuteja discusses the importance of the Punjab and points out: "Situated in the north west as the frontier province of the British Empire in India, the Punjab became a buffer between the Gangetic plains and Central Asia. Apart from its position as a frontier province, the Punjab also became crucial for the imperial system of control because the British army made its home in this province since the latter half of the nineteenth century. Before the outbreak of the First World War, soldiers from the Punjab constituted three-fifth of the total British army in India". Given this importance, growth of any anti-British sentiment was seen as dangerous by the British colonial powers and perceived as 'seditious'."

Professor Tuteja concludes that: "It is indisputable that the Rowlatt Act satyagraha and the Jallianwala Bagh massacre proved to be a decisive turning point in the national movement transforming it into a mass movement."

This volume of *The Marxist* publishes the text of the Nyerere Memorial Lecture delivered by **Professor Prabhat Patnaik** at Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in November 2018. This discusses the alternative trajectory that arose in the post-colonial independent countries after their liberation in the context of the efforts to develop capitalism and the system of petty production in these countries and the struggle for the transition towards socialism. The development of capitalism inevitably leads to the compression of petty production and petty producers creating large-scale unemployment and income squeeze. This had occurred in Europe as well during the emergence of capitalism, which it had resolved, as Professor Patnaik notes, "by the large-scale emigration to

temperate regions of European settlement, such as Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa." It is estimated that in the latter half of the 19th century, till the First World War, nearly 50 million people migrated from Europe to this 'new world'. This helped to restrict domestic unemployment in Europe. But importantly, such possibilities were never available to the displaced populations of the third world and are obviously not available today."

Professor Patnaik discusses the four misconceptions around this phenomenon which continue to remain in currency as neo-liberalism spreads these to facilitate its predatory profit maximisation.

The CPI(M)'s 20th Congress 'Resolution on Some Ideological Issues' had noted that the process of primitive accumulation is not a process confined only to the early stages of capitalism but is a process that continues all through capitalism. The word 'primitive', for Marxists, is not a historical but an analytical category describing the ruthless predatory character of Capital maximising profits.

Professor Patnaik discusses how, under neo-liberalism in the current conjuncture, such primitive accumulation intensifies. The possibilities for such ruthless exploitation can either be facilitated or checked by the correlation of class forces internationally. In a period following the dismantling of socialism in the USSR, balance of forces had shifted in favour of imperialism that permitted the neo-liberal offensive that is currently on today.

Rebuffing the understanding that capitalism can co-exist with peasant agriculture, Professor Patnaik says: "The concept of an *efficient* and robust peasant agriculture existing alongside capitalism is a myth; it mistakes misery for *efficiency*."

One of the hallmarks of the post-decolonisation regimes that emerged in various countries was the protection and promotion of petty production influenced by the anti-colonial struggles in respective countries. Subsequently, however, Professor Patnaik

notes that: "Such curbs upon the encroachment by the capitalist sector on the traditional petty production sector have now been largely abolished under the neo-liberal regime. This regime restores the spontaneity of the system and brings into being a 'neo-liberal State' that acts almost exclusively in the interests of globalised capital with which the domestic big bourgeoisie gets closely integrated." Under the neo-liberal dispensation, Prabhat Patnaik notes that: "capitalism in its spontaneity would overcome mass poverty in the third world is untenable."

Under these conditions: "The defence of the peasantry from expropriation does not of course mean accepting the perpetual existence of petty production; what it means is a transformation of petty production without the exercise of any coercion into collective forms of organising production, which become a stepping stone towards socialism."

How can this revolutionary struggle advance? "The support of the peasantry in short has been a crucial factor in deciding the outcome of the revolutionary fortune of the working class in countries with substantial peasantry, which include those coming late to capitalism; among these latter are the third world countries of Asia and Africa and much of Latin America. And for these countries, the absence of any thoroughgoing land redistribution, combined with the squeeze on the peasantry imposed under neo-liberal globalisation, marks a significant development, strengthening the prospects of forming a worker-peasant alliance and advancing towards socialism via a completion of the democratic revolution, though what exact form this completion would take, would vary from country to country."

Sukumar Muralidharan, in the background of the 2019 election campaign, discusses the issues of Indian media and advertising as part of the electoral battles in India. He notes that the credibility of the media has fallen and it has become a victim to globalisation. In an age of rapid advances in electronic communication and emergence of the social media, the spread of fake news has taken forward the misuse and abuse of media beyond the earlier scourge of paid news, in particular, how the BJP has been the

biggest gainer of the use of social media. The BJP has mastered the technique of using government advertisements as an instrument to influence the media to its advantage.

What is happening today is a far cry of the media acting as the "Fourth Estate" of our democracy. Willing to be manipulated, the corporate media has largely reduced media activity into a profit making process, rather than disseminating information, knowledge and helping a voter in a democracy to arrive at a considered point of view to exercise her franchise. The entry of foreign capital and the large-scale corporatisation is rapidly transforming Indian media. The author notes: "for the media as an institution serving a public purpose, globalisation has been a deeply corrosive force. The subservience to global advertising agencies has caused a sundering of older bonds of trust between the media and its audience. Several strategic choices made as competition in the globalised Indian environment escalated, lie behind this outcome. Today's media ecosystem is one in which trust has been severely eroded and fake news flourishes."

In lieu of the document that we usually publish as our final contribution, we are reproducing a section of the highly enlightening Presidential Address delivered by **Professor Mridula Mukherjee** at the Indian History Congress in 2011.

Professor Mukherjee revisits the assassination of the Mahatma Gandhi through meticulous documentation of historical records and archival material.

In the current rapidly growing communal atmosphere in the country with sharpened polarisation engineered by various tentacles of the RSS, hailing Nathuram Godse for assassinating Mahatma Gandhi, this recollection of history is of seminal importance. This should serve to aid the struggle of Indian patriots for safeguarding and strengthening the secular democratic character of our Constitutional Republic.