

Editor's Note

The current BJP Government in India self declares Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a global leader and self-appoints him as *Vishwaguru*. This is aggressively propagated despite the fact that in almost all global indices measuring the levels of economic development, human development, democracy, hunger, gender gap, press freedom and other civil society indicators, India ranks dismally low. Worse, its position has considerably declined during the last decade on most indicators, under the rule of this government.

Amongst many claims of such superiority, spewed out by the Modi propaganda machine is that India is the leader of the Global South. Modi government has declared that it shall take the lead in fashioning a resolution of the global debt crisis beneficial to the less developed countries in the South. As is the norm of such self-proclaimed assertions, no progress has been seen on this score and the debt crisis persists. There is not even an indication of the blueprint or a road map to resolve the debt crisis.

Aside from such propaganda, however, there are real concrete problems that need to be seriously addressed by the Global South. Neoliberalism as a recipe for promoting economic growth and overall people's prosperity has displayed its bankruptcy. With its singular focus on profit maximization, its prescriptions continue to perpetuate the global economic crisis adding to people's misery, higher levels of economic exploitation and alarming rise in wealth/income inequalities.

Such a situation has multifold consequences. The need to maintain the levels of profit maximization requires the need to contain the rise in people's discontent and popular struggles against intensified exploitation. Disrupting the unity of struggling people to prevent any possibility of such struggles leading to an assault on the Rule of Capital becomes a political necessity. Emotive issues like xenophobia, racism, National Pride, religious and ethnic divides etc. are exploited to divide the people, accompanied by growing authoritarian attacks on democratic, civil and human rights. A distinct political rightward shift is taking

place in many countries. US-led imperialist aggressiveness is imposing a new cold war divide with other serious consequences.

This issue of Marxist, however, focuses on initiating a discussion on how the Global South needs to respond to this current situation.

With the neoliberal regime reaching a dead-end **Prof. Prabhat Patnaik** discusses “How should the global south plan its future beyond neo-liberalism?” In particular, he discusses issues related to the development strategy particularly with regard to trade openness by the countries of the Global South.

Outlining various measures required for achieving self-sufficiency by the countries of the Global South, Prof Patnaik shows that the transcendence of neoliberalism must be accompanied not just by an alternative economic strategy but by an alternative mode of empowerment of the people with the introduction of a set of Constitutionally guaranteed, justiciable and universal, fundamental economic rights.

The debt crisis of the countries of the Global South has reached alarming levels. 2022 recorded the highest number of sovereign defaults since 1983. **Prof CP Chandrasekhar** discusses various issues connected with the historical development of external debt and the root of indebtedness in less developed countries. He underlines the obvious and direct way in which imperialism, in the post-colonial world, extracts surpluses from poorer countries to finance capital accumulation in the advanced capitalist countries is through trapping them in debt.

He discusses the various initiatives taken to resolve the debt crisis including the infamous Brady Plan in Latin America in the 1980s, and other multi-lateral debt relief initiatives launched in the 1990s, and notes that none of these address the fundamental constraint faced by the debt-ridden economies which is the absence of an economic structure that can reduce import dependence and foreign exchange outflows. He notes the fact that debt adjustment strategies imposed by the IMF with its conditionalities only enhanced import dependence. Further, IMF loans basically play serve to ‘de-risk’ private credit flows to less developed countries rather than reducing the dependence of the later on the former. The result is countries’ getting tied to repeated IMF loans and programmes. Sri Lanka,

for example, is using a 17th Programme Linked Loan from the IMF and Pakistan has just obtained a 23rd Line of Credit.

The way out is debt right offs. However, the advanced economies resolutely oppose any such measure. Hence, “not surprisingly, the crisis resulting from debt seems to be unresolvable in contemporary capitalism.”

Prof Malini Bhattacharya discusses the legacy of the rich Communist contribution in the evolution of the progressive cultural movement in India in the background of the current context. The corporate-communal nexus is “seeking to turn all identity politics relating to religion, caste, language and ethnicity – all of them the basis of culture – into deeply divisive isolationist enclaves.”

When authoritarian onslaughts are alarmingly rising and the “fascist process of what George Lucas had described as ‘destruction of reason’ is taking place.... The need for a ‘united front’ on a new level to combat this is evident”.

The Communist role in the establishment of various cultural formations like the Progressive Writers Association and the Indian Peoples Theatre Association (IPTA) contributed in creating the Gramscian ‘organic intellectuals’ of a new movement of workers and peasants during the time of the global anti-fascist struggle and the freedom struggle in India. In the current situation, the need for a united front on a new level is an urgent necessity. The Communists have the most important role to play in this changed situation. “There is no doubt about our role and to reinvent our war plans we certainly need to learn from our legacy.”

We carry as a **Document** in this issue of Marxist ‘Tasks on the Cultural Front’ adopted by the Central Committee of the CPI(M).