

Introduction

The record of any Government in office must be measured by the fulfillment of the promises that it had made to the electorate to garner votes. In that sense these have been three failed years. What is worse is that the Modi Government's approach and policies towards important issues have jeopardized India's unity and integrity.

Take the Modi Government's Kashmir policy for example. Its actions over the last three years and specifically over the last year have been disastrous. It has succeeded in strengthening Pakistan's goals of keeping unrest alive in the valley. It seeks to resolve what are essentially political issues with repression. Despite its bravado and tall claims, it has utterly failed to prevent infiltration of terrorists across the border in spite of great cost to defence personnel posted at the border. Worse, by its approach of refusing to intervene politically it has alienated vast sections of the Kashmiri population. The aggressive and jingoistic statements by various leaders of the ruling establishment instead of initiating a political dialogue with all shades of opinion in Kashmir, as promised by the Home Minister, has damaged national interests. This is the reason why several highly respected retired defence officers have expressed their discomfort at the Government approach towards Kashmir.

The Modi Government has utterly failed to control the communal attacks and specifically the attacks in the name of cow protection against minority communities, dalits and others involved in the cattle trade. On the contrary, Ministers in the Government have been justifying these attacks. Modi's silence on the criminal activities of the RSS backed so-called gaurakshaks, except for a single statement, is construed as tacit consent. The RSS continues to run a communally charged campaign on this issue with full State patronage. This is a straight assault on the constitution.

The weeks leading upto the three year celebration saw the horrific attack by an upper caste community against dalits in the village of Shabbirpur in Saharanpur district of Uttar Pradesh. The agenda of the Hindu rashtra retains in its toxic essence the iron bars of the caste system where the lower castes must be "kept in their place."

This has also been a bad year for adivasis. The Modi Government has encouraged through the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change a series of notifications and policy measures which in effect drastically dilute the rights of adivasis under the Forest Rights Act and other legal and constitutional measures. Egged on by the Centre and its policies of "Ease of business", BJP State Governments are handing over natural resources to corporates, desi and foreign by amending laws which prohibit transfer or sale of adivasi land to non-adivasis. Displacement and eviction of adivasis from their traditional habitats, cultures and ways of life have intensified in the last year.

On the eve of the official celebrations by the ruling regime of its three years in office, the Government issued a notification, which bans the sale of cattle for slaughter all over India. The Central Government has no right to do so. Such matters under the constitutional framework are under the jurisdiction of State Governments.

This notification will hand over a license to the goonda gangs who have been terrorizing minority communities in the name of cow protection who will now use the notification in the name of “animal protection”. It is a gift to the RSS backed cow vigilantes on the third anniversary of this Government.

Cattle in this notification includes cows, calves, bulls, bullocks, buffalos, heifers, steers, camels. Just the mere sale of an animal without proof that the animal is going to be used solely for agricultural purposes will be considered a crime. The seller of the animal has the onus of proving that the sale is not for slaughter. The buyer of the animal has to commit not to sell the animal for six months not even in the most dire emergency. Thus a traditional trade “made in India” through thousands of village cattle melas has been virtually banned.

This will deeply affect the livelihood of crores of dairy farmers all over India. The burden of upkeep of unproductive animals is estimated to be least 40,000 rupees a year. At a time when there are 12,000 farm suicides on an average every year during the last three years, this will intensify agrarian distress. It will help multi-national companies who are exporting milk powder and products to India.

It will also hit the export trade in beef, mainly buffalo meat, worth around 30,000 crores rupees, apart from its affect on small shopkeepers. The leather trade employing over 2.5 million people, already badly affected by stringent laws against cow slaughter, will be further hit affecting livelihoods.

Malnutrition and anemia rates in India are high. Beef is a source of nutrition for large substantial sections of the poor in India, not just minority communities. By banning even sale of buffalos for slaughter, it will have an impact on nutrition levels. Food habits and preferences are personal choices. This notification tries to impose a food code in India.

These aspects of the notification are representative of what has been happening in three years of Modi rule. Revealed is the face of authoritarianism and the attacks on democratic rights, including the right to decide one’s own diet; revealed is the nature of pro-corporate anti-people policies symbolized by the assault in the notification, on the livelihood of crores of people; revealed is the gameplan of the RSS of working towards the agenda of a Hindu rashtra and virtually giving a shot in the arm of the so-called gaurakshak gangs.

This booklet contains these and different aspects of the Modi regime. Several comrades have contributed to these pieces. We especially thank Comrades Srujana, Savera, Shyam, Vijoo Krishnan, Adira, Sabiha, Prabir Purkayashtha, Shruti, Vivek, Rajendra Sharma, Dr. Hemlata, P.G.Ambedkar, Pranjali, Muralidharan, Ajay Kumar. We also thank the cartoonists whose works we have used in this pamphlet.

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Masks are Off : Renewed Communal Aggressiveness

As the third year of Modi government ends, the communal Hindutva campaign of RSS-BJP has reached top gear. Yogi Adityanath, the unashamedly divisive face of the Saffron Brigade, being put at the helm of the biggest state of the country is the most blatant expression of this. The selection of Adityanath for the top post after Modi-led victory in UP, though not totally unexpected and actually in continuity with the election campaign, was still a deliberate choice made by Modi. This continuity can be best understood by the ‘Kabristan’ versus ‘Shamshan’ debate raked up by none other than PM Modi himself. Of course, this was only the icing on top of communal cake made by Shah and company. One ingredient was the so called ‘Hindu migration’ from Muslim dominated areas of western UP. On this issue Adityanath was made to campaign most vociferously, claiming that he himself liberated Poorvanchal (eastern part of the state), through his Hindu Yuva Vahini, from this menace by showing Muslims ‘their place’ in the streets. Other important ingredients were – not putting up any Muslim candidates, promise of closing down all the mechanical slaughter houses, fighting ‘love jihad’, ‘triple talaq’ etc. and last but not the least, ‘constructing Ram Mandir at Ayodhya’. This cooked up complaint of ‘Muslim appeasement’ was very craftily combined by the RSS-BJP with a similar complaint against dominant Dalit and OBC communities, the Jatavs and Yadavs, to achieve a winning electoral combination. In

this, the theme of 'Muslim appeasement' worked both as a component and as a wider ideological cement to hold this unnatural combination together. In this context Adityanath's elevation to the CM's post was hardly a surprise. Still it was a conscious choice that indicated readiness of Modi led BJP and RSS to put reveal one of its most divisive faces as it's real face in the most populous state of the country and that too after heat and dust of elections had settled down. This was the second Modi moment for Hindutva forces. Masks are off at the end of the third year.

Adityanath has not disappointed the Hindutva brigade. One of his first acts after taking over as CM was a full scale attack against slaughter houses and meat trade in general which is very visibly dominated by Muslim community. In the name of acting against illegal slaughter houses, entire chain of export and distribution of meat was disrupted, including production of leather. More than a direct attack on the livelihoods of over 25 lakh people and basic food sustaining crores more, it was also meant to be seen as indicator of the Hindutvavadi intent of the new government.

This has naturally encouraged the Saffron Brigade to adopt a more aggressive posture and running amok, leading to break down in law and order in large parts of this vast state. In a significant new move, police forces violently attacked protestors in many places when they tried to restrain the Saffron Brigade. Even more significantly, after such prominent incidents in Agra and Saharanpur, senior police officials who had earned the wrath of leaders of BJP and other RSS affiliated organizations, were summarily transferred by Adityanath. This has sent the clearest possible signal to the state police that Saffron Brigade is the new ruler and has to be treated as such.

Not surprisingly Hindu Yuva Vahini, run under direct patronage of Adityanath himself is exhibiting a phenomenal swelling of its ranks. So much so that now it has to put some restrictions on new recruitment, especially in giving organizational posts to newcomers. This Aditya Vahini has very quickly expanded out of Gorakhpur division and has made its presence felt in almost all the communal incidents in western UP. In one incident in Bulandshahar, motor

cycle riding Vahinisainiks killed a Muslim old man just because one Muslim man in a neighboring village had eloped with a Hindu woman. In another case of similar nature in Amroha, all Muslims of an entire village had to run away from their homes to save themselves from wrath of Hindutva brigade. And in Saharanpur, that has remained continuously in the news for last one month, Hindutva forces led by local BJP MP and other leaders first tried to use a so called celebration of Ambedkar's birth day to mobilize Dalits against Muslims and then, those Dalits who did not oblige were attacked ferociously in the name of celebrating Rajput hero MaharanaPratap's birth day. Receiving the necessary message from summary transfer of SSP earlier, local police is now trying of keep Hindutva forces in good humour by selectively acting against Dalits only. In such a situation, it's not surprising that Adityanath as CM has formally denied permission for prosecution of Adityanath, the then MP, in a 2007 case of communal rioting and provocation. It's worth noting that Adityanath and his close lieutenants have many such cases pending against them.

But Adityanath at the helm in UP, with all its ramifications, is not the only Hindutvavadi achievement of the third year of Modi government. Everything else inaugurated in first two years of Modi government has continued in significantly intensified form in the third year. Three examples should suffice. In spite of PM Modi himself calling 90% of them fake, the so called "Gau-rakshaks" have only increased their area of operations and frequency and ferocity of attacks. In one of most recent such attacks, Muslim Meo dairy farmer from Mewat area in Haryana, Pehlu Khan was brutally killed by cow vigilantes at Behrod, in Alwar district of Rajasthan. He had bought a cow from Jaipur Municipal Corporation's cattle market, complete with receipt, etc. While transporting the cattle their group was attacked by cow vigilantes on the busy National Highway. As has become the norm in BJP ruled states, the first action of Rajasthan police was to book the victims under various sections related to cow smuggling, while the real culprits roamed around freely. In spite of the countrywide outcry especially since Pehlu Khan succumbed to his injuries, the BJP state government has refused to drop charges

of cow smuggling against other victims of Hindutva vigilantes. BJP governments of both Rajasthan and Haryana have not cared to give any relief or compensation to the victims. Actually, subsequent to the killing of Pehlu Khan, BJP led state governments in Haryana, Jharkhand and few other states, reflecting overall view of SanghParivar in government, have only further tightened their steps for 'cow protection'.

In late 2016, the increasing violence against Muslims by vigilante groups prompted the then Chairperson of the National Commission for Minorities, Naseem Ahmed, to write to the Home Minister Rajnath Singh. He wrote, "We wish to bring to your kind notice the increasing violence against the Muslims by the so-called vigilante groups and the fear that this is creating across the country. This commission has been receiving petitions and has prepared reports on some of these incidents. Victims, in some cases, have also cited police apathy...All of this is vitiating the social fabric of the country and is bound to disturb the overall climate of co-existence amongst communities. In particular, it is creating an atmosphere of extreme insecurity and suspicions among the Muslims across the country and a deteriorating communal amity amongst communities that have traditionally lived together in peace and harmony. We believe that there is a need for a very strong statement from the highest levels of the government stating that such outlandish behaviour will neither be tolerated nor can it go unpunished and that the secular credentials of India will be protected by the state at all costs." This letter was written a month after Modi publicly condemned the self-styled GauRakshaks for the attack on Dalits in Una. However, Muslim votes were obviously not as important for Modi in the soon-to-be-held Uttar Pradesh elections. Consequently, no statement from "highest levels of the government" came in condemnation of the attacks on Muslims.

In fact, the RSS propaganda apparatus explains away the attacks by taking refuge in data. The number of communal incidents has not increased drastically in Modi's India, they argue, and so, the criticism about fear felt by minorities is a motivated claim. However, as the data put out by the Ministry of Home Affairs (see be-

low) shows, there is a general increasing trend and definitely no decline in recorded communal incidents.

But, these are only those violent incidents that are registered by police authorities. There are thousands of other "smaller" incidents of intimidation, beatings, damage to property, including damage to religious places, etc. that are now happening, perpetrated by fanatics from the Sanghparivar on members of minority communities. Mostly, these go unrecorded as "communal" and hence don't make it into home ministry reports.

Communal Incidents 2012-2016

Year	Incidents	Killed	Injured
2012	668	94	2117
2013	823	133	2269
2014	644	95	1921
2015	751	97	2264
2016	703	86	2321

Source: MHA Annual Reports

Several factors which elude the bounds of data have converged to contribute to a state of fear and panic among the minorities, particularly Muslims of several regions in the country. These include the license given to the so-called protectors of Mother Cow to indulge in targeted violence against Muslim farmers or cattle traders, although it may spill over to beatings and even killings of Hindu farmers some times. A related issue, raised by the Sanghparivar affiliated hooligans is that of beef eating which has been extended to all meat eating in UP after BJP's electoral victory. Various religious occasions are being utilised to take out provocative and armed processions. In fact, in both Bihar and UP, the Sanghparivar has undertaken massive campaigns like "Shiv Charcha" and "Ram Katha Paath" to spread its propaganda amongst naïve people in the name of religious observances. All these activities have a dual purpose: the short term one is to help in electoral gains, but the long term goal is to hammer the diversity of this country's people into a nar-

row, brahmanical version of Hinduism based on hatred and false pride.

Another aspect of how the Sanghparivar's parochial and hate based ideology is being spread by the Modi government is the use of pseudo-nationalism and militarism to foster a "pride" in the country's armed and paramilitary forces. While failing to curb terrorist attacks, the Modi government and the Sanghparivar, helped by a sycophantic media, is glorifying state violence. This too has a hidden agenda: it targets often Muslims and Pakistan, and urges an erroneous identification of the "nation" with Hindus only.

Whatever is happening in Kashmir is another major Hindutvavadi achievement. The situation in Kashmir has not only gone from bad to worse in the third year of this government, it has practically reached a stage of mass revolt in the Valley. Only 7% voting in Srinagar parliamentary bye-election, followed by only 3% voting in re-poll in dozens of booths shows the depth of alienation of Kashmiris. But the Modi government is not really concerned. Not only that, it has totally tied the hands of PDP-BJP alliance government of Mehbooba Mufti. She has repeatedly asked the Centre to start a political dialogue with all stake holders, but the Modi government clearly does not want any dialogue. This is in spite of the government's promise of starting a dialogue and confidence building measures given after the J&K visit of all-Party Parliamentary delegation led by the Home Minister himself. 'Tough' is the key word in Modi government's Kashmir policy. This government is hell bent upon forcing a security solution to an essentially political problem, which is bound to fail. But even this failure is a success for Hindutva forces, as they cynically seek to use the disturbed situation in Kashmir for their strident efforts to sharpen communal polarization elsewhere in the country, especially in Jammu. Pakistan is the external and Kashmir internal 'other' for this communal polarization.

All out offensive against secular research in general, and JNU and other prestigious universities in particular, is yet another important achievement of Hindutva forces. If second year of Modi government saw a direct offensive against left student activists, activi-

ties and student's union, the third year is seeing a serious offensive against research level entry in to these institutions. Current offensive that looks more successful than the last one, is naturally accompanied by steps for gradual destruction of democratic academic atmosphere in these institutions, with help of RSS filtered appointees everywhere. The latest controversy in once-prestigious Indian Institute of Mass Communications is an apt example. This institute is hosting a seminar on 'nationalistic' journalism, which is to be addressed by controversial ex-top cop of Chattisgarh, Kallori and is to be preceded by two hour long "yagna"! All this is part of RSS dictated education policy, formally still in process of formulation, but actually already in different stages of implementation. This policy is exclusively dictated by RSS and its affiliates. Fate of cultural organizations is no different. Only in addition to communalizing, they have also to commercialize. This is naturally weakening and even destroying the reputation of these institutions. BJP state governments' promotion of RSS supported "garbhsanskar" is not only promoting of mumbo jumbo as science and bringing Indian science to ridicule, it is also strengthening of racial prejudices through such 'best progeny' programme, inspired by the hated eugenics project of Hitler's Germany.

Further encouraged by latest electoral victories, specially in UP, BJP-RSS have intensified their campaign against left in general and CPI(M) in particular. Left is specially targeted as they consider it their main ideological adversary and biggest challenge to their project of converting India in to a "Hindu Rashtra." Second RSS chief Golwalkar, considered as main theoretician of Sangh, has identified communists, as one of three main enemies of their fundamental project, others being Muslims and Christians. Naturally left's main bastions are specially targeted. Since formation of LDF government in Kerala, RSS has intensified its violent attacks against CPI(M) cadre. At the same time, playing victim, they have also launched a massive disinformation campaign using all the clout of their central government. Meanwhile, RSS-BJP combine is working overtime to build an anti-communist alliance of all the communal and casteist forces. Similarly in Tripura where Left Front government is going

to complete its seventh term early next year and Assembly elections are to take place, RSS-BJP combine is trying to build anti-communist unity around itself. They have practically swallowed TMC in state and almost replaced Congress as centre of opposition. They are trying to cobble up alliance with tribal separatist organizations to complete their anti-left alliance, though this can disturb tribal-non tribal unity built by the left that is mainly responsible for Tripura being a peaceful exception in disturbed North-East. In Bengal, using mainly majority communalism card and taking advantage of ruling TMC using Muslim minority card, BJP is trying to push the left out of space of main opposition force. This campaign can only further intensify in fourth year of Modi government.

Masks are off as Modi government completes its three years. With real economy in bad shape and fast increasing unemployment exposing all its claims of development benefitting people, BJP-RSS is going to more and more openly show their real communal face to polarize the people. Forces of democracy and secularism can only expect more challenging times.



3 Years of the Govt: Constant Attack on Constitutional Rights

When the Modi government swept to power in May 2014, it did so without a single Muslim or Christian MP among the 282 who won on the party's ticket. In fact, SS Ahluwalia, a Sikh, and ThupstanChhewang, a Buddhist from Ladakh, were all that the BJP had to show by way of minority or non-Hindu representation among its flock. In a country in which the minorities account for over 20 per cent of the population, a party winning a majority in Parliament would be expected to have the diverse communities represented among its ranks. After all, an important aspect of democracy is that all sections feel they have a stake in power. But clearly, the BJP cares little for such niceties. Three years later, it jettisoned even the pretence of putting up Muslim candidates in UP, a state where almost a fifth of the population belongs to that community. If anything, the message has become even clearer – the minorities have no place in the BJP's scheme of things or in "sabkasaath".

The fundamentally undemocratic nature of the Modi government's vision of governance is laid bare not just by this stark reality, but by its actions in the three years it has been in power. Whether it is a question of individual rights or of political battles, the Modi government, the BJP and the larger sanghparivar have shown time and again that they don't need to think twice before trampling on democratic norms.

In just the year gone by, the instances of this contempt for democracy are several and unmistakable. The most obvious, of course, is the manner in which the government reduced almost 90% of all currency in circulation to worthless paper overnight. Another article in this booklet examines in greater detail how much damage was caused by this move, but even without going into the merits of the decision, there is no mistaking the autocratic impulse behind it. The prime minister and a handful of his chosen cronies did not even bother to consult the cabinet on something so enormously disruptive, leave alone the BJP's allies, Parliament or the people at large.

The same disregard for democratic norms was evident in the manner in which the BJP rushed to form governments in Manipur and Goa despite having lost the elections in both states. With governors who were not surprisingly willing to play along – the one in Goa actually went on record to say she had consulted Arun Jaitley about it!!! – the people's mandate was reduced to an irrelevancy. Given the manner in which the BJP had sought to destabilise the government in Uttarakhand earlier in its tenure and had successfully converted a Congress government in Arunachal Pradesh into its government, Manipur and Goa came as no surprise, but they did underline just how cavalier the party's attitude towards democratic norms is.

The manner in which Aadhar has been rammed down the throats of people is another example of this authoritarian attitude. Despite interim orders from courts that Aadhar cannot be made mandatory for welfare schemes, the government has simply gone ahead and in practice done just that without waiting for final orders. The manner in which the Aadhar law was passed was in itself another instance of the government riding roughshod over all dissent and opposition. Realising – after its experience with the land acquisition bill – that it would not be able to get the bill accepted by the Rajya Sabha, it simply dubbed it a money bill since money bills cannot be blocked by the Rajya Sabha. The fact that scores of constitutional experts said this was unconstitutional and that the Aadhar bill could not by any stretch be construed as a money bill mattered not one bit.

A similarly cavalier attitude has been exhibited by the

government in appointments to key academic bodies, the latest being the Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR). The primary claim of Braj Behari Kumar who's now the ICSSR head seems to be his views — that Modi is the best prime minister and worst victim of intolerance; that caste in its current form and untouchability are due to invasions by Arabs, Turks and Mughals; that Macaulay and Marxists led to India's intellectual decline; and, that the Opposition's support to JNU students hurt nationalistic sentiments. Never mind Kumar's academic credentials or the credibility of the institution nationally and internationally. He's clearly a Modi bhakt and that's good enough. Like a medieval monarchy dispensing favours, the Modi government has appointed Kumar and others just as unsuitable to a series of positions both in academia and in other institutions like the film censor board.

These blatantly authoritarian and undemocratic steps are of a piece with the larger thrust of the sanghparivar aimed at cowing down minorities and dissenting voices. The attacks on students in Hyderabad and JNU that had already signalled the intent to muzzle dissent in the early part of the government's tenure have been kept up in its third year, with a funds squeeze on universities being just another weapon for dealing with these potential centres of dissent.

Beyond the universities, the bigger picture reveals a consistent pattern of fanning a militarist 'nationalism' and of labelling anybody disagreeing with this approach an anti-national. The attempt is to reduce the equation to two choices – you're both a camp follower of Modi and the sanghparivar or you are an anti-national. What could be more undemocratic than this false dichotomy? This false binary was foisted on all those who chose to disagree with the 'ban' on Pakistani artists appearing in Indian films.

Arguably the most blatant exhibition of the Modi-led BJP's undemocratic nature was in the shutting down of slaughter houses in BJP run states in the aftermath of the party's victory in UP. While the move was ostensibly only against "illegal" slaughter houses, the agenda was clear. A trade would be effectively shut down because it was largely controlled by a community the ruling party has no

love lost for. The excesses of the anti-Romeo squads in UP once again betrayed a complete lack of respect for individual rights and choices and the intent to impose the sanghparivar's medieval world view, by force if need be.

None of this should surprise us. After all, the Modi government began by enacting an ordinance so a person of his choice could be appointed principal secretary in violation of the law as it then stood. And the sanghparivar's contempt for democracy was manifested just as clearly when its governments in Rajasthan and Haryana effectively made the overwhelming majority of rural women, Dalits and tribals ineligible to hold panchayats positions by imposing educational qualifications for these posts. While they should not surprise us, therefore, they should shock all those who value democracy into fighting these authoritarian trends before they gain further steam.



3 Years of the Govt: Dalit Suffering has Increased

The Modi government has completed three years at the Centre. The BJP came to power with the slogan of 'Sabka sath Sabka vikas' but in practice, the governance of the country has become 'Poonjipatika Sath Vanchitonka Vinash' (Support the capitalists, destroy the deprived). Modi went around saying that he was from the 'pichhdavarg' (backward class) and played with identity politics. But all this was done just to get votes. All his promises have only been election *jumlas* (bluffs).

The marginalised communities - Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes along with the minorities - have been on the receiving end in these three years. They have been given lesser priority than the 'cow'. But none of the misdeeds of the present regime are part of the discussions in the media.

False Promises

The best way to expose the misrule of BJP is to look at their Election Manifesto for 2014 general Elections and then compare it to actual implementation.

"BJP is committed to eliminate manual scavenging"

This promise is far from reality. In fact, in the 2017-18 Budget presented this year, Modi government reduced allocation for the rehabilitation of manual scavengers to half - from 10 crore to 5 crore. According to the 2011 Census, there are nearly 26,07,612 dry latrines, which require 2,00,000 workers for this in human work. If

we take into consideration the number of people who are engaged in cleaning the sewers and railway tracks, it would be an even bigger number. If we were to calculate Rs. 40,000 that is given as cash incentive per person for the rehabilitation of the people engaged as manual scavengers Rs. 800 crore would be required. Only 7,573 people were rehabilitated till 15 February 2016. That leaves a whopping 1,92,427 more people still to be rehabilitated. There is no data on how many dry-latrines have been even discarded or dismantled to claim as part of Modi's 'Swachh Bharat' programme.

"We [BJP] will accord highest priority to ensuring their security, especially the prevention of atrocities against SCs & STs."

The Hindutva forces have been emboldened since BJP came to power. The above quoted claim made during the election campaign is far from reality. As one of the victims of Saharanpur violence said, "We are Hindus for the elections and after that we become untouchables." Dalits have been facing severe atrocities under their rule. The recent attack on the Dalits in Shabbirpur, Saharanpur district, Uttar Pradesh is a reminder that whenever Dalits seek to uphold their human dignity they would be attacked to reinforce the caste codes in the society.

On May 5 in Saharanpur, upper caste Thakurs took out a procession which had been refused permission by the administration, in connection with the installation of a statue of Maharana Pratap in Shimlana village. One of the groups marching towards the venue went through the dalit basti of Shabbirpur shouting aggressive slogans and playing loud music to which the dalits objected. It should be noted that the dalits in this village had tried to install a statue of Dr Ambedkar on April 14 this year, to which the Thakurs had objected. The administration had stopped the installation. In this background, the dalits correctly objected to what was a blatant demonstration of upper-caste arrogance and bravado. When the police intervened, the Thakurs joined by many of their caste-brethren brutally attacked the dalits.

65 houses, agricultural implements, cattle fodder and motor cycles were destroyed in the arson attack. Scores of people, mainly elderly men, women and children were beaten up, of whom 14 to 15

persons were seriously injured. The police remained mute spectators to this violent assault.

A few days before the Shabbirpur incident, 54-year old Ghulam Ahmad of Sohi village, Bulandshahr district was beaten to death by Yuva Vahini men who claimed to have been 'enraged' by the elopement of a Hindu woman with a Muslim man in a neighbouring village. If these forces continue to be encouraged, Uttar Pradesh will become a cauldron of caste and communal violence.

Another horrendous incident that evoked widespread protest was the attack by the gaurakshaks on four Dalit youths in Una while they were involved in their traditionally forced work of disposing dead animals. The youth were publicly flogged using the police baton. It shows that the police have a tacit support for gaurakshaks.

Every year the Ministry of Home Affairs brings out the 'Crime Scenario in the Country' in its annual report. It is interesting to note that although there is an increase in media reports of atrocities against Dalits, there is a clear decline in the cases registered under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. The cases registered in 2013 against this Act were 13,975 and have decreased to 6,005, a massive decrease of 133%, in 2015. The data shows that there is an increase in most other crime cases, including other crimes against dalits. In all probability, police have been instructed to curtail registering cases under the POA in order to bring about an artificial dip in the data. Otherwise, how is it that all crimes are increasing steadily over the years, yet atrocities against Dalits have suddenly started decreasing from 2014?

No Jobs for Dalits

Dalits area community with no access to property. Employment in the government sector had been a major contributor for their progress. With the governments of the day adopting the neo-liberal economic agenda which increases privatisation, the numbers of government jobs have been decreasing. The BJP government which has been making a noise about empowering Dalits, has no concrete policy for recruiting to fulfil the backlog in jobs. The last special drive to fulfil the backlog posts for the SC/STs was carried out in the year 2008.

Incidents of crime against Scheduled Castes during 2011-2015

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	% change 2013 to 2015
Murder	673	651	676	794	813	20.27
Rape	1,557	1,576	2,073	2,388	2,541	22.58
SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act	11,342	12,576	13,975	8,887	6,005	-132.72
Other crime						
against SCs	14,958	14,164	16,797	27,017	27,684	64.8

Source: MHA Annual Report, 2016-17.

BJPs Denial of Budget allocations to the Dalits

The government had provisions called the Special Component Plan(SCP) for proportional allocations in the budget for the SC/ST population. These allocations were monitored by the Planning Commission. This year's (2017) budget has been a bane for the Dalits with the planned economy being scrapped. According to the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR), the budgetary allocations for the SC-ST as a proportion to their populations, should have been Rupees 91,386 crore and 47,276 crore respectively. But the current allocations are only 55% for the Dalits- Rs 52,393 crore and 66.5% for the Adivasis -Rs 31,920 crore. Even these figures are not exclusively for SC-ST population. They include allocations that are for other sectors as well. The SC/ST MPs had written to the PM stating that "The increase is notional as the funds for SC/STs have been diverted to administrative heads such as salaries, pensions and the like rather than properly-targeted schemes for empowerment of the SC-STs."

The provisions that directly benefit Dalits are scholarships. The MPs pointed out that an outstanding amount of Rs 11,267.61 crore of scholarships was pending from the previous years. Education has been the vehicle for social mobility for the SCs.This deliberate delay

is a way to make the Dalit students drop out from schools and colleges.

Alternative to BJP's jumlas- The Real Empowerment of the Dalits

On the other hand,CPI(M) led governments in Kerala and Tripura have retained the planned budget. Dr. Thomas Isaac said in his budget speech, "Rs. 26.00 billion for SCP (Special Component Plan) and Rs. 7.51 billion for TSP (Tribal Sub Plan) are earmarked. 9.81% of total outlay is being earmarked for SC population, who comprise 9.10% of total population. 2.83% is earmarked for STs who form 1.45% of the population. Rs. 1.88 billion for Scheduled Castes and Rs. 3.66 billion for Scheduled Tribe has been allocated in excess of the proportionate normative share. This allocation is higher than that of any other State in India."

The message of alternative development taking place in the Left ruled states are an answer to the hollow 'ache din' of the BJP.

3 Years of the Govt: Foreign Policy in Shambles

Over these three years of Modi raj, we have seen India abandon its position as an important, independent voice of the global south, and relegate itself to a subordinate ally of the US. Nearer home, Indian policy on Pakistan, China and Nepal has been a complete failure. Poorly thought out and ill-prepared initiatives, have been accompanied by noisy sabre-rattling and brinkmanship. And at home, the callous responses to incidents of racism against African students, have led to a backlash against India in Africa, and could, possibly, have long-term diplomatic repercussions.

The primary focus of Modi's foreign policy is Modi: all policy has been almost entirely Modi-centric, complete with gala media events during his more than frequent foreign tours. The Ministry of External Affairs and India's professional diplomats have been kept out of the loop; the consequence has been a complete lack of serious diplomatic engagement during such visits. Rhetoric and atmospherics – shadow over substance – has been the dominant theme. This has been compounded by a view of India's foreign policy through a narrow, security lens; and in the eyes of the world, virtually hyphenating India with its much smaller neighbour Pakistan.

India-US Defence Agreements

India signed a 10-year Defence Framework Agreement with the US in 2015. It has now followed this up with three more

agreements – the Logistics Support Agreement (LSA), the Communication and Information Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA), and the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA). The Logistics Support Agreement has been re-christened the Logistics Exchange Memorandum Agreement (LEMOA), but this is only a cosmetic exercise. All three, along with the Framework Agreement, commit India to providing its harbours, airfields and bases to the US armed forces, to “borrowing” Indian equipment, and to integrating the Indian armed forces through “inter-operability” of their arms and equipment. Not only will India act as a base for US military misadventures in the region; it will also buy US military hardware so that both forces use the same military equipment, and integrate themselves within a common military command and control structure. This is going well beyond a conventional military pact. This is, in fact, the biggest sell-out of India's strategic interests – an anti-national act without parallel in India's history.

The Malabar naval war games carried out last year by the US, Japan and India in the Japan Sea near Okinawa and off the Philippines, are clearly a part of the US attempt to meddle in the South China Sea controversy between China, Vietnam and the Philippines. India has been toeing the US line on the South China Sea.

Many pronouncements by the Indian and the US side, have stressed the interoperability of the two navies. Commenting on the possession of Boeing P-8 Poseidon military aircrafts by both the Indian Navy and the US Navy, Vice Admiral Joseph P Aucoin said, “I would like those two aircraft working together and to hunt submarines.” For this interoperability, India has spent one billion dollars to procure four P8I aircraft from Boeing.

Along with these interoperability agreements, the Modi government is also allowing 100% FDI in defence. US companies can set up 100% owned subsidiaries, transfer no technology to India, and simply sell India US hardware, claiming it is from India. This is Modi's Make-in-India policy, distinct from the earlier Made-in-India policy that demanded transfer of technology to India. With

India totally dependent on foreign military know-how and hardware, its armed forces will lose their ability to function independent of the US.

Strains with neighbours

Under Modi, India's relationship with its neighbours – Pakistan, China and Nepal – has sunk to a new low. It reflects the simplistic belief shared by Modi and the BJP's that foreign policy is a matter of bluff and bluster. But countries, even small ones, are not cowed by either military or economic threats. Bypassing the External Affairs Ministry has also meant that there has been no preparation for any serious engagement. Hurried, ad-hoc meetings with foreign leaders have been combined with grandstanding in the media. This has resulted in long-term damage to India's relationship in the region.

In the case of Pakistan, Modi began well by inviting PM Nawaz Sharif and other SAARC leaders to his swearing-in ceremony. But soon after, the proposed talks between the two foreign secretaries were called off, because of the Pakistani Ambassador's meeting with Hurriyat leaders. Modi's subsequent air dash to Lahore, and the ensuing *pappi jhappi*, was followed by the Pathankot terror attack, and the fiasco over the visits of the investigators. The Indian Army conducted a cross-border raid, hyped by Modi spokespersons as a "surgical strike", as if the Indian Army had not made similar strikes in the past. A climate of hyper-nationalism was encouraged. Any call for peace between India and Pakistan was deemed to be treason.

Earlier, there was at least a start and stop process of talks: talks and break down of the talks. In the last year, it has been an eye-ball to eye-ball confrontation between two nuclear armed states; a confrontation that can spin out of control at any moment. Modi's claim that playing tough will force Pakistan to sue for peace has been proven for what it always was, simple hot air. Terrorist violence, cross border violence and the loss of lives of both civilians and armed personnel have only increased under Modi's stewardship.

India's relations with China have followed a similar trajectory. The initial warmth in Ahmedabad quickly evaporated in the stand-off in Ladakh. Relations deteriorated with India's endorsement of

the US position on South China Sea in a joint statement; India's participation in a joint naval exercise with the US and Japan; China's opposition to India's NSG membership; China's blocking a UN declaration that Masood Azhar is a terrorist (which he undoubtedly is); India's retaliation inviting an Uighur activist designated as a terrorist by Interpol, and encouraging Dalai Lama's visit to Arunachal Pradesh. Together, these moves have brought India China relations to its lowest level in decades.

India has refused to join the Belt Road Initiative (or the One Belt One Road project) for which almost 100 countries have signed up. The endorsement by so many countries to building a common Eurasian-African road, rail and sea based trade network, is likely to leave India isolated. By hinging its opposition to the Belt Road Initiative primarily on the route of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor, India has cut itself off from the emerging trade connectivity with the rest of Eurasia. It is instructive that even the US, which backed India in its opposition to the Belt Road Initiative, sent a delegation to the recent international meet in Beijing. India's policy of tying itself to the US apron strings in Asia is rapidly unravelling, with India looking quite a bit like the odd man out.

India's handling of Nepal has been equally poor. In Nepal, India was perceived as encouraging the Madhesis in their long strike, in effect helping impose a blockade on all goods going from India to Nepal. Much goodwill was lost. This situation was not exactly improved by the likes of Adityanath arguing for a restoration of the discredited monarchy in Nepal because it was a Hindu one.

US Nuclear Deal

The only silver lining in India's foreign relations is that the India US Nuclear Deal, which the Left had opposed, has collapsed, though with no thanks to the Modi government. Westinghouse has filed for bankruptcy in the US, and only the very foolish would now go ahead with its offer to set up six Westinghouse units in Kovvada, Andhra. Hopefully, the guarantee the Modi government had given Westinghouse regarding underwriting suppliers' liability will not come back to haunt us, as the Vajpayee government's sovereign

guarantees to Enron did.

Israel

India has abandoned its policy support to national liberation struggles, and refuses to condemn Israel's continued occupation of Palestine, the only occupied country in the world today. It is now the major arms buyer of Israeli arms, buying more arms from it than even Israel's own armed forces. In the last 15 years, India has placed orders for more than \$10 billion of Israeli arms and equipment, in spite of repeated proof of corruption in such deals. Even after serious slippages – e.g. Barak naval missiles' slippage of more than six years — Israel is being rewarded with new orders worth \$ 2.63 billion for the same Barak missiles, both the land and the naval versions. Both these have been signed in the last one month. Other big-ticket deals worth another \$ 2 billion are in the pipeline.

All these deals are presumably to sweeten Modi's visit to Israel this July. India buying high value military items has also become a pattern of Modi's foreign visits. We saw this is the case of the \$ 8.5 billion Rafale deal, where all defence procurement norms were jettisoned to get Modi's a royal welcome in France.

Racism

The Modi government's insensitivity to racism was highlighted by its callous and graceless response to the attacks on African students in Delhi and other places. Consequently, envoys of 44 African nations met in Delhi and called for an independent investigation by the UN Human Rights Council on the repeated racist violence unleashed on African students.

By distancing itself from independent policy, the Modi government has made India vulnerable to losing visibility and voice in all international fora. For the first time, an Indian Prime Minister did not show up for the Non-Aligned Summit. Today, India is seen as a subordinate ally of the US. Its hyper "nationalist" narrative is not anchored in anti-imperialism, the hallmark of the national movement, but in bombast and rhetoric. Its sole success in foreign affairs is limited to its "victory" in the television studios over its political opponents.

3 Years of the Govt: People are hurting because there are no jobs

In the whole of last year, just 2.3 lakh jobs were added in eight key non-farm sectors of the economy ranging, according to a recent govt. report. These eight sectors are manufacturing, construction, trade, transport, accommodation & restaurants, IT/BPO, education and health. All together, they employ over 2 cr workers. So, the addition of new jobs amounts to a mere 1.1% of the total.

Remember: Narendra Modi himself, and all his associates in the government had promised the people of India that tackling unemployment by creating jobs will be the biggest priority of their government. They had promised that their much tom-tommed programs like 'Make in India', 'Skill India', 'Startup India' and others would resolve the joblessness that haunts India and set the country on the path of prosperity. Modi had in fact justified his kowtowing to foreign investors by saying that their investments will create jobs.

Now, three years down the line all this has vanished in thin air. Modi, Jaitley, et al are no longer talking about creating jobs. All the schemes are forgotten. They are just concentrating on winning elections and thinking up new tricks to fool the people like removing red lights from VIP cars or visiting temples to pray. Meanwhile people across the country are wondering – what happened to all the promises of jobs?

Reports from the rural job guarantee scheme (MGNREGS) indicate that unemployment continues unabated and in fact it seems to be worsening. In Modi's first year as Prime Minister, 4.65 crore households demanded work in the scheme. Next year, in 2015-16, this number had increased 15% to reach 5.35 crore. Then, in 2016-17, it further increased by 6% to reach a staggering 5.69 crore households in search of work.

Even as the demand for low paying work in MGNREGS increases, 10-11% of applicants are not given jobs. According to govt. data, last year nearly 58 lakh households that wanted work in the scheme were turned back.

In the current financial year 2017-18, only 35 days have passed but the number of households demanding work has already crossed 1.38 crore. This is despite the fact that last year's monsoon was much better than the preceding years.

As per the latest report, increase in new jobs is not only very slow but also that it is highly imbalanced. For instance almost half of the 2.1 lakh new jobs added are in two sectors – education and health which together added 1.1 lakh new jobs.

Growth in manufacturing jobs is recorded as being just short of 1%, and that too because of a sudden increase in the last quarter of 2016. This in itself is highly suspect because it was in this period that the disastrous demonetization was imposed on the country, with consequent job losses.

Manufacturing sector is the backbone of the non-farm economy and employs nearly half of the workers in the selected eight sectors. A mere one percent growth is virtually nothing for this massive sector. This is despite the fact that it was the target of attention by the Modi govt. through its 'Make in India' and 'Skill India' programs, as also of efforts to woo foreign direct investment. It is clear that all this has failed spectacularly.

The failure of Indian capitalist class to invest more in manufacturing, coupled with reluctance of foreign capital to invest in productive work in India, means that not only are new jobs not being created but existing ones are being cut on a country-wide scale. This is leading to a worsening of the job situation, forget about

improvement. Several recent reports by industry analysts indicate that IT, telecom and the banking & financial services sectors which have been the main job creators in recent years are now getting rid of their workforce. One report says that these three sectors will throw out at least 10 lakh employees in the coming 12-18 months because of a slowing economy, mergers among telecom giants and automation. Many of the startups – much applauded by Modi – are folding up or demanding more concessions to survive.

Where are the jobs? (Lakh)

	Total jobs change	Change Jan 16-Jan 17	% in 2016
Manufacturing	101.2	1.0	0.9
Construction	3.7	-0.3	-6.8
Trade	14.5	0.3	1.8
Transport	5.8	0.2	3.1
Acc.& Restaurants	7.7	-0.1	-0.9
IT/BPO	10.4	0.2	2.1
Education	50.0	0.7	1.3
Health	12.1	0.4	2.9
Total	205.2	2.3	1.1

Source: Quarterly Employment Survey, Labour Bureau, Mar 2017

Even foreign analysts, who otherwise do not tire of praising Modi, are worried about the lack of job growth. Over 30% of youth aged 15-29 in India are not in employment, education or training (NEETs), according to a recent report by the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), an organization of advanced capitalist countries. This is more than double the OECD average of 14.6% and almost three times that of China (11.2%).

Although the govt. has been patting itself on the back for the projected high GDP growth rate for India, the nuts and bolts of the

economy are all in deep freeze. This is why there is no growth in jobs.

The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) released monthly by the govt. confirms this dire situation with a rise of a mere one per cent between January 2015 and January 2017.

According to latest data from the Reserve Bank of India, the same period saw gross bank credit to industries increasing by a mere 0.3%. This includes credit disbursals to micro, small, medium and large industries and together makes up nearly 40% of all non-food credit. The meager increase in credit to industry is a symptom of the flagging growth in manufacturing which is also reflected in lack of jobs growth.

Further confirmation of the languishing manufacturing sector comes from second advanced estimates of national income and expenditure released by the govt. last month. Growth in investment in fixed capital known as gross fixed capital formation dipped by a

factor of 10 between 2015-16 and 2016-17 from 6.1% to a shocking 0.6% in 2016-17. This implies that the corporate sector is not investing in new production arrangements.

Growth in gross value added (GVA) at basic prices – a measure of actual production – has slipped from 7.8% in 2015-16 to 6.7% in 2016-17. This is yet another confirmation that the economy is not too well. And hence the flagging growth in jobs.



3 Years of the Govt: Boon for Corporate Defaulters

India's banking system, which was robust enough to withstand the financial crisis of 2008, is facing yet another crisis today. The banks, particularly the public sector ones, are burdened with huge amounts of non performing assets (NPAs), which are threatening the viability of the banking sector.

In the last three years, under BJP rule at the center, the NPAs of the banks have tripled – from Rs. 2.3 lakh crores to Rs. 6.8 lakh crores. Currently, the NPAs of public sector banks stand as high as 11% of their total advances.

Non-repayment of loans by some India's biggest corporate houses is the major cause of this huge accumulation of NPAs. According the chairman of Parliamentary Accounts Committee, K V Thomas, a handful of big corporate houses account for 70% of the NPAs of the banks.

The Finance Minister Mr. Arun Jaitly, tried to absolve himself and his government of all the blame, claiming that the NPAs are a legacy problem. According to him the loans that were given during UPA government have turned bad and are accumulating as NPAs today.

While there is no doubt that UPA government was generous with its favours to the corporates, the BJP government has been outdoing its predecessor. If the UPA government compelled the public sector banks to dole out loans worth lakhs of crores to a handful of corporates, the BJP government is helping the same corporates in continuing to default on the repayments – with the aid of loan re-financing and restructuring schemes introduced by the Reserve Bank.

In the last three Modi years, public sector banks have been pressured to restructure bad loans (under various schemes of RBI) worth Rs. 3.5 lakh crores belonging to the corporate houses, which have been treating banks as their personal piggy banks. These restructuring deals simply meant that the companies get new loans to pay off their old loans, which they have already defaulted on. These schemes also involve changing the terms of payments completely in favour of the defaulting corporates and to the detriment of the banks' interests

The infamous case of how Vijay Mallya defrauded the public sector banks, is all too well known. Less publicised are those of Modi's own crony capitalists, whose bad loans to the public sector banks are of even higher order. It is estimated that companies controlled by Adani, on whose airplanes Mr. Modi takes occasional rides, owe a debt of Rs. 72,000 crores to the banking system, much of which is to the public sector banks.

After BJP formed government at the center, two power companies controlled by Mr. Adani's firms have been extended loan refinance worth Rs. 15,000 crore by the public sector banks. This was done when both the companies' earnings -before tax- were not even enough to cover the interest cost on the loans they have taken. In this sweetheart deal, the previous defaulted loans were replaced with new loans and loan repayment date was extended by one more decade. Additionally, a moratorium on interest payments was given for a considerable period, meaning that in this period these two firms need not pay even the interest amount.

Similarly, Reliance Gas Transport Infrastructure Ltd. (RGTIL), a corporate entity controlled by Mr. Mukesh Ambani, was given a generous treatment by public sector banks after Mr. Modi's ascent to power at the Centre. RGTIL was given a loan refinance of Rs. 4,500 crores and an extension of payment period by more than a decade.

According to finance minister Arun Jaitley, most of the NPAs and bad loans are due to projects in power, infrastructure, mining and steel sectors - which are owned by the large corporates like Reliance, Adani and Vedanta. Let us not forget, these are the same

companies (remember Vedanta's land grab in Orissa), whose factories and plants were set up by grabbing thousands of acres of land belonging to farmers and tribals.

These billionaire promoters and owners of the companies should have been compelled to transfer the shares (equity) in these companies, to the public sector banks, in lieu of the unpaid loans. Or, they should have been made to inject fresh capital into the defaulting companies. Refinancing of the loans, extension of payment schedules and moratoriums on interest payments - without placing any responsibility on those who control the companies are bound to bring even heavier losses to the banks in the coming days.

The government seems to think that Mukesh Ambani, with net worth of more than Rs. 1.5 lakh crore rupees needs assistance in paying back the loans of his companies, while the farmers of this country are supposed to swallow the bitter pill - either kill themselves or sell their lands, if they cannot repay their loans after severe droughts and crop losses.

Desperate after years of drought, farmers from Tamil Nadu and elsewhere have been agitating for months for loan waivers. Their appeals to the central government have fallen on deaf ears. Modi government steadfastly refused to provide any assistance to the debt ridden farmers. Are the farmer's making ridiculous demands? Consider this - The entire amount of crop loans in India is worth Rs. 75,000 crore, while Mr. Adani firms alone owe Rs. 72,000 crores to the banking system. Mr. Adani gets a generous restructuring on the defaulted loans, while the farmers get tough love.

Farmers who could not pay back their loans are named and shamed. List of their names are displayed in public. Their possessions are auctioned off without any compunction. Then, what stops the government from instructing the banks to mete out the same treatment to the billionaire defaulters? After all, the Supreme Court has already mandated that list of defaulters be made public.

In more ways than one, it is the public money that is being squandered in the NPA mess. The banks are owned by the government and hence belong to the public. The deposits on the basis of which loans are advanced also belong to the public. Nearly 60% of

the deposits with banks are made by households, while another 15% of the deposits are made by the government sector. Effectively, the losses of the banks are also the losses of the public, both as depositors and as owners.

While the corporates that rob the public of their money are being given a free pass, Mr. Modi's pets in RBI are baying for the blood of public sector banks. Recently, RBI's deputy chairman Viral Acharya suggested that the solution to the NPA crisis is re-privatisation of some of the public sector banks and some divestment of government's stake in others, in favour of private players. RBI Chairman, Mr. Urjit Patel was not far behind, with suggestion that small banks afflicted with NPA problems should be allowed to perish naturally. The RBI satraps seem to be forgetting that it is the bulwark of public sector banks that protected India's financial system from the crisis of 2008.

After all, who has the money to buy banks in India - the same set of billionaires and the top industrial houses? These are the same companies, which owe, Rs. 5 lakh crores to India's ailing public sector banks, much of which are bad assets. Clearly it is not enough, that Indian corporates have defrauded banks of the public money - in return for their great deeds, they are now being offered the ownership of these banks.

The suggestion that troubled public sector banks be sold to these private players, who to begin with are the cause of the banks' troubles, is mind boggling and smacks of crony capitalism that afflicts the present government and its top administration.

Concession after concession given to corporates is what marks Mr. Modi's 3 years at the helm and there is no indication of change in course away from this. Mr. Modi is making sure that those whose money purses have brought him power are going to stay safe and sound from the consequences of their own financial and business follies. Now that he has passed a law allowing corporates to make anonymous donations to political parties, grateful corporates will no doubt be flooding him with gratitude funds for his never ending election campaigns.

3 Years of the Govt: What it Means to be a Woman Under Modi Raj?

Three years of Modi Raj. How has it been for the women of this country? In one word: devastating. Budget spending on women related programs has been cut, employment opportunities for women are nowhere in sight, unbridled violence against women continues and on top of everything, we have scores of RSS-inspired leaders who are openly preaching a return to medieval times with women locked inside domestic walls, wearing "proper" clothes and behaving respectfully towards men. No surprise that the promise of passing the Women's Reservation Bill is not even on the govt.'s agenda.

Cuts in govt. spending on women

For the past 2 years we have seen significant cuts in the gender budget, and this year also the pattern continues. When Finance Minister, Arun Jaitley, presented the budget it was called a budget for women by Ministry for Women and Child Development. But what do the numbers say?

This year's budget was a disappointment in terms of gender budget. There are many schemes and programmes which don't have separate allocations for women. Dairy and fishery are two industries that provide employment to a large number of women and yet their budget has no separate allocation for women. Same goes for the various agricultural schemes.

The only food related programme which has a separate allocation for women is National Food Security Scheme which saw a meagre increase of Rs. 60 crore.

According to the Economic Survey 2016-17, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme has 57% participation of women workers. Finance Minister claims to have increased the scheme's budget by 26%, from Rs. 38,500 crores in 2016-17 to Rs. 48,000 crores in 2017-18. But the revised estimate of 2016-17 for the scheme was Rs. 47,499 crores, which makes the increase in this year's budget just 1%. We know how Modi government likes to forge numbers but take a closer look and you can easily call their bluff. We regularly see reports about the non-payment of wages under MGNREGS. These workers are amongst the poorest of our country, their wages are a matter of survival for them. Did the Finance Minister think a puny increase of 1% will solve the crisis of non-payments this scheme is facing?

Integrated Child Development Scheme employs only women and caters to the nutritional needs of 0-6 year old children. Minister for Women and Child Development, Maneka Gandhi, informed the Rajya Sabha in May, 2015 that there are 24.58 lakh women employed under the scheme. These women are not considered workers and in lieu of their services are given a meagre amount of money as honorarium. Anganwadi workers have been demanding for years that they are brought under the definition of workers. But like the preceding Congress government, Modi government too has been ignoring their just demands. These workers don't get their paltry honorarium regularly. In the financial year 2015-16, according to WCD ministry, the scheme endured 50% budget cut. Similarly, in financial year 2016-17, the scheme's budget was cut by another 6%. In this year's budget, it saw a minimal increase of Rs. 34.79 crores, from Rs. 411.68 crores in revised estimate (2016-17) to Rs. 446.47 crores. This "increase" will not be able to cater to the needs of this extremely important scheme.

On New Year's Eve, PM Modi claimed to launch a new scheme for pregnant women of the country called maternity benefits programme. In reality, it was just expansion of an already existing

scheme. Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY) was introduced in 2010 and in 2013 was brought under National Food Security Act. On 17th May 2017, the cabinet decided to limit the scheme to only firstborns as opposed to earlier when it was for first two live births. This excludes a large number of women from the scheme. In violation of the NFSA, the government has also decided to provide only Rs.5000 to the mothers instead of Rs.6000. Also, this benefit will be linked to Aadhar cards, which will leave out thousands of women. The Modi government has allocated only Rs 2700 crore for this in 2017. This will cover only 17 percent of the 2.6 crore live childbirths per year in India. It is evident that the centre government is trying to rid of its responsibilities toward women of the country by such moves.

No work for women

A report by the Labour Bureau published in 2016 revealed that just 22% of women over the age of 15 were working on a regular basis, compared to 74% men in the same age group. In urban areas, the working women's share slips to a mere 14%. This shocking state of affairs, which puts India at rank 136 out of 145 countries for gender parity in work, is not new: it has continued like this for many years. But Modi govt is completely blind to this. No policy has been announced to encourage more job opportunities for women, no special measures for preparing women to take up jobs has been thought of, technical training for women still focuses on beautician and tailoring courses and there is no attempt to address safety and security issues for women in workplaces.

Wage differentials between men and women doing the same work continue as before, maternity leave and other benefits are not available to the bulk of working women and special provisions like creches at workplaces are rarely found even in ultra-modern industries, forget about the smaller units.

As a result, women's unemployment was pegged at 8.7%, more than double that for men, according to the report. This is of course based on reporting by women who said they wanted to work but couldn't find it. The vast majority of women are simply confined to

their homes with no hope for working, even in dire circumstances, because of the stranglehold of patriarchal thought on families. Modi, and the Sanghparivar are not in the least bothered by this as it fits in with their ideology completely.

In 2015, WCD minister, Maneka Gandhi, made a request to Finance and Corporate Affairs minister, ArunJaitely, to make it mandatory for companies to disclose whether they have constituted an anti-sexual harassment committee. ArunJaitely rejected the request stating that industry representatives are against this type of enhanced disclosure and this is not desirable. This shows that as long as the industries are happy it is absolutely fine to ignore Vishaka guidelines which directs the offices where women work to have in place an anti-sexual harassment committee.

Hindutva inspired approach to women

It may be easier to rectify the errors in policies and implementations of schemes. But what the Modi government and its motherboard RSS is trying to do with the fabric and structure of our society will be extremely difficult to undo. They are propagating the anti-women agenda intensively and it is evident in the comments and statements their ministers, BJP leaders and RSS members make regularly.

This year in March, minister for Women and Child Development, Maneka Gandhi, made a statement which brought her under fire. She has said on record that there should be an earlier curfew for women in their hostels for their own protection. She went on to say that a 16-17 year old girl is 'hormonally challenged'. Hence, a *lakshmanrekha* is drawn to control the 'hormonal outburst'. According to her "logic" women are responsible for their own safety and to ensure it, they should just remain in confines. Young adult females' hormonal equilibrium is too fragile to let them out in society. She justifies the patriarchal norm of keeping women locked away in order to "protect" them.

The appointment of Yogi Adityanath as chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, shows that the government is dead set to push the *hindutva* agenda which is devastating for women. This is the same person

who had said in a speech that dead bodies of Muslim women should be dug out of their graves and be raped to avenge the so called "Love Jihad". A person who thinks that raping a woman, dead or alive, is acceptable is now the Chief Minister of the largest state in the country. This is the ideology that the RSS and their political extension BJP upholds.

Immediately, after becoming the CM of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath, ordered the police to form 'anti-Romeo squads' to curb incidents of eve teasing. But media reports show, that this squad has primarily targeted couples, often beating them up, as recorded on videos available on social media. This is not an attempt to protect women from harassment but a thinly veiled plan to prevent inter-caste and inter-religion marriages. This again is an attack on a women's right to choose their partner.

Similarly the BJP leader, Manohar Lal Khattar, had said that women are the reason behind rising incidents of rape in India. He is now the Chief Minister of Haryana since the last three years.

Violence against women

Violence against women in its myriad forms continues unabated under Modi's rule, despite much chest thumping by diverse BJP leaders about protecting "our mothers and sisters". Police records, which reflect only the tip of the iceberg, show an uptick in 2015 over 2013 for rape, attempt to rape, kidnapping and abduction, assaults, and domestic violence among others. Strangely, the bunch of penal provisions related to dowry exhibit a dip. This may be because the Sanghparivar and BJP has always been wishy washy about opposing the heinous practice of dowry and its barbaric product, dowry deaths, probably resulting in a lower registration of cases by the police. In all, recorded crimes against women increased by 5.8% in 2015 compared to the last non-Modi year 2013.

The appalling state of convictions by courts in cases of crimes against women continues under Modi rule, worsening in several instances. While conviction rates for rape, attempt to rape, kidnapping and abduction showed minor increases, they are still such that roughly three quarters of those brought to trial are let off

by courts. Conviction rates for three other violent crimes against women – assaults with intent to “outrage modesty”, “insult to modesty” and cruelty by husbands and relatives – actually declined under Modi if one compares 2015 to 2013. Overall, under Modi raj, conviction rates for crimes against women have declined from an already outrageous 22.4% in 2013 to 21.7% in 2015.

Major crimes against women	% increase 2013-2015
Rape	2.8
Attempt to rape	4.8
Kidnapping & Abduction	14.3
Assault with intent to outrage modesty	16.5
Abetment to suicide	8.7
Domestic violence	8.2
Dowry deaths	-5.5
Cruelty by husbands and relatives	-4.5
Dowry prohibition act	-7.6
All	5.8

Source: NCRB

Since last year, Modi government has taken upon the responsibility of salvation of Muslim women by ending triple Talaq. While this practice is no doubt anti-woman but is the Modi government really interested in the welfare of Muslim women? It doesn't seem like it. Because BJP's and Modi's answer to this archaic practice is uniform civil code. One might ask what will be the character of this uniformity. We all know RSS wants to make India a Hindu Rashtra. So, one can infer that this proposed uniformity will destroy our multi-cultural society to create the nation of RSS' dream.

Also, Modi and his beloved Sanghparivar, who consider themselves the sole repository and protector of Hinduism, have completely failed to raise their voice against a host of heinous anti-women practices which are widely prevalent in the majority community. These include dowry, dowry murders, son preference driven female feticide and infanticide, and various rituals and customs

for keeping women enslaved to menfolk. To don the cloak of reform of anti-women practices in Islam only and turn a blind eye towards Hinduism exposes the fraudulent nature of this anti-triple talaq stance of the govt.

So, what does it mean to be a woman under Modi raj? It means that women's place is in the shadows. And they shall remain in the shadows till the patriarchal society need their services.



3 Years of the Govt.: Country for Sale

The Modi led BJP government has fast tracked the process of privatisation. It is determined to dismantle the entire public sector in the country, conceived to achieve 'commanding heights' of our economy. Public sector today is the repository of huge national assets including land and minerals, vital infrastructure and huge productive forces. It is the wealth of the nation. The decision of the BJP led government to allow 100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in such strategic sectors of our economy like defence, railways, telecom, civil aviation, satellites, power, petroleum, mining, coal etc is nothing but anti national in character. This will not only adversely impact the functioning of the PSUs in the concerned sector but also compromise our national interests including national security. Can anything be more 'anti national' than handing over our precious national resources and wealth to the corporates, national or foreign?

- Dismantling the public sector became a part of the government agenda since 1991 with the official advent of neoliberal policies under the Congress government. The concepts of self reliant economy, economic sovereignty, balanced regional development, social justice etc were sought to be given a go by. The Modi government has intensified these policies.
- Soon after coming to power in 2014, the Modi led BJP government

wound up the Planning Commission and replaced it with the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Ayog. NITI Ayog was entrusted with the task of identifying central public sector undertakings (CPSUs) that are to be disinvested and sold off. It has already identified 74 (CPSUs) – including 26 for downright closure and 10 for strategic disinvestment. (Disinvestment means the government would retain management, strategic sale means that majority shares will be sold and management would be handed over to the private party). The government has given 'in principle' approval to the recommendations of NITI Ayog.

- The government has appointed Reliance Mutual Fund Managers to provide consultancy and execute its project of quick selling 10 CPSUs strategic to our national economy, including ONGC, GAIL, Oil India Limited, Indian Oil Corporation, Coal India Limited, BHEL, Bharat Electronics Limited etc through the Exchange Traded Fund (ETF). This is like asking the robber to guard the house! Reliance's mother company is itself interested in sale of PSUs at throwaway prices!
- Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML), one of the nine defence public sector units engaged in defence production, Salem, Durgapur and Bhadravati plants of Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), Bridge and Roof Company, a premier mini ratna PSU, Dredging Corporation of India, Hindustan Fluorocarbons etc are among those identified for strategic sale. The Defence Ministry has also ordered to immediately list other Defence PSUs viz., BDL and MIDHANI in the stock market to facilitate disinvestment of at least 25% shares.
- 25% shares in all the five public sector general insurance companies will be sold to private companies, both Indian and foreign.
- Public sector makes huge contribution to the national exchequer. It not only scrupulously pays its taxes but also dividends, special dividends etc in addition to keeping the national economy afloat with regular capital investments of not less than Rs 1.5 lakh crore every year. In 2014-15 the PSUs contributed more than Rs 2 lakh

crore to the public exchequer.

- In contrast there are innumerable instances of tax evasion, manipulation of accounts etc by the private sector establishments, including the big corporates, both national and multinational. Government figures themselves inform that every year, the national exchequer is robbed of not less than Rs 5 lakh crore through such manipulations. In 2015-16 alone, direct tax evasion amounted to Rs 6.59 lakh crore.
- The BJP government is taking calculated measures to weaken the well functioning public sector units and make them sick to pave the way for privatisation. The surpluses generated by the public sector units, meant for modernisation and continuous updating are being drained. Many PSUs are forced to pay dividends to the government much above the statutory level, sometimes as high as 50% or more. This is a well articulated design to make them sick and create ground for handing them over at cheap rates to their favoured domestic and foreign buyers.
- The government has decided to close Indian Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Limited (IDPL) and Rajasthan Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Limited (RDPL). It has decided to privatise Hindustan Antibiotics Limited (HAL) and Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceuticals Limited (BCPL) if buyers are available; otherwise to close them. Even today, these can be made profitable by infusing the necessary capital and utilising their huge assets for this purpose. But the government is not willing to do that, making a mockery of its own slogan of 'Make in India'.
- Public sector in our country was an instrument to attain self reliant economy, create the industrial base of the country. It played an important role in developing balanced regional growth. It was the public sector which built the major infrastructure of the country like power, transport including railways, roads, ports etc when the private sector did not have the capacity or was not ready to take the risk of investing huge amounts of capital in these sectors, which do not provide immediate profits. Thermal, hydro and nuclear power projects, transport and communication,

production of steel, defence equipment, ship building, oil, coal etc were set up in the public sector. The Research and Development taken up by the PSUs had a huge contribution in our technological and industrial advance.

- The public sector research institutes immensely helped the farmers by providing new techniques to improve agricultural productivity in our country.
- The LIC has been contributing for infrastructure development, drinking water projects etc. The role of our public sector financial institutions in protecting our economy during the 2008 global financial meltdown is now well acknowledged. In fact, the private general and life insurance companies and the banks were nationalised to protect the interests as well as savings of the people from the loot of private companies and utilise them for the benefit of the people including the poor in the remote rural areas.
- The public sector had basic contribution in establishing the right to organise and collective bargaining of the workers which is sought to be denied in the private sector. The struggles of the public sector workers to attain better working and living conditions inspired the workers in other sectors in their struggle for trade union rights and other benefits.
- The townships constructed in the areas where the PSUs were located, many in remote undeveloped rural areas, not only provided housing and other facilities for the workers like schools, hospitals, dispensaries, community centres, shopping complexes etc but also led to overall development of the entire area. Thousands of the people in the surrounding villages benefited indirectly by getting employment and income opportunities through providing different services to the people in these townships.
- By implementing the reservations for SC/ ST sections, PSUs provided employment and opportunities for their development thus contributing to social justice.
- Dismantling public sector means subjugating our national

economic interests, our economic independence and sovereignty to the interests of international finance capital, to imperialist interests. It means handing over our national assets, our national wealth to the corporates in a silver platter. And it means facilitating ferocious exploitation of our workers by the profit hungry employers; imposing slavery on them. It means robbing the SC/ST of their statutory right to reservation. This will ultimately lead to the crushing of democratic structures and social institutions as a whole.

- The entire country must oppose such privatisation and disinvestment and strategic sale of public sector enterprises. It should not be left to the public sector workers alone.



3 Years of the Govt: Workers fight back attacks on rights and livelihoods

On International Labour Day 2017, Modi government's Labour Ministry held an event in Delhi, where officials spent most of their time showcasing portals and apps launched by the government for 'ease of doing business.' That, in a nutshell sums up the BJP-led NDA government's sham of "empowering" the vast army of workers, the backbone of India's 'robust' GDP growth.

The motto of the Modi government in the last three years has been clear — roll out the red carpet for foreign investors and industry and give them a free hand to hire and fire, while throttling labour rights and wages. Even existing provisions under labour laws are openly being flouted.

A recent case in the Supreme Court highlights the complete apathy of the govt. Over Rs.20,000 crore collected by state governments under the Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Cess Act, 1996, has gone missing although it was meant to be used for providing construction workers' children with education and other facilities. Even India's top auditor, the CAG, was clueless about this massive scam. The apex court asked "Where is this money going? Has it gone in a tea party or for vacation of officials? You have to find it out."

Attack on workers' right

The last three years have seen the worst attacks on workers' rights and livelihoods. Adding to this onslaught was the sudden demonetisation in November 2016, leading to withdrawal of 85 per cent high-value currency notes in circulation that destroyed an estimated 35 per cent jobs (about 4 lakh) in the cash-dependent small and micro sector. So, while millions of workers were struggling to survive, digital payment agencies, such as Paytm and mobile service providers like Reliance Jio made a killing.

The BJP-led NDA government has proposed labour law 'reforms' to take away whatever little protection workers had earlier, that too without thorough discussion with trade unions.

With over 90 per cent of unorganised sector workers having no social security and growing contractualisation and casualisation of labour, the Modi government is also hell bent on appropriating the hard-earned retirement savings (provident fund) of organised sector workers and invests these in the stock market, fooling them in the name of "better returns."

The attack on labour rights began as soon as the foreign investor and industry-friendly Modi government took charge in 2014. A 'labour law reform laboratory' was set up in Rajasthan, which was later followed by other BJP-ruled States, such as Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh etc, with the sole agenda of climbing up on the World Bank's 'Ease of Doing Business' ranking under the garb of 'simplifying' labour laws to suit corporate interests.

Amendments were brought in to the Factories Act and the Apprentice Act, a new law was formulated for small industries to keep 80 per cent units out of the purview of labour laws.

What's more, unions would not be registered unless they have the support of 30 per cent employees, against 15 per cent earlier. Also, the Factories Act would apply on companies that have more than 50 employees. The earlier limit was 20 workers.

The Modi government also plans to amalgamate 44 Central laws into five codes. A code on wages has already been drafted. The second code on industrial relations will amalgamate three laws — the Industrial Disputes Act, the Trade Union Act and the Standing

Order Act. Under this employers with up to 300 workers would not require government permission for retrenchment, lay off and closure. Three more codes are being planned — social security, health and safety, and working conditions.

The Small Factories (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Services) Bill, 2014 seeks to exempt firms with up to 40 employees from compliance with six major labour laws, making it easier for owners to hire and fire workers at will.

A virtual exemption has been granted to start-up firms, including five-year-old registered establishments with annual turnover of not more than Rs 25 crore, from obligations under nine basic labour laws.

Opening the doors for employers to replace regular workers with apprentices, the Apprentices Act has been amended to direct State governments to absorb half of the apprentices' cost for a company having less than 250 workers.

Privatisation

Simultaneously, the Modi government unleashed aggressive privatisation of even profit-making central public sector units, which threatens to take away more jobs. Once again, Reliance Mutual Fund has been appointed to provide consultancy and execute Modi's privatisation project!

The Modi government's aggressive privatisation comes at a time when the unemployment rate is rising (projected to rise from 17.7 million last year to 17.8 million in 2017 and 18 million next year. In percentage terms, the unemployment rate will remain at 3.4 per cent in 2017-18, as per ILO). There has been a marked decline in female participation in the workforce, lakhs of vacant posts are not being filled, there are massive closures & layoffs even in the IT industry, and the number of industries turning sick has risen. With real wages stagnant or falling, the rising prices of essentials, such as rice, wheat and dal, as well as of transport (despite falling global crude oil prices), the lives of workers have never been so miserable.

Workers Resistance

To sum up, the three years of Modi government saw intensification of multi-cornered attacks on workers and their rights, a complete disregard for the united voice of workers, which was so evident by the massive response to two general strikes called by 10 central trade unions in which 150-180 million workers took part.

The massive response to the general strike calls, the huge protest by women garment workers and anganwadi workers in Karnataka, which brought the government to its knees, and hundreds of strikes going on in factories across India, are all warning bells for the Modi government. Ignore workers at your own peril!

Millions of workers across the country are ready to fight it out with the government and ensure that all moves to dilute and kill existing labour laws are dropped, labour law enforcement machinery is strengthened, punitive fines and jail terms for violation of basic labour laws is ensured and the free and untrammled right of workers to organise and use all legal means of protest including strikes is preserved. The workers are also demanding an end to privatisation, contracterisation and casualization, with regularisation of such workers, and an end to the policy of giving concessions and exemptions on labour laws to woo foreign investors.



3 Years of the Govt: Immiserising the Peasantry to Fill Corporate Coffers

The BJP had come to power three years ago promising “Achhe Din” for the farmers and agricultural workers as well as toiling masses. It had promised an end to farmers’ suicides, ensure remunerative prices for crops according to the Swaminathan Commission recommendation of at least 50 percent above cost of production, more investment in agriculture, expanded employment opportunities and higher wages under MGNREGA, irrigation facilities to all farms, effective insurance, pensions, scientific land acquisition legislation to protect interests of the peasantry and much more. It is worth looking at as to how real these promises were.

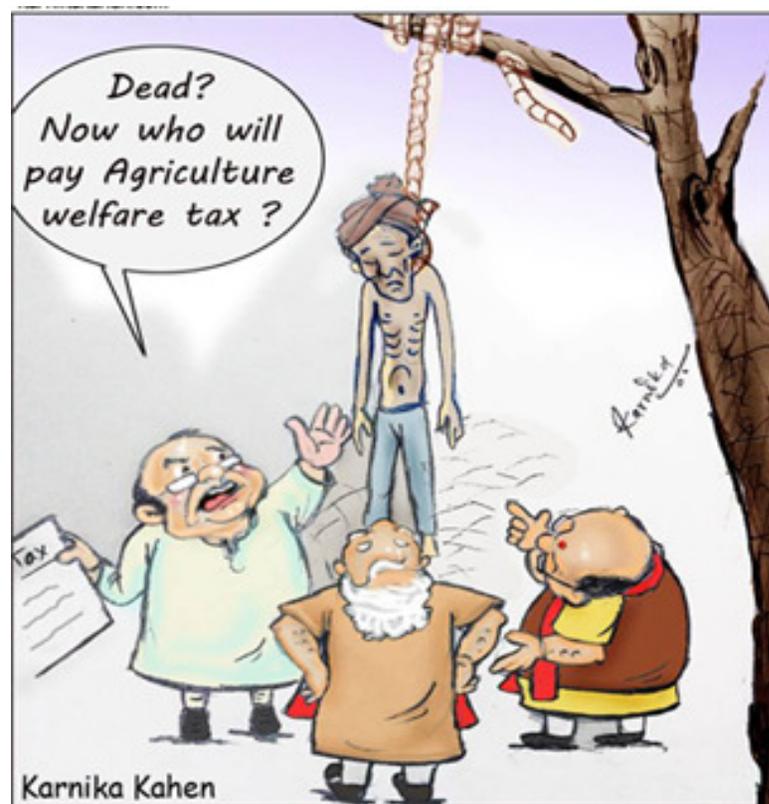
- Farmers’ suicides have continued unabated. BJP ruled Maharashtra has been witnessing the highest number of suicides and 2015 accounted for an unprecedented 4,291 suicides. BJP ruled States of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, accounted for 6,535 (51.85%) of all farmer suicides. Overall states ruled by BJP-led NDA accounted for 7,723 suicides (61.28%). States like Punjab and Haryana which were showcased as the Green Revolution success stories have also been witnessing many suicides. Tamilnadu has witnessed over 200 suicides in the last 4 months. Malnutrition deaths in States like Maharashtra and MP in the

last 3 years are over a lakh according to reports. An ostrich-like denial of the reality and refusal to address the real issues is all we get as a response to the human tragedy.

- The promise of providing remunerative prices to crops as per the Swaminathan Commission recommendation of $C2+50\%$ i.e at least 50 percent more than the cost of production has been permanently belied. The BJP Government also filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court clearly stating that $C2+50\%$ cannot be given. In addition it also issued a Government Order to States threatening that procurement would be banned from States providing bonus over and above the MSP fixed by the Central Government on the pretext that it was “market distorting”. As a result the States who were giving an additional bonus have stopped it. There is no effective procurement even at the low prices fixed, forcing farmers to make distress sales.
- The MSP announced for most crops are far below the actual costs of production. If we take Arhar/Tur the MSP announced is Rs.5050/QtI. The costs of production according to State Governments were Rs.5722/QtI in AP, Rs.6841/QtI in Telangana and Rs.5,100/QtI in Karnataka. Farmers are not even getting Rs.4,500/QtI as there is no effective procurement. The Government however has assured MSP along with seeds and technical knowhow and also agreed to bear transport costs from farmers in Mozambique while refusing to pay Indian farmers.
- The Import duty of wheat has been reduced to zero from an earlier 25 percent. This has led to dumping of wheat at rates ranging from Rs.1329/QtI to Rs.1431/QtI which is far below even the MSP of Rs.1625/QtI. The Government has failed to procure wheat at MSP and refuses to open purchasing centres which leads to distress sales. It opened the gates just ahead of the winter wheat crop to help agri-businesses rake in super profits by dumping wheat from USA, Australia, France, Russia, Ukraine and other countries which have had bumper wheat harvests. It is estimated that overseas purchase would be the highest in a decade.

The move will have a catastrophic effect on Indian farmers given the fact that global wheat prices are seeing a decline. The big players in the wheat flour market like Cargill, ITC, Adani-Wilmar, Reliance and such groups have been demanding withdrawal of import duties and this move is to suit their interests. Wheat traders are expecting imports to cross 5 million tonnes this year.

- After it was forced to withdraw the draconian Land Acquisition Ordinance, the state governments led by BJP and its allies in Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh have taken the lead in changing land laws for easy corporate takeover.



- On the MGNREGA there has been consistently low allocation and the slashed allocations under Labour Budget will restrict creation of jobs. Last year instead of the 100 days guaranteed by law, an average of just 46 days work was given. This year the Central Government has brought new instruments to further cut allocations. In the name of accountability, geo-tracking measures are put in place. Proof of MNREGA work done for three years has to be shown. Given the nature of the works done, it can obviously be only partial. Kuccha roads in remote tribals areas, such as in a State like Tripura can rarely be identified and counted. This becomes an excuse to cut funds. Shamefully Tripura the State which has provided the highest number of work days, 79 as compared to the national, average of just 46, is being deprived of funds. The labour budget cuts will allow creation of just 34 days of work a year.
- The BJP Government claims that it has allocated a record Rs.48,000 Crores in the latest Budget for MGNREGA. The budgeted rise in allocation for MGNREGA is just 1.1 percent. Actually this is only around Rs.500 crores over the revised expenditure of 2016-17. The increase over the 2016-17 (BE) was arrived at due to the intervention of the Supreme Court. However, the actual requirement for the programme is estimated to be over Rs.80,000 crores. Workers have not been getting their wages within a fortnight as guaranteed by the law. In 2016-2017, wages amounting to a staggering 20,000 crores rupees were not paid on time, ranging from delays of three weeks to over six months. The main reason is that the Central Government has not been giving allocations to the States in time. Shockingly over 2000 crores rupees of wage payments for the last year have still not been given to the workers. This is the shameful record of this Government. The Centre is systematically dismantling this programme and starving it of funds in a deliberate manner.
- On the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana while claiming to increase its cover to 40 percent of the farmers the allocation has

- been cut by Rs.4,240 crores from Rs.13,240 crores last year to merely Rs.9000 crores. Even this allocation has overwhelmingly gone to pay private insurance companies rather than to the benefit of farmers. Notably the premium collected in 2016-17 by Insurance Companies was as high as Rs.21,500 crores but of the total claims of Rs.4,270.55 crores in Kharif 2016 only claims of Rs.714.14 crores have been disbursed by insurance companies till date. Nearly Rs.21,000 crores taken from farmers and Governments have been pocketed by MNCs in the Insurance Sector.
- The promise of ensuring cheap credit to farmers has also been forgotten. Most of the credit goes to agribusinesses and to urban areas and is in no way addressing credit needs of poor, landless farmers and agricultural workers. The BJP Government has through demonetisation and ban on currency exchange imposed for cooperative banks crippled the widest network for disbursement of rural credit. The talk of Price Stabilisation Fund and protection of interests of the farmers with remunerative prices has been dumped. The plight of chilli growers in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana where prices have crashed from Rs.13,000-Rs.15,000/Qtl to Rs.1500- Rs.5000/Qtl depending on varieties, shows how miserably this as well as the PMFBY have failed. This is also true in the case of rubber, spices and cash crops which have seen a lot of volatility in prices leading to extreme distress for farmers.
- Another much hyped Scheme is the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana aiming to ensure water to all fields with the slogan "HarKhetKoPani". The recent Budget announced micro irrigation fund with initial corpus of Rs.5000 crore and enhancement of long term irrigation corpus from the existing Rs.20,000 crore to Rs.40,000 crore. The Finance Minister has not explained the funds invested and the irrigational infrastructure developed during the last financial year. It is notable that the 11th Five Year Plan had set aside Rs.67,477 crore for irrigating 9.4 million hectares. When we consider the fact that 47 million hectares of

cultivable land is unirrigated, the present allocation will not even mean Rs.10,000 per hectare. The total unpreparedness to meet the unprecedented drought in Southern India in 2016-17 and throughout the country in 2015-16 and the acute water shortage experienced is also a telling indictment of their claims.

Even as a large part of the country is faced with the worst drought the BJP Government has not disbursed adequate amount for drought relief. Tamilnadu is facing the worst drought in 140 years, with over 12 lakh acres left fallow and huge crop losses. We have all witnessed the extreme insensitivity with which the Modi-led BJP Government treated the Tamilnadu farmers on protest in the National Capital. The peasantry is rising in protest against the betrayals and massive mobilisation against Government policies have been going on across the country. The BJP and the Hindutva forces are seeking to divide the struggling masses by raking up issues like cow slaughter and using so-called “gaurakshaks” to attack cattle rearers. Communal and caste polarisation is also being attempted. Peasants and agricultural workers, Dalits and Adivasis are building issue-based unity against the Modi Model of loot of Jal, Jungle, Zameen and mineral resources and saying no to the loot.



3 Years of the Govt: Failure on Price Front

The Modi government has been regularly trotting out figures of the official wholesale price index to claim that these last three years have been a period of extremely low inflation. They have gone far enough to suggest that there have been points in time when the annual inflation rate was actually negative. But as everybody knows from their own experience, this has little bearing to reality.

Consider the following facts, all culled from official data:

- Prices of gram dal have risen by an astounding 75% in the last three years. From an average of about Rs 49 per kg at the retail level in May 2014, it has risen to about Rs 86 per kg at present
- Prices of urad dal have risen by 46% from an average of about Rs 68 per kg at the retail level in May 2014 to about Rs 99 per kg currently
- Prices of arhar have gone up by 24% over the period of these last three-years

And this is when you are looking at three-year variations. What these figures do not reveal is the dizzying heights some of these prices reached during this period before coming down a little. Arhar dal prices, for instance, had spiked to Rs 200 per kg in Sept-Nov 2015. Sugar prices had crossed Rs 50 a kg about a year ago. Onion prices had crossed Rs 100 a kg within the first year of the Modi

government. In October 2015, mustard oil prices had reached over Rs 150 per kilo.

In a country where a sizeable section of the population is forced to subsist on a largely or completely vegetarian diet either because of cultural reasons or because meat is too costly to afford, pulses are a crucial source of protein. When their prices hit such unaffordable levels, the poor have little option to cut back on their consumption. And remember that this comes in the context of already declining consumption of pulses as prices put them more and more out of reach of the poor. The amount of pulses consumed per person has steadily declined from about 61 grams per person per day in 1951 to about 44 grams in 2015.

Pulses provide a stark example, but this trend of runaway price spirals in food articles, in particular is familiar enough to all of us. The government may make light of it, pointing out that prices after all came under control after a few weeks or months, but for the poor those few weeks or months matter because they have no choice but to cut back on consumption till prices reach affordable levels. A government that was not so enamoured by markets would intervene quickly and decisively to prevent these price spikes. But like its predecessor, the Modi government too believes the market should be left to 'self-correct'. The people of India pay the price for this ideological blinker.

Ironically, where allowing markets to determine prices would actually have seen a sharp drop in prices – in the case of petroleum products – the Modi government has once again upheld its anti-people nature by keeping prices at around the same level as they were three years ago. While the current international price of oil has dropped to less than half what it was three years ago. Once again, we do not need to look beyond official data to establish the point.

In June 2014, weeks after the Modi government came to power, the monthly average international price of what is called the 'Indian basket of crude' – a combination of various specific kinds of crude oil that India imports – touched \$109 per barrel. From that level, it fell steadily to an average of just below \$47 per barrel in January

2015. After rising again till May, when it averaged a little under \$64 per barrel, it dropped to as low as \$28 per barrel in January 2016. Since then, it has risen to now hover at around \$50 per barrel.

You would think retail prices of petroleum products in India would more or less reflect this pattern, considering that the country is largely dependent on imported crude. But the reality is that the retail prices of diesel, the main transportation fuel, are actually up from Rs 56.71 per litre to Rs 59.02 per litre while those of petrol are more or less static at just above Rs 71 per litre. These prices are for Delhi, but while the actual prices for other parts of the country would typically be a little higher, the trend is exactly the same. Even PDS kerosene and subsidised LPG have become a little more expensive over these three years – kerosene rising from Rs 14.96 per litre to Rs 18.77 per litre and LPG from Rs 414 per cylinder to Rs 443 per cylinder after accounting for the subsidy.

Why has this happened? Because the Modi government instead of passing on the benefits of international oil prices dropping by half to the people of this country has preferred to use the opportunity to make its accounts look prettier. Thus, as costs have fallen, taxes have become a larger and larger proportion of the retail prices, more than wiping out the benefits of the lower costs.

The figures for the central government's collection from taxes on the oil sector are telling. In 2013-14, the year before the Modi government came to power, this sector yielded Rs 1.06 lakh crore in taxes to the Centre. In the first year of the Modi government that number rose to Rs 1.26 lakh crore. But the next year, it jumped to Rs 2.1 lakh crore that is about twice the amount collected just two years ago. It implies as if the government collected an extra Rs 4,250 per year from every Indian household just in the form of taxes on petroleum products. This, of course, is only the amount directly being collected as taxes on these products. The actual burden on Indian households would be much larger. Given the fact that diesel is the primary fuel for transportation and for things like running tubewell pumps and gensets for perennially power starved areas, it has a domino effect on prices in general. And once again, it is the people who pay the price, the poor more than those better off.

What should be done?

- 1) All essential commodities should be made available at controlled prices through universal PDS
- 2) Strict regulation and control of essential, drug prices
- 3) Extensive govt. procurement of various commodities at suitable prices so that these can be routed to PDS
- 4) Strong punitive measures against hoarders and blackmarketeers
- 5) Strengthening of APMCs, breaking of dominant trader cartels (expand network of procurement centers/APMCs to reach all farmers.)
- 6) Strict control over export
- 7) Reintroduce import duty on wheat

For petroleum products

- 1) Delink from market
- 2) Cut central govt duties and taxes
- 3) Ensure gas cylinder supplies at subsidized rates



3 Years of the Govt: Assault on Education Continues Unabated

Last year, while analyzing two years of Modi government, we had underlined the 'unrelenting authoritarian assaults on the campuses and students in the wake of the imposition of RSS' agenda of Hindutva'. We had also noted the economic attacks on students and seen how the period had been one of 'growing struggles and resistance, with student movement emerging as a catalyst in the movement against authoritarianism.' After one year, all those inferences have only grown further.

Destruction of Public Education

The goal of increasing the public spending in education to 6% of GDP has been repeated numerous times in the last 50 years starting right from the Indian Education commission (1964-66) headed by Daulat Singh Kothari. Prakash Javadekar claimed in February 2017 that India (centre & states combined) was now spending 4.5% of GDP on education. However, the Economic survey for 2016-17 shows that this figure is only 2.9%. Javadekar further claimed that India is 'progressing' towards achieving the 6% target. Far from increasing education spending, Modi Sarkar has ensured a dip in its share:

Declining Funds for Education

	Central govt. spending on education as	
	% of Total Budget	% of GDP
2013-14	4.57	0.63
2014-15	4.14	0.55
2015-16	3.75	0.50
2016-17 RE	3.65	0.49
2017-18 BE	3.71	0.47

Source: MHRD, Budget documents

Javadekar goes on to argue that while calculating the expenditure the private investments should also be considered (thereby negating BJP's own poll promise in 2014 election manifesto). His assertion is not showing any novelty, rather it smacks of typical neoliberal dogma that seeks to quantitatively under-define the spending goals and hide the failures of the governments.

This approach has directly affected the various centrally sponsored education schemes including the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA) for universal public elementary education. While the recommendations of Fourteenth Finance Commission (FFC) makes it mandatory for the states to spend 40% on schemes like SSA (up from earlier 25%); centre has successively failed to fulfill its own commitments. In 2017-18 for instance, while MHRD estimated a resource demand of Rs 55,000 crores for SSA, only Rs. 23,500 crore was allocated, that is, 42.7% of the approved outlay.

Meanwhile, forced by the deterioration of learning in govt. schools, more and more parents are being forced to send their children to private schools that extort exorbitant fees and charges. All over the country, parents' associations have been protesting against this racket but to no avail. Although CBSE issued a circular that schools should not indulge in such malpractices, the managements paid no heed. This is because of the close nexus between politicians of several bourgeois parties and educational

institutions. The central and state govts. are silently allowing this to continue because they are committed to privatisation at any cost.

Students from the dalits, Adivasis, backward minorities and women have been hit the most. The fund crunch has led to long delays in the disbursal of fellowships causing immense hardship to students from these sections, majority of whom are first generation learners and are entirely dependent on the fellowship to continue their higher education. The illegal and draconian push towards drastically reducing the research seats in public universities will further impact the marginalized sections the most. JNU (which through its historical admission policy and deprivation point system based on regional & gender deprivation enabled the students from the most deprived sections to reach higher education) has been the first victim of this policy offensive and similar seat cuts are now being witnessed in other universities like Patna, Wardha and Jadavpur.

Escalated Privatization and Commercialization

This period has seen aggressive push from the central government and UGC to arm-twist the colleges to apply for 'autonomous status'. It needs to be noted that the idea of 'autonomous colleges' in its present form was first mooted by Birla-Ambani committee during the NDA-1. The UGC's 12th plan document on the 'Guidelines for autonomous colleges' says that the fund given by commission as autonomous grant cannot be used for creation of posts, payment of salary to any of the college staff, payment of honorarium, or to meet normal college contingency requirement or subsidies. It also adds that the examination fee should be fixed so that income from fee can meet the expenditure on examinations and other staff appointed in examination cell.

UGC already has over 575 autonomous colleges in the country. Of these, 167 are government institutions. Premier institutions such as Loyola College, Chennai, and St Xavier's Colleges in Mumbai and Kolkata have already been granted autonomy. The erstwhile Presidency College in Kolkata has been granted the status of a deemed university. Most of the government autonomous colleges are

struggling with the financial and academic aspects of autonomy. In effect, there is a big mismatch between the stated claims and the actual reality of the entire autonomy process.

‘Autonomy’ is being linked to academic excellence and only those institutions which have been awarded a minimum of B grade 3 times in the last 10 years are eligible to apply for the autonomous status. The ranking of educational institutions hence is directly related to the push towards autonomy agenda. The ‘India Ranking Report 2017’ as per the National Institutions Ranking Framework (NIRF) has been released recently. Both, ‘autonomy’ and ‘ranking’ are vehicles of privatization, which in turn means that education will become costlier, accessible to only the elite. For the vast majority of people, their children will have to go through D-grade institutions, if at all.

On the one hand, there is a tiny minority of “elite” institutions and on the other hand, a vast number of institutions which are struggling with faculty shortage, cramped classrooms and inadequate infrastructure.

Another aspect is that a set of pre-conditions has been laid down to get access to funds: implementation of Choice Based Credit System (CBCS), semesterization, and compulsory accreditation among others. Moreover funding for higher education under RUSA will be norm based as well as performance based. This basically means that the state governments or universities won’t have any room to modify the system according to their specific conditions. Funding will be linked to the performance of the institution based on set criteria (which would include student-teacher ratio, infrastructure, examination results etc.). This would effectively spiral into increasing the already existing inequalities.

Gimmicks in the name of Policy revamp

This government is characterized by launching of new schemes and slogans after every few months. The previous UPA regime was characterized by many of the current ministers, who were at that time sitting in opposition, as ‘policy paralysis’. However, the current regime has moved further back. While on one hand public education

is being sought to be dismantled; on the other hand there is absolutely no policy direction. Modi government had claimed to put in place new National Education Policy within 100 days of taking power. The report prepared by the TSR Subramaniam Committee has been put in back burner and so has the draft report prepared by the HRD ministry. There is absolutely no clarity on the direction which the NEP will take in the coming days. This is lack of policy direction doesn’t mean that the government doesn’t have a perspective. It is ruthlessly pursuing its two-fold objectives of destroying public education to pave the way for privatization and the saffronisation of all education – from primary school to higher levels. But there is no public policy.

Hindutva offensive

Education has always been close to the Hindutva agenda of the Sangh Parivaar. The Hindutva offensive is characterized by indoctrination of young children through the network of RSS-run schools, tampering with school syllabus & history text books, sabotage of academic institutions, and so on. Simultaneously, an attempt is being made to detach public institutions from larger society. In fact the neoliberal academic reforms would lead to further detachment of the university from the larger society (since the social consciousness attached with education would get eroded). We can apprehend that the current trajectory will lead to further decimation of the social and political role of the public institution.

However, it is not that all this is going unchallenged. As the offensive from the government and saffron storm troopers intensifies, we are witnessing strong resistance building from within the student community, with new sections getting mobilized and saffron forces getting marginalized with new political articulations.

