

<https://association-radar.org/spip.php?article6034>



India

Defeat the BJP Strengthen the Working Class, Left and All Progressive Movements

- IV Online magazine - 2019 - IV531 - April 2019 -

Publication date: Friday 26 April 2019

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

The 2019 Indian general election is currently being held in seven phases from 11 April to 19 May 2019 to constitute the 17th Lok Sabha. The counting of votes will be conducted on 23 May, and on the same day the results will be declared. [1] This statement by Radical Socialist was issued on 19 April 2019.

A: Five Years of the BJP Rule

In 2014, the National Democratic Alliance, headed by the BJP, won 38.5% votes, but, due to India's first past the post electoral system, that was enough for it to get 336 out of 543 seats. The BJP itself got 31% votes and 282 seats. This had a dramatic effect. It meant, that while there was a coalition government, it was now firmly under the grip of the BJP, which no longer needed the Vajpayee type of conciliatory mask. The core RSS agenda could be brought forward without any hesitation. The push for Modi for Prime Minister had been funded by a considerable part of the Indian big bourgeoisie. Thus, the rise of Narendra Modi was also connected to Indian big capital. To assess the five years of the Modi-led government, therefore, we need to grasp the totality of the following elements: a sluggish neoliberal economy mired in cronyism, a sharp attack on democratic rights, attacks on Muslims and Dalits, a determined Hindutva pushed and a splintered opposition to these developments.

The Economic situation: Cronyism, mismanagement and widening inequality

A general economic malaise

The five years of BJP rule has not been a period of sustained high growth. Certainly a few favoured cronies of the ruling dispensation have profited tremendously. Adani's growth has been staggering and most remarkable of all industrial houses. In 2017 alone the Adani group grew by 124.6%. In the run up to the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the helicopter personally used by Narendra Modi was provided by Adani. In the economy as a whole, however, much of the capitalist class has not done spectacularly. Overall growth rates, despite much massaging of figures, have remained well short of the performance of UPA I. Investment in the economy has remained low, with the Gross Fixed Capital Formation falling as a percentage of GDP over the period. Agrarian distress has sent even large landholders on protest marches in Delhi and Mumbai. Employment generation, one of the BJP's signature poll promises, has been tellingly absent. The latest NSSO data, leaked despite government efforts to bury it, reveal that there has been a shrinkage in the male workforce for the first time since 1993.

Indeed, each of the BJP's signature economic measures have been conspicuous failures.

– The biggest of these was demonetization. It was carried out supposedly to check black money. The claim about recovering black money has been demonstrated to be false. The Reserve Bank of India has confirmed that 99.3% of demonetised notes were returned to the bank. The sudden decision had a massive negative impact on the Indian economy, including a slowdown in employment of labour and a dip in overall farm incomes. Growth slowed down to a four-year low of 6.7%.

– Though planned by the Congress, the BJP executed the imposition of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), which, besides causing a further decline in growth rates, effectively enhances the dependence of states to the centre, by replacing the state controlled Sales Tax in favour of an all India GST, whose rates are decided by a GST council

where every state is just one member, together with the Centre, and therefore quite powerless to alter the rates it can charge, it is clearly taking away states' powers.

– The much touted Make in India scheme has, so far, floundered on the falling rate of investment by the private sector. FDI as a percentage of GDP has remained limited to around 2 per cent. Only a minuscule proportion of this has gone to the manufacturing sector.

This government has hardly proved an able steward of the economy, even by the standards of the capitalist class.

Rising inequalities

While growth in the economy has been sluggish and concentrated in a select few companies, smaller firms have been hit by Modi's penchant for spectacular authoritarian gestures. Demonetisation – an utterly ineffectual measure – devastated Small and Medium Enterprises, while leaving big capital relatively unscathed. The much touted Mudra loan scheme aimed at the former, has had a risible average loan of just over Rs. 45,000. Smaller business continue to limp back to normalcy while Gautam Adani waltzes into the list of the world's richest people.

Among the ordinary people of this country, too, wealth has continued to concentrate among those at the top. The Global Wealth Report 2018 published by the Credit Suisse, an investment bank, says India now has 343,000 persons owning over one million US dollars, or about 7 crores of Indian rupees, worth of wealth. According to the World Inequality Database, the income of the top 1% of the Indian population was Rs 33 lakh per adult or Rs 275,000 per month, while the income of the bottom 50% of the population was Rs 45,000 per year per adult, that is Rs 3750 per month.

Spiralling inequality is an outcome of the effort to wind up or curtail welfare expenditures. After its initial frontal assault on India's fledgling social safety net – the PDS and MNREGA – failed, the BJP settled for death by a thousand cuts. Overall welfare expenditure has increased only marginally while tall claims have been made about the pathbreaking nature of schemes that were essentially re-launches of existing government measures. There have been no countervailing expenditures by the state to check the growth of inequalities.

Rampant Cronyism

Cronyism, then, has been a keynote of this government. This has not been a regime that has spread wealth far and wide across even corporate India. Instead, a chosen few have been consistently favoured for positions of power and direct benefits transfer. The Planning Commission was replaced by the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Ayog, which has already identified 74 central public sector undertakings (CPSUs) – including 26 for downright closure and 10 for strategic disinvestment. The government has appointed Reliance Mutual Fund Managers to provide consultancy and execute its project of quick selling 10 CPSUs strategic to the 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). So the Ambanis, who are among the corporates sector closest to the BJP, are asked to oversee privatization. The numbers of Non-performing assets held by corporate houses has increased steadily over the period of the BJP government and have contributed to making the position of the financial sector one of the most tenuous in the current economy.

Government figures themselves inform that every year, the national exchequer is robbed of not less than Rs 5 lakh crore through non-repayment of loans and tax fraud. In 2015-16 alone, direct tax evasion amounted to Rs 6.59 lakh crore. In mid 2017, the bad loans of India's nationalised banks amounted to about 10 lakh crore rupees. The top ten business group borrowers alone accounted for 5 lakh crores.

– The Rafale Scandal is too well known to need a detailed discussion. In place of giving the contract to Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, it went to the Anil Ambani owned Reliance Defence Limited, which has no experience. The cost of the aircrafts went up from what had been originally negotiated. The final version of the deal, in September 2016, saw India signing an inter-governmental agreement with France, in which India will pay about Rs. 58,000 crore or 7.8 billion Euros for 36 off-the-shelf Dassault Rafale twin-engine fighters. According to Yashwant Sinha and Arun Shourie (dissident BJP leaders, not leftists) along with Prashant Bhushan, the total price of 36 aircraft is about ₹60,000 crore, which works out to be Rs.1,660 crore per plane. This makes the price more than double the original 126 Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft proposal.

Any question about the scam has been answered by accusations that asking such questions threaten India's national security. We do not accept the bourgeois nationalist perception of national security in any case, where increasing military hardware is the main task. But even when that line of argument is advanced, we want to ask, if it was true that India needed 126 aircraft, buying 36 at a higher price benefits whom?

Why is BJP the chosen vehicle of the capitalist class?

If economic mismanagement, rampant cronyism and rising inequalities have characterised the current government what are we to make of the consolidation of the capitalist class behind the BJP? This is best captured in the vast gulf between the incomes of the BJP from any other political formation. According to an Association for Democratic Rights report, the BJP accounted for 80% of the income of national parties for 2017-18. For donations above Rs. 20,000 the BJP received 93% of such donations (Rs. 437 crores) while the INC received Rs. 26.6 crore of such donations. This gulf in funding is one of the many indicators of the capitalist consolidation behind the BJP. What explains such a one-sided choice?

The answer lies not so much in the performance, but in the promise of the BJP. Plans for over 11 industrial corridors lie with the current government. The scale of these plans is instructive. The largest of these currently ongoing is the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor; at \$100 billion, this is easily the largest infrastructure project ever in India. It spans the states of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra. This project alone will urbanise an estimated 12 per cent of India over the next 30 years, displace 20,000 families. Other industrial plans on this scale and larger include the Bengaluru-Mumbai Economic corridor, Chennai-Bengaluru Industrial corridor and Amritsar-Kolkata Industrial corridor. Most of these will require the firm and cruel hand of the government of the day as millions of people are displaced.

On this count, the BJP government has made all the right noises. With the dilution of environmental clearances, the continual surveillance of people's movements and the demonstrated willingness to use the coercive apparatus of the state to put down opposition, the BJP has repeatedly demonstrated both ability and desire to carry through repression on the truly mass scale that this industrial push will entail once investment picks up.

The Congress, initiator of most of these industrial plans, may feel a petulant envy at the favour the BJP currently enjoys with Indian big business. For Left and Progressive forces, however, this only underlines the need to think more comprehensively about our strengths and weaknesses in the coming battles.

Democracy Under Threat

To the authoritarian stamp needed to push through neoliberal measures, this government has also added its own Hindutva twist. Attacks on democratic rights and constitutional provisions have increased since 2014. The secular and democratic elements of the constitution are being whittled down at the expense of the Hindu-tinged, communal and scholastic orientation.

Decimating Political opposition

There has been a concerted and systematic marginalization of the opposition typified by the slogan Congress mukt Bharat. Whenever possible, they have subverted democratic content within the parliamentary form to wipe out the opposition; but even otherwise they have not stopped at brazen attacks if needed.

The election of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Delhi was one of the first electoral setbacks to the Modi regime. There has been an unremitting assault on this regime through a shameless campaign of obstruction using the peculiarly complex structure of the Delhi government. The lengths to which the BJP has gone have included the refusal of the Delhi Development Authority (controlled by the centre) to provide land to the Delhi Government for neighbourhood clinics. The Lt. Governor has repeatedly refused transfers of officials requested by the AAP government. Municipal services (controlled by the BJP through the municipal corporations) have been repeatedly interrupted through non-payment of the wages of municipal workers.

Elsewhere, money power and the governor have been used to subvert democratic mandates. Take for instance the 2017 Assembly elections in Goa. The BJP got 13 seats (reduced from 21 in the previous Assembly elections) compared to the Congress's 17 and yet ManoharParrikarwas asked to form a government by Governor MridulaSinha. The situation was reversed in the Karnataka Assembly elections when the BJP had more seats than the Congress, but the Congress-JDS post-poll alliance had more numbers than BJP. The drama unfolded on live television for the next few days as people could witness the brazen horse trading of MPs and recorded audio tapes of Yedurappa offering money to buy MPs.

More generally, opposition figures have been repeatedly painted as anti-national and betrayers of a supposed national consensus. Questioning the government in parliament has been painted as efforts to destroy the nation. This is, of course, when parliament has even functioned. The average duration of past Lok Sabhas has been 468 days. The 16thLok Sabha compares badly, with 331 days of sitting in its entire life. Meanwhile, there was a mainstreaming of aggressive hate speech. Hate speech by MPs, MLAs and Ministers, defined as statements that are clearly communal, casteist, or calls to violence, rose by 490% between May 2014 and April 2018. 90% of such comments were by BJP politicians.

As socialists we have always maintained that bourgeois democracy is limited and partial at best, but guarantees of even limited political democracy are now being rolled back.

Capturing and Undermining Institutions

A bourgeois democratic system is of course first and foremost a democracy for the bourgeoisie. In other words, a major difference between bourgeois democracy and bourgeois authoritarianisms of various kinds is that in the former all sections of the bourgeoisie have greater access to the corridors of power and get opportunities for accumulating capital. But this government is characterized by weakening of all forms of democratic institutions. The institutions of the state are suborned and subverted to suit the narrow goals of the Sangh Parivarâ€”a steady lurch towards a Hindu Rashtra.

Of these the first is the massive attack on the judiciary. In early 2018, four judges of the Supreme Court took the unprecedented step of holding a press conference to voice their protest against the arbitrary allocation of cases by the then Chief Justice of India. This was not mere factionalism within the court, but a revolt against how the CJI was allegedly distributing cases to suit the Modi Government.

A second institution under siege is the system of higher education: at the level of the universityas well as the

umbrella body of higher education the UGC. Right after getting elected in 2014, the BJP has relentlessly targeted the central institutes of higher education, most prominently JNU, HCU, etc. Vice Chancellors in these universities have transformed structures of university governance, ridden roughshod over Teachers' Associations and threatened students. Structures of participatory and consultative administration are fast being replaced by a culture of bullying and intimidation of faculty and staff.

Along with branding any independent critical assessment of the regime as anti-national, the present government has tried to remove the very basis of assessment. By manipulating the figures put out by autonomous statistical institutes like the NSSO, a complete control over information has been sought. Data increasingly are either not released at all, or else are 'massaged' to a point that strains credulity. This has been true of the controversial GDP figures, data about demonetisation and its effects and, most consistently, data about employment. The resignation of two non-governmental members of the National Statistical Commission (NSC) points to the direct government intervention in the workings of the statistical institutes.

The CBI has completely become a tool of the government to harass opposition party members. It must be recognized that unlike the courts, or civil society organizations, the CBI cannot even be thought of as any kind of pro-people institution. Furthermore it must be recognized that the independence of the CBI has always remained compromised no matter which government is in power. But, the functioning of the CBI has sunk to depths not seen in the past. It has been used to target opposition parties, and arm twist opposition leaders to change sides, etc. This of course shows the poor moral and political standards of such opposition politicians – like Mukul Roy, who switched from being a high ranking Trinamool Congress leader to the BJP – but this also shows that the CBI is not probing corruption or crime. Instead, it has become an instrument for turning tainted or dubious opposition leaders into BJP leaders.

Crackdown on Civil Society Organisations

For workers, peasants, dalits, adivasis, religious minorities, attacks on other organisations matter more. There has been a relentless attack on civil society and human rights organizations, human rights activists and NGOs like the Greenpeace, INSAF, etc. Selectively using bureaucratic and legalistic mechanisms like the application of FCRA regulations the government has pushed human rights activists and NGOs to the margin by accusing that they take foreign funding, when the irony is that it is the Sangh Parivar which is one of the highest recipients of foreign funding from NRIs.

There has been seen a massive use of undemocratic laws against workers, dalits, adivasis, Muslims. The singling out of the Dalit protests over Bhima-Koregaon is particularly significant as a symbolic action. After violence on the peaceful gathering at Bhima-Koregaon by Hindutva provocateurs fake claims about their programme being Maoist was used to widen the net, and arrest many civil rights activists, seize laptops and plant fake "evidence", seize books containing keywords like Marx, Lenin or Mao, etc. Between April and August 2018 there was a broadening of the net, with the arrests of artistes like the Kabir Kala Manch, civil rights activists like Professor Shoma Sen, SudhaBhardwaj, Gautam Navlakha, Arun Ferreira, Vernon Gonsalves, poets like Varavara Rao, activists like Sudhir Dhawale, the editor of the Marathi magazine Vidrohi and founder of the Republican Panthers, etc. However, the FIR the arrests were based on related to the violence that followed the Bhima-Koregaon event. In other words, there is an attempt to attack Dalit activists and civil rights activists as Maoists, and to say that if you are a Maoist then you have no democratic rights.

The cases have increasingly been made under the UAPA along with various sections of the Indian Penal Code. The UAPA is an act that allows ferocious violence on the accused. GN Saibaba, a wheelchair-bound teacher with 90 per cent physical disability, along with five others, were convicted by Suryakant Shinde, a sessions judge at Gadchiroli District Court, Maharashtra, under Sections 13,18, 20, 38 and 39 of the UAPA and Section 120B of the Indian Penal

Code (IPC). The UAPA, by its own definition, does not arrest citizens for committing a crime. It does so to prevent them from doing so. But what constitutes an “unlawful activity”? Just about any action that either “disclaims, questions, disrupts or is intended to disrupt the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India” or causes or is intended to cause “disaffection against India”. Left intentionally vague, these words manage to cover almost any action that the “Designated Authority” feels can constitute a threat against the nation, thus justifying the drive to a police state.

Hate Crimes: Terrorising Minorities and Dalits

Most striking of all has been the free rein given by the BJP government to vigilante groups affiliated to the Sangh Parivar to carry on a campaign of terror and intimidation against minorities and dalits. Designed to keep these groups fearful and simultaneously rouse the social base for Hindutva, the incidence of these crimes has mounted steadily. Government data on communal violence shows a spike of 28 per cent between 2014 and 2017. In the name of beef ban and cow protection, there have been repeated attacks, murders.

Even more serious, the state has acted in favour of organised mobs carrying out such lynching activity. Thus, in 2015, Mohammad Akhlaq was murdered after being accused of beef eating. The police, instead of targeting murderers, wanted to investigate whether the meat in his home was beef or not. And Modi, after keeping silent for several days, issued an ambiguous statement, instead of an outright condemnation. In October 2015, amid protests spurred by rumours of cow slaughtering, a truck was attacked with a petrol bomb, killing one Muslim man in Jammu and Kashmir. In March 2016, two Muslims were killed and hanged in the tribal state of Jharkhand after being accused of smuggling cows. On June 22, 2017, three Muslims were killed in West Bengal state after being accused of cow smuggling. On June 27, a Muslim dairy owner in the state of Jharkhand was attacked by a mob after being accused of killing a cow; the man was rushed to a hospital in critical condition after the police managed to save him from his attackers.

These were not accidental and stray incidents. The UP government of Adityanath made a ban on beef one of its first tasks. Cow protection, a Brahminical agenda, has been used to systematically generate violence on Muslims and Dalits.

There have, thus, been threats to democracy at every level: from the parliament to the grassroots. The effect has been a cumulative one: fuelling an atmosphere of fear and intimidation among dissenting groups while emboldening the cadre of Hindutva.

Pushing the Hindutva Agenda

The last issue discussed brings us to the BJP-RSS offensive in pushing the Hindutva agenda. Many parties and organisations on the left, when they use the term fascism against the RSS, do not recognise that fascism or fascist-like itself implies two simultaneous dimensions –the economic offensive against the common people and in favour of the big bourgeoisie, and the ideological offensive of aggressive nationalism. In India, that means pushing the Hindutva agenda and generating hyper nationalism, against particularly Pakistan. It is not that only one of these is a “real” agenda while the other is a diversion. The strength of the RSS lies in the forces it has generated in civil society, basing themselves on aggressive Hindu nationalism. This is not the belief of all Hindus, but a very aggressive nationalism, where the nation is defined as Hindu. Its strength lies partly in the previous Hindu inflection of the nationalist movement, and the consequent Hindu bias in aspects of the Constitution itself. But the Constitution, and the nationalist movement, were both the result of compromises. The RSS was a purely aggressive Hindutva force. And in the last five years it has pushed its agenda very far, in numerous ways. It has attacked all major secular democratic institutions of higher education, and especially humanities and social sciences, because these teach youth to look at society critically. It has degraded science, by stressing fake ancient science.

Pushing the Hindutva agenda has also meant violence on rationalists. The murders of Kalburgi, Dabholkar, Pansare and Gauri Lankesh show the extent to which the aggressive Hindutva forces are willing to go. The degree of their impunity has grown. When in some cases they are checked by law and court orders, as in the Sabarimala case, they attack the secular and democratic laws. Thus, in the case of Sabarimala, Modi attacked the state government of Kerala for doing the little it did to protect the women who wanted to enter the temple. In other cases, they have pushed the Hindutva agenda in other ways. Thus, the Supreme Court had struck down instant triple talaq. That is enough to make it illegal. But the passage of an Act that makes it a criminal offense and prescribes a jail term for the offending man, does not actually protect Muslim women, who in such a case would not get security, while the criminalisation would go against the reconciliation that they presumably seek. In no other religion are men (or women) flouting legal divorce procedures criminalised in this way.

Finally, pushing the Hindutva agenda means taking a far more aggressive stance on Kashmir, as well as on Pakistan. On Kashmir, by pulling out of the alliance with the PDP and establishing President's rule, they have the province under their control. At the same time, by their collaboration with Israel and the extensive use of techniques originally used by Israel against the Palestinians, they have shown how violent they will be. And the Pulwama incident shows how aggressive nationalism will turn to war threats, even while there is the risk of its escalation between the two nuclear powered neighbours.

The Pulwama event and its aftermath are major electoral campaign issues of AmitShah, Narendra Modi and their cohorts. So let us look at some questions dispassionately. Why was the warning of an attack ignored? And why did 80 car loads of soldiers go in such a huge convoy, making it a tempting target? Third, why is the question never posed of what has made Kashmiri youth turn to militancy for decades or why so much violence is inflicted in Kashmir? The attitude is – the territory of Kashmir is an integral part of India, but the people of Kashmir do not matter. Their rights to maximum autonomy, promised in 1947 when India also promised a plebiscite, have been long betrayed. Today, even their elementary democratic rights, are violated by keeping lakhs of armed personnel there and continuously exercising violence against them.

Following Pulwama, in place of examining these issues, the government claimed to have carried out a bombing of a major terrorist camp deep inside Pakistan. This was accompanied by a campaign of nationalist fervour in the media. In the face of this aggressive nationalism a left perspective must stand implacably opposed and demand a focus on the rights of Kashmiris.

Working class and progressive social movements

The period of the current BJP government has not been one of working class strength. While there have been important workplace struggles in a number of places, The working class has not emerged at the forefront of opposition to the rise of Hindutva. More significant progressive opposition has come from a variety of groups: students, dalits, peasants and women.

The Working Class

The period has seen ominous labour law reforms being proposed which would make it harder to unionise and reforms to social security of organised workers. The Labour Code on Industrial Relations Bill was so draconian that it was rejected by the RSS's own union (the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh). The 2018 Draft Labour Code on Social Security would similarly marginalise unions from negotiations over social security.

Despite this clear attack, the period has not been one in which militant labour struggles have been launched or supported by the established trades unions. Major strike actions have been largely symbolic one or two day actions

with little impact, though participation has been impressive. The divisions among the larger trades unions have deepened with the BMS often relying on its special connection to the government to bargain.

Outside the central unions also there have been militant struggles. A wildcat action on a huge scale (1.25 lakh workers) by largely women workers in the garment sector of Bengaluru points to the continuing intensity of, both, exploitation and the fight back against it by workers. Less sporadic, more sustained and militant struggles have also occurred. Struggles have emerged along the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor: those in Manesar and Neemrana by workers from Maruti, Honda, Daikin and other companies were particularly important. In this context, the effort by some of the unions leading militant working class struggles in those regions have come closer to form larger platform – ‘Mazdoor Adhikar Sangharsh Abhiyan (MASA)’. Similarly, building bases for united militant working class struggle and politicising these struggles elsewhere are critical tasks ahead.

Rather than from the working class, the sharpest opposition to the current regime has come a number of other sections.

Students

Among the earliest opposition to the NDA regime came from students in universities across the country. Beginning with protests in FTII, the emergence of Ambedkar-Periyar Study circles in IITs to the Ambedkar Students Association at Hyderabad Central University. These were determined and militant struggles against which the state took severe measures, including those that led to the death of Rohith Vemula. The struggle of students at JNU took on a wider scope with the effort to term students seditious. These major sites of revolt were mirrored by impressive student struggles in Jadavpur, TISS, and a number of other campuses.

The suppression of each of these movements has proceeded apace. But, through actual networks of solidarity, and through force of example, the students’ movements have tended to spread and support each other. Most recently, struggles against the state’s efforts to, in effect, nullify reservations among faculty have also sparked pitched battles on campus.

The unrest on university campuses are not the result of some greater awareness of students. The People’s Commission on Shrinking Democratic Spaces has revealed the breadth of actions required to transform India’s higher education into the neo-liberal university. High handed university authorities are required to create the more quiescent, pliable, and professionalised public university desired by the Hindu Right and neo-liberals alike. An agenda of surreptitious privatization has also been pushed. There has been a steady decline in the funds invested in higher education as a proportion of GDP, a reduction in enrolment of MPhil students, and in 2018, for the first time in India, the enrolment of undergraduate students in private institutes has exceeded those in the central institutes. Meanwhile, universities are also the sites of other social transformations. As the Saksham Committee report has revealed, with 47 per cent of students in higher education being women, this is nearly the only place in the entire economy where men and women are present in equal numbers. The OBC reservations have made universities more representative than ever before. Graduate employment prospects continue to be dismal.

University campuses are churning as a result of larger structural forces. Student agitations on university campuses seem likely to continue and a perspective of politicising and connecting them to other struggles is crucial.

Dalit Groups

Protests by Dalit groups have, in this period, continued to have a radical edge that has worried the BJP regime. As mentioned, Dalits along with Muslims, have been direct targets of cow vigilantism. The incident at Una, Gujarat of

publicly flogging Dalits sparked a grassroots mobilisation in that state. Earlier, Dalit groups were among those at the forefront of protests against the institutional actions that led to the death of Rohith Vemula at HCU. Most impressive of all, perhaps, was the response to the April 2018 Bharat Bandh call against the dilution of the SC/ST Atrocities Act. Particularly across North India, there was an unexpectedly large response which shut down many cities. Similarly impressive was the Maharashtra Bandh called by Prakash Ambedkar in response to the attacks by Hindu nationalist groups on the Dalit commemorations at Bhima-Koregaon.

The state and Hindutva groups more generally have adopted a two-pronged approach vis-a-vis Dalit Groups. On the one hand, to attack these movements and mobilisations. The sordid attempt to deny Vemula's Dalit identity, the arrests and crackdowns against the protestors involved in the Bharat Bandh and the brutal attacks on the Bhima-Koregaon protests followed by efforts to imprison many of the organisers for being 'Urban Naxals'. The second prong has been to try to assimilate and Hindu-ise Dalits. Partial veneration of Ambedkar (as an anti-Muslim thinker), the appointment of Ram Nath Kovind, a Dalit, as President, patronising high-visibility stunts like the PM washing the feet of Dalits, and being prepared to bring in ordinances and legislations on SC/ST atrocities and the university appointments roster are all examples of this more conciliatory approach.

It is important to recognise that no Hindutva approach will successfully and stably incorporate Dalit demands. The ethos of the RSS is a fundamentally brahminical one and that will not change. It is equally important that historical suspicions, where they exist, between Left and Dalit groups must be overcome. Joining together in struggles – particularly working class struggles – are crucial for this to happen.

Peasants

Agrarian distress has reached a critical point and peasants have been on the march. Impressive mobilisations have happened in Mumbai, led by the All India Kisan Sabha and in Delhi with a coalition of various groups. At more local levels there have been agitations of farmers as well. Discontent about non-payment of dues to sugarcane farmers has put the BJP on the backfoot in Western Uttar Pradesh.

The farmers' agitations have brought together a coalition of farmers. This includes rich farmers and marginal ones. The existence of this coalition reflects the depth of the crisis in which the agrarian sector finds itself. This has, moreover, been a long time coming. With the an industrial push in place, it seems quite clear that band-aids are all that is on offer for the deep gashes inflicted on the agrarian sector over two decades. The concessions won by the movement – the government's announcement of Rs. 6000 per year to land holders – represents one such band-aid with little hope of addressing the underlying crisis in agriculture.

Women's movements

These past few years have also seen a remarkable explosion of popular energies on issues of women's rights in public and private. Beginning from the mass mobilisations following the 2012 rape and murder of Jyoti Singh, the issue of gendered violence, sexual harassment, rape and unequal work conditions for men and women have been brought to centre stage. Women have protested in academia, journalism, and a number of other professions. The debate has also posed the issue of caste-based forms of gendered violence with particular force.

While these movements have not taken direct aim at the BJP regime, their far-reaching exposure of the forms of male dominance in public life have brought a new generation of women (and some men) into radical activism. These were the actions and energies of the Pinjratod movement against the confinement of women through curfews in university hostels, the demand for the creation of safer workplaces through the Me Too movement and other protests such as the 'Garima Yatra' of survivors of sexual violence across 24 states. Even in BHU, often seen as a bastion

of Hindutva organising, women's protests have shaken the establishment. There is a fundamental incompatibility of the demands for equality and freedom being articulated in these struggles and the masculinist ethos and atavistic values promoted by the Sangh Parivar. Strengthening these movements will form a critical part of a resistance that points towards a more liberatory future. Indeed deepening the intersectional vision and connecting them to working class struggles will be critical to the winning of these ends.

These varied movements have given some hope of the persistence of a spirit of struggle. At times they have even been able to roll back this or that aspect of the Hindutva juggernaut. Nevertheless, it must be recognised that these are not much more than the starting points of a potential alternative. There have been important fissures between these various movements. A broader vision of strengthening Left and progressive movements through strengthening the working class is necessary.

B: Is Congress the alternative?

There is considerable agreement over many of the issues we have discussed in the foregoing sections. However, the situation in India today calls, not for academic discussions, but concrete political actions. And this is where a wide range of views and perspectives come up.

The Liberal anti-BJP standpoint has as its principal axis the desire to replace a BJP parliamentary majority by a different majority. For many liberals, particularly the English speaking elite, the main target is to have a favourable outcome in the elections of 2019. This has made the Congress their principal choice. Indeed, even the parliamentary left seems enamoured of this option. The calculation is purely arithmetical. To block the BJP there has to be a firm parliamentary majority of 290 to 300. Unless there is at least one party as the core of the opposition bloc capable of getting at least 130 to 150 seats, no alternative government would be able to be sworn in. It is worth remembering that the Election Commission now has at its helm people aligned to Modi, that the President is an RSS man, as is the Vice President. With dice loaded so much, mainstream liberals have become admirers of the Congress. Rahul Gandhi, once mercilessly trolled as ineffectual, he is now constantly held up as a mature politician and contrasted favourably with Modi.

A minimal gloss of welfarism is given to this basically 'mathematical' affirmation of the INC. One measure referred to is the NYAY scheme announced just recently. This is a minimum income support scheme, to pay Rs. 12,000 per month to the 20% families in the poorest of poor category. The Congress's own lack of interest in the scheme is indicated by how poorly it has been thought through. Proper estimation of household income cannot be done through NSSO household consumption surveys. Past experience has demonstrated that this kind of targetting generates huge errors: by including undeserving recipients while excluding those that need and qualify for support. Finally, the Congress has not said how it is going to raise funds for this scheme estimated at Rs. 3.65 lakh crores over the 5-year government term. Given the Congress's fundamental neoliberalism, it is unlikely to raise taxes on corporates or the rich. Instead, the most likely approach will be to wind up other social welfare schemes to pay for this one. Nor is there likely to be any serious move to do what is most needed: prioritize the creation of free, universal, quality healthcare; make available quality public primary and secondary schooling for all; install adequate social security and pension for the elderly; massive investment on public housing and transport and so on.

There are some extremely important problems with support for the Congress. One or two may not trouble liberals overmuch, but they must trouble anyone claiming to be a socialist and to standing on the grounds of class struggle. There are troublesome problems even if we were to stay close to the premise of the liberals.

As socialists, we need to ask, apart from the demonetisation issue, and leaving aside Hindutva for a very short while,

can we discern major differences between the BJP and the Congress? If we look at the period 1991-2018, the Congress was in government for fifteen years. The dismantling of the state sector, the destruction of the Public Distribution System, the privatisation of banks, all began under Congress governments, even if the BJP has been able to push these through with greater success in the last five years.

The plan for the GST, which we have seen takes away the autonomy of provinces, in the name of national unity, was also planned by the Congress. So was the UID scheme, now known as Aadhaar – a step in creating a police state. At the same time, it is unsafe, as leakages have already shown. In other words, not only does the state gain massive control over people, but the data can be leaked to private corporate players. It is not surprising that the Congress criticisms about Aadhaar were all minor and over technicalities. It has not, and cannot, put up any principled opposition to the UID scheme as a whole.

A second problem that socialists should have is the attempt at moving the discourse to personalities and to a two-party system. On one hand, we are constantly asked to consider who will be the better Prime Minister, Modi or Rahul Gandhi. Or, we are asked, if an alliance wins, will there not be instability due to too many contenders for the position of Prime Minister? This is an attempt to move India more and more in the direction of a plebiscitary and a presidential style politics. Revolutionary socialists have always insisted that socialist democracy must be more democratic than bourgeois democracy. So we cannot support a shrinking democracy by making it a Modi versus Rahul Gandhi fight, but by fighting for proportional representation, so that any party getting 1 per cent vote gets five seats in the Lok Sabha, and by making it a transferrable ballot, so that no vote is wasted. If the party of first choice does not get 1 percent then the vote will be transferred to the party of second choice. We must remember, also, what US leftist activists say about the Republicans and the Democrats – the bosses have two parties, we have none. The two party system is a conscious attempt to create a false choice for the masses, while the bosses and elites control both the parties.

The other problem with seeing the Congress at the core of a supposed secular-democratic alliance is, that it is neither very democratic, nor deeply secular. If we look at how the Congress has used the Constitution and other laws, it becomes clear that from the outset there was an attempt to strike a ‘balance’ between secular and Hindu communal tendencies, along with a centralising tendency which carried a whiff of the Hindu-Hindi-Hindustan politics. This is evident if we look at the Constitutional promise to promote cow protection: a Brahminical demand dressed up in a pro-agriculture garb. This is also evident when we look carefully at Schedule VIII, with its promise of developing Hindi, and the concept that this would necessitate drawing resources from Sanskrit. The collapse of the Hindu Code Bill was likewise the result of a compromise with Hindu communalists.

But it is not merely a matter of the past. In the last few years we have seen that the Congress has taken the view, that secular liberals have no option, but to vote for the Congress and neither do the Muslims. It therefore sees its task as one of wooing the Brahminical forces. On a significant range of issues, the Congress has reverted to a policy of soft Hindutva. In very recent times, two of its actions describe this clearly. One is the Congress response to the Supreme Court verdict on Sabarimala. In Kerala, it tried to compete with the BJP in mobilising Hindu communal forces, since it hoped that this would weaken the CPI(M) in the province. And in Delhi, when Congress(I) MPs from Kerala wanted to stage a protest, Sonia Gandhi effectively told them not to do these things in Delhi. In other words, for the Congress High Command it was a tactical matter. In Delhi they had to compete against the BJP. In Delhi they had to negotiate with the CPI(M), and with secular liberal forces. So in Delhi the support to Hindu communalism should not be played up.

Another Congress action we can talk about is the support given to the call for building a Ram Temple by several Congress leaders, such as Harish Rawat, former Uttarakhand Chief Minister, or Kripashankar Singh, former Maharashtra Minister. Obviously, there is a difference between a party that has made the Ram Temple one of its signature campaign themes and a party that uses it as part of a huge set of issues. But these people clearly show that Hindu communalism will not die out if the BJP is ejected from power.

That the Congress is willing to support not just Hindu communalism but even people who kill in the name of religion was on display when they made Kamal Nath, one of the main accused in the 1984 anti-Sikh pogrom case, the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh after the recent elections there.

So if the arithmetic alone is considered, key political issues are discarded. It is a matter of recognising how far to the right the political terrain as a whole has shifted. Only then can we acknowledge, that while we would oppose the Congress unhesitatingly, many exploited and oppressed people in several provinces may find that they have no option but to vote for the Congress (I). That might well be the choice facing Muslims, Adivasis, Dalits, in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and other provinces and union territories where they do not find significant alternative forces for whom to cast their votes.

We are not in the business of giving political advice to bourgeois parties. However, revolutionaries need to make sober estimates of political situations. The soft Hindutva of the Congress is one of the major impediments to cobbling together a “secular” front against the communal agenda. Just as the deep rightwing economic commitment of the Congress is one of the major impediments to cobbling together a “people’s front” against the economic offensive mounted simultaneously by fascism. So, when we are accused of being politically irrelevant forces who out of a misplaced purism oppose voting for the Congress, we ask, what is the programme for which we are voting? If the actions of the Congress over the past three decades, if the utterances and deeds of Congress leaders over the past five years, are any indication of the things they would do in power, it is clear that:

- Congress in power would also be hawkish against Pakistan

- Congress in power would now go for further militarization, with Rahul Gandhi accusing Modi of causing a slowing down of purchasing the Rafale planes

- Congress would not fight openly against communalist forces on the ground, being content with cosmetic surgery, such as changing a few officials in certain academic and other bodies (UGC, ICHR, VCs of JNU, HCU etc) rather than passing severe anti-communal laws, banning the RSS and VHP under the same laws and for the same reasons which have been used to ban organisations like the SIMI, which have actually been able to inflict far less damage to the fabric of secularism and democracy in India, or taking up thoroughgoing struggles against the Brahminical ideology of the RSS.

- Congress would continue along the path created by the BJP in centralisation, since the BJP in turn took over many of the weapons forged for previous Congress deeds.

In short, a Congress-led and Congress dominated government may keep BJP out for five years. But first, once the politics of the Congress are clear to the majority of toilers, to Dalits, Adivasis and Muslims, they would hesitate to vote, which itself would make the coming of such a government more difficult. And secondly, such a government (even if it were to last that long) would restore the credibility of the BJP for 2024, since people would see that the economic policies of that government would not benefit them, while the BJP, out of power, would be able to use its forces to on one hand mobilise the oppressor castes on a Brahminical plank, while on the other, mobilising the toilers by pointing to the failure of the Congress. And since the front that the Congress aspires for, is a front that would include most of the opposition parties, its collapse would be the last throw of the dice. The RSS would be able to campaign openly for a full blooded Sangh regime, with majorities in both Houses, opening up real prospects for making decisive changes in the Constitution.

C: What about a Federal Front or a Third

Front?

In different forms, this is the call that has been going round. This has two shapes, and we need to look at both. One is the very rightwing call for a Federal Front given by West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress leader Mamata Banerjee. This has of course not materialised in a formal way. What most regional parties know is that their role will be finally determined by how the seatshares that emerge. So they are mostly content with province to province arrangements. But we must be aware that the TMC has been one of the most aggressive right wing parties in India after the BJP.[1] We have identified it as such a long time back, and that was why, unlike many parties and groups on the far left, who in their so called struggle against “social fascism” supported the TMC in 2009-2011, we have never called for any political support or even any grassroots collaboration with the TMC. It has struck violently against working class struggles, fighting against every all India general strike called by Central Trade Unions since 2011, imposing a terrible “settlement” on tea-garden workers in West Bengal, refusing to pay Dearness Allowance twice a year to government employees and other workers paid by the government, and has waged war against the left forces (both parliamentary left and radical left), including arrests, false cases, deaths due to violence by party goons, deaths due to police action, deaths in prison due to action (or inaction, as when Sudip Chongdar, arrested on the charge of being a CPI Maoist leader, was allowed to die without treatment after he suffered a stroke).

The TMC has also been a partner in earlier NDA blocs, including being in an NDA government. Its current electoral opposition to the BJP stems from bourgeois political compulsions. At present the BJP is a rising force in West Bengal, while the Congress and the Left Front are both seemingly on the backfoot. Consequently it has formally declared its opposition to the BJP. The dubiousness of this opposition can be seen from many developments. Supposedly, TMC goons have repeatedly beaten up Dilip Ghosh, the BJP leader. Yet not once has he even had a few days of hospitalisation. This appears to be a TMC-BJP mutually agreed and staged ‘show’. It enables the TMC to act the role of opponent of the BJP at low cost, and it allows the BJP to also appear to be the real opponent of the TMC. Despite all its failings, in West Bengal, as the 3 February 2019 mobilisation showed, the Left Front is capable of really massive popular mobilisations. At election times, however, massive hooliganism at the grass roots level can have the effect of cutting down the transformation of that support into votes.

That the TMC has no principled secular agenda can also be seen from its use of Bengali chauvinism rather than democratic politics as a mobilising strategy. Its supremo, Ms. Banerjee, has as her declared goal the winning of all 42 seats from West Bengal, hoping this will make her party the strongest in a very fragmented parliament. And if that hope does not work out, she still expects that a lower tally will make the BJP turn to potential allies, possibly dump the Modi-Shah duo for a “secular” and “moderate” face (Gadkari, for example, has already been making the right noises), in which case she can provide her support for or even join a new NDA government in exchange for some of her key demands along with a few token gestures that she can hold up as great victories for secularism.

The second model of the Third Front/Federal Front is one that is more tilted against the BJP. This is a conception that many activists have been hoping to achieve in reality but has little basis in the political calculations of significant electoral formations. This is an Indian version of a rainbow coalition. It is put forward by activists who do not see class struggle as central, but at most as one identity (“class identity”) along with other identities. They believe that a coalition of the BSP, the Dravidian parties, the RJD and the SP, etc would highlight caste, regional and ethnic aspirations and create a more democratic space.

It is true that Dalit-Adivasi-Bahujan oppression is a major point of struggle. But India has seen the performance of the United Front Government too when the Left participated in it but was certainly not in the driver’s seat. Without stronger struggles being generated on the ground, a rainbow coalition will not lead to a rainbow government. Rather, first of all, the sheer numbers show that at least in 2019 such left-of-centre rainbow coalition government is impossible. In several provinces, the Congress is either a partner in such a rainbow, or the Congress is the major opposition to the BJP.

Moreover, such a coalition is unlikely to develop a coherent programme, even for the exploited and oppressed whose votes it is banking on. The refusal of Mayawati to have anything to do with Azad and the Bhim army shows that the BSP is trying to get a constituency under its hegemony rather than fight for Dalit rights. While some intellectuals keep talking about a rainbow, there are no significant gender or class slogans emanating from most of these parties.

D: What Strategy for the Left and Working Class

Conditions in India have worsened in a number of ways. The organised left – parties, unions, other mass organisations, have less striking power than they did thirty years ago. Our benchmark needs to be set at 1989, as a starting point, because that was when the BJP launched its new strategy. Our current has been arguing about that since then. In Parliament that year, the CPI, CPI(M), Forward bloc, Indian Peoples' Front and Marxist Coordination Committee had 54 seats and had between them polled 10.49% votes. The organised working class had a bigger striking power.

Indian capitalism had begun its turn to a neoliberal, privatised economy some years earlier, but at a slow pace. 1990-91 saw a drastic shift. A balance of payments crisis was used as the plea to ram through devastating pro-market, pro-rich policies. And the minority government of P.V. Narasimha Rao could do that, constantly holding the left at bay by raising the bogey of the BJP. The left had 58 seats and about the same votes as in the previous parliament. But its persistent policy of lesser evilism, of making a distinction between fighting class battles and fighting fascism, meant that it dealt gently with the Rao government. The result was a further massive growth of the BJP, and its ability to forge alliances with other regional bourgeois parties. In 1996 the BJP won 161 seats, and its allies a further 26. The Congress won 140 seats, a decline of 92 seats and nearly 7.5% votes. The Left Front won 52 seats with just over 9 per cent votes.

What was significant through all these years was the determination with which the parliamentary left clung to its illusions about progressive bourgeois parties. This was revealed in 1996 when the United Front Government was formed. The CPI entered the government, while the CPI(M) and RSP supported it from outside. This government showed absolutely no difference in its economic policies. P. Chidambaram as its Finance Minister presented a budget which Indian big business described as a dream budget. Montek Singh Ahluwalia, one of the principal market advocates of the government, wrote, in a paper for the Planning Commission in 1999: "That a consensus of sorts has evolved is perhaps reflected in the fact that the reforms initiated by the Congress Government in 1991 were continued by the United Front coalition which came to power in 1996 and have also been broadly endorsed by the BJP led government which took office in 1998".

This popular frontism cost the left heavily in the end. Its last major opportunity had come in 2004. The BJP had gone into the 2004 elections with an arrogant, openly upper class campaign, talking about 'India Shining'. The national level perception went against the BJP, as did its local level alliance pacts. The left won 61 seats. But that was followed by the Left Front deciding to give "support from outside" to the Congress led UPA based on a Common Minimum Programme that was hailed as a great step forward. But in fact, the CMP did not do certain things. The CMP did not promise natural justice to the victims of the Gujarat Genocide. In the NDA period Murlidhar Joshi had ensured the rewriting of text books. When Manmohan Singh, in a rotten balancing act, called for equal rejection of left fundamentalists as well as Hindutva fundamentalists, the left parties did not stand fully with the secular historians and their scholars fighting against the glorification of Savarkar, Hitler and the denigration of the Russian Revolution as a coup in school text books..

Nor is it the case that the left took stronger positions over bread and butter issues. It has been a persistent failure of the left to recognise that the strength of the left, even the non-revolutionary left, is primarily based on

extra-parliamentary mobilisations. Despite the left parties not being in power in many provinces, it is the AITUC, CITU etc that have repeatedly mobilised vast numbers of workers in general strikes that have been considered the biggest in the world. But the left parties in the UPA period did not fight all out for the rights of workers and peasants, being satisfied with such sops as the MNREGA, which only offered 100 days of low paid work for one member of each family. Had the left fought resolutely, primarily outside parliament, but also using its MPs in Parliament, for full restoration of the PDS, for universal health care for all, for state funded education and teachers who are state employees, rather than farming it out to NGOs and ill paid workers, they could have both snatched greater gains from the ruling class for the exploited, and made possible a strengthening of their base. After all, the German Social Democratic Party in the period 1890s-1910 won victories, rights for workers, and parliamentary seats, through major trade union mobilisations. The CPI in the period 1951-1962 progressed in much the same way. The experience of being in government has so reoriented the reformist left that it has stopped being able to understand even this. Instead of solidly linking the parliamentary battles to the extra-parliamentary dynamics, the majority of left parties and leaders create separate calendars. They have mobilisations of workers, peasants. But that calendar ends and a separate electoral calendar begins once the elections are announced. As a result, thereafter the class battles are ignored. Absolutely current instances are the struggles of tea garden workers and the elections, or the struggles of School Service Commission applicants, both in West Bengal. With the BJP putting up John Barla as a candidate, what was absolutely necessary was to fight for tea garden workers' rights NOW. Similarly, with Mamata Banerjee and the TMC deeply implicated in turning the SSC into a shady racket, there was a need to make the struggle far more visible and to sharpen its focus, instead of leaving it to the handful of protestors.

In addition, the left continues to have a narrow vision of the class struggle that mirrors the politics of the identity politics forces. Where they see class as one among so many identities, the left sees a narrow economism as the class struggle. It does not look at the links between class struggle and caste oppression (and when it tries, it ends up with the failed theory of semi-feudalism). The left reduces gender and sexuality issues to a dogmatic definition of class struggle. As a result, whatever the potentialities, in fact the politics of the left remains a marginalised politics.

Our criticism of the left is based on that. We have an understanding of the class struggle that is potentially unifying. But to be actually capable of unifying the various exploited and oppressed masses, there is a need to develop theory and practice together, to struggle for every sector of the oppressed and exploited, and to connect that with the parliamentary struggles. Unless the struggles are linked, unless the left moves out of its eternal search for progressive bourgeois allies and fights together with the oppressed and exploited, there can be no revival of the left even in the parliamentary sphere. And only a stronger left in the parliament can resist the fascists. If we have to rely on chance combinations of bourgeois parties we constantly give ground to the fascists.

The left, whether the reformist or the radical left, needs to understand that the failure to make a Marxist analysis with a proper action programme for caste-gender-sexuality issues leads to either a wooden Marxism of the sectist type that alienates Dalits, Adivasis, women activists, queers, or leads to a post-modernist influenced collapse of the Marxist outlook.

From this perspective, we say that the real United Front in today's perspective has to be a United Front with mass organisations of workers, peasants, Dalits, Adivasis, mass women's struggles, queer movement organisations etc. A left alliance should be one that has candidates from such mass movements as well as from left parties, rather than candidates of non-BJP bourgeois parties, as the people we are asked to vote for.

In the concrete situation, our slogans are:

– Defeat BJP.

– Defeat all the most right-wing parties regardless of whether regionally they are in alliance with the BJP or not.

– We understand that in seats where there is an essentially BJP vs Congress stand-off people will feel compelled to vote for the Congress. But we do not see that as the road out of the crisis. The road forward requires treating elections as part of the process of generating mass movements.

– Hence we call for a vote for Left and progressive candidates.

– Fascist type forces have never been defeated by bourgeois parties. Other bourgeois parties claiming to fight the BJP are neither anti-neoliberal nor capable of permanently defeating the politics of Hindutva. But they too are now opposing the BJP as they realise that its final victory could be their death knell. The Congress is an ugly rightwing party which cannot be a serious barrier to the progress of Hindutva in the long run but is not a far right fascistic force. Because it cannot be a serious opponent of the politics of neoliberalism or Hindutva we cannot call for a positive vote for Congress even as we do call for a vote against BJP/Sangh as our principal political electoral slogan.

The Struggles to Which We are Committed, before, during and after the Elections

FOR A DEMOCRATIC ELECTORAL, ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGISLATIVE REFORMS

1. Proportionate peoples representation in parliament, legislative assemblies and local governments, instead of current first-past-the-post system for a true reflection of people's aspirations.
2. Thirty three percent reservations for women and people of other sexuality in parliament, legislative assemblies and local governments and gradually raising the same to fifty percent in timebound plan.
3. Total state funded electoral system free from the evil of money, muscle, bribes and other ill practices, including media practices. EC should be appointed by multi-member constitutional committee.
4. Legislative change in appointment and removal of top brasses in CBI, CVC, NIA, CAG through parliamentary committee without any extra weightage and advantage to the ruling party/(ies) and constitutional guarantee in their independent function without govt. interference and control.
5. Non-Parliamentary top executive to be appointed/removed/replaced mandatorily by the legislature through committee of members from ruling and opposition parties without any extra weightage and advantage to the ruling party/(ies).
6. A legally binding mandatory framework for pre-legislative consultation to ensure participation of the citizens in process of making laws which affects them for.
7. Restore in the Electoral list the names of lakhs of Muslim and Dalit voters, who have been eliminated in the last five years.
8. Scrap the National Register of Citizens and the Citizenship Bill.
9. Fix income for both governmental and private sectors at the maximum ration of 1:6. Bring back a progressive

income tax up to a highest tier of 80%, restore the property tax and raise the tax on corporate profits.

FOR PRESERVATION AND EXTENSION OF DEMOCRACY

1. Repeal (completely and unconditionally) the anti democratic laws and sections of laws/acts viz. UAPA, NSA, AFSPA, Article 124(a), 499 of IPC etc and administrative detention.
2. An effective whistle blower's protection law.
3. Legislative enactment of accessible, decentralized citizen's grievance redressal mechanism to provide time bound redressal of citizen's grievances with provisions for auditability & accountability and compensations.
4. Constitutional guarantee of fund, functionaries and authorities for the local self-governments without discrimination for democratic and effective governance, as per the spirit of 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment with mandatory provisions for highest authority of the Gram/Ward Sansad in decision making, overseeing and action taking.
5. Legal framework for punishable offence with respect to assault upon individual or groups reflecting diverse culture and identity, like food habits, religious practices, caste hierarchy, gender differences etc, mostly minority and weaker stratum and protection of victim(s) with compensations.
6. Independent statutory body with quasi-judicial power to oversee and protect political and social opposition to the government and the state with right to protest, organise events without discrimination with equal opportunity as the ruling party.
7. Any aggression or offence by the ruling party or administration, formal or informal with the patronage of the government should be dealt with proper and quick response actions by independent statutory body empowered for the same.

BASIC OF RIGHTS

1. Constitutional guarantee of 'Right to Work' for living to all adult people, with compulsory unemployment wage equivalent to minimum wage, upto the age of sixty.
2. Universal 'Right to Pension' at the age of 60, equivalent to last drawn wage.
3. Declaration of national floor level minimum wage in consultation with trade unions, nutritionists, social activists with bi-annual upward auto-revision enabling based on CPI; irrespective of nature of work and employment. Mandatory revision of minimum wage with legal obligation after every five years.
4. 'Right to Food' act for universal (nutrition and health compliant) subsidised PDS.
5. Universal basic health and healthcare system by easy accessibility of safe drinking water, nutrition, housing, end-to-end free medical services with ensured quality and availability at all levels..

6. Every school must be complaint of RTE. Every childhood education and care should be integral part of it. ITI must be increased in huge numbers followed by setting National Village Education Fund to support Government to improve quality of education in rural areas. Provide residential facilities for under privileged at least up to college level. No communalisation of education system.
7. Strict implementation of existing labour laws including accountability and actionable provisions upon violation, with progressive reforms over time in favour for employees to minimise the difference in power and authority between employer and employee.
8. Statutory assurance of remunerative prices as per Swaminathan Committee's recommendation for the peasants and their land distribution support for farmer's collective, sustainable/ecological agriculture promoting and full implementation of land acquisition Act, 2013.
9. Recognition of local communities specially forest dwellers as custodians and share holders of local eco-system and natural resources of that area and legally empower the relevant local assemblies to govern the system while the forest department should be restructured to assist them. An independent and empowered environment commission should be set up to judge environmental standards and make regulations and ensure compliance.

MEDIA, JUDICIARY AND JUSTICE FOR VULNERABLE SECTIONS

1. An independent institutional framework for accountability of the media and licensing power free from government control and independence of public service broadcasters.
2. An accessible and accountable judiciary which can deliver justice for all. A full time body independent of government and judiciary which can examine is highly needed to make judiciary accountable and implementable..
3. Establish an Equal Rights Commission through a law that all can easily understand and that covers all aspects of social inequality. Ensure through this the structural inequalities and the injustices that are faced by helpless social groups. Thereby ensure proper solutions. Reservation in public and private sectors for jobs and education only for the socially oppressed and repressed groups of peoples.
4. Recognise the rights of all marginal sexualities as equals by creating law respecting self-identification by transgenders.

ENVIRONMENT, FOREIGN POLICIES ETC

1. All natural wealth must be controlled neither by the government nor by corporate sectors. They must belong to the people. The direct producers must have rights over land.
2. Maintaining the ecological balance in utilising natural wealth must be given proper weightage. Scrap all industries that destroy the environment.
3. India must tread the path of friendly and fraternal relations among the peoples of South and South East Asia and West Asia, in order to achieve general development of the peoples of these regions, rather than developing conflict-based relationships. Halt war madness, reduce military expenditures. Stop the use of nuclear weapons and nuclear power.

Defeat the BJP Strengthen the Working Class, Left and All Progressive Movements

Source: [Radical Socialist](#), 19 April 2019.

PS:

If you like this article or have found it useful, please consider donating towards the work of International Viewpoint. Simply follow this link: [Donate](#) then enter an amount of your choice. One-off donations are very welcome. But regular donations by standing order are also vital to our continuing functioning. See the last paragraph of [this article](#) for our bank account details and take out a standing order. Thanks.

[1] Wikipedia [Indian general election 2019](#).

[2] Wikipedia [Indian general election 2019](#).