

janata

Vol. 74 No. 46

December 8, 2019

Our Demands on the 35th Anniversary

New Industrial Relations Law: Farewell to Job Security
Subodh Varma

New IR Code Bill: Another Nail in the Coffin
Ronak Chhabra

Despite Hurdles, Jammu–Srinagar March Succeeds

Sandeep Pandey, Rajendran Narayanan

Protests Against Firoz Khan: Undoing India's Glorious Tradition
Minakshi Rajdev

Historic Students' March in Pakistan
V. Arun Kumar

Palestine: We Thought the House Was Empty
Vijay Prashad

One Year of López Obrador's Mexico
Katu Arkonada

The Realism of Bernie Sanders' Climate Policy
Naomi Klein, Sivan Kartha

UK: Labour's General Election Manifesto
Kenneth Surin

Editor : G. G. Parikh

Associate Editor : Neeraj Jain

Managing Editor : Guddi

Editorial Board :

**B. Vivekanandan, Qurban Ali,
Anil Nauriya, Sonal Shah,
Amarendra Dhaneshwar,
Sandeep Pandey**

D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Mumbai - 400 007.

Email : janataweekly@gmail.com

Website:www.janataweekly.org

Ambedkar For Our Times

Subhash Gatade

At a time when we are witnessing a concerted attempt from the powers that be to water down Ambedkar's legacy and appropriate his name to peddle an agenda which essentially hinges around political and social reaction, we need to understand how during his more than three decade long political career he put forward a "variety of political and social ideas that fertilised Indian thinking" (as per late President K R Narayanan) which contributed to the rulers of the newly independent nation's decision to adopt the parliamentary form of democracy. Perhaps more important would be to understand his differentiation between what he called 'political democracy'—which he defined as 'one man one vote' and 'social democracy'—which according to him was one man with one value and his caution that political democracy built on the divisions, asymmetries, inequalities and exclusions of traditional Indian society would be like 'a palace built on cow dung'.

We also need to take a look at the unfolding scenario in the country and also see for oneself whether there is a growing dissonance or resonance between what and how Dr Ambedkar envisaged democracy and

the actual situation on the ground and how should we see our role in confronting the challenges which lie before it.

* *

Let us first try and understand whether the image of Ambedkar which has been taught to us through textbooks and popularised by the ever expanding media matches with his actual contributions as a great leader, scholar and renaissance thinker, all put together.

This image would include: 'Dalit leader', 'Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution', 'fought for the rights of Scheduled Castes', and 'embraced Buddhism with lakhs of followers'. The image of Ambedkar in people's minds normally does not transcend these limits.

The imagery does not include the historic Mahad Satyagraha which was organised under his leadership way back in 1927 at the Chawdar Talab (lake) nor does it include the burning of Manusmriti in the second phase of this Satyagraha, which was compared to the French revolution by Ambedkar in his speech. It also does not include details of the first political party

This article has been edited by us for reasons of space. The full article is available on Janata blog.)

formed under his leadership called Independent Labour Party, role of many non-dalits or even upper castes in the movement led by him or the historic march to Bombay assembly against the 'Khot pratha' in which communists had participated in equal strength. His historic speech to the railway workers in Manmad wherein he asked them to fight the twin enemies of 'Brahminism' and 'Capitalism' (late thirties) or his struggle for Hindu Code Bill, which ultimately became the cause of his resignation from Nehru cabinet, all these details of his stormy life, never get mention in the imagery. One can add many other important interventions under his leadership which definitely do not 'suit' his image of a 'dalit messiah'.

Is it not surprising that most of us know so little of him, which is definitely not the case with other great leaders who emerged during the anti-colonial movement?

This selective amnesia about Ambedkar is largely due to the way in which the ruling classes then—dominated by the upper caste elite—tried to belittle his image in a very surreptitious manner. Undoubtedly people or formations involved in the work of broader social transformation, which also include organisations claiming to be his legatees, cannot escape blame for the critical silences around his image.

Any student of politics of the oppressed would vouch that this is a bane of most of the leaders of the exploited and oppressed. In fact, we have been witness to a similar process which unfolded itself in the USA itself where a very sanitised image of Martin Luther King has been made popular. Instead of MLK who opposed Vietnam War, looked at capitalism as source of all evils,

who equally struggled for workers rights, we have before us an image of King which seems more amenable to the ruling classes there.

* *

Coming to his ideas on democracy, it can definitely be said that future of Indian democracy depends to a great deal upon revival of Ambedkar's visionary conception of democracy. Of course, this would need to be enlarged and updated in the light of the recent experience.

But before taking up this aspect it would be opportune to know from Ambedkar himself how he looked at the idea of democracy. Perhaps his speech on the 'Voice of America' radio (20th May 1956) which he gave few months before his death could best summarise his ideas around the concept.

The first point which he makes is that 'Democracy is quite different from a Republic as well as from Parliamentary Government.' According to him:

"The roots of democracy lie not in the form of Government, Parliamentary or otherwise. A democracy is more than a form of Government. It is primarily a mode of associated living. The roots of Democracy are to be searched in the social relationship, in the terms of associated life between the people who form a society."

Next he comes to define the word 'society' itself. For him a society is united by its very nature and "the qualities which accompany this unity are praiseworthy community of purpose and desire for welfare, loyalty to public ends and mutuality of sympathy and co-operation."

Interrogating Indian society, he asks whether "these ideals are found in Indian society?" Elaborating on the Indian society which is nothing

but "an innumerable collection of castes which are exclusive in their life and have no common experience to share and have no bond of sympathy", he concludes that:

"The existence of the Caste System is a standing denial of the existence of those ideals of society and therefore of democracy."

He discusses how "Indian Society is so embedded in the Caste System that everything is organised on the basis of caste." He shares examples from daily life of individuals revolving around the twin concepts of purity and pollution, then moves to how the caste system operates in the social-political arena and wryly concludes that "there is no room for the downtrodden and the outcastes in politics, in industry, in commerce and in education."

He discusses other special of the caste system and focusses on what is called "Graded Inequality" where "Castes are not equal in their status" but rather 'are standing one above another' and form "an ascending scale of hatred and descending scale of contempt" which has the most pernicious consequences as "it destroys willing and helpful co-operation."

He then takes up the manner in which one caste is bound to one occupation which "cuts at the very roots of democracy." He goes on to say that a democratic society "should open a way to use all the capacities of the individual. Stratification is stunting of the growth of the individual and deliberate stunting is a deliberate denial of democracy."

In the concluding part of his speech he discusses obstacles in the way of ending the caste system. He says that the first obstacle is the "system of graded inequality which is the soul of the Caste System."

The second obstacle is that “the Indians Society is disabled by unity in action by not being able to know what is its common good” as “the mind of the Indians is distracted and misled by false valuations and false perspectives.” He ends his speech by emphasising that mere education cannot destroy the caste system, it would require education to be given to the right strata of society, it would require education to be given “to the lowest strata of Indian Society which is interested in blowing up the Caste System.” Giving education to those “who want to keep up the Caste System” is not going “to improve the prospect of Democracy in India” but rather would “put our Democracy in India in greater jeopardy.”

* *

Ambedkar believed that democracy is “a form and a method of government whereby revolutionary changes in the economic and social life of the people are brought about without bloodshed.” The conditions for that are as follows:

“(1) there should not be glaring inequalities in society, that is, privilege for one class; (2) the existence of an opposition; (3) equality in law and administration; (4) observance of constitutional morality; (5) no tyranny of the majority; (6) moral order of society; and (7) public conscience.” (See: Shyam Chand, Dr Ambedkar on Democracy, *Mainstream*, Vol XLV, No 51.)

In his speech to the Constituent Assembly on November 25, 1949 he also elucidated three devices that he stated were essential to maintain democracy: “(i) constitutional methods: (ii) not to lay liberties at the feet of a great man: (iii) make a political democracy a social democracy.”

Looking at the fact that India happens to be a multi-denominational society where the common denominator could be secularism which is understood as one of the pillars on which the superstructure of our democracy rests and is a unifying force of our associated life, he emphasised :

“The conception of a secular state is derived from the liberal democratic tradition of the West. No institution which is maintained wholly out of state funds shall be used for the purpose of religious instruction irrespective of the question whether the religious instruction is given by the state or by any other body.”

In a debate in Parliament, he also underlined:

“It (secular state) does not mean that we shall not take into consideration the religious sentiments of the people. All that a secular state means that this Parliament shall not be competent to impose any particular religion upon the rest of the people. That is the only limitation that the Constitution recognises.”

Taking into consideration the possibility that a minority can become victim of the tyranny of the majority, he suggested enough safeguards for their protection :

“The State should guarantee to its citizens the liberty of conscience and the free exercise of his religion including the right to profess, to preach and to convert within limits compatible with public order and morality.”

Prof Jean Dreze, in an article “Dr Ambedkar and Future of Indian Democracy”, brings forth an important point wherein he underlines how “Ambedkar’s passion for democracy was closely related to his commitment to rationality

and the scientific outlook.” In this connection he quotes from one of his last speeches, “Buddha or Karl Marx”, wherein summarising the essential teachings of Buddha, Ambedkar elaborates :

“Everyone has a right to learn. Learning is as necessary for man to live as food is ... Nothing is infallible. Nothing is binding forever. Everything is subject to inquiry and examination.”

According to Prof Dreze, raising this issue has become particularly important today considering the recent threats to Indian democracy which often involve a concerted attack on rationality and the scientific spirit.

* *

Let us now go beyond Ambedkar’s understanding of democracy to take a look at another danger to democracy in the unfolding situation in India today.

What is the *sine qua non* of democracy?

It is the understanding that minority voices will be allowed to flourish and they will not be bulldozed.

On the surface, majoritarianism—rule by majority—appears to be very similar to democracy but it essentially stands democracy on its head. For real democracy to thrive, it is essential that ideas and principles of secularism are at its core. The idea that there will be a clear separation between state and religion and there won’t be any discrimination on the basis of religion has to be its guiding principle.

Majoritarianism thus clearly defeats democracy in idea as well as practice.

While democracy’s metamorphosis into majoritarianism

is a real danger, under the rule of capital— especially its present phase of neoliberalism—another lurking danger is its evolution into what can be called as plutocracy—government by the rich.

This has been brought out in considerable detail in a recent book by Thomas Picketty, *Capitalism in the 21st Century*. This convincingly demonstrates that the twentieth century exhibited a secular tendency towards continuous and widening inequality, with disproportionate concentration of income at the top, and that this can be seen in India too, which too is a relatively high inequality country.

In such an unfolding situation, where on the one hand, we are faced with the danger of democracy metamorphosing into majoritarianism, and on the other hand, democracy becoming an oligarchy, the question arises: what needs to be done ?

Jean Dreze, in the above mentioned article, suggests a course of action which merits attention:

“The best course of action may be to revive the Directive Principles of the Constitution, and to reassert that these principles are “fundamental in the governance of the country” (Article 37).

Indeed, in spite of much official hostility to these principles today, there are unprecedented opportunities for asserting the economic and social rights discussed in the constitution—the right to education, the right to information, the right to food, the right to work, and the right to equality, among others. For this, Dr. Ambedkar’s advice to “educate, organise and agitate” is more relevant than ever.

(The author is a social activist and writer.)

International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal, Press Release
November 27, 2019

Our Demands on the 35th Anniversary

For over three decades, several survivor led organisations have been fighting for justice and a life of dignity (proper health care, economic and social rehabilitation and safe living conditions). On the 35th anniversary of the Bhopal Gas Disaster, the survivors have specific demands of the Governments of Indian and USA and Dow Chemical.

1. **Compensation:** Union Carbide / Dow Chemical must pay a minimum of 8 thousand US dollars to each Bhopal survivor as additional compensation for personal injuries as claimed in the Supreme Court of India. The Indian government must make Union Carbide / Dow Chemical pay compensation for health and environmental damage caused by contamination of soil and groundwater.
2. **Criminal punishment:** The US government must serve the summons from the Bhopal District Court upon Dow Chemical without delay. The Indian government must ensure that the criminal trial of accused Indian corporate executives is concluded within the next six months.
3. **Health care and research:** The Indian government must ensure that standardised treatment protocols are developed for gas exposure related chronic diseases. The Indian government must establish a population based registry for all deaths, births and congenital malformations in the gas exposed families. The Indian government must ensure that NIREH (National Institute

for Research on Environmental Health) fulfil its commitment to the Bhopal survivors by generating scientific information on the long term health damage by the gas disaster and most effective means of ameliorating them. The Madhya Pradesh state government must ensure that free medical care is available to residents who drank contaminated groundwater for six months or more.

4. **Rehabilitation:** The Indian and MP state governments must ensure that a monthly pension of Rs 3,000/- is paid to all women widowed by the disaster and all those left without means to support themselves as a consequence of gas exposure.
5. **Clean up:** Indian government must ensure comprehensive scientific assessment of the depth, spread and nature of soil and groundwater contamination in an around the abandoned pesticide factory. Union Carbide / Dow Chemical must pay for the clean-up of the soil and groundwater up to international standards. The state government must cease and desist from covering up the contamination by building a memorial to the disaster on top of the contaminated lands.

Janata
is available at
www.lohiatoday.com

New Industrial Relations Law: Farewell to Job Security

Subodh Varma

Silently, indeed clandestinely, a major change has been brought about in the relations between employers and employees. This will affect not just crores of employees of all types—private or public sector, in industries or in services—but also future generations. Jobs are no longer going to be the same again, ever.

On November 28, the Narendra Modi government introduced a new draft Industrial Relations Code, 2019, (IRC) in the Lok Sabha. An earlier version of the draft Code was made public in 2017 and created a storm of protest for its anti-labour provisions. The new draft was never made public. It came as a surprise to not just Parliament members but to trade unions and workers/employees across the country. That's the clandestine part.

The IRC replaces three key existing labour laws—Trade Unions Act, 1926; Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946; and Industrial Disputes Act, 1947. The first of these dealt with how trade unions are to be formed, while the second and third deal with relations between employers and employees.

After being introduced, it obviously came under public scrutiny. And its provisions have caused a fresh round of outrage. Trade unions have again roundly condemned it. All the central trade unions have already called for a massive two-day nation-wide strike on January 8–9, 2020 to protest against the other labour laws that have been either passed or are in the pipeline. The new Industrial Relations Code, too, will face similar protest.

One part of the IRC deals with new and more restrictive provisions for forming trade unions. This is meant to prevent workers getting empowered through forming a collective body to fight for their rights. Another article in this issue of Janata looks at these provisions. Let us look at another key provision.

Bye-Bye Job Security

The IRC provision that completely changes the landscape of employer–employee relationship is contained in a small definition given in Section 2 clause (l), which says:

(l) "fixed term employment" means the engagement of a worker on the basis of a written contract of employment for a fixed period:

Provided that—

(a) his hours of work, wages, allowances and other benefits shall not be less than that of a permanent workman doing the same work or work of similar nature; and

(b) he shall be eligible for all statutory benefits available to a permanent workman proportionately according to the period of service rendered by him even if his period of employment does not extend to the qualifying period of employment required in the statute;

What does this mean? It means that the employer can engage workers/employees for a fixed period of time, say, one year or two years, or whatever. Such workers will have all the same conditions of service, wages etc. and all the same statutory benefits as a 'permanent workman'. The only difference would be that a 'fixed term'

employee will automatically cease to be an employee when his or her term finishes.

A Pliable Workforce

What this means is that the fixed term employee will be at the mercy of the employer. He/she will know that the job is only for, say, one year. In that one year, if any problem arises, if any benefit is denied, if any harassment or humiliation takes place, he/she will not dare to utter a word. Otherwise, the job will not be renewed.

Also, all terms and conditions will have to be accepted by the worker. If the employer dislikes trade unions, then the hapless fixed term employee will have to steer clear on unions.

And if the employer declares that his/her job performance is not satisfactory, that productivity is low, that the josh is not suitably high, the fixed term employee will have to pull up socks and produce more.

And, ultimately, despite all the best efforts of employees, if the employer finds himself in financial trouble due to stiff competition or any other reason, he will simply allow the term of employment to end. So, bye-bye employee, look for another job.

What this means is that a fixed term employee will never be able to settle down, plan a future, invest in anything. Because, who knows when the job will go!

Through this one fell stroke of the pen, so to speak, the entire lives of crores of workers, current and future, have been unimaginably changed—for the worse.

Shifting the Power

It may be argued—and many do argue—that the employer cannot be responsible for all employees. He has to run a business not a charitable outfit!

But enterprises were running before this change was invented. It was not as if employees were sitting idle in factories and other establishments. In fact, if you look at the data from the Annual Survey of Industries, it shows that per worker productivity has been steadily growing over the years. In most industries, workers were working overtime indicating that there was a lot of work to be done. Factory output also has been growing constantly, except in recent months when the slowdown has ruined many industries.

So, this change is not about running industries better. It is more about keeping workers on a tight leash, hiring and firing them according to management needs and forcing them to be more pliable and meek—in short, turning them into modern slaves.

(Subodh Varma is a senior Indian journalist.)

Janata Subscription

Annual Rs. : 260/-
Three Years : 750/-
Demand Draft / Cheque
on Mumbai Bank
in favour of

JANATA TRUST

D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Grant Road (W),
Mumbai 400 007.

New IR Code Bill: Another Nail in the Coffin

Ronak Chhabra

After introducing starvation-level wages and removing protections available to the workers, the next target of the labour law codification is the trade unions and the industrial action. To tame the former and dismantle almost every possibility of the latter seems to be the objective of the reforms. This is how Prime Minister Narendra Modi is ensuring the ‘new India’ to further jump the ranks of ‘ease of doing business’.

On Thursday, the Industrial Relations Code Bill, 2019 – the third one out of the four labour codes – was presented in the Lok Sabha by the Labour and Employment Minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar. The Bill proposes changes to the provisions relating to the membership and registration of the trade unions—the representatives of the workers—giving too much flexibility to the employers to toy with.

The government strikes the first blow by further fettering the registration process of a trade union. The IR code provides a minimum number of workers—at least 10% of the total strength or 100 workers, whichever is lesser—in an establishment to be the members of the union which seeks registration. The existing Trade Unions Act of 1926—which the code subsumes—requires only seven members of the union for the same.

Further, for a trade union to be recognised as a ‘negotiating body’ by the employer in times of labour dispute, the workers’ front requires a formal support of 75%, or more workers on the muster

roll of the industrial establishment. In case of no union securing the stipulated support, a council is to be formed consisting of different representatives.

The introduction of such a requirement must be read as giving too much room to the employers to wriggle with, as their refusal to recognise a union becomes the triggering point of many of the industrial dispute. Recent example being the labour distress in Kerala caused by Muthoot’s management or the struggle of Motherson workers in Tamil Nadu.

Considering the “repressive” nature of the proposed provisions, both were opposed by the workers’ bodies in 2015 when the code was first put on table for a discussion. This time, however, even the ‘formality’ of a consultation with the trade union representatives was done away and inclusion of both the provisions in the 2019 draft—despite strong criticism—further verifies the “killing of tripartism” under the Modi rule.

In India, getting a trade union registered was never easy. Workers get threatened by the management to withdraw their support to the union and in some cases even get transferred. Therefore, workers’ bodies had demanded that union registration be made a time-bound process. This finds no mention in the proposed code.

Moreover, the code restricts outsiders to an establishment from holding an office bearer position in the trade union.

The other overriding concern is that the clauses surrounding industrial actions and conciliations will translate to an apparent ban on workers raising any demands.

This has been achieved, at first, by restricting the workers to go on a strike during the conciliation process, which usually follows the strike notice. What's more, provision to submit the strike notice 14 days prior has been extended to all industrial establishments, which was earlier only applicable to 'public utility services' under The Industrial Disputes Act, 1947.

Another problem is the changing of the definition of the strike which now includes 'casual leaves' of the employees. Earlier, workers used to put pressure on the management by using their leaves to register their absence; however, now that provision has been taken away. As per the proposed code, strike also includes 'concerted casual leave' by 50% or more workers in an establishment. Going by this definition, a strike notice will be required prior to the 'mass leaves' of workers and if not, an action can be taken against them.

If these were not enough, the IR code also cements contractualisation of the labour by introducing 'fixed term employment' and provides executive powers to the state governments to ease the retrenchment norms.

What this means is that, if the code is passed, another nail will have been hammered by the Modi Government into the coffin of the labour laws in the country.

(Ronak Chhabra is a Bengaluru based reporter.)

Despite Hurdles, Jammu–Srinagar March Succeeds

Sandeep Pandey, Rajendran Narayanan

A 'Restoration of Democracy' march, part on feet and part on vehicles, was planned from Jammu to Srinagar between 26 November and 1 December, 2019 in Jammu and Kashmir after the decision of Government of India earlier on 5 August to abrogate Articles 370 and 35A and divide and downgrade the state into two Union Territories, J&K and Laddakh. When the march started on 26 November from Press Club, Jammu with over fifty people, the police stopped it just before it reached a main road and told us that we could not proceed on feet. They, however, allowed it to go on vehicles. The marchers then assembled at a nearby Gurudwara and about 30 of them went ahead in five vehicles. Prominent among the marchers were Sheikh Abdul Rehman, former Member of Parliament from J&K and two times Member of Legislative Assembly from Madhya Pradesh, Dr. Sunilam. The group reached Udampur, its destination for the day, and distributed a pamphlet prepared for the march while taking out a procession through the market. The next morning, however, the police prevented the group from holding a press conference. The march then proceeded towards its destination for the second day, Ramban. Local political leader Amrit Varsha received the march with much fanfare. Slogans were raised for restoring the pre-5 August status and a press conference was immediately held. On 28 November morning distribution of pamphlets took place at the local bus stand and market. Small group discussions also took place with people while pamphlets were being distributed.

However, after a public meeting held inside a hall during the day, the police arrived and threatened the journalists not to further cover the march and on the pretext that route ahead to Srinagar was closed due to land-slides asked the march to return to Jammu. The police vehicles followed the march and ensured that they crossed the Ramban district border on the way back to Jammu.

However, six marchers, including the two writers, decided to make an attempt to directly reach Srinagar by shared taxi and were successful on the second attempt on 29 November. In Srinagar, the group met Communist Party of India leader Ghulam Mohammad Mizrab in his village Poshpora in Shopian district and activists of J&K Coalition of Civil Society and Haq Insaf Party in Srinagar besides common citizens. The group also interacted with security personnel deployed at short distances from each other on stringent long duty hours for long stretches extending from several months to years.

Common sentiments expressed by people ranged from disappointment to anger at the way the Union Government has handled the situation. G.M. Mizrab said that earlier there were three kinds of people in J&K, one who had accepted being part of India, second who aspired for independence from India and Pakistan both and third who looked towards Pakistan with some hope, although the latter two segments had realised over a period of time that their dreams were not practical and had shrunk in size. For example, the total number of militants presently in J&K, according

to government's own figures, is not more than 300, for whom 8 lakhs security personnel have been deployed and the government incurs an extra expenditure, other than salaries and upkeep, of Rs 3 crore daily. Most Kashmiri families now have some connection with India, either their children are studying in some educational institutions or they have business interests elsewhere in India. But after the 5 August decision of the government, when even the most pro-India leader Dr. Farooq Abdullah was put under house arrest, majority in Kashmir have now turned against India. Mizrab says that even though he would prefer to be with India, he has been deeply hurt by the decision as he thinks it is taking away his identity in a way. A college teacher put it more succinctly: Articles 370 and 35A were like nikah-nama, document of marriage, between India and J&K, and the Indian government by abrogating these Articles has annulled the marriage. The link between India and J&K has been severed and the alienation is now complete. Another college teacher said previously they were not so conscious of Indians coming to J&K but now they view them with suspicion. It is what the British rule was for India. Khurram Parvez of JKCCS informed that about 3.5 to 5 lakh migrant labourers have also been sent back to India before 5 August just like the tourists, whose departure was publicised, and it may not be a surprise that after some time Kashmiris may be blamed for this just like they are blamed for driving out the Kashmiri Pandits, even though they were evacuated then, initially only for several months, on the pretext of some planned action against militants, both of which have now prolonged. The group of

marchers also saw vacant houses belonging to Kashmiri Pandits on the border of Shopian district and Pulwama, keeping the option for them to return open, in addition to a colony established for Hindu government employees here. It doesn't appear that there is any problem in common Kashmiris belonging to any religion living together as they emphasise that their culture is Kashmiriyat and the variety of Islam practised here is Sufi.

The economic life seems to be limping back to normalcy from external appearance, with business and economic activity going on for several hours during the day, but the fact is that the four month long clampdown has broken the back of the economy which was further compounded by bad weather. The apple industry suffered the worst. The producers could not meet the demands of buyers due to lack of labourers and restriction in transportation and trees have been damaged due to early snow which will take about a decade to re-grow. It is being claimed that Jammu region, especially the larger Hindu population is happy with government's decision, but the fact is that economy of this region is tied with Kashmir and has also suffered badly. People in Kashmir now want to bypass Jammu and want to do business with other regions of the country.

When one of the marchers Amit Maurya took photograph of an empty classroom in a school in Haval on 30 November, 2019, the teachers present panicked. They would not let him leave until he deleted the photograph from his mobile phone. In spite of the claims being made by the Home Minister, the fact is that except for the Board examinations,

the questions papers were taken by teachers to homes of students of all other classes and answers brought back to the school. The parents of children are forced to engage the same teachers at home for tuition classes at monthly charges upto Rs. 5,000 for a child of class VI or VII.

It is not clear when the economy or education will return to normalcy but the most serious damage that the government has done is to politics. There is no sign of revival of political process. While the Bhartiya Janata Party has realised the political agenda of Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh in J&K, it is preventing other Parties from carrying out their activities. There is a ban on political activity, especially related to Articles 370 and 35A. Government employees have been made to sign an agreement to be part of one of the two Union Territories. The people who were arrested are being released after 10-15 community members are made to sign bonds guaranteeing that the person being released will not take part in any activity opposing the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A. The government doesn't want any other voice than its own. Most newspapers are carrying government advertisements or reporting government and apolitical events. The media is totally censored. The bureaucracy and security establishment is dominating the politics. There doesn't seem to be any hope for restoration of democracy yet. Senior activist of JKCCS Pervez Imroz asks how can there be democracy in a situation of occupation, either before 5 August or after that?

(Sandeep is a social-political activist and Rajendran teaches at Azmi Premji Univeristy.)

Protests Against Firoz Khan: Undoing India's Glorious Tradition

Minakshi Rajdev

Who is Firoz Khan? What is his identity in Indian society? How did he develop an interest in learning the Sanskrit language? Is it because of something beyond the narrow peripheries of religion but a reason which is deeply rooted in the culture of India?

Firoz Khan, the newly appointed assistant professor in the Banaras Hindu University belongs to the Dhadhi, Hindu-Islamic community of Rajasthan. Dhadhis are traditional bards, musicians and genealogists living in northern parts of India like Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat. Agricultural Hindus and tribes like Jasts, Rayaka-Rabari, Bishnoi, Khatri and Chhippas are their traditional patrons.

According to the Marwar Census Report of Rajasthan in 1891, Dadhis are followers of both Islam and Hinduism who trace their origin to Rajput families from the time of Ram. The Report records a popular couplet or doha which is still evoked by the community,

*Dasrath ke ghar ram janamiya
has dadhan mukh boli,
Athara kiror le chawk meliya
kaam karan ko chhori*

(‘Ram was born in the house of Dashrath, said a dhadhi woman

Leaving all work aside, she started singing songs of his birth.’)

From the popular origin story of yore to the present times where a singular religious identity dominates, Dadhis have preserved the century-long tradition of a composite, syncretic culture of India. Their identity is testament to an order where Hinduism and Islam are not antagonistic to each other.

When it comes to Firoz Khan’s

appointment as Sanskrit professor, it is imperative to answer questions posed by the protesting students of the University and supporters of the protests at large.

Why should a Muslim be allowed to teach Sanskrit at an institute with Hindu religious precedence?

Dr. Firoz Khan was appointed faculty of the Sanskrit Vidya Dharma Vijnan. Protesters said that in the same way that a Hindu cannot attain the education to become a maulavi, or imam or even a Christian priest, a Muslim or ‘non-Hindu’ can have no right to become a professor of Sanskrit, especially at a place where Sanskrit is taught to produce future shastris and perform rituals.

This question, however, lacks in basic reasoning.

Unlike priests or imams of other religious orders, a professor of Sanskrit at BHU would play a role in the preservation and development of ancient and traditional knowledge by keeping pace with modern patterns of learning. His role would not be limited to producing mere machines of rituals which are considered to come under the paradigm of Hinduism.

Besides, Firoz Khan was appointed to the department of literature which has no direct hold over ritual practices.

What about the Hindu calendar published by BHU?

The second major concern raised by the protesters is that the Faculty of Vidya Dharma Vijnan publishes the *Vishwa Hindu Pnachangam* which is the Hindu calendar, based on Vedic astrology.

Its authenticity would be affected, protesters argue.

The major point of ire raised here is that it would set precedence for the appointment of more non-Hindu faculty members in the department of Sanskrit.

The ‘fear’ expressed here is that many more Muslims would find a way to the Sanskrit department and would gather strength to raise qualms on of authority of the Hindu calendar, which allegedly affects the larger Hindu population across the world.

The right wing politics of ‘sentiments’ develops upon the field of ‘fear’ of losing the integrity of ‘faith’ with the inclusion of non-Hindus in the teaching-learning practices of Sanskrit.

Sanskrit, however, is not the religion but one of the mediums of languages in which Hindu religious scriptures are written.

Teaching Sanskrit literature and making the Hindu calendar are separate functions. More importantly, the Hindu calendar is not made by the divine insight of Brahmins, but instead is designed on the basis of the lunar month and weather of India.

Thus the ‘politics of sentiment’ and the ‘politics of hurt’ is a right wing narrative imposed on BHU to polarise students of the campus on communal lines, establish political advantage of the ‘Hindu’ faith over any other religion living in India, and distract the protests of students over a fee hike.

A cultural attack?

Can it be believed that the future of Hindu ancient religious practices

depends upon the appointment of teachers in the modern university space for one of the oldest languages of the world? And can Brahmanism be considered the saviour of this alleged cultural attack by Muslims on the BHU Sanskrit department?

Periyar once said that between a snake and Brahmanism, Brahmanism is more poisonous. It is not a 'cultural attack' in the way it is being propagated, but it is a Brahmanical attack on peaceful coexistence of religions in India.

Akbar, Jahangir and Shahjahan gave special attention to the development of the language and it would be unjust to not include Aurangzeb in the list. Shayasta Khan, maternal uncle of Aurangzeb, was noted poet of Sanskrit language who even wrote a treatise called *Rasakalpadruma*. Other noted Sanskrit poets of the time like Devdatta, author of *Gurjarishakata*, acknowledged Aurangzeb and his son Azam Shah in the opening lines of the treatise.

Mohammed Hanif Khan Shastri is the most recent example of a Muslim Sanskrit scholar who was awarded with fourth highest civilian award of the country, Padma Shri (literature and education) in 2019 by President Ramnath Kovind for his immeasurable service to the nation as professor of Sanskrit at the Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan. He also won the National Communal Harmony Award in 2009

The politics of language replaces language with religion to create anxiety over fragile identity politics driven by a 'politics of hurt'.

Does cultural Hinduism strengthen political Hindutva?

The invented 'precariousness' of the Hindu religion tries to establish

a direct link between 'cultural Hinduism' and the political ideology of 'Hindutva' nurtured by VHP and RSS.

It is this soft communalism or cultural Hindutva which reaches a wider section of the society and sows the seeds for spreading stronger communal hatred.

The narrative constructed by the protestors of BHU are based on soft Hindutva ideology, but is essentially based on the popular communal ideas according to which Islam, 'a religion of violence' and Hinduism, a religion of peace can never share the same place. Besides, the appointment of a non-Hindu would dismantle the predominance of Brahmins in the working of the Sanskrit department.

Was Hindutva the fundamental idea behind the Banaras Hindu University?

It is also important to delve into the history of the Banaras Hindu University where 'H' doesn't represent the politically driven perspective of Hinduism. BHU stands on the southern outskirts of Banaras at the bank of the Ganges.

Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, with the vision of spreading scientific education and rationality, left his legal practice and focused upon the development of the university which he formally announced at the 21st session of Indian National Congress in December 1905.

On November 22, 1911, the Hindu University Society was registered by Malaviya with the support of Annie Besant. He spent a few years to raise funds for the actual foundation of the university.

With persistence, he could wield the support of few princely states and nobles such as Kashi Naresh Prabhu Narayan who gave land at

the southern outskirts of the present day Varanasi; the Raja of Darbhanga state, Maharaja Sir Rameshwar Singh Thakur; and the last Nizam of Hyderabad, Mir Osman Ali Khan who donated Rs 1 lakh for the construction of the university.

The foundation stone of the university was laid by the Sikh saint of the time, Baba Attar Singh ji of Punjab in 1914.

I now come back to the original matter of discussion. A university which was constructed with a vision and contribution of various personalities of the time comes to a point where religion is evoked for the appointment of an assistant professor.

If religion is the deciding factor of the country's education system and language becomes the battle ground of communal battle against identities, I believe that even gods can't save the people of this country.

Looking at the increasing saffronisation of educational institutes, the repercussions are not just limited to the destruction of the liberal structures of the societies, but it is the threat to the century-old composite traditions of India or South Asia at large where variegated religious, ethnic and linguistic identities have lived with each other and developed a distinct cultural field of shared heritage.

Several syncretic identity groups like Dadhis, Mirasis, Manganiyars and Langas who have carried this tradition through generations are now under constant attack from dominant political narratives of religions.

An anonymous poet from the same community expressed the dilemma.

Vahid tang nazar ne mujhe kafir mana,

Kafir samajhte hain ki musalman hu mai

(‘The narrow sight of the world labelled me a Muslim

And the Muslims treated me as Hindu’)

Retrospectively, the Indian education system and philosophy

is based on the secular notions of learning, and therefore the development of the institutions of learning are based on inclusivity of various caste, creed, religion, gender or class.

Protests against the appointment of the Dr Firoz Khan at Banaras

Hindu University not only exhibits right wing political propaganda for further polarisation but is also an attack on composite culture.

(Minakshi Rajdev is a PhD scholar at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University.)

Historic Students’ March in Pakistan

V. Arun Kumar

“Sarfaroshi ki tamanna ab hamare dil mein hai, Dekhna hai zor kitna baazu-e-qatil mein hai” [The desire for revolution is in our hearts, we shall see how much strength lies in the arms of the enemy]. On Friday, November 29, the whole of Pakistan reverberated with this revolutionary poem written by Bismal Azimabadi in 1921, as students marched across the country for their rights.

The call for students solidarity march was given last month by leftist student organisations including the Progressive Students Collective (PSC), the Progressive Students Federation (PRSF) and the Revolutionary Students Front (RSF). The organisations demand the repeal of a three-decade-old ban on student unions in universities and an end to the privatisation of education.

Their call to mobilisation was adopted on a national level, and many more students organisations, trade unions, and civil society members began extending their solidarity with the students march.

A young student, Sahar from Karachi speaking to Peoples Dispatch said that she participated in the march because “private universities keep on increasing their fees and the government is doing nothing but suppressing the voices of students who speak against it.”

The participation in the students’

march on Friday was unprecedented, not only in terms of numbers but the expansiveness. In the most remote corners of Pakistan, university students participated in the Students Solidarity March. Activists report that mobilisations were held in more than 40 cities.

Students across the world have been on the front lines of mobilisations against neoliberalism and the rise of the right. In the capital city of Islamabad, one banner read, “Students of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but debts, loans and privatisations.”

Suppressing students’ voices

The ban on student unions was imposed in 1984 by Pakistan’s military dictator Zia-Ul-Haq in an attempt to suppress resistance against the dictatorship. Students and workers were in the forefront of struggle against the brutal regime of Zia-Ul-Haq. This ban was briefly lifted in 1988 by prime minister Benazir Bhutto but the Supreme Court re-imposed the ban in 1993. Successive governments have used this ban to repress students’ voices demanding education for all, but today, students are rising up.

One participant in Friday’s mobilisation said that to them, student unions are nurseries which equip students with the ability

to think critically and to develop opinions. The violence that occurs on campuses is not because of the political activities organised by students, but due to the presence of regressive ideologies that believe in suppressing critical thinking.

Workers and students united

Hundreds of people from the education sector, trade unions, professional organisations and members of civil society joined the march calling for ‘Azaadi’ [freedom] from fees hike and privatisation.

“We, the students and workers are united against the system of privatisation, and we will see how they [elities] will stop our rage,” said Waqar, member of student wing of Mazdoor Kisan Party (MKP) speaking to Peoples Dispatch.

“One day this wave of students and workers will drown the rich and the elites and establish a world of working class and poor,” said Waqar.

The students are also demanding the allocation of at least 5% of the total GDP for education and the end of the militarisation of campuses. Pakistan’s intelligence agencies are notoriously known for kidnapping students and activists who express their dissent against the policies of the government and military.

Students note that education in Pakistan has always been for

the rich, but the policies of the new government of Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) have exacerbated the situation and higher education is even more inaccessible for the poor. In a budget announced

on June 11, 2019, the government imposed a massive cut of 37% to the higher education development budget.

(V. Arun Kumar is a journalist

with *People's Dispatch*. *People's Dispatch* is an international media organisation whose mission is to highlight voices from people's movements and organisations across the globe.)

Palestine: We Thought the House Was Empty

Vijay Prashad

On 13 November 2019, as part of its deadly attack on the people of Gaza, Israeli armed forces bombed a building in the Deir al-Balah neighbourhood of Gaza City. That strike killed eight people: Rasmi Abu Malhous (age 45), Miriam Asoarka (age 45), Yoseri Asoarka (age 39), Sim Mohamed Asoarka (age 13), Mohand Malhous (age 12), Moad Mohamed Asoarka (age 7), and two unnamed toddlers. Israel's armed forces said that it had targeted an Islamic Jihad commander, although everyone in the neighbourhood said that no such commander lived either in the building or in the area. 'This was a very simple, poor family, who lives from hand to mouth in a tin shack, with no water or electricity', said a neighbour. 'They lived off herding sheep'. Israeli officials said that they thought the house was empty.

What happened on that day has become routine in Gaza, which is a ruin populated by nearly two million people. A garrotted sliver of land that sits on the Mediterranean Sea, Gaza cannot import goods to survive, let alone to reconstruct the damage caused by Israeli attacks. In 2012, the UN's Palestinian Agency (UNRWA) argued that it would take 'herculean efforts' in the areas of health, education, energy, water, and sanitation to make Gaza a liveable place. Three years later, the UN's Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) suggested

that the constant Israeli bombardment of Gaza's infrastructure, and the Israeli embargo of Gaza, would make the territory 'unliveable by 2020'. No attempt has been made to reverse the direction.

Last year, the United States cut off funding for UNRWA, which now limps on with no expectation that it will raise the funds needed to staff for schools, clinics, emergency services, relief and social services—key support for Palestinians whose families have been in refugee camps or in exile for five generations. UNRWA plays a major role for Palestinians, especially in Gaza. During the Israeli bombing in mid-November, at least 34 Palestinians were killed. Amongst them was Ameer Rafat Ayad, a Class II student in UNRWA's Zaitoon Elementary School.

For six decades, the people of Palestine have been denied rights of statehood and rights of citizenship. They have been reduced by the cruelty of history to being refugees and an occupied people. The promise of a two-state solution is now largely eviscerated. Settlements in the West Bank, the attrition of East Jerusalem, and the incarceration of Gaza have made the sovereignty—and even existence—of any Palestinian state on these territories impossible. Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's longest serving prime minister, has talked about the full-scale annexation of the West Bank; now

the US government has openly said that Israel can claim the settlements as part of its territory, which means that the West Bank can be seized. That is the contempt shown by the Israeli state—and its US enablers—towards the two-state solution. They want a three-state solution—to expel Palestinians to the three states of Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt. That is why the Israeli regime so systematically and callously humiliates the Palestinian population on a daily basis.

This systematic humiliation comes in the searches, the insults and the imprisonment; in the devastation of olive groves; in the apartheid wall that encircles both the West Bank and Gaza; and it comes at the checkpoints where Palestinians routinely endure denigration. The group 'Stop the Wall' has just published an online collection of essays, *Build Resistance Not Walls*, where the Palestinian feminist and legal scholar Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian writes of the steadfastness of young Palestinian children who refuse to accept the fact of the colonial occupation.

A wall only exists if you do not challenge it. If you stand up to it, the wall is merely earth which can crumble. If you resist, you are not standing behind a wall. It is those who are inhumane who are held by the wall. They are hiding behind the wall. It is their wall. It is not our wall. We live in a world without walls.

A one-state solution, the position with the most possibility, is rejected by the Israeli state and large sections of Israeli society on the basis that it would no longer permit the existence of a Jewish state. Palestinians would be a near majority, and such democracy would be unacceptable in an ethno-nationalist state. So, what Israel is saying is that it is content with being an apartheid state and with the annexation of five million Palestinians in the occupied territory who will become second-class residents inside Greater Israel. That is apartheid, as a United Nations report put it two years ago. It is the situation we are confronted with. It is a situation encouraged by the US government. It is the current reality.

At the United Nations a few days ago, Andrew Gilmour, the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights noted that nothing can ‘justify the frequent targeting by [Israeli] snipers who know exactly what they are doing and are aiming with immense accuracy—sometimes to kill, more often to injure but with life-changing injuries, including loss of sight and amputation of limbs—at thousands of Palestinian children and on a far too frequent basis’. ‘Taken as a whole’, Gilmour said, ‘it is a massive injustice and a systematic example of discrimination and humiliation’.

As Gilmour made his presentation, Israeli forces targeted journalists in Surif, near Hebron, in the West Bank. Muath Amarneh, a Palestinian photographer, was shot in the left eye while he reported on the seizure of Palestinian lands by the Israeli military. ‘The eyes of truth will never be blinded’, chanted his colleagues at a demonstration in Bethlehem. For journalists, this shooting brings back memories of the killing of Yaser Murtaja as he reported from the Gaza fence last year.

Five thousand and fifty Palestinians are currently in Israeli jails, many of them under arbitrary and illegal ‘administrative detention’. Amongst them is Khalida Jarrar of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, who has previously been arrested in 2015 and 2017, last released on 28 February 2019. She was arrested again on 31 October 2019. This language is farcical—arrest, judge, court, law. None of it is real, since Jarrar is being held outside all legal provisions and is being tortured in an Israeli jail.

The thread of viciousness runs from the Israeli jails to the homes of militants of the Movement for Socialism in Bolivia, where the violence incited by the illegal coup and its leaders has intensified. Whether it is the Israeli government or the neo-fascist racist evangelical political forces in South America, they prefer violence to humanity. No surprise that the new ‘government’

in Bolivia hastily expelled the Cuban medical brigade, preferring death squads over doctors.

Despite the inhuman repression, the Palestinians and the Bolivians will continue to take to the streets with Brecht’s words from *In Praise of Dialectics* (1951) in their ears,

*When the rulers have already spoken,
Then the ruled will start to speak.*

Who dares say ‘never’?

*Who’s to blame if oppression
remains? We are.*

Who can break its thrall? We can.

*Whoever has been beaten down must
rise up!*

Whoever is lost must fight back!

*Whoever has recognised his
condition – how can anyone stop
him?*

*Because the vanquished of today will
be tomorrow’s victors!*

*(Vijay Prashad is an Indian
historian, editor and journalist,
and the director of Tricontinental:
Institute for Social Research.)*

One Year of López Obrador’s Mexico

Katu Arkonada

After the speech of Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) in the Zócalo (name of the main square in central Mexico City), 12 months after December 1, 2018, this is a good moment to take stock of his first year in office.

Perhaps one of the first things AMLO has learned is that getting into government is not the same as having power. He won the presidency of the government on July 1, 2018 for a lifelong struggle in defense of the social majorities, but the year since December 1, 2018 has served to teach that the government is only one part of a beast called the State, and that the political and economic elites that governed

Mexico for years have lost political power, but continue to control a part of the country’s economy, while entrenching themselves in media and judicial power.

But despite the difficulties, it is undeniable that the country has changed. The image of AMLO a year ago while he was heading to the inauguration in his white Jetta, when a cyclist beside him says “You do not have the right to fail us”, is the image of a country full of hope, but above all, tremendously politicised.

There is hope, because AMLO has been able to channel the discontent with the neoliberal model, incapable of guaranteeing dignified living conditions for a

majority of the population, towards a transformation of Mexico, by explaining to the people that in order to leave this neoliberal model behind, it is necessary to build a new, post-neoliberal, model, while attacking at the root one of the main evils of the State: corruption.

1 year of government, 12 months of pending tasks

AMLO said in his speech in the Zócalo: “How much time will we need to consolidate the transformation? I think that in one more year; that is to say, by December 2020, the foundations for the construction of a new homeland will be established. By then, under any circumstances, it will be practically impossible to return to the era of abuse that the neoliberal period meant.”

It is clear that there has been a lot of symbolism in the first year of the AMLO government, from the disappearance of the Presidential General Staff to the opening to the public of Los Pinos (the opulent presidential residence from 1934 to 2018, till AMLO decided to convert it into a public museum), passing through AMLO’s trips in commercial airplanes.

But, although the symbolism is crucial for challenging the cultural hegemony of neoliberalism, the transformation taking place in Mexico will ultimately be measured in two material and concrete issues:

First, the reduction of poverty and inequality. In a country where 41% of the population lives in poverty, and 16% more in extreme poverty, the commitment of AMLO to reduce these levels of poverty will be measured by the implementation of a process of redistribution through different social programs. This redistribution will allow consumption and internal demand

to be stimulated in order to generate growth (and this is Keynes, not Marx). If this is accompanied by a commitment to (re)industrialisation (with the recovery of Pemex, the Mexican state oil company, at the head) and development of major infrastructure works, such as the Mayan Train, the social indicators (which do not always go hand in hand with the economic ones) should improve.

Second, the commitment to a new security strategy. Mexico has been suffering from a real internal war, as its statistics of violence bear out. AMLO has promised to bring this under control. As 2019 comes to a close, the media is going to start bombarding him, pointing out that the number of deaths due to violence is the highest in history. But the reality is that the increase with respect to 2018 is only 2%, while the year-on-year growth during the two previous six-year periods was 25-30%, implying that some success has been achieved. If we are able to achieve a reduction in the number of deaths by 2020, however small this percentage may be, it will indicate that AMLO has been able to initiate a strategic shift.

12 months of government, 5 years of challenges ahead

If the reduction of poverty, inequality and violence are the main indicators to evaluate the transformation taking place in Mexico in the short term, the success or failure of López Obrador’s government in the remaining 5 years of his term can be evaluated on the basis of the following 5 indicators.

In the first place, it is urgent and necessary to build a party that pushes to the left a government that by inertia will always tend to push towards the center. That is all the more important as mid-term elections to the Mexican Congress

are due in 2021 and AMLO will need to again win a clear majority if constitutional reforms are to be made.

Likewise, the politicisation of society is essential. What happened in Bolivia is the best example of how the inclusion and redistribution of wealth are useless if you create a depoliticised middle class of consumers. Or, more accurately, politicised by the media. The millions of people who are going to see their material living conditions improve should know that this is due to specific social and economic policies of the López Obrador government.

It is urgent and necessary that those responsible for the looting of the country during the previous governments be tried and imprisoned. AMLO has taken a tactical decision of not pushing for the prosecution of previous presidents so as not to open new battle fronts. But sooner or later, he will have to take measures to attack structural corruption.

This looting has only been possible through creating an atmosphere of terror in Mexico, with the help a criminal economy protected by narco-politics, which has transformed Mexico into a cemetery, or worse, into a large mass grave. AMLO’s human rights policy, such as uncovering the truth and ensuring justice in the case of the 43 Ayotzinapa students who were forcibly disappeared five years ago, will be another of the pillars by which to measure the success or failure of the ongoing transformation.

And finally, since people do not subsist on ideology, the redistribution of wealth and the country’s growth, especially in a context of global recession like the one we are entering, must be accompanied by fiscal reform and getting the rich to pay more. That is the only way to sustain the transformation

process. More will have to be paid by those who have the most as a way of structurally improving a G-20 country that has among the highest poverty and inequality rates in the OECD.

If all of the above is faced with courage, the entire lifelong struggle of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, and millions of others, will have achieved some success at the end of his six-year term in laying the

foundations of a long-term radical transformation of Mexico,.

(Katu Arkonada is a Basque political analyst and journalist.)

The Realism of Bernie Sanders' Climate Policy

Naomi Klein, Sivan Kartha

As Bernie Sanders brings his plans for a Green New Deal to Iowa, one part is proving most resonant: the idea that, as our economy rapidly shifts to renewable energy, power companies should be publicly owned and controlled, and the biggest polluters should help underwrite the costs.

Interestingly, this is the part of the Sanders plan, which builds on the resolution introduced by Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York and Senator Ed Markey of Massachusetts, that has received the most pushback from media commentators—who have been quick to dismiss public ownership over renewables as impractical and radical.

Yet for many Iowans, it is precisely these parts of the Sanders plan that make it most exciting.

Plenty of Iowans support renewable power and feel a tremendous sense of urgency about the climate crisis—after all, their communities are facing historic flooding, and their crops are dying as a result of both record-setting heat and cold. But like most of us, Iowans also have a keen sense of fairness. And they know from hard experience that when for-profit companies own the wind farms that dot their rolling hills, consumers and working people get a raw deal.

For instance, Alliant Energy, one of two major investor-owned utilities serving the state, raised rates in 2017

and 2018 and then sought to hike the average consumer's monthly bill by yet another \$20 this year (an effort that has been unsuccessful so far). Even as Alliant collected \$500 million in profits last year, showered money on shareholders, and paid its CEO over \$6 million, it blamed the rate increases on the cost of new wind investments.

For the thousands of Iowans who have been packing Sanders rallies over the last few weeks, it's experiences like this that have made the senator's climate plans so resonant. They understand that at a time of tremendous economic inequality and injustice, only a plan firmly rooted in both fairness and boldness has a hope of building the support necessary to take on the big polluters and win transformative climate action.

The boldness of Sanders' plan is not in question. He is proposing to spend an astounding \$16.3 trillion to get our economy off fossil fuels, an exponentially greater investment than any other candidate, one that actually meets the scale and urgency of the climate crisis. And yet it is how he is proposing both to raise and spend that money that is the true game-changer.

More than a decade of so-called market-based climate policies have expected workers and consumers to foot most of the bill for climate action. The result is often fierce backlash: in Chile, an increase in

public transit fees sparked the recent uprising, and in France, an increase in fuel costs did the same. As in Iowa, it's not that people are opposed to climate action. They are simply so overburdened by stagnant wages, job losses and cutbacks to social services that they can't accept getting stuck with the bill for the climate crisis.

Sanders' Green New Deal plan doesn't ask them to. Instead, it calls for polluters and the rich to pay their fair share, using a range of tools from progressive taxes to litigation and ending fossil fuel subsidies. And rather than watching the profits from a renewable energy revolution flow into the pockets of shareholders and executives, publicly owned utilities would keep the profits in communities, where they can help pay for badly needed services. Not only would the entire plan create an estimated 20 million jobs, but through investments in green public housing, health care and child care, the people who are under the most economic stress would see their lives directly improved.

Far from an unrealistic fairy tale, this approach—which fuses climate action with a battle to end poverty and close stubborn inequalities—may well be the only way to build mass support for an economic shift on this scale.

Another area where Bernie's plan stands apart is in its insistence that fairness is not only owed to people in places like Iowa, but to

people living on the other side of the planet.

Here are the hard facts: Even if we stopped emitting greenhouse gases tomorrow, the United States would continue to warm because of the rest of the world's emissions. In other words, the reason to rapidly decarbonise is in large part to motivate other countries to quickly do the same. But how do we do that?

Once again, fairness is key. The United States has contributed the most to the problem, spewing the largest share of the greenhouse gases that over time have accumulated in the atmosphere and now threaten to smother our planet. And, we're a technologically advanced country that gets the greatest share of the world's total annual income and thus can contribute the most to solving the problem. In this fundamentally global crisis, America bears the largest share of ethical duty. Which means that if we hope to catalyse the world into action, we'll need to take the biggest steps—cutting domestic emissions at a breakneck pace while helping poorer countries to do the same.

Sanders' plan takes the idea of fair shares seriously. On top of its massive low-carbon mobilisation in the United States, it commits to a huge push to collaborate with poorer countries to support their transitions.

Accordingly, the plan puts a game-changing sum on the table: a \$200 billion contribution to the United Nations' Green Climate Fund, which supports projects across the global South to reduce emissions and cope with climate impacts. (The Obama administration pledged a mere \$3 billion, delivering only one-third before payments were scrapped by Trump.)

The Sanders campaign also recognises that, in some cases, no amount of money can keep people

on parched or flooded land. And so, on the campaign trail, the senator's newly released immigration platform includes, among other measures, a call to accept at least 50,000 global climate refugees during his first year as president.

If implemented, all of this would set an entirely new tone in international climate discussions. After decades of finger-pointing and broken promises, the United States would finally be acting from the obvious truth that we are all in this crisis together.

Sanders also makes the common-sense (if politically risky) argument that since the United States spends a fortune protecting oil and gas infrastructure around the world, over a trillion dollars should be cut from military spending and reinvested in his Green New Deal. No single institution on the planet consumes more petroleum than the Pentagon—itsself a bigger greenhouse gas emitter than many countries—so this is yet another way that the Sanders platform is demanding that big polluters, and not regular people, pay the steepest costs of the transition.

The persistent refusal by the United States to fulfill its international climate commitments—especially to help finance a just transition in poor countries—has emboldened political figures worldwide who claim it's now their turn to light the fires of climate disruption.

UK: Labour's General Election Manifesto

Kenneth Surin

Those of us who attended the Labour Party annual conference in September knew from the resolutions passed there that the party's manifesto for the next election would offer a vision of socialism not seen since the immediate postwar Labour government.

President Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil, for example, has declared that international action to protect the Amazon, one of the planet's most important carbon sinks, is tantamount to treating his country as a "colony." He is far from alone: Governments who want to continue with pollution-as-usual have consistently used the continuing failures of richer nations as their excuse. But if the United States does its fair share, as it would under Sanders' plan, we would strip those polluters of this potent argument while showing the world that a post-fossil fuel future is indeed possible.

It's easy to dismiss all of this as unrealistic, as campaign pundits will continue to do. But the message, from Iowa to Chile, is clear: fairness matters. Not only because it's good to be fair; it matters because fairness is needed to win the kind of widespread buy-in that stands a chance of getting the job done.

Alone among candidates, Sanders gets that. And that makes his Green New Deal the most realistic by far.

(Naomi Klein is Senior Correspondent at The Intercept and the inaugural Gloria Steinem Chair of Media, Culture and Feminist Studies at Rutgers University. Sivan Kartha is a scientist specialising in climate risks.)

While not all conference resolutions find their way into the manifesto, there was enough at the conference to indicate that the party was going to repudiate the 40 years of neoliberalism prevailing since Thatcher took office in 1979, and continuing to the present day even

though New Labour was in office from 1997 to 2010.

A politico-economic structure that has been in place for decades can't be overturned by a party's single term in office, so ideally Labour has embarked on a project that will require it to be in power for at least 3 full parliamentary terms, that is, 15 years. Labour's manifesto seems to be predicated on this timeframe.

□ Labour, once in office, will discard the Tory deal and negotiate a new deal within 3 months. This deal will be put to the public in a referendum, with Remain as an option, within 6 months.

- Labour will sponsor a “green industrial revolution”, creating a million jobs and 800,000 apprenticeships in the ecological and energy sectors. Included in this plan will be offshore wind and carbon capture schemes, and a nationwide plan to upgrade and insulate homes.
- Labour will construct up to 100,000 new council houses and apartments every year, as well as 50,000 “genuinely affordable” new homes a year with open-ended tenancies. There will be a tax on holiday homes, a cap on rents with payments linked to inflation. New “renters’ unions” will be created so tenants can defend their rights. Rough sleeping will be ended within 5 years. The finance minister John McDonnell has earmarked £75bn / \$87bn to fulfil these commitments.
- The NHS budget will increase by 4.3% every year. Privatisation will end, free annual dental care check-ups will be provided, and there will be a £1.6bn / \$1.86-a-year increase in the budget for mental health services. Labour will introduce free personal care for the elderly and impose a “lifetime cap” on payments for social care.
- The NHS would not be part of any trade deal negotiation with the US.
- University tuition fees will be scrapped, maintenance grants for students will be reintroduced, and the running of schools will be returned to councils and headteachers instead of the private sector academies. There will 30 hours of free childcare for all pre-school aged children, and a Sure Start centre will be put in every community.
- Labour will scrap the cruel Tory Universal Credit welfare system, the 2-child limit for benefits and the welfare cap, and introduce a “minimum living wage” of at least £10 / \$11.60 an hour, while ending zero hours contracts that are the basis of the gig economy, strengthening trade union rights, and introduce an immediate 5% increase in pay for public sector workers, followed by annual above-inflation pay increases.
- Labour will also not implement the Tory-imposed sudden increase in the female pension age to 66.
- In an ambitious renationalisation programme, Labour will return rail, mail, water and energy to public ownership, and provide free full-fibre broadband via a publicly owned company.
- 22,000 more police officers will be recruited, legal advice aid restored, and protections for victims of revenge porn will be introduced. A national refuge fund to support rape crisis centres and a commissioner for

violence against women and girls will be created, and the Domestic Abuse Bill, shelved by the Tories, will be reintroduced.

Labour will finance these pledges with additional income tax paid by those earning more than £80,000 / \$93,000 and a surcharge on those classified as “super-rich”, that is, those more than £125,000 / \$145,000, which will bring in £5.4bn / \$6.3bn, and corporation tax, upped from 19% to 26%, will raise approximately £24bn / \$30bn.

Other measures, including as reversing Tory tax cuts, curbing tax evasion, and ending the absurd “charitable” status granted to private schools, would bring the revenue chest up to the required £83bn / \$97bn.

Labour is also proposing an £11bn / \$13bn windfall tax on oil companies.

Ukanian mainstream media got into a froth over how these ambitious plans were going to be financed, and the rightwing-trash-tabloids predictably yelped “Cuba”, “Venezuela”, at these pledges, with BoJo Johnson joining in the chorus, as was to be expected.

Better informed and less biased commentators noted that Labour's plans have more in common with Scandinavian socialism than anything approximating to Bolivarism (not that the latter resembles in any respect its massively distorted depiction in the Ukanian tabloids).

Labour has been behind in the opinion polls since BoJo called the general election, and this brave attempt at overturning decades of neoliberalism could be what brings True Labour (as against Blair's ersatz New Labour) into office. *(Kenneth Surin teaches at Duke University, North Carolina.)*



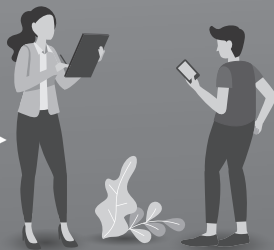
MKCL
Creating a Knowledge Lit World
www.mkcl.org

MS-CIT

Syllabus Available in Two Options

Job Readiness

IT Awareness



Job Readiness

Improve your
employability
and IT skills



IT Awareness

Update your digital
skills in fast
growing IT world

Gateway to New Careers

MS-CIT

Maharashtra State-Certificate In
Information Technology

www.mkcl.org/mscit

Enroll today at your nearest Authorized MKCL Center or ☎ 8411960005

Painterior[®] (INDIA)LLP[®]

TIME WILL TELL THE DIFFERENCE

“We are, what we repeatedly do,
Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”

Aristotle



Taj Palace & Towers - Mumbai



Bombay Stock Exchange - Fort, Mumbai



J.K. House (Raymond)
Breach Candy, Mumbai



Forum Atmosphere - Kolkata

SPECIALISTS IN STRUCTURAL REPAIR / GUNITING / WATERPROOFING /
REHABILITATION & RENOVATION OF BUILDINGS / INTERNAL & EXTERNAL
PAINTING / EXTERNAL FACADE TREATMENTS.

WINNERS OF :

- ✦ 4 INTERNATIONAL AWARDS (2 IN 1998 & 2 IN 2002)
For BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN THE WORLD
(GIVEN BY INTERNATIONAL CONCRETE REPAIR INSTITUTE, U.S.A.)
- ✦ 3 NATIONAL AWARDS
FOR BEST RESTORED STRUCTURES IN INDIA IN PAST 20 YEARS.
(GIVEN BY AMERICAN CONCRETE INSTITUTE - INDIA CHAPTER)
- ✦ 3 URBAN HERITAGE AWARDS
(GIVEN BY INDIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY, MUMBAI)

1-A STAR MANSION, 66 WODEHOUSE ROAD, COLABA, MUMBAI - 400 005.

Tel. : 2218 8375 / 76 • E-mail : painterior@vsnl.com • Website : www.painterior.com



GANNON DUNKERLEY & CO., LTD.

An infrastructure company established since 1924

REGD. OFFICE

*New Excelsior Building, (3rd Floor),
A.K. Nayak Marg, Fort, Mumbai 400001.*

Tel. : 022 2205 1231

Fax : 022-2205 1232

Office :

**Ahmedabad, Hyderabad,
Kolkata, Mumbai & New Delhi**