

# PEASANTS' STRUGGLE

JULY - AUGUST, 2024





7 March 2024 - Rally at Majalgaon, Maharashtra for 'Right to MSP'



Protests Against Mob Lynchings in Kerala on 24th July 2024



Protest Against The Union Budget 2024 at Agartala, Tripura

**PEASANTS' STRUGGLE**  
**THE JOURNAL OF AIKS**  
**JULY-AUGUST 2024**

**Contents**

**Editor**

**Dr. Ashok Dhawale**

**Working Editor**

**Dr. Vijoo Krishnan**

**Editorial Board Members**

**Hannan Mollah**

**P. Krishnaprasad**

**Prof. Vikas Rawal**

**Manoj Kumar**

**Nidheesh J Villatt**

**Shubhojeet Dey**

**Ranjini Basu**

**ALL INDIA KISAN SABHA**

**36, Pandit Ravi Shankar Shukla  
Lane (Canning Lane)**

**New Delhi - 110001**

**Tele: 011-23782890**

**Website : kisansabha.org**

**E-mail : psksaiks@gmail.com**

**kisansabha@gmail.com**

*18<sup>th</sup> LOK SABHA RESULTS: ANXIETY REMAINS, BUT  
POSSIBILITIES HAVE EMERGED*

**- Editorial 2**

*2024 LOK SABHA ELECTION RESULTS: LESSONS AND  
TASKS*

**- Ashok Dhawale 4**

*MOVEMENTS CREATED THE ATMOSPHERE AGAINST  
CORPORATE-COMMUNAL BJP*

**- Vijoo Krishnan 9**

*THE IMPACT OF THE HISTORIC FARMERS'  
MOVEMENT ON THE GENERAL ELECTIONS*

**- Interview with Amraram by Shinzani Jain 13**

*FUTURE ROADMAP OF THE SAMYUKTA KISAN  
MORCHA*

**- Hannan Mollah 17**

*UNION BUDGET 24-25 - A WARRANT FOR  
CORPORATISATION OF AGRICULTURE*

**- P Krishnaprasad 22**

*NEW CRIMINAL LAWS: TARGETING DISSENT WITH  
EVEN MORE REGRESSIVE INTENT*

**- Pushendra Tyagi 25**

*ERRATIC WEATHER AND INDIAN AGRICULTURE*

**- Supratik Ray 27**

*ON THE PATH OF REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE:  
SWAMI SAHAJANAND SARASWATI*

**- Awadhesh Kumar 29**

*STUDENTS WANT ANSWERS FROM THE 'PAPER LEAK  
GOVERNMENT'*

**- Mayukh Biswas 33**

*HOW SCIENTIFIC IS THE NANO UREA SCHEME OF  
THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT?*

**- Nishith Chowdhury 36**

*WHY THE FIGHT FOR MSP IS NECESSARY*

**- Manoj Kumar 40**

*CHHATTISGARH: WILL THE RULE OF LAW PREVAIL  
OR THE LAW OF THE JUNGLE?*

**- Sanjay Parate 43**

*AIKS-AIAWU DELEGATION VISITS FAMILIES OF THE  
THREE VICTIMS IN UP*

*GAZA: A HORRENDOUS IMPERIALIST WAR AND THE  
FIGHT FOR PEACE* **- Nidheesh J Villatt 47**

**Cover Designed by - Abhinav**

## Editorial

# **18<sup>th</sup> LOK SABHA RESULTS: ANXIETY REMAINS, BUT POSSIBILITIES HAVE EMERGED**

The results of the 18th Lok Sabha elections held in seven phases have made two things clear. First, the public did not consider Modi fit to rule. Despite spending thousands of crores and taking the election campaign to the lowest possible level, he was pulled significantly below a clear majority. In a parliamentary democracy, if the ruling party loses the majority, it loses the moral right to form the government. However, words like morality, integrity, and honesty do not exist in Modi's and his BJP's dictionary.

Second, this mandate is the result of the tremendous struggle, filled with sacrifices by the working masses, which was centred on the 380-day-long historic farmers' movement at Delhi's borders which then spread across the country, growing as the unity of farmers and labourers. This was the movement that grabbed the corporate Hindutva bull by its horns, not only pushing it back but also demolishing its entire narrative and bringing the real issues of the people to the centre of political discourse. It made these issues so sharp that they became the main agenda of the INDIA bloc, forcing even the ruling party to speak within the same framework.

By retaining almost all the old ministers in their previous positions in the new cabinet and appointing the infamous Shivraj Singh Chouhan, notorious for the Mandsaur farmer massacre, as the new agriculture minister, and with subsequent events, it has been indicated that regardless of the election results, even if the people of India have given a mandate against Modi and Shah's BJP, they will neither reform nor change themselves. Modi encapsulated it in the phrase 'We neither lost nor will we lose,' with the attitude of 'so what if we were defeated, our nose remains high.'

The rest was shown in his decisions in the first week; the government immediately allowed the prosecution under the draconian UAPA of Arundhati Roy and Prof. Shaikat Hussain in a 14-year-old case despite no evidence. The NSA chief Ajit Doval, the Chief Secretary and the Lok Sabha Speaker were given extensions, and the new criminal codes were implemented at the earliest opportunity. These were then passed in Parliament by the now re-elected Speaker suspending 146 opposition MPs without any debate. In this way, the Modi-Shah duo of the RSS-controlled BJP has indicated that although they did not get a majority, the corporate Hindutva demon will continue to ride on the shoulders of the NDA, doing what it has done so far. It also indicates that although the people have crushed them in places like Ayodhya and many others, their venomous teeth have not yet broken.

Not only at the government and administrative levels, but the attacks on Dalits and minorities through planned attacks across the country have also intensified. The start was

made in Chhattisgarh by planning the murder of cattle traders from Uttar Pradesh; communal violence was incited in Odisha, Telangana and Maharashtra. Just before Eid, minorities were targeted in the tribal-dominated districts of Mandla and Seoni in Madhya Pradesh. In Lucknow, houses were selectively demolished, and during the Kanwar Yatra, the names of street vendors and shopkeepers were forced to be declared on boards. The Supreme Court had to intervene to stop this frenzy-driven communal polarisation.

Along with this increased activity of Hindutva, the work of filling the coffers of corporates was carried on through the recently presented budget. Overall, the rulers have shamelessly stated that whatever the election results, the same vile agenda will continue, which the public has rejected in these elections. In a parliamentary democracy, expecting a democratic and positive attitude towards the opposition from Modi's BJP is futile.

Modi has already revealed his special prejudice against the Left by blaming "the rumours spread by leftists about changing the Constitution" for the reduced seats. Even after forming the government, this hatred continued, to the extent that after the fire tragedy in Kuwait, he sent a minor minister from his government but refused to allow the health minister of Kerala to go to Kuwait, despite most of the victims being Keralites. The Modi government claimed that the permission was denied to save expenses, while at the same time, Modi went to Italy to attend the G-7 meeting in his Rs 8,000 crore aircraft, where, apart from a much-discussed selfie, it is unknown what he achieved. It is clear that the concern was not to save expenses but to bypass the LDF government of Kerala. Only those who harbour animosity and resentment towards the federal democratic republic structure of the country can do this.

In summary, the crisis looming over the Constitutional, secular, democratic republic is not over yet. The likelihood of it increasing rather than decreasing in the coming days appears higher. The examples listed above make it clear that the Modi-led BJP, frustrated and disheartened by the trends of the mandate, will move forward on the repressive path with even more desperation in the coming days and will intensify polarisation. It would be utterly wrong to sit back and have any hope from NDA allies like TDP and JD(U), or rely on the equations in Parliament to stop this. This can only be done by creating the broadest possible unity of the people - this is the broad coordination whose impact pushed the BJP back in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. But this cannot be considered complete. It cannot be changed only by the coordination or alliance of anti-BJP political parties.

Certainly, the election results have made a big hole in the shroud of darkness - before corporate Hindutva patches it up, it has to be widened even more. A space has been created. Before the conspiracies to reclaim it succeed again, it has to be made broader and more dynamic on all fronts, including economic, political, social, ideological, cultural, etc. The farmers' movement has proved that the unity and struggle of all sections of the people can do this; the efforts on the political stage will also be strengthened by this mass effort. □

# 2024 LOK SABHA ELECTION RESULTS: LESSONS AND TASKS

- Ashok Dhawale

The results of the keenly fought Lok Sabha elections of 2024 have been widely welcomed by all democratic sections across the country because they have led to a considerable setback for the BJP and NDA. The opposition INDIA bloc has substantially increased its strength. The cutting down to size of this corporate-communal-authoritarian regime of the BJP-RSS has given some relief and breathing space to the democratic forces, which had faced aggressive attacks and ruthless repression in the last one decade of the Modi regime.

These results are also a big personal setback for Narendra Modi, who had made himself the sole face of the BJP-NDA campaign, with even the BJP election manifesto being named “Modi Ki Guarantee.” The lowest depths of communal propaganda that Modi indulged in during the campaign were detestable. The ridiculous levels of self-aggrandisement that Modi reached were seen in his assertion that he was “non-biological” and had his origin in divinity itself! But the aura of invincibility that Modi had built around himself now lies shattered.

## **Setback to BJP-NDA**

The seats won and vote share received by the BJP and the NDA in the last three Lok Sabha elections is as follows: 2014 – 282 (31.0%) and 336 (38.5%); 2019 – 303 (37.7%) and 353 (45.3%); 2024 – 240 (36.6%) and 292 (42.5%).

The BJP-NDA began their election campaign with the pompous slogan of “400 paar”. They could not even achieve “300 paar”! For the first time in the last ten years, the BJP

has lost its clear majority in the Lok Sabha, falling short by 32 seats. Compared to 2019, the BJP has lost 63 seats, and the NDA has lost 61 seats.

However, due to the 52 seats won by other parties in the NDA in addition to the 240 seats won by the BJP, the NDA has been able to form a government with a 20-seat majority and has come to power for the third consecutive time, again with Modi as prime minister. The BJP is now dependent on the support of the TDP (16) and the JD-U (12), which together have 28 seats.

However, the vote share of the BJP has reduced by only 1.1%, and that of the NDA by only 2%. This means that the Hindutva consolidation achieved by the RSS-BJP over the last one decade through its campaign of hate and violence is largely intact, and the danger of the communal-corporate nexus still remains. Hence there is no reason for any complacency or for lowering our guard.

The biggest and most unexpected blow to the BJP was in Uttar Pradesh, where its tally went down from 62 out of 80 seats to just 33. Had it not been for the spoiler role of the BSP, it could have lost in 16 seats more. Its vote share dropped by 9 per cent in the state. The biggest irony is that it lost its sitting Faizabad seat, where Ayodhya and the Ram temple are located, that too to a Dalit candidate of the SP who fought on a general seat. It lost a majority of seats around Ayodhya. Even Narendra Modi’s own majority in his Varanasi seat was severely curtailed.

Two significant and welcome defeats

sustained by the BJP and NDA were the defeats of the butcher of farmers Ajay Mishra Teni at Lakhimpur Kheri in Uttar Pradesh, and the sex fiend Prajwal Revanna at Hassan in Karnataka.

The other big blow that the BJP received was in Maharashtra, where the BJP tally came down by 16 from 25 to 9, and the NDA tally came down by 25 from 42 to 17. This was because the BJP tried in a most corrupt and immoral manner to split the SS and the NCP. In Rajasthan, the BJP-NDA lost 11 of the 25 seats that it won last time. It lost 8 seats in Karnataka, 6 in West Bengal, and 5 each in Haryana and Bihar. It lost 3 seats in Jharkhand, and 2 in Punjab, where it drew a blank.

However, the BJP partly made up for some of these losses elsewhere in the country. It won 20 of the 21 seats in Odisha, and also won there in the state assembly polls. Due to the BJP alliance with the TDP and the Jan Sena, the NDA won 21 out of 25 seats in Andhra, and also the state government there. The servile stand of the BJD and the YSRCP in towing the line of the BJP central government for the last five years hit them hard – a future lesson for all regional parties. Due to the JD(U)'s 'Palturam' returning to the NDA, it won 31 of the 40 seats in Bihar. The BJP made a clean sweep of all 29 seats in Madhya Pradesh, 25 out of 26 in Gujarat, 11 out of 14 in Assam, 10 out of 11 in Chhattisgarh, all 7 in Delhi, all 5 in Uttarakhand, and all 4 in Himachal Pradesh.

The worrying part is that the BJP this time has made significant inroads in South India. For the first time ever, it won one seat (Thrissur) in Kerala. The BJP vote share in Kerala increased from 13.0 to 16.7 per cent. In Tamilnadu, although it did not win any seat, its vote share increased from 3.6 to 11.2 per cent, and it stood second in 9 seats. In Telangana, its seats increased from 4 to 8, and

its vote share from 19.7 to 35.8 per cent. In Andhra, in alliance with the TDP, it won 3 seats and its vote share increased from less than 1 per cent to 11.3 per cent. In Karnataka its vote share dropped from 51.4 to a still very sizable 46.1 per cent; but with 5.6 per cent to its new ally the JD(S), the NDA total is 51.7 per cent.

### **Reasons for Return to Power of BJP-NDA**

The BJP-NDA could return to power for the third time due to these seven factors:

1. Rabid communal campaign led by Modi, Shah, Yogi, and the BJP-RSS, not only in this election but in their last ten years in power, this leading to overarching Hindutva consolidation and communal polarisation throughout the country;

2. The full support of large sections of the corporate lobby, led by Adani and Ambani, and the obscene and unprecedented use of money power amassed from the BJP's corporate cronies through electoral bonds and other means.

3. Unprecedented attacks on the opposition through the brazen misuse of central agencies like the ED, CBI, and IT, jailing of two chief ministers, splitting up of political parties like the SS and the NCP, freezing of bank accounts of some opposition parties, and wooing back the JD(U) and the RLD to its fold;

4. Misuse of the Election Commission as a lapdog of the central government, it turning a blind eye to the brazen violations of the model code of conduct by Modi and others, and glaring anomalies in the actual conduct of the elections;

5. The despicable, servile role of the Godi mainstream media and the BJP's social media in spreading motivated lies and misinformation for the last one decade;



6. Systematic efforts to mobilise crores of beneficiaries of the various social welfare schemes of the central government to vote for the BJP;

7. Use of the formidable organisational machinery of the RSS and the Sangh Parivar, including their systematic election booth-level management.

The reduction of its brute majority will put some constraints on the BJP-NDA regime's unbridled attacks on democracy and the Constitution. But the first steps of the new government show that nothing much has changed. Almost the same Cabinet, the same Home Minister, the same Finance Minister, the same National Security Advisor, the same Speaker of the Lok Sabha who had suspended as many as 146 MPs in the last session and then steamrolled several draconian laws through Parliament, the same confrontation with the opposition, the same attacks on minorities, the same targeting of opponents like Arvind Kejriwal, and now Arundhati Roy. We shall soon see once again this regime's neo-liberal and pro-corporate face in the coming Union Budget. Hence, a constant and bitter struggle against the Modi-led BJP-RSS regime is very much the need of the hour.

### **Advance of INDIA Bloc**

The INDIA bloc made a good showing in this election, in spite of fighting with its back to the wall. Many of its leaders and parties were severely targeted by the central government. With more preparation and efforts, it could even have won.

The seats won and vote percentage received by the Congress and the UPA/INDIA respectively in the last three elections is as follows: 2014 -

44 (19.3%) and 59 (23.0%); 2019 – 52 (19.5%) and 91 (27.5%); 2024 – 99 (21.2%) and 234 (40.6%).

It is significant that although the difference in the number of seats won by NDA (292) and INDIA (234) is 58, the difference in vote share between the two (NDA 42.5 per cent, INDIA 40.6 per cent) is less than 2 per cent.

If we see the above figures of the last three Lok Sabha elections, it will be clear that while the Congress has gained in terms of seats and vote share, the regional and other parties in the INDIA bloc have gained even more in both.

Among the major states, the INDIA bloc did well in states like Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Haryana, Punjab, Tamilnadu, Kerala, and West Bengal (although the Left fared poorly in the last two states.) It did not fare well in states like Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Odisha, Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Delhi.

### **Reasons for Partial Success of INDIA Bloc**

The partial success of the INDIA bloc was due to these seven factors:

1. The atmosphere of unity created, and the



successful seat adjustments and transfer of votes achieved by the INDIA bloc constituents, which helped them to make it a united and straight fight against the BJP in many states;

2. The campaign focus on the burning issues of the people – unemployment, price rise, agrarian distress, workers’ issues, and other livelihood questions;

3. The people’s struggles on the above issues – the historic and victorious farmers’ struggle against the Farm Laws, the general strikes of the working class, the struggle against CAA, the agitation by women wrestlers, youth opposition to the Agniveer scheme – all these created the background for the INDIA advance;

4. Highlighting the real threats to the Constitution, democracy, secularism, federalism, and civil liberties posed by the Modi regime and Hindutva forces;

5. Taking up the issues of social justice and caste census, and those of the alarming rise in atrocities and attacks on Dalits, Adivasis, Minorities and Women;

6. All the above steps elicited the massive support of large sections of the working people and the poor, the Minorities, Dalits, Adivasis, and Backwards;

7. The contribution of various independent YouTube channels and their anchors, with millions of viewers, and other social media outlets that countered the Godi media; the active role of several social organisations and civil society groups.

### **Persistent Weakness of the Left**

The Left parties won 8 seats in this Lok Sabha election, as against 5 seats last time. The CPI(M) won 4, the CPI won 2, and the CPI(ML) won 2 for the first time. These seats come from Tamilnadu (4), Bihar (2), Kerala (1), and Rajasthan (1).

However, the persistent weakness of the Left in all the Lok Sabha elections since 2009 is a reason for great worry and deep introspection. In this Lok Sabha election, the Left weakness in its three strongholds of Kerala, West Bengal, and Tripura has once again been seen, as has also been its failure to make any substantial independent political headway in any other state. Immediate and concrete steps need to be taken for radical improvement.

### **Tasks in the New Situation**

The growing popular discontent reflected in various people’s struggles, especially in the historic Kisan struggle, had a good impact in these elections. The BJP lost 38 of its sitting seats in the agricultural districts in five states of UP, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra. The continued rural distress with lack of a remunerative MSP and rural wages stagnating during the Modi decade, ensured that in 159 rural constituencies in India, people voted for a change.

In view of this, the major tasks for the AIKS in this new situation are as follows:

#### **1. Broadening and Intensifying Independent Struggles**

The return to power of the Modi regime clearly means that the same disastrous pro-corporate and neo-liberal direction of policies in the agrarian sector will be intensified. Our response has to be the manifold broadening and intensification of our independent struggles on burning agrarian issues all over the country. It must be underlined that unless our independent activities and strength grow, we cannot make the desired impact on united platforms and struggles.

#### **2. Taking Up and Winning Local Issues**

We have always stressed that taking up and winning local issues through consistent struggles is the most effective way to gain mass

support, attract new activists, and build the organisation. This is linked to the great necessity of constantly active village committees. Clear accountability of the village committees and regular check-up by the higher committees must be conducted.

### **3. Giving a Boost to United Struggles**

In recent years, we have had rich experience of united platforms and united struggles. These include the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), the Bhumi Adhikar Andolan (BAA), and others. The struggles of these joint platforms have helped the agrarian movement to win some key demands, like the repeal of the three Farm Laws in 2021, and taking back the Land Acquisition Ordinance in 2015. There have also been victories of united struggles in some of the states. But many key agrarian issues still remain to be resolved. For winning them, we must strengthen joint platforms, their struggles, and our independent participation.

### **4. Towards Worker-Peasant Unity**

Worker-peasant unity is of utmost importance in our strategy of a radical social transformation. Since the huge nationwide Jail Bharo Struggle and the massive Delhi Rally on 9 August and 5 September 2018, the CITU, AIKS and AIAWU have been coordinating for joint worker-peasant united actions and solidarity actions.

There was a nationwide Worker Peasant convention in Delhi on 5 September 2022 and a united Delhi Rally on 5 April 2023, jointly led by CITU, AIKS and AIAWU. This was followed by another large joint national convention of the SKM and the Central Trade Unions (CTUs) on 24 August 2023, and several nationwide joint actions thereafter, which mobilised lakhs of working people.

This process of forging worker-peasant unity must be taken to the state, district, and

lower levels. Besides, as Comrade B T Ranadive used to say, this process must deepen further, go beyond just symbolic actions of solidarity, and must result in concrete help and support of various kinds in one another's struggles.

### **5. Ideological Battle against Corporate-Communal-Authoritarian Regime**

Along with the broadening and intensification of our struggles, the ideological battle against the RSS-BJP-led corporate-communal-authoritarian regime assumes cardinal importance. For this, a series of political-ideological-organisational study camps at all levels is the urgent need of the hour.

Equally important is the great need to politicise the masses that participate in our struggles, and convince them of the democratic, secular and socialist values that we hold dear. In short, we must win the hearts and the minds of the people.

### **6. Strengthening the Organisation**

Lastly, keeping in mind Lenin's famous dictum, "In its struggle for power, the proletariat has no other weapon but organisation", we must pay maximum attention to streamlining the organisation at all levels, from our All India centre to our village units. Our AIKS All India Conference in December 2022 at Thrissur has given us the direction. We must stringently implement that direction at all levels, with collective decisions, individual responsibility, and regular check-up.

One of the key issues in organisation is that of the identification, training, development and check-up of the work of our activists. Special and immediate attention must be paid to enrolling and promoting youth and women into the AIKS at all levels. This will be one of the surest guarantees of our future advance. □

# MOVEMENTS CREATED THE ATMOSPHERE AGAINST CORPORATE-COMMUNAL BJP

- Vijoo Krishnan



The Lok Sabha election results have come as a victory of people's movements and a significant rebuff to the authoritarian, communal-corporate Narendra Modi-led BJP-NDA. The peasants and workers have been the most consistent forces that have relentlessly built up struggles against the BJP regime from day one of Narendra Modi coming to power a decade ago. Reconciliation between antagonistic classes in such a manner that they complement each other for achieving a common objective as well as defeat a powerful enemy was a very difficult proposition. In the process of the incessant struggles, this is exactly what the peasants' movement achieved. It quickly realised that cross-class alliances are indispensable. Building of broad issue-based unity against a common exploiter or policies was the only way of scripting victory in these dark times. The farmers voted with their feet against the corporate-communal BJP regime

in the just concluded Parliamentary elections and kicked them back.

Significantly, the peasant struggles managed to bring to the centre stage the overarching agrarian crisis, farm suicides, indebtedness, need for legal guarantee of Minimum Support Prices, public investment in agriculture and rural development etc. The other main ruling class party - the Indian National Congress, the originator of Neoliberal Economic Policies in India as well as a gamut of policies like trade liberalisation, cuts in subsidies, deregulation of the input market, finance liberalisation, privatisation, income deflating policies, withdrawal from social sector expenditure etc. also was forced to re-orient its policies. In its 2019 Election Manifesto the Congress Party had stated "the BJP government has reversed the clock of reforms. Congress promises to undo these distortions and restore an open, liberal market

economy.” It stated that “the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 belongs to the age of controls” and promised to have an enabling law which can “be invoked only in the case of emergencies”. It also said that it will “repeal the Agricultural Produce Market Committees Act and make trade in agricultural produce including exports and inter-state trade - free from all restrictions.” It was the actual pursuer of the Model Contract Farming Act under the UPA-II regime. These were exactly what the Narendra Modi-led BJP Government brought in the form of the three black Farm Acts. The fact that the Congress Party had to make a complete U-turn in its 2024 Manifesto is also a result of the pressure built up by these struggles.

The building of an issue-based unity against the draconian Land Acquisition Ordinance immediately after it was promulgated in December 2014 and the struggles by the Bhumi Adhikar Andolan (BAA), with the opposition parties also taking up cudgels in Parliament, led to its withdrawal. This was the first defeat faced by the Narendra Modi-led regime and it was surely in the wake of the issue-based united struggle not letting it go. The struggles did not cease with this victory alone. Struggles were launched against the attack on livelihoods of people, the demonetisation-led crisis, the attacks in the name of Gauraksha, against privatisation and sale of Public Sector Undertakings, against the encroachment on Forest Rights, against the National Monetisation Pipeline and various other issues. The Joint Platform of Central Trade Unions has had a longer presence, they have played the role of countering the neoliberal policies for decades, and their experience also benefited the peasants’ movement.

By June 2017 after the killing of farmers in police firing at Mandsaur in BJP-ruled Madhya Pradesh, yet another issue-based unity called the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC) was formed which took the struggles to a different plane. The AIKS-led Kisan Long March from Nashik to Mumbai in March 2018 caught the imagination of the people and sent a clear message that the BJP could be defeated and its invincibility was merely a creation of the corporate media. The slogan **BJP-Modi Kisan Virodhi** emerged as an important factor in creating an atmosphere against the BJP regime. Even when the BJP managed to win the 2019 Lok Sabha elections in the wake of the Pulwama incident and the heightened jingoistic campaign post the Balakot airstrike, one cannot forget that in the State elections prior to that the BJP had been defeated in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh.

In the second term of Narendra Modi the struggles intensified. The historic united struggle of the peasantry and workers against the 3 pro-corporate Farm Acts and the 4 Labour Codes despite great repression and martyrdom of about 750 farmers emerged as a beacon of hope. Narendra Modi was forced to accept defeat, withdraw the Farm Acts, and also did not dare to pursue implementation of the Labour Codes. The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) was the new issue-based unity that drew in the widest sections of the peasantry cutting across class lines. One cannot forget that the struggle was in the midst of a pandemic and when the fear of the disease kept large sections confined indoors under the stringent lockdown. They first won a victory over the fear of the pandemic, then on State repression, and that in no small measure helped in the final victory when the three Farm Laws had to be

repealed.

The SKM decisively created the narrative that the struggle was against corporate loot; it was against the Modani Model, pitting the peasantry directly against the likes of the Adanis and Ambanis, epitomising them as the corporate cronies of the ruling regime for whose profits Narendra Modi was willing to sacrifice the interests of millions of peasants and workers. This narrative was amplified by the opposition parties and had a significant role in the electoral defeat of the BJP. The Muzaffarnagar Kisan Mazdoor Mahapanchayat clearly proclaimed that the divisive communal agenda would be defeated by the unity of workers and peasants. The SKM call **BJP Ko Sajaa Do / Punish BJP** was carried out across the country and SKM-JPCTUs took out many campaigns exposing the pro-corporate, communal policies of the BJP. A campaign against the Agniveer Scheme, the serious issue of women wrestlers, and other issues were also taken up.

In Punjab and Haryana the BJP candidates could not even freely enter the villages as they were met with protests by farmers. Massive literature, posters and campaigns were carried out in coordination with the Trade Unions. A consistent campaign was also carried out against Ajay Mishra Teni, the butcher of Lakhimpur Kheri, where his son's vehicle mowed down 4 farmers and a journalist. It is notable that these struggles were independent of political parties like the Indian National Congress or the regional parties, who were mostly passive onlookers.

The election results also vouch for the effective role of these consistent struggles and



campaigns. In the States of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan which were the main centres of the year-long farmers' struggle, the BJP lost badly in many of the rural seats. In the farm belt of 5 States of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana and Maharashtra, BJP lost 38 seats. In Western UP it lost in Muzaffarnagar, Saharanpur, Kairana, Nagina, Moradabad, Sambhal, Rampur and most significantly Lakhimpur Kheri from where Ajay Mishra Teni lost the elections. The Agriculture Minister Arjun Munda also lost in Jharkhand. BJP could not win a single seat in Punjab and it lost 5 seats in Haryana. In Rajasthan where it had won all the 25 seats in the last elections, the BJP lost 11 seats in the farm belt. In Churu, the CPI-M had secured over 1,40,000 votes in the Assembly elections, about a lakh in Ganganagar, about 70,000 in Bikaner, a lakh in Sikar and also substantial votes in Jhunjhunu, Nagore etc. It is the struggles by the Kisan Sabha and the SKM which led to this massive backlash against the BJP in the region.

AIKS Vice President Amra Ram who was one of the main leaders of the farmers' struggle and who led the struggle on the Shahjahanpur Border for 13 months has won as the INDIA-supported CPI-M candidate from Sikar.

In Maharashtra's onion belt, including two Union Ministers who were defeated, the NDA lost 12 seats with BJP drawing zero. It is in this belt that there have been massive AIKS-led Kisan Long Marches raising the issues of the farmers. The CPI-M which has a considerable following in this region worked to ensure the defeat of the BJP-NDA candidates. It is to be noted that in the Dindori Lok Sabha seat the leader of the Kisan Sabha and former CPI-M MLA J. P. Gavit withdrew and facilitated the victory of the INDIA bloc candidate. CPI-M had over a lakh votes in two Assembly constituencies falling within this Lok Sabha. In yet another Lok Sabha constituency of Palghar within which the Dahanu Assembly Constituency from where Vinod Nikole, a sitting CPI-M MLA comes, the CPI-M decided not to contest to ensure that the BJP is defeated though the strategy did not succeed. In Vidarbha and Marathwada regions, which are hotbeds of farm suicides, in Amravati district alone in the last 6 months more than 557 farmers committed suicide. In Amravati as well as in most other constituencies in Vidarbha and Marathwada regions, the BJP-NDA were trounced and parties of the INDIA Bloc won elections.

In Bihar which also witnessed consistent implementation of the SKM calls Rajaram Singh, General Secretary of the All India Kisan Mahasabha who was an important leader of the united struggle and Sudama Prasad its leader got elected from Karakat and Arrah as the INDIA supported CPI-ML Liberation candidates. The INDIA supported CPI-M candidate Satchidanandam who won from Dindigul in Tamilnadu by over 4 lakh votes is also a leader of the All India Kisan Sabha. If one were to look at the other States also the

impact of these struggles will come out more clearly. The BJP and NDA have lost 159 seats in predominantly rural constituencies across the country.

In the wake of the serious setback to the authoritarian, corporate-communal BJP in the Lok Sabha elections there has been a clamour to crown certain individuals as the "saviours". Some have been quick to place the laurels on individual political leaders. Some have also placed the laurels on YouTubers or independent journalists like Dhruv Rathee, Ravish Kumar and many others who took on a campaign against the political propaganda of the right wing and the corporate Godi media. The efforts of such individuals and opposition parties have undoubtedly had a role in the fight against the BJP and they all deserve credit. This approach however has a significant flaw that tends to undermine the collective efforts of movements which actually in the first place created the confidence that Narendra Modi was not invincible.

The struggles of the youth, students, women, the oppressed, and the historic struggle against the CAA have all also had a role. The fearless voices of dissent, many of whom are languishing for years in prisons have also undoubtedly played a role. Thousands of unsung people who have selflessly worked with no expectation of any personal benefits, to defend the Constitution, democracy, secularism and federal rights also cannot be forgotten. The significant rebuff given to the authoritarian BJP is a cumulative of all these efforts, of leaders of different opposition parties, civil society and a host of others. But the peasants and workers' movements were the driving force that created the atmosphere and confidence that victory was possible. □

# THE IMPACT OF THE HISTORIC FARMERS' MOVEMENT ON THE INDIAN GENERAL ELECTIONS

- Interview with Amraram by Shinzani Jain

The results of Indian Parliamentary Elections were declared on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June 2024. The results have been nothing short of humbling for the ruling coalition, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) led by the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP). The BJP, which claimed to come back to power with a whopping 400+ seats was brought down to 240 seats from 303 seats in 2019, and the NDA was brought down to 292 seats from the 353 seats in 2019. The opposition Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) led by the Indian National Congress (INC), who is in the opposition improved its tally significantly to 234 seats, with the INC almost doubling its seat share from 52 seats in 2019 to 99 seats in 2024.

In a previous article published on this platform earlier this year, this author argued that amidst the religiously charged atmosphere designed to appeal to India's Hindu majority through the grand inauguration of the Ram Temple at Ayodhya, the second wave of the farmers' movement once again dented Modi's image of invincibility. The primary impact of the farmers' movement had been to bring the material issues - joblessness, inflation, hunger, farmers' suicides - back to the forefront. Further, a senior leader from the farmers' movement, Badal Saroj argued, "The farmers' movement has led to a consolidation of the political opposition in states such as Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Bihar, and to some extent Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh."

The outcome of the General Elections is an empirical reflection of this analysis. Despite having formed the government once again, the electoral



share of the BJP has declined significantly in Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. Most striking is the loss of the BJP at Ayodhya (the site of the Ram Temple) where the BJP lost to the Samajwadi Party.

In the light of these results, I interviewed Amra Ram, member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) who has been recently elected to Parliament from the Sikar constituency in Rajasthan. He is the National Vice President of the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), and spearheaded the farmers' struggles in Rajasthan led by the AIKS, and the historic year-long farmers' struggle at the Delhi borders led by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM).

***Q. Please tell us about your life and political journey in Rajasthan.***

A. As a student at Sri Kalyan Government College in Sikar, I worked with the students' organisations mobilising on student issues. The Sri Kalyan Government College was the biggest one in Rajasthan and I was the President of the Students' Union there. Then, I was twice elected as the *Sarpanch* (President) of the *Gram Panchayat* (Village Council) in Mundwara in Rajasthan. After this, I served as a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) four times. In 1993, 1998, and 2003, I was elected from the Dhod constituency of the Rajasthan Assembly. In 2008, I was elected as an MLA for the fourth time from the Danta Ramgarh constituency.

As an MLA, I consistently raised the issues of the farmers, students, farm labourers, workers, and the common people of Rajasthan in the State Legislative Assembly. When the government ignored our demands, we raised the same issues through people's movements on the streets. Whether it was the issue of electricity bills, the agitation to demand water supply for irrigation during 2004-05 in which 8 farmers were martyred, or the farmers' agitation during 2017-18 when the government was forced to implement a waiver of the farmers' loans, we raised these issues in the State Legislative Assembly as well as on the streets.

I was also involved with the farmers' movement during 2020-21 against the three farm laws in which the farmers struggled for more than a year and finally, the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was forced to withdraw the three farm laws. On 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021, the government assured us that they would enact a law to make Minimum Support Price (MSP) a legal guarantee. However, even to this day, this has not been done. This farmers' movement during 2020-21 has been historic. The political impact of the movement has been felt strongly in Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttar

Pradesh, and Punjab, the regions from where we saw massive participation and support for the farmers' movement.

During the 2014 and 2019 Parliament Elections in Rajasthan, all 25 seats were won by the NDA coalition led by the BJP. Out of these the opposition INDIA bloc has won 11 seats in 2024. The Sikar constituency, from where I have been elected is one of these 11 seats. In Haryana, the NDA had won all 10 seats in 2019; in 2024 the INDIA bloc has won 5 out of 10 seats. In Uttar Pradesh, the Samajwadi Party, which was a part of the INDIA Bloc, has won 37 seats. In Punjab the BJP-NDA has not won even a single seat. This has been a massive setback for the BJP. They made lofty claims of winning over 400 seats, they have just come around to winning 240. Such has been the impact of the historic farmers' struggle on the outcome of this election.

***Q. Could you please give us a background of the farmers' movement during 2020-21? How did the movement come to be so massive and historic?***

A. There have been many instances in different parts of the country where the farmers have faced government backlash for protesting. However, the farmers' movement started becoming big after six farmers were shot and killed by the police in the Mandsaur district in Madhya Pradesh in the year 2017. In this agitation, the farmers were raising the issue of low prices for their garlic crops. While the cost of cultivation for the crop was Rs 100 per kg and the labour employed to cultivate the crop was extraneous, no one was ready to even buy the crop for Rs 5 per kg. When the farmers demanded fair and remunerative prices for their crops, the BJP government led by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan responded with bullets, and six farmers were martyred. Following this attack, farmers from across the ideological divide from across the country were mobilised by the AIKS and others to come together in struggle. A combined movement was built



around the issues of non-remunerative prices, land acquisition, and against the three farm laws that were passed by the BJP-led NDA government.

The Indian government tried to break the movement in different ways, they tried to project the movement as communal. They even labelled the agitating farmers as ‘Naxalites’, ‘Maoists,’ and ‘supported by China and Pakistan.’ But the farmers persevered and continued to follow all the calls of the SKM throughout the country. The AIKS, which was a national organisation mobilised farmers at the national scale. Finally, the farmers defeated the dictatorial government and it was forced to withdraw the three black Farm Laws. However, the written guarantee that the government gave us in December 2021 has still not been implemented.

Before the BJP-NDA government came to power in 2014, they declared at more than 400 farmers’ public meetings that the farmers would be given MSP, that 2 crore jobs would be created for the youth, and within 100 days all Indians would get 15 lakh rupees in their bank accounts, since black money from foreign accounts will be brought back to India. Rather than fulfilling these promises, they did the exact opposite. Through these elections, the youth, the farmers, and the people have given a fitting response to the government.

***Q. Could you please explain to us what is the extent and nature of the agricultural crisis in the country?***

A. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, India adopted the policies of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation, under the pressure of American imperialism. Following liberalisation and opening up of markets, all the production and procurement of agricultural inputs used by the farmers – seeds, manure, pesticides, insecticides, diesel - have been allotted to agri-businesses and multinational corporations. This has been done not

only in India but across the world. As a result of these policies, the farmers continued to become indebted. Drowning in debt, they started committing suicide in lakhs. The youth of the country became unemployed, and businesses were destroyed. The liberalisation model also promoted agricultural imports and the prices offered to the farmers declined. Large corporations and agri-businesses prospered and the farmers fell into a debt trap. Bullets have been fired on farmers on the issue of electricity and drinking water as well.

Remunerative price for agricultural produce was an issue that affected farmers across the country. Whether it be a farmer cultivating foodgrains, vegetables, fruits, or cash crops like cashews and raisins. The cost of cultivation of all kinds of crops increased manifold and the farmers are not even getting remunerated for the cost they incur. The farmers do not have an option but to protest. The World Bank and the IMF wanted farmers to be ousted from agriculture. They wanted the agricultural sector to be dominated by the large agri-corporations and wanted the farmers to become wage labourers for these corporations. It is a result of these policies of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation that not only in India, but farmers across the world, including in England and European countries are agitating against these policies implemented by the imperialist countries.

***Q. How did the farmers’ movement connect with and appeal to the people from other sectors and the urban population?***

A. The farm laws were not detrimental only to the agricultural sector and the people employed within this sector. The idea behind these laws was to allow stocking of agricultural produce to rob not only the farmers but also to loot the people at large. The movement was also against the loot by big corporations like Adani and Ambani, against the toll

mafia run by giants such as the Reliance Group. For an entire year toll was waived in the states in struggle. Even the common man benefited from this struggle.

Even before the enactment of the farm laws, the situation of the farmers was desperate, as they were not getting remunerative prices. Imagine the situation of the people after the implementation of laws allowing for stocking of foodgrains and other essential crops even at the time of an emergency. Naturally, this will impact not only the farmers but also the workers of the country. Hence this movement was fought not only by the farmers but also by the workers of the country. Ultimately, the movement took shape as a 'people's movement' and the result was that the dictator heading the government who never listened to anybody, had to bow his head before the unity of this peoples' movement.

***Q. What do we learn about the impact of such people's movements on electoral outcomes?***

A. The first lesson from this movement is that all the farmers' groups with different flags, diverse ideologies, and leaders came together to fight. The second benefit of this struggle was that all the communist and secular forces that fought elections separately in 2014 and 2019 fought the elections together this time and brought the BJP down to 240 seats from 303 seats during the previous elections. In India, even to this day, the majority of voters are in the agricultural sector, whether it is the farmers or wage labourers. The majority of the voters have now understood that behind their troubles is the NDA government led by the BJP.

Wherever there is a huge mass movement, we see that electoral outcomes are affected by it. This time we have seen that those who were claiming to achieve 370 and 400+ seats have not even reached the number of 270, they have been stopped at 240. I believe that this is a blow to the BJP, despite all its

undemocratic efforts at meddling with free and fair elections. This is a people's mandate against their black laws and farm laws. We realise that the opposition has still not been able to form the central government. But the seats of the opposition have doubled. The Congress has doubled its seats to 99, and the Samajwadi Party (SP) from UP (the biggest state with most constituencies) has increased its seats from 5 to 37.

From now on, all governments will hesitate before messing with the farmers of the country.

***Q. What are the long-term goals of the farmers movement? What issues will you raise in Parliament and beyond?***

A. The government did not fulfil the promises made to the farmers in December 2021. The Electricity Bill, 2020, which was one of the contentious issues during the farmers' protests has been passed – The Electricity (Amendment) Act of 2024. Under the new law, the contract for electricity generation and distribution will be granted to large corporations. This means that now, electricity will be available only to the rich and not the poor of this country. Pre-paid smart meters for electricity are being installed, and are being opposed in several states.

The future of this movement is not only for the farmers to raise their issues in Parliament, but to continue their struggle on the streets. Even in December 2021, the movement was merely paused on account of the promises made by the government. In February 2024, the farmers resumed the movement and a big rally was held at the *Ram Leela Maidan* (ground) in Delhi. The farmers from Punjab are still protesting at the Punjab-Haryana border. We will continue to struggle and strengthen the movement not only in India, but also across the world till we succeed in bringing about a radical structural change. □

# FUTURE ROADMAP OF THE SAMYUKTA KISAN MORCHA (SKM)

- Hannan Mollah



The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) is not only the largest platform of Kisan organisations in India; it is also in the forefront of the democratic movement of our country. After leading the longest historic Kisan movement in 2020-21 and achieving the great victory of forcing the Modi-led BJP Government to withdraw the three black anti-farmer laws, the SKM suspended its struggle on the basis of a written letter from the central government in which it agreed to discuss with the SKM and solve the remaining demands in course of time. In the 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021 letter, the government assured that the issues of MSP and its legal guarantee, loan waiver, electricity bill withdrawal, assistance to martyrs' families, withdrawal of all false cases on farmers etc. would be discussed with the SKM and solved.

But after that, the government maintained

dead silence. The SKM wrote letters of reminder, led mass gheraos of Governors of 23 states, organized a Gramin Bharat Bandh, and held a massive rally at Ramlila Maidan. But the government did not respond. In fact, to disrupt the SKM, the government sent three ministers to discuss with some Kisan organisations who had left the SKM in order to try to establish these splitters as the real SKM. But it was no use.

In the meantime, the 18<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha elections were announced, and the Model Code of Conduct imposed. Hence no agitation was possible. The SKM discussed the situation and decided to the fight against the betrayal of the Modi government. The SKM appealed to the farmers of the country to use their electoral power against this betrayal and called to "Expose, Oppose and Punish the BJP." Modi did not talk about farmers and their problems

but widely communalized the atmosphere by making use of the “Ram Mandir” and other issues.

The opposition parties came together and formed the INDIA bloc to fight the BJP and its anti-national, anti-poor policies. They also raised demands of farmers and promised to implement them if they came to power. The SKM campaigned against Modi’s betrayal and many Kisan organisations including AIKS campaigned against the BJP. In the bitterly fought election, the BJP got a big setback. Modi had called for victory in over 400 seats, but BJP won only 240 seats, much below the half way mark. Modi with the help of his NDA allies formed the government. The opposition won substantial seats but not sufficient to form the government.

The SKM decided to hold a national general body meeting to assess the situation, review the election result, and chalk out the future plan of action. The general body was held on 10 July 2024 at the Harkishan Singh Surjeet Bhawan, New Delhi and over 150 members representing the SKM member organisations from 17 states attended the meeting. 26 comrades from AIKS attended it from different states. The members related their experiences of the election.

The farmers’ movement made a large impact on the election. The continuous Kisan movement in the last 10 years, its culmination in the SKM struggle for 380 days and its coordination with the workers led by the Central Trade Unions (CTU) made it victorious. Their campaign highlighted livelihood issues to counter the communal and corporate narrative of the BJP. The BJP was

defeated in 38 rural seats of Punjab, Haryana, UP, Rajasthan and Maharashtra, which were the centres of powerful farmers’ movements. The defeats of Minister Ajay Mishra Teni (killer of farmers) in Lakhimpur Kheri, UP, and Arjun Munda (Agricultural Minister) in Khunti, Jharkhand, reveal the impact of the Kisan movement. BJP lost in 159 rural constituencies populated by farmers, agricultural workers and the rural poor.

The SKM opined that continuous and united struggle based on people’s issues could build confidence in large sections of the people. It brought to the fore the crucial issues of protecting the democratic, secular and federal principles enshrined in the Constitution of India. The general body meeting congratulated the farmers across India for ensuring a setback to the authoritarian, corporate, communal coalition led by the BJP. The meeting appreciated the farmer leaders Amra Ram from Sikar, Rajasthan, Rajaram Singh from Karakat, Bihar, Sudama Prasad from Arrah, Bihar, and R Sachithanantham from Dindigul, Tamil Nadu, who were elected as Members of Parliament. The SKM expects that they will succeed in intensifying the struggle against the pro-corporate policies inside Parliament.

The meeting opined that in the post-election scenario there is no need for having any illusion of any change in the pro-corporate and anti-farmer policies of the BJP-NDA government. The killer of the Mandsaur farmers Shivraj Singh Chouhan has been made the Agriculture Minister. The recent budget has shown that there is no change at all in the BJP-NDA government’s policies. Hence we have no alternative but to restart movement in the

coming days. The SKM thus demanded the implementation of the agreement of 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021 that the union government had made with the SKM to discuss and solve all other problems.

As part of re-starting of the struggle the SKM submitted the updated Charter of Demands to the new MP's of the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha. A delegation of the respective state SKM leaders directly meet the MP's in their state on 16, 17, 18 July 2024 and requested them to take up farmers' issues and demands in Parliament. The SKM will also submit the memorandum to the Prime Minister and Opposition Leader.

On 9 August 2024 SKM will observe "Quit India Day" as "Corporates Quit India Day" by holding demonstrations across the country in support of farmers' demands. It also demands that India must come out of WTO, and it warns that there should be No MNCs in agricultural production and trade. The respective state committees of the SKM will meet soon and decide the form of action. 9 August is also International Tribal day. Hence the specific

tribal demand of implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA) and upholding tribal rights will be raised.

On 17 August 2024, the Punjab state SKM will observe a 3-hour strike in the whole state at the house of the minister in charge, and the chief minister regarding the serious Punjab water problem. Other states also can raise their water, irrigation and climate issues on the day.

In the near future assembly elections of states of Haryana, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Jammu & Kashmir will be held. It was decided that these state SKM committees should meet and organize state conventions and plan campaigns on the lines of "Expose, Oppose, and Punish BJP" to defeat the anti-farmer, communal and corporate forces.

All the state coordination committees of the SKM will identify concrete local demands and burning issues, link them with national issues and plan independent campaigns to mobilize farmers of the state.

The SKM will meet CTU's at the national level and request them to build joint state level



farmers-workers united struggles which will also bring together women, students, youth, agriculture workers and other sections of masses in the state.

The SKM will campaign for constructing Martyrs' Memorial at Singhu/Tikri border in memory of our martyrs in the historic Kisan struggle.

The SKM demanded compensation to the families of the Lakhimpur Kheri martyrs. In UP the state SKM should take care of the cases in Lakhimpur.

The SKM at the state level also raised the demand that the INDIA parties must implement the promises that they made during elections, especially in opposition ruled states.

The SKM discussed future plans of regional SKM conventions, forming regional committees, planning Jathas and Mahapanchayats in future.

The SKM condemned the new authoritarian criminal laws that the central government has begun to implement.

The SKM secretariat will update the list of its member organizations, list of representatives, and shall set up its headquarters. The website and social media will be activated.

The National Coordination Committee (NCC) of the SKM is maintaining its financial management and accounts. It was decided that strong organisations should contribute Rs 1000 per month and regional organisations Rs 500 per month to the SKM fund.

Some new demands were suggested. Along with the SKM's old demands a new Demand

Charter has been prepared as follows:

### **A. Immediate Demands**

1. Legally guaranteed MSP@C2+50% for all crops with procurement.
2. Comprehensive loan waiver to free farmers and agricultural workers from indebtedness, farm suicides and distress migration.
3. No privatisation of the power sector, no prepaid smart meters.
4. No GST on agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, seeds, pesticides, electricity, irrigation, machineries, spare parts and tractors.
5. Reintroduce subsidy on agricultural inputs. Extend the benefits of government schemes to sharecroppers and tenant farmers.
6. Comprehensive insurance coverage under the public sector to all crops and animal husbandry. Close down the pro-corporate PMFBY Scheme.
7. Recognise the right to pension of farmers and farm workers, they being the food producers, and give them Rs 10,000 per month from the age of 60.
8. Execute Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (LARR) Act 2013 with mandatory revision of circle rate every alternate year. Compensation for all land acquired with low circle rate for public sector as well as private sector projects. No acquisition without rehabilitation and resettlement. No demolition of slums and settlements without prior rehabilitation. End Bulldozer Raj. No forceful construction of overhead High Voltage transmission lines on farm land without full compensation.

9. Strictly implement Forest Rights Act (FRA) and Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA).

10. Permanent solution for wildlife menace; provide Rs 1 crore as compensation for loss of life and twice the value for loss of crops and cattle.

11. Repeal of 3 criminal laws being imposed on the people without any democratic process in Parliament, replacing the Indian Penal Code and CrPC, to suppress dissent and people's protest by making India a Police State.

12. Construct a suitable Martyrs Memorial at Singhu/Tikri Border to commemorate the 736 farmer martyrs. Suitable compensation to all martyrs' families of the historic farmers' struggle including the Lakhimpur Kheri martyrs. Withdraw all the cases linked to the farmers' struggle.

13. Tax the Super Rich; Enhance Corporate Tax; Re-introduce Wealth Tax and Succession Tax to find financial resources for rational, equitable distribution of wealth among workers, farmers and toiling people.

## **B. Policy Demands**

1. Formulate a separate Union Budget for Agriculture with adequate outlay.

2. No corporatisation of agriculture. No entry to MNC's in agricultural production, trade and food processing. No Free Trade Agreements (FTA). India must come out of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture.

3. Amend the GST Act and reinstate the right to taxation of the State Governments as per the federal principles enshrined in the Constitution of India, upholding the principle

of Strong States in a Strong Union of India.

4. Uphold the Constitutional provision of Cooperation as a State Subject and abolish the Union Ministry of Cooperation.

5. End Corporate control and commoditization of natural resources including land, water, forests and minerals for protecting people's livelihood and nature. Address climate change to save agriculture, develop scientific rainwater harvesting, watershed planning and protection of water bodies, structured irrigation and afforestation to recharge ground water and develop resilience to global warming.

6. Enhance wage in MGNREGA to Rs. 600 per day, link the scheme across India with watershed planning for agricultural development.

7. Repeal 4 Labour Codes. Implement National Minimum Wage of Rs. 26,000 per month. No privatisation of the Public Sector, scrap National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP). End contractualisation of labour.

8. Protect land and cattle resources of farmers and agricultural workers and prevent their pauperisation due to the acute agrarian distress. Secure employment and minimum wage of petty producers and labourers to live a dignified life, liberate them from indebtedness, farm suicides and distress migration. Introduce alternative policies to promote consortium of producer cooperatives and collectives as well as Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises supported by the public sector in credit, agro processing, value addition, infrastructure network, marketing and Research and Development.

□

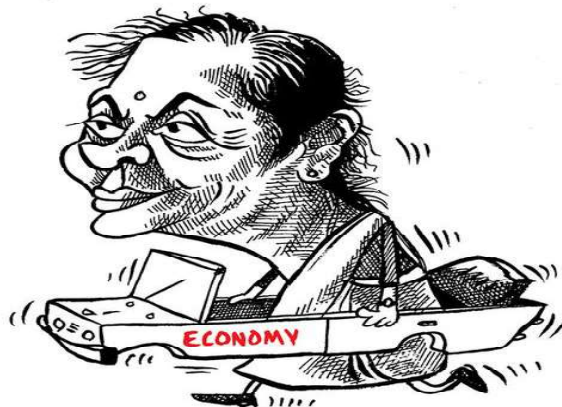
# UNION BUDGET 24-25: A WARRANT FOR CORPORATISATION OF AGRICULTURE

- P Krishnaprasad

The Union Budget 2024-25 has continued with its obstinate direction of corporatisation of agriculture and industry at the cost of farmers and workers, and usurping the rights of State Governments thus violating the basic concept of the federal character of the Constitution of India. The Budget is an open war aimed to further squeeze the livelihood of farmers and rural workers, and intensify unemployment and income inequalities.

The Budget is prepared under the pressure of International Finance Capital. It has declared a tax exemption of 5% for MNCs and is not ready to tax the Corporates and Super Rich while 67% of the GST collected as indirect tax is from 50% of the poor population. There is no tax increase on Corporate Companies nor any wealth tax and inheritance tax, this clearly revealing its anti-farmer, anti-worker class bias. This is not acceptable to the farmers of the country.

The Budget has neglected the long pending genuine demand of the farmers for MSP@C2+50% with guaranteed procurement. The Finance Minister said in the Budget speech for Annadata, that the Government had announced higher MSP a month ago for all major crops, delivering on the promise of at least a 50 per cent margin over costs. This is clearly untruthful. The promise was @C2+50% and the current MSP is @A2+FL+50%. The Finance Minister must clear this fact through a White Paper on MSP and uphold the transparency and propriety in governance. She must understand that nobody can dupe the people forever.



The cut in fertiliser subsidy from Rs 2,51,340.5 crore in 2022-23 actuals to Rs. 1,64,102.5 crore in the 2024-25 Budget Estimate (34.7% decline) will raise the cost of production and along with that the cut in food and public distribution subsidy from Rs 2,73,101.3 crore in 2022-23 actuals to Rs 2,05,700.6 crore in the 2024-25 Budget Estimate (24.7% decline) will destroy the food security of the country, paving way for immense social calamities in future as experienced recently by countries like Sri Lanka. This must be campaigned in each and every village and urban localities as a mark of the anti-farmer, anti-worker policies of the BJP.

Even though the RBI has transferred Rs 2,10,874 crore as surplus to the Union Govt. for the accounting year 2023-24, the Budget has cruelly neglected the long pending demand of comprehensive Loan Waiver to Farmers and Workers. As per the official records 31 farmers and 86 daily wage workers are committing suicide daily in India. The Union Government had given Rs 14.46 lakh crore debt waivers to corporate houses during the



last ten years and is currently processing another Rs 10.2 lakh crore through the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code. Thus the daily death of workers and farmers cannot be considered simply as suicides. They must be seen as State murders due to the cruel pro-corporate policies.

The Budget did not reflect just demands like minimum wage of Rs 26,000 per month for workers that can support 90% of the workforce in the unorganised sector, recruitment in the existing 30 lakh plus vacancies in the Public Sector as well as Government Sector, and wage hike to Rs 600 per day and minimum work of 200 days under MNREGA. In fact, instead of doubling the allocation for MNREGA, it has been drastically reduced if the high rate of 9.5% of food inflation is counted. The demand for linking MNREGA with watershed planning and agricultural development is neglected. The wrong policy on MSP and MNREGA reveals that the Modi Government has no sincerity to revive agriculture and small production to end farmers' suicide, distress migration and the acute crisis of unemployment.

Out of the Rs 48.25 lakh crore estimate of the Union Budget 2024-25, only Rs 1,51,851 crore or merely 3.15% is the share of Agriculture and allied sectors. The share of this sector has declined during the past Budgets. It was 5.44% in the year 2019-20, 5.08% in 2020-21, 4.26% in 2021-22 and 3.23% in 2022-23. The Budget did not rescind GST on farm inputs including seed, fertiliser, machineries, spare parts and tractors, thus helping the farmers to reduce the cost of production. This is the attitude of the Modi Government towards this crucial sector that sustains 45.76 % of the work force and 58 % of the population. The Kisan movement's demand in this regard is a separate Budget for

Agriculture and Rural Development, with adequate share of the Union Budget.

The Budget ignored one of the most important demands of replacing the failed PMFBY under the corporate sector and ineffectual NDRF with an insurance scheme in the Public Sector and also provide interest free credit to farmers especially in the background of widespread crop failures and increasing natural calamities due to global warming and climate change.

The Finance Minister in her Budget speech was silent about the serious issue of loss of crops and life due to the wild life menace. This is a serious matter of concern and as per the records wild life attacks caused 782 deaths in the year 2023 alone. The crop wise demands such as clearing arrears of sugarcane farmers and declaring FRP at Rs 500 per quintal, declaring Price Stabilisation Fund and support price of Rs 250 per kilo for rubber farmers, 100% import duty on apples, market protection for onion, potato and vegetable farmers, extending MNREGA to the Dairy and Animal Husbandry sector, market price for cattle, and ending the stray cattle menace to crops and human life etc. are also not addressed in the Budget.

The decision of enlisting 1 crore landed farmers out of 9.3 crore to natural farming is detrimental for intensifying aggregate agricultural production and will create a food crisis. Instead of such misconceptions, the Union and State Governments have to collectively ensure good agricultural practices among the farmers based on soil testing, scientific researches on seeds, productivity, comprehensive insurance coverage, and technological updating with market support ensuring remunerative income.

The long-term objective of the Budget is

to promote contract framing under the direct control of the Corporates and MNCs. The ICAR signed Memorandum of Agreements with MNC's including Bayer and Syngenta working in Agribusiness and Research and Development sectors. The Finance Minister has declared Budget funding to the private sector for promotion of R&D, and a 5% cut in corporate tax for Multinational Corporations investing in infrastructure, trade and marketing to promote Foreign Direct Investment. These efforts are part of facilitating rear door entry to the Black Farm Acts which had to be repealed due to the historic farmers' struggle under the banner of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM).

The Union Government must amend the GST Act to reinstate the right to taxation of the State Governments thus upholding the principle of Strong States in a Strong India as enshrined in the principle of federalism in the Constitution. The denial of the right of the States for taxation and then practicing discrimination in fixing the share of allocation to the States has become a serious matter of political concern. The BJP and NDA are pitting the fund starved States against each other and appeasing certain States with irrational allocations to sustain in power. This is dangerous and in the long run will injure national unity and cohesiveness of sustaining in a federal structure respecting the diversity of various nationalities that constitute India.

The announcements of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) in agriculture to register land and crops and preparation of the 'National Cooperation Policy' are aimed at encroaching upon the rights of the State Governments since as per the Constitution of India, Agriculture, Land and Cooperation are State subjects. Upholding the Constitutional provision of Cooperation as a State Subject is

crucial and necessary considering the State specific character of economic development. Hence the farmers and the people at large need to be sensitised against the centralisation of power under the Union government to serve the big capitalist class interests. The Union Ministry of Cooperation formed in 2019 must be abolished in the best interests of the federal structure of the country and all the State governments have to collectively demand the same. Instead, the Union Government should extend financial assistance to States to promote producer cooperatives of farmers and workers for cultivation, processing and value addition and to develop cooperative marketing networks. The principle of federalism must be the guiding principle in sectors of agriculture and cooperation.

All the State Governments and political parties have to take firm and clear positions on the above serious issues and raise strong voices against the Modi Government. The united Kisan movement in the respective States has to put pressure upon the State Governments demanding the same through building massive farmers' struggles.

Widest unity of all sections including farmers, urban and rural workers, women, youth, and students is the need of the hour and all the people have to rally and build massive struggles across India to force the NDA Government to change its pro-corporate policies to protect the interests of the people. Conducting widespread campaigns and protests across India in the villages is a precondition for making the peasantry and the rural workers aware of the looming dangers over their livelihood, and prepare for a long haul of massive struggles to transcend the current acute agrarian crisis and resultant unemployment, indebtedness and distress migration. □

# NEW CRIMINAL LAWS: TARGETING DISSENT WITH EVEN MORE REGRESSIVE INTENT

- Pushendra Tyagi

Though the BJP government formed after the 18th Lok Sabha elections is on crutches propped up by its two allies, its eye nevertheless, is right on target. No act of even pretense is on display to address the grave challenges of unprecedented unemployment, price-rise, agrarian crisis and corruption. The BJP has however ensured



that the three new criminal laws passed at the end of their second term, without any debate, have been enforced pan-India starting July 1st, 2024. This is not something sudden or without any groundwork. There is a set agenda behind the imposition of these laws. The ridding of the nomenclature of its colonial hangover, the claim of replacing it with ‘Bharatiya’ and ‘Nyaya’ etc is only an attempt by way of distraction to hide the real alarming motive.

In the criminal justice system, intent is considered a basic element since it determines the outcome. The BJP government in the last ten years of its own majority had realized that the old criminal laws of colonial times were not sufficient to carry forward the real intent of the RSS-BJP regime. The government was in need of laws that would serve its purpose of stifling and targeting dissent.

In order to fulfil this requirement, the Modi government had, even before formulating and implementing them, started practicing some provisions of the three new criminal laws. In hindsight we see how they have been using the

UAPA, PMLA, NSA, Sedition, ED, CBI, NIA, NCB, Bulldozer, Encounter code so effectively that Nyaya is now being handed out without trial!

But there came occasions when the BJP government met with a situation where it found that even after all its efforts old criminal laws were not helping it to realize its motives.

The historic Kisan Movement on the borders of Delhi was one such point in time when claiming to do ‘Nyaya’ for the farmers, the corporate friendly three black farm laws were imposed. Interestingly the modus operandi was the same: no consultation, no debate. This Kisan movement is termed historic not just because of the perseverance and integrity displayed by those who were part of it, but also because it made the Modi government do something it had not done before: retreat. The regret expressed by the prime minister over the lack in his tapasya was actually a vow to come down on dissent even more fiercely. This sinister intent took the shape of the repressive and regressive

provisions of the titular laws.

The three laws, the Bharatiya Nyaya Samhita, the Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam have replaced the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) and the Indian Evidence Act respectively.

Now, with the enforcement of these new laws, there will be two systems functioning concurrently as crores of pending cases registered under the old laws will be tried as per the old laws. It is clear that not only will there be disputes on the applicability of the old or new system, numerous problems will also arise related to provisions, procedures, explanations and interpretations. The Home Minister has made a claim of getting justice in maximum three years' time. With the new uncertainty, it will become even more difficult to have an idea about how long it will take to complete a trial.

The registration of an FIR is the first step to get justice in a criminal case. In India, the most basic task of registering an FIR has been a challenge for victims and the last ten years of the Modi-led BJP government have not been an exception to it. Under the new criminal laws, the registration of an FIR with regard to offenses that may attract a punishment of 3 to 7 years of imprisonment can be delayed up to 14 days by the police. Strangely, this gap of a fortnight has been given to the police to apply its mind 'to study' the matter. It can then decide whether an FIR is to be registered or not. It is clear that the very beginning of a case will be at police discretion. This is a gross violation of the orders of the Supreme Court that FIRs must be registered immediately by the police. This would lead to massive increase in corruption and police raj, wherein the right to

justice of the marginalized will be severely undermined.

Post implementation of the new laws, 121 people died in a stampede in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras, but even an FIR could not be registered against the 'Baba'. The new laws also require police to seek remand for a longer duration beyond the 15 days limit as was provided earlier. This will also further enhance the power of the police to deny justice.

Another very dangerous change in the new laws is the provision under Section 152 of the BNS, where Sedition, defined under Section 124-A of the IPC, has been brought as 'Deshdroh' along with aspects of sovereignty and integrity of India. The track record of the last ten years of the BJP-RSS government is testimony to the fact that the new laws will make existing situations turn worse, particularly for freedom of speech and expression and the right to dissent.

Some of the provisions of the new laws make it clear that instead of making criminal laws progressive, simple, clear and transparent, the BJP government has changed them to suit its requirement of paralyzing any protest and dissent against its divisive pro-communal, pro-corporate agenda. For instance, many offenses under the UAPA have also become part of the new criminal law. This will result in enslavement of the procedure, which in itself will be harsh punishment.

The new criminal laws are highly cruel, regressive and repressive and cannot be accepted in the present form. Lawyers all over the country are already protesting against these laws. Other sections of the society, farmers, workers, students must also come forward to protest against this miscarriage of justice. □

# ERRATIC WEATHER AND INDIAN AGRICULTURE

(Excerpted and edited from original article written by Supratik Ray, published in Bengali weekly, Deshitaishi in May 2024)

Agrarian distress is worsening in India. Among the many reasons behind the deepening of the agrarian crisis, climate change is unarguably one of the most prominent. The Centre has no plan or course of action to combat the climate change challenge. Modi government continues to make way for corporates in Indian agriculture. Profit is the sole guide of the corporates, while Indian farmers face poverty, income losses, impact of extreme weather conditions and degradation of land due to excessive use of fertilizers.

The threat of food insecurity is increasing as crop yield falls due to rise in temperatures and as incidents of droughts, heatwaves and floods become more rampant. Further, pest attacks and plant disease outbreaks are rising and spreading into new areas. Livestock is also affected by shortages of animal feed and the spread of parasitic and vector-borne diseases caused by rising heat. By mid-2050, climate change is expected to bring an additional 8 to 80 million people to the brink of hunger.

Results of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) study on impact of climate change on crop productivity is quite astonishing and a matter of grave concern. Findings by ICAR show that the yield of paddy will decrease by 20 percent by the middle of 2050. With regards to rainfed varieties of paddy, as total rainfall declines and unseasonal rains increase, yields will decline over time. By 2080, there will be a yield-drop of 47 percent in rainfed varieties of paddy. There will be a yield decrease of 3.5 percent in irrigated rice by 2025 and 19.3 percent decline in wheat by 2050. Maize production will see an 18

percent decline by 2050 and by 2080 the decline will rise to 23 percent.

Report published by the Centre for Science and Environment shows that out of the 308 days between January 1, 2022, and October 31, 2022, there were weather-related events on 271 days across India. These were either drought, flood, storms or hailstorm events in various parts of the country, resulting in crop-losses on 18.1 lakh hectares of agricultural land. Figure of loss in central India itself stood at 1.36 lakh hectares. In this period, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Odisha experienced 198 days of adverse weather. Madhya Pradesh suffered crop losses on 1.36 lakh hectares of land. East and Northeast India suffered 191 days of extreme weather events which damaged 2.85 lakh hectares of cropland. Assam was the worst affected in the region. North and North-West states of the country had 216 days of weather-related events. In Uttar Pradesh 3.11 lakh hectares of cropland were damaged. Similarly, the southern states suffered crop-damage on 10.73 lakh hectares of land due to 145 days of bad weather



conditions. Karnataka suffered the most.

With still a high proportion of land under rain-fed cultivation and restricted spread of irrigation, monsoons continue to play a crucial role in Indian agriculture. The effects of climate change on monsoons in a largely agriculturally dependent country like ours can be severe. Presently about 56 percent of our total net cultivated area is dependent on rainfall. Further, around 61 percent of the country's net irrigated area is irrigated using ground water. The 7,600 km long Indian coastline is also vulnerable to adverse weather conditions.

Due to global warming, the climate has been changing. In recent years the effects of climate change on weather patterns in India are clear. Heat continues even after the end of summer. Similarly, unseasonal rains come after monsoon is over. Droughts, floods are increasingly bringing on crisis in Indian agriculture. Cases of humidity, lightning, fog, and water scarcity are rising. According to agricultural scientists, due to rising temperatures, cultivation in the rabi season will be in crisis by the year 2100. According to M.S.Swaminathan, with a rise of one degree Celsius in temperature, there could be a potential loss of 6 million tonnes of wheat per year.

Addressing a symposium in 2017, B Venkateswarlu, former director of the International Central Research Institute for Dryland Agriculture, Hyderabad, said, "Climate change affects three aspects of food security: availability, access and exploitation. The availability of food is reduced. Climate change affects the poor the most, as their access to food is affected". Threats of declining foodgrain productivity will hit the poorest the hardest, as food prices rise leading to overall food insecurity. He also noted that

climate change impacts on agriculture could potentially lead to 15% loss in India's GDP.

In West Bengal, farmers are adopting cash crops to deal with the decline in foodgrain productivity. Inadequate rainfall in the state is adversely affecting paddy and flower production. Between 1 June to 12 August 2019, the state received 30 percent less rainfall. Weather vagaries have damaged various crops, including potato, in the past few years. There have been regular outbreaks of potato blight, caused by the regular heavy fog, cloudy weather and winter rains. Potatoes need at least one month of cool weather to produce good yields. However, due to shortening of the winter season, together with cloudy skies and untimely rains have led to major damages of the crop in the past few years. In other parts of north India, subsequent heat waves have damaged the wheat crop, resulting in productivity fall.

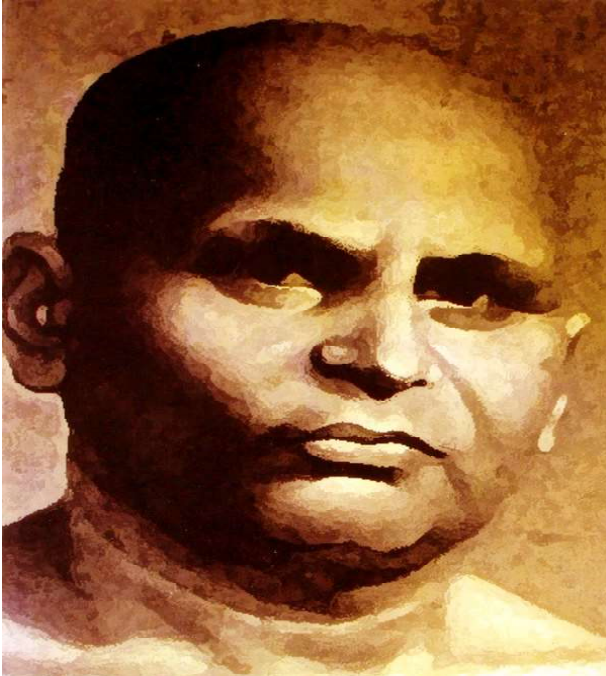
Global average temperatures are rising. A rise in global average temperature of 2°C could jeopardize Indian monsoons, which will further deepen the agrarian crisis. It is estimated that the average rainfall will be higher in the north-west coast of India than in the south-east coastal region. The ground water levels have already depleted in many parts of the country.

Increasing levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide, decreasing rainfall, shorter winters, seasonal climatic changes and natural disasters (floods, droughts, cyclones) are harming agriculture. These are all effects of global warming, which has negative impact on soil and crop yield.

To combat the challenge of climate change, the environmental movement must be strengthened with a perspective of class-struggle. Neoliberalism must be defeated. □

# ON THE PATH OF REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE: SWAMI SAHAJANAND SARASWATI: LIFE AND IDEOLOGY

-Awadhesh Kumar



The founder president of the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, was a person whose life's purpose was to create a society free from oppression, exploitation, and subjugation. He dedicated his entire life to liberating the country from British colonialism, ending the exploitation by landlords and domestic-foreign capitalists, and establishing a state of workers and peasants. His life is the story of a person who was deeply engrossed in asceticism and religious contemplation but believed that serving the people is the highest form of worship to God.

Talking about Swamiji's contribution to advancing the peasant movement, the renowned scholar Dr Ramachandra Shukla wrote that:

In Bihar, the peasant movement began in 1917 under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi in Champaran, but this movement was against

the indigo planters who were mostly Europeans, not against local landlords. Gandhi Ji and the leaders of the Congress believed that if the peasant movement was against the landlords, it would weaken the national movement against colonialism. Contrary to this, Swami Sahajanand Saraswati propagated the idea that landlords are not only exploiters of peasants but also agents of colonialism. Because of this understanding, the peasant movement in Bihar gained significant momentum. The credit for advancing this movement in Bihar goes to the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha and its prominent founder, Swami Sahajanand Saraswati.

## **Philosophy of the Poor**

Swamiji maintained that his philosophy was clear: development of the human being is essential. His clear understanding was that the agrarian crisis in the country was due to the contradiction with the feudal and capitalist system. When the revolutionary forces attacked the system, Swamiji quickly realized that our struggle for freedom had now intertwined with the struggle against feudalism and capitalism. At that time, he was in jail for having taken part in the freedom struggle against British imperialism. From jail, he inspired the people of India to revolt against feudalism and capitalism.

Swamiji's strong connection with the most exploited farmers and his continuous interaction with the oppressed was well established. From the contradictions, he concluded that the highly exploited producing

farmers were not yet united as a class organisation; relieving farmers from the traps of exploitative production, fulfilling the work of agrarian reform, and confronting the British government could not be accomplished easily.

Swamiji's continuous observation indicates that he wrote several books while in jail. He was a scholar, writer, and journalist. He wrote books on revolution and collective farming, the organization of the farmers' assembly, how farmers fight, what farmers should do, what happens to farm labourers, my life struggle, and more.

In or out of jail, he always maintained a close connection with the farmers. His rich life was based on high thinking, making his personality exemplary for the people of all generations. His thoughts and actions were exemplary. Therefore, his name became a symbol of the farmers' movement in our country.

### **Naurang Rai Becomes Swami Sahajanand Saraswati**

Sahajanand Saraswati was born on February 22, 1889 in the village of Sewa-Dewa in the district of Ghazipur in Uttar Pradesh. His childhood name was Naurang Rai. When he was three or four years old, his mother passed away. His early education began in a school in the nearby village of Jalalabad.

From his childhood, he was inclined towards religious practices and had a strong interest in worship and reading scriptures. Observing his inclination towards worship, his family arranged his marriage at the age of 15. However, within two years of marriage, his wife passed away. Talks about a second marriage were ongoing in the household, but in 1907, Naurang Rai reached Kaushal and became a

monk. As a monk, he deeply studied religious texts. He met Achhutanand Saraswati and became his disciple. Thus, he transformed from Naurang Rai to Sahajanand Saraswati.

For the next eight years, he devoted himself to intensive religious study, pilgrimages, education, yoga, and meditation. By his personality, he became known as a great scholar and an extraordinary monk. During his travels and pilgrimages, Swamiji encountered many devoted religious individuals and disciples. Witnessing the degradation and pollution in the name of religion, he became distressed and agitated.

Swamiji led movements against caste and religion. He considered religion as a personal matter. In his words, "Religion is, in my opinion, a personal thing, like skin, hair, eyes, nose, etc. If two individuals cannot share the same skin or eyes, then how can religion be the same for two individuals?"

### **Towards Social Reform**

At the request of some followers, Sahajanand Saraswati went to Bhagalpur, Bihar, to participate in a congregation. Upon reaching there, he saw that poor and backward Bhagalpur families were involved in religious social activities, leading to their exploitation and oppression. Previously, as a monk, he had seen performances and festivals in the name of religious texts.

In 1915, he started a social reform campaign among the Bhagalpur followers. During this time, he realized that the Bhagalpur followers also wanted to adopt religious values, but they faced opposition from those involved in economic, social, and political corruption. Sahajanand Saraswati's name gained significant recognition due to his social



reform movement. He himself initiated the Bhagalpur congregation. Through his experiences, he understood the pain and suffering of farmers.

Sahajanand Saraswati writes in his biography, “Saints may fight for their own liberation, but I cannot remain silent. I don’t want any liberation for myself by abandoning everyone else’s pain. I will live and struggle with them and remain alive.”

### **Role in the Independence Movement**

After this, he decided to dedicate his life to the benefit of farmers. In 1918, Swamiji went to Katori, a village in the Begusarai district of Bihar. Living there, he began to raise concerns about farmers’ issues and started reading newspapers regularly. His interest in social and political matters began to grow. In July 1920, he was severely punished for breaking the salt law. He came to Patna and met Gandhi Ji on December 5, 1920. Influenced by Gandhi Ji, he decided to participate in the independence movement. Swamiji writes in his autobiography, “After discussions with Gandhi Ji, I felt that I must get deeply involved in politics not to gain power but to become a true monk.”

Swamiji, with his full strength and determination, joined the Congress and plunged into the country’s independence movement. After returning from the Congress session in Ahmedabad in 1921, Swamiji was arrested. Almost two years later, he was released from jail in January 1923. Inspired by the Congress, he participated in the complete independence demand in 1930, the Dandi March, and the Civil Disobedience Movement, and was arrested and sent to Nagpur jail. During his first and second incarcerations,

he closely observed the personal shortcomings of Congress leaders and was deeply disillusioned. He began to realise how the oppressed and poor people would gain independence.

### **Gandhi and Disillusionment with Congress**

After 1927, while working in the farmers’ movement, Swamiji found that not only were Congress leaders heavily influenced by landlords, but they were also their close associates. His complete support for farmers and continued vow against landlords led to his increasing disillusionment with Gandhi and the Congress. Eventually, he separated himself from Gandhi and the Congress. In 1934, after the Bhagalpur earthquake, numerous complaints were made by farmers against landlords regarding the collection of rent and other issues. Swamiji discussed these with Gandhi Ji. Gandhi Ji’s suggestion was to send all complaints along with the names of the complaining farmers to the landlord, as the manager of the landlord was a Congress leader. Swamiji refused to do so. He argued that sending the names of the farmers would result in such strong retaliation that no farmer would dare to complain in the future.

In his biography, Swamiji recounts this event, stating that after that conversation, he felt completely estranged from Gandhi and the Congress, which marked the end of his nearly twenty-four years of association with Gandhi.

### **Establishment of Kisan Sabha**

Starting from 1926-27, Swamiji began living in Sikandara, Begusarai, and eventually the Farmer’s Union and the centre of the farmer’s movement were established there. In late 1927, he founded the Western Patna Kisan Sabha.

Despite opposition from the landlords, Swamiji continued his relentless struggle to change Bihar's peasant structure, and tried to pass a Peasant Protection Bill in the Assembly. As part of this effort, the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha was formed on November 17, 1929, at a meeting in Sonapur, with Sahajanand Saraswati elected as the president. The ongoing struggle of the Farmer's Union culminated in the significant victory of reclaiming the Peasant Protection Bill. Under Swamiji's leadership, the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha passed a resolution in 1935 to abolish the landlord system. This resolution accelerated the farmers' movement against the landlords.

In various states across the country, the farmers' movement against exploitation and the colonial economy gained momentum, leading to the establishment of branches of the Kisan Sabha. On April 11, 1936, a nationwide conference was held in Lucknow under the presidency of Sahajanand Saraswati, resulting in the formation of the All India Kisan Sabha with Sahajanand Saraswati elected as its first national president. In his presidential address, Swamiji clearly stated that no reconciliation was possible between farmers and landlords, as the landlord system itself was the root cause of many conflicts. The aim of the founding conference was to achieve complete liberation from exploitation and to secure complete economic-political rights and independence for farmers.

The establishment of the All India Kisan Sabha triggered an upsurge in the farmers' movement across the country. By 1945-46, historic peasant movements erupted in several states, like the Telangana struggle in Andhra Pradesh, the Tebhaga movement in Bengal, the farmers' struggle in Punnapra-Vayalar and Malabar in Kerala, the Warli Adivasi revolt in

Maharashtra, the Surma Valley struggle in Assam, and the Gana Mukti Parishad tribal movement in Tripura.

At the All India Kisan Sabha inaugural conference, some Congress leaders raised objections about Jayaprakash Narayan. In response, Swamiji stated, "Wherever there is a symbol of nationalism, Jayaprakash Narayan represents internationalism. In this age of internationalism, the farmers' and various oppressed people's struggle has now become an international phenomenon. They cannot achieve their goals without embracing internationalism."

Swamiji firmly declared that the foundation of the farmers' movement is class struggle, and the objective of the farmers' movement is much more than agricultural reform.

Swamiji was very comfortable working with activists. He supported them as strong allies. In his speech, he said that activism is an integral part of the farmers' and workers' state. During the movement, he believed that only through the united power of the farmers and workers, could landlords and capitalists be subdued.

### **Victory for Farmers and Workers**

Swami Sahajanand Saraswati passed away at the age of 61 on June 26, 1950. His exemplary personality and devotion to the struggle for the complete liberation of farmers from exploitation continue to inspire us even today. Towards the end of his life, he stated, "Now it is time to raise the slogan Victory to Farmers, Victory to Workers. The law will be established by those who produce. India belongs to them, and they will run the government." Only by intensifying and broadening the struggle initiated by the farmers and workers can we honour Swamiji's dreams. □

# STUDENTS WANT ANSWERS FROM THE 'PAPER LEAK GOVERNMENT'

- Mayukh Biswas

Anitha was a brilliant child coming from a very poor family. Her father is a wage labourer. She was the youngest of five siblings. When she was in the second grade, her mother died due to lack of medical treatment. From that day on, Anitha dreamed of becoming a doctor. From her early years until twelfth grade, she was always first in her class. Before the implementation of NEET across the country, board exams were conducted on a state basis. Some states had Joint Entrance Exams while others admitted students based on twelfth-grade marks. Anitha scored 1176 out of 1200. But after NEET was introduced, Anitha did not pass the said entrance.

Before the implementation of the National Education Policy by the central government, one of the steps towards centralizing education was this NEET exam, the all-India medical entrance exam. Its syllabus was modelled on ICSE or CBSE, and the medium of the question papers was mainly focusing on English and Hindi. Translating these questions into other languages was quite challenging. Various changes in UGC rules are also affecting researchers. Statistics from different states also show that those who pass the NEET exam are mainly from English medium and CBSE boards. The same pattern is seen in other central exams as well. For instance, the NET General Paper questions are only available in English and Hindi. The RSS's 'Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan' and the corporate formula do not recognize regional languages. As a result, the main sufferers of this, the State board students studied in vernacular languages, who are in the majority, are losing time just trying to decipher these questions in Hindi and English. Even in Bengali question papers, English terms



dominate. Naturally, these barriers are a significant challenge for students from poor and socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

Anitha, along with some educationists from Tamil Nadu, filed a case in the Supreme Court against the centrally imposed exams. They faced brutal insults and trolling from BJP and RSS. Ultimately, the dream of Anitha, a child from a Dalit family, ended on September 1, 2017, when she committed suicide.

Recently, it has been seen that students who failed in Physics or Chemistry are scoring 705 out of 720 in NEET! Can anyone explain how a student who failed in twelfth grade can score 99.94 percentile in NEET? This year, 67

students scored 100 percentile in NEET, meaning even the toppers won't get a chance to study in AIIMS. Many of these toppers are from the same exam centre, which belongs to a BJP leader from Haryana! Everything seems connected! Therefore, after the results of NEET, there have been allegations of corruption. Anurag Yadav, who was recently arrested, claimed that he received the exact question paper a month in advance. And yet the country's education minister cannot see the corruption. It all falls into place like puzzle pieces - centralization of education, single window system, coaching nexus, and corruption. It is frightening to think about who Modi's government wants to entrust with the country's education and health systems!

NEET is currently the sole entrance exam for medical studies nationwide, favouring the affluent and excluding marginalized students. Rural and economically disadvantaged students struggle with the exam, leading to frequent suicides and social exclusion. Numerous coaching centres profit by selling dreams of medical careers, reinforcing the belief that only the wealthy can afford medical education. NEET has increased inequality, a concern highlighted by the Tamil Nadu Justice A K Rajan Committee. Following the committee's recommendations, a bill in the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly warned that without abolishing NEET, the medical system would face severe decline, citing corruption and unethical practices since 2017.

Just like NEET, now NET has also been cancelled. On 18th June, the UGC NET exam was conducted nationwide. Millions of candidates participated. But the next day, the government announced that the exam was cancelled due to issues related to exam transparency. The same agency that conducted the exam and engaged in corruption cancelled it. Where does that leave the students?

Frustrated students are demanding immediate announcement of the next exam date. There is a circus going on with the future of higher education of millions of students. Each time, the exam form fee is increasing. It is about 1200 rupees now. Many dreams are ending prematurely because students cannot afford to pay this amount.

Students from far-off places come to take the exam. A girl from Silchar might get a seat in Dibrugarh. Exam centres are often located in places where public transport is inaccessible. Many had to hire cars and book hotels, which is against the interests of the poor and middle class. This mockery with students is infuriating. SFI is demanding immediate compensation. Future researchers are paying the price for various UGC rule changes. The insufficiency of infrastructure for online exams and introduction of Computer Based Testing (CBT) is affecting the students coming from marginalized backgrounds. In many places, there is no internet network, how will the students take the exam online?

Questions are full of errors. In the music paper, 8-10 lines of Rabindranath's songs were wrong! Who is preparing these questions? In some exam halls, students are not allowed to use watches, but there are no clocks in the hall. While in some centres, candidates were allowed to enter wearing smartwatches. Who will oversee these issues? There are no answers. Modi is claiming himself to be the 'vishwaguru', but the condition of exam centres in the country is dire! There is no sign of basic infrastructure for national level exam!

Moreover, the Common University Entrance Test for admissions in various central, state, private, and deemed universities are also showing flaws. In the month of May, it was reported that in a centre in Kanpur, English question papers were distributed among Hindi medium students. The same issue was reported

in a centre in Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan. The agency had to conduct re-exams for affected students in both cases. Now, NEET, NET, CUET, and nearly 25 other all-India exams are being conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA) with only 25 temporary staff. The body is also under the scanner like PM Cares Fund.

Previously, many entrance and recruitment exams were conducted by various universities and state, central agencies. These included NEET and the Joint Entrance Exam for engineering courses, which were previously conducted by the Central Board of Secondary Education; and the Common Management Admission Test, conducted by the All India Council for Technical Education for admission to management programmes. Universities used to conduct their exams themselves. When these systems were working well for so many years, what was the need for this change?

The main reason for the change is that the Modi government wanted control over education and recruitment, placing RSS affiliates in key positions. For example, former ABVP leader Pradeep Kumar Joshi now heads the National Testing Agency (NTA) and has previously led organizations like UPSC and State Public Service Commissions. His tenure has been marked by corruption and mismanagement. Yet, he is tasked with investigating NTA irregularities, which is likened to a thief investigating a theft. Additionally, the UGC is led by anti-student Vice-Chancellor Mamidala. The RSS and Modi government seek control over education through a 'single window system', enabling influence and job placements via central agencies. Errors are inevitable when one agency handles many exams, but the Modi government, acting as a broker for the RSS and corporates, aims to empower the NTA, undermining state schools and higher education. The RSS opposes federalism, preferring central control. The National Education Policy exemplifies this centralization, implemented without state or expert consultation, focusing on profit and spreading RSS ideology.

The Students' Federation of India (SFI) has criticized the Modi government's centralization for promoting the coaching industry. Students are driven to costly coaching centres to prepare for NEET, with 96% of aspirants relying on them according to the Justice A K Rajan Committee. In 2019-20, 77% of NEET candidates used coaching, making it hard for poor and middle-class families to afford medical education. Many coaching centres are run by the RSS, contributing to unequal competition and student suicides. Unlike China, which has shut down sources of inequality, India has not addressed this issue.

The SFI opposes NEET and central exams, arguing that they disadvantage marginalized students in socio-economically unequal India. The "one nation, one exam" policy reduces opportunities for state board and vernacular language students, with their numbers in medical colleges declining since 2017. Many NEET qualifiers are repeaters, which is financially unfeasible for poorer students. Wealthier students can afford expensive coaching, creating an uneven playing field. The rise of private medical colleges, where seats can be bought through capitation fees and quotas, worsens the inequality.

The SFI called for a nationwide strike on July 4th, 2024 against the centralization and privatization of medical education, demanding the abolition of NEET and equal opportunities for all students. The Modi government has faced accusations of corruption, including paper leaks in exams like NEET and NET. SFI has demanded a Supreme Court-supervised investigation, the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and his deputies, and changes in PhD admission requirements. Large protest have taken place by students, parents, and the medical community, with demonstrations across various states, including Kerala, Delhi, Himachal, Rajasthan, and Bengal.

There is no stopping in this fight until justice is done. There are no shortcuts in this fight. If we stand by the deprived, they will stand by us. We will stand united against these atrocities!

□

# HOW SCIENTIFIC IS THE NANO UREA SCHEME OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT?

- Nishith Chowdhury



A so-called newly discovered chemical fertilizer called ‘Nano Urea’ is coming up in the discussion. Although this is not a new discovery, the Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) has already patented this Nano Urea by recognizing Ramesh Ralia, a consultant of this company, as its inventor. While approving the commercial use of this fertilizer, the government has said that the use of granular urea will be reduced and the import cost of the country will also be reduced significantly. Inaugurating the production of this fertilizer at IFFCO’s Kolol plant in Gujarat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on 28th May 2022, “...a small bottle (500 ml) of nano urea is equivalent to one 50 kg bag of granular urea currently used by farmers”. IFFCO or Ramesh Ralia, the inventor of this nano urea, claims that this nano urea contains nitrogen, an important element for plant growth, “*in the form of granules that are hundred thousand times finer than a sheet of paper*”. For this reason, these nano-urea materials will be much more effective at

the microscopic scale, it is asserted.

Of course, the Narendra Modi-led government is in favour of this claim, but many research papers have already been published in the national and international arena doubting the authenticity of this claim. Nano liquid urea can certainly be approved as a fertiliser by the government, but one wonders why it is in a haste and so interested to propagate the efficacy of a fertilizer with only 4% nitrogen content and compare its effectiveness with Urea having 46% nitrogen content. This essay is an attempt to shed light on all these issues.

It is scientifically established that nitrogen is the main element for the growth of food crops and urea is the most nitrogen rich chemical fertilizer. Chemically conventional grain urea contains 46 percent nitrogen. That is, a bag of 45 kilograms of urea contains 20.7 kilograms of nitrogen. Nano Urea is sold in 500 ml or half liter bottles, containing 4 percent nitrogen i.e., 43 grams of urea or only 20 grams of nitrogen. The Prime Minister and

the IFFCO claim that a half litre bottle of nano urea is equivalent to a 50 kg bag of urea. In general, this claim is completely frivolous and has no scientific basis.

Researcher Max Frank of the Department of Plant and Environmental Science at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, and Professor Soren Husted of that same university recently questioned the scientific validity of nano-liquid urea in an opinion paper published on July 25, 2023. The researchers in their opinion paper also raised doubts about the quality and properties of Nano Urea based on the available scientific evidence and compared the claims made by IFFCO or the Government of India with the existing scientific literature from well reputed journals.

Long back, the agricultural fraternity of our country had expressed doubt over this claim regarding Nano Urea. It is well established that 25 Kg of nitrogen is required to produce one tonne of wheat, and for production of similar quantity of Rice and Maize the requirement is 20 kg and 30 kg of nitrogen respectively. But a plant won't be able to utilize all the urea that is applied in the soil or sprayed on leaves in the case of Nano Urea. In 2022, N K Tomar a retired Professor of Soil Science at Chowdhury Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University stated that *"if maximum 60 percent of the available nitrogen were used, it would yield 496 kg of wheat grain,"* and further added, *"Even if 100 percent of 20 grams of nitrogen in Nano Urea, which is effectively available, is utilized by the plant, it would yield only 368 gm of grain"*. Professor Tomar in his letter to the Niti Aayog and the National Academy of Agricultural Sciences has clearly stated that the Nano Urea concept is "futile" and is a sheer waste of farmers' money. This

claim of IFFCO is baseless and will be disastrous for farmers in future.

Dr. Tomar's feelings are echoed in the speech of former Deputy Director General of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) I P Abrol. He said, *"Urea is highly water soluble and already reaches the lowest form of concentration when absorbed. How the nano particles can increase the effectiveness of nitrogen uptake by being still smaller is unclear to me. That foliar spraying (spraying on leaves) improves fertilizer uptake is known for over half a century. So, what's new here?"*

### **Farmers' Experience**

A well-known environment and science magazine called 'Down to Earth' has published several articles on this issue in May this year. Author Vivek Mishra spoke to several farmers. Vivek Mishra usually writes news on the National Green Tribunal, and river, air and water pollution. He talked to a number of farmers in various parts of the country and on DTE's behalf he interviewed Praveen Parmar, a farmer from Sehore district in Madhya Pradesh; Satpal, a farmer from Kurad village in Sonapat district, Haryana; Pawan and Azad Fauji, farmers from Bhatgaon village in Sonipat; Satyaveer, a farmer from Bali village in Baghpat district, Uttar Pradesh, etc. All had very bad experiences. Praveen Kumar told that in November 2022, he experimented with Nano Urea while cultivating wheat in his 8 hectares of land and sprayed 5 liters of Nano Urea after 20 days of seed sowing on half of the land and cultivated the remaining land with grain urea in the old method. He had to spend an extra Rs 1000 for spraying Nano Urea. Crop colour change and leaf growth were observed in conventional urea treated plots but there was

no change in Nano Urea treated plots. Similarly, Satpal says that in November 2022, he planted wheat in his land which was ready for harvest in April 2023. After 20-25 days of planting wheat, Nano Urea was sprayed on the land, but as there was no effect on the crop, he had to apply conventional urea as well.

Pawan of Bhatgaon said he planted wheat on his 25 bigha land on November 4, 2022. During that time there was a urea crisis and he was forced to buy 5 bottles of Nano Urea of 500 ml each. Using conventional urea, 125 quintals of wheat would have been produced, but with the use of nano urea, only 3.5 quintals of wheat instead of 5 quintals per bigha, were finally produced, totaling 87.5 quintals. According to him, he had to spend Rs 11,925 to grow wheat with Nano Urea on 5 bigha land. He expected a high yield of 25 quintals, but could harvest just 17.5 quintals facing a loss of 0.5 quintals per bigha. At the rate of Rs 2100 per quintal, he could earn just Rs 36,750, but had there been proper production, his income could have gone up to Rs 52,500. Thus his loss in one crop session or 6 months was Rs. 25,000 meaning a loss of Rs. 50,000 annually. Azad Fauji of the same village raised the cost factor. A farmer can spread conventional granular urea by his own in the land in a few hours. But to use Nano Urea he has to hire a spray tank. He has to spend at least Rs 40 per bigha for a 25 litre tank to spray Nano Urea mixed with water. The method to use Nano Urea as specified by the manufacturing company is - at least 4 ml of Nano Urea is required to be mixed in 1 liter of water. A maximum of 5 bigha or 1 acre farm land can be cultivated in a 500 ml bottle. Additional cost of spraying per bigha being Rs 40, the total cost of spraying for 5 bigha becomes Rs 200. A 500 ml nano urea bottle costs Rs. 240 and



thus for using Nano Urea one has to spend Rs 440 while a 45 kg conventional granular urea bag costs Rs 250.

Satyaveer, another farmer in Baghpat, says that he and other farmers are being forced to buy Nano Urea bottles. Farmers in Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh have the same experience. The March 2023 report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers states that the sale of urea has almost halved due to the use of Nano Urea. Farmers' experiences being negative it can easily be construed that there must have been forced sale of Nano Urea.

### **Field Trial of Nano Urea**

Surprisingly, there is little information about field trials of Nano Urea, yet government approval was quickly given for its commercial production and marketing despite opposition from the scientific community. The amount of subsidy on domestic production or import of urea fertilizer increased from Rs. 80 thousand crore to Rs 2 lakh crore after the Russia-Ukraine war. So, is this a ploy to force Nano Urea without successful field trials?

What is the raw material for the production of Nano Urea has also not been disclosed. As we know, the production of grain urea requires



ammonia, carbon dioxide and nitrogen. But the manufacturing company IFFCO has kept the raw material for making Nano Urea a secret on the pretext of taking a patent.

As the farmers say, the use of Nano Urea is not beneficial, there is absolutely no increase in production; instead it is decreasing. And on the other hand, scientifically it is a standard practice to accord government approval to a new product only if its usefulness is proven in the research results of at least three years i.e., 6 crop cycles before commercialization. All that information is not available for Nano Urea.

An unnamed scientist at the Krishi Vigyan Kendra who was involved in the field trial of Nano Urea told *'Down to Earth'* that he had no positive results using Nano Urea on his own land. Again, scientists of the ICAR say, farmers should be grateful that Nano Urea is not having a negative impact on crop production! According to J K Nandal, Retired Chief Scientist, KVK, Sonapat, *"Nano Urea can never be a substitute for Granular Urea. At best this fertilizer can reduce the usage of granular urea hardly by 15 to 20%"*.

According to the rules, at least three seasons of data must be submitted to the ICAR for approval of any new chemical fertilizer. Information released about the Nano Urea trial shows that 13 crops have been tested at 43 locations in the country and 9 crops have been tested in 21 states in a total of four seasons. But there are no research results of its application for at least three seasons on any particular crop. It is learned that IFFCO has results of only two seasons of a crop. It also appears to be quite flawed. Practically the amount of nitrogen left in the soil for urea or other fertilizers applied during the previous

year is practically sufficient, and one year means two crop sessions. The stipulation of field trials for three consecutive years is a scientific necessity for this reason as well as to get the results of the application in different climatic conditions in different years.

IFFCO started research related to Nano Urea in 2017, its application in the laboratory started in 2018 and field trial started in Rabi season 2019. Nano Urea was officially approved on 24th February 2021, commercial production started in June 2021 at IFFCO's Kalol, Gandhinagar, Gujarat plant, online sales started in July 2021, and commercial production was announced on 1st August 2021. In other words, total of just 4 crop seasons were available from Rabi crop of 2019 till 1st July 2021, the date of commercial production and marketing of Nano Urea. Then how did Narendra Modi's government take such a decision without completing the field trial? Is it all for the purpose of reducing the amount of urea subsidy in an unfair way, endangering the country's food security?

After Nano Urea, IFFCO is going to introduce Nano DAP. DAP is another fertilizer with high import volume and high import subsidy. Field trials of Nano DAP are going on and that too will be imposed on farmers in the same way in future. Farmers from different parts of the country are showing reluctance to use nano-fertilizers, domestic and foreign agricultural scientists are expressing doubts, then why this compulsion? So, it is a burning question before the farmers as to how this attempt of the government can be resisted. After all, the government cannot just be allowed to play with farmers' lives and the food security of the country. A thorough review of the entire exercise is a must. □

# WHY THE FIGHT FOR MSP IS NECESSARY

- Manoj Kumar



For the last few years, the Minimum Support Price (MSP) has been in headlines continuously. On one hand, farmers' organizations are demanding MSP; on the other hand, the government is claiming that it is giving MSP and announcing MSP for 23 crops every year. But the question is, if farmers are getting MSP, then why are farmers and agriculture in crisis?

According to the data of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), between 2014 and 2022 a total of 1,00,474 farmers and farm workers have been forced to commit suicide, which is more than 30 farmers committing suicide every day. Behind this figure are 1,00,474 untold stories of helplessness and compulsion, whose pain is often ignored and thousands of precious lives turn to just a figure. The tragedy of these stories is due to the indebtedness born out of the agricultural crisis. But the need to change

the neo-liberal policies that have caused this tragedy have not become a part of the discussions of those in power.

After more than a decade of implementing neo-liberal policies, the incidence of farmer suicides had been consistently increasing. This became a pressing issue when the incumbent BJP-NDA government started facing criticism. Then the newly formed UPA-1 government which was supported by Left parties from outside formed the National Commission on Farmers under the chairmanship of Dr M.S. Swaminathan in 2004. Its five reports came between 2004 and 2006.

The reports state that the main reason for the increasing debt on farmers is the failure to receive prices commensurate with the rising agricultural costs for crops and that without profitable prices, farmers cannot escape the quagmire of debt. It recommended that to improve the farmer's situation, they should be

paid one and a half times (C2+50%) the cost of cultivation for all crops. The calculation of this cost should include the price of the labour done by the farmer's family, cost of fertilizer, seeds, electricity, diesel, depreciation of agricultural equipment and rent of land. But till now the MSP declared by the governments has been much less than the amount as per this formula. Even today, less than 10% of the total produce is being sold at the declared MSP across the country. Except for Punjab and Haryana, in most parts of the country, the coverage of APMC mandis is very limited.

If we look at the prices of inputs and the selling price of crops over the past 10 years, we will find that the price of inputs has increased many times more compared to the declared MSP. Yet, most farmers in the country are still compelled to sell their crops at prices even lower than the announced MSP. In June 2014, when international crude oil prices were \$ 106 per barrel, diesel prices in Delhi were Rs 57.28 per litre. Now, ten years later in June 2024, with international crude oil prices at \$ 82 per barrel, diesel prices in Delhi are around Rs 87.67 per litre and in between they had increased even more. The prices of fertilizers, electricity, seeds, agricultural equipment have all increased a lot, but in comparison to this the declared MSP has not increased, whereas the price that the majority of farmers get is much less than even this.

Before the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, Narendra Modi promised in the BJP election manifesto that if he came to power, his government would provide MSP to farmers at C2+50%. However, after the elections, in February 2015 the Modi government gave an affidavit in the Supreme Court that it is unable

to give this MSP. After the firing on farmers in Mandsaur in June 2017, the demand for remunerative prices and guarantee of MSP for all crops once again came to the focus. The All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC) organized a Kisan Sansad in 2018 in which the "Farmers' Rights for Guarantee of Minimum Support Price for Agricultural Commodities Bill" was passed and presented as a private member's bill in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha by two MPs. One of them was K K Ragesh, then Joint Secretary of the AIKS. After this, in 2020, in the movement led by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) against the three infamous Farm Laws, one of the major demands was the guarantee of MSP, which was supposed to be discussed with the farmer leaders as per the written agreement with the government on 9 December 2021. But the government did not implement its assurances. The movement of farmers' organizations is still going on for the demand of MSP.

If we analyse the MSP announced by the Modi government, we find that its claim of increasing MSP as per C2+ 50% is factually false. Here we should also not forget that procurement at the declared MSP is limited to a small fraction of farmers in the country. Therefore, farmers are demanding a law for guaranteed procurement at a remunerative MSP for all crops.

In its announcement of MSP for the Kharif crop season 2024-25, the Modi government falsely claimed that the declared MSP is as per the Swaminathan Commission's recommended formula of C+50%. However, the truth reveals something different. According to the report of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), the weighted average cost (C2)

of states for paddy is Rs 2,188 per quintal. At this cost, the C2+50% price will be Rs 3,282 per quintal. However, the MSP announced for paddy is only Rs 2,300 per quintal, resulting in a loss of Rs 1,255 per quintal for farmers. In case of cotton, as per the average C2 estimates of states C2+50% MSP is expected to be Rs 11,163 per quintal, while the MSP announced is only Rs 7,121. On this basis we can say farmers will incur a loss of RS 4,042 rupees per quintal. According to state average estimates for maize, the MSP is expected to be Rs 3,378 rupees per quintal as per C2+50%, which means there will be a loss of Rs 1,153 per quintal to farmers at the current MSP. Even with the contracted cost estimates of CACP, farmers are facing a loss of Rs 712 per quintal on rice, Rs 570 per quintal on maize, and Rs 2,224 per quintal on cotton as per C2+50%.

When we talk about the Rabi crop season 2024-25, the MSP for wheat has been announced at Rs 2,275 per quintal. However,

according to the formula of C2+50% it should have been Rs 2,478, which means a loss of Rs 203 per quintal for farmers. The C2 for gram was shown as Rs 4,547. Accordingly, the MSP should have been Rs 6820 per quintal as per C2+50. However, the announced MSP is Rs 5,440, which means a reduction of Rs 1380 per quintal for the farmers. Similarly, there is a significant difference between the calculation based on the C2+50 percent formula and the announced MSP for almost every crop.

From all these facts, it becomes clear that the government's claim of providing MSP at C2+50% to farmers is a blatant falsehood. Therefore, farmers are demanding guaranteed procurement at remunerative MSP for all crops. Without addressing this issue, we cannot overcome the agrarian crisis, we cannot stop farm suicides, and the majority of the country's population, which depends on farming, cannot be lifted out of poverty. □



# CHHATTISGARH: WILL THE RULE OF LAW PREVAIL OR THE LAW OF THE JUNGLE?

- Sanjay Parate

The obsession of killing humans in the name of cow protection has now reached Chhattisgarh. Despite the clear murder and identification of some of the killers, if a case of culpable homicide is being made against unknown attackers, then it seems that the killers have got permission from the top to carry out mob lynching in the name of cow protection. The killers identified by a victim who survived are habitual criminals and cases are already registered against them.



This incident of mob lynching in the name of cow protection took place on the night of June 6-7, in Arang, about 40 km away from capital Raipur. The sporadic statements given by the police and the piecemeal information received from various sources together reveal the magnitude of the incident, which the local media of the state tried to present as a very minor incident. It was only after some national media exposed this heinous crime against minorities that the BJP government of Chhattisgarh had to form an SIT to investigate this incident.

Briefly, the entire incident is that some cattle traders had bought buffaloes from a village in Mahasamund, which were being taken to Odisha by three drivers living in Saharanpur district of Uttar Pradesh. All three drivers belonged to the minority Muslim community. Some people from the Hindu community associated with one of the various cow protection organisations that have mushroomed in the state chased the

vehicle from Patewa area of Mahasamund district. They had already laid nails on the Mahanadi bridge to stop the vehicle. Police have found a large number of nails on the bridge. After the truck loaded with buffaloes got punctured and stopped, a group of 15-20 people attacked them. After beating the three, the attackers threw Chand Miya and Guddu Khan on the rock of the dry river flowing under the bridge, due to which both of them died. Saddam's condition remains critical and he is undergoing treatment in a private hospital in Raipur.

During this attack, the deceased Chand Mian called Shoaib and Saddam called Mohsin. Chand's call was disconnected immediately, but Mohsin's call lasted for 20 minutes. Shoaib said that in the call Saddam can be heard saying that his hands and legs are broken and he is pleading the attackers to leave him. Shoaib said that I think Saddam had kept the phone in his pocket during the call, he did not disconnect the call, so everything was clearly audible. This means that this attack (mob lynching) must have lasted for at least an hour. Shoaib alleges that

the attackers are people associated with Bajrang Dal.

The police have recovered 24 buffaloes from the truck and registered a case against the unidentified assailants under Sections 304, 307 of the IPC. After a national uproar, an SIT has now been formed.

From this piecemeal account, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The buffaloes were purchased from a village in Mahasamund. The Muslim drivers were taking these buffaloes to Odisha. This is a clean business of cattle purchase. Despite this, these traders belonging to the minority community are being maligned as cow smugglers. This is what has been emphasized in the media reporting. The administration is trying its best to downplay this incident and the BJP always maintains silence on such attacks.

2. The attackers and the victims know each other. Some of the people identified by Saddam are habitual criminals living in Raipur. According to Saddam, these people let those vehicles pass which offer Cash fund ('Chadhawa'). Hence, the suspicion is strong that due to not offering Chadhawa, they have been attacked in a planned manner and have been publicised as cow smugglers.

3. The attackers were following the truck from a long distance and for a long time. If they suspected cow smuggling, why did they not inform the police instead of taking the law into their own hands?

4. Since this attack and mob lynching was pre-planned, the murder is also pre-planned and not unintentional as the police have registered the case. An attempt is being made to cover up the murder of these members of the minority community under the

protection of the government by raising the issue of cow smuggling.

The government has a responsibility to protect the lives and property of its citizens. Based on these conclusions, the question that must be asked is whether the rule of law will prevail in Chhattisgarh under the BJP rule or will mob lynching be encouraged in the name of cow? India today ranks second in the world in terms of beef export and is a major source of foreign exchange earnings. All the exporting companies belong to Hindus, from whom the BJP has illegally collected thousands of crores of rupees for its election fund through electoral bonds. When beef companies owned by Hindus can run, how can attacks and killings of the minority community, who earn their livelihood through cattle trade, be justified? Taking election donations from beef companies and the planned killings of Muslims in the name of cow fall under which category of 'nationalism and patriotism'?

The BJP's silence on this horrific communal incident and the government's inaction clearly shows what kind of Chhattisgarh it wants to build in the coming days? The BJP wants to push Chhattisgarh into the darkness of anarchy, where the constitution and law are not followed, but Manusmriti and communal goons rule.

AIKS Centre and Chhattisgarh Kisan Sabha has demanded the arrest of all the criminals on the basis of available primary evidence and register a murder case against them, give compensation of Rs 50 lakh each to the families of those killed in mob lynching, provide protection to cattle trade and stop attacks on traders and their transporters. □

## AIKS-AIAWU DELEGATION VISITS FAMILIES OF THE THREE VICTIMS OF PLANNED KILLINGS



On 5 July 2024, an All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS)-All India Agricultural Workers Union (AIAWU) delegation visited the families of the three victims of the planned killings of Muslim youth transporting cattle, on 7 June near the Mahanadi Bridge on the Mahasamund-Raipur border in Chhattisgarh by BJP-RSS criminals posing as cow vigilantes. The delegation visited Lakhnauti village in Saharanpur district and Banat town in Shamli district of Uttar Pradesh, and handed over cheques of one lakh rupees each to the three families of the victims.

The planned murders took place just three days after the declaration of the results of the Lok Sabha elections on 4 June, in which Narendra Modi and the BJP-NDA came to power for the third time, although with a much-reduced majority. This has been followed by

similar attacks on Muslims by Sangh Parivar criminals in several states.

The AIKS-AIAWU delegation visited the bereaved families of Tehsim Qureshi at Banat town, and Chand Mian and Saddam Qureshi in Lakhnauti village, in Uttar Pradesh. The delegation comprised V Sivadasan, Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha and treasurer of AIAWU, AIKS president Dr Ashok Dhawale, general secretary Vijoo Krishnan, finance secretary P Krishnaprasad, AIAWU general secretary B Venkat, joint secretary Vikram Singh and AIKS CKC members Pushpendra Tyagi and Manoj Kumar. They were accompanied by AIKS leaders from Uttar Pradesh Daud Khan, Sushil Kumar Rana, Dharmendra Singh and Virender Singh.

So far no government officials have visited

the family of Tehsim Qureshi while the Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) had visited the two families in Lakhnauti village. No compensation or treatment expenditure was provided to these families by either the state government of Chhattisgarh or Uttar Pradesh, both led by the BJP.

AIKS demands compensation of Rs one crore, and one permanent job to each victim's family by the Chhattisgarh state government. It may be recalled that the BJP-led state government of Haryana did not pay any compensation to the family of Pehlu Khan, a cattle farmer of Mewat who was lynched by Bajrang Dal goons on 1 April 2017 in Alwar, Rajasthan. Then also farmers across India had collected money and AIKS gave a sum of Rs 10 lakh to assist the family of Pehlu Khan.

The Chhattisgarh incident happened between 2-3 am on 7 June when a gang of 11-12 people followed the truck loaded with cattle - all buffaloes, not a single cow - and stopped the truck at the Mahanadi bridge and attacked the workers. It is a case of premeditated murder and hate crime and not mob lynching. The state police registered FIR under section 304 and 307 of IPC for attempt to murder and culpable homicide that attracts punishment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with a fine or with both. There is no section 302 of IPC for murder. This reveals the rabidly communal bias of the Chhattisgarh State Police. Among the four belatedly arrested in this case is Raja Agrawal, who is district propaganda chief of the BJYM.

The BJP MP Brijmohan Aggarwal of Raipur has publicly stated that the workers were not murdered, but they have committed suicide by

jumping from the bridge. This is nothing but an attempt to protect the murderers and is hence a serious crime. The BJP-led state government has done nothing in this matter. AIKS again strongly demands a judicial enquiry, strong action against the top police officers involved in the conspiracy to protect the murderers, and prosecution of the BJP MP.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah are directly responsible for the current wave of widespread increase of hate crimes against Muslims all over India in the post poll scenario. The RSS and its outfits constantly instigate hatred against the minorities. This fosters alienation and insecurity among the minorities, which breeds fundamentalist trends, weakens the secular foundation of India and endangers national unity. Defence of minority rights is a crucial aspect of the struggle to strengthen democracy and secularism.

The cattle economy is part of agriculture contributing 27% of the income of farmer households. India is the second largest country in beef export. The attack on traders and workers in the cattle industry severely affects the cattle farmers, who are unable to sell their animals or get remunerative prices since there is no cattle trade market.

AIKS strongly demands that the NDA Union Government and Parliament enact a stringent law against mob lynching and hate crimes, establish fast track courts to expedite the trial and conviction of the lawbreakers, and protect the interests of cattle farmers, traders and workers in the cattle trade and meat industry. The government must purchase cattle at market rate from the farmers and protect their livelihood. □



# GAZA: A HORRENDOUS IMPERIALIST WAR AND THE FIGHT FOR PEACE

- Nidheesh J Villatt

“The triumph of imperialism leads to the annihilation of civilisation” - Rosa Luxemburg, The Junius Pamphlet

“In the operating room, we examined Juri from head to toe. This beautiful, meek little girl was missing two inches of her left femur along with most of the muscle and skin on the back of her thigh. Both of her buttocks were flayed open, cutting so deeply through flesh that the lowest bones in her pelvis were exposed. As we swept our hands through this topography of cruelty, maggots fell in clumps onto the operating room table”, writes Mark Perlmutter and Feroze Sidhwa, two American surgeons who were volunteering at the Gaza European Hospital. These American doctors were writing about their experience of operating a “malnourished” 9-year old Palestinian girl Juri who ended up in the preoperative area of the hospital.

While describing the “topography of cruelty”, these two surgeons with a combined 57 years of volunteering in more than 40 surgical missions in the global south reiterated that “what we saw was unspeakable”. As these surgeons pointed out, UNICEF’s declaration of the Gaza Strip as the most dangerous place for children was hardly unexpected. The brutal reality that the children suffered was a reflection of the true nature of imperialism that ‘imperialism means war’; in this case perpetrated through the hands of its Zionist lackey.

According to the official estimates by UN and WHO, by this time around 39,000 people have been killed in the Gaza Strip. However, The Lancet, a renowned British medical

journal, has cautioned that the Gaza crisis’ true mortality rate could be much higher as it was sure to have been significantly underreported, with a possible death toll of above 186,000. The Lancet report titled “Counting the Dead in Gaza: Difficult but Essential” estimated that “this would translate to 7.9% of the total population in the Gaza Strip”. If 7.9% of the Indian population died, it would come to around 114 million people. This is the gravity of the terrible tragedy being unleashed upon the people in Gaza.

Considering the gravity of the situation, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the apex UN legal authority, in its July 19 order ruled, “the State of Israel’s continued presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is unlawful; the State of Israel is under an obligation to bring to an end its unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as rapidly as possible; the State of Israel is under an obligation to cease immediately all new settlement activities, and to evacuate all settlers from the occupied Palestinian territory; the State of Israel has the obligation to make reparation for the damages caused to all the natural or legal persons concerned in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; all states are under an obligation not to recognize as legal the situation arising from the unlawful presence of the State of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and not to render aid or assistance in maintaining the situation created by the continued presence of the State of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory”.

Earlier, in May 2024, ICJ had ordered Israel to “immediately halt its military

offensive, and any other action in the Rafah Governorate, which may inflict on the Palestinian group in Gaza conditions of life that could bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part”. The colonial settler state went on ignoring all these orders with an ingrained character of pathological perversion. From the reports available from the Israeli local media, Israeli soldiers have been openly admitting that they went on shooting and killing innocent Palestinian civilians for fun when they got bored. They also burned civilian homes after occupying them. For instance, +972, an independent magazine of Israeli and Palestinian journalists has carried testimonies of Israeli soldiers who killed civilians as part of fighting their boredom. “The testimonies paint a picture of a landscape littered with civilian corpses, which are left to rot or to be eaten by stray animals”.

This barbaric attack on Palestine has the total support of US imperialism. Palestine is a living example of Lenin’s insightful formulation that the primary method for resolving financial capitalism’s internal contradictions has become increasingly reliant on imperialist war. Writing his classic pamphlet on Imperialism in 1916, Lenin had exposed the claim made by the apologists of imperialism that “the rule of finance capital lessens the unevenness and contradictions inherent in the world economy”. Lenin categorically argued that “in reality it increases them”.

Writing about Gaza, Arab Marxist Ali Kadri recalls a postulation made by Lenin that “higher debt issuance by imperial powers signals war”. Drawing on Lenin, Kadri explains that “the higher the frequency and amount of credit issued, the more it forces society to be subjected to a higher rate of exploitation to meet future returns”. In a heavily financialised

economy, war is the “big industry of capitalism”. The crux is that Israeli war “adds to accumulation by militarism on a global scale”, and thus tries to save monopoly capitalism characterised by the Marxist law of the “Tendency of the rate of profit to fall”.

In a press release issued on June 20, 2024, the office of the High Commissioner of UN Human Rights quoted certain independent UN experts to officially record that the western financial companies like BlackRock, Vanguard, JP Morgan Chase, Morgan Stanley, Bank of America etc. might be going on profiting from the war on Gaza. This profit has come from their investment in the western arms corporations like Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Caterpillar, ThyssenKrupp, Rolls-Royce Power Systems etc. This proved that the military-industrial complex has leached bloody money from the marauding hunt for profit on the one hand and went on unrolling the war project to intimidate free nations with a view to expand the area of imperialist domination to central Asia, which is the eye of the gas-basin. Both ways war has become all the more essential for the sustenance of the imperialist system. Its Zionist lackey also shares this essentiality. They have become necessary enemies of peace.

This has become a chronic horrendous lethality that stares us in the face, all the more menacingly, due to the intensification of the rabid imperialist hunt for natural resources and fuel, because of the failure of imperialist globalisation and its mantra of neoclassical economics and neo-liberal rule. To escape a catastrophic expansion of the hostilities into a regional war, the world people have to fight against this war project of imperialists and their rabid Zionist lackey for peace; peace that brings freedom and sovereignty to Palestine and begets peace for the world. □



**Tamil Nadu Sugarcane Farmers Demonstrations at Tamil Nadu Sugar Mills**

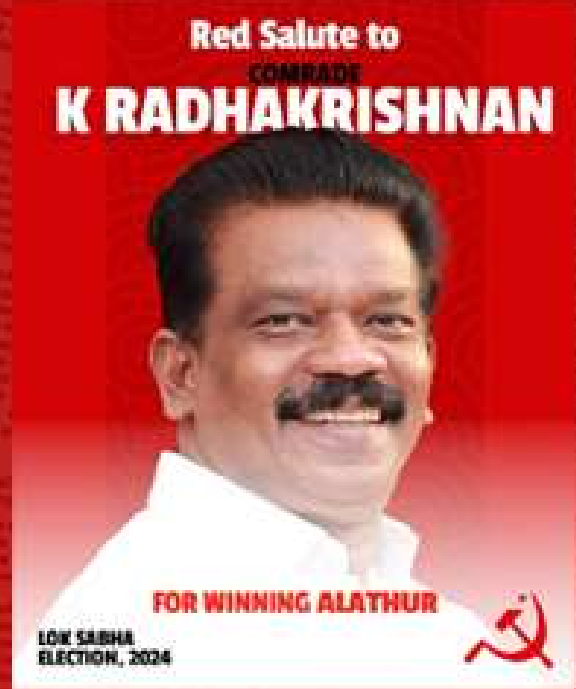
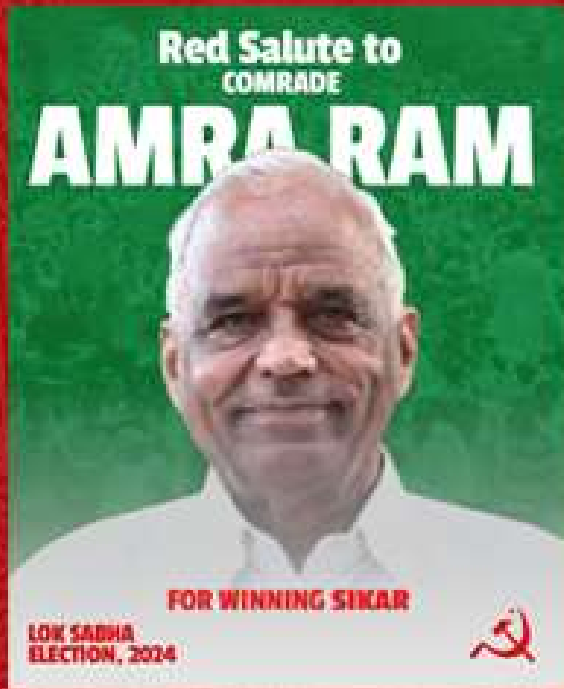


**21 July 2024 - AFFI Public Meeting at Kulgam, J&K**



**26 June 2024 - Jharkhand State Kisan Sabha Demonstrated at Block Irrigation Office**

# CHAMPIONS OF KISANS IN PARLIAMENT



**ALL INDIA KISAN SABHA**

36, PANDIT RAVI SHANKAR LANE, (CANNING LANE), NEW DELHI - 110001

TELE FAX: 011-23782890, E-MAIL: KISANSABHA@GMAILCOM

PRICE - 20/-