

vicious cycle of repression and brutalities and then concoct more lies to justify the brutality, thus criminalising the desires of the masses for liberty, freedom and equality. This conflict management militarily has cost India huge sums of money,

manpower, loss of lives of soldiers who do not count but for oiling the state's propaganda machinery. Besides, such a policy of feeding conflicts murders the basic spirit and inspiration of the Indian Constitution as the state decides to cling

on to troubled territories by butchering its people and bulldozing the very essence of Indian democracy and its cherished values of liberty and equality. Conflicts have to be resolved politically and in a civilised manner.

Bridging the Dalit-Left-Liberal Divide

Language of Recent Student Protests

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Dalit and Adivasi politics, long enslaved by liberal civil society, has found a new voice in the aftermath of Rohith Vemula's suicide and subsequent student protests. The left-liberal establishments will benefit from standing together with this subaltern democracy in resisting the Hindu right-wing forces.

The political significance of Kanhaiya Kumar's passionate address to the students of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) can be deciphered to reveal several interesting phenomena in contemporary Indian politics. It outlined the political desires of the student communities of India. However, these political desires have ramifications beyond the interests of students alone. This was a political manifesto of contemporary social and political challenges faced by Indian society.

New Democratic Agitation

Many experts observe that these protests are reminiscent of the Paris student struggles of 1968. It not only alludes to the 1968 uprising but also follows the revolution in content and essence.

The Paris struggle emerged as the new face of democratic politics when the traditional liberal politics and left counterparts became obsolete by not acknowledging the political desires of people. Many contemporary thinkers also compare it with the French Revolution of 1789, particularly with respect to the new trajectory it opened to reorient the world.

The JNU student protests also call for a new democratic movement across India. We can hear its resonance in Kanhaiya Kumar's proclamation of freedom. Like the Paris student protests, his speech points to slavery of all forms. It includes demands for the freedom of movement for both genders, be it day or night, for

them to love and live together irrespective of caste, religion and gender thereby usurping patriarchy and caste segregation. Another aspect that Kanhaiya Kumar pointed out in his speech is the spontaneity of these protests. Such a spontaneous, powerful and organic coming together was something that student outfits of political parties have rarely witnessed.

Kanhaiya Kumar champions Rohith Vemula, who committed suicide in Hyderabad, as his hero. Though Rohith Vemula's suicide is certainly a personal tragedy, it cannot be ignored as an isolated occurrence. Indeed, it is a political event that represents the desperation of the down-trodden classes in all realms of life. It is evocative of the challenges faced by farmers driven to suicide from incumbent debts that no longer make news headlines, of Dalits and tribals facing extinction due to eviction from their land, daily wage workers living in miserable slums and settlements, urban middle class and the rural poor, and the subaltern classes and castes. Rohith Vemula's suicide is a cry of war against the conservative cultural and political forces that dictate and perpetuate this predicament of Indian society. Therefore, a revolt that adopts Rohith Vemula as its leader must be regarded as a foreshadowing of the new democratic agitation eagerly awaited by India.

Redefining Political Concepts

The JNU student agitations highlight the glaring shifts in the conceptual framework of patriotism and nationalism and the need to redefine them in the context of current politics. The secular and democratic nationalism that has evolved by adopting inclusivity and cultural diversity is not acceptable to the religious nationalist imagination of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). The students are leading a new front in their battle with the RSS by outlining several issues of Indian public life, from

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Dalit-Adivasi minority living conditions to gender equality.

The question is whether the left-liberal political leadership, that has declared solidarity with the movement, will stand by the spontaneous forces of the democracy of the multitude inspired by Rohith Vemula. In other words, will the existing political establishments recognise this new tide in Indian politics and acknowledge the challenges it raises?

Although the answer to this is uncertain, one can say that the future of these political establishments depends on the answer they give themselves.

Global Capitalism and Fascism

Let us examine the premise of this question. The immediate context in which this question emerges is a changed political scenario where there have been structural changes in the formation of the world's political and economic systems.

We have arrived at a new stage which began with the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Bloc. The current form of globalised corporate capitalism is not imperialism in the way Lenin described it, as independent nation states exporting capital. Global capital broke all old boundaries to become a worldwide phenomenon.

Indian politics and economy cannot isolate themselves from this evolution of structural formation of systems. The recent changes we observe in Indian politics are evidences that point to this evolution. RSS, which was a negligible entity in Indian politics, which hid or presented itself when convenient, has not only come to mainstream politics but has also snatched the authority of the government.

This is neither a temporary nor unexpected phenomenon. That is to say, it is not an ideology that surfaced unexpectedly in recent Indian politics. RSS has become the handmaiden of the globalised capitalist empire. The Sangh Parivar is an important part of contemporary Indian political reality where economic forces converge with authoritarian forms of power.

In order to understand this reality, the reciprocal relationship between anti-democratic establishments such as the RSS and the system of global capitalist

empire, which makes the old liberal political theories obsolete, has to be explicated. While on the one side, the global capitalist empire attempts to amalgamate the world in order to engulf both nature and life, on the other it facilitates further segregation and conflict.

Today, several countries of the world are under threat from civil wars and conflicts. These wars are not interludes to peace but a constant state of affairs. Contrary to the past, war is universal and peace has become an exception. The crisis or emergency periods were only intervals when the rights of humans ceased to matter. Today, with the persistent normalisation of conflict, political emergencies are part and parcel of daily life, endless and without respite. Therefore, democracy is essentially ousted from life.

Democratic rights that support the existence of the common man and help sustain life are thus slowly peeled away. The sovereign state's rule is seen to be irrelevant to the functioning of global capital.

Micropolitics of RSS

Organisations like the RSS thrive in this political environment as the perpetrators of political conflicts. What enables this is their fundamentally fascist nature, their micropolitics that can order, contain and frustrate the politically mobilising multitudes. This frustration is evident in the recent struggles for the freedom to express/practise beliefs and eat what one desires during the regime of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Power that lies with the government is decentralised and redistributed amongst the henchmen of the government who thwart people's rights to life. Fascist authoritarians will turn a blind eye towards any breach of democracy for as long as they can sustain this façade of democracy through their puppets. They will give tacit approvals to anti-democratic activities for in the destruction of democracy lies their interest. We saw this fascist indifference in the silence borne by many Sangh Parivar leaders, including Narendra Modi, in response to student agitations in Hyderabad University, JNU and the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII).

The aggressive growth of the RSS and Sangh Parivar outfits in the last couple of decades is due to their mobilisation of the marginalised sections of society. The left and the liberal political establishments failed to formulate a formidable resistance to this move. Instead their resistance was often superficial which could not intercept the micropolitics of the RSS.

Rising Subaltern Force

However, this does not mean that the Indian masses have completely surrendered to fascism. A new politics is developing in India, a politics that attempts to rise to a new level. Indian democracy is a biopolitical force that eludes the definitive explanations of Western mainstream political theories. Political theoreticians were baffled by the coexistence of numerous cultures and languages in this geographic space.

Its success as a nation is not because of its liberal framework but due to the force of the numerous struggles waged by farmers, villagers and the poor for their freedom. These forces have challenged assumptions and predictions of political experts, politicians and the media on many occasions to deviate the course of Indian politics. However, it still remains as a subaltern force that has not been able to establish hegemony, a force that is subject to domination by mainstream politics.

What we will see in the coming age of Indian politics is the mutation and maturation of this subaltern force. In contemporary politics, one can discern the weakening of the national capitalist regime and its civil and democratic politics crumble under the globalised capitalist empire. This post-civil society context gives rise to the political environment in which the progressive forces of subaltern democracy can form and transform themselves.

Dalit Politics—A New Direction

The student protests from Hyderabad and Delhi send a strong statement from the downtrodden minority to India's contemporary politics. Indian universities that have been producing elite westernised intellectuals are now resounding

with the cries of the millions living in our forests and villages through the voice of Rohith Vemula. It also marks a new direction in Indian Dalit politics. Dalit identity politics was so far enslaved by the politics of civil society; Dalits and the Adivasis were confined to the limitations of the civil rights proffered by the state.

It needs to be seen whether the left-liberal political establishments can carry forth the revolutionary spark lit by the students to sustain the new democratic footsteps. When the politics of the 21st century is undergoing structural transformations of the kind I have elaborated above, the left-liberal establishments

will benefit from standing together with the subaltern democracy of the multitudes in its resistance of the RSS. This will become the highlight of the multitudinous awakening of people of India against the RSS and the politics that they will uphold to deliver liberation from age-old oppressions and exploitations.

IMF's Autocritique of Neo-liberalism?

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In a recent article published in *Finance and Development*, an International Monetary Fund magazine, three economists have critically evaluated the policies the IMF promotes. They acknowledge evidence that suggests that economic growth under neo-liberalism is difficult to sustain, that it leads to an increase in inequality, and that continuing inequality is harmful for sustainable (or continuing) growth.

A group of three economists in the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) research department have written a joint paper criticising some key aspects of IMF's creed of neo-liberalism. Since it is only "some" aspects that are criticised, it may be more appropriate to call it semi-autocritique. However, the significance of this even less than full-fledged criticism cannot be overstated. It is as significant as it would be if one day, a group of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh ideologues were to write in *Organiser* that some aspects of Hindutva politics are harmful for the Hindus, or a group of Chinese Communist Party leaders were to write in *People's Daily* that some aspects of the party's programme had harmed the cause of communism.

The paper titled "Neoliberalism: Oversold?" by Jonathan Ostry, Prakash Loungani and Davide Furceri in the June 2016 issue of IMF's official magazine *Finance and Development* brings out for the first time the flavour of the internal debates raging at the IMF, and builds upon many well-known criticisms of IMF's policy paradigms of market fundamentalism that advocates privatisation, deregulation, market liberalisation, and austerity policies.

The acceptance and use of the word "neo-liberalism" by IMF economists is remarkable in itself. The word has been used pejoratively mainly by left-wing critics of the IMF's and World Bank's policy paradigm known as the "Washington Consensus" (so named because both

organisations are based in Washington and share the ideological framework of free-market capitalism). It proves the point that if a criticism is robust and is carried on consistently, it may be brushed aside as uncomfortable in the beginning but it tends to have a lasting impact in the long run. The authors of the paper in subtitled it as "oversold" seem to be aiming at suggesting that not everything in the IMF policy package is wrong. The abstract of the paper sums up their intent of criticising the overselling of the IMF policy package by referring to only "some" aspects of neo-liberalism: "Instead of delivering growth, some neo-liberal policies have increased inequality, in turn, jeopardising durable expansion" (Ostry et al 2016: 1).

The paper praises the role of increased international trade in reducing poverty and that of increased foreign direct investment in increasing competition and efficiency. The paper then focuses on criticism of neo-liberal agenda on three aspects. One, that the evidence from a broad range of countries suggests that the claim that neo-liberalism always contributes to economic growth is difficult to sustain; two, that even if growth takes place in some countries, it leads to increase in inequality; and third, that continuing inequality is harmful for sustainable (or more appropriately continuing) growth. All these three self-criticisms from the horse's mouth, so to say, deal a severe blow to the apologists of the neo-liberal agenda.

On the face of it, it might seem like a contradiction that if one aspect of the neo-liberal policy framework, namely, increased international trade, reduces poverty, how can another aspect, namely of economic growth, lead to increase in inequality? The confusion over this apparent contradiction—reduction in

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