

AIDWA



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Editorial Communication

About a Mosque

But how would you remove this mosque?

In our dreams it shall come back like a dead child and ask:

Dad, where does all that blood come from?

There are layers of land under this land

Layers of emotion obliterated with time

Dig through

And you will find roots like fingers

Embracing the murderous shovel:

Brother, you would kill me?

Why would you kill me, brother?

Look, we do not need to remove the mosque;

Better that we go on exile—all of us--

Leaving this twin city uninhabited

Burnt earth, dwelling houses bereft of memory—

That is the kingdom we leave behind!

The darkness swoons with heavy smell of

Burnt incense—

The four hundred year-old fool

Falling riddled with bullets again

Cries out in agony: Hai Ram!

No, no more can this mosque be removed!

Dear comrades, friends and well-wishers,

The above poem, translated from Bengali, was read at a memorial meeting for Safdar Hashmi organised by Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust in Delhi just a year after his death. The Babri Masjid was still standing in its place at that time, but howls demanding its demolition so that a temple for Rama might be built on the same site were already growing in strength. That phase seems to have now come full cycle with the Prime Minister of India himself having betrayed his oath to the nation as Prime Minister triumphantly to lay the foundation stone for the promised temple. Yet I think the poor poem had a grain of truth in it. That mosque is not for removing! It is a living presence for us not as the religious structure it happened to be, but as the emblem of all that has been betrayed, our Freedom Struggle and the Constitution that emerged out of it.

It is time for us to say: No Pasaran! We shall not allow this barbarism to pass! We have been with struggles waged by the trade unions. We have rallied together with the People's Science Movement. On 28 August we have joined with like-minded women's organisations all over the country to demand freedom from this atrocious rule of fear and oppression. But this is just the beginning. We shall still surely see the women of India rising to be in the forefront of what might well be our second Freedom Struggle. We want our newsletter to be a fit weapon in their hands.

Malini Bhattacharya, President, All India Democratic Women's Association

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Let Us Fight for a Just, Secular and Democratic India!

-Mariam Dhawale, General Secretary, AIDWA

We have just completed 73 years of our independence on August 15, 2020. Majority of our population is born after independence with 65 per cent being less than 35 years of age. We have grown up in an India that is secular and democratic. The Indian Constitution gives us our identity as Indian citizens irrespective of caste, community, religion and gender. Our freedom fighters fought for independence with dreams of building a democratic and secular nation. Our martyrs like Bhagat Singh and others gave up their lives for a nation committed to socialism. The revolutionaries in the freedom struggle dreamt of a nation free from exploitation and poverty.

The stark reality of these dreams being crushed to the ground was revealed as never before during this Covid pandemic and lockdowns and the insensitive manner in which the arrogant BJP-RSS government handled it.



Miseries compounding

Even after six months of the first lockdown, people are grappling with incessant miseries of their daily lives. Food intake in rural areas has decreased. A hunger pandemic stares at the face of the poor. It is universally known that in situations of lack of food, it is women who will be at the receiving end, being the last to eat.

Has this scarcity of food been taken up seriously by the government? No. The poor are left to their fate. We are the largest producer of milk and the second largest producer of rice and wheat. Yet India's position is at 102 out of 117 countries in the Global Hunger Index. We have the largest number of hungry people in the world.

Joblessness of migrant labour who returned to their villages has forced lakhs of them to re-return to the cities in search of work in spite of the dangers of the pandemic. As some migrant women workers pointed out, 'We will die anyway, if we continue to stay in the villages, it will be hunger that will kill us'. The tall claims of the government withstanding, crores of Indians are unemployed and there is no surety of getting work in the near future. This will force women in the worst situations with increasing trafficking and child marriages.

The terrible weaknesses in the public health system and the troubles and tensions that ordinary citizens have to suffer during this pandemic are now well documented. The horrifying incidents of women giving birth outside hospitals, the image of a child trying to wake up his dead mother will torment us for a long time. The ruling regime has not provided even basic health facilities to our citizens with India spending less than 1 per cent of the GDP on health. More people die of dysentery and malaria in India than anywhere in the world. More than a crore children less than 5 years old succumb to preventable diseases like pneumonia and diarrhoea every year. Almost 50 per cent of teenage Indian girls are underweight and 52 per cent are anaemic.

Women's health needs a lot more attention, especially in rural areas, where basic facilities are absent. Menstruation continues to be a major taboo and many women still have no access to sanitary products. About 46 per cent of women do not use hygienic methods of menstrual protection and about 39 per cent of women still defecate in the open. Menstruation and lack of toilets keep many young girls away from schools.

Challenges Ahead

What is in store for the youth of our country who form the majority of our population? Young women want freedom to be able to lead a life of their choice and rise above restrictive stereotypes. Freedom to study, learn new things, to choose a career, freedom to choose their own life partner or not get married at

all. Freedom to be able to walk in the streets without being harrassed. Freedom from violence. Freedom to speak up and not be afraid.

According to Census 2011, the literacy rate of women is 64.46 per cent while male literacy is 82.14 per cent. The literacy rate of women from the SC, ST and minority communities is even less. Doors of higher education are still closed to most.

Women have been continuously told they should be “docile and gentle” and fit into societal norms. Many are not allowed to even take a decision about how to spend the money that they earn. The capitalist, patriarchal system ensures that women are always overshadowed and controlled. Women bear the responsibility of the family but have limited right to speak and be heard. The judgmental patriarchal society forces women to conform. Women are still confronting issues of lack of safety and mobility, financial dependence, unequal pay, and bias.

Over 51 per cent of work done by women is unpaid and is not counted in the nation’s GDP. India ranked 121 out of 131 countries in Female Labour Force Participation (FLFP), according to a World Bank report. This data suggested that India lost between \$1.4 trillion and \$2.8 trillion in GDP in 2018 due to lower female participation in the workforce. But women run the households and get pushed into the insecure, unprotected work in the unorganized sectors, thereby increasing their exploitation. According to the 'Progress of the World's Women 2019-2020' report by the United Nations Women, an estimated 4.5% of all Indian households – 1.3 crore - are run by single mothers.

Women are not safe in their homes, workplaces or on the roads. Girl children are not safe in educational institutions, ashram schools or hostels. Shelter homes have become infamous for sexual atrocities on the already traumatized victims admitted there. The horrific instances of atrocities against women and girl children in various states expose the failure of the state governments and police in curbing crimes. Cybercrimes and trolling are the latest form of abuse that women face.

Fight for a just, secular and democratic India

The disparities and inequalities have multiplied during the era of liberalization. The richest 1 per cent in India own 58.4 per cent of the country’s wealth, the richest 10 per cent own an astounding 80.7 per cent. The bottom 10 per cent of our nation own 0.2 per cent. Mind-boggling concentration of wealth accompanies



the massive pauperization of vast masses of the people. We have the world's largest abject poor, the majority of them being women without any property in their name.

We are at the threshold where all Indians, especially women have a lot at stake. Attempts to change our secular, democratic republic into a Hindu Rashtra by the ruling BJP-RSS combine is a dangerous portent. The attempts to replace our Constitution by the Manusmriti must be resisted. We have to stand in defence of Dalits and depressed castes who are more vulnerable with caste atrocities increasing. The Modi government's use of religion and hate politics to polarize the citizens must be unitedly opposed.

A Hindu Rashtra is based on hierarchies and exclusion. It strengthens upper caste hegemony and patriarchy. As Babasaheb Ambedkar stated, "If Hindu Raj does become a fact, it will no doubt be the greatest calamity for this country", and warned that "It (Hindu Raj) is incompatible with democracy".

Let us unitedly resolve to never allow 'Manu-vaad' to rule the roost in India!

A Year under Forcible 'Lockdown': Women in Kashmir

-Subhashini Ali, Vice-President, AIDWA

On the 5th of August, 2019, the BJP Govt. dealt a tremendous blow to democracy in our country. It used its brute majority in the Parliament to strike at the rights of the citizens of Jammu & Kashmir by doing away with Article 370 and dividing the State into two Union territories – Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. No attempt was made to give the people of the region an opportunity to voice their opinion on these vital issues. On the contrary, not only were they subjected to the most humiliating and violent attacks on their fundamental rights, but they were gagged by the imposition of Sec. 144 and curfew, by their phone and internet connections being cut off, gagged by barbed wire, guns and tanks that blocked their efforts to raise their voices in protest. All the important political leaders of the State were arrested and, in a few days, more than 4,000 people were in jail. The jails in the State were overflowing and arrested persons were sent to jails in far-off Uttar Pradesh and other States.



A year has passed. The Modi Government has had time enough to fulfil the promises it made to the people of J&K and the rest of the country on the 5th of August to justify the authoritarian and communal attacks that were carried out on that day.

A promise was made that gender justice and social equality would now be ensured; that economic development would take place at a tremendous speed; that terrorism and militancy would be completely wiped out and peace restored in this land of natural beauty and cultural diversity; that once Article 370, the root cause of alienation and separatism had been done away with, the region would become part of the national mainstream. It had been proclaimed that women would no longer have to forego their property rights if they married outside the state. Even apart from the fact that this last right was won by Kashmiri women years ago quite contrary to BJP propaganda, the promise of gender justice in general has proved to be the most hollow of all. Moreover, nothing has been done to resettle Kashmiri Pandits in the Valley and their families too, including women and children, are still living in camps.

Kashmiri women have suffered untold misery during the decades of conflict and violence. Hunger, deprivation and the never-ending loss of loved ones have robbed them of both health and happiness. After the 5th of August new troubles were added to the festering old ones. One of the first steps taken by the new dispensation was to abolish the State Women's Commission on the plea that it had been constituted under a legal framework that no longer existed. In that case, why did the new legal framework that replaced the old one – the legal framework that exists in the whole country now – not constitute a new Commission? Advocate Vasundhara Masudi Pathak, the erstwhile Chairperson of the Commission, has said that after the abolition of the State Women's Commission, she is being approached night and day by women in distress. This was not the case when the Commission was functioning. According to her, not only are women threatened, harassed and subjected to abuse outside their homes where they have to confront security forces at every step, but they are at the complete mercy of violent members of their own families being largely confined to their homes. There is only one Women's police station in the Valley. Police personnel are not trained to deal with their problems and react only if women have been badly injured. Going to the hospital was extremely difficult during the earlier lockdown and, during the Corona Pandemic most OPDs have been closed down. There is not a single shelter home available to them and courts are completely inaccessible.

Apart from the violence that they themselves endure, they have to bear witness to the brutality and violence that the State unleashes on their children and their family members. It has been accepted before the Supreme Court that children have been arrested in Kashmir. It is horrifying that the response of the judges

hearing the matter was that this was not something to worry about because they were only being kept confined for a few hours and that this was being done to help them because of the insecurity of the situation.



Many of the sons and family members of the women have been sent to jails in other States. These are poor women having to struggle to find money for the travel. Often, on reaching those far off jails they are told to speak in Hindi to their loved one, but being poor and poorly educated, knowing no language other than Kashmiri, they have to return without having exchanged a word.

Many are even less fortunate and are compelled to witness the deaths of their family members in 'encounters' or in crossfire. As a result, women, even more than men in similar situations, are succumbing in increasing numbers to stress and depression. As doctors point out 'Conflict can add to all three factors [poverty, gender inequality and domestic violence] which in turn can add to depression'. 'Even men vent the stress generated through conflict situations on women back home. It takes a further mental toll on women.'

While from 5th August, telephone lines and internet connections were cut off in the Valley so that no screams of help could be heard, in Jammu and Ladakh too, communication systems were highly erratic. After sometime, landline phone connections were partially restored, but internet connections remained largely unavailable to the public for the next six months. The nearest internet connectivity was in Ladakh, 500 kms away. There are instances of people who made more than one trip to send and receive an urgent message. After 11th

November, the train to Banihal, the nearest point in Jammu, 70 miles away, was re-started. It left Srinagar every morning at 8.15 when it was bitterly cold and dark with mist and fog. Crowds surged at the platform every morning and the compartments were packed with many left standing. The same thing occurred when the train returned to Srinagar late in the evening. There is a report about a young woman who travelled twice in two days just to register for her medical entrance examination. When her form was finally accepted by the computer, she broke down, weeping.

After six long months, internet connection was restored but only with 2G. The Government claims that 4G will encourage conversations between terrorists and their handlers abroad. The absurdity of the argument makes the harsh reality even more difficult to accept. Businesses have come to an end because connections with buyers have snapped; certificates cannot be accessed in time; doctors cannot consult with specialists and are forced to watch their patients die; successful performers, consultants, musicians have been forced into bankruptcy.

Immediately after 5th August, schools and educational institutions were closed down. After weeks, when they re-opened, neither students nor teachers could reach them. There was no transport available, the streets were dangerous. In the absence of internet, no digital classes could be held or accessed. Even after restoration, internet connection is so disturbed that even those fortunate enough to own smartphones and laptops are still not able to attend classes and the teachers who are supposed to upload lessons and videos are unable to do this. As a result, not only are there no classes but there is no hope either, only rage and despair. Lack of access to education is creating severe psychological problems for many young students who are becoming prone to both aggression and depression. The likelihood of drop-outs is high, especially among girls.

With economic loss of more than 40,000 crore rupees, business and industry are floundering, the fruit industry has suffered terribly and tourism is at a standstill. As a result, unemployment has increased. With the passage of the Domicile Laws which give access to citizenship to different categories of people from outside and with the ending of the special citizenship rights which gave the people of the area exclusive rights to ownership of property and Government jobs, there is a growing fear that poverty and unemployment among the local population will increase by leaps and bounds. Recruitment procedures to banks and Government jobs that had almost been completed before 5th August, 2019 have been stalled. It seems likely that those recruited next time around will include many from outside the region.

The experience of the last year has proved that it was not the existence of Article 370 that had spawned militancy and separatism. After removal of the Article,

militant activity and militant attacks have increased. 'A fact sheet from the Home Ministry shows that in the first seven months of this year, 90 locals have joined various terror groups...What is causing further concern is that the numbers might be more than expected'. Earlier, security forces were informed by the family or neighbours or even social media posts if a young man went missing and joined the terrorists. 'But now no posts are going online nor are families coming forward,' said a senior officer in charge of operations.

More than 90% of those who are being killed in encounter as terrorists are Kashmiri locals. Officials have said... 'Anger is palpable in Kashmir Valley. That is why no matter how many terrorists are killed, their number doesn't come down'. A North Block official said. 'Youth related activities have come to a halt due to Covid. Schools and colleges are closed'. 'Destroyed internet connectivity and lack of recreation have led to lot of bitterness,' said another officer, adding that scarce employment opportunities are adding to the resentment.

A year of betrayal has gone by, a year of broken promises has passed, bringing many of us this realization that democracy and citizenship rights are indivisible. An attack on some will, sooner or later, develop into an attack on all.

Why Women Should Oppose the National Education Policy, 2020

-Archana Prasad, Member, CEC, AIDWA

The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 was released by the Union Government on 29 July 2020. It was hailed by the Union Government, led by the Prime Minister, as a game-changer that would result in the transformation of the social structure of the country. Statements like: the New Education Policy will be the foundation of New India-- were repeatedly made by PM Modi and his MHRD minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'. We need to ask why the leading lights of the government are promoting the NEP, 2020 with such an aggressive political campaign.



If we take a close look at the NEP three things become very clear: First, it promotes privatization of education in a manner that will lead to severe exclusion of women from the 'formal' education system. Second, its thrust on the communalization of education through the emphasis on a 'classical' and majoritarian culture will reinforce patriarchal social conservatism and will go against the goal of achieving women's emancipation. Third, the steps advocated by the NEP will push women and other socio-economically disadvantaged

groups into second rate inferior education. Thus, even though the NEP makes a nominal claim towards achieving equality, it substantially dilutes the constitutional commitment to education for all. These three underlying tendencies are evident in changes proposed in every sphere of education: early childhood care, school education and higher education.

Legal changes to globalize and privatize education were mooted, and also resisted, in the pre-NDA era. The marketization of education has been engineered through abysmal public funding of education with educational expenditure of both Union and State governments being about 4.43% of the GDP in 2017-2018. The NEP proposes to increase this to 6% at the earliest; however, several studies of the data show that this expenditure is largely made by the State governments, whose control over the educational system is going to weaken through this NEP. Mobilization of increased resources through 'private and philanthropic funding', is, in spirit, against the very notion of expanding government expenditure, and is likely to make education hostage to several ideologically motivated instruments and institutions. The creation of a Gender Inclusion Fund, when seen in this context, will also be based on the capacity of the government to mobilise 'philanthropic and private' funding and be open to the same hazards.

The first important indicator of patriarchal designs going side by side with the privatization of education is that the NEP hardly promotes liberal and progressive values which are compatible with the project of women's emancipation. Rather its focus is on promoting Indian 'tradition' through special emphasis on Sanskrit (through its language formula) and ancient India. At the same time, the only trace of 'modernity' that is evident in it is the promotion of technology-based and digital learning. In fact, use of technology is equated with 'modernity' and the policy has very little mention of modern values and 'scientific temper' that should be inculcated through education. A close look shows us that the use of modern techniques and platforms is only advocated to increase the functional efficiency of education and not to develop a 'scientific temper' which is necessary to resist patriarchy. In this sense this policy has reversed and diluted the goals of the previous policies and set the clock backwards.

Such a tendency is also at the core of the RSS's project to 'Indianise, Nationalise and Spiritualise' education. Thus, basis of the RSS's penetration into the mainstream educational structure is subtly laid down in the NEP in the name of a

'light but tight' regulatory structure. *It is in fact proposing to dilute all constitutional guarantees available to citizens at present in at least two ways:*

1. It dilutes the constitutional commitments under the Right to Education Act through a new regulatory mechanism which will reduce the 'restrictive criteria' for recognizing schools, especially in terms of infrastructure. Both these measures will increase the penetration of Vidya Bharti (an RSS affiliate) run schools which already have close to about 11353 informal educational institutions and 12898 formal institutions with 3.5 million students. In addition, 17000 pre-schools like Saraswati Shishu Mandirs to induct small children into their Hindutva agenda will gain ground over public institutions.
2. Instead of ensuring constitutional guarantees for children and students from historically oppressed sections, NEP creates a new omnibus category of socio-economic disadvantaged groups (SEDG) including "gender identities" (women, transgenders), "social identities" (SC,ST, OBC Minorities), and 'geographical identities" (a category which is very vaguely defined (such as students from aspirational districts) and "disabilities", and others like migrants, urban poor etc. The exclusion and inequity that SEDGs face is only amplified for women; the policy maintains a telling silence on the question of reservations and scholarships for special categories undercutting the issue of their inclusion in the mainstream. Further, the emphasis on expanding Open Distance Learning is likely to push many SEDGs and the most disadvantaged women out of the 'formal' education system.

Let us now turn to the central structural changes which will lead to the exclusion of women and deprive them of affordable quality education:

1. *Early Childhood Care Education:* The NEP makes a fundamental change by including Early Childhood Care Education a part of the overall school structure. While this may appear as a welcome development, it will lead to the weakening, rather than strengthening of the Anganwadi programme for neighbourhood child care and nutrition to make it more inaccessible to working class women. Further, there is no mention of the rights of the current Anganwadi and midday meal worker and their regularization. It is likely that the existing cadre of these will be completely disregarded through further professionalizing the service and separating ECCE from nutrition and childcare.
2. *School Education:* The NEP sets up a structure of school education which will dilute quality of educational content through the system of self-accreditation. This is very akin to the self-declaration by corporates that

they will not harm the environment under the Environmental Impact Assessment. Similarly, now school owners can declare their premises as fit to be designated as a 'school', even if they are only small one room shops. This dilution of the requirements of the RTE Act, according to the NEP takes account of the prevailing social reality where many schools have multi grade classrooms and limited infrastructure. It is said that this will increase the number of schools and provide more access to girl children and children in inaccessible regions. This means that the focus of the NEP is more on 'access' and less on making common standards to provide good quality of education. Hence, equality is not substantive equality, i.e. it is not necessary to have adequate 'inputs' for infrastructure and a curriculum that inculcates constitutional values, equality between religions, sexes etc. Such dilution of standards in terms of content and physical infrastructure will downgrade the existing public education system and reduce its anti-patriarchal potential. *Further there is no capping and regulation of the fee, and thereby no guarantee that cheap and affordable public education is going to be provided.*

3. *Higher Education:* In higher education, the NEP has proposed 4+1 structure; i.e. a 4-year undergraduate and a 1-year Masters programme with multiple exit points which will dilute the Master's course and together with the semester system create a class of elite academics; students from SEDGs, many of whom will be unable to complete the course because of socio-economic reasons, will have to be satisfied with lesser degrees. The multiple exit strategy appears to be a way of hiding the existing problems in the system rather than finding genuine solutions to address the problem of dropouts from higher education. Instead of proving their commitment to facilitate a good university education to all citizens, and especially those who come from deprived families, the State is proceeding to dilute the norms and content; there is a show of greater access, but in substance it is highly exclusionary. It is obvious that because of son-preference and other forms of social discrimination most women students will always get second class education and instead of completing the whole course, will have to remain satisfied with 'diplomas' etc. of little value.
4. *Research:* One of the most dangerous proposals in higher education is the setting up of the National Research Foundation. This centralized fund will prioritize research through 'national priorities' thereby increasing government intervention in research. There is no mention of whether the concerns of women and other historically oppressed sections will be given any priority in this agenda.

5. *Representation of women in committees:* in the proposed structures and committees, there is no provision for mandatory representation of women and SC/ST and other disadvantaged sections of the society.

To sum up, NEP 2020 pushes for a framework that has social conservatism and market fundamentalism as its main pillars and which will turn the clock of the public education system backwards, instead of democratizing and strengthening it at all levels. There is an urgent need to intensify the struggle for a common school system and expansion of public infrastructure for higher and school education. It is imperative that AIDWA plays a lead role in sensitizing women and their families about the dangerous implications of the NEP, 2020. A mass citizen's campaign is a must to prevent the implementation of the policy, whose main aim is to hand over public education to the Sangh Parivar and its corporate friends.

We mourn the victims of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States of America on 6th and 9th August, 1945 and reiterate our pledge to a world free of wars.

Let There be No Mistake

-Manjeet Manvi, Member, CEC, AIDWA



A flash of blinding light and swirling smoke
On the doomed days of World War in August
A giant cloud of burning fire and lost hope
The cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki engulfed—

Its people, its land, its dreams, its little children
In the blink of an eye all turned into dust
Such brutal dance of “Little Boy” and “Fat Man”
Never before the sea of humanity had witnessed

For years long after, the children of survivors bemoan
The arrogance, the blind trail of force
The black rain of radiation that still sends shivers
The hazards that dig in the bones

Let there be no mistake that
the rain of ruin from the air
And the fire of imperialist damnation
Shall disfigure every colour and fragrance
That shines through the brittle hopes of young and old

Let there be no mistake that
the rain of ruin from the air
And the fire of imperialist damnation
Shall disfigure every colour and fragrance
That shines through the brittle hopes of young and old

For the hulk of imperialism spares none
And sooner or later demolishes all bloom
Be it human lives or the cherished aspirations
And spreads on earth the pall of gloom

Since the claws of capital dig deeper
Into the veins of labour to satiate its hunger
Since jingoism now returns with all its glory
Let us come together and call in unison

Down with imperialist designs and deceit
We are for inclusion, sunshine, and peace
We denounce all armaments in the name of power
We want human life to thrive and prosper

Let there be freedom from violence and hunger
Let the ray of hope ignite every splinter
Let every child fly on beaming wings of fancy
Let's build a world sans hatred and fear!

Beware, You Are in Uttar Pradesh

-Madhu Garg, Member, CEC, AIDWA

Uttar Pradesh is today widely discussed in the whole country, not for any positive achievements, but for increase of gruesome incidents of violence against minor girls, women, Dalits and minorities.

This BJP government assumed office in the state in the year 2017 with the promise of improving the law and order situation in the state. However, after becoming Chief Minister, Yogi Adityanath announced a policy of 'ENCOUNTERS' with the watchword of 'ठोक दो'. Under this policy of 'ठोक दो', a large number of mostly innocent people belonging to minorities, Dalits and OBCs became victims of police encounters.



In the same way, in the name of women's safety, UP administration formed 'Anti-Romeo Squads' to prevent eve-teasing. However, instead of checking eve-teasing, this experiment resulted into harassment of innocent couples and others. Actually, the mentality of the administration is such that they cannot differentiate between eve-teasing and genuine relationships.

Some of the institutions, such as '181 Women Help Line', '1090 Help Line' etc. constituted by the earlier government to provide security to women, have been discontinued or made inactive by the Yogi government.

Kidnappings, rapes and murders have become the order of the day. Even Supreme Court has characterized Uttar Pradesh as a state of 'Jungle Raj'. The NCRB 'Crime in India' report for 2018 shows a shocking increase of 20% in crimes against women between 2016 to 2018 in Uttar Pradesh. NCRB has marked Uttar Pradesh as the most unsafe state for women. Further, NCRB 2018 noted that 11,924 cases of crimes against SCs were registered in Uttar Pradesh – as compared to 10,426 during the year 2017 with an increase of about 14%, putting it at the head of other states. The incident of a Dalit person named 'Satymev Jayate', who was Gram Pradhan of a village in Azamgarh district, being shot dead by Thakurs for the simple reason that he refused to obey their bidding regarding MNREGA scheme, is a stark example of the plight of such people.

But the chief minister keeps boasting about the drastic decline in crime figures and claiming that number of rape cases has come down significantly in comparison with the year 2019. However, the claim that from January to 31st July, 2020 only 1216 rape cases have been registered in the state is a jugglery of statistics because this period includes 65 days of complete lockdown due to Corona Pandemic.

Some incidents of violence against women during the months of July and August, 2020, expose the claims of the Yogi Government :-

1. In the month of July, a rape accused on bail in the district of Etah killed the rape victim and her mother by crushing them under a tractor.
2. During the same month, due to police inaction, a mother and a daughter from Amethi attempted to immolate themselves in front of the UP Vidhan Sabha in Lucknow. The mother died of burn injuries.
3. Another gruesome crime occurred in Hapur district; a six year-old girl was kidnapped from her very doorsteps by a motorcycle-borne person. She was raped and found unconscious in a jungle with grievous injuries.
4. Three girls in Jalaun were taken to the police station on alleged charge of theft and tortured by male cops for eight hours. When they were released, one of the girls felt so humiliated that she committed suicide.
5. In Lakhimpur Kheri, a thirteen year old girl was gang-raped and then strangulated and murdered.

6. A minor girl was kidnapped and raped in Gorakhpur. She was subjected to burns by cigarette butts.
7. In Bhadohi, a woman was murdered after rape. Later on acid was poured to disfigure the body to conceal her identity.

The question is; why is it that such heinous crimes take place in Uttar Pradesh? Why is it that the criminals roam about freely and are so fearless? A possible explanation is that there is close nexus between the criminals, police administration and politicians. In a state where, in the absence of on-going traditions of social reform movements, backward and feudal mentality prevails, the vesting of political power in the hands of those professing aggressive 'Manuvaad' leads to aggravation of oppression on women and Dalits. The ideology of ruling political class permeates into the civil / police administration and society at large.

As far as police are concerned, they are carrying out unconstitutional and illegal instructions of their political masters instead of performing their duty towards common people. Recovery notices have been issued to the activists of CAA/NRC movement, who have been charged with arson and murder, but are yet to be proved guilty of the same.

The Muslim community is being particularly targeted since Yogi assumed power. He does not allow a single opportunity to go for pouring scorn on the community, whether it is the issue of 'love jihad', opening of meat shops, or celebration of Id. In such a situation, it is very natural for the Muslim community to be extremely apprehensive. In a polarized atmosphere, attacks on the community have increased on the one hand, and on the other, no redressal mechanism is in place.

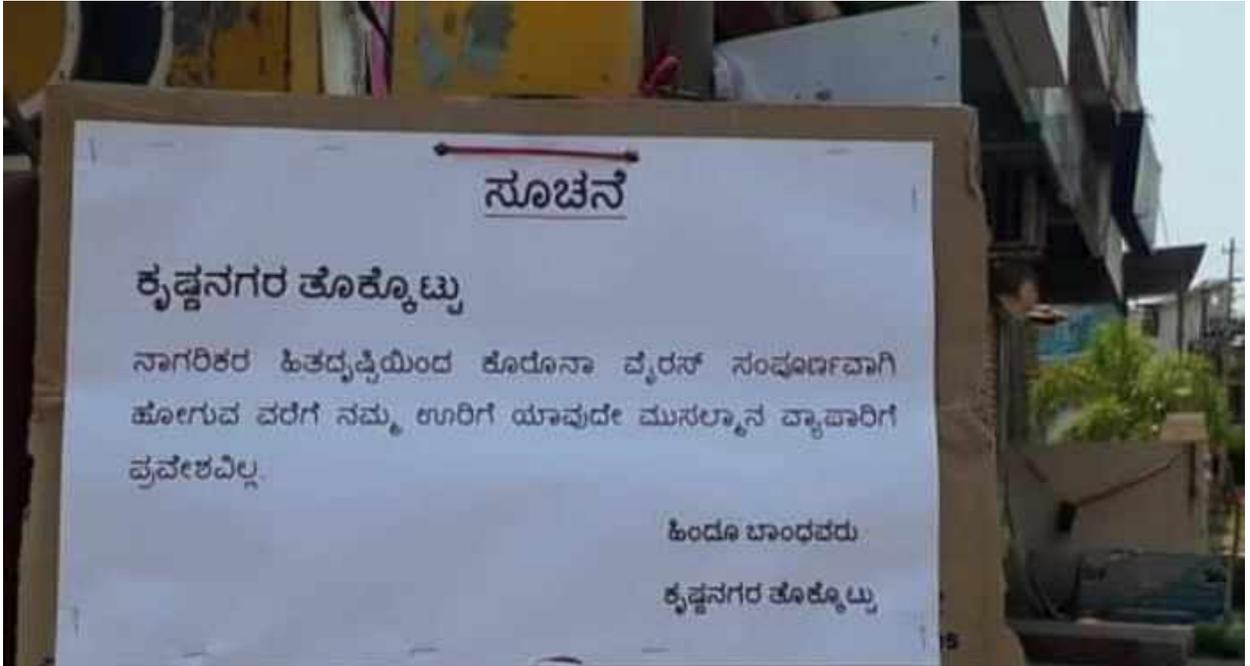
Despite tall claims of improvement in law and order situation, the reality is that common citizens of the state, especially women, Dalits and Muslims have been living under threats and attacks. This is the challenge that AIDWA faces in UP, where it can rightfully be said " डरिये कि आप उत्तर प्रदेश में हैं".

Human Feelings Locked Down: Experiences from Karnataka

-Vimla Kalagar, Karnataka State Vice-President, AIDWA

Many countries in the world announced lockdown to contain the virus spread during the Covid-19 Pandemic and expected their citizens to stay home and stay safe. It was announced in India without preparations and without any consideration for those living on daily earnings even when they were the worst hit by the situation. In any adversity, women's woes are enhanced in special ways and these times were no exception.

In Karnataka, there are many migrant workers from other states. These include Hindus, Muslims, people from scheduled castes and tribes, women, small children and young boys. These working people who build the nation cannot be differentiated on caste or religious line in the time of their dire distress when they are far away from their homes and have lost their earnings. We have heard of the migrant woman labourer who walked the distance of 300 kms and before reaching the destination collapsed and died. But even in this situation, the government in Karnataka and the RSS forces behind it are indulging in spreading communal bias.



A poster banning the entry of Muslims.

I am giving you an instance of how this is being done. When I come out of my kitchen in the morning to buy vegetables from the vendor, even before I can reach the gate, I am shocked to hear him calling out: 'Madam...I have bought these from the Hindu merchant, we do not get anything from those Muslims any more. You can take these without fear'. My *sabziwala* has never seemed to me to be a RSS convert and I feel I have to listen to him to understand what he meant. On being asked to explain himself, he naively replies: 'Madam, it is being said that some people called the 'tabli muslims' are purposely spreading this virus. Yesterday they were showing it on Kannada TV channels.' I explained to him that just because some men who attended the *Tabligi Jamat* religious convention later tested positive, that does not mean that Muslims have to be blamed and banned for it.

But my vendor's problem is that many of my neighbours who have also watched the TV channels would want to know from which source he has got his vegetables and since he has to sell his vegetables to feed his wife and children, he has to advertise that his ware is 'purely Hindu'. This may be the situation everywhere. As evident from his words, it is the media channels, penetrated by RSS forces, which are creating these virulent myths and stories for the consumption of common people and having no other more authentic source of news, the latter are getting influenced by the well-planned campaign against minorities. Communal tension and even communal outbreaks are on the rise because of such campaigns.

In some places in Bengaluru and elsewhere, some areas where individual returnees from the Delhi *Tabligi* convention had been identified with Covid-positive cases, were declared as containment zones. This is only according to rules. But when an area is sealed down, it is the responsibility of the administration to provide basic necessities. Unfortunately, even here the communal mind-set of the administration came in the way. Daily requirements were not supplied, even milk to the infants was not available, ailing patients were in great distress. Would-be mothers became panicky, aged women could not get proper medicines and other requirements. Instead of providing an adequate supply of basic needs and reassuring the people, the administration also played to the tune of the *Sanghis*. Together with the virulent media campaign, it was such provocations which recently led to some youth going on a rampage and committing acts of vandalism. This provided a handle for the administration to retaliate and women in these families had to bear the brunt of it.

Even after the lifting of restrictions, when women from these areas go to the market to buy household necessities, they are identified by their attire and asked to go away. What else can we expect when marking out anti-CAA protesters, no less a person than the Prime Minister of the country makes the frivolous and biased comment that 'clothes reveal the identity of a person'? This is one side of the story. On the other side during the Ramzan festival, some women who went to buy clothes for children were chased out by men of their own community, because they went for purchase to a non-Muslim shop. This shows how the communal poison is affecting people from minority communities too.

On the Karnataka-Kerala border, the movement of patients, including women and persons belonging mostly to minority communities was prevented by residents at the behest of local BJP leaders. Many vehicles carrying patients were forced to return to Kasargod in Kerala and some of them even died on the way back. It is the most brutal instincts of people that are being inflamed taking advantage of the Pandemic and humanitarianism itself seems to be under lock-down. It is against this that we are fighting in Karnataka both on our own and together with the People's Science Movement and other organisations.

**Let History Speak: Excerpts from a Note on the Babri Masjid-
Ramjanmabhoomi Issue**

-Prepared by Ratnabali Chattopadhyay, Malini Bhattacharya, Preeta Bhattacharya on behalf of *Punarnaba Kolkata*.



Excerpt 1: The Supreme Court Verdict

In November, 2019, the Supreme Court of India pronounced a final verdict on the disputed land in Ayodhya on which the Babri Masjid had stood. What was the main issue in the case and what were the basic points of the judgment?

- In 1992, after the Babri mosque had been destroyed, the Government of India acquired this plot of land. The Ayodhya suit had three major parties: (1) an organization called 'Bhagwan Shrirama Birajaman' (Lord Shrirama Existent) set up in 1989, (2) an old establishment called 'Nirmohee Akhara' which belonged to the Ramanandi monks, and (3) the Central Sunni Waqf Board. The first two groups claimed that this was the place where Rama the *avatar* of *Treta Yuga* was

born, and they wanted to build a Rama temple there. The Waqf Board contended that this was a Muslim religious place from the time the Babri mosque was built.

- The judgment says that the first party has been able to establish, on the 'preponderance of probabilities', that this plot of land was believed to be the birthplace of Ram in a long and continued Hindu tradition. The Nirmohee Akhara submitted the same plea, but could not establish its right to the land as 'sevayat'(trustee of worshippers).
- On the other hand, states the judgment, the Sunni Waqf Board has not produced evidence that this land was in the continued legal possession of the Muslims from the time of the building of the Babri Mosque.

The Supreme Court is of the view that the destruction of the structure of the mosque in 1992 was a serious criminal offence, but on the strength of the foregoing argument empowers the Government to form a trust and hand over to it for the purpose of building a temple the disputed land and an adjacent 67 acres also acquired previously.

Excerpt 2: Who Built the Babri Mosque?

The historians are largely in agreement that the mosque was built in 1528 by Mir Baqi, an official in the administration of Babur. An inscription on the mosque said: This monument where angels tread has been built at the orders of Emperor Babur, whose judgment soars as high as the heavens, by Mir Baqi. Some people have supposed it to have been built by Aurangzeb, but this supposition has no evidence, particularly as this mosque is constructed in the Jaunpuri Sharqi style, with three domes and a huge gateway. A different set of styles of architecture gradually became the norm in later Mughal era, and there was little possibility of such an architectural style prevailing in Aurangzeb's reign. Babur incidentally was much more interested in laying out gardens than building mosques, as *Baburnama* shows.

Excerpt 3: How did the *status quo* change after 22-23 December, 1949?

At dead of night a few fanatic *sadhus* with incitement and support from Hindu Mahasabha entered the mosque, placed some idols right under the main dome of the mosque and raised a great hue and cry about the child Rama having appeared there to take possession of his authentic birthplace. In spite of Prime Minister Nehru's insistence that the idols must be removed from the mosque, the prime movers of the plot could by exertion of undue influence at the highest level of Ayodhya-Faizabad and Uttar Pradesh administration and the High Court succeed in bringing an injunction against displacement of the said idols and permission for daily rituals was also obtained. On the other hand, the mosque having been desecrated by the presence of idols according to Islamic faith, Muslims became automatically excluded from it. Even in 1934, after the mosque had been damaged in Hindu-Muslim riots, the colonial administration had repaired it and handed it back to the Waqf Board. This time, the administration used the injunction to retain the structure to itself under lock and key while allowing daily worship of 'Ramlala' (the child Rama) under its very dome. The continuing presence of 'Ramlala' certainly helped RSS and Hindu Mahasabha to hold on to their influence in Ayodhya even when Gandhiji's murder had led to their being ostracized all over India.

Excerpt 4: Is there Archaeological evidence [of a demolished temple under the mosque]?

- The 'excavation' (2003) at the site of the demolished mosque at the bidding of Allahabad High Court by Archaeological Survey of India [was] in contravention of all recognized scientific methods. It is clear that the anecdote of a mosque being built on the site of a destroyed temple started circulating long after the building of the mosque, probably in the 18th century. The melodramatic story of a

Rama-temple of the Vikramaditya era being destroyed by Babur, found in the publicity material produced by the RSS, is based on only such anecdotes which might have spread when the influence of the Ramanandi monks was on the rise in the Ayodhya region.

- There was no archaeological evidence [found] of a temple of the Vikramaditya era or even of the 12th century after the -- controversial and unscientific -- excavation in 2003 ordered by the Allahabad High Court on the plot of the demolished mosque. The 12 black-marble columns under the dome of the mosque are not load-bearing columns. The bases of the few brick-built columns found underneath do not happen to be load-bearing at all, and are not even from the same archaeological layer. Therefore it is impossible that these were part of a massive temple. There is no evidence either of the mosque having been built after demolishing a temple or even of its being built on the ruins of a great temple.

Excerpt 5: Why Could Not the Structure of the Mosque Be Saved on 6th December, 1992?

- The RSS started increasing its political clout with the aid of the BJP in the 1980s. The Congress Party too for all its professions of secularism did not refrain from dabbling in matters of faith in the interest of political gain.
- In 1986, the Faizabad Court permitted the removal of the lock of the mosque for devotees of Rama to foregather in the interior and offer worship. Building materials called 'Rama-bricks' (*ramshila*) were gathered with the cry: 'We shall build the temple there and nowhere else' (*mandir wohi banayenge*).
- In 1990, L.K.Advani went on his 'chariot-tour' all over the country in the name of Rama, leading to communal riots in various places.

- In 1991, the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh bulldozed the smaller religious places around the mosque to widen the road for volunteers (kar-sevaks), making assault on the mosque easy.
- On December 6, 1992, the mosque was demolished in the presence of Advani, Bajpayee, Murli Manohar Joshi and others; the criminal case against them is still going on. But they had kept announcing till the 5th of December, 1992 that the volunteers (*kar-sevaks*) would not damage the mosque.

The incident could take place because of the blatant lies resorted to by these leaders, the trained violence of '*Kar-sevaks*', the duplicity of the Central Government run by the Congress and the aggravated communalist divide in the country.

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