



**NEWSLETTER-16**

**September-2022**

### **Editorial Communication**

Dear comrades, friends and well-wishers,

One wishes to have something cheerful to say as the seventy-fifth anniversary of our Independence comes to a close. Some silver lining among the dark clouds? But no, I have been wracking my brains and the only thing that cheers me up today is the resolute efforts of thousands of grass root activists of our organization to come out of the Slough of Despond in which they were thrown in the pandemic years and to resuscitate their close contacts with the masses. Indeed, the latter are also in dire need of our organized force to stand up against the evils heaped on them.

We want no more Indra Meghawals to die for having touched a pitcher reserved for 'upper castes', but we want them to come to schools freely, to have the best education, to have free mid-day meals and to be united in resisting hooligans posing as teachers lording it over the school campus. We want no more Bilquis Banos to lose their children, born and unborn, through the attacks of rapists and murderers; we want them leading our movements and striking out for dignity and justice for women irrespective of their religious faith. Dear comrades, what is the worth of our organized power if we cannot ensure this in our country?

We need to be united against our torturers and exploiters who seem to have a special genius for destroying whatever they touch. 'We are many, they are few' and it is only because we are so divided that they exert their power of destruction to make our lives intolerable. The mythical bhashmasura had been endowed by

the gods with the power to turn to ashes whatever he touched. Look at our modern Bhashmasuras rampaging across the country!

They touch the fields full of crops and they wither; they touch forests and rivers and they dry up. They touch the Indian railways, BSNL, steel factories and they fall into shambles. They bulldoze people's homes, they destroy our heritage in literature, science, art and architecture. They have but to bring out a policy on education and schools and colleges where our children went are closed down. They are unscrupulous incendiaries destroying love, friendship, trust and courage wherever they reach out. How can we tolerate their arrogance and self-congratulatory attitude even as they are wrecking our country?

Unlike the original Bhashmasur we cannot even expect them to be reduced to ashes involuntarily by touching their own heads. We cannot sit trembling expecting them to wither away one day when their term is over. Let us fight them face to face and vanquish them!

**Malini Bhattacharya**

**President, All India Democratic Women's Association**

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## Message on 75 Years of India's Independence

-Mariam Dhawale, General Secretary, AIDWA



In his 15 August 2022, the Prime Minister announced from the ramparts from the Red Fort, that India should respect women and support Nari Shakti. On the same day 11 gang rapists and mass murderers of 14 family members of Bilkis Bano, a victim of the Gujarat Riots, 2002, were released by the BJP Gujarat state Government.

This release of criminals was shocking and exposed the real face of the BJP. Women, minorities and dalits are not safe in the country that the BJP-RSS wants to convert India into. Goons will roam free and human rights activists like Teesta Setalvad and others will be jailed.

Our Vice President, Subhasini Ali, Prof Roop Rekha Verma and journalist Revathi Laul have challenged the remission in Supreme Court. Our units are also showing the way by leading large protests against this remission in every state and exposing the intentions of the BJP regime.

We must rise up to the challenges women of our country are facing today. 75 years of our independent, secular and democratic nation cannot be allowed to be demolished by those who betrayed the independence struggle. This fascistic, manuwadi forces must be defeated. In unity lies our strength.

## **AIDWA Strongly Condemns Release of 11 Murder and Gang Rape Convicts in the Bilkis Bano Case**

-AIDWA Statement

The All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) strongly condemns the release of the 11 persons convicted for murder and mass rape of 14 persons in the Bilkis Bano case in the communal carnage following the Godra incident and calls upon the Supreme Court to set aside the Gujarat government decision. It is outrageous and shocking that after the commission of such a heinous and violent crime, these 11 accused who had been convicted by the trial and High Court for rigorous imprisonment for Life, which meant the whole of their lives, were released by the Gujarat Government under its Remission Policy of 1992 just because they had completed 15 years in jail.



The entire incident of gang rape and murder took place in front of Bilkis Bano's eyes, who was five months pregnant at the time. In spite of that she was gang raped and had to witness the horror of her mother and three other women of her family being gang raped while even her three-year old daughter along with 13 others were killed by a mob of 30 to 40 people who deliberately and viciously attacked them with sickles, swords and sticks while they were trying to hide in a field to escape the carnage being carried out against Muslims. However, out of 19 people who were

eventually charged, the special court acquitted seven accused for want of evidence while one of the accused had died during the trial. Against those 11 eventually convicted there was obviously overwhelming evidence.

It is relevant to mention that one of the accused, Radheshyam Shah had approached the Supreme Court and the Supreme Court had unfortunately directed that the Gujarat Government consider his case under its 1992 Remission policy within two months. It is important to point out that the remission policy of 1992 did not exclude murder cases decided by the CBI court while the subsequent 2014 policy which replaced this does. Subsequently it appears that the Gujarat Government set up a panel which released all those convicted in the Bilkis Bano case. The basis on which the remission took place is not spelled out except that these convicts had completed 15 years in jail.

It is a travesty of justice that those convicted of such a heinous crime after such a long and torturous legal fight should be released in this manner. On a day when the Prime Minister was highlighting the issue of the need to protect women against crimes, the BJP Gujarat Government decided to release those convicted of brutal gang rape and murder. This shows that though crimes against women are rising in this country the BJP Government is not concerned about even the most brutal of these crimes.



It sets a bad precedent that crimes against Muslims can be committed with virtual impunity and no accountability. It gives an indirect encouragement to those elements of the Sangh Parivar who give threats of death and call for violence against the minorities - specially Muslims - that they can do so with impunity and without fearing any adverse consequences. It shows that these crimes had the tacit approval of the government as normally sentences of those who have committed gang rapes and murders are not remitted. Even the Central Policy on

remission announced on this Independence Day excluded those convicted of murders and rapes. The decision of the BJP Gujarat Government clearly highlights that rapes and murders of Muslims in the 2002 communal pogrom are inconsequential and in tune with their Manuvadi Hindutva agenda. AIDWA deprecates the fact that these convicts were greeted with sweets when they came out of jail as if they were heroes. How could the State Government have allowed this to happen?

In the meanwhile, Bilkis Bano's trauma continues after she thought that justice had finally been given to her. It is reported that once again her life and that of her family is in danger and she fears for her safety. This must be immediately provided to her.

In 2019 the Supreme Court had given a compensation of 50 lakhs to Bilkis and directed that she must be given a house and a job. She has not yet been given a house and a job. The Court must once again set aside this totally unwarranted, audacious and inhuman decision of the Gujarat Government to remit the sentences of murder and gang rape convicts in the Bilkis Bano case.

AIDWA will hold protests all over the country against this highly unjust, anti-women decision of the BJP Gujarat Government.

## **Kranti Simha Nana Patil: The Lion who Heralded Revolution**

- Dr Maya Pandit

Nana Patil was born on 3 August 1900. He passed away on 6 December 1976.



Nana Patil developed many forms of revolutionary struggle in the Indian soil throughout his life. On 9 August 1942, the Indian people warned the British rulers through the Quit India movement that they had to leave the country. The people in Satara district of Maharashtra took Gandhiji's slogan literally, and from the very next day they overthrew the yoke of the British rule in their land.

The Quit India movement began, as Gandhiji had suggested, in a non-violent manner. But the British rulers fired at Indians in 5 different places in Satara district and killed 11 patriots. With the backing of the repressive police force and the feudal lords and their local armies of criminals and thugs, the British managed to crush the rebellion for a brief while. Yet the rebellion represented an expression of the Indian peoples' tremendous urge for liberation from cruel political and socially repressive power structures in society. But the people could not be repressed for too long. It was Nana Patil who once again ignited that fire in the hearts of people and spearheaded that rebellion with a renewed vigour.

This rebellion was far more radical than the other agitations taking place in India at that time. On the one hand there were individuals who did individual Satyagrahas. On the other hand, there were many organized efforts to overthrow the British rule. There emerged diverse forms of struggle. Agitations were taking place in places like Bhagalpur, Balia, Midnapore, Comilla, Champaran among others.

In 1930, the textile workers in Solapur district of Maharashtra had liberated the city of Solapur from the clutches of the British for a few days. The creation of the Solapur Commune was a huge experiment carried out by the workers of Solapur under the leadership of Mallappa Dhanshetty, Shrikrishna Sarada, Qurban Hussein and Jagannath Shinde, who were later hanged. The Solapur Commune was a response given to the Bolshevik Revolution and reminded the whole world of the Paris Commune.



The winds of change seen in the Solapur agitation, however, were limited to a lone city. Later on they transformed into a huge hurricane in the neighbouring Satara district. Nana Patil, a live wire of an individual, successfully ignited the people's dormant desire for liberation into a huge force. Nana Patil created a massive rural commune with people's participation for a period of no less than three years, from August 1943 to May 1946. Nana Patil's movement was distinctively different from all the other rebellions in that he managed to liberate hundreds of villages from the yoke of British rule despite the British forces that had surrounded them. This was no less than a miracle. This movement is known as the Prati Sarkar movement, meaning the Movement for an Alternative Government.

In order to understand the distinctiveness of this movement, one has to understand the history and geography of this region. The region had witnessed the rule of a just and forthright king Shivaji Maharaj; it also contained villages like Katgun and Naygaon, the birthplaces of Mahatma Phule and Savitribai Phule respectively; Gopal Ganesh Agarkar, the great reformer in the 19th century was born in Tembhu in this region. It represented the traditions of the battles of Shivaji against the

Mughals on the one hand, and on the other the anti-caste struggle of the Satyashodhak movement in the social arena. A new consciousness was spreading in society against British imperialism, as well as the feudal structures in society and the oppressive caste system. The region had witnessed a social transformation created by Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil and his tremendous efforts to educate the masses including the lower castes through his network of schools. Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar also had stayed in Satara for his education. Karmaveer Vitthal Ramji Shinde had organized the masses for eradication of the caste system in the same region. Com V V Chitale was organizing the rural masses under the Red Flag of the Communist party. All these movements had created a very sustainable atmosphere for liberation movements. Nana Patil represented the amalgamation of all these forces of liberation and ushered in an age of revolution.

The Prati Sarkar movement took up cudgels against the established power structures that had repressed people for a long time. It would be rare to find a movement comparable to this, which caused a huge upheaval in rural society and challenged the dominant power structures and their repressive practices. The aim of this movement was to create a new society under the leadership of the peasants and workers in which there would be no exploitation on the basis of class, caste, gender and religion.

One may even compare the tremendous changes this revolutionary movement brought about with the changes that the Enlightenment had brought about in Europe. Nana Patil was inspired by Bhagat Singh's essay on the Structure of National Liberation and the struggles against the fascist forces of Hitler in Europe. He realized that to win the fight against the British Empire, he had to identify the centres where this power was concentrated and strike these centres down. He identified the police stations, the feudal lords in the region and their armies of crooks and criminals as the three power centres through which the British operated. Like the seasoned wrestler that he was, he knew that if these power centres were attacked and destroyed, the British rule would collapse. Thus he managed to oust British rule from these power centres in hundreds of villages.

Firstly, he organized young men into a disciplined army called Toofan Sena which would attack the police stations, imprison policemen and take hold of their weapons. Another technique in this struggle was to loot the government coffers. In those times, huge funds collected through taxes and the funds for the salary of government employees would be sent by trains. The revolutionaries would attack the trains, take the money in the treasury boxes, and use it to fund their rebellious activities. Such attacks spread from Dhule district to small villages like Kundal in Satara district. The revolutionaries would also burn down railway stations. These activities sent shock waves in the British rulers and weakened their confidence.

Several feudal lords in the region worked as the agents of the British and oppressed the poor farmers in collaboration with the British. This section of toiling farmers became the soldiers of the revolutionary liberation army of Nana Patil. Before their attacks, the government officials and Watandars like Patils, Deshmukhs and others were reduced to a weakened state. The Satyashodhak movement had already weakened the Bhat-Bhikshukshahi (the rule of the Brahmin priests and preachers).



The liberation army of Nana Patil attacked the domination of the money lenders who had tied the poor farmers in the monstrous trap of loans. The Prati Sarkar movement attacked the houses of the money lenders and destroyed the files and documents of loans given to farmers. They declared that the farmers were free of these loans. The year 1936 saw the establishment of the All India Kisan Sabha which had given a call for cancellation of loans and equitable distribution of land to the landless. The Prati Sarkar took up these demands and immediately put them into practice. This gave the farmers a sense of self confidence. The Prati Sarkar would also distribute the government funds looted from the trains among the poor.

Apart from this, another major work the Prati Sarkar movement did was related to social reform. They addressed issues such as the eradication of the caste system, conducted inter-caste marriages, widow remarriages, prohibition of alcohol, and release of prisoners. They actively organized programmes where they put their ideas into practice. They also evolved various cultural forms for the spread of their ideas. They formed groups of young artists, singers and actors which would perform various Jalsas (musical programmes with songs and music), and created

among the people a new consciousness through their cultural programmes. This was a conscious attempt to create an alternative cultural front that challenged the traditional forms dominated by Brahmanism. Thus the Prati Sarkar was a complete revolution that embraced political, economic, social and cultural aspects of people's lives. It spoke to people in their own language. They made tremendous efforts to reach the ideas of Marx, Lenin, Phule and Ambedkar in the popular language of saint poets and people loved it. As a result, the Tricolour of Indian freedom flew over each Chawdi, the village level office of the British administration for months together.

The Prati Sarkar was not just a poet's dream, nor was it an aberration. It represented the rule of people in the true sense of the term. The movement had a strong foundation of scientific thinking. There were many organizations that were created for the new State. There was an army of committed soldiers that were adept at guerrilla warfare. Then there was a treasury department created for people's uplift. There was an organizing committee that supervised work done among people. There was a system for dispensing justice through judges that handled cases in a just manner. Then there was the Bahirji Naik Committee, a committee for spreading news among people, a committee for communication, schools for people and for training of their cadre. The most famous and popular among them was the Toofan Sena. They established groups of activists, sometimes their number would be small and sometimes there would be as many as 150. The groups had clusters with their own leaders. There would be senior level leaders and at the top would be their controllers which they would call 'Dictators'. This was the structure of their government and administration. And that worked perfectly well. With all of these systems at work at various levels of the organization, the Prati Sarkar movement presented a model of governance for people. It was an exercise in creating a system that sought to eradicate exploitation.

Nana Patil continued this tradition even after India became independent. He provided help to the farmers in the Telangana struggle by sending them arms, a scintillating example of his deep commitment to the communist revolution. He also helped the movements for the liberation of Goa as well as Hyderabad. He was a staunch leader of the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement. He became a leader of the CPI and was also elected President of the All Indian Kisan Sabha in 1955. He was so popular that he was elected as a Member of Parliament from Satara in 1957 and also in 1967 from Beed, a district in the far away Marathwada region.

The Prati Sarkar movement gave stalwarts and great leaders like Kranti Agrani G. D. Bapu Lad, Krantiveer Nagnath Anna Naikwadi, Barde Master, Sheikh Kaka, Babuji Patankar who was martyred, D.G. Deshpande, Shantaram Garud among others.

The struggle against exploitation continues in this land even today. The tradition of the ideology and practice of the Prati Sarkar continues through these efforts. Their commitment to the farmers is significant in these difficult times. It is this inheritance of the Nana Patil tradition that stands out against the background of the terribly regressive and increasingly fascistic State in India today.

The Prati Sarkar of Nana Patil and his comrades represented a beautiful socialistic dream that Maharashtra saw in the times of struggle against imperialism and exploitation. Our socialist movement will follow in the footsteps of these great leaders. Red Salute to Nana Patil and his comrades in this 75th Year of Indian Independence!

**Kozhikode Sessions Court's remarks on bail in Civic Chandran's sexual assault case are highly anti-feminist and objectionable**

-AIDWA statement

The court has made very bad remarks against the woman who is the complainant in the sexual assault case against writer and social activist Civic Chandran. The court's remark that the complainant was wearing sexually provocative clothes and that a prima facie case cannot be made out under Section 354 of the Indian Penal Code is ridiculous and unacceptable.

It is ironic that in a country celebrating 75 years of independence, even today, women face such humiliation even from the side of the judiciary. It is to be noted that an incident like this happened in Kerala just after the order acquitting the accused in the Bilkis Bano gang rape case.

There are many victims among us who live uncomplainingly in fear of the psychological pain, ridicule and exploitation that women victims of sexual violence go through in a male-centric society. These kinds of comments coming from the court, which is supposed to protect civil rights, make women more insecure. Such remarks will only serve to push the women community into a general sense that justice will not be served. The remark made while considering the bail plea that the complaint is not maintainable in an ongoing case is not at all outrageous. The Kerala State Committee of the All India Democratic Women's Association registers its strong protest against such court remarks which are unbecoming of a progressive society.

*From the Archives of AIDWA*

**2nd AIDWA Conference: Resolution On Muslim Women's Bill  
(Thiruvananthapuram, 1986)**

*[This document from our archives records AIDWA's consistent struggle against people in power trying to play a communal game for short-lived gains and making women pawns in the game. The Supreme Court's verdict in 1986 granting Shah Bano, a divorced Muslim woman maintenance rights under Indian law, was overturned by the Congress Government under Rajiv Gandhi using brute majority in Parliament and separate legal provisions were enacted for Muslim women denying them rights to such relief at the behest of Islamic fundamentalists. It may be recalled that the same government had in the same year decided not to contest the verdict of the Allahabad High Court allowing Hindus entry for worship within the main precincts of Babri Masjid. Subsequent events have amply shown that this dangerous game of misrepresenting secularism as satisfying fundamentalist demands on both sides can only stoke the fire of communalism.]*

This second conference of the AIDWA expresses its strong condemnation of the passing of the Muslim Women's (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Bill 1986 with the use of its brute parliamentary majority by the Rajiv Gandhi government.

The Bill which has now become an enforceable Act exonerates the husband from all responsibility of maintaining his divorced wife by depriving her of her rights to maintenance under Sec 125 Cr. PC. It further exonerates him from the responsibility of even maintaining his children after the first two years. The responsibility has been shifted to the helpless parents of the divorced women or in their absence to the Waqf Board. These institutions notorious for mismanagement are in any case by their own admission virtually bankrupt. Thus, while the man has been given the legal sanction to enjoy any woman and divorce her at will with no further responsibility, the Muslim woman and her children are left with no protection at all.

The plight of such women can be understood by a recent survey conducted for the planning commission by the Tata School of Social Work which shows that even today "about 90% of prostitutes in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh are destitute Muslim Women".

Increased divorces, increased destitution, increased suicides, increased prostitution, this is the Rajiv Gandhi Government's gift to the divorced Muslim women the most oppressed among the oppressed, the most helpless among the helpless. It is precisely this section which has been made the victim of the sham slogan of "Islam in danger" by religious bigots.

This Conference holds that the women's movement has always had to confront attacks on their rights in the name of religion whether by Hindu fundamentalists during the struggle for the Hindu Code Bill or now by their counterparts in the

Muslim community. However, the fact is that this slogan has no ground in reality as can be seen by the legislation in numerous Muslim countries all of which grant many more rights to divorced women. But instead of taking a firm stand against such misleading slogans the Government of India has shamelessly surrendered to the fundamentalists in the hope of regaining the Muslim vote. By this cynical barter the Government has completely violated the secular principles enshrined in the Constitution and indeed the very spirit of the legacy of the national movement which believed in the separation of religion from the affairs of the State. In this case not only has the Government used the dangerous precedent of consulting only so-called religious leaders it has also attacked an accepted principle that the criminal laws of the land apply to all regardless of caste or creed.

This conference expresses its serious concern that instead of moving towards the implementation of the constitutional principles concerning equal right for all women regardless of their religion, the Government of India has moved backwards in this connection [with] the recent promise of a voluntary uniform civil code as a hoax to cover up the Government's deliberate violation of the principles of the Constitution.

Clearly the Act is not only the most blatant attack on women's rights since independence, it is equally violative of the principles of democracy and secularism.

This Conference therefore calls on the women of India and particularly and particularly women of the minority community to intensify the struggle for withdrawal of this black act. This Conference congratulates the thousands and thousands of women who defying tradition and opposition have come out in the streets in protest particularly in Kerala and West Bengal. This Conference emphasizes that it is only through the broadest mobilisation that we can roll back the tide of the official attack on our rights.

This conference calls upon its units throughout the country to take up the struggle on the slogan:

Equal Rights for All Women.

Withdraw the Black Bill Now!

## *Women's Struggles across the World*

### **Cuba's New Families Code**

(Extract from Newsletter July, 2022, Published by Asia Pacific Department of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples, Cuba, pp.6-7)

*[Note from Newsletter: The text is available on the website of the National Assembly of the Peoples Power, with the modifications agreed by the Cuban parliamentarians in the course of their analysis, held during last December's Eighth Ordinary Period of Sessions of the 9th Legislature.*

*The document, which had 20 plus versions, is the result of an extensive consultation process with experts and organizations, valued by Cuban Minister of Justice as "contributive, intense and a lot of work, but essential to achieve a draft and of high quality."*



Since July 16, 2019, the Temporary Working Group coordinated by the Ministry of Justice and made up of renowned experts from the Supreme People's Court, the Attorney General's Office, the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Organization of Collective Law Firms, the National Union of Jurists of Cuba, the Federation of Cuban Women, the National Center for Sexual Education, the National Office of Statistics and Information and the Faculty of Law of the University of Havana, which prepared the proposals of Policies and 20 versions of the draft of the Family Code.

As a result of intense and contributing days of study and work, it was agreed during the presentation to the National Assembly last December, to initiate a process of specialized consultations that would allow perfecting its content and, at the same time, its publication on the Website of the Ministry of Justice, to obtain the knowledge and opinions of the population as part of the most genuine democratic

exercise of our political system in the process of normative creation of a transcendental legal disposition whose fundamental objective is to strengthen families, the respect for human dignity, the equality of all its members and the protection of the most vulnerable.

More than six million people participated in a popular consultation that took place in Cuba from February to April 2022.

Among the main aspects of the preliminary draft of the Family Code are:

- It protects all expressions of family diversity and the right of each person to form a family in coherence with the Constitution of the Republic and its principles of equality, non-discrimination and human dignity.
- Strengthens family responsibility from the emotional, educational, training and economic point of view in the care of its members.
- It places love, affection, solidarity and responsibility at the top of family values.
- Updates and perfects family legal institutions: a) kinship, b) the obligation to provide support, c) marriage, d) de facto union, e) filiation whatever its origin, f) Parental relationships; and other custody and protection institutions.
- Promotes gender equality in the family space.
- It expands the variants of the economic regime of marriage to achieve greater autonomy of the spouses in the decision that is most favorable to their interests.
- It protects motherhood and fatherhood and the promotion of their responsible development in synergy with respect for the rights of children and adolescents in the family environment.
- It recognizes the right of grandmothers, grandfathers and other blood relatives, related and of another nature and of children and adolescents to a harmonious and close communication between them in the family environment.
- It promotes self-determination, preferences and equal opportunities in family life for older adults and those with disabilities.
- It expresses the right to a family life free of violence in any of its manifestations and presents protective formulas against these situations.
- Develops the possibilities of harmonious conflict resolution.
- It reinforces the guarantee formulas for people in any situation of disadvantage or vulnerability in the family space.
- Provides solutions to transnational conflicts arising from migration or relations between Cubans and foreigners.
- Strengthens the role of the Courts in family disputes; the powers of the Prosecutor's Office, the presence of these matters in the notarial field and the

responsibility of the Ministry of Justice in the defense and protection of people in a situation of vulnerability in the family sphere.

- It makes its content compatible with international treaties on this matter ratified by the Republic of Cuba.

Official data show that 336 595 interventions were made by voters in the popular consultation, collecting 434 000 proposals.

This text will be discussed in July's parliamentary session for approval as well as to set the date on which the draft Family Code will be submitted for final approval by popular referendum in the coming months.

**SAVE EDUCATION  
SAVE CONSTITUTION  
SAVE INDIA**

**01 Aug-  
15 Sep  
2022**

Starting from  
Jammu & Kashmir,  
Tamilnadu, Tripura,  
Bihar & Maharashtra

- Oppose fee hike
- Reject Saffronisation of syllabuses
- Ensure proper Reservation
- Bring back girls to school

**MARCH FOR  
EDUCATION  
SFI ALL INDIA JATHA**

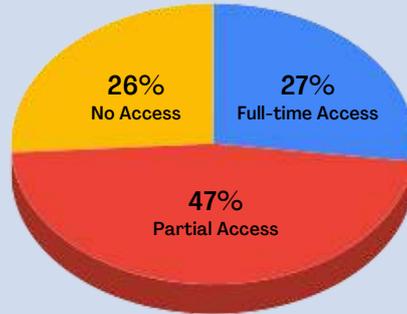
Dear friends and comrades,

Today, the students in India are facing a severe crisis in the education sector. The pandemic has set back education nationwide, worsening many issues, including the stark digital divide, gender gap in accessing online education, the lack of inclusivity regarding educational rights etc. The existing problems are accompanied by the wicked policies and unfair approaches of the BJP-led central government. The reduction of public funding, the forceful implementation of the new National Education Policy, and the discriminatory way of conducting national entrance exams like the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) and National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) are few among them. This raises the question of whether education is a right or a privilege.

The BJP-RSS nexus is also trying to saffronise the educational sector by changing history textbooks to promote the views propagated by Sangh Parivar. The appointments of core right-wing disciples corrupt the central university recruitments. The Sangh Parivar-backed administrations have been systematically diluting universities' reservation policies. The quality and affordable education as guaranteed by our constitution is therefore turning out to be an illusion.

Therefore, our time needs to join hands together to resist the attempt to undermine constitutional rights by privatising, commercialising, and communalising the education system. In this context, the Students' Federation of India is building a nationwide movement to save the education and future of millions of youths in India. As a part of that, the Central Executive Committee of SFI is organising India Jatha named 'March for Education', starting from 1st August to 15th September 2022. SFI is marching from five different corners of the country with the slogan "Save education, save constitution, save India." SFI CEC calls upon the students and youth across the country to support the movement by participating in large numbers to defend our right to education and appeals for larger student unity.

Online mode of education has created a huge digital divide among students which led to an increased segregation of the poor and disadvantaged. **73% of the students didn't have proper fulltime access to smartphone for education.** The blended mode of education proposed by the University Grants Commission (UGC) has deepened the crisis in higher education sector.

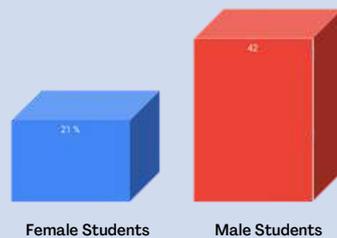


Students Access to Smartphones for Education in India

Source: ASER 2021

In general, across the country, **economically and socially disadvantaged families witnessed a depleting source of income significantly impacting children's learning.** Especially, students from Jammu and Kashmir, Northeastern states have been severely affected due to internet restrictions and other access inequalities.

The gender gap during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that young boys had a high level of access to the use of the internet in comparison to girls and they were forced to do the household chores as carers in their families.



Gender gap in internet access for Education in India

Source: ASER 2021

### Shrinking state schemes for the poor

BJP government has disrupted all the educational schemes for the welfare of the school student community, like scholarships for SC and ST students and the mid-day meal scheme. As a result, poor students cannot take education as they want.

While the children of India's elites have been sheltered from the worst impacts of the pandemic, many children from poor and marginalised families will never return to school. A higher drop-out rate will likely be witnessed among Dalits, Adivasis and Muslims. Many of them will become victims of child labour and child marriage. Girls are more vulnerable as they are exposed to additional risks, including early and forced marriage, violence and early pregnancies.

### Saffronisation of Higher Education

The RSS strategy of 'early indoctrination' involves massive overhauls of school and higher education curricula. **The ideas of Bhagat Singh and others are being omitted from textbooks.** They are being replaced with the concepts of authoritarian communal forces in the country.

The recent imposition of the dress code through the ban of 'hijab' also shows the growing tendency of the present BJP RSS Government to communalise educational spaces and further takes away the right of the student coming from first-generation learners to enter the education.

### Does Education Matter to Govt. of India?

The BJP-led government has completely neglected the education sector in terms of allocating and spending adequate amounts in improving the nation's future.

Percentage of Public education expenditure in different countries

	2015	2020
Afghanistan	3.3	3.2
Brazil	6.2	6.1
Kenya	5.3	5.1
Nepal	3.3	4.4
South Africa	6.0	6.8
<b>India</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>2.98</b>

Source: World Bank and Ministry of education, India