Neoliberal state, austerity, and workers' resistance in India

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Abstract

Despite being divided on the consequences of liberalization, people of India put up significant resistances against the neoliberal state and its austerity policies under the leadership of the Left and the broader Left. Some of the battles were won, some were lost. Yet, struggles are continuing to win the war. This paper is an empirical and analytical description primarily of workers' resistances against the state's withering away from its responsibilities in a pluralistic society like India as well as some of the other movements against these neoliberal policies.

Keywords: Economic reforms, austerity, workers' resistance

David Harvey in his *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2005) has given a wide-ranging definition of neoliberalism:

> Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices… Furthermore, if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary. But beyond these tasks the state should not venture.

However, the term 'neoliberalism' is not as commonly used in India as in the West. Instead, terms like 'globalization,' 'liberalization,' and 'SAP' (Structural Adjustment Programmes) are more common and widely used in India to describe the changes to the Indian economy in the last 25 years. The differences in the Indian and the Western common discourses are significant. In Western 'developed' countries, the term 'neoliberalism' more appropriately describes the changes in the last 30+ years or so; whereas 'globalization,' 'liberalization,' 'SAP' are more appropriate terms and used interchangeably to depict changes happening almost during the same period in 'developing' countries, most of which were Western colonies at some point of time or other. However, this paper is not about the debate on the nomenclatures of those terms, but to focus primarily on the workers' struggles in India against the neoliberal state. There are four sections in this paper: in section I, India's economic plans before India initiated reforms (i.e. from 1951-1983) and its consequences are discussed;

section II has a detailed discussion about India's economic planning from 1984 to the present (i.e., the liberalization phase and its consequence); section III is about resistance through institutional as well as through non-institutional politics; and finally, a conclusion in section IV.

The data for this paper were collected from primary as well as secondary sources. The author himself has observed some of the movements; in addition he has interviewed movement organizers from all the central trade unions and some other organizations. Secondary data were collected from books, journals, newspapers, pamphlets etc.

I. India before Reforms: 1951-1983

When colonial rule came to an end in India in 1947, more than half of its population was in abject poverty with a per capita annual income of Rs. 228 ($48 at 1947 rates). The average life expectancy was 32 years, less than 10% of its population had access to safe drinking water, the literacy rate was only at 17% and, between 1900 and 1950, and its economic growth rate was a sluggish 0.8% (Sarker 2009). After independence, India embarked upon a path that combined a mixed economy with a federal political structure with unitary bias. It was not a closed economy in the truest sense, but India intended to stand on its own proverbial feet after 200 years of shameful and disastrous colonialism. It embraced centralized planning, an import substitution industrial policy, state intervention in labour and financial markets, a large public sector, and business regulation.

Though most heavy industries and mining operations at that time were publicly owned, there were some big bourgeoisies who held significant influence over Indian economy. They owned much of the manufacturing sector, including the production of automobiles, textiles, consumer durables, and capital goods. Any private company that wanted to open an industry in a province in India needed a license from the federal (central) government. Thus, this era was sarcastically termed as *license raj* (license regime). To protect the public sector from foreign competitors, eighteen industries were reserved exclusively for the public sector. These industries included iron and steel, heavy plant and machinery, telecommunications and telecom equipment, minerals, oil, air transport services, and electricity generation and distribution. There was protection for national bourgeoisies also; restrictions were placed on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) equity shares. In 1961, many banks (fourteen in all) were nationalized, which also complemented India's path to 'socialistic development.' In fact, in December, 1954, parliament adopted a resolution that stated in one of its clauses, 'The objective of economic policy should be a Socialistic Pattern of Society.' And in 1976, by the 42nd amendment, three words were incorporated into the preamble to the constitution of India: socialist, secular, and democratic (Sarker 2009). However, this socialism is not Marxian Socialism, but more in the line with P. Samuelson's Mixed Economy.

During this pre-reform period from 1951 to 1983, India's average GDP growth rate was 4.7%, which was higher than most other Asian economies. Yet, at the end of 1983, India's unemployment rate was 9.22%, 44.93% of its people lived below the poverty line, and inequality (Gini[11]) was 31.5 (ibid 2009). In the social sector, the literacy rate was 43.5, life expectancy 56.2 years, and 38.2% (1981) of its people had access to safe drinking water (World Bank 2010).

II. India after Reforms: 1984-present

Though India has started embracing neoliberal policies more aggressively from 1991 onward, its foundation was laid during mid-1980s with some pro-business policies (Kohli 2006) like opening up the doors of restricted public sectors for private investment, the dissolution of the MRTP Act (Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act), liberalizing credit for big borrowers, reducing corporate taxes and import taxes, and removing price control, etc. (Sarker 2009). From 1991, India started liberalizing its economy in all major sectors, including industrial policy, trade and exchange rate policy, tax reforms, public sector policy, and foreign investment policies. Visibly, India was making the historic shift towarda pro-market economy (Kohli 2006). The measures taken resulted in a devaluation of India's currency, disinvestment, dismantling of the industrial licensing regime, the allowance of foreign direct investment, and the abolition of the MRTP Act. In addition, the Indian tariff rates declined sharply in the 1990s from a weighted average of 72.5% in 1991-92 to 24.6% in 1996-97. Although the tariff went up slowly in the late nineties, it managed to reach 35.1% in 2001-02 (Balakrishnan 2004). The simple average of India's tariff rate is now 13.72% (WTO 2013). Whereas a pro-market strategy supports new entrants and consumers, a pro-business strategy mainly supports established products (Rodrik & Subramanian 2005).

The intricacies of politics of shifting from 'Socialist India' to 'Incorporated India' lies in its failure to redistribute wealth to the poor as well as in its bowing down to the pressure from the Indian big bourgeoisies: new and old. Whereas, the old enterprises are mostly interested in catering for the domestic market, represented by India's two main national chambers of commerce: the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the Associated Chambers of Commerce (ASSOCHAM), the new entrants are mostly export oriented modern industries like engineering and IT firms represented by newly constituted Confederation of Indian Industries (CII), who has become more powerful than FICCI and ASSOCHAM (Kohli 2006).

From 1985 to 1990, India enjoyed an economic growth rate of 6.2% before it opened up its economy to foreign investment in 1991. In 1990, India's unemployment rate was 8%, the number of people living below the poverty line

[1] Gini Coefficient: The measurement of inequality. It ranges between 0, where there is no concentration (perfect equality), and 1 where there is total concentration (perfect inequality).

was 37% and inequality (Gini) was 29.7 (Sarker 2009). Its literacy rate was 48.2%, life expectancy was 58.5 yrs, and 62.3% people had access to safe drinking water (World Bank 2010).

After liberalization from 1991 to the present, the average GDP growth rate is around 7%. Yet, 37.2% of the Indian population still live below the National Poverty Line (DNA 2010); ¾s of its population live below Rs. 20 ($0.50) per day (Sengupta 2007) with a per capita GDP of $3,337 in the corresponding year. Unemployment rate is 10.7% (estimated), and the income inequality (Gini) is 36.8. Its literacy rate amongst adult has increased to 74%, life expectancy has increased to 66 years, and 92% of its population has access to safe drinking water. The overall HDI rank is 136 (World Bank 2013; UNDP 2013) among 186 countries.

There are many reasons cited for embracing reforms. These include the (in)famous debt crisis of 1991, depletion of foreign exchange reserve, slow GDP growth, unemployment, inequality, poverty and its associated indicators. The debt crisis was one of the most serious among others in 1991 as cited by the pro-reformers. From 1980 to 1991, India's domestic public debt increased steadily, from 36% to 56% of the GDP, while its external debt increased (more than tripled) to $70 billion (Ghosh 2004). At this juncture, India entered on the Fund-Bank approach to development that has been mentioned above.

According to Government of India, there was no alternative other than opening up the country's economy to get rid of the debt and to restore the foreign exchange reserve. But Patnaik et al (1995), Bagchi (1999) opine differently. Patnaik argues that there was enough foreign currency to cover almost 3 months' imports.

The central objective of this phase was economic growth through structural reform, deregulation, liberalization, and privatization in which government will have little role, and the market will be the key player.

Apart from these changes, there were other changes that were quite significant in this context. Firstly, the definition of small-scale industry has undergone considerable changes. While, in 1985, it was defined as an industry with fixed capital investment of Rs 3.5 million, by 1997, this limit became Rs 30 million. After some criticism, this was redefined to Rs 10 million in 1999. In addition, the reservation of items exclusively for the small scale sector forms a significant aspect of the industrial policy, review for dereservation of such items is also undertaken by the Government at periodic intervals. During the last 5 years itself more than 600 items have been dereserved. At present only 20 items are reserved for manufacture in the small scale sector.

The role of small scale industry in India's economy is significant as it contributes 40% of the total industrial output in India and has 35% share in exports (India Business News 2010). It gets various government and legislative support, such as product reservation, fiscal concessions, preferential allocations of credit and interest subsidy, extension of business and technical services, and preferential procurement by the government. Hence, the increase in investment level will help big investors to the disadvantages of the small investors.

To regulate labour, one of the major steps taken was to set up the Second Labour Commission on Labour (SNCL) in 1999 (30 years after the first) under the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government. The recommendations of the Commission came in June 2002. Trade unions saw this as an attack on the rights of the working class that would only facilitate the exit policy. Some of the anti-labour recommendations were:

1. To keep all the supervisory personnel, irrespective of their wages / salary, outside the rank of worker and labour laws meant for workers.

2. The industries employing fewer than 300 persons can retrench or close the industry at will. Industries with 300 or more workers shall need permission from government to retrench workers. However, if the government does not respond within 60 days under bureaucratic plea, the industry can go ahead with its plan.

3. Secret ballot for a strike has been made compulsory, and it will be considered legal only if 51% vote in favour of the strike. But in the case of essential services, the government shall immediately refer the dispute to arbitration or adjudication, thus depriving the workers of the right to strike. The management shall negotiate with only the recognized unions, which have membership of more than 25%.

4. Unfettered freedom to contract out non-core jobs completely and also core jobs, subject to some spurious limitations. The SNCL recommends the employment of contract labour to meet the seasonal demands of human power even for perennial core jobs like production, and the giving of even perennial non-core services, such as canteen, watch & ward, and cleaning on contract observes.

The Commission also makes some labour-friendly recommendations: the firm should clear all its dues to workers before effecting retrenchment or closure, and the government has to closely scrutinize employers' actions. It also recommends that contract labourers receive equal payment as the regular workers for the same types of employment in an organization. Besides, the Commission also recommends a lower rate of compensation in the case of sick firms and a higher rate of compensation for healthy firms (Sundar 2005).

Another attack on labour by this neoliberal state was a Supreme Court's decision in 2003 that government employees had no legal right and no moral justification to go on strike (*Rangarajan vs. Government of Tamil Nadu and Others* case: Supreme Court Act No. 5556). This was not completely new, as courts had declared some strikes illegal before; and this verdict, in some ways, is contradictory to Industrial Disputes Act (IDA), Trade Union Act of India, and the mandate of ILO. Nevertheless, the Indian workers disregarded this verdict.

One of the inevitable features of liberalization is the establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZ) to avoid export tariffs and bypass labour regulation. To make it more attractive to foreign investors, the SEZ Act was passed in India in 2005, which stated that workers would not have any trade union rights.

In some cases, attacks were waged against workers even without changing laws during mergers and acquisition of industries. In many such events the employees are not paid the legitimate dues (i.e. provident fund etc.) under the onus of the Factory Act of 1948.

Labour regulation was attempted not only through changes in labour laws, but also through various ways, such as the 'Voluntary Retirement Scheme' (VRS), wage freezes, and hiring freezes. The other major ways of regulating labour are through contracting out, outsourcing, contractual employment, no or minimum benefits, the absence of medical and accidental benefits, no insurance, and long, unregulated hours of work.

The VRS is the most popular technique undertaken to shed the number of employees both in public and private enterprises. VRS is so aggressively used to cut down regular, salaried jobs across all forms of enterprises that it actually did not remain voluntary anymore and became infamous among trade unionists as CRS, or 'Compulsory Retirement Scheme.'

While recruitment was frozen, especially at lower levels, the government also froze the centralized wage bargaining process for a few years after 1992 in public sector enterprises (PSE). It later opened the negotiation process and announced that any wage increases would have to be absorbed by the specific enterprise. In other words, the new policy clearly stated that any additional wage burden would not receive budgetary support (Bhattacherjee 1999). The share of budgetary support for public enterprises came down from 23.5% in 1991-92 to 15% in 1999 where it has remained constant (Roychoudhury 2003). At the time of writing, it's unlikely that the present Indian National Congress led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government would extend any budgetary support to state-run companies, but push for their divestment to mobilise resources. Besides wages, sometimes bonuses are not given to the workers under the same pretence of austerity. Hiring is also literally stopped in the organized manufacturing sector. Both in percentage and absolute number, jobs in the organized sector are decreasing. The decline of the labour force in the organized manufacturing sector is the most severe at the expense of the growing informal sector.

Thus the most significant feature of this economy is the contracting out or outsourcing of jobs, which gives rise to enormous casualization of the workforce to keep cost down by not entitling them any benefits, coupled with low wages and termination without any severance package. Regular violations of the Contract Labour (Abolition and Regulation) Act of 1970, which bans contract labour in all forms of work deemed 'perennial,' is one of the most crucial examples of austerity. While there is no official data available on the number of contract workers in India, the government is one of the biggest users of contract labour. In many public sector firms, contract workers make up over 70% of the staff and majority are paid only 40% of regular wages with no social protection (Economic Times 2010). A study by Meenakshi Rajeev (2009) on both the public as well as the private sector shows that the majority of contract workers do not even get the stipulated minimum wage. The proportion of casual workers to the total number of workers enumerated by the NSSO (National Sample Survey Organization) had been consistently increasing since 1977-78 (Deshpande et al 2005). Another study by Venkata Ratnam (2003) shows that temporary and contract workers are increasing by up to 30% in the organized sector. They get eight times fewer wages and are 30% more prone to accidents in some sectors. According CITU, 70% of contract workers do not even get minimum wages. In fact, contract labour, has been seen one of the principal methods used by employers to gain flexibility in the labour market (Sharma 2006). They are also used as a reserve force to substitute regular workers during the period of strike (Roychoudhury 2004).

To ease the path of reform, the Board of Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) was established in 1987 and a National Renewal Fund had been set up in 1993 to finance the VRS –both in the public and private sectors. The main objective of BIFR is to determine sickness and expedite the revival of potentially viable units or closure of unviable units. It was expected that by revival, idle investments in sick units will become productive and by closure, the locked up investments in unviable units would get released for productive use elsewhere. In continuation of this process, in 1996, the Disinvestment Commission was established to select and recommend disinvestment of PSEs. While, in 1991-92, it was announced that the government would divest up to 20% of its equity in selected PSEs in favour of mutual funds, financial, and institutional investors in the public sector, the Disinvestment Committee divided the PSEs into strategic and non-strategic areas and recommended that government's shareholding should be brought down to 26% on case to case basis, excluding strategic areas like arms, ammunitions, atomic energy, and railways. The current policy of disinvestment was announced on 6 July 2009 by the Finance Minister of India:

> The Public Sector Undertakings are the wealth of the nation, and part of this wealth should rest in the hands of the people. While retaining at least 5% Government equity in our enterprises, I propose to encourage people's participation in our disinvestment programme. Here, I must state clearly that public sector enterprises such as banks and insurance companies will remain in the public sector and will be given all support, including capital infusion, to grow and remain competitive.

However, it is not that all labour laws in India are anti-worker as mentioned before. There are also some pro-worker laws. But, it is often found that those laws are not implemented or followed properly. Workers, particularly those unorganized, are the regular victims of such situations.

The state's austerity measures have also profoundly impacted the social sectors, such as the public distribution system, health care, and education in India. This is more significant as unorganized sectors accommodate 94% of the total workforce in India.

Public Distribution System: Its aims are to provide a price support system to the producers and food subsidies to consumers. Since it was established in 1951, it has put an indirect check on the open market prices of various items and attempted to socialize the distribution of essential commodities. The public distribution system (PDS) functions through this chain of ration and MR shops. There are around 47,80,000 such shops all over the country. The role of the Central government is procurement and transport of commodities; the state governments are responsible for distribution to the ration shops. The commodities included are rice, wheat, sugar, cooking oil and cooking fuel (kerosene/ LPG) at approximately half the market rates. But in the wake of liberalization in 1991, which encourages government expenditure reduction and the removal of subsidies, the government has increased the issue prices of essential commodities like rice, wheat, and edible oil, which resulted in a price rises in the market and reduced poor people's access to subsidized essential commodities at fair priced shops.

Despite its successes, the PDS has its inherent shortcomings that result from mismanagement and massive corruption. In fact, the per capita availability of food grains in India declined from 449.3 grams in 1990-91 to 395.5 grams in 2000-01, and then increased to 444 grams in 2009 (Chand 2005; Commodity Online 2010). In 2013, India's Hunger Index Score was 21.3; the comparable data for China and Vietnam were 5.5 and 7.7. Its GHI rank is 63 out of 78 countries and in South Asia, it is at the bottom most position (GHI 2013). In 1990-92, the proportion of undernourished people was 24%. In 2004-06, there was a slight decline of only 2%. In terms of absolute numbers, the number of malnourished individuals has actually increased from 210.2 million to 251.5 million during the same period (FAO 2010). However, the buffer stock of India for rice and wheat has crossed 67 million tonnes as opposed to the required limit of strategic and buffer stock of 31.9 million tonnes. The food grains are rotting in storage and the government is paying huge exchequer for carrying these stocks, while its citizens are starving. The NCRB figures across 18 years for which data exist show that at least 2,84,694 Indian farmers have taken their lives since 1995. Divide that 18 years into two halves and the trend is dismal. India saw 1,38,321 farm suicides between 1995 and 2003 at an annual average of 15,369. For 2004-12, the number is 1,46,373, at a much higher annual average of 16,264. The figures in the second half occurred against a steep decline in the numbers of farmers in India and are hence even worse than they appear (Sainath 2013).

Health Care: The government expenditure in health care has been declining steadily during the last few decades. It was 1.05% in 1984-85, 0.96% in 1990-91, and 0.91% in 2003-04, as expressed as a percentage of India's GDP (Gupta 2005; Ghuman 2009). Currently, only 2% of the national budget is spent on health care (The Financial Express 2010). India ranks 171st out of 175 countries in percentage of GDP spent in the public sector on health and 17th in private-sector spending (Singh et al 2004).

India is liberalizing health services under Modes 2 (health tourism) and 4 (export of health professionals) of GATT. India, which is a major exporter of health professionals, has a domestic deficit in the number of physicians, ranking 119 of 184 countries (IDRC 2010). India has six doctors per 10,000 people, as compared to12 in Brazil, 14 in China, and 43 in Russia (Financial Express 2010).

From 1990-1991, with the introduction of user fees in public health care, the proportion of people unable to access any health services has doubled, primarily among disadvantaged castes, religious minorities and low-income people with disabilities (Duggal 2009). Moreover, the National Health Policy of 2002 legitimizes the ongoing privatization of health care. While domestic and foreign private insurance companies, health care management organizations, medical technology and pharmaceutical companies have proliferated, often with government support, poorly-funded public health care that has traditionally cared for the poor has collapsed (Sengupta et al 2005). Only around 10% of Indians have some form of health coverage (Gupta et al 2005), and only 13% of rural population has access to primary healthcare centers as per a survey done in 2009-10 (The Financial Express 2010).

Additionally, privatization and deregulation have resulted in rising drug prices. The number of drugs under price control decreased from 347 in 1979 to only 35 in 2004 (Gupta et al 2005). In 2005, under pressure from the WTO's Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) agreement, the Indian government changed its Model Patent Act of 1970, thereby raising the cost and reducing the availability of essential drugs. The increased cost of medical care is the second most common cause of rural indebtedness in India (People's Health Movement – India 2007).

Education: Since liberalization, India has allowed 100% foreign direct investment in higher education and is still encouraging private investment. In the period from 1990-91 to 2004-05, the share of higher education fell from 0.77% to 0.66% in a total 3% spending on education as a percentage of GDP (Mukherjee 2008). In fact, per student in real terms, there was a 28% decline in public expenditure from 1990-91 to 2002-03 since liberalization has started. There are enormous escalations in the fees structure in public institutions in some provinces, introduction of self-finance courses, and, at the same time, mushrooming of private institutions charging students exorbitantly. From 1950-51 to 1990-91, 5,180 new colleges were established in forty years; however in the next twenty years (1990-91 to 2010-11) 25, 677 new colleges were established. For reasons understandable, most of these new colleges are unaided private colleges. Thus, we see that India has one of the worst educational inequalities (the Gini coefficient of educational inequality of India is .56) in the world (Bardhan 2006). It is not that India did not have private educational institutions before liberalization; in fact, private philanthropic and no-profit driven initiative took the leading role in higher education at the beginning.

What the present ministry is trying to do is to bring about a structural change in higher education in favour of marketization.

Comparative data on some of the socioeconomic indicators of the three phases will tell us more about the consequences of reform.

**Table 1. Selected economic performances:
Pre-reform, pro-business, and pro-market periods**

Year/ Period	GDP growth (%)	Per Capita GDP (PPP)	Unemployment (%)	People below poverty line (%)	Inequality (Gini)
1983	4.7 (1951-83)	$527.47	9.22	44.93	31.5
1990	6.2 (1984-90)	$832.74	8	37	29.7
2012	7 (1985-12)	$3,813	9.4	37.2	39.2

Source: UNDP, World Bank, and others

**Table 2. Selected social indicators:
Pre-reform, pro-business, and pro-market periods**

Year/ Period	Access to Safe Drinking Water (%)	Life Expectancy (%)	Literacy (%)
1947	10	32	17
1983	38.2	56.2	43.5
1990	62.3	58.5	52.3
2012	92	66	74

Source: UNDP, World Bank, and others

The above discussion clearly indicates that since the reform has been introduced, the Indian state has started relinquishing its responsibility over its citizens in the name of austerity. As a result, inequality and unemployment have increased and there has not been a significant decrease in the percentage of people living below the poverty line in the last 25 years, despite significant increase in GDP growth. Even there is not much improvement in the poverty ratio since 1947; proportion of people below the poverty line decreased from over 50% in 1947 to 45% in 1983 to 37% in 2009 (the other two indicators i.e. inequality and unemployment rate of 1947 are not comparable due to the absence of authentic data on these indicators of that year). In the social sectors (table 2), however, in some areas, like access to safe drinking water, there is significant improvement since 1947, but data show that reform has not played any role in it; the same is true for life expectancy and literacy.

A recent study by Petia Topalova (2005) from the IMF, documents that Indian communities with a concentration of industries that lost protection have experienced smaller declines in poverty than the national trend. Topalova's study documents that workers in industries that experienced larger declines in tariffs observed declines in their relative wages, and it appears that adults in affected communities do not experience the same increases in income as experienced in communities better positioned to take advantage of the tariff declines (Edmonds 2008). In fact, the more India has opened itself to foreign investors, the more inter-provincial and rural-urban inequality has been increased (Sarker 2009). Another study by Venkata Ratnam (2003) shows that three industries that did well in the post-reform period were those, which were labour-intensive: garments, gems- jewellery, and software.

III. Resistances

It is understood from the above discussion that liberalization did not contribute positively to the conditions of common people of India, regardless of an emerging vibrant consumer class with changed priority in consumption. The people are confused. For them, neither the mixed economy or 'socialistic pattern of society' nor the neoliberal state has worked. Reform did bring quality treatment through private hospitals, reduced significantly the waiting time for electricity and telephone connections, increased number of engineering and medical seats through private schools, brought more choices of products to them, but the costs of most of these are beyond the capacity of common people. Along with the abundance of opportunities, reform has brought unprecedented stress and strain at work, uncertainty, indebtedness as well as the commodification of social relations. Besides, both periods are marked by huge corruption and bad governance in different degrees.

The political parties in India are divided on ideology as well as on their support base. National parties like the Indian National Congress (INC), and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are represented by big bourgeoisies, but they both have significant base among the middle class and the poor. Communist Party of India (CPI) and Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPIM) are represented by workers and peasants. There are two other national parties, and a significant number (around 50) of regional (state) parties in India, but in terms of organizing national movement, the above four national parties are the most powerful, because of their mass base and trade union strength. Out of the first five of 11 central trade unions recognized by the government (to be recognised, a union has to have 4,00,000 members), four central trade unions (BMS, INTUC, AITUC, CITU) are affiliated to these four national parties, the other union in this group is HMS, who generally go with the Left unions. Of the remaining seven central trade unions, four belong to other Left parties. Besides, CPI and CPIM have strong organizations among the peasantry and public sector employees.

Despite this pluralism, political parties, workers' organizations, peasant organizations, civil societies, community organizations, and various mass organizations did exhibit strong resistances against this neoliberal state. The following discussions examine such resistance movements. Though the objective of this paper is to discuss primarily the workers' resistance against neoliberal policies, however, I would briefly mention about some other movements which are important to understand the perspectives within which the workers resistances are taking place.

The first major anti-privatization movement in India was the protest against the Enron Corporation's Dabhol project in Maharashtra. Until 1992, the power generation in India had been reserved for the public sector. The demand for power was growing but there was a shortfall in the supply, which was caused by the high rate of industrial growth that occurred in the 1980s as well as by the figuring out of future demands. The government de-regularized the power sector for private investment, expressing its financial inability. Enron Corporation was invited to set up a $2.8 billion power plant at Dabhol in 1992. The protest began immediately, first by an environmental group, the Bombay Environmental Action Group, which was subsequently joined by consumer protection groups, citizens groups, NGOs, researchers, political parties, and trade unions, etc.

These groups eventually formed an umbrella organization: *Enron Virodhi Sangram Manch* (Forum for Struggle against Enron). The protest was massive and nationwide. In 1995, the Government of Maharashtra announced the cancellation of the project. Enron Corporation sought a massive compensation from the provincial government. There were streams of negotiations between the provincial government and Enron and finally a new deal was signed to revive the project with many modifications that were in line with the demands of the protesters in 1996. The new deal was welcomed by most of the protest groups, barring a few that thought that the present deal was worse than the previous one. Though the public debate on Enron died down quickly, but it remained as the first major protest movement against the state walking away from its responsibility as a part of its liberalization process. Protests against privatization of electricity continued even after Enron. More than 10,000 electricity employees, representing almost all of the states of India, marched to parliament on March 1, 2006 under the banner of National Coordination Committee of Electricity Employees & Engineers (NCCOEEE), demanding the review of Electricity Act 2003. Recently, nearly 60,000 Punjab State Electricity (PSEB) employees stopped work for 24 hours on March 30, 2010 to protest against the state government's decision to privatize the company.

If *Enron Virodhi Sangram Manch* (Forum for Struggle against Enron) is the first major anti-privatization protest in India, *Narmada Bachao Andolan* (Save the Narmada) may be called as the first major movement in India which questions the present neoliberal development paradigms. The protest against the India's largest dam project Sardar Sarovar Dam was begun in 1985 and eventually became India's one of most influential social movements in India and later we also saw the birth of National Alliance and People's Movements (NAPM), a network of social movement organizations against the present discourse on development.

There have been numerous protests in other sectors almost from the beginning of the liberalization process. Indian farmers, fishermen, villagers, on different occasions, have put up resistance against the state's liberalization process, which has affected their livelihood. India decided to join the WTO in 1991. Soon after this decision, a million farmers across the country came to Delhi in March, 1991 on a national platform called National Coordination Committee of Indian Farmers to protest against India's induction in the WTO, which would inevitably open India's market to subsidized food grains, imported seeds, and agricultural inputs. There were a number of protests against multinational corporations (MNCs) entering India after liberalization. Farmer's organizations like *Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha* (Karnataka State Farmers' Organization), *Bharatiya Kisan Union* (Indian Farmers' Union), *Krishi Jami Raksha Samiti*(Organisation for Saving Agricultural Land) , *Bhumi Uchhed Pratirodh Committee* (Committee against Land Evictions), *All India Krishak Sabha* (All India Peasants Front) led by CPI and CPIM), fishermen's organization like National Fishworkers Forum, and other organizations like *Samajwadi Abhiyan* (Socialist Memento), *Swadeshi Jagaran Manch* (A Vision of Self Reliance) did exhibit strong resistance against Cargill, Monsanto, KFC, Coke, Pepsi, Salim Group, Tata Motors, and the government's decision to allow MNCs to deep-sea fishing, etc.

Not all these movements have seen immediate, tangible successes; some of them definitely achieved success, while others did not, but the issues they had raised were transmitted into the political circle of India, as well as to the general masses. With this presage of the resistances against liberalism, in the following few paragraphs, I will briefly discuss a few of the people's resistance movements which were centering on privatization of three vital social sectors: water, higher education, and the health care system, and finally labour resistances will be discussed at length briefly followed by peasants and tribal protests against corporate looting of agricultural and forest land in India.

The National Water Policy, 2002 clearly encourages the privatization of water in its recommendations: *"Private sector participation should be encouraged in planning, development and management of water resources projects for diverse uses, wherever feasible."* Even before this policy, Madhya Pradesh State Government had sold a part of the Sheonath River to a private company in 1998. *Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha* (Chhattisgarh Liberation Front), *Nadighati Morcha (River Valley Front),* along with Left parties organized several protests against this sale and demanded the cancellation of the agreement. In 2003, the provincial government (now Chhattisgarh) succumbed to the pressure of the people and announced that it would cancel the deal. However, a huge compensation was demanded by this private company and the replacement of the then chief minister of Chhattisgarh province allowed maintaining the status quo. There are a greater number of instances of the privatization of rivers, canals, and ground water in India in the name of austerity. Organizations like Water Workers Alliance, *Tarun Bharat Sangha* (Young India Front), Science Technology and Ecology, *Paani Morcha* (Water Forum) have been constantly organizing protests and seminars against government's policy of privatization, as well as its decision to privatize water resources in some cities in India, such as New Delhi, Tirpur etc.

The National Forum in Defence of Education (NFDE) held a protest march and rally at Parliament Street on December 2, 2010 to denounce the centralization, privatization and the commercialization of the education sector in the country. The protest saw participation from the left student and youth organizations, Democratic Teachers' Front, among others. The marchers comprised students, teachers, as well as non-teaching employees of educational institutions. However, in general, teachers' movements have reacted to the government's policies in a piecemeal way without striking at the root. Even the students' unions are unable to put up strong resistance against the phenomenal growth of private colleges and universities.

As in the case of higher education, there were not many protests against privatization of the health care system. However, there were significant protests against intellectual property rights (TRIPS) from different platforms like political parties and even by the government of India in the WTO's ministerial meetings.

As mentioned above, different community organizations have been participating in the movements against this neoliberal state, sometimes alone, sometimes with others. These are small groups of social activists, landless peasants, marginal farmers, unorganized labourers, displaced people, urban poor, small entrepreneurs, and unemployed youth etc. Most of them are not affiliated to any political parties, but have lineage in the Gandhian, socialist, communist, and social reform movements (Seth and Sethi 1991)

Organized labour constitutes only less than 6% of India's total workforce of 459 million (NCL 2009). The numbers of unionized workers form only 2% of the total labour force: 5.5% of non-agricultural work and a decreasing 20% of wage-earning organized sector labour. Union membership in the public sector enterprises is almost 90% of the 2 million workforce (Uba 2008). However, a study on the three provinces of India, Kerala, West Bengal, and Maharashtra, shows that union density is much higher than commonly believed, indicating that government data underreport the number of unionized workers (Teitelbaum 2006). In addition to that, members of small trade unions are not included in this number. However, even considering all these factors, unionization in India is low and one of the prime reasons is the dominance of informal sectors. Despite the low unionization, we know that the political and economic importance of the working class lies in its ability to monopolize existing labour markets and, thereby, challenge the structural power of capital. In this context, the mobilization capacity of the working class vis-à-vis industrial capital is the crucial factor to consider, not the size of the organized manufacturing relative related to the informal sector. Though not a common occurrence, when labour rises, it can shake the social order to its very core, exposing basic fault lines, unsettling deeply rooted social hierarchies, and revealing the degree of social power that can be realized in collective action.

When a state like India, which had a robust public sector presence in its economy, tries to increase private stakes, freeze recruitment and wages, curtail union rights, and reduce social sector expenditure, it always does so in the name of austerity. Today, the unions are facing many challenges, the most important of which is to ensure workers' interests, while at the same time making the organization profitable in an extremely competitive environment.

Since 1991, there were 15 nationwide strikes organized against liberalization and its impacts like unemployment, casualization, price rice etc. by major political parties (mostly the Left parties), trade unions, peasant organizations, and employees federations, particularly by the left (CITU, AICTU, UTUC, UTUC-LS) and socialist unions (HMS) in India. These have been accompanied by hundreds of strikes at enterprise and firm levels. The Indian National Congress and its union, INTUC, participated in the last three of these 15 nationwide strikes: on Sept. 7, 2010, on February 28, 2012, and on February 20-21 2013. BMS of BJP did participate in three of them, one independently, when its own government tried to implement recommendation of SNCL in 2002 and in the last two mentioned above. It is interesting to observe that though the central leadership of the two rightist trade unions, INTUC and BMS, decided to refrain from participating in most all the nationwide strikes against liberalization process, at the regional, local, and enterprise levels, a section of their workers did participate in those nationwide strikes.

The recent two consecutive nationwide strikes in successive years called by all the central trade unions need to be discussed. In an unprecedented show of unity, all trade unions in the country have come together on the same platform and given a call for a general strike on February 28, 2012. This is the first time since Independence that trade unions, cutting across ideological and political affiliations, have joined hands to register their protest on a wide range of issues arising out of the liberalisation policy (The Hindu 2012).

"The liberalisation and new economic policies unveiled since 1991 have undermined the interests of workers to such an extent that trade unions representing the Left, Right and Centrist parties have been forced to come together. Such unity was not witnessed even during or after Emergency," All India Trade Union Congress general secretary Gurudas Dasgupta told The Hindu (ibid).

The very recent nationwide general strike was called for two-day strike on February 20-21 2013, which completely shut down many parts of the country. The trade unions have 10 demands that constitute the major problems facing the working class. Of the ten demands put up at least six of them relate to problems of informal workers. These are: a national floor wage of Rs. 10,000 per month, the removal of contract labour and in the meantime contract workers should receive the same wages and facilities as permanent workers, the compulsory recognition of trade unions by management within 45 days of application, retirement benefits for all workers, pension for all workers and social security cover for informal workers (Bhowmik 2013).

What is significant is that all trade unions have come together to fight for the rights of labour. This itself is a significant advance for the working class in the country that is badly divided. This was the first time when trade unions called for a two-day strike and stuck to it despite the government trying to mislead the unions with empty last-minute gestures. There was unprecedented participation of unorganised labour including largest sections like agriculture, construction apart from other rural and urban workers. Significantly Contract workers have joined the strike in a magnificent way.

In the present industrial relations of India, there were more lockouts than strikes. Since 1965, the number of lockouts is increasing as compared to the number of strikes. The latest data available on industrial disputes in 2005 show that there were 227 strikes and 229 lockouts in India (Sengupta 2009). It has been suggested that lockouts were more responsible for workdays to be lost than strikes and this reflects the increase in the bargaining power of employers (Sundar 2005).

However, despite the recommendations of SNCL, establishment of Disinvestment Commission as well as BIFR, the government of India has, so far, been able to privatize only 10 of its 244 PSEs and sold shares of 51 others by 2011. While, not many PSEs were sold to private enterprises, but the increasing tendency towards selling shares of PSEs, particularly the *Navratna*[2] Industries is definitely a move towards gradual privatization.

As mentioned above, SEZ is another area of regulation of labour. When the SEZ Act was passed in 2005 during INC lead United Progressive Alliance government, the left parties were supporting the government from outside the cabinet. The central government proposed to keep a clause in the Act that workers in SEZ will not fall in the purview of IDA. But, because of the protest of the left MPs, the central government was forced to exclude this anti-labour clause and let respective provincial governments make decision on it. In three provinces of India, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu, CITU has been able to organize SEZ workers. However, the dilemma is that the CPIM led Government in West Bengal forcefully tried to acquire land in Nandigram, an area in East Medinipur district of West Bengal to allow Salim Group of Indonesia to establish a chemical hub under SEZ, which ended in a tragic violence that killed at least 14 people on March, 2007.

[2]*Navratna* Industries: *Navratna* was the title given originally to nine most successful and prestigious Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs), identified by the Government of India in 1997 which allowed them greater autonomy to compete in the global market. The number of PSEs having Navratna status has been raised to 19.

I have already mentioned that the composition of the labour force has been changing; contractualization, outsourcing, and casualization are the features of manufacturing as well as service sectors in India. Permanent workers have trade unions, employees have federations, pay commissions, and regular wage negotiations, but unorganized, casual, and contract labourers are mostly non-unionized, and even if they are unionized, trade unions did not pay much attention to them. Even leftist unions were not serious about these workers in the recent past, despite having unions in the organized sectors for a long time. These workers are the most disadvantaged, exploited, and unattended. Pay hikes for the government employees brought more problems for the casual as well as contract workers, and especially for the workers of unorganized sectors because of inflation and price rise.

However, with recent changes, trade unions started organizing these workers and incorporating their demands among the demands of the workers of organized sector. Besides CITU, AITUC, INTUC, HMS, BMS, National Centre for Labour (NCL), Self Employed Women Associations (SEWA), New Trade Union Initiative (NTUI), and National Alliance of Street Vendors of India (NASVI) are some of the unions that work among India's massive informal sector (433 million workers according to NCL). In fact, 7% of those employed in the organized sector have been identified as informal workers as well (NSSO 2004-05). Whereas, NTUI works among the non-core sectors, NASVI is an umbrella organization of street vendors; SEWA, as the name suggests, is a women's organization, started organizing women street vendors, and gradually extended to women workers in other informal sectors as well. Organizing informal workers is too difficult considering their scatteredness, low density, casual nature of job, and fear of the employers. However, according to Registrars of Unions, India (2002) about one-fourth of the union members are informal workers.

Change of attitude of the unions also forced the government to change its approach toward these people. While wages (minimum) and social security along with job security are the pressing demands of most of these workers, right to vending and social security are the two most important demands of India's 10 million street vendors.

Minimum Wages Act**,** 1948 provides for the fixation and enforcement of minimum wages. This act is a very important weapon to save informal workers from exploitation and provides a moderate wage. But, the problem is the implementation of this act in a country of more than 94% informal labour force. Unions, peasant organizations, as well as various social justice groups have been struggling to ensure the implementation of minimum wages, but there has not been much success in this regard due to the lack of organizational strength, improper attitude of the employers, inadequate inspecting staff with corrupt practices, and massive size of the country.

Another important issue is the social security benefits for the unorganized workers. The central (federal) government enacted the Unorganised Workers Social Security Act, 2008. The Act provides for consultation of National Social

Security Board which shall recommend social security schemes like life and disability coverage, health and maternity benefits, old age protection and any other benefit that may be determined by the state (provincial) government for unorganized workers. The central government did come up with an extremely important labour act, but it did not create any fund for this, instead put the implementation as well as financial responsibility on the provincial governments.

Street vendors are the most visible and a significant section of the informal sector. Their existence was always a question of legality as they conduct their business on public places. However, since the 1990s, they have been facing acute problems of eviction in the name of building 'World Class City' modelled on London, New York etc. In 1998, the NASVI was formed. It initiated a survey on street vending in seven cities in 1999. Based on the findings of NASVI, SEWA advocated for a national workshop in 2001 on the problems faced by street vendors. The minister of urban affairs announced that a National Task Force on Street Vendors, with the objective of drafting a National Policy on Street Vending, would be set up. A new version of the policy was framed, which was very similar to the earlier one. A model law which has few major discrepancies with the national policy was also framed in 2009 by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation. The bill has not been introduced in the parliament so far (Bhowmik 2009).

Finally, I would like to mention the current peasant movements in India. Whereas, peasantry have joined all the 13 national strikes against liberalization, they also have their own specific issues like minimum wages, Implementation of NREG Act, along with corporate looting of their land. There are sporadic movements for minimum wages as well as implementation of NREG (National Rural Employment Guarantee) Act across India, but the peasant movements that shook the corporate India as well as MNCs were the movements against land grabbing by the corporations. Whereas the parliamentary Left parties like CPI-M, CPI participated in few of those movements, it was the tribals and *dalits* (lower caste), the inhabitants of those areas, alone or under the leadership of CPI-Maoist, the largest group of erstwhile CPI-ML (Marxist-Leninist) Party, who has taken this cause and put stiff resistances against these corporations. In some cases, the corporations either had to withdraw (Salim, Vedanta etc.) or change their original plans (Posco etc.), while in others, peasants had to retreat. However, the struggle did pay as always. The increasing consciousness and solidarity among the poor along with better compensation package, environmental regulations, and cultural sensitivity from the neo-liberal state and its associates are the gains of these movements.

IV. Conclusion

In this postmodern, post-communist era in which the mainstream media plays a significant role in people's lives, yet the media is mostly owned by corporate sectors, it is extremely difficult to organize workers under the banners of unions. Unions are often made to be scapegoats without any valid rationales for corporate failures. The masses are in a deep ideological crisis along with the unions and political parties. The objective condition is very dilemmatic: 'World Class Cities' with flyovers and shopping malls, wide, smooth, metalled roads, modern cars, 10 times more aeroplanes in the sky, well-dressed men and women in branded attire, a thriving consumer class on one side, and on the other side with vast majority of people struggling for the bare necessities of life: 77% of people living below Rs. 20 per day, unemployment is increasing with massive casualization of work and inequality is on the rise. Along with these, the government is also trying to curtail the right to protest either through enacting laws or through changing the workforce structure. What is responsible for this dichotomy? Is it individual fate, skills, achievement or the unequal social system? Is Privatization better for the common people or State Ownership? In India, people have mixed experiences about government control. Before liberalization, one had to wait for 3-5 years to get an electric connection, cooking gas supply, or telephone connection. Even to buy a good quality Black &White TV (EC TV owned by Government of India), the waiting time was more than a year. Corruption at all levels of government is another factor. It is not that the privatization does not bring corruption; it does so in a different ways and probably on a larger scale; but people's expectation from government institutions is certainly different from the private institutions. People want good governance.

At present, neoliberal philosophers and corporate sectors with their enormous financial, political, and military strength and with the media in their hands are on the winning side – at least for the time being. They have successfully created a dilemma among the general masses regarding 'what is to be done' to get out of this situation.

The power structure at the apex decision making body in India will explain more about it. The Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh is also the ex-officio Chairman of Planning Commission of India, is a pro-liberalization man; the Deputy Chairman Dr. Montek Sing Ahluwalia is an ex-World Bank and ex-IMF employee, and the current Minister for Home Affairs, Mr P. Chidambaram who had been Indian's Minister of Commerce twice (1996-98 and 2004-2008), is a multibillionaire and happens to be on the corporate boards of various companies. It is obvious that they will speak in favour of neoliberal policies.

There are opposite views also. Blanchflower and Oswald's study (1994) shows that almost all over the world, higher wages are associated with higher employment, implying that unemployment could be the result of many factors except higher wages. A recent ILO study, based on the data collected from 162 countries, concludes that stronger trade union rights do not generally hinder trade competitiveness, including trade of labour–intensive goods, and indeed countries with stronger trade union rights tend to do comparatively well (Kucera et al 2004). Sudha Deshpande et al (1998) found that unionized firms are more likely to introduce technological changes, change product range, and improve the quality of products. Most Left intellectuals see globalization in a black and white manner, which does not conform to every experience of common people. When their experience tells that they can reach their homes by a better bus on a metalled road, they can get electric connection, telephone connection, cooking gas supply without years long waiting, and see that some of them are elevated to enjoy the increased GDP of India and abundance of products, they probably want to give 'globalization' a chance.

As we know, commoners have enormous capacity of patience. But there is a limit. To give an example, INTUC never participated in any of the 14 national strikes except the last two. When I asked their president about their changed position, he said that the economic conditions of their workers forced them to join formally with the Left unions. In addition to that, we have seen that a section of workers of INTUC and BMS have joined the Left unions in those nationwide strikes. There is confusion also among the Left as well as its supporters. Not all the Left supporters are fully convinced of launching a strong protest against everything of this neoliberal state, as their experience of the past is also not good. The leaders are not also immune to this confusion. The parliamentary Left sometimes failed to recognize the neoliberal offensive or a part of it. The incidences of Nandigram, Singur, Posco, Koodankulam nuclear power project are some of the examples of the failure of the Left. Besides it needs to consider that the Left has moderate support base in Indian politics. They are not in a position to introduce a national policy, but can certainly exert influence over the BJP led or Congress led central government with their trade unions, peasant organizations, and employee's federations. The BJP or Congress on the other hand, though represented by big bourgeoisies, also needs the support of the commoners who eventually will vote them to power. That's why we see the introduction of various social assistance programmes within a neoliberal state and participation of their trade unions in nationwide strike on February 28th, 2012.

Despite all these, Indian workers as well as peasants have seen their success to a large extent in stopping privatization of its public enterprises as mentioned above. People's struggles continue through success and failures. Whereas Indian Iron and Steel Company (IISCO), Nationalized Banks, and Insurance Companies are success stories of the 90s, followed by the recent success in stopping Vedanta Aluminum Limited, a UK-based firm from opening mining in sensitive tribal forest land, the stories of failure are the disinvestment of VSNL (*Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited*), BALCO (Bharat Aluminum Company), and Maruti Udyog Limited. However, the biggest achievement among these struggles was the stoppage of the privatization of public financial institutions, which has saved India from the recent global meltdown. If these are some of the shines of success of the people's resistance, the major defeat is the failure to stop casualization, contractualization, and outsourcing along with the failure to ensure a minimum wage to informal sector workers.

People's relentless struggles inside and outside of institutional framework did also result in other significant successes in favour of the poor. The introduction of National Agricultural Insurance[3], the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act[4], Right to Forest Act[5], Social Security Act[6] for informal workers, the Food Security Bill[7] are some of the landmark successes of people's resistances in India.

This paper does not boast to claim a strong theoretical engagement, but once again it is proved that it is the people's united struggles which determine the fate of the people. The people of India are divided not only on the basis of class, but also on the basis of ethnicity, religion, caste, kinship, regionalism etc. as well on the level of education and degree of consciousness. Thus it is extremely difficult to bring them under a single umbrella to fight against neoliberalism; still the account of the people's protests in India indicate that it is the class, not the primordial identities, which united the working class against capital.

Trade Unions and Affiliations:

AICCTU: All India Central Council of Trade Unions: CPIML (Liberation)

AITUC: All India Trade Union Congress: CPI

BMS: Bharatiya Majdoor Sangha: BJP

CITU: Center of Indian Trade Unions: CPIM

HMS: Hind Majdoor Sabha: not directly affiliated with any political party, but to some extent with different fractions of Janata Party

INTUC: Indian National Trade Union Congress: Indian National Congress

UTUC: United Trade Union Congress: Revolutionary Socialist Party

UTUC-LS: United Trade Union Congress-Lenin Sarani; Socialist Unity Centre of India.

Interviews:

Amarjit Kaur: All India General Secretary, AITUC.

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[3] National Agricultural Insurance: Introduced in 1999 to provide insurance coverage and financial support to farmers in the event of failure of any of the notified crop as a result of natural calamities, pests and diseases.

[4] National Rural Employment Guarantee Act of 2005: 100 days guaranteed employment in rural India at minimum wages.

[5] Right to Forest Act of 2006: Tribal people got back their rights over forest land including both individual rights to cultivated on forestland and community rights over common property resources.

[6] See explanation above.

[7] Food Security Act of 2013: People below poverty line will get 25 kg of food at highly subsidized price (Rice @Rs.3/kg; Wheat @Rs. 2/kg.; Millet etc. @ rs.1/kg.). This would cover almost 75% of rural population and 50% of urban population.

Anuradha Talwar: Paschimbanga Khet Majdoor Samity.

Basudev Bose: General Secretary, WB State Committee, AICCTU.

Chandan Sanyal: Founder member of various federations including NTUI, Ex-All India General Secretary, National Federation of Sales Representatives union.

Jyotirmoy Pal: Organizing Secretary, West Bengal Government Employees Union (Naba Parjay).

Kingshuk Dutta: General Secretary, Association of Chartered Accountants.

Lakshma Reddy: General Secretary, BMS.

Piyus Roy: General Secretary, Coordination Committee of Central Government Employees and Workers.

R.A. Mital: General Secretary, HMS.

Subhasish Gupta: Writer and Left Activist.

Subrata Mukherjee: Ex-President, INTUC WB State Committee.

Tapan Sen: General Secretary, CITU.

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