

The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

January 2021



“Let us all work for the Greatness of India.”

– The Mother

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Successful Future

(Full of Promise and Joyful Surprises)

Botanical name: Gaillardia Pulchella

Common name: Indian blanket, Blanket flower, Fire-wheels

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A DECLARATION

We do not fight against any creed, any religion.

We do not fight against any form of government.

We do not fight against any social class.

We do not fight against any nation or civilisation.

We are fighting division, unconsciousness, ignorance, inertia and falsehood.

We are endeavouring to establish upon earth union, knowledge, consciousness, Truth, and we fight whatever opposes the advent of this new creation of Light, Peace, Truth and Love.

— The Mother

(Collected works of the Mother, Vol. 13, pp. 124-25)

THE REPUBLIC DAY DEBACLE: HOW THE FARMERS' PROTEST STANDS EXPOSED

After having staged massive sit-in protests for more than 2 months, the alleged farmers at the Delhi-Haryana and Delhi-UP borders are visibly in a state of turmoil. From the superfluous protests by the so-called farmers of Punjab and Haryana to the unprecedented violence marring India's Republic Day to the lapsing of these protests into political and caste-based display of ego, these protests have come a long way and exposed the nefarious political machinations underway in the name of farmers.

In the previous article, we had highlighted how the key demands of farmers – to repeal the three farm laws and to legalize the provision of Minimum Support Price (MSP) by making it a punishable offence to buy below MSP – were completely devoid of any substance. The demands not only contradicted basic sensibility, but also the past positions of these very so-called farmers. We had highlighted the politics behind the farm protests – how most of the farmer leaders were explicitly Communist leaders, how many of the protesting organizations like Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) factions had always supported the liberalization of Indian agriculture but had presently taken a U-turn, and how various political parties now opposing the laws always included their precise provisions in their election manifestos in the past. We had also highlighted the vast support to the farm laws by key all-India farmer organizations and the lack of protests across the rest of the country, barring Punjab and Haryana.

Together, these and other basic facts and arguments had made it more than clear that the protests against the farm laws were wholly politically motivated – they had been undertaken solely for the sake of toppling the foundations of the ruling

Modi government. The events that have occurred since – especially the developments in January and the violence on India's Republic Day – have ultimately and thoroughly exposed the alleged 'farmer' protests and evaporated whatever little public sympathy it had. Even as the protests take their own self-defeating turns, the decades-long suppressed poison of a subverted democracy is finally coming out in this process of national churning and struggle.

THE FARMERS' PROTEST: A CONFUSED AND DEVIOUS TRAJECTORY

The farmers' protests – centered at the Singhu and Tikri borders between Delhi and Haryana, and, UP Gate border between Delhi and UP at Ghazipur – began with much earnest towards the end of November 2020. The complete background of the initial phase of the protests and the demands of the protestors has been provided in the previous issue of this magazine. Since the protests began, there has been a consistent stalemate, with protestors occupying the roads by erecting makeshift tents, kitchen facilities, medical facilities and even luxurious services. After 11 rounds of government-farmer talks, going up to January 22nd, and, after unprecedented violence on Republic Day by farmers, the situation is seemingly back to how it started – but only seemingly, as the remaining shreds of credibility of the protest are completely lost.

Throughout December and early weeks of January, the government has tried its best to arrive at an acceptable solution that can encourage the farmers to disband the protest. **Short of repealing the laws, in the 11 rounds of talks held, the government was ready to concede on every possible aspect and went even as far as to offer to suspend the laws for 1.5 years and form a joint committee to discuss the laws. In the midst of these talks, even the Supreme Court gave its verdict,**

offering to suspend the implementation of the three farm laws till a resolution to the deadlock is found. The Court, although wading into policy-making legislative domain, mercifully, did not pass judgement on the nature and validity of the laws, and restricted itself to finding a manageable way to handle the raging protests. It formed a four-member committee which could talk to the farmers, take their views and suggest the relevant amendments, prior to the implementation of the laws. The committee consisted of Pramod Kumar Joshi of International Food Policy Research Institute, agriculture economist Ashok Gulati, Bhupinder Singh Mann of Bhartiya Kisan Union and Anil Ghanwat of Shetkari Sanghatana.

Within two days of the formation of the committee, Bhupinder Singh Mann of Bhartiya Kisan Union resigned. Mann's BKU faction has not participated in the protests. He resigned amid the outcry that all four members of the committee are supporters of the farm laws. He was also isolated by BKU (Mann), whose members deserted him to form a new faction – BKU (Punjab). The new outfit also broke ties with All India Kisan Coordination Committee, which was headed by Mann (Bhardwaj, 2021). The protestors also refused to accept the SC committee and kept insisting that they will only be satisfied with the complete repeal of the three farm laws.

Besides the SC's intervention in the issue, the Bar Council of India also stated that 90% of the farmers are not in favour of protests (Livelihood, 2021). Even after the SC ruling, failed talks – where the government offered the significant concession of holding the laws in abeyance for 18 months – have also only further gone onto re-affirm the bogus and politically-motivated intentions of the protestors. They have rejected each and every proposal put forward by the government. **Finally, at the 11th round of talks when it became clear that farmers refused to listen to anything and, as it became increasingly obvious**

even to the public that the only motivation of the protestors was to anyhow break the back of the Modi government, the government told the protestors that it had nothing more to offer to them.

THE REPUBLIC DAY VIOLENCE – A BREAKING POINT FOR THE PROTESTS

The near unanimous public opinion after the 11th round of talks – cutting across ideological spectrums – was that it would have been the smartest for the farmers to take the government's offer of 18-month suspension of laws, declare victory and walk off. But this did not happen and it seems **in the larger and deeper working of things, the nature of these and all such protests was destined to be exposed, for the progress and deeper unification of the country.**

Thus, after the miserable light in which the farmers appeared after the talks, the unprecedented events on 26th January marked a complete turnaround in the protest movement, putting the protestors on backfoot. The farmers' rally, for which Delhi Police had granted permission limiting it to specific routes on the outer parts of Delhi only, was instead pre-planned to create trouble and internationally embarrass the Modi government.

THE REPUBLIC DAY DEBACLE

I. EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE 26TH JANUARY VIOLENCE:

The proposed tractor rally of the farmers on Republic Day was an event planned well in advance. Many union leaders, in their anticipation, had even made public statements indicating that something unforgettable and of a large scale would take place. The motives of drawing global attention to the tractor rally, overshadowing India's Republic Day by showing protestors as a parallel power centre to the government and embarrassing

the Indian government internally and externally was always present.

The Supreme Court had refused to take a decision on the petition regarding the proposed farmers' tractor rally on Republic Day and left the decision to the Delhi Police, citing it as being a law-and-order issue. After much deliberation, the Delhi Police granted permission on the conditions that law and order will not be disrupted, the farmers rally would follow the designated pre-decided routes agreed upon between the police and protestors, and the rally would begin only after the official Republic Day programme had concluded.

Accordingly, the Delhi Police had agreed upon the designated protest route with the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) – an organization of about 40 unions protesting against the farm laws, mainly from Punjab, and the main entity that had been involved in talks with the government.

However, one night before the protests, there is a video evidence to show that a section of young protestors occupied the stage at Singhu border site of farmers' protests to raise objections to the route agreed upon between Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) and the Delhi Police, and express unhappiness with SKM's decision to water down the march. They insisted that they will take the Ring Road and enter Delhi. Prominent among these young protestors were gangster-turned-politician Lakha Sidhana and Punjabi singer and actor, Deep Sidhu, who had been summoned several times during the course of the protest for his alleged links to separatist foreign Khalistani outfit, Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) (Brar, 2021).

They were part of a protesting group called Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee, which had decided that it will enter inner Delhi. Many of the protestors sitting at the SKM site also decided to follow the Ring Road route. The following day, by the

time the protest march of SKM started, many protestors had already gone along the Ring Road route (Brar, 2021). Something similar happened at the Ghazipur protest site near the UP Gate. A large section of young protestors defied the senior union leaders and insisted that they would go towards Akshardham and through that directly into central Delhi (Jha, 2021).

This divide between union leaders and young protestors must not, however, be taken at face value. The implication of this apparent 'divide' between young protestors and union leaders was clear. **Deliberately or incidentally, with the full knowledge of union leaders, the decision had been taken to enter Delhi and move towards central Delhi.** An undated viral video of BKU leader, Rakesh Tikait, released by news agencies on January 27th shows him goading the protestors to carry sticks, lathis and flags in order to save their land (Times Now, 2021).

The fact that an alleged breakaway group decided to take their own way and ensured that huge masses of protestors followed them made it highly convenient for union leaders to remain cushioned in safety, even as assurance of creating a mayhem was declared one night before. That way, the objective of embarrassing the Modi government, holding the nation's dignity hostage and ensuring that union leaders could not be named in any future investigations, would be simultaneously achieved. Critical analysis, therefore, shows that, in all likelihood, there was no real divide between young and old protestors, and union leaders were all along implicit in the Republic Day violence, and had planned everything carefully so that it becomes difficult to directly implicate them.

II. THE REPUBLIC DAY MAYHEM:

As a result, protestors at both the borders completely violated the understanding reached with the Delhi Police and

not only started their march before the Republic Day parade was completely over, but also deviated from the pre-decided routes to enter into inner Delhi. Even before 9 AM, the protestors had started breaking the barricades near north Delhi. The cops couldn't fire and could only use basic crowd control methods, like tear-gas, which had little effect on farmers racing in their tractors, breaking barricades. Many even tried to drive the tractors onto the police personnel who came in their way. The so-called "volunteers" who had been appointed by the union leaders to guide and assist the protest at various points were nowhere to be seen.

The most jarring visuals of this mob rampage (disguised as a protest march) came when this huge mob entered central Delhi and moved towards ITO, where they engaged themselves in massive vandalism of public property and attacking police forces (including brutal attacks on women police officers) with swords, kripans and fursas. Many were mounted on horses, led by Nihang Sikhs. **The spectacle of Khalistani sympathizer disguised as a farmer raising a sword on police officer, and of the saffron and yellow flags – one of which was Khalistani – hoisted at the Red Fort, have gone down as the most jarring memories of this Republic Day.**

Besides barbaric sword attacks on police personnel, amongst the worst visuals to stand out was a protestor over-speeding his tractor in a bid to crush the police under it. Ultimately, he lost control of the tractor near the barricades and it overturned, thereby killing the possessed protestor. He was a Sikh from UP who had gone to Australia a few years back. Thus, there was only this one death among the protestors. The mob also vandalized buses and private vehicles, leading to shut down of several metro stations in an attempt to control the situation.

Subsequently, overpassing the violence at the ITO were the scenes from Red Fort, where a huge mob ultimately managed to reach. **Protestors breached the Red Fort and finally hoisted the Sikh religious, Nishaan Sahib, flag and the Khalistani flag next to the Indian flag – a clear insult of the Indian flag.** The Delhi Police eventually pulled down the illegally hoisted flags and attempted to clear the Red Fort off the protestors. Prior to that, they had to rescue terrorized children and civilians in the premises.

Incidentally, the protestors also specifically targeted and vandalized the Republic Day tableaux of Uttar Pradesh (depicting Ram Mandir) and Uttarakhand (depicting Kedarnath temple), thereby betraying how their hatred for India was closely bound up with resentment against consolidating and ascendent Hindutva nationalism (Organiser, 2021).

III. THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH:

The Delhi Police had to bear the largest brunt of the mob violence. It resulted in injuries to more than 300 police personnel, with 2 admitted in ICU – over the next few days, this number increased to more than 500. Prior to the Republic Day violence, the epicenter of protests was at Singhu border between Delhi and Haryana, with substantial presence of Sikhs from Punjab, Haryana and Uttarakhand. The violence on 26th January put these protestors on a backfoot, with crowds at Singhu substantially thinning. Security deployment around the protest site was also tightened.

Delhi Police had begun to arrest several protestors. The very next day of the Red Fort incident, around 200 protestors were detained. Internet has remained consistently shut at the protest sites since 26th January.

FIRs were also filed against various famous Leftist public figures who had directly stoked the protests – such as Yogendra

Yadav, various senior journalists including Rajdeep Sardesai, Congress politician Shashi Tharoor, environmental activist Medha Patkar and others. Prominent media entities and individuals – such as former India Today journalist Rajdeep Sardesai, the Caravan magazine and others – had spun all kinds of stories about the single rioter’s death whose tractor had overturned, alleging that he died after being shot by the police. Fake news had been leveraged to the hilt on this issue.

The union leaders made repeated statements that they were not associated with the Red Fort and ITO vandalism and that the government was responsible. **Opposition parties, instead of standing with the nation at this hour, have accused the government of the bizarre charge of being responsible for the Republic Day incident by not giving in to farmers’ demands to repeal the three laws.**

Certain public faces, mostly belonging to Congress party, who had egged on the protestors for months were either quiet or were busy trying to spin one conspiracy theory or the other to anyhow pin the blame for the Republic Day debacle on the Modi government, by suggesting ludicrous and baseless theories that alleged that the BJP and the Delhi Police wanted the protestors to enter the Red Fort area. They did not examine the rationality of their own claims. The very same people had been applauding the protestors as they marched through central Delhi, vandalizing public property on the way from ITO to Red Fort. It was only after the flag hoisting at Red Fort that these Left-liberal lobbies went into overdrive to somehow salvage whatever little justifications they could.

However, despite this massive ill-will of the united anti-national forces, the public has been solidly behind the government. Public outrage was so much that the celebrated Left-liberal journalist Sardesai was temporarily put off air by

India Today media group. He resigned a few hours later. Many of those responsible for the Red Fort incident – such as Deep Sidhu – had already absconded. Sidhu has been releasing videos threatening to expose the union leaders in all aspects, alleging that they were involved in planning and were there during the Red Fort incident and were making him a scapegoat.

In the aftermath of the Red Fort incident, the protestors, on a backfoot, cancelled the planned February 1st farmers' foot march to the Parliament. Differences and blame games emerged among protestors. Several participating organizations/unions also quit the protests. Sardar VM Singh was among the first prominent ones to quit. BKU (Bhanu) President, Bhanu Pratap, also quit. As a result, Chilla border became completely free of protests.

Besides the Delhi Police investigations and arrests, the UP Police also went into action. Internet services and electricity were cut-off. UP had completely managed to nearly empty the Ghazipur protest site, and opened the NH-24 route connecting Delhi and Ghaziabad. The Delhi-Saharanpur highway had also been cleared and protestors at Baghpat were evicted on January 28th.

THE LOCALS AS A THIRD FORCE

After the Republic Day mayhem, the locals have turned highly hostile towards the protestors. Indeed, on Republic Day itself, as the tractor rally was being taken out in the morning in north Delhi, the workers in factories criticized that these people were not farmers (Lalwani & Sharma, 2021). Not only their businesses were hindered, but also the national outrage immediately after the Red Fort incident had united the country, for the moment, against these protests.

At the Singhu border, following partial revival of protests, there were clashes between protestors and locals. The Congress

ecosystem went to the extent of alleging that the locals were BJP agents. The police did control the clashes, but not before a police officer (a Station House Officer) was grievously injured by a sword-wielding protestor. In the aftermath of Singhu clashes, 44 people were arrested from the site.

In other cases too, locals have strongly resisted protestors' encroachment on roads and lands. Immediately in the aftermath of the Red Fort incident, Resident Welfare Association (RWA) of Yogendra Yadav's residential society, protested against him, asking him to move away from the society. Family members of Delhi police personnel and retired police personnel also sat on a protest against the violence committed by the protestors.

Other local mobilizations happened in various villages. Dharuheda protestors were asked to evict within 24 hours. After the Republic Day violence, incensed at the insult of national flag, several villages from Rewari objected to the blockade created by protestors at a certain point on the Delhi-Jaipur Highway which was diverting vehicle movement to villages and leading to slow traffic (Kumar, 2021).

Thus, it was in the aftermath of the Red Fort incident that the so-called famers' movement began to lose steam.

The entire game-plan of the protestors – to flout protocol and provoke the police to act against them, so that they can compare it to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre – had failed completely. There are numerous visuals of the so-called kisan netas openly challenging the government to stop them (Chari, 2021).

The events on Republic Day helped to put in perspective the farmer unions' leaders' statements during the past days that they were planning something big which no one will forget and that the whole world would watch. The entire plan was to embarrass India, create an international flutter and

attempt to bring the country to its knees.

The hoisting of the flag went down in the public psyche as a direct assault on the country. It symbolizes the irony of where the Republic stands today, with the present system of democracy having nurtured interests that now stand as country's internal and external enemies.

NO LONGER A FARMERS' PROTEST – EXPOSING THE POLITICAL FACADE

Post-Republic Day violence, the so-called protests have been severely diminished in terms of their resonance with the public. There was little resonance with the public to begin with, but after the Republic Day violence, the real nature of the protests has been exposed, thereby completely alienating them from any remaining public support. As a result, it is with much difficulty that the protestors are able to somehow sustain the movement.

What presently appears to be a new phase of the protests is nothing but a discredited, struggling continuation of the old protests. While the number of protestors may have swelled due to direct political intervention, the discredited protest, as a whole, is having to be publicly defended and justified constantly.

The events leading up to the second phase of the movement, after 26th January, reveal how this was always a politically-propped up protest, made to look like a farmers protest on ground. Indeed, it almost appears as **if this huge fluid mass of protestors is nothing but a proxy in a direct contest between the government and the opposition parties along with some external anti-India forces. They were made to invade Delhi with such overwhelming force, so as to make the government and the police lose control, react violently i.e. to open fire to control the situation and then be blamed for deaths of Sikh protestors. Such a scenario would have been a**

dream come true for anti-national forces in India and abroad, who are working overtime to instigate riots in the country – on pretexts of laws like Citizenship laws, farm laws, Dalit rights etc.

HOW THE NEW PHASE OF PROTESTS RECEIVED FRESH IMPETUS:

What gave a fresh impetus to the protestors was the press conference held by farmer union leader, Rakesh Tikait, of BKU, supported by his brother Naresh Tikait. Rakesh Tikait, son of well-known late farmer leader, Mahender Singh Tikait, is a constable-turned-politician-businessman-farmer, with a failed political career and several stints in jail. After the 2013 Jat-Muslim riots in Muzaffarnagar, he had contested 2014 polls on an RLD ticket, and lost badly, getting just 9539 votes. Contrary to popular perception, he has been largely anti-BJP, even before the present protests. In 2018 and 2019, he had organized farmers' protests in western UP, which failed to take off. He is also known to have assets worth several hundred crores.

During the press conference on January 28th, the media widely highlighted and replayed the scenes of Rakesh Tikait crying and overcome with emotion. This generated widespread sympathy and anger among the Jats. Overnight, across western UP and Haryana, several Panchayat and Khap Panchayat meetings were called. The issue of hurt Jat farmer pride was highlighted, and, overnight, thousands of Jats mobilized at the Ghazipur border to support Tikait. Simultaneously, Naresh Tikait also announced the decision to hold a Mahapanchayat at a Muzaffarnagar college ground the following day.

Within a day, more than 10,000 Jats had been mobilized at the border and within two days, the number was more than 25,000. This number has since been steadily increasing. The Mahapanchayat called at Muzaffarnagar also saw a massive

turnout – by various estimates, the turnout of Jats was more than what it was during the 2013 Jat-Muslim riots. Expectedly, the rally gave a call to continue the protests and march towards Delhi border. At the Singhu and Tikri borders, where the protestors were thinning, there was a revival of protests, encouraged by developments at Ghazipur.

PROTESTS EXPOSED AS A COVER FOR POLITICAL AGENDA

While media has refused to highlight it, but as discussed in the previous issue of this magazine, many of the key farmer leaders of the protest already had deep political linkages, mostly with Communist parties and Naxalite movement, seeking to divide India. The names of the leaders that stood out during the Red Fort incident also betray their political affiliations. Gurnam Chaduni, a protestor, had fought elections in 2019. He was implicated in the Red Fort attack. It is well-known that Yogendra Yadav has been associated with AAP and now has his own political party that contests elections. Similarly, Rakesh Tikait had fought in Lok Sabha polls in 2014 on an RLD ticket and had contested state elections in 2007 also, in UP – performing badly both times. From the outset, AAP's Naresh Balyan, Sanjay Singh and others always supported the protests. Congress and AAP have been the most vocal in their support.

After the protests re-ignited post-Republic Day, the UP government cut off water and electricity supply to the protest site, and deployed police personnel. However, the number of protestors has only swelled. **In this new phase of protests, politician backers, who had till now remained hidden, have come to the fore to openly support the protestors.** As a result, AAP's Delhi Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal, announced that he would ensure the supply of water, electricity and everything else that Tikait may need. **AAP ministers have regularly visited the protest sites to ensure that all the protestors' needs are**

taken care of. Indeed, Tikait directly communicated with Kejriwal to appraise him of the list of needs for the protestors.

Most significantly, farmer issues are being used as a cover for advancing a political agenda to defeat BJP and deflate the growing Hindu national consciousness in the country. There is an attempt to mobilize villagers across various Panchayats in western UP, to bring back the old pre-2013 political equations hinging on the so-called, imagined Jat-Muslim brotherhood. The massive distrust created in the wake of the 2013 riots between Jats and Muslims has helped BJP expand base in western UP through its Jat leaders. Parties like Ajit Singh and Jayant Chaudhary's Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) rapidly waned, as they were based solely on Jat-Muslim votes. Tikait fought the 2014 elections on an RLD ticket and lost badly, garnering little more than 9000 votes.

In the present agitation, attempts by Tikait brothers to woo the Jats came through the Muzaffarnagar Mahapanchayat. The Tikait brothers expressed regret at supporting the BJP and pledged never to do so again – Naresh Tikait even said that making Ajit Singh lose was a mistake, thereby giving more importance to RLD. **It must be noted that, as already mentioned, there is no clear instance of Tikait overtly supporting BJP. Indeed, over the years – as even electoral performances have shown – Tikait has lost sway over the Jats. Therefore, regardless of the crowds assimilating at Ghazipur and attending Mahapanchayats, neither western UP holds the key to BJP's base in UP, nor is it certain that Tikait will be able to fully endear himself to Jats.**

The fact that these union leaders plan to revive the Muslim card to influence Jat politics is also not surprising, and has been an old ploy of India's secular parties. In the Muzaffarnagar Mahapanchayat, chants of Islamic slogan 'Allahu-Akbar' rent

the air, as a Muslim Panchayat farm leader of Bhartiya Kisan Mazdoor Manch (in the past, very close to erstwhile farmer leader Mahender Singh Tikait), Ghulam Mohammad Jaula, on stage reminded the Jat leaders that they had made two severe mistakes in the past – killing the Muslims in the 2013 riots and making RLD lose in the successive elections (BT, 2021; AU, 2021).

In yet another subsequent Panchayat held in Budhana's Jaula village, Ghulam Mohammad Jaula yet again declared that all villagers should travel to Ghazipur to support Tikait and declared that the Muslim community, as a whole, is against the three farm laws (DJ, 2021). Following Muzaffarnagar Mahapanchayat, Agra's Mathura also witnessed a massive Mahapanchayat of BKU farmers and opposition politicians, which declared that 10,000 farmers may soon block the Yamuna Expressway (Jaiswal, 2021).

Besides UP, Punjab and Haryana also saw revival of protests. In Punjab, Sarpanches in several villages are forcing people to send at least one member from each family to protest at Singhu border, threatening to impose a fine and socially boycott them if they refused to comply (Sehgal, 2021).

Haryana has witnessed politics similar to UP after the Jat mobilization behind Tikait brothers. In Haryana's Binain Khap Panchayat in Jind, Panipat, a Mahapanchayat of 52 villages was held. Once again, the rhetoric of secularism stressed upon transcending religious and caste lines and uniting as farmers. It was decided that every house in the village will send people to protest and every house will hoist a flag of kisan union.

Before January 26th, the protest had largely been limited to Punjab Sikhs, with things in Haryana largely in control. But Tikait's emotional appeal on January 27th has compelled Haryana to follow the UP course, with Jats mobilizing in both

the states. As a result, Dushyant Chautala – NDA's coalition partner in Haryana – is under pressure to support the protests. However, in Haryana, the BJP, which has a non-Jat Punjabi Chief Minister, is not beholden to Jats.

The Jat factor, even if relevant to the protests, should not be overestimated. It only plays out in Haryana and Rajasthan, and does not hold much sway in UP as a whole. **In Haryana, BJP is not beholden to Jats and has never been so.** In Rajasthan, farmers are not protesting against BJP and the Jats are with the BJP. In UP, regardless of the numbers present at the protests, the extent to which Tikait and RLD will be able to electorally endear themselves to the Jats is highly doubtful and yet to be seen, especially given the spoilt Muslim-Jat equations and strong network of BJP Jat leaders in the state.

On the ground, **in Haryana, despite secular, Communistic declarations of rising above caste and religion, majority of protestors are exclusively from the Jat community. Indeed, the protests seem to be having the opposite effect on other communities by alienating them further from protests and more strongly backing Modi. They can see clearly that it is simply Haryanvi Jats versus the BJP issue, and has nothing to do with farm issues. This resentment has become stronger since the Republic Day violence** (Daniyal & Lalwani, 2021).

However, these reality checks do not seem to be registering with the opposition, which is repeatedly revealing its true colours by openly sharing the stage with the protestors. While it was well-known that the hidden political hand to create havoc in India and compel Modi to make some mistake in this matter was always present, yet the Opposition's self-delusional behaviour and making a beeline for the farmers after Tikait's emotional mobilization has laid bare its ever-preset intentions for the whole country to witness. Indeed, planning appears to

have been meticulous. **At the farmers' Mahapanchayats, the presence of nearly all opposition parties has been witnessed – SP, RLD, BSP, Congress, Bhim Army and AAP. They have meticulously used and cheered this divisive agenda to once again fragment the consolidated Hindu vote, along caste lines. Repeatedly, nearly all leaders on stage kept on pledging loyalty to the farmers' cause in the name of 'Hindu-Muslim unity' (AU, 2021).**

The reason for opposition political parties allying openly with Tikait and protestors has been mainly to sustain the protest, which they knew would not last long if they did not support it openly. They are also under some delusion that Jat and Sikh anger will somehow damage the BJP, not realizing that public resentment against the protests is growing in intensity.

SENDING MIXED SIGNALS

Despite adopting an apparently brave face, in the face of the way the protestors were exposed on January 26th, the union leaders are now looking at either reviving the protests and misleading the public as they were doing in the initial phase of the protest, or exiting without a loss of face. But the rigidity of their protest and hatred against the Modi government has boxed them and their political masters into a corner from which it is difficult to emerge.

The political assumptions behind the protests have backfired in a highly damaging way. The protests that started with the assumption that history will repeat itself and like every other government in the past, Modi government too will be brought down to its knees before the “farmers”, have received a big blow. By not reacting to them, verbally or in act, the Modi government allowed these protestors plenty of space and time to commit one blunder after another,

culminating in the Republic Day fiasco. The government itself ended up coming across as most accommodative – never using force against the protestors, allowing them to create a public nuisance by occupying roads for months, and not uttering a single negative or sensational statement against them.

On the other hand, the protestors have arrogantly rejected everything, and have clearly supported an anti-India agenda, raising dubious demands in the beginning of the protest, and provoked the government into acting against them so that they could embarrass India globally, committing horrific blunders on Republic Day. **Last but not the least, the protestors have made a new blunder in the new phase of protest. It is openly exposed that they have the backing of opposition political parties like Congress, SP and AAP, thereby confirming the suspicion that this was always a political protest against Modi.**

Now they want to emerge out of this fiasco in a dignified manner without loss of face. Despite open backing by opposition parties and numbers at the border, they are unable to ensure that the message of protests is able to endear itself to the public. That is why Rakesh Tikait has repeatedly sent feelers to the government for holding talks, although, in a show of public bravado, he has simultaneously insisted that the government first release the arrested farmers and create a ‘conducive environment’ for talks. All these attempts have fallen flat so far. Both Ghazipur and Sighu protestors are now in a dilemma, admitted by many leaders (including Naresh Tikait), that if they return empty-handed they will not be able to show their face back home, while protests are not making any headway. It’s a dilemma from which they will find it hard to emerge.

THE UNHOLY GLOBAL NEXUS – FLAILING POLITICIANS AND ISLAMIST HIJACKERS

The fact that, right from the beginning, the protests were

a hidden hand of Islamic-Khalistani radicals was evident when the protests had started at Singhu border, where Khalistani posters were seen, protestors made demands for the release of accused like Umar Khalid and other Islamic and Naxal radicals who had incited the Delhi and Bhima-Koregaon riots, and controversial comments were made by people in support of Sikh terrorist, Bhindrawale. Islamist outfit, Popular Front of India (PFI), had also lent support to the protest. This has been covered in the previous issue of this magazine. After the 26th January violence, this became further evident from the bonhomie between Islamist leaders and farmer protestors sitting at UP-Delhi border.

Foreign Khalistani outfit, Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), that had announced a reward \$350,000, owned up to their hand in the Red Fort violence, and also goaded the protestors to lay siege on the Indian Parliament on February 1st. **The internal and external anti-India voices are under the illusion that they can successfully leverage the farmer protests to gain traction for the Khalistani agenda in India, especially in Punjab. For, till now, Punjab has not shown any inclination towards this agenda. The international event, 'Referendum 2020', that was planned by Khalistani groups for a long time, evoked little response in India and elsewhere.**

Similarly, the farmers' protest too has intricate networks of foreign funding as well as domestic support among anti-national forces, however it too has failed in India, contrary to the expectation of the conspirators behind it. Many of these networks are beginning to be revealed and investigated. As of now, there has been a sharp dip in daily donations received by protestors, after the January 26th incident – from 5-7 lakh a day to 1-2 lakh a day – which is not enough to cover the daily operational expenses (Bhandari, 2021). Reasons for dip in donations are not certain, but it reveals how well-funded the

protest has been – and these are only modest publicly revealed amounts, and may not include the full picture.

WHAT THE PROTESTS REVEAL ABOUT THE STATE OF THE NATION – POISON OF DECADES FLOWS OUT

The farm protests have come at a time when India, after the coming of Modi in 2014, has been going through a period of immense struggle and churning. Every year – and increasingly, every few months – major protests, hinging on selfish and superficial issues and seeking to divide the nation, have become a frequent occurrence. Prior to the farm protests, the country had witnessed the anti-CAA Shaheen Bagh protests, culminating in the Hindu-Muslim Delhi riots. In the past few years, JNU students have repeatedly engaged in violence and protests on a serious scale only to be finally tamed; artists/intellectuals/cultural elite have abused their positions by returning their awards to protest against Hindu nationalism with the intention to embarrass the country; Dalits have been goaded into Bharat Bandh and all kinds of protests albeit completely unsuccessfully; Jats have repeatedly protested either in the name of reservation or in name of farmers; even ex-servicemen have not shied away from misusing their revered stature to prevent national unification. Bhima Koregaon riots were engineered in Maharashtra in 2018 to turn Dalits against non-Dalit Hindus.

The list can go on. The so-called farmers' protest should be seen in the context of this litany of endless attempts to prevent nationalism from growing in the country. In this difficult process, the poison stored within the body politic for the last several decades is naturally being thrown out, and will continue to be so for some more time. Sponsored very clearly by political parties professing an ideology of secularism and by foreign elements, this process noticeably gets worse with each

protest, exposing the increasing desperation of those behind it more clearly.

In the farmers' protest, the divisive forces assumed that since farmers form an irreplaceable vote-bank of every political party, including BJP, and no one who wants to survive politically would have the temerity to alienate this vote-bank. Therefore, they hoped that political manipulations in the name of farmers, on a massive scale, would have the power to bring any government to its knees – as had happened in the past. Rakesh Tikait's father, Mahender Singh Tikait, had bent the Rajiv Gandhi government during the late 1980s, and had attempted to do the same with Mulayam Singh Yadav unsuccessfully. Over the years, politicians have always had to give priority to this vote-bank of mainly landed farming rural elite, and no one has openly stood against them. This time, it is one of those rare instances, when a government has foregone risk of losing a vote-bank, facing massive protests, but refusing to bend to irrational and suicidal blackmail.

Indeed, in this case, the issue is not simply of blackmail, but of elaborate national and external networks bent on pulling the Modi government down – much of it is now in the process of being exposed. In this churning of events, the adverse impacts and poison flowing out of the body politic is further releasing the negativity and refining and strengthening the national character.

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HIGHLIGHTS

MAYHEM IN US CAPITOL

Prior to new US President, Joe Biden's oath-taking ceremony as the President on January 20th, US witnessed unprecedented siege of the Capitol – where US legislature convenes – on January 6th. The US Congress had convened for formally counting the electoral votes and declaring Biden as the President, on January 6th. In the middle of this exercise, a huge mob of Trump supporters breached the Capitol building with the intent to disrupt the counting of the votes, and clashed with the security officials.

Such a breach of American institutions has not been reported since 1812. Visuals of the mob climbing the walls of the Capitol building, overwhelming the outnumbered security personnel, breaking doors and windows, entering lawmakers' chambers, vandalizing artifacts inside the Capitol, have shocked the world. It has been condemned universally and has been variously described by American Democrat and Republican lawmakers as a riot, an insurrection, a siege and an attack on democracy. Trump also belatedly appealed to his supporters to maintain peace, law and order. At least, 5 people died in the siege, with several cops injured. Around 52 arrests were made on January 6th itself, while subsequent investigation has been going on and arrests were being made.

PRIOR MOBILIZATION

The Capitol siege occurred after an incendiary speech given by the then sitting President, Trump, at a public gathering in the Ellipse park near the White House. Trump had refused to accept the election results in November 2020, and he and his campaign had filed several lawsuits and made public statements declaring that the election was stolen by the Democrats. Trump

got the highest number of votes secured by any sitting President at 71 million. Biden also secured the highest number of votes by any Presidential candidate. When all court challenges were refused, Trump even asked former Vice-President, Mike Pence, to refuse to declare Biden as the President on January 6th formal counting of votes.

In his speech at Ellipse park, Trump reiterated that the election had been stolen, and blamed the Democrats, media and 'big tech' groups for it. He said he and his supporters will never concede a stolen election. He also urged his supporters to walk down to the Capitol, cheering. Therefore, initially the mob had taken out a public rally in support of Trump. However, upon reaching the Capitol, it turned into a siege of the building.

IMPLICATIONS:

After the siege, there were widespread calls by Democrats to either impeach Trump or that Vice-President should invoke the 25th Amendment to declare him unfit to continue in office. Republicans flatly refused on both counts. Notably, even after the siege, many Republicans continued to be united behind Trump.

Democrats finally decided to initiate impeachment proceedings, for the second time in the course of Trump's Presidency. In the House of Representatives, where there is a Democratic majority, the vote was 232-197 in favour of impeaching Trump, with 10 Republicans also joining the Democrats. In Senate, the impeachment proceedings are due to begin soon. Republicans are expected to defeat the motion to impeach Trump, thereby making the impeachment bid unsuccessful. One of the reasons for Republicans widely rallying behind Trump is because they fear losing favour with the electorate and further popularity, if they go against him.

Besides the impeachment, the Capitol siege has several

implications for US polity. The impeachment bid itself is widely being seen as a tool through which Democrats would have prevented Trump from running for Presidential elections in 2024. The entire politics certainly reflects the widened and seemingly unbridgeable gap within a polarized population and system.

The fact that big technology companies that provide social media services – highly influential in shaping electoral outcomes by manipulating collective psychology – have banned Trump from their platforms and many of his supporters as well, has only further increased mutual hatred in the polity. These steps were also criticized by European governments that are highly suspicious of ‘Big Tech’. India and other countries too have woken up to the threat of technology companies interfering in elections in an openly biased manner. Ukraine even banned Twitter prior to its polls, as it was seen blocking government access. This increased polarization cannot go away easily.

According to a YouGov survey conducted after the storming of the Capitol,

- 45% Republicans actually support the Capitol siege.
- While among all registered voters, 71% opposed the siege, the number was 96% among Democrat voters.
- 90 percent of Democratic voters and 55 percent of registered voters blamed Trump “a great deal” for what happened.

According to a Reuters survey conducted in November 2020, only 3% Trump voters accepted the Biden victory as legitimate. 31% Trump voters said that Trump should fight it out in court until the states ratify the results, while 66% said that Trump should “never concede”.

More or less, the hard-core Trump base amongst the

people remains intact, and so do the Republicans. While the Capitol siege was a shocking incident, subsequent polls do not reflect that it has made any dent in Trump's base.

GRAM PANCHAYAT ELECTIONS IN MAHARASHTRA

Elections were held to 12,711 gram Panchayats in 34 districts in Maharashtra. The Maha Vikas Aghadi alliance of Shiv Sena-NCP-Congress won, with BJP emerging as single largest party.

Party	No. of seats
BJP	3236
NCP	2997
Shiv Sena	2820
Others	2497
Congress	2131
MNS	28

MUNICIPALITY ELECTIONS IN RAJASTHAN

Elections to urban local bodies were held in Rajasthan, across 3035 wards.

Party	Wards won
Congress	1197
BJP	1140
NCP	46
RLP	13
CPM	3
BSP	1
Independents	634

17 councillors, who had rebelled against Congress and

won on NCP ticket, joined BJP, after declaration of the results.

FAKE NEWS PROBLEM AND POLITICAL VENDETTA

Rampant fake news and increasing political immaturity has become a serious problem for the Indian media and opposition politicians. In a bid to satisfy political biases, even senior, well-known media-persons are rampantly engaging in spreading fake news. One such instance was witnessed on Subhash Chandra Bose's birth anniversary, on January 23rd, declared by the government as 'Parakram Diwas'.

On Parakram Diwas celebrations, PM Modi went to Kolkata to pay homage to the freedom fighter. He also delivered a speech at Victory Memorial in Kolkata, where he stressed upon India's rising power in line with Subhash Chandra Bose's vision. However, at the event, prior to Modi's speech, West Bengal Chief Minister, Mamata Bannerjee, was to deliver her address. Upon taking the stage, she was greeted by chants of 'Jai Shri Ram' from the audience. This miffed her so much that she refused to speak, claimed that she has been insulted and walked off the stage. Few days later, the ruling TMC even attempted to pass a censure motion against the slogan 'Jai Shri Ram', but failed due to lack of support from all other parties. The incident betrays opposition's unmasked frustration for anything even remotely related to Hindutva or Modi.

Not only the opposition, but even sections of media have been exposed in this. On 'Parakram Diwas' prominent mainstream media personalities spread the fake rumour that, in Rashtrapati Bhawan, the President of India had unveiled the portrait of a Bengali actor, Prosenjit Chatterjee who played the role of Subhash Chandra Bose in a movie, instead of unveiling the portrait of Subhash Chandra Bose himself. Taking the cue, opposition parties, such as Congress and TMC, began to mock the President and took jibes at his education.

After some time, it became clear – after clarification from Subhash Chandra Bose’s family and proofs of original portrait – that what was unveiled by the President was indeed the copy of the original portrait of Subhash Chandra Bose. The media giants who had attempted to discredit the President offered their apologies. However, after some days, Rashtrapati Bhawan sent a notice to the India Today group announcing the review of their engagement with the media house due to their former journalist’s, Rajdeep Sardesai, and many others from India Today, mocking of the portrait of Bose unveiled by the President, and spreading misinformation about the same.

MYANMAR COUP

Following the December 2020 election results in Myanmar, the country has witnessed a military coup. In the election results, Aung San Suu Kyi’s ruling party, the National League for Democracy (NLD) won the majority of the seats to form the government. Winning 346 seats, it easily crossed the 322-seat mark needed to form the government. However, the military-backed opposition, Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), claimed that the election was disputed and demanded a re-run of the election. This did not happen. Displeased with the results, Myanmar witnessed an unprecedented military coup few days back, wherein all the leaders of NLD, including Suu Kyi, were detained. Emergency was declared and social media was blocked.

Nearly all major countries, except China, have issued statements condemning the coup. India has expressed concern at the situation. The question for India is of the way forward. There are two key factors to be considered here:

First, India has been accustomed to dealing with Myanmar military and has close cooperation with it. Indeed, the Tatmadaw (Myanmar military) has, in the past, been more suspicious

of China and comfortable with India. Together, Indian and Myanmar armies have nearly wiped out the border insurgency in north-east areas.

The military was never under the democratic government in any case. Indeed, crucial departments like foreign policy, home affairs and defence had always remained with the Tatmadaw, even when NLD was in power. Therefore, on ground, the coup would make little difference to India.

Second, it must be remembered that Suu Kyi's policies were completely in sync with the Tatmadaw. She was criticized heavily by the West for presiding over the exodus of Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar during 2017-18, and for stoutly defending her country at various international fora on this issue. She had endeared herself to the Buddhist majority in Myanmar and was fully in sync with Buddhist nationalism. Therefore, there was little practical difference between Tatmadaw and Suu Kyi – except a game of power struggle, wherein Tatmadaw felt that Suu Kyi might usher constitutional changes to dilute military's powers.

“...the way out is that first and foremost we must keep a firm hold on spirituality – that inestimable gift handed down to us by our ancient forefathers. Did you ever hear of a country where the greatest kings tried to trace their descent not to kings, not to robber-barons living in old castles who plundered poor travellers, but to semi-naked sages who lived in the forest? Did you ever hear of such a land? This is the land. In other countries great priests try to trace their descent to some king, but here the greatest kings would trace their descent to some ancient priest. Therefore, whether you believe in spirituality or not, for the sake of the national life, you have to get a hold on spirituality and keep to it. Then stretch the other hand out and gain all you can from other races, but everything must be subordinated to that one ideal of life; and out of that a wonderful, glorious, future India will come – I am sure it is coming – a greater India than ever was.”

– Swami Vivekananda (CWSV 3 : 380)