

Yeni Demokrasi: We know that bsCEM is a youth organization that has long been subjected to repression by the fascist Indian state. In recent months, several of your members were also abducted by the police. First of all, could you briefly introduce bsCEM to us?

bsCEM: bsCEM is a student organisation based in the University of Delhi, which has the revolutionary ideology of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. As an organisation that propagates and practices revolutionary ideology, we have consistently tried to integrate with the toiling masses of India and not limit ourselves to issues concerning the university and education system. We conduct discussions and reading circles, make street plays, hold cultural evenings, and protest demonstrations and pamphlet distributions in campus to propagate the ideology of MLM and the dream of building a society without exploitation. Through the course of our political practise, we have faced continuous surveillance by the state, detentions, arrests, and even abductions and torture. The recent abduction of several activists from bsCEM and other organisations was regarding a conference that was being organised on the war on people in India. The conference eventually could not happen. However, our work has only continued with more determinance and revolutionary spirit.

Yeni Demokrasi: Could you tell us about the timeline of the protests? What were the main reasons behind its onset, how was it organized, and what kind of tactics were used? What challenges did the protesters face?

bsCEM: On 15th May – Chief Justice of India Surya Kant made a statement on unemployed youth and activists, calling them cockroaches. Soon, a social media handle by the name "Cockroach Janta Party" was formed, and gained a large following. The "founder", Abhijeet Dipke, then announced a protest against paper leaks. On 6th June, the first protest by CJP at Jantar Mantar against paper leaks happened. Hundreds of students participate. From 20th June, an Indefinite sit-in was announced and the protestors started the sit-in at Jantar Mantar, Delhi. On 28th June, Sonam Wangchuk and leftist organisational members started a hunger strike. On 20th July, they started a march to the parliament, in which the protestors were met with brutal violence by state forces. On the 25th July, Dharmendra Pradhan, Education minister, resigned, after the youth had continued protests for over a month.

CJP and other left organisations sought permission for the protest. Indefinite sit-in was announced, mass mobilisation happened. However, it was a majorly structureless and unorganised mass mobilisation. The tactics used were indefinite sit in, and hunger strike. The hunger strike, however, did not have a revolutionary character. The hunger strike appealed to the consciousness of the Indian state, while the most prominent face sitting on hunger strike, Sonam Wangchuk, had been openly favouring RSS-BJP in the past. The other left organisations too, claimed to have used hunger strike as a means to mobilise. The emphasis on "peaceful" means and equating the masses' spontaneous militancy as undesirable elements disrupting the protests, the CJP leadership and left leadership played the role of protecting the status quo and letting out the masses' frustration in non-threatening ways.

The challenges faced by the protestors include continuous surveillance, lack of permission to protest, police brutality, fascist RSS goons attack, state propaganda. They were constantly targeted by the ruling class media, which particularly spread malicious lies and pro RSS BJP propaganda.

The comments by the CJI are not just an individual insult, but reflected the larger Brahminical Hindutva nature of the Indian state. The unemployment rate in India keeps increasing significantly for graduates, highlighting the discontent of the petty bourgeois (urban) youth. For the ruling classes and their political representatives in the state, selling out the country to imperialists means that in order to provide cheap labour, they are willing to sacrifice the sustenance of crores of today's youth.

Reduction in govt job seats, and college seats means that the youth are forced to compete in a rat race, where only a handful get to “win”. A system that keeps producing the same inequalities and is sustained on them, cannot provide any better. The solution is to dismantle it, and build a truly democratic society.

Yeni Demokrasi: How do you evaluate the CJP (Cockroach Janta Party), which led the protests? What were the class character and political line of this leadership? To what extent were revolutionary forces effective in the protests? To what extent was bsCEM able to participate in the protests? What was the class character of the masses that took part in the protests? Was there any diversity in this sense?

bsCEM: The last few years have seen a sharpening of the contradictions for the petty bourgeois youth in the country and have further alienated them with issues like - the leak of the NEET paper, issues with CBSE's board paper checking, mismanagement in conducting the CUET exam - all of this, along with a generally worsening job market, has sharpened disillusionment among the downwardly mobile urban middle class. It is in this concrete social context that the cockroaches have come up and gained their strengths. The movement is a symptom of class contradictions at the heart of Indian society today.

The petty bourgeoisie class has no means to show frustration due to contradictions. In India, even bourgeois democracy is also not developed. The petty bourgeois leadership of the CJP promoted a "false consciousness", a “peaceful” protest as the perfect means of dissent, and when the spontaneous militancy occurred, it distanced itself clearly from it. It also disconnected itself from the radical forces, other indigenous peoples struggles and nationality struggles, to the point of even asking protestors to stop chanting the slogan of “Azadi”, a slogan popularised in the course of the struggles of the Kashmiris. National chauvinism was also promoted, with the protestors giving “Bharat Mata Ki Jay” slogans promoted by the CJP, and supposedly “tolerated” by the left. The context and the use of the slogan for lynching muslims, and justify the occupation of Kashmir and suppression of other minorities, were conveniently ignored.

The genuine frustration of the masses cannot be ignored and must instead be channeled towards genuine social change through active participation in the struggle towards a new democratic society. The reactionary and revisionist forces who took lead in these struggles inevitably exploited this frustration for their own parliamentary gains and ultimately abandoned the masses.

While bsCEM participated in the protest, and distributed pamphlets and performed cultural activities, we did not share the stage with the CJP and other left organisations. The scope to build a principled unity was little, and the recent setbacks have only made the revisionists openly disengage from revolutionary forces. We had a limitation in that sense. However, our mass work continued, even though we weren't able to take central leadership roles due to our internal limitations and external factors.

Yeni Demokrasi: What was the level of participation by minority communities, such as indigenous peoples and Muslims, in the protests? What kind of difficulties did they face?

bsCEM: The minorities in India, which includes religious minorities, and ethnic minorities. The BHF, as it consolidates itself further, subjugates the minorities, especially the Muslims who have been portrayed as the "enemy". However, a class aspect has to be emphasised as well. Even in the fictitious enemy of the Muslim, immigrants like the Mia muslims, working class muslims are targeted more. Ethnic minorities - tribals and Adivasis - economic exploitation, displacement, killings.

The minorities belonging to the petty bourgeois class participated in the CJP protests. But they were being targeted on the basis of identity. Religious ethnic minorities and women in general were targeted, harassed, and in many cases religious minorities were assaulted for their identity after the protest. One case included a man named Abdul whose father was killed by a cop for his identity and political participation. Junaid, a volunteer distributing food to the protestors had police reach his village and threaten his family.

In the old times, anyone against “manuwaad” were punished according to manu, similar pattern of targeting and making examples out of few cases to spread fear and curb resistance to Brahmanical Hindutva Fascism was seen.

Yeni Demokrasi: In recent years, we have been witnessing many protests taken up by the youth such as in Turkey, Nepal, Peru, and most recently in India. What do you think all of these —and especially the recent successful protests in India—mean for the young masses?

bsCEM: World imperialism today is in a state of crisis. Imperialist countries are fighting for resources and conflict is growing. Fascism is on the rise at a world level to deal with its crisis. The state of crisis very deeply and adversely affects the exploited and the oppressed masses - the Muslims and Dalits in India, the children in Gaza, the refugees displaced as a result of war. The working masses all over the world are pushed into further misery.

The youth as a group, being at the juncture of the dying of an old society and the birth of a new one, has an important role to play in the ushering in of revolutionary transformation. However, they are often led by their emotions, especially under the influence of subjective individualism, which is a result of the postmodern thought present in every sphere of cultural life from literature to music to even university spaces where it is spread through syllabi. This means that the urban, educated, youth constitute a part of the vacillating section of the petit bourgeois. The petit bourgeois has a dual class nature - it doesn't align itself totally with the ruling class as it knows that there is little scope for the fulfillment aspirations under the dictatorship of the bourgeois. Therefore, while it has a (non-antagonistic) contradiction with the aims of the proletariat revolution, or is fearful of it, it also has a sharp contradiction with the ruling classes. Today, some of the strongest mass movements have been started by the youth - the Bangladesh Revolt started as a student protest against quotas, the movement in Sri Lanka as well as Indonesia were also led by the youth. What all these movements had in common was the fact that these were all consequences of the world imperialist crisis.

Across semi-feudal semi-colonial countries, youth-led movements have increasingly emerged as expressions of deepening economic and political contradictions. The Gen-Z uprising in Nepal and the uprising in Bangladesh, despite emerging around different immediate issues, demonstrate a common pattern: unemployment, underemployment, rising living costs, inequality, corruption, and political repression which create conditions in which relatively limited grievances can develop into broader mass movements.

In Bangladesh, the struggle initially centred on government employment quotas, but the issue became a focal point for the much wider frustration of a generation facing unemployment and limited economic opportunities. State repression transformed the movement into a broader challenge to the Hasina government, eventually forcing her from power. In Nepal, opposition to the government's social-media ban similarly became an expression of accumulated anger over corruption, political privilege, unemployment and the lack of opportunities for young people. In both cases, the immediate demand was therefore only the spark; the combustible material had been produced by deeper social contradictions.

These contradictions cannot be understood separately from the crisis of imperialism. As imperialist capital seeks cheaper labour, markets and profitable avenues for investment, while the local ruling classes facilitate this penetration in exchange for their own share of the wealth generated. Economic development therefore takes place alongside growing insecurity for the masses. In Nepal, this is reflected in the enormous dependence on remittances and the mass migration of youth in search of employment. In Bangladesh, it is reflected in an export-oriented economy integrated into global capital while large sections of youth continue to face unemployment and insecurity.

Youth themselves do not constitute a class. The youth include workers, students, unemployed people, petty-bourgeois sections and even sections of the bourgeoisie. Their generational position can unite them around immediate demands, but the class contradictions within the movement remain. A movement may successfully overthrow a government without overthrowing the class relations that produced it. The fall of Hasina or the resignation of Oli does not by itself abolish the conditions that led to it. These however, show the revolutionary potential of the masses, and what they would be capable of under the right conditions and armed with revolutionary ideology.

Similarly, the resignation of Dharmendra Pradhan, although a victory, is very limited. It shows that under the united resistance of the masses the fascists had to bow down, but at the same time, with the resignation they contained the spontaneous struggle from escalating. The youth, being at a historic juncture, has a huge responsibility on its shoulders. Only by arming itself with the revolutionary ideology of MLM can it bring in a new society, and that is our appeal as well - that the youth study MLM, strengthen the class struggle, and build united militant struggles.

Yeni Demokrasi: Is there anything else you would like to add?

bsCEM: bsCEM sends revolutionary greetings and salutes to all comrades of Turkey, and all readers of Yeni Demokrasi. We draw inspiration and strength from the Proletarian International solidarity showed by all comrades. We send our salutations and appeal to the youth of all countries to unite in the struggle to build a world free from exploitation. Lal Salaam!

Yeni Demokrasi: Thank you for your answers. We wish you success in your work.