

### AGRICULTURE IN INDIA - BEHIND THE FARMERS PROTESTS

This is not the first Farmers Protests the BJP government is facing. It faced it 2 years ago when the privatization laws were first introduced. The laws in specific Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce Bill and Essential Commodities Bill 2020 were to move the already existent highly subsidized market for agricultural commodities into a privatized model where the government will not support the farmers produce on prices and Production of essential commodities such as rice, pulses, oils, onions, potatoes etc will not be controlled unless there are extreme circumstances such as war and famine. Both these laws were not stopped by the protests in 2020-2021 but only delayed it. It was mainly due to the war in Ukraine in start of 2022 which increased the demand for Indian agricultural exports due to Russia being sanctioned and Ukraine's agricultural outputs blocked from the Sea route. India has done multiple export bans to make sure the supply was present. The BJP which is expected to win the coming elections will plan to bring this privatization laws one way or the other.

#### Indian food habits – a Poor man's staple

India after Independence was a weak agriculturally, having faced multiple famines that were caused by the British rule and the world wars. Food was exported instead of given to the local population during this time causing famines. This has changed how Indian people eat. Indians are blamed for eating too much carbohydrates but no one rationally thinks why. Many Indians cannot afford to buy fresh vegetables and fruits or meat hence take up things that last long in a shelf and doesn't go bad easily. Rice, wheat and pulses are things that will stay longer and are hence preferred.



INDIAN FARMERS: should not only ask for the Privatization laws to be repelled and minimum support price to be reinstated but also for the state to take over all of food production and distribution

we use now. India even asked the UN to name 2023 as the year of Millets. In the G20 summit held in New Delhi, the guests and dignitaries served variety of dishes made using this substitute. The reality is Millet doesn't taste like rice or wheat - its tasteless and it is not easy to prepare. It will take a toll on Indian families who have to spend extra time and cooking energy to prepare it. BJP government want to sell these 'Healthy' Millets to people in Mumbai who just take a banana for breakfast and lunch and run to board a heavily packed trains to go to their Jobs on time. This promotion is only because there is an excellent export opportunity for rice and wheat in the international market.

India wants to be an goods export economy. The foreign exchange that it received from its expatriates (India's major exports are people) are decreasing with the advent of AI and poor job growth and many of those who lived abroad are returning back to its shores. So it wants to boost its other exports. The plan is to sell the best outside the country and the poor to receive only the low quality just enough to fill their stomach. Corruption that rids India's government and bureaucracy also complicates the aim for an export driven economy. Indian Farmers should not only ask for the Privatization Laws to be repelled and Minimum support price to be reinstated but also for the state to take over all of food production and distribution. There is more for everyone to have but less of someone to care in India.

By Voice Special Correspondent

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US Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff attends the official State Dinner in honor of India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, at the White House in Washington, DC, on June 22, 2023. (AFP). Courtesy : ALARABIYA NEWS



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### THE EGYPTIAN CODE BOOK TRAILER

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Many Indians just eat rice or wheat with an Onion/chilli or pickle every day.

## Quantity and not Quality

Years after independence the Indian governments worked on moving towards increasing food production in its five year plans. The Minimum support price was one of those that made sure agricultural production was encouraged irrespective of fluctuating market conditions and poor harvests that were plaguing farmers . India



'Healthy' Millets. Courtesy : Wikipedia

wanted to produce what it needed. It succeeded in doing so and called it the Green Revolution . This was achieved through Heavy industrialization and processing of agricultural , meat and dairy production. The focus was only increase in quantity and not the quality of produce. Indian food have low standards.

## Ration Shops

The welfare system that is currently run by the government are the ration/family card system where government provides basic needs - rice , wheat , pulses, oil , and sugar to holders of this card free of charge or at minimal prices. These grains and pulses are of very low quality but helps fill the stomach of family members. BJP government wants to rid of this welfare system. It has introduced pay instead of direct supply of the subsidy for cooking gas as a start. It has also digitized the welfare system to filter out any 'gainers' among the poor.

## 'Export Quality'

If you visit any normal Indian food traders shop you can see the words 'Export quality' advertised to show the quality of their product. This shows how poor quality the local production is. Many Diseases such as Diabetes , Cancer, Infertility plague India due to its poor quality and processed food

products. Poultry – a well sought after food is highly polluted with chemicals and sold to the Indian population. Cardiovascular health alone makes up about 27% of deaths in India and another 3% are from Diabetes and both have grown by 30% and 60% between 2009 and 2019 respectively 'Healthy' Millets

Substitutes to rice and wheat such as Millet is highly recommended by BJP government to the Indian people. Indian social media is filled with doctors stating how good the ancient ways of food were and the reason for Indians getting all these diseases is due to the bad foods such as white rice/wheat

## HOW THE WORLD'S POLITICAL CLIMATE IS AFFECTING POOR PEOPLE

Throughout my life, I've had the opportunity to explore numerous regions worldwide. I've observed the universal ethos of friendship and harmony among people worldwide. However, a recurring observation has been the divisive nature of political affiliations and ideologies, often exploiting religious, color and sectarian differences to consolidate power. This phenomenon is not confined to any specific region; it permeates both Western nations and societies worldwide. In India, deep-rooted divisions based on caste persist, alongside the stark contrast between the affluent and the impoverished. These divides are frequently exploited by various political factions, including socialists, to further their own agendas. The recent political developments in India have contributed to the transformation of caste differences into religious divisions. These divisions, crafted by governments and political entities, serve to fortify their own interests. Governments often resort to tactics of division to ensure their survival.. As a member of the Congress party, we have historically championed the cause of independence for our people. For instance, Subash Chandra Bose led a military campaign against British colonial rule. In Southern India, we witnessed one of the earliest freedom struggles against British oppression, spearheaded by the 17 th century king of Panchalankurichi in Tamil Nadu, focusing on resisting taxation. This approach was later adopted by Gandhi during subsequent years of Freedom Struggle. Also, the Third Reich of Hitler, obstructed the British Government's economic progress and development. The leadership of figures like Subhas Chandra Bose and Gandhi led to British granting indepenence to India. However, the transition of power favored Gandhi's followers over Bose's, leading to the continuation of a democratic system inherited from the British. Unfortunately, this continuity within the Congress party nurtured a breeding ground for corrupted individuals, paving the way for religious fundamentalist groups like the RSS to ascend to power. Originating from officials who served under the British regime, the RSS persists today, benefiting from government funds and bureaucratic support. This ascent through democratic channels has facilitated the RSS's efforts to steer India toward autocracy. The Congress party, indirectly complicit in this shift, failed to address poverty adequately, potentially driving people towards religion-based alternatives such as the BJP. As a member of the Congress party, I have a profound concern that our failure to address poverty has inadvertently steered people towards seeking solace in religious alternatives. This observation is particularly poignant considering my father's role as a freedom fighter. Given the current international climate, there is a significant possibility that Mr. Narendra Modi may not become the next prime minister.