

Adivasi Bharat Mahasabha (Unity Forum)

The need to provide space for local and regional Adivasi struggle groups to find their own expression and work voluntarily towards collective actualisation resulted in the emergence of Adivasi Bharat Mahasabha (Unity Forum) on the dual plank of recognising individual identity while identifying collective rallying points. ABM (UF) is also simultaneously a recognition of the way Capitalism tries to decimate collective struggles forcing the masses to struggle individually.

A serious examination has shown that even as one tries to work within the rights and duties enshrined in the constitution, communities/ individuals have been criminalised, dehumanised and denigrated in a attempt to smash their moral courage for self actualisation and depend on doles, subsidies and largess of the State/ Philanthropists. The large number of indigenous and socially and economically backward communities incarcerated in jails across the country without trial is witness to the nature of status the State provides its citizens. AFSPA, IFA 1927 and other draconian Acts , more than the Constitution of India provide the framework in which a majority of Indigenous communities exist. Even as **India voted in favour of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2007 and signed the ILO Convention 107**, the government continues to deny the term and concept of “Indigenous Peoples” claiming that all Indians are Indigenous.

This claim gets contradicted by a number of Acts and steps taken by the Government of India against its own people, foremost among them being the Citizens Amendment Act selectively recognising citizenship to refugees entering this country while simultaneously denying the rights of ‘Indigenous citizens’ of this country to protest these Acts. As a result subjectivity on the Nationality question has sharpened many fold allowing the Government to arbitrarily declare its citizens as anti national, charge them for sedition, targeted State support for vigilantism in areas where constitutional and other legal provisions do not allow the State apparatus to formally intervene in favour of one particular thought process. Undermining principles of secularism and democracy and using this to grant extra judicial and extra constitutional favours to Corporate is an undercurrent of this polarisation and decimation of the social and cultural fabric of this country.

So far two meetings have been held. The second meeting on 14th March attended by 19 persons from 14 States of the country resolved to evolve a multi pronged approach to encompass the diversity of issues faced in different parts of the country. The Forum expressed solidarity with the people of Oting village in Mon District on hearing the report of the unfortunate killing of 14 persons by the Armed Forces and agreed to participate in the Conference on AFSPA in Dimapur on 29th and 30th April by the North East Indigenous People’s Forum.

Viren Lobo

On Behalf of ABM ((UF)