

# Robbing the Poor to Enrich the Super-Rich

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Despite the high-sounding claims of our rulers that our country had considerably progressed economically and achieved an over-all development during these 2 ½ decades of implementing neo-liberal economic reforms prescribed by the imperialist capitalism as the panacea, the hard reality is that the condition of the common man has gone from bad to worse. The living standards have been deteriorated. The exploitation of the labour power of the toiling people has substantially gone up. The rights and freedoms of the people are gradually eroding. The means of livelihood is dwindling day by day. The purchase power of the people is decreasing. The purchasing price of the rupee is going down. Agriculture, the life line of the sustenance for the people, is ridden with crises. Housing, health-care, transport, communication, educational costs are all been going up. Incessant rising of prices of commodities, food and other basic necessities are ruling the roost; pushing the common man in to misery.

On the other hand the rich are amassing wealth. The corporates and big capitalists are earning super profits with the support and incentivisation in different forms of subsidies. The super-rich are able to reach in to global billionaire clubs.

All these regressive develop-ments are the results of the capitalist neo-liberal economic reforms implemented in our country. After the implementation of imperialist neo-liberal economic policies in our country for the past two and a half decades, it is becoming more and more evident that besides its classic nature of exploiting the labour power of workers and the natural resources in creation of surplus value and wealth, these policies have a distinctive feature of robbing the very working millions whom they have pauperized and pushed them in to abject poverty of their hard-earned savings through diverse methods and meeting the needs of the crises ridden capitalist economies.

In our country our rulers are committing this robbery of poor working millions under the false claims of providing schemes of social welfare or under the lofty proclamations of inclusion of the poor in to economic activity etc.

Particularly after the ascent of NDA government under the leadership of Narendra Modi, the robbing of the poor is increased under false-pretexs and proclamations.

It is no secret that the public sector banks and private banks have been claiming very large amounts of Non-Performing Assets(NPA) to a tune of more than 15,00,000 crores of rupees, which amounts have been actually looted by the big bourgeoisie, with the willful aid and consent of our rulers, who have facilitated them to obtain these huge amounts of loans from the banks and subsequently to become intentional defaulters, appropriating those huge amounts without repaying the banks; resulting in to the technical bankruptcy of the banks who have collected deposits from the common people and funds supplied by the governments. Presently all these banks are suffering with paucity of funds, lack of even marginal flow of funds to continue their functioning. So making the availability of sufficient in flow of funds has become the responsibility of the government to make good the deficiency of funds by hook or crook. Added to this the corporate elite of India who want cheaper funds have been demanding and pressurizing the government to lower the interest rates on the deposits.

So in order to fulfil the demands of the big-business, and help the banks in making available of inflow of funds the 'Modi' government has chosen to rob the poor.

Jan-Dhan yojan is such a scheme mooted to provide continuous supply of inflow of funds as a shock absorber for the NPAs. With in two years 28 crore bank accounts were made to be opened by the poor and marginalized and Rs 36,000 crore deposits were received in to these accounts. It is being grandly propagated that 28 crore people of our country have been 'economically empowered' and included in to 'economic activity' and that their (of those who opened bank accounts) 'self-esteem' has gone up. In fact not even an iota of benefit or advantage is gained by those 28 crores of poor people, but their meager earnings were forcefully diverted in to banks, to continue their un-interrupted inflow of funds again to route them to the big-business class as loans with cheaper interest rates.

Another method of robbing the poor adopted by the Modi government is cutting the interest rates on public provident fund, National Savings certificates, the Kisan Vikas Patra and even on the Sukanya Samridhi

Nidhi Scheme recently started with much fan-fare. With this diktat the NDA government of Modi has deprived working people, single women, senior citizens and other poor of a little extra return on their savings, over which most of them depend for their economic survival. With this the NDA government deliberately robbed the poor to help inefficient, state owned banks get deposits from the common people.

While these anti-poor policies of robbery are implemented against the general public, the government had specifically targeted the savings of the working people, who have saved their hard-earned money in E.P.F (employee's provident fund). This fund (EPFO) handle long-term cash very predictable inflow as well very predictable liability of returning back of the amounts saved.

In fact by the end of 31 March 2016, it is having a very huge corpus fund amounting to Rs 7,53,000 crores. Its incremental rate on corpus at every year is presently is Rs 1,15,000 lakh crores. An unclaimed amount to the tune of Rs 27,000 crore is being with the EPFO. The returns on EPF deposits have the guarantee of the state, which are being invested in state/central govt. bonds without any risk.

But the big-capitalist class as well the corporate elite have been demanding that these amounts be drawn in to the speculative markets and thus make available them to the private players to profit by it. The neo-liberal economic policies of the capitalism too are mandating that the governments shall abdicate and lessen their burden of paying pensions to their employees and the very employees shall provide for their own pensions without burdening themselves. These reform policies are directing that the large amounts of funds available with government and its control be diverted in to the private control.

Obliging these demands and dictates of the big-capital, big-business, corporate elite and neo-liberal economic reforms which dictate them, our rulers have systematically adopted a slew of policies overtly and covertly to rob the working millions ostensibly to provide for future better social-welfare to them in the below given forms.

1. Starting a new scheme of National pension scheme on the workers' contributory basis-through which lots of funds can be accumulated in the fund of NPS. Taxing on the withdrawal of NPS funds and restrictions in payment of pension by way of extending the time of eligibility of funds. Thus the tax concessions being given to workers' savings (contributions) is removed and taxed. The funds were facilitated to remain for much more time in the hands of organization. And the note-worthy condition in this NPS is it will be managed by the private fund managers who invest it "wisely" in the speculative stock markets giving access to the private players over the huge and very huge funds to be accumulated, with a guarantee of continuous accumulation with nominal liability of paying pensions to a few only on attaining the required age of eligibility prescribed.

2. Since the NPS has not attracted the employees and workers, to promote the NPS and to discourage E.P.F, the government had ventured to take various decisions to the dis-advantage of EPF contributors and to the benefits of the interests of the big-capital and big-business.

To increase the inflow of contributions, proclaiming that it would extend the E.P.F facility to more and more workers and employees in the unorganized sector and informal sector, the eligibility criteria of pay from 6,500-15,000 has been enhanced. Thus it paved way for abnormal flow of predictable funds to be available with in its hands.

By deciding to invest in equities from 5% to 15% of the E.P.F corpus, under the false pretext of rising the returns on the savings of the workers, knowing fully-well that it is highly risky to invest workers' savings in speculative market, the NDA government had paved the way for investing the corpus of EPF in to risky speculative markets. During 2015-16, it has invested Rs 6,577 crores in equity market (75% in national stock exchange and 25% in Bombay stock exchange). While the EPFO is earning around 7.9% returns on central govt. securities and 8.15% to 8.20% on public sector unit bonds, the investments in the stock market brought only 1.52% and 1.68% returns in years 2014-15 and 2015-16 respectively. Showing the nominal increase of .16% of these paltry returns, now the labour minister (central) is advocating that since there is a 'positive' trend of returns on investments from investments in stock market equities, the government will increase its amounts of investments in the stock market equities. Thus every effort is made to hood-wink E.P.F. contributors.

Though sub-sequently rolled back the decisions of taxing on 60% withdrawals, restriction on the withdrawal of E.P.F amounts with various conditionalities and decision of cutting the interest rate on EPF

from 8.8% to 8.7%, they are mooted by the NDA government in accordance to its policy to rob the poor for the benefit of big-capitalist classes.

3. E.S.I.C (Employees' state insurance scheme) is another big organization presently under the control of the government. Workers contribute to this organization an insurance scheme for providing health services to the workers.

During the year 2014-15 this ESIC organization has earned Rs10,867 crore as funds from the workers as their contributions. It spent on 7510 crore for providing health benefits to workers through 151 large hospitals, 42 annexes and 815 dispensaries across 30 states.

Now the government mooted privatization of these services in PPP model and provide opportunity for looting the huge funds created by the contribution of the workers, in the name of giving an option to workers to choose between ESI and private health insurances. Has the government been sincere in providing the contributor-workers with better medical-facilities on par with private corporate medical hospitals, it can improve the standards of service in its hospitals and dispensaries with the huge funds available to it. But it wants the private insurers to loot these huge funds.

4. The P.F.R.D.A –the government agency to direct the public funds and regulate them properly has been consistently targeting at expanding the subscriber base of NPS under the pretext of Assets under management, and thus to rob more and more of workers' earnings to facilitate the government, to implement the neo-liberal capitalist economic reforms on a more under base.

5. More over the NDA government resorted to indirect taxing on the common man besides already existing 'service' tax which from 5% in 1994 is enhanced to 15% to the present day. The new taxes introduced are the 'Swatch Bharat' cess and the recent KRISHI KALYAN CESS, which rob the poor to provide indirect tax service to the government.

The government which had allocated Rs 70,000 crores in the yearly budget to provide subsidies to the corporate sector and the government which allowed the rich to evade their tax payments to a tune of Rs 7 lakhs crores has chosen to attack the hard-earned savings of working millions to make good of its economic deficiencies.

Thus the hard earned money of savings of the working millions is subjected to the exposure of the rapacious market forces, which erode the social security of the workers, as has been experienced by the working-class of America in the wake of global recession.

In simple words this is nothing but robbing the poor to enrich the super-rich!

The working class shall always be vigilant against these machinations of imperialist capital and its agents.

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