



A TALE OF TWO TRAGEDIES: NEOLIBERALISM FUELLED ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

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TRACING THE ROOTS- AN INTRODUCTION TO NEOLIBERALISM

The 21st century is often touted as the age of “neoliberalism”. Neoliberalism, apart from being an academic catchphrase, refers to a time when the free market is spreading to all areas of economic, political and social life.^[1] The theory of neoliberalism dates back to the 20th-century when the economists of the German School of Economics envisaged an economic system which was based on the principles of economic liberalism and free-market capitalism.^[2]

As an economic philosophy, “neoliberalism emerged among European liberal scholars in the 1930s as they attempted to revive and renew central ideas from classical liberalism as they saw these ideas diminish in popularity, overtaken by a desire to control markets, following the Great Depression and manifested in policies designed to counter the volatility of free markets, and mitigate their negative social consequences.

The core of the philosophy, in the words of noted Marxist theorist David Harvey, states “The idealist interpretation of liberalism rests on a utopian vision of a world of individual freedom and liberty for all guaranteed by an economy based on private property rights, self-regulating free markets and free trade, designed to foster technological progress and rising labour productivity to satisfy the wants and needs of all.”^[3] One impetus for the formulation of policies to mitigate free-market volatility was a desire to avoid repeating the economic failures of the early 1930s, failures sometimes attributed principally to the economic policy of classical liberalism.^[4]

In liberal theory, the role of the state is minimal (a “night-watchman” state with laissez faire policies)^[5]. In neo-liberalism it is accepted that the state play an active role in promoting technological changes and endless capital accumulation through the promotion of commodification and monetisation of everything

[1]Dylan Meisner, '21st Century Neoliberalism - Exponents' (www.exponentismag.org, 2020) <<https://exponentismag.org/2020/04/18/21st-century-neoliberalism/>> accessed 25 November 2021.

[2]Billy Christmas, 'The Neoliberal Turn: Libertarian Justice And Public Policy' (2020) 26 Journal des Économistes et des Études Humaines.

[3]David Harvey, 'Neoliberalism Is A Political Project' (www.jacobinmag.com, 2016) <<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/07/david-harvey-neoliberalism-capitalism-labor-crisis-resistance/>> accessed 25 November 2021.

[4]M. Soderstrom and J. Stahl, 'Editors' Introduction: Genealogies Of Neoliberalism' (2012) 2012 Radical History Review.

[5]Ibid

along with the formation of powerful institutions (such as Central Banks and the International Monetary Fund) and the rebuilding of mental conceptions of the world in favour of neoliberal freedoms.^[6]

These liberal and neo-liberal utopian visions have long been critiqued as inadequate because as Marx so clearly shows in practice, they both support a world in which the rich get richer at the expense of the well-being and exploited labour of the mass of the population. Keynesian policies and the redistributive state after 1945 proposed an alternative utopian vision that rested on the increasing empowerment of the working classes without challenging the power of private property.^[7] In the 1970s, a counter-revolutionary movement arose in Europe and the Americas organised by the large corporations and the capitalist classes to overthrow the Keynesian system and to replace it with a neo-liberal model (along with all its ideological baggage) as a means for the capitalist class to recuperate its waning economic strength and its fading political power.^[8]

Thus, while initially, in the early 20th century, the term was limited to being associated with an economic model, with the turn of the century, and most notably with the rise of Augusto Pinochet, and his brand of politically conservative, economically liberal policies, the term became a household name associated with crony capitalist policies. Other notable proponents of the neoliberalism policy included right wing populist leaders such as Margaret Thatcher, and Ronald Reagan.^[9]

In the 21st century, neoliberalism is often associated with the financial meltdown of 2007-8, the offshoring of wealth and power, of which the Panama Papers offer us merely a glimpse, the slow collapse of public health and education, resurgent child poverty, the epidemic of loneliness, the collapse of ecosystems, and the rise of far-right fascist, racist, islamophobic, transphobic, evangelical hardline christian politicians like Jair Bolsonaro and Donald Trump.^[10]

NEOLIBERALISM AT THE MARGINS

The term neoliberalism was coined at a meeting in Paris in 1938, and was the brainchild of two economists from the Austrian School of economics - Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek.^[11] Both the ideologues felt disillusioned with communism and advocated neoliberalism as an anti communist economic model. Hayek, further through his magnum opus, the Road to Serfdom, argued that government planning, by crushing individualism, would lead inexorably to totalitarian control. The Road to Serfdom was widely read, and gained the attention of some very wealthy people, who saw in the philosophy an opportunity to free themselves from regulation and tax. These oligarchs, millionaires and western

monopolists later helped Mises in setting up several institutes to spread his philosophy of neoliberalism.^[12]

Initially, despite its lavish funding, neoliberalism remained at the margins. The post-war consensus was almost universal: John Maynard Keynes' economic prescriptions were widely applied, full employment and the relief of poverty were common goals in the US and much of western Europe, top rates of tax were high and governments sought social outcomes without embarrassment, developing new public services and safety nets.^[13]

[6]Ibid

[7] n 1

[8] n 3

[9]Brett Heinz, 'The Politics Of Privatization: How Neoliberalism Took Over US Politics' (www.faireconomy.org, 2017)

<https://www.faireconomy.org/the_politics_of_privatization> accessed 25 November 2021.

[10] n 3

[11] n 4

[12]George Monbiot, 'Neoliberalism – The Ideology At The Root Of All Our Problems' (www.theguardian.com, 2016)

<<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/apr/15/neoliberalism-ideology-problem-george-monbiot>> accessed 25 November 2021.

[13] n 4

However, after Thatcher and Reagan assumed power, massive tax cuts were provided for the rich, the trade unions were crushed, deregulation and privatisation became the norm, thereby setting the tone for neoliberalism. Further, through the IMF, the World Bank, the Maastricht treaty and the World Trade Organisation, neoliberal policies were imposed – often without democratic consent – on much of the world.^[14]

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

On a more thorough analysis of neoliberalism, we can find a better picture of its insidious self serving nature. The economic growth has been markedly slower in the neoliberal era (since 1980 in Britain and the US) than it was in the preceding decades; albeit not for the rich. Inequality in the distribution of both income and wealth, after 60 years of decline, rose rapidly in this era, due to the smashing of trade unions, tax reductions, rising rents, privatisation and deregulation.^[16]

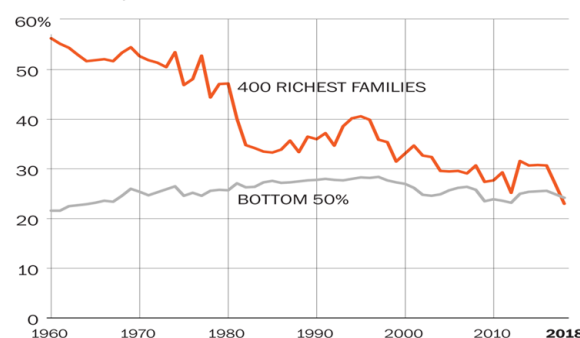
A direct analysis of the same can be the analysis of the tax paid by Billionaires with respect to the inflation. A study conducted by economists Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman of the University of California at Berkeley, presents a first-of-its kind analysis of Americans' effective tax rates since the 1960s.^[17] It finds that in 2018, the average effective tax rate paid by the richest 400 families in the country was 23 percent, a full percentage point lower than the 24.2 percent rate paid by the bottom half of American households. In 1980, by contrast, the 400 richest had an effective tax rate of 47 percent. In 1960, that rate was as high as 56 percent. The effective tax rate paid by the bottom 50 percent, by contrast, has changed little over time.

In comparison, the current federal minimum wage in the United States, sits at \$7.25 an hour, and hasn't been raised since 2009.^[19] Ever since its inception, the federal minimum wage, implemented under the Fair

Some of the first victims of neoliberalism included the trade unions and collective who saw their wages being suppressed, and them eventually getting sidelined. Further, regulations were relaxed which paved the way for excessive environmental destruction (like the poisoning of rivers), endangering workers, etc. Further, tax breaks in the name of development meant that inequality rapidly increased.^[15]

In 2018, the super-rich paid a lower tax rate than the bottom 50%

Average effective tax rates of the 400 richest families and the bottom 50 percent of U.S. households



Source: Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman

THE WASHINGTON POST

Note: Includes federal, state and local taxes.

[18]

Labor Standards Act, 1938 kept increasing at a pace with productivity growth (meaning more goods and services are produced per hour) and inflation. Although economic productivity continued to grow, the pace of wage growth started slowing after 1968, and the minimum wage stopped rising with inflation. Further, with the strengthening of the neoliberal model of economics, the federal minimum wage stagnated. Purchasing power adjusted, the current federal minimum wage, has less purchasing power than it did from the mid-1950's to around 1980. A 2019 analysis by the Economic Policy Institute finds the federal minimum wage in 2019 had 17% less purchasing power than it did 10 years ago, and 31% less than the minimum wage in 1968. A similar 2018 analysis by Pew Research points out the \$4.03 per hour minimum wage in January 1973 has the same purchasing power of \$23.68 in August 2018—more than three times the actual minimum wage.^[20]

[14] n 9

[15] n 12

[16] n 2

[17]'The Liberal Economists Behind The Wealth Tax Debate'

(www.nytimes.com, 2020)

<<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/21/us/politics/the-liberal-economists-behind-the-wealth-tax-debate.html>> accessed 25

November 2021.

[18]Christopher Ingram, 'For The First Time In History, U.S. Billionaires Paid A Lower Tax Rate Than The Working Class Last Year'

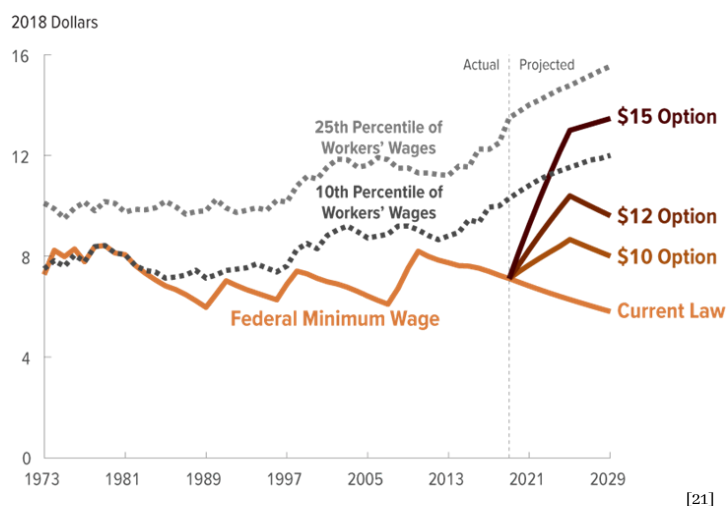
(www.washingtonpost.com, 2019)

<<https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2019/10/08/first-time-history-us-billionaires-paid-lower-tax-rate-than-working-class-last-year/>> accessed 26 November 2021.

[19]Jack Kelly, 'The Unintended Consequences Of Raising Minimum Wage To \$15' (www.forbes.com, 2019)

<<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jackkelly/2019/07/10/the-unintended-consequences-of-the-15-minimum-wage/>> accessed 25 November 2021.

[20]Paul Verhaeghe, 'Neoliberalism Has Brought Out The Worst In Us | Paul Verhaeghe' (www.theguardian.com, 2014)



A more practical example in this category can be seen in countries which adopted neoliberalism in a shock therapy mode. Countries such as Russia and India, which were at the forefront of the neoliberal revolution saw oligarchs acquiring state assets

through firesales.^[22] In Mexico, Carlos Slim was granted control of almost all landline and mobile phone services and soon became the world's richest man.^[23] The functioning of neoliberalism is also insidious in nature - Bankruptcy moves by major corporations (e.g. airlines) deprive employees of their pension and health care rights. Monopoly pricing in pharmaceuticals, in telecommunications, in health care insurance in the USA provide lucrative avenues for profiteering. Increasing extraction of wealth through indebtedness is evident. Rentier extractions based on accumulation by dispossession (e.g. acquiring land or mineral resources illegally or at cut rates) have become more common because the rising mass of global capital is finding increasing difficulty in procuring productive uses for surplus capital. Not only are these policies susceptible to failure, in most neoliberal markets, business takes the profits, the state keeps the risk.^[24]

NEOLIBERALISM AND FASCISM

Perhaps the most dangerous impact of neoliberalism is not the economic crises it has caused, but the political crises. As the domain of the state is reduced, our ability to change the course of our lives through voting also contracts. Instead, neoliberal theory asserts, people can exercise choice through spending^[25]. But some have more to spend than others: in the great consumer or shareholder democracy, votes are not equally distributed. The result is a disempowerment of the poor and the middle-class. As parties of the right and former left adopt similar neoliberal policies, disempowerment turns to disenfranchisement. Large numbers of people have been shed from politics.^[26]

It is an open secret that "fascist movements build their

base not from the politically active but the politically inactive, the 'losers' who feel, often correctly, they have no voice or role to play in the political establishment"^[27]. When political debate no longer speaks to us, people become responsive instead to slogans, symbols and sensation. To the admirers of the likes of Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro for instance, facts and arguments appear irrelevant.^[28]

Donald Trump as described by leading Marxian economists is merely a President of the postmodern era, wherein alienation of the middle class has seeped deep into the society. The alienation produced by neoliberalism managed by the Workers Party, coupled with widespread corruption, produces a mass base prone to be exploited by neo-fascist delusions.^[29]

[22] n 12

[23] n 12

[24] Taylor C. Boas and Jordan Gans-Morse, 'Neoliberalism: From New Liberal Philosophy To Anti-Liberal Slogan' (2009) 44 Studies in Comparative International Development.

[25] Martin Lukacs, 'Neoliberalism Has Conned Us Into Fighting Climate Change As Individuals | Martin Lukacs' (www.theguardian.com, 2017) <<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/true-north/2017/jul/17/neoliberalism-has-conned-us-into-fighting-climate-change-as-individuals>> accessed 25 November 2021.

[26] Ibid

[27] Thomas Biebricher, 'Neoliberalism And Democracy' (2015) 22 Constellations.

[28] Martin Lukacs, 'Doug Ford Isn't "For The Little Guy" – He's A Mercenary For The Millionaire Class | Martin Lukacs' (www.theguardian.com, 2019) <<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/true-north/2018/may/25/doug-ford-isnt-for-the-little-guy-hes-a-mercenary-for-the-millionaire-class>> accessed 25 November 2021.

[29] Steve Cohen, 'State Of The Planet - News From The Earth Institute' (blogs.ei.columbia.edu, 2020) <<https://blogs.ei.columbia.edu/>> accessed 25 November 2021.

A NEOLIBERAL INDIA (READ: ILLIBERAL INDIA)

India's tryst with neoliberalism is perhaps the most tragic of all tales of neoliberalism, that has taken its current form of pure fascism in the name of hindutva nationalism. While the Congress had originally scripted the liberalisation programme in the 1990s, it was Modi who capitalised on this scheme to entrench Hindutva hyper-nationalism at the centre stage of Indian politics.^[30] As a chief minister, before 2014, he leveraged the capitalist promise of economic growth to boost the "Gujarat model"—a neoliberal playbook of "Vibrant Gujarat," Modi's flagship biennial international investors' summit, combined with his strongman populism.^[31] This blueprint, which was dubbed as 'acche din', or good times—the open-ended promise of economic growth and the restoration of a Hindu civilisational past—is what brought him electoral success in 2014.^[32] Neoliberalism in addition to the aforementioned has also provided Modi with a chance to acquire a strong economic

muscle that in turn can bring legitimacy to the political establishment. For instance, global capital inflows or the increase in foreign exchange reserves are projected as a form of global recognition of the Modi government, often as a testament of his strong personal leadership.^[33] An inflow of capital investments also redraws political power dynamics such that the management of the nation's domestic affairs remain a no-go territory for external actors. The bargain is this: the state controls the territory and puts it at the disposal of investors, and in turn, the investors legitimise the sovereign power of the state. This narrative of economic development and the attendant political dynamic was evident when the BJP government revoked Jammu and Kashmir's special autonomous status in 2019.^[34]

In furtherance of his economic ambitions, issues such as environmental regulations have often taken a toll, as shall be discussed in the forthcoming section.

NEOLIBERALISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

Environmental regulation has always taken a back seat when it comes to neoliberalist policies and pro-market reforms, especially in a developing country like India. When the Government actively takes measures, which dilute the existing environmental regulation in the country, it is bound to raise strong objections from all quarters.^[35] The most prominent example in this category can be that of the Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2020.

The Environmental Impact Assessment ("EIA") is said to be one such tool of neo-liberal environmental policy, where before an industrial project is approved, the effect of such an activity/project on the environment is studied and analysed.^[36] If the proposed project is deemed to have adverse consequences on the ecosystem, approval for the project is usually denied by the concerned authority. In India, the EIA gained formal recognition in 1994,

[30] n 3

[31] 'Narendra Modi's Authoritarian Neoliberalism' (Sum.uio.no, 2020) <<https://www.sum.uio.no/forskning/blogg/terra-nullius/jostein-jakobsen/narendra-modi-s-authoritarian-neoliberalism.html>> accessed 25 November 2021.

[32] Ajay Gudavarthy, 'Neoliberalism Is Killing The Very Idea Of Citizenship In India' (www.qz.com, 2021) <<https://qz.com/india/1700542/neoliberalism-is-killing-the-very-idea-of-citizenship-in-india/>> accessed 25 November 2021.

[33] n 29

[34] 'Revocation Of Article 370 Will Boost Development In J&K: Rawat' (www.business-standard.com, 2019) <https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/revocation-of-article-370-will-boost-development-in-j-k-rawat-119080501421_1.html> accessed 25 November 2021.

[35] Alan Bond and others, 'Explaining The Political Nature Of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA): A Neo-Gramscian Perspective' (2020) 244 Journal of Cleaner Production.

[36] Utsav Mitra, 'Environmental Degradation And Neoliberalism: Does Deregulation Work?' (www.lawschoolpolicyreview.com, 2020) <<https://lawschoolpolicyreview.com/2020/08/22/environmental-regulation-and-neoliberalism-does-de-regulation-work/>> accessed 25 November 2021.

when the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests, under the Environmental (Protection) Act 1986, promulgated an EIA notification making Environmental Clearance (“EC”) mandatory for the expansion or modernisation of any activity, or for setting up new projects in the country. This law was enacted after the Bhopal Gas Leak disaster of 1984, largely due to huge public pressure for the regulation of industrial projects in the country.^[37] Although the EIA is regarded as one of the most successful policy innovations and has been implemented in over 100 countries, there are quite a few differences in the EIA systems of developed and developing nations. For example, EIA systems of developed countries are comprehensible and clearly defined, where screening for actions of environmental significance is carried out completely, and there exists specific guidelines on scoping, public participation and the review process which are not usually present in the EIA systems of developing nations. Since its inception in India as well, the EIA has been a cause for much debate and concern amongst environmentalists who believe that there exist several shortcomings in the process, and a lack of genuine regulation of economic activity. More specifically, issues had been raised regarding the approach to conducting an EIA, the fact that most projects are almost always given approval, the lack of an authority to constantly monitor the environmental conditions imposed on the project proponent, conflict of interests in the process and lastly, the fact that the affected communities are not well aware or informed about the process of public hearing and the rules regarding the EIA.^[38]

Further, for example, the EIA has often been criticised for propagating the neo-liberal agenda of minimum regulatory control over commerce and industry. It is contended that the affected communities have no real powers under the draft notification, and this tips the scale to favour the corporates. Another major cause for concern is the fact that the EIA draft 2020 allows an activity/project to carry on operations even if it has not received adequate environmental clearances from the authorities, and receive a clearance post the construction of the plant. Such post-facto clearance threatens to leave disastrous consequences on the environment, and especially on the affected communities whose basic livelihood is dependent on

it.^[39] Moreover, a list of selected projects, which are considered “strategic”, is exempted completely from any form of public scrutiny such as modernisation of irrigation projects, plant constructions, mining activities, national defence and security, expansion of national highways, amongst others. By removing the voice of the public completely from the process, many are of the opinion that the public trust doctrine has been abandoned and such projects can now be commissioned in extremely fragile and eco-sensitive zones, where large scale environmental violations may lead to devastating consequences. In fact, this is now being viewed as a complete trade-off between economic growth on the one hand, and environmental quality on the other. Another worrisome change has been the extension of time allotted for the submission of a compliance report.^[40]

For some time now, the Government of India has bought into the idea that neoliberal policies will lead to a faster growth in commerce and industry^[41].

However, such policies have in recent times come at the cost of directly diluting existing environmental regulations, and has also put a large question mark on the development of environmental jurisprudence in the country. The dilution of the existing environmental legislation, compounded with the disregard for all the progress that has been made in environmental jurisprudence through the Tribunals and Courts can also be seen as an outcome of the Indian political economy, which is now largely dictated by interests focussed only on growth.^[42] Such drastic de-regulation in environmental legislation does not serve anyone’s interests in the long run as environmental damage has irretrievable consequences, and will inevitably affect the economy as well. . More importantly, the recent incident in Madhya Pradesh where toxic ash leaked from a power plant after a dyke collapse, or the severe flooding in Assam, or even the recent styrene gas leak at a plant in Visakhapatnam are all indicators of why strict scrutiny of industrial projects must be done before permission is granted to them to commence operations.^[43] Although the revival of commerce and industry is of paramount importance in the present situation given the severe downward spiral of the economy due to the pandemic, it cannot be at the expense of sustainable development. In fact, experts in the field have noted

[37]Ibid

[38] n 29

[39]ManjuKohli, 'EIA Legitimised Environmental Destruction. Now, Govt 'Renovates' It For The Worst. - The Wire Science' (www.thewire.in, 2020) <<https://science.thewire.in/environment/eia-2020-environmental-degradation-draft/>> accessed 25 November 2021.

[40]Ibid

[41] n 29

[42] n 37

[43] n 34

that if we don't learn from our past mistakes, and further hamper delicate ecosystems it may result in more health hazards like the current pandemic. Going forward, environmental policies must be drafted with the understanding that it is indeed possible to safeguard the environment along with having a robust economy, for example, by implementing cleaner and

greener technology. It is not a question of a trade-off between the economy and the environment, but there must be maturity on the part of lawmakers to realise that the two can, and should co-exist harmoniously. This can only be achieved by designing an effective national environmental policy based on scientific research and transparent decision-making processes.^[44]

THE STORY OF GOA: A TEXTBOOK NEOLIBERALISM SAGA^[45]

Goa, a state known for its picturesque countryside and beaches, in the era of neoliberalism has often seen itself as the centre of controversies when it comes to sustainable development of projects. Not only is Goa extremely rich in industrial minerals like coal, but it has also been blessed with deep ports, and a natural harbour.^[46]

One such demonstration is against the expansion of the Konkan Railways in the Western Ghats. According to environmentalists, the project will cause enormous harm to the Mollem National Park, as the Railways will pass right through the heart of the park.^[47] Eastern Goa has also witnessed several agitations in the past including one by environmentalists to halt the coal mining in the environmentally sensitive areas. What these projects and agitations also present is the unparalleled neoliberal zeal to ensure profits going to the last penny, at the expense of people and justify it with economic and educational progress.^[48]

For instance the 17th century built Mormugao port in Goa has been a major coal export destination for Australia and Indonesia since 2000. India is the second-largest importer of coal, as domestic production often falls short of the demand, and prefers importing from Australia and Indonesia as they have vast reserves of coal that are claimed to be

'cleaner' than Indian coal and offer competitive pricing.^[49] Goa is also favoured as it does not serve as a naval base and is located close to metros such as Bangalore, Mangalore, Pune and Mumbai, where the coal is subsequently consumed. However, in the name of economic development, the ports have been leased out to corporate houses like the Jindal Group and the Adani Group.^[50] Far from serving the interests of the state, the privatisation of the ports have only led to greater environmental damage, exploitation of the workers (in most cases, immigrant labourers are brought in from neighbouring states and are often underpaid, flouting norms and regulations), and has had a minimal impact on the prospects of either boosting the treasury or the standard of lives of the citizens of the state.^[51]

Another such example can be that of the construction of an IIT in the state (albeit on the lines of the Indian School of Mines). The IIT campus will be situated in the ecologically sensitive Melalui area of north Goa^[52]. It was expected that over 100,000 trees were supposed to be felled for this campus, apart from the relocation of several of the villagers. The argument provided by the government again was based on the same old tale of education, employment and economics to justify its claim for the destruction of the forest and forest dwellers.^[53]

[44] n 37

[45] n 29

[46]Kiran D. Tare, 'Goa's Green Wars' (www.indiatoday.in, 2021)

<<https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/special-report/story/20210308-goas-green-wars-1773224-2021-02-27>> accessed 25 November 2021.

[47]Ibid

[48]Solano Da Silva, Kenneth Bo Nielsen and Heather P.Bedi, 'Land Use Planning, Dispossession And Contestation In Goa, India' (2020) 47 The Journal of Peasant Studies.

[49]Brototi Roy and KuntalaLahiri-Dutt, 'India's New Coal Geography: Reassembling Infrastructure In Goa To Move Coal'(www.Sum.uio.no, 2020) <<https://www.sum.uio.no/forskning/blogg/terra-nullius/kenneth-bo-nielsen/india-s-new-coal-geography-reassembling-infrastructure-in-go-to-move-coal.html>> accessed 25 November 2021.

[50]Ibid

[51] n 29

[52]Staff Writer, 'Protests Against IIT Goa Campus Turn Violent As Police, Villagers Clash' (www.livemint.com, 2021) <<https://www.livemint.com/news/india/protests-against-iit-go-campus-turn-violent-as-police-villagers-clash-11609936796561.html>> accessed 25 November 2021.

[53]Ibid

And lastly, perhaps the greatest instance of such travesty can be the widening of the Konkan Railways route, wherein the government plans to construct an expressway and expand the pre-existing railway line by completely destroying the lush green Western Ghats.^[54] Environmentalists and villagers have also raised the red flag over the proposed track doubling of the rail link between Vasco in western Goa. This case is also no exception to the general neoliberal sentiment, as the government is trying to justify its action by playing a political gimmick that the expansion was done for the benefit of the common citizenry.^[55] The catch however lay in the fact that the new track is being laid to aid the transport of coal arriving from Australia and Indonesia at the Mormugao Port to existing and upcoming power plants in Bellary, Hospet, Belgaum, Hubli-Dharwad, Bijapur and

Gulbarga in Karnataka and Maharashtra's Solapur, thereby showcasing a completely different and contradictory story to what had been presented to the common public. What the locals and the activists also fear is that the expansion of the port, and the widening of the Konkan Railways could lead to the destruction of the state's iconic beaches and marine industry, thus further pushing locals into sprawling debt, and despair.^[56]

However, despite these concerns given the manner in which the NIA and the National Green Tribunal operate and the vision of the current neoliberal government, it is nothing but obvious that the projects might get the required clearances, without taking into account the contentions of the locals.^[57]

CONCLUSION: NEOLIBERALISM, THE GOD THAT FAILED...

Neoliberalism is the God that failed, but the zombie doctrine staggers on, due to the hope of a very world in a dystopian environment that was created due to neoliberalism in the very first place.^[58] Neoliberalism can at best be defined as a distinctive, innovative philosophy that was patient and persistent, and ultimately became the path to power, for capitalists and politicians alike. The Ethics of Neoliberalism boldly proposes that neoliberalism strategically co-opts traditional ethics to ideologically and structurally strengthen capitalism. It produces "the ethical capitalist subject" who is personally responsible for making their society, workplace and even their lives "more ethical" in the face of an immoral but seemingly permanent free market.^[59]

This disparity, between the enormous prosperity on the part of the bourgeoisie business class, at the expense of the labour class, along with the introduction of "ethical capitalism"^[60] proves the self-serving racket that neoliberal capitalism is, in the

truest sense of the word. Neoliberalism's triumph also reflects the failure of the left, which in some countries like the UK and the US actually welcomed this breed of immoral capitalism with open arms.^[61]

This further gets aggravated by the fact that neoliberalism today no longer commands the consent of the mass of the population. It has lost its legitimacy, and to ensure its survival, neo-liberalism is compelled to enter into an alliance with state authoritarianism, thereby further ruining millions of lives.^[62] It is now moving towards an alliance with neo-fascism, due to ongoing protests against this imposed order which aims at lining the pockets of the rich at the expense of the people.^[63]

The aforementioned project is an attempt at analysing the same through the lens of the environmental damage, and lives destroyed by these neoliberal policies in the name of economic development, and highlight aptly the shortcomings of the current neoliberal model.

[54] n 44

[55] n 46

[56] n 47

[57] C. Michael Hall, 'Framing Behavioural Approaches To Understanding And Governing Sustainable Tourism Consumption: Beyond Neoliberalism, "Nudging" And "Green Growth"?' (2013) 21 *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*.

[58] n 3

[59] Jorge I. Valdovinos, 'Transparency As Ideology, Ideology As Transparency: Towards A Critique Of The Meta-Aesthetics Of Neoliberal Hegemony' (2018) 2 *Open Cultural Studies*.

[60] Ibid

[61] Arvind Ravikumar, 'Market Capitalism, State Capitalism, And Community Capitalism' [2010] SSRN Electronic Journal.

[62] n 29

[63] n 3.