

Do you know that:

- Coke and Pepsi are harmful to our health - they contain acids to give 'bite', caffeine to give 'kick', excessive amount of sugar, ... Yet we drink it, mesmerized by their ads...
- Coke and Pepsi are flouting Court rulings - that they must display their contents on their labels.
- Coke and Pepsi are drawing millions of litres of groundwater daily to make their toxic brew - depriving people of drinking water.
- Coke and Pepsi are dumping their deadly waste, which contains lead and cadmium, in the fields - polluting the soil and ground water.
- The government of India is kneeling before foreign multinationals... so it refuses to ban Coke and Pepsi.
- But ordinary people all over the country are coming together to fight these corporations. In a simply unbelievable development, lakhs of people have come together to form human chains hundreds of kilometers long! Dozens of colleges have announced a boycott of Coke-Pepsi. People have also forced the Plachimada plant of Coca Cola to shut down. Let us also join the struggle.
- Let us act... to save our health, water, environment.

Lokayat

Contribution: Rs. 15/-



YEH DIL MANGE MAUT



Coke Pepsi Quit India!

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*Yeh Dil
Mange Maut!*

Coke-Pepsi Quit India!



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List of abbreviations used in this book

BBC	British Broadcasting Company (United Kingdom)
BMI	Body Mass Index
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (USA)
CSD	Carbonated Soft Drink
CSE	Centre for Science and Environment (India)
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
JPC	Joint Parliamentary Committee
MEI	Methylimidazole
MNCs	Multinational Companies
NGO	Non-Government Organization
PTA	National Parents and Teachers Association (USA)
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organization
FDA	Food and Drug Administration (USA)

Important Note Regarding References to this Booklet

For reasons of economy, we are not giving the references to the facts given in this booklet, as they run into many pages. They are available on our website: <http://www.lokayat.org.in/> in the section on English booklets.

FOREWORD

Multinational corporations (MNCs) are entering India in a big way. Ever since 1991, when India's rulers began the globalisation of the Indian economy, governments have rolled out the red carpet for them. Laws are being rewritten, controls are being relaxed, regulations are being modified, to remove all obstacles to their operations in India, enable them to make super-profits, and repatriate it back to their home countries.

MNCs are huge. They are so big that they can gobble up entire countries. Wal Mart—the retailing giant (2011 revenue \$446.95 billion)—has a revenue that exceeds the respective GDPs of 174 countries.¹ Shell is bigger than Pakistan and Bangladesh combined. Ford is bigger than New Zealand. In 2009, of the 100 largest economic entities in the world, 44 were corporations. Their combined revenues were \$6.4 trillion, an amount which is larger than the combined economies of 155 countries.²

MNCs are non-transparent, autocratic entities, dedicated to a single purpose—accumulating more and more profits. Since the 1980s, with more and more countries accepting globalisation and allowing MNCs to enter and gradually dominate their economies, they have been able to spread their tentacles throughout the world. They now dominate the global economy. Each and every economic activity, in every conceivable sphere, be it manufacture of automobiles or semiconductors or medicines, or be it retail or transport or IT, or be it banking and finance, or be it pesticide manufacture or wheat or rice production, is dominated at the global level by a handful of giant corporations. The same MNC operates in several countries, and along with a handful of other such MNCs, dominates global production in that particular sector. To give a few examples: today 5 MNCs produce nearly half the world's motor vehicles; 4 companies essentially supply all of the world's recorded music; 10 companies dominate the world's pharmaceutical industry; the top 10 pesticide firms control 84% of the global pesticide market; and so on.³

On top of it, MNCs enter into strategic alliances and partnerships with each other to further increase their stranglehold over the globe. On top of it, a recent study of 43,000 MNCs discovered a vast web of interlocking ownerships that is controlled by a "core" of 1,318 giant corporations!⁴

The takeover of the world economy by giant corporations has had calamitous consequences for the mass of humankind. On the one

hand, a tiny number of people now control a huge amount of wealth. The world's 1226 billionaires have a net worth of \$4600 billion (in 2012)!⁵ The world's 24.5 million millionaires⁶ constituted barely 0.55% of the world's adult population but controlled 35.6% of the world's wealth (in 2010); and the world's richest 10% owned 83% of the world's wealth.⁷ On the other hand, the bottom half of the world's population, 3 billion people, are living on less than two dollars (Rs. 100) a day, with most of them either chronically malnourished or continually concerned with where their next meal will come from. Over a billion have no access to clean water, 1.5 billion have no electricity and 2.5 billion have no sanitation facilities.⁸

The MNCs' ruthless quest for profit accumulation is now beginning to threaten the very existence of life on planet Earth. The problem of global warming is rapidly becoming worse, and scientists fear that the crisis may soon become irreversible, leading to sea level rise of many metres, floods, hurricanes, species extinction, etc. And this global warming is just one part of a global environmental crisis! Yet, the developed countries led by the USA are simply unwilling to sign any global treaty to control environmental destruction, because it would affect MNC profits.

Such is the nature of the monstrous corporations who are now being allowed an unfettered entry into India. They are moving quickly to take control of each and every sector of the Indian economy—from agriculture to industry to finance to services, and now retail too. Along with their collaborators—India's big business houses, they are seizing control of the country's natural resources—forests, rivers, seas, mineral wealth. The entire economy is being pulverised and remoulded, to squeeze out the maximum possible profits. Even essential services—health, education, transport, electricity—are being taken over by private capital, to be transformed into mere means for profit accumulation. India's rulers have become so myopic in their greed that they are allowing MNCs to exploit even the most fundamental resource of all, necessary for sustaining life: groundwater reserves!

Amongst the most monstrous of the MNCs entering India are the carbonated soft drink giants, Coca Cola and PepsiCo (both make all kinds of soft drinks, but carbonated soft drinks is their biggest business; PepsiCo makes snacks too). They are notorious—for what they make, how they make it, and how they sell it. (It's actually the same with all multinationals.) This booklet focuses on the activities of these two corporations, to illustrate the impact the entry of MNCs into India is going to have on our lives.

INTRODUCTION

Thanda matlab Coca Cola... Yeh pyaas hai badi... through such advertisements featuring the country's most popular film stars and cricketers, Coke and Pepsi have so mesmerised the Indian youth that today thirst has become synonymous with these cold drinks. Even though it's only two decades since these two corporations began operations in India, they already control over 95% of the country's soft drink market. However, their success has nothing to do with the quality of their products; as we see below, their products are nothing but a toxic brew. Their success is, firstly, because of their giant size: they are so big that competition with them is simply not possible; and secondly, because of their huge advertising budgets: they spend hundreds of crores of rupees to influence and control our minds.

Before we take a look at the operations of these corporations in India, let us take a brief look at the cola story globally.

1. THE COKE-PEPSI STORY

Coca Cola was invented in 1886 by John Pemberton, a pharmacist. Soda water was very popular in the US in those days. Shopkeepers would add various extracts to the mineral water they sold at their soda fountains so as to please their patrons. Pemberton came up with the idea of mixing the extract of coca leaf—known to be an ideal nerve tonic and stimulant, with the extract of cola nut—another powerful stimulant said to be invigorating and able to cure hangovers, and gave his product the name Coca-Cola. The combination of two powerful stimulants, accompanied by a massive advertising campaign, sent sales zooming. By 1929, Coke dominated the US soft drink market and was among the 125 largest US companies in terms of sales.⁹

Pepsi was invented by Caleb D. Bradham, also a pharmacist and a soda fountain owner. Sometime in the 1890s, he came up with a mixture that he labelled Pepsi-Cola as he felt that the drink could relieve dyspepsia (upset stomach) and the pain of peptic ulcers. The drink initially became quite popular and sales boomed; but then, in the 1920s, disaster struck the Pepsi-Cola Company as a result of fluctuations in the price of sugar following World War I, and it twice went bankrupt. In 1931, the company was finally acquired by Charles Guth. He adopted a new marketing strategy to challenge Coke. First he changed its composition to make it taste similar to Coke, and then he priced it in such a way that the customer would get the same

quantity at half the price of Coca Cola. It was the years of the Great Depression. With Coke unwilling to lower its high prices because of its monopoly position, Pepsi's pricing strategy clicked with customers and its sales took off. By the end of World War II, Pepsi had gained a toe-hold in the US market. In 1950, it had a 10% share in the US carbonated soft drinks market, as compared to 47% for Coke. Having become big, it now abandoned its *Twice as much for a nickel* campaign; since then both these giants have not indulged in price wars and have only indulged in advertising wars.¹⁰

Coca Cola of course was much bigger. While the people of its home country were busy slugging it out with the Germans in the battlefields of World War II, Coke was planning ahead...

Coke during World War II¹¹

In 1929, Coke entered Germany with the subsidiary Coca-Cola GmbH. Germany was soon to become the company's second biggest market. Coca Cola's success in Germany rested, in part, on its ability to establish itself as a German brand in the minds of consumers. Coke sponsored many Nazi events, including the 1936 Olympics, and would situate billboards and advertisements in close proximity to Nazi leaders at rallies and in magazines. The strategy of direct association with Nazi leaders sent a strong message to the German people that Coke was on Germany's side and helped the company towards financial success. By 1939 when the Second World War broke out, Coke had established itself to such a degree that Max Keith, the chief of Coke's German operations, was appointed to the 'Office of Enemy Property'. Coca Cola had clearly become part of the Nazi state.

This close association with the fascist regime paid off handsomely—sales zoomed from zero cases (crates) in 1929 to 4 million in 1939. So successful was Coke in Germany that even when the country was being destroyed in 1944, the company sold 2 million cases.

While Coca Cola was rubbing shoulders with the Nazis and pretending to be a German company, it also used the opportunity offered by World War II to establish itself as a patriotic morale booster for American soldiers. The President of the company, Robert Woodruff, announced Coke's wartime policy in 1941 after the bombing of Pearl Harbour: "We will see that every man in uniform gets a bottle of Coca Cola for five cents wherever he

During World War II, Coke had placed one foot in both camps; irrespective of who lost the war, Coke was going to win.

is and whatever it costs.” Coca Cola Company managed to convince the War Department that Coke would boost morale, and the US government agreed to fund the installation of sixty-four bottling plants just behind the warfront. The bottling plants were shipped to the front lines and moved as the battlefront moved. Coke literally went to war with the rest of America.

Not one to miss an advertising opportunity, Coca Cola’s wartime advertising in the United States now highlighted its ‘contributions’ to the war effort. Coke became the patriotic drink! It was an advertising coup. After the war, millions of soldiers came home with a strong attachment to Coke, thus bolstering the company’s sales. Its ingenious wartime advertising strategy helped establish Coke as the leading soft-drink brand in the US, and helped it become the American icon that it is today.

Unbeknownst to the population in the United States and the American soldiers fighting in Europe, their enemy was enjoying the same beverage in Germany with a similar patriotic zeal. Coke had placed one foot in both the camps; irrespective of who lost the war, Coke was going to win.

Coke-Pepsi become MNCs

At the end of World War II, the US emerged as the most powerful economic and military power on earth. A wave of independence struggles was sweeping across the countries of Asia and Africa. To consolidate their independence and allow local industry to develop, the newly independent countries were imposing restrictions on foreign investments by the developed countries (that is, USA, Western Europe and Japan). Taking advantage of its financial strength, the US doled out grants and loans to these countries to create an opening in their markets for exports of goods and capital by its corporations; it even militarily intervened where possible to force their rulers to bend to its wishes. As US President Eisenhower put it: “A serious and explicit purpose of our foreign policy is the encouragement of a hospitable climate for investment in foreign nations.”¹² US corporations, including of course Coke and Pepsi, now began to spread their tentacles worldwide, backed by a string of US military bases spread across the globe.

By the late 1970s, the independent capitalist development models

History of expansion of Coca Cola Company and PepsiCo worldwide is a history of manipulation, trickery, thuggery, even genocide.

of the third world countries (that is, the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America) had started failing, and their rulers started borrowing heavily from the developed countries. The debt rapidly accumulated and soon became unpayable. The US seized the opportunity to pressurise these countries to fully open up their economies to foreign investment—the so-called *globalisation* of the world economy began. This enabled the corporations of the developed countries to expand their international operations and dominate the global market to such an extent that they now started being called Multinational Corporations (MNCs).¹³ Coke and Pepsi too became giant behemoths straddling the entire globe, selling in more than 200 countries.

Like other MNCs, the history of expansion of Coca Cola Company and PepsiCo worldwide is a history of manipulation, trickery, thuggery, even genocide; profit is all that counts. A few examples:

- Since their basic product is soft drinks, which requires a lot of water, they have been seizing control of and over-exploiting aquifers of the local communities, creating water scarcities for the people. Thus, in Mexico, the government of President Vicente Fox has privatised water resources and handed them over to corporations, depriving people of access to them. Fox—a former President of Coca-Cola Mexico—has given as many as 27 concessions to Coca Cola! Nineteen of these concessions are for the extraction of water from aquifers and from 15 different rivers; and eight are for the right of Coke to dump its industrial waste into public waters!¹⁴
- Coca Cola has been involved in exploiting and repressing workers



all over the world. In Colombia, Coca Cola has attempted to destroy the workers' union, SINALTRAINAL, by hiring armed thugs. These groups work in close collaboration with the US-backed Colombian military and the dictatorial Colombian government. Several workers have been murdered by these death squads, including the President of the union, Luciano Romero.

- In Turkey, Coca-Cola got the local police to intimidate and torture workers protesting outside its bottling plant against being illegally dismissed.
- In Peru, Coca Cola has refused to implement court orders for reinstatement of 60 workers that it has illegally dismissed.
- In Chile, workers at its plants work 16 hours a day, and are not even paid the minimum wage.¹⁵

Today these two corporations, which basically sell almost the same identical product despite whatever their advertisements might say, control over 70% of the world's carbonated soft drink (CSD) market.¹⁶ (While Coca Cola and Pepsi remain their most valued brands, both companies have diversified their portfolios. The Coca Cola Company has a portfolio of more than 3500 beverages, including fruit juices, energy and sports drinks, teas and coffees, and milk and soy-based beverages. PepsiCo also has a portfolio of hundreds of brands; apart from that, it has expanded into snack and nutrition foods too. Despite this diversification, CSDs still account for a leading 40% volume share of the global soft drinks¹⁷ industry.¹⁸) ['Soft drinks' refers to any beverage with added sugar or other sweetener, and includes soda, fruit punch, lemonade and other "ades," sweetened powdered drinks, and sports and energy drinks.] The total annual revenues of these two corporations exceeded \$100 billion last year. Coca Cola reported sales of \$46.77 billion for the year ending December 2011; while PepsiCo had 2011 sales of \$66.50 billion of which 34% was from beverages.¹⁹

Since their profits depend upon making people drink more and more soft drinks, Coke and Pepsi use every trick in the book to make people drink more, including lacing their drinks with additives, huge advertising and marketing campaigns, bribing policy makers, etc. And so the global consumption of CSDs has been rising every year: it has increased at a compound annual growth rate of 2.1% over the past five years to top 198 billion litres in 2011; and is forecast to reach 224 billion litres in 2016!²⁰

The rise has been the steepest in the United States, the home country of Coca Cola and Pepsi, where people have been bombarded by one of the most intense advertising campaigns in the world. Consumption of CSDs in the United States has gone up ten-fold since the 1940s: from only about 21.3 litres per person per year in 1942 to a whopping 212 litres in 1998—which means that every

Every American drinks an average of two 300 ml bottles of CSDs made by Coke and Pepsi every day!

American man, woman and child drank an average of two 300 ml bottles of CSDs made by Coke and Pepsi every day!²¹ (Since then, due to rising consciousness about their adverse health impacts, US consumption has steadily declined, but is still the highest in the world.)

Let us now examine the contents of these soft drinks, which have been so successfully marketed by Coke-Pepsi all over the world that on an average, every person in the world drinks one 300 ml bottle every four days! In the subsequent chapter, we take a look at their marketing techniques, which have made them so successful.

2. CSDs: A TOXIC BREW

Coke and Pepsi have consistently portrayed their products as being positively healthful and life enhancing. According to the chairman and CEO of Coca-Cola:

*Actually, our product is quite healthy. Fluid replenishment is a key to health ... Coca Cola does a great service because it encourages people to take in more and more liquids.*²²

Not only that, these companies claim that soft drinks contribute positively to a well-balanced diet. A poster that the National Soft Drink Association of the USA provided to teachers stated:

*As refreshing sources of needed liquids and energy, soft drinks represent a positive addition to a well-balanced diet ... These same three sugars also occur naturally, for example, in fruits ... In your body it makes no difference whether the sugar is from a soft drink or a peach.*²³

The reality is quite the opposite. Consider just the known facts about the contents of Coke-Pepsi drinks¹ and their effects on us. (**The examples given below are all from the US**, as that is where the effects are most visible, because that is where people have been drinking Coke-Pepsi for decades.)

i) Acids

Acids are added to give 'bite'. Soft dinks contain numerous acids, such as: acetic, fumaric, gluconic and phosphoric acids. The combination and strength of these acids is so strong that a plumber can use a soft drink to unclog a severely clogged drain, or if a car

¹ Note that when we are talking of Coke and Pepsi drinks, we are referring to all their products, like Coca Cola, Mirinda, Fanta, Pepsi, Sprite, 7 UP, etc.

battery is corroding one can use a soft drink to dissolve the corrosion.

The stomach maintains a very delicate acid-alkaline balance. Excessive consumption of soft drinks disturbs this balance, thereby creating a constant acid state. This can then cause inflammation of the stomach and erosion of the gastric lining, a condition known as gastronomic distress, which is very painful and disrupts digestion.²⁴

The phosphoric acid present in Coke and Pepsi causes the body to waste its much-needed alkaline minerals (sodium, potassium, magnesium, and calcium) to neutralise the acid, thus causing problems like weakening of bones, colitis, heart disease, indigestion and anaemia.²⁵ According to doctors, the phosphoric acid in combination with the fructose present in soft drinks may also block iron absorption into the body.²⁶

ii) Caffeine

Most soft drinks contain caffeine. A 300 ml bottle of Coke-Pepsi normally has 30-40 mg of caffeine.²⁷ This is added deliberately, for its physiological effects: caffeine is an addictive drug whose potency is increased when it is consumed cold, causing customers to drink more soft drinks.²⁸

The amount of caffeine in soft drinks can have distinct physical and behavioural effects: it can cause nervousness, irritability, sleeplessness and rapid heartbeat. Studies show that drinking the caffeine equivalent of two to three bottles of soft drinks per day (100 mg/day) produced physical dependence (addictiveness) in people, causing them to suffer withdrawal symptoms like tiredness and headache when they stopped consumption.²⁹

Caffeine's addictiveness is probably one reason why 6 of the 7 most popular soft drinks in the US contain caffeine. An official of the British soft drinks manufacturer Hero Drinks Group has in fact forthrightly admitted that caffeine "is added mainly for its stimulatory effects".

Companies can but prefer not to make caffeine-free colas: for instance, they account for only about 5 percent of the volume of colas made by Coca Cola.³⁰ In today's world of saturated markets, every means to increase sales goes...

Like phosphoric acid, caffeine too causes decalcification of bones. Caffeine increases the excretion of calcium in urine. Drinking one 300 ml bottle of caffeine-containing soft drink causes the loss of about 20

Coke-Pepsi drinks contain acids – of such strength that they are an excellent toilet cleaner.

mg of calcium, or 2% of the recommended daily consumption.³¹

Caffeine can also cause maternal fertility problems. The US FDA gave a warning in 1981 itself that "pregnant women should avoid caffeine containing foods and drugs, if possible, or consume them only sparingly".³²

iii) Excessive Sugar

Finally, soft drinks contain an enormous amount of refined sugar, and that too of a particularly harmful variety, high fructose corn syrup. Each 300 ml bottle of soft drink contains the equivalent of 8-9 teaspoons of sugar³³—to counter the bitter taste of all the various additives in this brew.

The excessive sugar found in soft drinks also functions like an addictive. To digest it, the small intestine needs a large amount of water, which it draws from other parts of the body. As a result, soon after drinking a soft drink to quench one's thirst, one feels thirsty yet again, and reaches out again for another bottle of soft drink. This, in combination with caffeine, and backed by an intense marketing campaign (discussed later), is what is responsible for the soaring consumption of CSDs worldwide.

Because of the large amount of sugar in soft drinks, the massive consumption of soft drinks worldwide is leading to a myriad of pathologies, most importantly: obesity and obesity-related diseases, especially diabetes and heart disease.

The 'Obesity Epidemic'

A can (355 ml) of soft drinks provides about 150 calories. With the average American drinking nearly 2 cans of soft drinks a day, the US is in the grip of an "epidemic" of obesity, according to the US Surgeon General.³⁴ Today, two out of three adults (69%) in the US are overweight, and one in three (36%) is obese.³⁵ Obesity has become the number-one health problem in the United States, according to Dr. Julie

Obesity – has become bigger threat to health than tobacco.

Gerberding, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a component of the Department of Health of the

United States government.³⁶ It has become an even bigger threat to people's health than tobacco! Over the period 1993-2008, while the proportion of smokers among American adults fell by one-fifth, obesity rates nearly doubled. With the incidence of smoking declining and that of obesity rising, a recent study conducted by researchers

from Columbia University and the City College of New York (USA) found that obesity is causing as much, if not more, disease than smoking.³⁷

This obesity epidemic is directly related to the rising consumption of carbonated sweetened beverages (and also other sugar sweetened drinks, apart from the consumption of fast food, like hamburgers and dough nuts) in the United States.³⁸ A study by doctors at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston and Harvard Medical School (USA) found that women who had increased their soft drink consumption over a four-year period from one or fewer drinks per week to one or more per day gained an average of about 4.5 kilograms. The *Nurses' Health Study*, which tracked the health of nearly 90,000 women over a eight year period, was published on August 25, 2004 in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.³⁹ The Harvard School of Medical Health estimates the weight gain due to drinking one can of a sugar-sweetened soft drink every day to be even more, at up to 6.8 kgs in a year.⁴⁰

And So, the Diabetic 'Epidemic'

It's common medical sense that obesity is a primary risk factor for diabetes. And so, predictably, the *Nurses' Health Study* also found that women who consumed one or more servings of soft drink daily (a figure which is less than the US national average), had nearly twice the risk of developing type 2 diabetes as compared to women who drink less than one serving per month.⁴¹ Numerous other studies, including one presented recently at a meeting of the American Heart Association in March 2010, have also confirmed these findings.⁴²

And so the 'obesity epidemic' has spawned a 'diabetes epidemic'. In 2010, 25.8 million Americans had diabetes—8.3 percent of the US population; another 79 million American adults had pre-diabetes, a condition in which a person's blood glucose levels are higher than normal, but not high enough for diagnosis as diabetes. Together, this means that more than one-third of the American population has either diabetes or pre-diabetes!⁴³ The CDC has warned that if current trends continue, one in three Americans born in 2000 will develop diabetes! If the CDC's predictions are correct, 45 to 50 million Americans could have diabetes by 2050!⁴⁴

With soft drink consumption booming world wide, the obesity-diabetic epidemic is not confined to the United States; it

Nearly one-sixth of the American population is expected to be diabetic by 2050.

has crossed over to Europe, and has penetrated even the poorest countries, especially in their urban areas. The World Health Organisation (WHO) says that an escalating global epidemic of overweight and obesity—"globesity"—is taking over many parts of the world. In 2008, nearly 35% of the world adult population was overweight or obese. The number of obese people in the world had doubled over the period 1980–2008; and by 2008, nearly half a billion adults were obese (BMI ≥ 30 kg/m²) worldwide.⁴⁵

The globesity epidemic is leading to a global type 2 diabetes epidemic: according to a study by an international team of researchers published in the *Lancet*, the number of adults with diabetes worldwide has more than doubled between 1980 and 2008, to 347 million—a number far higher than previous estimates. Nearly 10 percent of all men and women worldwide were diabetic in 2008.⁴⁶

Stroke, Vascular and Other Diseases

Apart from diabetes, consumption of soft drinks also increases the risk of heart disease, stroke, cancer and other diseases, and causes severe social and psychological problems.

Middle-aged adults who drank more than one soft drink daily, either diet or regular, have a nearly 50% greater rate of developing metabolic syndrome, according to data released by the Framingham Heart Study, a project of the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, USA. Metabolic syndrome is a constellation of conditions—high blood pressure; high insulin levels; excess weight, especially around the abdomen; high levels of triglycerides; and low levels of HDL (good) cholesterol—that increases the risk of heart disease.⁴⁷

Another study carried out by researchers at Cleveland Clinic's Wellness Institute and Harvard University (USA) examined the effects of CDSs on brain stroke risk. The study concluded that the excessive sugar in sodas caused blood glucose and insulin levels to spike, which over time may lead to glucose intolerance, insulin resistance, and inflammation. These physiological changes influence atherosclerosis, plaque stability and thrombosis—all of which are risk factors for ischemic stroke (brain stroke when artery to the brain is blocked).⁴⁸

There is also convincing evidence that regular consumption of soft drinks induces the production of uric acid and leads to high levels of blood uric acid, causing gout. (Gout is inflammatory arthritis with uric acid building up in the joints.) People consuming a can of sugar-sweetened beverages a day had 50%, and even as much as 75%, higher risk of gout as compared to people who rarely had such drinks.⁴⁹

The Sugar in Colas: More Toxic

The high fructose corn syrup present in colas is made out from corn through a complicated chemical and enzymatic process, and contains 55% fructose and 45% glucose. It is used extensively as a sweetener in making soft drinks and processed foods, as it is cheaper than sugar, has a longer shelf life, and mixes very easily with other ingredients. However, this form of sugar is more dangerous for the body than ordinary sugar. While every cell in the body can metabolise glucose, the fructose in high fructose corn syrup can only be metabolised in the liver. Excessive consumption of high fructose corn syrup containing soft drinks therefore overworks the liver, damaging it. It causes a condition known as scarring of the liver, which can ultimately lead to cirrhosis and liver failure.⁵⁰

Children: Worst Victims

Habits about eating and drinking formed during childhood often continue into adulthood. So Coke-Pepsi especially target children in their advertising and marketing campaigns (discussed later). Their efforts have borne fruit—teenagers are the most avid consumers of all, with consumption in the United States nearly tripling over the period 1977-78 and 1999-2002. By 1999-2002, the average 13- to 18-year-old teenager was consuming the equivalent of two bottles (300 ml each) of carbonated soft drinks a day! Almost half of all children between the ages of 6 and 11 drink CSDs, with the average drinker consuming one and a half bottles per day.

What is even more unbelievable: one-fifth of one- and two-year-old children consumed soft drinks. These toddlers were drinking an average of 200 ml—one cup—per day!⁵¹

Nutrition experts recommend that most of the body's daily calorie needs should be met by eating carbohydrate containing foods like vegetables, fruits and whole grains, which provide useful nutrients to the body, and that foods containing added sugars should be avoided. Added sugar is the sugar added to processed food and drinks while they are being made, as well as sugar one may add while cooking food at home. This added sugar provides only calories to the body; it is not a necessary nutrient for the body, and is added solely for its taste.

According to the American Heart Association and other bodies, children aged 13 and below and adolescent girls (who are not active) should not consume more than 80 calories and 20 grams of added sugar per day; for adolescent boys, the recommended limit is 133 calories and 33 grams of sugar.⁵² One 300 ml serving of CSD contains

around 135 calories and 35 grams of added sugar, much more than the recommended amount of calories & sugar that most children should consume in an entire day. But almost half of all US children consume one and a half bottles of soft drinks every day! While US teenagers consume two bottles of CSDs every day, which contain twice and more of the daily recommended intake of calories & added sugar for them. And since not every teenager consumes CSDs, if we exclude the non-consumers, the daily beverage consumption for all 13- to 18-year olds in the US was an astounding 3 bottles (830 ml to be more precise) a day!⁵³ On top of it, children do not only consume soft drinks. They also consume fruit drinks, chocolates, cookies, cakes, ice creams, and other such foods, all containing added sugar, every day!

32% of US children are overweight, 17% are obese.

And so it is no surprise that children are the worst victims of the obesity-diabetic epidemic. Childhood obesity has tripled in the USA over the past 3 decades. In 2008, nearly 1 of every 3 (32%) children between the age of 6-19 was overweight, while 1 in 6 (17%) was obese.⁵⁴

For children, obesity is a bigger tragedy for many reasons. Obese children and teenagers often suffer from psycho-social problems due to prejudice, discrimination and taunts from other children. This leads to low self esteem, preventing them from living up to their full potential.

More than two-thirds of obese children and teenagers have at least one cardiovascular risk factor (e.g., hypertension, high cholesterol, etc.), and 39 percent have two or more risk factors.⁵⁵ A recent study by the University of Sydney came to more alarming conclusions. It found that children who drank one or more soft drinks each day had narrower arteries in the back portion of their eye—a factor linked to higher risk of heart disease and high blood pressure.⁵⁶

Even more worrying is that obese children are increasingly being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. Earlier, type 2 diabetes was practically unheard of in young people under 30, hence its other name—adult-onset diabetes (almost all children with diabetes used to suffer from type 1 diabetes). But type 2 diabetes isn't just for adults anymore. The number of children with this condition has skyrocketed within the last 20 years. When these children grow up, they'll face complications such as amputations, blindness, heart attacks, and kidney failure.⁵⁷

Other conditions linked to childhood obesity include asthma, fatty liver disease and sleep apnea.⁵⁸

Decalcification

Bone development mainly depends upon how much bone mass is built up in early life, especially up to the age of 18. Calcium (together with Vitamin D) plays an important role in building up bone density during childhood. Today, numerous studies have established that drinking carbonated soft drinks leads to bone weakening, as the acids and caffeine in soft drinks leach out calcium from the bones, which then passes out of the body through urine. And children are the most avid drinkers of these calcium-leaching soft drinks! On top of it, children who drink too many soft drinks tend to drink less milk and so have a lower calcium intake.

The loss of calcium, combined with children drinking soft drinks instead of milk, is leading to weaker bones. Studies show that children who drink soft drinks are 3-5 times more likely to break a bone as compared to those who avoided CSDs. This also makes children more susceptible to osteoporosis (a disease in which bones become porous and hence more prone to fractures) in later life. For girls, this is more damaging, as they are more prone to osteoporosis on growing up.

In 2002, the US National Osteoporosis Foundation estimated that 10 million Americans had osteoporosis. Another 34 million had low bone mass and were at increased risk for the disease. That's a total of nearly 15% of the population at risk for osteoporosis! Obviously, this huge number is directly related to the booming CSD consumption.⁵⁹

Impact on Teeth

Soft drinks have emerged as one of the most significant dietary sources of tooth decay, affecting people of all ages, more specifically children.

The white visible section of the teeth is called the tooth enamel. It's made up of minerals, especially calcium and phosphate. There are naturally occurring bacteria in everyone's mouths. When these bacteria come in contact with sugar, acid is produced. This acid, in combination with the extra acid in the soft drinks, dissolves some of the tooth's strengthening minerals (calcium and phosphate) from the tooth surface. Each time one sips a cold drink, the acid attack lasts for around 20 minutes.

Saliva is the body's natural defence against tooth demineralisation. It helps wash sugars from the mouth and contains bicarbonate that helps neutralise the acid production. The calcium and phosphate present in saliva also help to replace the minerals on the surface of the damaged teeth. But if 'acid attacks' occur too often, as when soft

drinks are sipped throughout the day (as is often the case with teenagers), the saliva won't have enough time to repair the damage done, and a cavity will eventually develop in the tooth.⁶⁰

Economic Costs of Obesity-Diabetic Epidemic

According to the US Surgeon General, obesity-related diseases account for more than 300,000 deaths every year; one out of every eight deaths in America is caused by an illness directly related to overweight and obesity.⁶¹ By one estimate, the US spent \$190 billion on obesity-related health care expenses in 2005.⁶²

iv) Other Additives

A commonly used preservative in soft drinks is sodium benzoate. In acidic solutions (like sodas), sodium benzoate can break down into benzene, a known carcinogen. Levels in soft drinks can be up to 40 times higher than recognised 'safe' doses.⁶³

**Caramel colouring in Colas –
causes cancer!**

The characteristic dark brown colour of colas comes from caramel colouring. There are various types of caramel colourings. The caramel colouring used in colas is sulphite ammonia caramel (E150d). The making of this caramel colour involves a chemical process that adds a chemical to the caramel, 4-methylimidazole or 4-MEI. Studies show this chemical causes cancer in laboratory animals; and the US state of California recently added 4-MEI to its list of carcinogens. Tests show that colas contain 4-MEI in quantities several times higher than the safe limit set by California state. In 2011, the Center for Science in the Public Interest (a US based advocacy group)⁶⁴ petitioned the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to ban this kind of caramel colouring.⁶⁵

v) And in India, Pesticides too!

As if this was not terrible enough, tests carried out by the Center for Science and Environment (CSE), a public interest advocacy group based in New Delhi, of 12 leading drinks produced and marketed in India by Coca Cola and PepsiCo, showed that all samples contained high levels of pesticides and insecticides. The levels were high enough to cause cancer, damage to the nervous and reproductive systems, birth defects and severe disruption of the immune system. CSE also tested two soft drink brands sold in the US, to see if they contained pesticides. They didn't!⁶⁶

vi) Diet Sodas: More Poisonous

Diet sodas are advertised by Coca Cola and PepsiCo as the healthy, sugar-free alternative to Coke, and their sales have zoomed worldwide. Diet Coke is now the second most consumed carbonated beverage in the world, with annual sales topping \$1 billion.

The most important health benefit claimed for diet sodas is that they are low-calorie and so do not cause weight gain and related health problems. However, numerous studies have shown that this is just another lie propagated by Coke-Pepsi. The reality is that diet sodas too lead to weight gain and therefore heart disease risk. One such study presented at a American Diabetes Association meeting in June 2011 showed that diet soda drinkers had waist circumference increases of 70 percent greater than non-diet soda drinkers. And those who consumed two or more diet sodas a day experienced waist size increases that were a shocking six times greater than those who did not drink diet soda.⁶⁷

The internationally renowned Framingham Heart Study mentioned earlier too came to the same surprising conclusion. It found that people who drank more than one can of diet soda daily had a 48% greater rate of either having or developing metabolic syndrome, which increased heart disease risk; the risk was the same as those who consumed regular soda! This is probably because the sweetness of artificial sweeteners in diet sodas confuses our body, provoking it to release insulin and other hormones that control blood glucose, disturbing the hormone balance and leading to weight gain and metabolic syndrome. Researchers have found that adults who drink diet soda daily have a 43% increased risk of heart attack or stroke compared to those who do not drink diet soda.⁶⁸

That is not the end of bad news for Diet Coke-Pepsi drinkers. Not only do diet sodas contain tooth and bone destroying acids, psychoaddictive caffeine and cancer causing sodium benzoate present in regular sodas, additionally, they also contain an extremely toxic artificial sweetener, aspartame.⁶⁹

Aspartame is probably one of the most controversial food additives in history. Both the US FDA and the CDC have admitted to a long list of adverse effects associated with ingestion of aspartame. The list includes numerous symptoms connected to impaired



neurological function, including: headache, aggressive behaviour, disorientation, hyperactivity, extreme numbness, excitability, memory loss, loss of depth perception, liver impairment, cardiac arrest, seizures, suicidal tendencies, severe mood swings, muscle weakness, abdominal pains and cramps, vision deterioration, skin rashes, and joint and musculoskeletal pain. Furthermore, according to researchers and physicians studying the adverse effects of aspartame, the following chronic illnesses can be triggered or worsened by ingestion of aspartame: brain tumours, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, chronic fatigue syndrome, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, mental retardation, lymphoma, fibromyalgia and diabetes. The most recent evidence shows that aspartame ingested at half the levels that are currently found in diet sodas raises the risk of otherwise rare brain tumours known as lymphomas.⁷⁰

Compelling evidence presented by numerous eminent scientists and consumer groups with regards to aspartame's toxicity forced the US FDA to initially deny approval to aspartame. The ban continued for eight years. Eventually, however, corporate muscle and political skulduggery won out over scientific rigour, and aspartame was approved for use in 1981. The FDA's about-turn opened the floodgates for aspartame's swift approval by more than 70 regulatory authorities around the world. (See Appendix for this story.)

3. DECEPTION UNLIMITED

Even though soft drinks have been around for over a hundred years, it is only in the last 2 decades or so that researchers have started studying their effects on human health. Their startling findings summarised in this booklet, that Coke and Pepsi are a toxic brew, will appear to most readers to be far-fetched, because people have got used to seeing soft drink advertisements umpteen times daily; because Coke and Pepsi have become ubiquitous—they are available everywhere, from the corner paan-shop to the shopping mall to hospital canteens to cinema halls (and many of them keep no other drink); because people see everyone around them drinking Coke-Pepsi drinks many times a day to quench thirst ...

Most readers would also be thinking: 'Coke-Pepsi are MNCs. Their drinks are consumed by billions of people the world over. Surely, if they are so toxic, there would have been an uproar against them.'

To draw a parallel, it has been the same with tobacco. It was 50 years ago (1962) that the harmful effects of tobacco were

authoritatively established in a report by the Royal College of Physicians (UK); it was way back in 1964 that the US Surgeon General announced that smoking causes lung cancer; but it has taken decades of struggle by anti-tobacco activists to force governments to act to discourage smoking, and even today tobacco advertising is only partially banned in most countries. Despite all the evidence, many smokers still refuse to believe that smoking is harmful to health. Presently there are about 1.1 billion smokers in the world, despite the fact that lung cancer is the most common form of cancer worldwide and 5 million smokers die due to tobacco-related illnesses every year. The cigarette industry of course continues to deny that nicotine is addictive.

Most of us are ignorant of the reality of the world we live in. Most of us are unaware of the power wielded by giant multinational corporations over our daily lives. In today's globalised world, MNCs dominate the global economy and are able to influence policy-making to such an extent that no government dares to take action against them for their environmental-social-economic-health crimes. MNCs also dominate the global television, newspapers, music, film and publishing industry. They have transformed all these means of education, information and entertainment into means for their propaganda, and through that, they are able to influence and even determine what we read, think, see, our dreams, desires and tastes, even what we eat and drink.

An important objective of the MNC-controlled global propaganda machinery is to transform human beings from thinking beings to consuming pigs. A principal means by which MNCs do this is through advertising and marketing—MNCs earn such huge super-profits that they are able to spend billions of dollars on this. They hire the brightest minds whose sole job is to use their intellect, skills and creativity to manipulate our minds and convince us to consume more and more and more...



Hyper-Consumerism

In 1877, Chief Sitting Bull of the Lakota nation (in what is now the United States) said of the European invaders who were destroying his people and their way of life, "[T]he love of possession is a disease with them."⁷¹ Disease is an apt term, because the desire to possess more and more is not inherent to the nature of human beings; it is acquired. The Native American chief was able to perfectly identify the disease, because he came from a different culture. Prominent US historians have written of American Indians:

*[T]hey are all equal... Neither is richer or poorer than his companion and all unanimously limit their desires to that which is useful and precisely necessary, and are contemptuous of all other things, superfluous things, as not being worthy to be possessed...*⁷²

Despite what neoclassical economists may tell us, people do not have an inherent, insatiable desire to acquire more and more goods, to consume without end. Anthropologists studying *primitive* societies have found very different human relations and human nature than the highly competitive, dog-eat-dog, selfish characteristics that have dominated during the modern, capitalist period. People lived in cooperation with each other in egalitarian societies. There were no bosses or rulers; there was no obsession with private property. Behaviour was characterised by generosity rather than selfishness.⁷³

The desire to possess and consume limitlessly has been artificially created, it is a product of capitalism. Ever since capitalism came into being 500 years ago, cooperation and sharing inherent among human beings has been downplayed, while aggressive competitiveness, greed and individualism has been promoted so as to create the conditions for the growth of a system whose central feature is accumulation, accumulation and even more accumulation of profits. And along with this, a culture of consumerism has also been promoted: because only when goods are sold can profits be made.

In today's world of monopoly capitalism, this has taken on a newer form, hyper-consumerism—to purchase, possess, consume, more and more, without any relation to basic human needs or happiness. Buy, buy and buy, so that MNCs can make more, more and more profits... This is intrinsically

Desire to possess more and more is not inherent to human beings

Desire to possess and consume more and more is a product of capitalism

related to the deepening economic crisis in the developed countries; since the 1970s, their economies have been continuously slowing down. With the market becoming more and more saturated, the giant MNCs that dominate the economies of those countries have been resorting to all kinds of sales gimmicks in a desperate attempt to boost sales.

The most visible part of this sales effort is of course advertising; but in reality, advertising is only one part of a huge marketing exercise, which also involves things like: making minor changes in product's appearance, extravagant packaging, making goods fragile (planned obsolescence), frequent model changes, introducing new fashions, targeting, psychological research of consumer behaviour, etc. The aim of this entire sales effort is to manipulate people's desires to push products and rake in profits.

Over the years, advertising and marketing have become indispensable for large corporations—they have, so to say, become a part of the bone marrow of corporate capitalism. And so, corporations have been pouring in fantastic amounts of resources in an attempt to ensnare people into the 'consumer trap'. Big businesses in the United States now spend well over two thousand billion dollars a year on marketing!⁷⁴ Corporations have set up huge research apparatuses, staffed by psychologists and cultural anthropologists, to determine ever newer ways of manipulating peoples' feelings, thoughts and behaviours so as to get them to buy more and more products. There are no moral or ethical limits to be observed. Modern marketing is clearly the greatest concerted attempt at psychological manipulation in all of human history.

Even children are not spared. Not long ago, children were considered vulnerable beings, to be caringly nurtured. However, today's corporation-dominated world increasingly sees kids through an economic lens. Children are now viewed as an economic resource to be exploited, just like bauxite or timber.

Once the race began to target children, it has become unstoppable. Corporations are increasingly targeting younger and younger children, in an attempt to imprint their brand names on their vulnerable minds. Children are easy to take advantage of, because they tend to trust adults. Most children don't grasp the motives behind advertising; they are unable to see it as propaganda. Even the US Federal Trade Commission concluded in 1978 that most children "view commercials simply as a form of 'informational programming'"!⁷⁵

Aggressive Marketing Strategies of Coke-Pepsi

Amongst the most aggressive marketeers in the world are the soft drink giants, Coca Cola and Pepsi. These two corporations make their billions by capitalising on the most basic human physiological need—thirst. Coca Cola says:

All of us in the Coca-Cola family wake up each morning knowing that every single one of the world's 5.6 billion people will get thirsty that day. If we make it impossible for these 5.6 billion people to escape Coca-Cola, then we assure our future success for many years to come. (From Coke's 1993 Annual Report)⁷⁶

These two corporations spend over \$5 billion (over Rs. 25,000 crores) annually on advertising their products, which of course more than pays itself off in increased sales and profits.⁷⁷ Coca-Cola Company, ranked as the seventh largest advertiser in the world,⁷⁸

Big businesses in US spend over 2 trillion dollars a year on marketing

spent \$2.9 billion on print, radio, television and other advertisements in 2010, thanks to which it sold \$35 billion worth of beverages worldwide and its net profits rose a

whopping 73% to top \$11.8 billion that year.⁷⁹

Apart from media advertising, soft drink companies also spend billions of dollars on a myriad of marketing techniques to promote their products: from corporate social responsibility (CSR) campaigns to sponsorship of concerts to giving away freebies to giving grants to public organisations.

Through their CSR campaigns, the two soft drink corporates are attempting to portray themselves as ethical organisations by associating themselves with good causes. Thus, Pepsi has launched the 'Refresh Project' in the United States and several other countries around the world. The campaign awards a total of \$20 million in grants annually (this figure is for the US alone) to projects that have a 'positive' impact on the community or the country. Anyone can submit an idea for a project online; people are then invited to cast votes on the campaign website, or via Facebook or Twitter, or by SMSes; and the projects receiving the highest votes are funded by the company.

Similarly, to counter the growing campaign by health activists that soft drinks are responsible for the 'obesity epidemic', the two companies are trying to project themselves as 'health friendly corporations' by associating themselves with campaigns and activities promoting healthy lifestyles. One marketing coup for Pepsi has been

becoming a commercial partner since 2009 with the UK National Health Service's *Change4Life* campaign. The campaign is the UK government's response to obesity and promotes physical activity and healthy eating. As a part of this, Pepsi has been sponsoring ads that use famous soccer players to encourage parents to help their children "have an active lifestyle". Similarly, Coca-Cola has launched a 'Live Positively' campaign, wherein it undertakes educational campaigns urging people to live healthy lifestyles, and funds construction or improvement of school playgrounds and public recreation facilities. The aim of such campaigns is to propagate the view that it is not drinking soft drinks, but unhealthy lifestyles that is responsible for the huge rise in obesity.⁸⁰

Similarly, both corporations have been investing heavily to sponsor high profile sports events. Coca Cola has been sponsoring the football World Cup since 1978; it has also sponsored the Olympics, the cricket World Cup and other sports competitions. Pepsi is the official partner to Football Association, the governing body of English football; it is also the sponsor of the biggest sports event in the USA, the Super Bowl (an annual American football championship), which is also the most watched American television program.⁸¹

Marketing Coke-Pepsi to Children

And like other corporations, Coca Cola and Pepsi too make children a prime target of their indoctrination campaigns. In 1999, Dawn Hudson, Pepsi's chief of marketing, told the *New York Times* that marketing to 8- to 12- year-olds was a priority.⁸² Matt Nussbaum, Coca-Cola's youth market representative in Cleveland, Ohio, explains why: "We know ... students will continue to drink Coca-Cola products for 50 to 60 years ... We're trying to gain their business for the future."⁸³

Beverage and fast food corporations spend billions of dollars on insinuating themselves into every aspect of children's lives. According to one estimate (for the US), these corporations spend over \$1 billion on advertising directed at children, mostly on television; over \$4.5 billion on youth-targeted



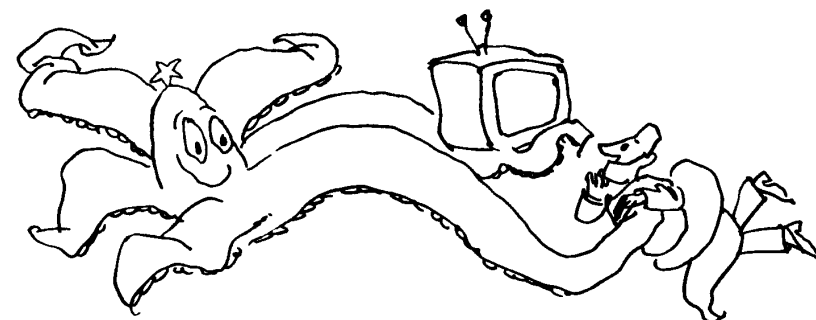
promotions such as premiums, sampling, coupons, contests and sweepstakes; about \$2 billion on youth-targeted public relations, such as broadcast and print publicity, event marketing, and school relations; and an additional roughly \$3 billion on packaging especially designed for children.⁸⁴

Let us take a look at some of the despicable techniques used by these corporations to hook children on to soft drinks in the capital of the globalised world, the United States.

i) Through the Media

Television literally is an obesity machine, not just because it makes children couch potatoes, but also because of what it shows. The average American child watches around 20 hours of TV programs every week and so around 40,000 TV ads every year.⁸⁵ Realizing the power of TV marketing in reaching out to children, junk soft drink and food companies have been advertising heavily on TV. Food advertising in the developed countries now accounts for around half of all advertising broadcast during children's TV viewing times; three quarters of such ads promote high calorie, low nutrient foods.⁸⁶

Advertisers continuously search for newer and newer ways to paste their products on the minds of children. A popular technique is to pay pop stars, sportspersons and film stars to promote their products. Of late, even recorded music is being used: late in 2002, Pepsi and Sony Music signed a deal wherein both will promote each other. Coke-Pepsi are also tying up with popular children's movies. In 2001, Coke paid Warner Brothers \$150 million for exclusive global marketing rights for the film *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*;⁸⁷ Pepsi, not to be outdone, signed a \$100 million contract with Walt Disney to market its film *Monsters Inc.*⁸⁸ Another technique used is called product placement, wherein the product is so woven into the story that the viewer would have to view it. Coca Cola, for example,



paid \$25 million to AOL Time Warner so that, among other things, characters in the popular TV children's serial *Young American* would gulp down cokes in each episode.⁸⁹ Coke also paid \$26 million so that judges in the popular TV talent show *American Idol* sit behind large red cups emblazoned with the Coca Cola logo; and contestants wait their turn in the Coca Cola room, perched on a Coca Cola sofa.⁹⁰ PepsiCo shelled out \$60 million to sponsor the equally successful TV music competition *X Factor*.⁹¹

With children spending an increasing number of hours every day on the internet, marketeers are reaching out to children online too. The most common marketing technique is to set up websites which provide entertainment (games, music, puzzles, etc.) or educative information to children. One of the most popular of these websites is Coca Cola Company's website, *MyCokeRewards.com*, which averages more than 170,000 unique young visitors per month.⁹²

Marketeers want to engulf children's minds from all angles, like the tentacles of an octopus. Toys too have become marketing tools: there are Coke toys such as checker sets and cars that are designed to introduce kids as young as four to the Coca-Cola brand.⁹³ Coke and Pepsi pop up even when children read! Junk foods now feature so extensively in children's books that Kate Klimo, vice president and publisher of Random House Books for Young Readers, says: "It's not that these books resemble advertising—they are advertising."⁹⁴

The race to 'catch them young' has reached its limits: soft drink companies are now encouraging feeding soft drinks to babies too, by licensing their logos to makers of infant-feeding bottles!⁹⁵

ii) Marketeers Go to Schools

Marketeers have even invaded sanctums that were previously off-limits, such as schools.

Cutting government funding to schools is not taking place just in third world countries like India, it is taking place in the world's richest countries too. And so, to raise funds, schools are allowing soft drink companies (and fast food companies) to sell their toxic products in schools. More than one-third of elementary schools, half of middle/junior high schools and almost three-fourths of senior high schools in the USA have signed such contracts. Incredibly, nearly half of these contracts include financial incentives for schools to sell more Coke or Pepsi. Teachers are even asked to promote soft drink consumption in classrooms to meet sales targets. The schools have become soda pushers!

The contracts can be highly lucrative. For example, a beverage contract with one US school district (a special district in the USA that operates local public primary and secondary schools) has the potential to generate up to \$1.5 million per year.

The contracts also allow soft drink companies to advertise in schools. And so, schools and school facilities have become advertising boards. Ads have become omnipresent: on school buildings, school corridors, sports facilities, playing grounds, noticeboards, scoreboards, book covers, student assignment books, school buses, etc.⁹⁶

Marketeers will stoop to any level to sell their products. Thus, the Channel One television news program has tied up with over 12,000 schools in the US to show 10 minutes of TV "news" and 2 minutes of ads every day to a captive audience of over 8 million children. Schools receive free video equipment in exchange for mandatory showing of the program in classrooms. While promoted as "education", the real appeal is to advertisers. Around 70% of the commercials shown are for food products, mainly fast food and soft drinks. The junk drink companies are now able to bombard children with their advertisements every day, as knowledge! The atmosphere of the school is an advertiser's dream, says Joel Babbit, former president of Channel One: "[T]he advertiser gets a group of kids who cannot go to the bathroom, who cannot change the station, who cannot listen to their mother yell in the background." Because of such guaranteed

effectivity, Channel One charges exorbitant rates for ads. A thirty second TV spot can cost up to two lakh dollars.⁹⁷

A new company called 'ZapMe!' has extended this strategy to computers. 'ZapMe!' offers free equipment to schools—computers and Internet browsers. In return, it advertises to kids, plus it gets a market research gold mine. The company snoops on schoolchildren as they browse the internet, and then "breaks down the data by age, sex and zip code. It then sells this information to advertisers and marketers, who use it to target students in school with "laser-like precision" (to quote Associated Press, the news agency).⁹⁸

Channel One TV program in schools: Children compulsorily see 2 mins of junk food-drink ads every day!

4. WHY DON'T GOVERNMENTS INTERVENE?

Way back in 1864, referring to the increasing interference of corporations in the political life of the USA, President Abraham

Lincoln wrote,

I see in the near future a crisis approaching that unnerves me and causes me to tremble for the safety of my country... corporations have been enthroned and an era of high corruption will follow, and the money power of the country will endeavour to prolong its reign by working upon the prejudices of the people until all wealth is aggregated in a few hands and the Republic is destroyed.⁹⁹

Since then, the power of the corporations has multiplied to reach such astronomical heights that they dominate not just the economies of their home countries, but the world economy too.

Because of their enormous financial muscle, it is easy for giant corporations like Coca Cola Company and PepsiCo to manipulate, distort and suppress scientific research on the toxicity of their products. And if at all some independent scientists and public spirited bodies do defy their power and come up with damning evidence of their crimes, they are powerful enough to influence policy makers and prevent governments from taking action. A few examples:¹⁰⁰

➤ **Corrupting Science:** Corporations suppress research, intimidate scientists, set up fake scientific bodies, ghost-write scientific articles, and selectively publish results that suit their interests.

- Thus, Coca Cola in March 2004 created a research institute, Beverage Institute for Health and Wellness. This is clearly for public relations, the goal being to convince people that Coke cares about health issues. On the side, the institute will also aim at downplaying the health risks associated with consuming soft drinks. Many professors of reputed Universities are on the advisory council of this research institute.¹⁰¹
- Coca Cola is also one of the corporate sponsors of the Center for Consumer Freedom, a supposedly non-profit body that campaigns against dietary guidelines recommended by the FDA and other government agencies and medical associations. The Center has also received funding from Monsanto, Philip Morris, Cargill, and many other such corporates.¹⁰²

➤ **Restricting Effectiveness of Regulatory Authorities and Public Bodies:** Companies hinder the regulatory process; corrupt regulatory bodies, science associations and public spirited organisations; exploit the "revolving door" between corporate and government employment.

- Many Coke executives occupy senior positions (like being a member of the Board of Governors) of numerous US

universities.¹⁰³ This has helped Coke sabotage calls for banning soft drinks on campuses.

- In 2003, the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry received a \$1 million donation from Coca-Cola. The Academy president David Curtis now went on record to state, "Scientific evidence is certainly not clear on the exact role that soft drinks play in terms of children's oral disease." Before the gift, the group had noted the link between soft drinks and tooth decay.¹⁰⁴
- The WHO, the public health arm of the UN which fights chronic

Coke now advises WHO on how to fight obesity!

ailments such as diabetes and heart disease, in 2012 accepted a £35,000

donation from Coca Cola. It has also accepted donations of thousands of dollars from other fast food companies like Nestle and Unilever. These corporations now advise WHO on how to fight obesity!¹⁰⁵

- In 2003, Coca Cola became a sponsor of the venerable National Parents and Teachers Association (PTA), which for more than a century has promoted the health of children in the USA. Coca-Cola's senior vice president for public affairs John Downs Jr. even had a seat on the PTA as a Board member for some time!¹⁰⁶
- **Influencing Congress:** By spending billions of dollars on lobbying and campaign contributions, corporations influence members of Congress, getting them to delay or scuttle action against their crimes.
- Coke and Pepsi spend millions of dollars every year on lobbying politicians in state capitals and Washington. Both of them, together with the American Beverage Association, spent around \$70 million on lobbying in 2011 to scuttle proposals to impose taxes on soft drinks to counter the obesity epidemic. The bribes have had an effect. Attempts to levy such taxes have failed in 30 US states.¹⁰⁷
- Coke-Pepsi have given millions of dollars in contributions to the campaign coffers of Congressmen of both the Republican and Democratic parties. They have also given generous sums to the two main candidates for the American presidential elections.¹⁰⁸ With such bribes, is it any surprise that when the WHO released a draft report in 2003 suggesting that the consumption of soft drinks are a major cause of obesity in the West, the White House immediately objected, saying that there was not enough

evidence to link the two, and demanded that the offending words be “deleted or significantly revised”!¹⁰⁹

In reality, corporations have become so powerful that Lincoln's worst fears have come true. They now actually control the levers of power in the United States (and other countries too). This is most evident from the way the US Presidential elections are now funded. By the time the present round of elections concludes in November 2012, the two main candidates will have together splurged about \$2.5 billion. Throw in spending by the two parties, spending on the Congressional races, and 'outside money', and the total would be closer to \$6 billion, according to the Centre for Responsive Politics, the foremost poll tracker in the United States!¹¹⁰ Obviously, such huge sums cannot come from the general public; they are donated by corporations. The food and beverage industry, which includes corporations like Coca Cola, PepsiCo and McDonalds, is one of the bigger contributors; it donated \$16 million to the 2008 Presidential election campaign.¹¹¹

American democracy: “Of the 1%, by the 1%, for the 1%”

And so, whoever wins the elections will obviously have to return the favour during his Presidency. As Joseph Stiglitz has put it, American democracy has become: “Of the 1%, by the 1%, for the 1%.”¹¹²

In such a system, expecting the government to act against corporations to protect the health of people is like expecting the fox to guard the hen house.

5. COKE AND PEPSI IN INDIA

It's again very similar to the tobacco story. Due to intense campaigning by activist groups, conscientious doctors and public spirited scientists, consumption of carbonated soft drinks has fallen by one-fifth in the United States in the last decade and a half: from 212 litres per person per year in 1998 to 169 litres per person per year in 2011.¹¹³ (Of course, even this is still the highest in the world.) Sales of CSDs have been weak in Europe too: Coca Cola reported that sales volume in Europe fell by 5% in 2011.¹¹⁴ Facing stagnant or declining markets in the developed countries, soft drink corporations have been increasingly focussing on the third world countries, especially Latin America, China and India, to boost their sales.

Coca Cola Company and PepsiCo began operations in India in the

late 1980s / early 1990s. In just 2 decades, they have come to dominate the carbonated soft drink market in India, and together account for 95% of the total sales. In 2011, total CSD sales in India were estimated at 60 billion rupees (\$1.05 billion), of which Coke had a 60% share (in retail value sales) as compared to PepsiCo's 37%.¹¹⁵

Annual per-capita consumption of CSDs in India is still very low as compared to global figures: approximately 5.2 litres against the world average of nearly 85.22 litres.¹¹⁶ And so, both companies see a huge potential for increasing sales in India, and have been investing heavily. After investing \$2 billion in its India operations over the past two decades, Coca Cola announced in 2012 that it planned to invest an additional \$5 billion in India by 2020.¹¹⁷ For PepsiCo, India's food and beverage business is already amongst its top five businesses in the world. It has invested over \$1 billion in the last 14 years; in 2008, it announced plans to invest another \$500 million.¹¹⁸

Obviously, a significant portion of this investment is going to be in advertising. Both corporations have unleashed a deluge of print, television and outdoor advertising campaigns; hired film stars, pop stars and cricketers for these advertising campaigns; sponsored cricket, football, music, dance and even Navratri events; doled out money to sponsor school and college events; and so on.

There are such fantastic indigenous natural nutritious drinks available in India, such as nimbu pani, butter milk, lassi, panna, sattv, coconut water, kokam sharbat, sugar cane juice, innumerable fruit juices and shakes, etc. Despite their easy availability and cheap cost, despite numerous reports in the media about the presence of pesticides in Coke-Pepsi soft drinks, the advertising binge unleashed by these two MNCs has lead to a sharp rise in consumption levels of their toxic drinks. And therefore, despite being associated with numerous scams and scandals, India has been one of the fastest growing markets for both corporations in recent years. Sales volumes of carbonated drinks of both Coca Cola and Pepsi have been growing at double digit rates.¹¹⁹

History of Coke-Pepsi in India

Coca Cola came into the country in 1956, when it used to be distributed free at seminars to promote its taste and thus create a demand. By the 1970s, it had established itself in the Indian market. It was kicked out in 1977, due to its refusal to accept Indian laws under which it had to dilute its ownership stake in its Indian subsidiary to 40%. Justifying his decision to throw out Coke, George Fernandes, the

then Industry Minister in the Janata Party government, stated:

*Coke had 100 percent equity in India. Their investment was not much. They came into the country with 600,000 rupees, which at the present rate of exchange is less than \$20,000. On this 600,000 rupee investment, they had taken out of the country, by a modest estimate, 250 million rupees (about \$8 million) as profit in the twenty years they had been in the country.*¹²⁰

By the late 1980s, the winds of globalisation had started blowing across India, and the Indian government began welcoming western MNCs to India. The trickle turned into a deluge after 1991, when the Indian government, trapped in a foreign exchange crisis and facing external account bankruptcy, entered into an agreement with the World Bank-IMF to restructure the Indian economy and open it up to foreign capital inflows. This surrender of India's economic sovereignty is being glorified by the high-sounding name of globalisation.

Since then, the government of India has been running the economy solely for the profit maximisation of giant foreign multinationals and their Indian cohorts, India's big business houses. The MNCs are seizing control of agricultural lands, forests, rivers, mountains, coastal lands, urban lands. So that they can commandeer the resources—bauxite, iron ore, coal, water... Or set up special economic zones, infrastructural projects, expressways, airports... Or build resorts, golf courses, villas, shopping malls, etc. Lakhs of people are being brutally displaced from lands and forests they have been living on since times immemorial; the police are behaving like the private armies of these corporates... while the courts remain mute spectators to this blatant violation of the Constitution. The foreign and India corporate houses are also taking over all welfare services, including education, health, electricity, transport, even drinking water facilities... and transforming them into instruments of naked profiteering.¹²¹

PepsiCo began operations in India in 1988, and Coca Cola re-entered in 1993. The story of their operations since then is very similar to that of the other MNCs. They are trampling upon our



laws, refusing to implement agreements, thumbing their nose at the judiciary, looting our resources, polluting our environment, destroying people's livelihoods... with the connivance of our bureaucracy and politicians.

Breaking Agreements, Violating Laws

What a change has taken place in the country! When Coke returned to India, it signed an agreement with the government agreeing to divest 49 percent of its equity holding in its bottling operations to the general public by 2002. However, in 2002, instead of forcing Coke to honour its commitment or quit India, the government diluted the condition imposed on Coca Cola! Ironically, this happened when Fernandes was the defence minister in the government headed by Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who had served as external affairs minister in the Janata Party government in 1977!¹²²

Pepsi too made several promises at the time of entering India, such as that it would create 50,000 jobs, that 74% of its investment would be in food- and agro- processing (and only 26% in soft drink manufacturing), that 50% of the value of its production would be exported, and that it would set up a farm research centre in Punjab. Not one of these promises has been fulfilled; the government has meekly swallowed the insult.¹²³

In 2003, after the CSE published a report on pesticide residues in soft drinks, Coke and Pepsi launched a vicious attack to discredit the findings. They questioned CSE's testing methodology, the data analysis, even raised questions about whether there existed laboratories in the country that could test their products. They threatened to sue CSE for defamation. Their concubine government in Washington too intervened. The US Under-Secretary for International Trade, Franklin L. Lavin, warned India that a ban on soft drinks could "affect investment". Their toadies sitting in Delhi also attempted to bully the CSE. Grey-clad men from the Intelligence Bureau visited the CSE office. Taxmen served notices asking CSE to submit details of its accounts and funding sources for the past 20 years.¹²⁴

However, CSE stood its ground, and the public uproar which followed the publication of the test reports eventually forced the government to constitute a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) to review the CSE tests. The JPC report vindicated CSE's findings. The tests, and their vindication by the JPC, led to much noise in the Indian Parliament... but all that this hallowed institution did as a follow up action was to ban Coke-Pepsi soft drinks in its canteens.¹²⁵

In 2006, the CSE again undertook a nation wide study of 11 soft drink brands made by the two MNC giants, and found little had changed. The study found pesticide residues in all the samples. Again there was much noise made in the Indian Parliament. But such are the relations of power between MNCs and the government of India that it again ducked the issue of taking action against these soft drinks corporations.¹²⁶

In October 2004, the Rajasthan High Court, in an unprecedented ruling, ruled that Coca Cola and Pepsi must specify on their labels not just the composition and contents of their beverages but also the presence of pesticides and chemicals, if any. There was actually nothing new in the Court order, the Court was only asking the companies to implement Indian laws. The requirement to disclose the ingredients of all packaged food items on their labels has been there in the Prevention of Food Adulteration rules in India for a long time. The companies went in appeal to the Supreme Court, which too upheld the High Court order.¹²⁷

These poison companies simply cannot implement the Court orders, as if they do so, they will go out of business. And so, they have resorted to the simple stratagem of not implementing the judgement. And the mendicants sitting in Delhi's corridors of power have no spine to force these corporations to follow the country's laws.

Destroying People's Livelihoods

Depleting Groundwater

Coke and Pepsi have set up around 90 bottling plants in India. At each and every location, these plants have been drawing out anywhere between 5 to 15 lakh litres of groundwater every day!¹²⁸ Thus, the bottling plant of Pepsi located in the Puthusheri Panchayat in Palakkad district, Kerala is extracting seven lakh liters water per day, according to a report tabled in the Kerala Assembly.¹²⁹ A bottling plant of Coca Cola located in the neighbouring village of Plachimada in the same district was extracting up to 15 lakh litres of water every day, till a powerful agitation by the local people forced the plant to shut down.¹³⁰ (For most other plants, we do not have confirmed figures of water extraction by them, as the authorities just do not investigate.)

[In recent years, Coke and Pepsi have been making tall claims about having reduced water usage at their soft drink bottling plants by using the latest bottle-washing technologies. They claim that they now use about 2.5 to 3 litres of water to make one litre of CSD. But the fact is, these companies are

crooks, and simply cannot be trusted with their claims. For, if indeed they have reduced their water consumption, they could have confidently invited independent experts / NGOs into their plants to study and verify their claims. But that they are not doing! Obviously, they have much to hide.^{131]}

There are no laws to check groundwater exploitation by private corporations in India. The underground aquifers hold water resources collected over many hundreds of years. As such they represent the heritage of entire communities. The overexploitation of this precious resource by these giant corporations for making their toxic products is causing groundwater levels to fall, creating water shortages for people living in the regions where the bottling plants are located. It is not just affecting water supply for agriculture—because of which crop yields are falling; it is affecting drinking water supplies too—wells are going dry, hand pumps no longer work, and women have to go for miles to fetch drinking water. To give a few examples:

- Coca-Cola established a bottling plant in the village of Kaladera in Rajasthan in 1999. The village is located in a semi-arid region, where farmers rely on groundwater for the cultivation of their crops. Coca-Cola's arrival exacerbated an already precarious situation. Government documents themselves show that water levels in the ten years before the arrival of the Coca Cola plant (1991-2000) had fallen by just 3.94 meters, and in fact had remained stable from 1995 until 2000. However, in the ten years since the Coca-Cola plant became operational, groundwater levels have plummeted 25.4 meters!¹³²
- Similarly, in Mehdiaganj (near Varanasi) too, water levels have fallen sharply since Coca-Cola began operations there in 1999: official data shows that in the 11 years since then, groundwater levels have dropped 7.9 meters; in the 11 years before that, groundwater levels had actually risen 7.95 meters!¹³³

If this continues, these regions will soon become *dark zones*, the term used to describe areas that are abandoned due to depleted water resources.



Polluting the Environment

On top of it, these giant corporations have been indiscriminately discharging their toxic waste water into nearby fields and rivers, polluting the groundwater and the soil, rendering the water unfit for human consumption. Coca Cola has even distributed its solid toxic waste as free fertiliser to farmers!

- BBC presenter John Waite visited Coca Cola's Plachimada plant and took samples of water and wastes sold as fertiliser by Coke to the farmers back to the UK, where laboratory tests showed that they contained dangerous levels of cadmium and lead! A short while later, on August 6, 2003, a report by the Kerala State Pollution Control Board confirmed the existence of carcinogenic contaminants in the plant waste.¹³⁴
- The same year, the Central Pollution Control Board of India surveyed eight Coca-Cola bottling plants in the country and tested the sludge at all these facilities. The Board too found that all the sludge at all the bottling plants it surveyed contained high levels of toxic heavy metals like lead, cadmium and chromium!¹³⁵
- On August 8, 2003, a report by the West Bengal government stated that it had found toxic metals, including the carcinogen cadmium, in the sludge and liquid effluents from Coke's plants at Dankuni, Taratala and Jalpaiguri and Pepsi's at Narendrapur.¹³⁶
- A few years later, another study by the Delhi-based well-respected NGO, Hazards Centre, found that nothing had changed. In tests conducted in 2006-08, it found high levels of toxic chromium and other pollutants in the soil and water around five Coke and Pepsi plants in northern India: Mehdiganj and Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh, Kaladera and Chopanki in Rajasthan, and Panipat in Haryana.¹³⁷

Bottled Loot

That is not the end of the crimes of these robber corporations. Apart from extracting groundwater to make soft drinks, they are also (along with other corporations like Nestle and Parle—owner of Bisleri brand) mining millions of litres of groundwater to bottle and sell it to the country's middle classes and elites as 'pure drinking water'. This is further worsening the water woes of India's villages.

India ranks 120th among 122 nations in terms of quality of water available to its citizens (according to a World Resources Report).

Aquifina-Kinley extract their water virtually for free, and sell it for Rs. 15 a litre!

About 70% of India's water supply is seriously polluted with sewage effluents. The result is that more than 4 lakh people die every year of diarrhoeal diseases, more than 90% of which are due to unsafe drinking water.¹³⁸ Yet, India's ruling elite is unconcerned. Using various mumbo-jumbo theories like 'free market' and 'limiting the fiscal deficit for growth', the state is gradually withdrawing from its responsibilities of providing even the most essential welfare services to the people, including drinking water, and handing them over to corporations for their profiteering.

The corporations are making a killing. Taking advantage of the lax laws in the country, they are drawing lakhs of litres of water from rivers and underground aquifers paying practically nothing. For instance, in Kaladera in Rajasthan, Coca Cola extracts the water virtually for free, paying nothing even to the local community which is suffering heavily due to Coca Cola's operations because of the sharp decline in the water table. Coke only pays a tiny cess to the government, that too not for extracting water, but for discharging waste water into nearby water bodies—a little over Rs.5,000 a year during 2000-02 and Rs.24,246 in 2003, for extracting half a million litres of water every day! That works out to just 14 paise per 1000 litres of water. The purification cost, even with the latest technology, would not be more than 25 paise a litre.¹³⁹ And then it bottles and sells the water for as much as Rs. 15-20 a litre!



With such superprofits to be made, no wonder the bottled water industry is booming. It has become a Rs. 1600 crore business, and is growing at a whopping 40% annually! The bottled water corporations have set up over 1200

bottling plants in the country, which are overdrawing water, robbing local communities of their resources and livelihoods. Coca Cola's Kinley and Pepsi's Aquafina dominate this sector too, together accounting for nearly 50% of the market share.¹⁴⁰

6. COKE-PEPSI QUIT INDIA!

Faced with destruction of their environment and livelihoods, denied access to the very source of life—drinking water, people living around Coke-Pepsi's bottling plants are fighting back. They are demanding that these corporations be held accountable for their crimes. From Kala Dera (near Jaipur) to Badauli (in Haryana), from Mehdiganj and Ballia and Jaunpur (Uttar Pradesh) to Patna (Bihar), from Mandideep and Peelukhedi (Madhya Pradesh) to Sivagangai and Gangaikondan (Tamil Nadu), from Kudus (Thane district, Maharashtra) to Plachimada and Pudukkottai (Kerala), tens of thousands of people living in these regions are waging militant struggles, demanding the closure of the bottling plants and compensation for the destruction caused to their health and their lands. They are all raising a common demand: that *Coke and Pepsi should be thrown out of the country*.

However, our rulers, instead of defending the health, environment and livelihoods of the people of our country and taking action against these corporations, are singing eulogies to foreign MNCs. They are telling us that the FDI being brought into the country by these criminal corporations is necessary for our development. In other words, we are being told that we cannot develop ourselves, and that these foreign brigands are coming to help us!

The government is behaving like an agent of foreign MNCs. Wherever people are agitating against Coke-Pepsi, the government has acted to defend the interests of these corporations, and the people have been subjected to severe police repression. Their peaceful demonstrations and rallies have been viciously attacked by lathi-wielding policemen, injuring many. Hundreds have been arrested and false cases foisted upon them. It is back to the colonial days once again. We, the people of India, have become second grade citizens, or non-citizens, in our own land. Helots, as the Roman citizens used to call the others.

Yet the people have refused to cow down. And they have won significant victories too.

Plachimada Struggle

The biggest of these struggles has been the struggle of the people of Plachimada, a small village in Palakkad district of Kerala, against Coca Cola's bottling plant located in their village. A majority of the local population comprises of adivasis, 80% of whom are agricultural

labourers. The struggle thus pitted one of the most marginalised sections of the Indian society against one of the most powerful corporations in the world, a David versus Goliath struggle.

Initially, all the political parties, from the left to the right, supported Coca Cola. But the people did not give up, they resolutely continued their struggle. Gradually, the agitation spread across the state, and wide sections of the people actively got involved. As public pressure mounted, with even school children getting involved in demonstrations and dharnas, the political parties too were forced to change their position. After a fantastic struggle that lasted for nearly 2 years, Coca Cola was forced to shut down its bottling plant in the village in March 2004.

The people however have not remained satisfied with just the closure of the company. They also want compensation for the damage caused to their health, environment and livelihoods. The agitation continued, and eventually, the state government was forced to set up a committee to examine the issue. The committee submitted its report in 2010, recommending that the company should be made to pay Rs. 216 crores as compensation to the local people for the losses they have suffered. In 2011, the Kerala Legislative Assembly unanimously passed a bill to set up a tribunal to go through the claims and award the compensation, which would then be legally binding on Coca Cola Company. The bill was then sent to the Centre for President's assent. But such is the power these MNCs have over the Indian government that the Central Government has sat on the bill since then!¹⁴¹

The Struggle Spreads...

As awareness about Coke-Pepsi's crimes has spread, an increasing number of people from all walks of life across the country are coming out in protest, demanding that the government stop bootlicking these corporations and force them to 'Quit India'. At the initiative of the *Azadi Bachao Andolan*, an Allahabad-based Gandhian activist group fighting the assault on our country's sovereignty by foreign corporations:

- On February 1, 2001, 3.5 lakh students of 500 educational institutions participated in forming a 300-kilometer long human chain connecting the cities of Allahabad, Varanasi and Jaunpur.¹⁴²
- On January 29, 2003, over 10 lakh students and village folk participated in forming an even more unbelievable 1200-km long human chain that passed through 22 districts of Rajasthan, UP, Haryana and Punjab as well as the union territory of Chandigarh to

gherao Delhi's rulers. Students from 2000 schools and colleges participated in the human chain, braving the cold wave sweeping the region.

- On January 20, 2005, nearly 50 bottling plants of Coke and Pepsi spread over 14 states were gheraoed by people by forming human chains. People also staged peoples' courts at the factory gates charging the factories with destroying people's livelihoods and the environment.

In another exhilarating development, students, teachers, college principals and vice-chancellors of several universities and colleges have openly come out and announced a boycott of these two criminal corporations. Tens of thousands of students, together with their teachers, at the Anna University in Chennai, the Avinashlingam Deemed University for Women in Coimbatore, the Gujarat Vidyapeeth of Ahmedabad and Kashi Vidyapeeth of Varanasi have imposed a people's ban on the entry of these junk drink companies into their campuses. Several dozens of colleges across the country have also declared their campuses as 'Coke-Pepsi Free Zones'.

[Why have we not heard of these movements? Because the national newspapers didn't find the news worth printing.]

The Struggle Goes Global...

The struggle against Coca Cola's crimes in Plachimada, Mehdiganj, Kala Dera and elsewhere in India, as well as its human rights violations in Colombia, Turkey and other countries, has drawn support from students and ordinary people around the world:¹⁴³

12 US universities ban Coke from campuses for crimes around the world.

- ✓ Students at several universities in the UK, including universities at Leeds, Sussex and Manchester (one of Europe's biggest universities with 36,000 students) have banned Coke's drinks from their student union's shops and bars in protest against the American company's alleged abuses of human rights and the environment in India, Turkey and Colombia.¹⁴⁴
- ✓ By early 2006, 12 universities in the USA, including the New York University, the largest private university in the US with over 50,000 students, and the University of Michigan, had thrown out Coke products from their campuses. University of Michigan and New York University were Coca-Cola's largest campus markets in the US; Coca-Cola's annual contracts with the University of Michigan

alone were worth around \$1.4 million in sales.¹⁴⁵

- ✓ Worldwide, anti-Coke campaigns are active in more than 130 campuses. Dozens of schools and colleges, in countries from Ireland to Italy and Germany to Canada, have banned Coke from their campuses for its crimes.¹⁴⁶
- ✓ Federations and unions across the United States and Canada have passed resolutions protesting Coke's labour and human rights violations, banning Coke machines and products from union halls, and demanding that schools remove Coke machines. These include various locals of the Postal Workers, Communication Workers, Service Employees, Automobile Workers, and Steel Workers. In April 2005, the Representative Assembly of the 525,000-member New York State United Teachers union adopted a resolution to ban serving or selling Coke products at its offices, events or meetings.¹⁴⁷

Plachimada Declaration

In January 2004, representatives of peoples' movements from all over the world participated in the World Water Conference held in Plachimada. Over 2000 people attended the 3-day conference. The Plachimada Declaration issued at the end of the conference affirms:

Water is not a private property. It is a common resource for the sustenance of all.

- *Water is the basis of life; it is the gift of nature; it belongs to all living beings on earth.*
- *Water is not a private property. It is a common resource for the sustenance of all.*
- *Water is the fundamental right of all human beings. It has to be conserved. It is our fundamental obligation to prevent water scarcity and pollution, and to preserve it for generations.*
- *Water is not a commodity. We should resist all criminal attempts to marketise, privatize and corporatise water.*
- *The right to conserve, use and manage water is fully vested with the local community.*
- *The struggle against Coca Cola in Plachimada and various parts of the world is the symbol of our valiant struggle against the devilish corporate gangs who pirate our water. We, who stand in full solidarity with the struggle of the people of Plachimada, exhort the people all over the world to boycott the products of Coca Cola and PepsiCo.*

Let Us Join the Struggle Too

Friends, Coke and Pepsi are symbolic of all MNCs. Multinational corporations are seeking to acquire control over what we eat, what we drink, what we read, what we see, what we think, so that they can maximize their profits. They are bombarding us with their propaganda, and we are becoming victims of it. We must throw off this yoke of mental slavery.

Our government is grovelling before these foreign corporations. Therefore we need to act. The least we can do is BOYCOTT COKE-PEPSI soft drinks.

We must join the boycott of Coke and Pepsi:

- Not just because they are harmful to our health;
- Not just because through their manipulative advertising techniques they entice people into drinking their toxic brew;
- Not just because they are destroying the livelihoods of thousands of people in Plachimada, Mehdiganj, and other places;

We must support the movement to throw Coke and Pepsi out of India, also because:

- We need to assert that foreign corporations who do not implement the agreements they have signed with our government, who do not respect the laws of the country, who do not respect and honour the judgements of our judiciary, cannot be allowed to operate in our country.
- We need to assert that our country's natural resources are common property; giant cash-rich corporations cannot be allowed to acquire control over it;
- Most importantly, We need to affirm, that 'Water is a Fundamental Right', corporations cannot be allowed to plunder it.

Let us therefore join this struggle and:

- ☞ Boycott all Coke and Pepsi cold drinks;
- ☞ Organise campaigns against Coke and Pepsi in our schools, colleges, offices, workplaces, residential colonies;
- ☞ Impose a ban on Coke and Pepsi in our college canteens, office canteens, union offices, etc;
- ☞ Organise cycle rallies, form human chains, and adopt other such forms to reach out to people in the area we live in.

Let us unite to KICK OUT COKE-PEPSI from India!

APPENDIX

The Story of How Aspartame Got US FDA Approval¹⁴⁸

- **1965:** Searle Pharmaceuticals accidentally discovers aspartame.
- **1967-71:** Searle's safety tests on aspartame reveal: when fed to seven monkeys, one dies, five have epileptic seizures; and that it causes holes in the brains of infant mice.
- **1973:** Searle suppresses these reports and applies for FDA approval, citing over a 100 safety studies.
- **1974:** Scientists and consumer groups file objections to Searle's test reports, cite evidence that aspartame could cause brain damage, particularly in children.
- **1975:** FDA appoints a task force to examine accuracy of Searle's test reports; its report affirms that Searle had done faulty and fraudulent product testing, and had misrepresented test data.
- **1976-77:** FDA forms Task Force-2, to further investigate Searle's aspartame studies; its report upholds report of first task force. FDA requests US Attorney's office to begin criminal investigation of Searle for misrepresenting findings and making false statements.
- **March 1977:** Searle hires Donald Rumsfeld, ex-Congressman and former defence secretary (in the Ford administration), as new CEO. Rumsfeld brings several influential Washington politicians into top management.
- **July 1977:** Samuel Skinner, the US attorney in charge of the Searle investigation, resigns and joins Searle's law firm. William Conlon replaces Skinner. Conlon stalls prosecution of Searle till December, the maximum time by which legal proceedings needed to be initiated as per the statute of limitations, and the investigation is dropped. A year later, Conlon too joins Searle's law firm.
- **1977:** FDA creates Task Force-3, headed by senior scientist Jacqueline Verrett, to review report of Task Force-2; it exonerates Searle of any wrongdoing. A decade later, Jacqueline Verrett testifies to the US Senate that Searle's experiments were clearly a 'disaster', and that her team was pressured into approving faulty data. (The Senate maintained a stony silence on her charges.)
- **1979-80:** FDA establishes a public board of inquiry (PBOI) comprising three scientists to review public objections to aspartame; it too votes unanimously against aspartame's approval.
- **Jan 1981:** Reagan sworn in as US President. Rumsfeld is on his transition team (he later becomes Defence Secretary); the team nominates

The Story of How Aspartame Got US FDA Approval¹⁴⁸

Dr Arthur Hull Hayes Jr as the new FDA commissioner. Searle re-applies to the FDA for approval for aspartame.

- **Mar-Oct 1981:** Hayes sets up Inquiry Panel-2 to review issues raised by PBOI; it too affirms latter's recommendation. Hayes overrules Panel-2, and gives approval for use of aspartame in dry goods in Oct 1981 and in carbonated beverages in 1983. .
- **1983:** Hayes resigns as FDA commissioner to eventually become senior scientific consultant with Burston-Marsteller, the chief public relations firm for both Searle and Monsanto; newsreports later reveal that more than 10 federal officials involved in granting approval to aspartame have taken up private sector jobs linked to the aspartame industry.
- **1984:** Numerous complaints begin to come in regarding adverse effects of aspartame. FDA requests the US govt. health agency CDC to investigate. CDC's tests show that aspartame adversely affects nervous system; nevertheless, CDC concludes that aspartame is safe to ingest!
- **1985:** Monsanto purchases Searle.
- **1986:** US Supreme Court rejects petition filed by consumer groups against FDA approval to aspartame. Court is headed by Justice Clarence Thomas, a former Monsanto attorney.
- **1995:** FDA admits under Freedom of Information Act that it has received more than 10,000 complaints from aspartame consumers, of which a majority are connected to impaired neurological function. The US National Institutes of Health publishes a bibliography of 167 studies documenting adverse effects associated with aspartame.
- **1996:** Despite this mounting evidence, FDA approves use of aspartame as a 'general-purpose sweetener', meaning that it can now be freely used in any food or beverage.



ABOUT US: LOKAYAT



Who has become free?

From whose forehead has slavery's stain been removed?

My heart still pains of oppression...

Mother India's face is still sad...Who has become free?

Ali Sardar Jafri wrote this poem a few years after independence. But these lines accurately describe the current situation in our country too! Who has become free, is indeed the real question. This country now belongs to the rich; development is now only for them. Giant-sized malls, ultra-modern cars, express highways, imported luxury goods, five-star hospitals....and, on the other hand, the few crumbs given to the poor after independence are also being snatched away.

In the name of *Globalisation*, giant Multinational Corporations (MNCs) are being invited into the country – **the country is now being run solely for the profit maximisation of big foreign and Indian corporations.** In connivance with the politicians-bureaucracy-police-courts, they have launched a ferocious assault to dispossess the poor of their lands, forests, water and resources – in order to set up SEZs, huge infrastructural projects, golf courses, residential complexes for the rich, etc. Laws are being modified to facilitate their loot. In the name of *Privatisation*, public sector corporations, including banks and insurance companies, built out of the savings and by the sweat and toil of the common people, are being handed over at throwaway prices to these scoundrels. Indian agriculture, on which 60% of the Indian people still depend for their livelihoods, is being deliberately destroyed – so that it can be taken over by giant agribusiness corporations. The consequence: nearly 2 lakh farmers have committed suicides in the past ten years. Tens of thousands of small businesses have downed their shutters. Even welfare services are being taken over by these corporations and transformed into instruments of naked profiteering: govt. hospitals and municipal schools are being privatized; medicine prices have zoomed; college fees have gone through the roof; electricity prices are rising; bus fares are rising; the public distribution system designed to check speculation in prices of foodgrains is being eliminated; and now, drinking water supply in cities is also being handed over to these corporations, who will then hike its prices 10-15 times. There are simply no decent jobs for the youth; nearly half the population is unemployed or underemployed. The imperialists want to control what we eat, drink, see, think, read.

And so along with MNC capital, imperialist culture is also flowing in. Today, there is no need for the imperialists to rule us by the force of arms. Our rulers are themselves handing over control of our wealth, resources, economy to them for their unbridled plunder.

As the economic system becomes more and more sick, the social and political system is also becoming more and more degenerate. All-pervasive corruption, a caste-based social system because of which atrocities on the dalits take place almost daily, and which is exploited by politicians to make the upper caste youth believe that the reservation system is responsible for lack of jobs, a communal political system that divides people in the name of religion and fills them with hatred against each other, a value system that promotes crass selfishness and unconcern and apathy for others, a society where cynicism and moral bankruptcy permeate every nook and cranny -- this is the reality of today. In the name of fighting terrorism, the criminals and murderers who dominate the Indian Parliament are passing the most draconian laws which give almost unlimited powers to the police to arrest ordinary people and put them behind bars for years without trial!

The common people have not been silent spectators to this sordid drama being enacted by the MNCs and their Indian collaborators. Like flowers springing up in every nook and corner with the onset of spring, people are coming together all over the country, getting organized, forming groups, and raising their voices in protest. Though these struggles are presently small, scattered, without resources, the future lies in these magnificent struggles. As more and more people join them, they will strengthen, join hands, and become a powerful force which will transform society.

We must stop being skeptics, dream of a better future, believe that it is possible to change the world. Yes, Another World is Possible! But to make it a reality, we must start our own small struggles. And so, we have started this forum, '**Lokayat**'.

Lokayat is actually a thought process that has existed in India since Vedic times. Lokayat is a vision of life that rejects fatalism, is uncompromisingly rationalist, realist. Life must be lived to the full, in the best possible way. All problems are man-made; one should face them, and not run away from them. This is the inspiration that Lokayati thought gives us. Hence the name of this forum, **Lokayat**. The aim of Lokayat is to bring together ordinary people who wish to do their bit for transforming society for the better, and take up various activities with their co-operation. Some of the activities we have

initiated are:

- We organize public awareness campaigns on various issues of deep concern to common people, such as privatisation of education-health-electricity, rise in petrol and diesel prices, destructive effects of nuclear energy, decaying public transport system, harmful effects of Bt Brinjal, etc. We initiated and participated in the movement against Dow Chemicals plant in Chakan, Pune. We are also been active in many national campaigns like 'Boycott Coke-Pepsi Campaign', 'No More Bhopals Campaign', 'Campaign for Judicial Accountability and Reforms', etc. We use various forms such as street campaigns, poster exhibitions and street plays in these campaigns; likewise we also protest programs like rallies, dharnas etc. on these issues.

- We organize film shows, seminars and talks on issues like displacement and destruction of livelihoods of common people in the name of development, US terrorism, targeting of minorities in the name of fighting terrorism, global warming, etc. We especially focus on reaching out to the youth in colleges.
- Our women's wing, Abhivyakti, organizes awareness programs on women's issues.
- While working on all these fronts, we publish booklets-pamphlets that discuss and analyse current questions, because in order to solve a problem, we must first thoroughly understand it.

Dear friends, many of you do not know us. Nevertheless, we believe that you will agree with the thoughts expressed above. But your agreement is not enough, your active participation is of the utmost importance. You may contact us at any of the addresses mentioned below.

Lokayat

Contact Address

Lokayat, Opposite Syndicate Bank, Law College Road,
Near Nal Stop, Pune – 4.

(We meet every Sunday from 4 to 7 pm at this address.)

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(All our books can be downloaded from the website)

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