

AN OVERVIEW OF MARXIST THOUGHT AND THE INDIAN SOCIETY

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Received: 29 May 2018

Accepted: 06 Jun 2018

Published: 12 Jun 2018

ABSTRACT

The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways. The point however, is to change it-Karl Marx, Eleven Theses on Feuerbach.

India is a burgeoning economy moving in the fast lane towards a global power in the arena of economic progress. Diplomats go out of their way dispensing olive branches to the high and mighty in their endeavor to sign pacts and treaties to bring in foreign currency and investments into the Indian soil. But under this veneer of sophistication, lies a hard bitter truth that is often brushed under the carpet- the state of the real India which lies buried in the mire of caste, poverty, exploitation, and corruption. The underbelly of the society is in a state of putrid decay. Even after nearly seventy years of independence, the society has not been able to shake off the mantle of colonialism and India that the world sees is just a dolled up mannequin-the superstructure may be bright and elegant, but the foundation stands on flawed principles and conditions. The constitution declares India to be a socialist society, but the sad reality is that the ideological concept of servitude and inferiority is deeply ingrained in the psyche of the masses and the political fraternity go out of their way to consolidate and cement the bias in order to perpetuate their own selfish and vested interests. The problem lies not in solutions but the imbibing of the results of the Marxist way of thought and life. The proletariat needs to be given the status of human entities and not just be treated as vote banks. The paper is an attempt to analyze the presence and impact of a Marxist conduit of thought in the society.

KEYWORDS: *Economy, Real India, Proletariat, Marxist Thought*

INTRODUCTION

India is a country that is truly blessed with all natural resources and has the potential to outdo the best in the world in terms of growth and prosperity. Lying within the Indomalaya Ecozone and containing three biodiversity zones, the economy is already the world's seventh largest by nominal GDP and third largest by purchasing power parity(Wikipedia).Thus it makes it the fastest growing economic power According to the IMF, India's growth is expected to grow to 7.2% in the 2017–18 fiscal and 7.7% in 2018–19.With 1.27 billion people and the world's third-largest economy in terms of purchasing power, India's recent growth and development has been one of the most significant achievements of our times. “Over the six and half decades since independence, the country has brought about a landmark agricultural revolution that has transformed the nation from chronic dependence on grain imports into a global agricultural powerhouse that is now a net exporter of food”— World Bank: India Country Overview 2013. India has been put on the roadmap of economic progress in spite of the fact that it is a relatively new industrialised country and not so long ago it was under the colonial shackles of the British rule for over 200 years during which the basic economic, cultural and societal fibre of the

society was mutilated beyond recognition to suit the interests of the ruling class. Unlike the other rulers who had also ravaged the subcontinent, The British were venomous in their attack on the basic identity of the Indian class. They overturned the critical conceptual reality of the masses by making forays into their educational and cultural distinctiveness. In the historic words of Macaulay, the English had the onus to create a “class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect”. They had scant regard for the rich cultural and scholastic heritage of the sub-continent and in their own parlance a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. “They looked on Indians as savages who have to be educated to bring them on par with the European Standards. Paradoxically, 70 years into the independence in spite of the grandiose numbers and statistics exhibited by the World Bank, the ground reality is that, the majority of the Indians continue with the same broken psyche and having internalised this ideology continue existence with the same kind of regressive mentality and difficulties”.

In her study of India's political economy in the thirty years after independence (India's Political Economy, 1947-1977, Princeton University Press, 1978), Francine Frankel analyses the paradox of Jawaharlal Nehru's commitment to both accommodative politics and radical social change. “The idealism was clear in the designated goals of egalitarianism, secularism, and socialism; but, Frankel notes, the practical results fell far short. Nehru's "Third Way" between communist revolution and western capitalism had not solved fundamental production and distribution problems. The ranks of the impoverished continued to grow.” (Indian Communism: Opposition, Collaboration and Institutionalization, Milton Israel)

GROUND REALITY

Marxism as a theory is quite revolutionary in character and so the tendency to equate it extreme revolutions and drastic changes is dominant stream of thought. The proletariat of the country who have always been under the yoke of repression have always looked up to a political party or an external outfit to alleviate their difficulties. But the reality is that Marxism is a humanistic philosophy which calls for a change in the ideological perception of empowerment of the “Base” or the workers. And to make things worse, the party or the external forces that purport to support them are constituted of the class of either the intelligentsia or the new bourgeoisie and so the movements remain ineffective in the long run leading to the statistics showing differential results. The few privileged people who make up the emancipated few and who are the lucky stakeholders of powdered Indian status quo have taken on themselves to perpetuate this myth to keep the wheels of their own fortune running and in the process prolong the social evils that have scarred the conscience of the society. Corruption rules the roost and exploitative customs like female foeticide, child marriage, caste politics, dowry deaths, farmer suicides, poverty etc. plague the society. The common man continues to agonize under the heavy weight of exploitation. Reports of farmer suicides, droughts and floods, dowry deaths, infringement of human rights etc. have now become the norm rather than an exception. According to Nandan Nilekani, the co-founder of Infosys and the author of *Imagining India*, 93% of the population of India are in the unorganized sector totally bereft of any kind of labour rights that are enjoyed by the enfranchised labour workforce. This leaves them completely exposed to the machinations of the elite and the privileged classes who make up the polished visage of India's stupendous economic and global power. Thus even though India is a heavyweight in terms of capital-physical, Institutional, Financial, Human, Security etc., the road to uniform progress still remains largely untrodden. The absolute need of the hour is to bring into practice the principles of

Marxist philosophy to curb this kind of class and social exploitation.

MARXISM AND THE INDIAN SOCIETY

Marxism is the system of economic and political thought developed by Karl Marx, alongwith -FriedrichEngels, especially the doctrine that the state throughout history has been a device for the exploitation of the masses by adominant class (Dictionary meaning). Today as the society is moving towards an increasingly polarised entity both in terms of economic disparity and the power relationships, the class struggle and the increasing sense of alienation is on a dangerously tipping scale which can be ominous for the future of the country as a whole. Any tree which is decayed from the inside can never stand the rage of storms-Marxism in the true sense of the word is the panacea for the present state. However, this concept is not a new theory for the country. In fact, India was introduced to the tenets of the philosophy with the start of the Russian Revolution and Rama Krishna Pillai had translated the biography of Karl Marx into Malayalam in the year 1914. Even though such tenets were known to the Indian and we still have the communist manifesto alive in the society even today, the condition of the class-based Indian percept makes it difficult for socialist principles to be accepted and implemented in totality – the very multifaceted nature of the society poses challenges of various kinds. In addition, there is the problem of the unity of ideologies. The three communist parties in the country have their own codes of law which don't allow for a united front. The main conceptual hurdle is in the dogmatic hypothesis through which we view the whole idea of the political theories that is the norm in a burgeoning economy like ours-we tend to hold principles on a leash and most of the time not look at the practical implications of such a stand-we tend to reach for revolutions of an extreme kind; either in the form of extremist outlook like Maoist or Naxalite insurgency or hypocritical and phoney dharnas that only provide leverage to the political bigwigs to promote their nefarious activities and selfish ends.

Ross Mallick's study of Indian communism argues an even greater paradox...“ Rather than a third mediating path and rejection of extremes, communists in India, as in other parts of the world, had insisted on the case for revolution.” But they too accommodated to a democratic system that rejected the legitimacy of revolution while failing to achieve radical goals through other means’

Marxism as a way of life and thought has to be the underlying agenda while drafting policies that have an effect on the economic development at large. Imperialist forces had unleashed an era of capitalist society and it continues to this day it is time to Rethink the modalities of inheritance (Ashraf Ghani). Even though India is a democratic country and secular in its outlook, “the democratic dividends”(Nandan Nilekani) have not been uniformly distributed and the society remains largely imperialistic in principle with money and power holding the society in a vice-like a grip.

BRIDGING GAPS

“Imperialist influence percolates through the capitalist ruling class who holds power. If we want to fight against imperialism or neo-colonialist influences in India we have to fight against the ruling Indian bourgeoisie through whom these influences infiltrate and operate in this country. The idea of forming any kind of anti-imperialist united front with the national bourgeoisie with a view to fight foreign imperialism is clearly out of place from an objective historical and political point of view. For imperialism does not hold ruling power in this country but the native capitalist class” (Marxists Internet Archive)

Thus the onus of bridging the gap lies with focusing on the human capital and bringing in a change at level of thought. Marxism as a concept never depended on changing the world but in only changing the nature of the world. Marx clearly defined that class conflicts are an inherent part of any capitalist society-given the unequal distribution of capital and the intrinsic desire of man to possess wealth and power-he is very deeply afraid of being treated as a commodity with a short shelf life. The materialist society treats every worker as an “use and throw” property-modern work alienates and at every level man tries to free himself and move higher in life and to consolidate power-the class struggle as we know it and this forms the basis of any growth in the society. Thus capitalism and imperialism are not the culprit, but the issue lies in the reaction of the masses to this phenomenon. The need of the hour is to channelize the collected strength of the masses into a broader perspective. Just like the British who used Education as a tool to break the self-concept of the Indians, similarly building up of the nation’s psyche should also be on the principle of education. Education in the Indian context is free and compulsory only in principle. The urgent need is to strengthen the primary education in the country and bridge the gap between the government and private education. The change in thought and the emancipation of the workers can only happen when there are more educated people who are aware of their rights and their value as human beings.

The spread of English as a language is another step towards bringing in an egalitarian society, however paradoxical it may seem. English is India’s sure-fire means of stepping into prosperity and self-concept. If the language percolates faster into the bloodstream of the proletariat, the faster would be their rise to emancipation. Language as a tool is now wielded by political powers to keep the wind blowing in their favor and maintaining class divide to favor their own ends. Maintaining cultural identity is good but in the era of globalization, getting holed up in a geographical and cultural isolate would amount to being the typical frog in the well.

India is a land of villages and Marxist thought should originate there if there has to be an overhaul of the society. The urgent demand is to build up the infrastructure to help in the changing the very nature of the rural arena to make it more akin to the city so as to stem the exodus of the people into the cities and stop the proliferation of slums which are the breeding ground for exploitation of numerous kinds, Technology has to be made more available and people have to be educated on the use of technical gadgets and its use in agriculture and other occupations which definitely would enhance the quality of life and which in turn help cement the communist way of life in the society.

Sustainable development which is inclusive in nature and which takes into consideration the needs and identities of various classes that constitute the spirit of India can only hold aloft the flag of Marxist thought and break the hegemony of capitalist forces. Although a social change is the foundation of a classless society that is open to freedom of thought, the strength of humanity and openness of economy-all precepts of the Marxist way of life and the panacea for the issues of today.

CONCLUSIONS

Like Mr. Ashraf Ghani (Chancellor of Kabul University) said “Neither the state nor the polity is constituted on the basis of inclusion nor this forms the basis for the capitalist economy to thrive. Just because a state projects a whopping growth rate, inequality and exploitation remain the norm and a socialist state fails to reinvent it. Marxism calls for opening opportunities for inclusion and accountabilities. A.R. Desai finds that the dominant sociological approaches in India are basically non-Marxist and the Marxist approach has been rejected on the pretext of its being dogmatic, value-loaded and deterministic in nature. The relevant approach according to him is the Marxist approach as“ it could help to study of

government's policies, the class entrenched into state apparatus and India's political economy. The Marxist approach helps to understand the social reality through the means of production, the techno-economic division of labor involved in operating the instruments of production and social relations of production or what was more precisely characterized as property relations".

Marxist thoughts are the way, the truth and the life of a better society that is egalitarian in the true sense of the word.

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