

INTRODUCTION

Socialism is one of the most influential doctrines of modern time. As a major political force, Socialism originated as the result of modern industrial capitalism. As an effective, organised political movement, it is the product of the Industrial Revolution that took place during the 18th and 19th century in Europe.¹ It emerged as a reaction to the inequalities and exploitation, caused by the capitalist system. Of course, the best minds of the world in all ages had directed their efforts to the problem of inequality and had sought a solution, but Socialism is not a mere a vague protest against social injustice. On the contrary, it specifically points out the cause of social inequality and injustice and gives a concrete solution to it. According to the Socialists, the enormous wealth that had accumulated in the hands of those who owned the means of production had so accumulated by virtue of their exploitation of the labour of the workmen. The rich, they claimed, accumulated their wealth not because they created it, but because they diverted to themselves a large share of the national produce than what they actually produced, that is to say, they exploited others. In the ownership of the instruments of production in private hands, the Socialists found the real cause of the inequality of the present-day society. And as a cause of inequality was the private ownership of the means of production, the means of removing such inequality was the social ownership of the means of production.

Socialism disagree's with capitalism regarding the best method of bringing the maximum welfare to the people; the capitalism stresses individual property and efforts, while, Socialism puts its faith in collective productive property and effort. 'As the capitalist economy progressed, the individual form of ownership and work was gradually replaced by an economic system in which large-scale enterprise swallowed up the original capitalist-owner-manager. As the size of industrial enterprise grew larger and larger, work became more and more socialised, more collective, whereas ownership remained private.'² To restore the harmony between work and property, collective ownership is the remedy, at least as far as industrial production is concerned, according to the socialists.

'The link between democracy and socialism is the most important single element in socialist thought and policy. The history of socialism quickly shows that successful Socialist Movements have grown up only in nations with strong democratic traditions. Where democratic, constitutional government is generally accepted, socialists can concentrate, on extensive economic and social reforms.'³ In fact, to make democracy more real by broadening the application of democratic principles from the political to the non-political areas of society,⁴ is the central theme of democratic socialism.

Socialism differs from communism in many respects. 'On the basis of experience in many countries and circumstances it is clear that communists seek to end capitalism by a

single act of revolutionary upheaval and civil war. Once in power, communist determine to stay there indefinitely.

Socialists on the other hand adhere to strict constitutional procedures; and seek power by ballots.

To the communists, every capitalist system, whether democratic, authoritarian or fascist is a bourgeoisie dictatorship, specifically, democratic institutions in a capitalist system are considered a facade which does not make the capitalist system less dictatorial. Once capitalism even liberal capitalism - is defined with dictatorship, the communist insistence on violence as a sole means of change is a logical conclusion.

Socialist on the other hand, draw a fundamental distinction between two types - the political dictatorship and the liberal democracy. In a liberal democracy, socialists believe in playing according to the rules of the game - provided of course, the other side does the same.

Socialists envisage the transition from a predominantly capitalist economy to predominantly socialist economy, not as a result of a sudden revolutionary coup, but as a result of gradual measures, none of which by itself irrevocably alters the nature of the whole economy.

Whereas the communists think in terms of three absolutes - capitalism, revolution, communist dictatorship, socialists think in terms of three relative concepts : a predominantly capitalist economy as the starting point, a period of gradual change, and finally a predominantly socialised economy.⁵

The process of democratic socialist movement began in India during the British Imperial rule. It was the result of the urges that were different in some important respect from those that inspired a similar movement in the West. Being a colonial society, the presence of alien rule was an important factor that made the situation in India different from that of the western countries. In India the Socialist Movement was not merely a protest against capitalism, as it was the case in the West. Achievement of the national freedom was the foremost aim of the country. And the socialist idea came along with the nationalist struggle for independence. Naturally, socialism, along with anti-capitalism took the form of anti-colonialism. In fact, the pioneer of the Socialist Movement in India were at first nationalist leaders who were actively involved in the freedom struggle.

Secondly, India being an undeveloped country, economic growth was her immediate concern. And, therefore, socialism here means a commitment to planning. In the West, 'Socialism has meant, not how to industrialise an undeveloped country, but how to distribute fruits of a wealthy society in a more equitable way. As a result the concept of the welfare state has virtually absorbed the idea of socialism. By contrast, socialism, in underdeveloped countries like India, is confronted with the task, not so much of distributing the fruits of an industrial economy which hardly exists, but of building an industrial economy so as to raise the economic and educational level of the masses of the people. For the

same reason, while socialism in western countries has generally developed best within a framework of established constitutional government, socialism in developing countries (like India) frequently developed with a burdensome tradition of authoritarian rule by foreign imperialists or native power holders.⁶

The Russian Revolution of 1917, was the first effort of translating theoretical concepts of Marxism and Communism in reality. The revolution created great enthusiasm and attraction among the Indian leaders and thinkers. And it was after this revolution that many socialist groups were formed in the different parts of the country. Afterwards in 1934, the Congress Socialist Party, an organisation within the Congress was formed. It was the first organised expression of the socialist aspirations at the national level.

Here, an attempt is made, to study the Rise of the Socialist Movement in Maharashtra. The region Maharashtra is chosen for two important reasons - first, Maharashtra was the most industrialised region in India. Naturally, the growth of labour movement in Maharashtra was more rapid and extensive than most of the parts of India. Particularly the city like Bombay became the main centre of the labour organization in India.

Secondly, Maharashtrian leaders like - S.M. Joshi, N.G. Goray, M.L. Dantwala, Raosaheb Patwardan, Achut Patwardan, Acharya Jawadekar, Yusuf Meherally, P.U. Deshpande were from the beginning actively involved in the movement,



and because of their activities, Maharashtra became one of the few regions, where the movement gained sufficient ground even before India achieved its freedom.

In the following chapters, an attempt has been made to examine the circumstances in which Socialist Movement began in Maharashtra, the factors that were responsible for the formation of the Congress Socialist Party, the factors that influenced the ideology and actions of the Socialists, their aspirations programmes and activities during this period. And ultimately what led the Socialists to form the independent parties when India achieved the freedom.

References :

1. William Ebenstein & Edwin Fogelman - Today's Isms - 8th Edition, Prentice-Hall Publication, p.208.
2. Ibid., p.210
3. Ibid., p.213
4. Ibid., p.213
5. Ibid., p.218
6. Ibid., p.251