

CHAPTER - IIEARLY SOCIALISTIC THINKING

- Thinking of Social Revolutionary and Nationalists - Impact of the Russian Revolution - Early Socialistic Literature -

With this background of industrialization, growth of the worker's and peasants movement - as examined in the first Chapter, and under the imperialistic rule, it was natural for socialist and communist ideas to take their roots in India. It was after the Russian revolution in 1917, that the communistic and socialistic ideas began to attract the Indian intellectuals which ultimately gave rise to the socialist and communist movement in India. Before we take into account these developments, it is essential to trace in brief, the early efforts of social reformists and nationalists who tried to expose the social and economic injustices which prevailed in the society, besides the exploitative nature of the imperialism. Though by no means they were the socialists, their effort's created an atmosphere in which socialist ideas developed in the later years.

The second half of the 19th century witnessed the influence of Karl Marx and Fredrick Angles, because of their writings, which ~~layed~~ down the foundations of what is called as "Scientific Socialism." Besides, in 1884, Fabian Society got established in Britain, and with it the evolutionary socialism of Fabians got emerged. During the same period

the phenomenon that took place on the Indian sub-continent is generally known as the "Indian renaissance." It was a sort of reaction to the defeat of India at the hands of a western power. The intellectual elites in India, in the light of a modern knowledge, gained through their contacts with the west, examined our own traditions, religious customs and social and economic conditions of the society, and tried to modify it. It was the efforts "of the first generation of Indian thinker's under colonialism to come to grips with the challenge represented by the West and the seeming backwardness of their own society and culture. With ruthless self criticism they sought to lay the ground for a total social transformation, to weld science and rationality to Indian culture, to recreate India."¹

In this respect, Mahatma Jotirao Phule's and his work for social upliftment stands forth as an expression of the first generation renaissance thinking. He was the pioneer of the social revolutionary movement that developed in Maharashtra during the second half of the 19th century. He, for the first time, drew the attention of the society towards enslavement created by feudalism, priesthood and bureaucrats.

In early 19th century, in Maharashtra there were many social reformer's with liberal and broad outlook towards the social problems. But the nature and direction of Jotirao Phule's work was totally different. His aim was the creation of a society based on justice and equality.²

He was not satisfied, only with the social reforms here and there, but wanted a total revolution in the social structure. Therefore, he is rightly admired as a 'Social Revolutionary.' by eminent scholar like Prof. G.B. Sardar.

In the year 1973, Satyashodhak Samaj was founded. The aim of the Samaj was the total ~~irradication~~ eradication of religious and social slavery, to disburden the downtrodden classes from the dominance of priesthood and to make the dalit and downtrodden people aware of their natural rights, and basic freedoms.

Mahatma Phule, though did not use the subject terminology while expressing his thought, instead used the old communal terminology like Arya-bhat, Brahmin and Shudra-ati-shudra, for him there were only two varnas - exploiter and exploited.³ 'He was the first social reformer in Maharashtra who realised the unlimited exploitation of the farmers which took place through the class and caste relations.'⁴

Gopal Hari Deshmukh (known as Lokhitwadi), another social reformer, drew the attention of the people towards their economic exploitation and supported native industries and the principle of Swadeshi. He pointed out the exploitative nature of the foreign rule, and he exposed the internal exploitation by the native people also. He insisted on the fact that the human labour is the source of wealth.⁵

In his 'Shatpatre', Lokhitwadi has dealt in detail of the inspirative forces of the modern age.

Therefore, 'Shatpatre' has got a vital place in the history of social reform in Maharashtra.⁶

In 1885 Indian National Congress was founded. And from the very beginning the nationalists came in contact with the labour and socialist leaders of Europe, and they have always found some support for their cause from these labour and socialist leaders of Europe. At first this association gave rise to criticism. Dadabhai Naoroji, the grand old man of Indian National Congress, answered such criticism saying - "Do not be prejudiced that it is the socialists who are helping us, it is an unexpected good fortune that the Indian cause has been taken up by a powerful and advancing organization to whom the future largely belongs."⁷

'The moderates, however, were not so much concerned with the problems of inner contradictions of a capitalist society as with the economic problem that India faced as a result of the impact of an industrially advanced imperial power on a traditional economy.'⁸

'The moderates like Dadabhai Naoroji referred to the phenomenon as to how the traditional Indian economy was disintegrating under the influence of British imperial policy and how the poverty of the masses was increasing. On this economic diagnosis the moderates built up a powerful critique of British policy in India and made it the basis of their indictment of British rule. They pleaded for the liberalization of the administration, also advocating that the state

should play a positive role in effecting the economic growth of India's underdeveloped economy. The moderates were thus the forerunners of the modern advocates of welfare economics.⁹

Dadabhai Naoroji put forth his famous - "drain" theory, which was also subsequently hailed by other moderates like M.G. Ranade. Dadabhai in his book entitled, "Poverty and Un-British Rule In India" asserts - "not till this disastrous drain was duly checked and not till the people of India were restored to their natural rights in their own country, was there any hope of the material amelioration of India."¹⁰ According to him the drain prevented India from retaining any capital, and the British, by bringing back the capital which they had drained from India, secured almost a monopoly of all trade and important industries, thereby further exploiting and draining India.¹¹

The drain theory not only influenced the thought of other moderates like M.G. Ranade and G.K. Gokhale, but also it was subsequently hailed by many socialist and communists in India. Thus, Ashok Mehta, a later socialist of India, claimed that "Sociologically speaking, the Drain Theory alone enables one to understand the havoc that was being brought in India by the working of imperialism. The working of the laws of imperialism can be uncovered by the drain theory alone, as the laws of capitalism can be uncovered by the Labour Theory of Value." And he asserted that, though the drain theory could be proved wrong, it had

"sociological significance" in rousing the feeling of nationalism.¹²

The drain theory of Dadabhai, though much criticized, 'was the first attempt of Indian liberals to examine the nature of imperialism.'¹³

The criticism of moderates of British imperial rule was virtually the same as the criticism of British socialist. The socialists in Britain criticized the British imperialism on the ground of its exploitative nature. Indian political leaders and thinkers also traced the poverty of the people to British imperialism and exploitation. Thus, the attack of Indian nationalists on British imperialism was in a sense the same as the socialistic attack. This criticism, imperceptibly and gradually led some Indian nationalists to a vague socialistic approach. Dadabhai, though by no means a socialist, declared in 1901 before the British audience - "you have been regularly draining and bleeding us of millions of money ----- these millions do not go to make you any better off, they go into the pockets of the capitalists."¹⁴

The Indian liberals also attacked the doctrine of laissez-faire, a doctrine wholly opposed to socialistic theory which relies on state power to effect social and economic change. Maharastrian thinkers like K.T. Telang and M.G. Ranade were among the first Indian nationalists who attacked this theory of laissez-faire, they championed state interference for improving the economy of the country.

'But although the early Indian moderates or nationalists would have joined hand with the socialists in

their denunciation of imperialism and laissez-faire, they were not advocates of socialism, an ideology with which they were imperfectly acquainted if at all.¹⁵

Among the 'extremists' Lajpat Rai got attracted towards socialistic thought more than anybody else.' He claimed that Marx's diagnosis of the ills of capitalist society had turned out to be so true "that there is now practical unanimity among western thinkers about the indescribable evils of the capitalist system."¹⁶ But of course Lajpat Rai at the same time declared very clearly, that he was not a marxist.¹⁷ Incidentally it was Lajpat Rai who became the first President of the All India Trade Union Congress formed in 1920.

India and the Russian Revolution :

The Russian Revolution of 1917, aroused a great deal of enthusiasm and attraction among the leaders and thinkers in India.

In the twenties and thirties the problems which India was facing were in some respect similar to those the pre-revolutionary Russia faced - 'the problem of agriculture and a peasantry unadjusted to the economic forces which had been let loose upon them by modern industrialism.'¹⁸ In both these countries, despite universal illiteracy, an elite or highly trained intellectual class had developed throughout the second half of the 19th century which had entered into the struggle with the bureaucracy that controlled

the government of these countries. The principle of autocracy on which the Russian and Indian systems of government was based was constantly challenged by this intellectual class.¹⁹

Immediately after the Russian revolution many articles appeared in various Indian, newspapers and periodicals. In Maharashtra, 'Kesari' of Tilak and 'Bombay Chronicle', edited by B.G. Horniman hailed the Russian revolution and claimed that the Bolsheviks stood for the down-trodden and that they were opposed to imperialism.²⁰

Since the Russian revolution, socialist and communist thought have increasingly spread throughout the world. The growth of trade unions, in particular, helped in the development of the socialist movement in India. In 1920, the All India Trade Union Congress was formed. In inaugurating the AITUC, Lajpat Rai, the first President pointed - "Imperialism and militarism are twin children of capitalism. It is only lately that an antidote has been discovered and that antidote is organized labour. The workers of Europe and America have now discovered that the cause of the workers is one and the same all the world over, and that there can be no salvation for them until and unless the workers of Asia were organized, and then internationally affiliated. --- The movement we are inaugurating today is thus of more than national importance. It is a matter of international significance. The workers of India are joining hands and brains not only to solidify the interests

of Indian labour, but also to forge a link in the chain of international brotherhood --- My own experience of Europe and America leads me to think that socialistic, even Bolshevik, truth is any day better, more reliable and more humane than capitalist and imperialist truth."²¹

Ever since the Russian revolution Indian labour had been pulled in two different directions. The moderate trade unions were attached to the second International. The more extreme section was attracted to Soviet Russia and the Third International. In India the conflict between the Second and Third International led to the split in the trade union movement in 1929. The moderates walked out of All India Trade Union Congress and set up the Indian Trade Union Federation on the ground that the AITUC had affiliated itself to the League Against Imperialism and the Pan Pacific Trade Union Secretariat, both of which were dominated by communists.²²

Revolution in Russia brought a new enthusiasm in the working class movement in the industrial centres like Bombay.

'The red flag and the device of the hammer and sickle became increasingly evident in labour meetings and in the processions of workers the cry of 'Inquilab Zindabad' (long live the revolution) began to be heard. Further, Bombay and afterwards even some small towns began to celebrate the first day of May as a Labour Day.'²³

Since the 1920's vague socialistic and communistic ideas began to spread among young intelligentsia of India. The young welcomed these ideas with enthusiasm and the writings of Karl Marx fascinated them. Everywhere there was a new spirit of inquiry and growing discontent with the old ideologies. Those who were inclined towards the left asserted that Gandhi and the Congress represented a bourgeois policy.

'One of the most important contributions of the Russian revolution and the Russian experiment in planning was to make planning popular among Indian nationalists. Many had looked at socialism only as a theory of distribution, but the revolution in Russia gave rise to the idea that through socialism and state planning production could be raised. Socialist agitators had preached equality and had emphasized the need for equitable distribution. In academic circles, however, greater production was thought a much more pressing need in the particular backward conditions of India. After the Russian revolution the chief attraction of socialism to some academic economists lay in the idea of planning and not in the idea of class war or of economic equality. A National Planning Committee was set up by the congress in 1938 with the support of Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, both of whom declared themselves to be socialists, to inquire into the possibility of a planned development of India's resources.

Nehru believed that in a country of arrested economic growth, such as India, planning was essential.

"I am convinced" wrote Nehru - "that the rapid industrialization of India is essential to relieve the pressure on the land, to combat poverty and to raise standards of living of for defence, and a variety of other purposes. But I am equally convinced that the most careful planning and adjustments are necessary if we are to reap the full benefit of industrialization and avoid many of its dangers."²⁴ Subhas Bose in the 'Indian Struggle' had also visualized the emergence of a left party which "will built up a new belief in a sound system of state-planning for the reorganization of agricultural and industrial life of the country"²⁵.

Early Socialistic Literature :

It was mainly after the Russian Revolution of 1917, that the Marxian and the Socialist thought were introduced to the Maharashtrian people through different newspapers, magazines and books. But even before 1917, different aspects of Marxism were known to the people through some periodicals. It is very interesting to note here that, when Marx and Engles published their famous book 'The Capital', in the same year i.e. in 1867, Vihnubua Bramhachari a Maharashtrian thinker published the fifteen articles, viz. "Sukhadayak Rajyaprakarani Nibandha." Though he has not put forth these articles with the help of any scientific study of the society, and though he was not acquainted with any western philosophy, the similarity between his articles and the Marxian thought is very astonishing. In these articles, he had put forth the same principles like - from

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each according to his capacity to each according to his needs; the principle of collective farming; the state ownership of the means of production. And even the concept of ideal society free from any kind of exploitation.²⁶

Mahatma Jotirao Phule (1827-1890) the 'pioneer of the social revolution' in Maharashtra wrote many books, such as - "Gulamgiri (Slavery) (1873), Shetkaryacha Asud (Peasants' Whipcord) (1883), Ishara (1885) and Sarvajanik Satyadharma (1891). He also started the periodical viz. "Satsara" in 1885."²⁷ "Through all his writings he exposed the exploitative nature of priesthood, feudalism and bureaucracy, and gave an expression to the sorrows and grievances of peasants and the downtrodden classes."²⁸

"In 1877 the first newspaper of the Satyashodhak Movement - 'Din Bandhu' was founded under the editorship of Jotirao Phule's colleague Krishnarao Bhalekar. Later on Narayan Meghaji Lokhande, who is credited with being India's first labour leader, became its editor and the paper began to call itself the "Journal in the interests of the working classes."²⁹

"Lokahitwadi (Gopal Hari Deshmukh) also through his "Shatpatre" drew the attention of the people towards the economic exploitation of the people by the foreign rulers as well as by the native landlords. He insisted on the fact that the human labour was the source of wealth."³⁰

After the Russian Revolution of 1917, the attention of the intellectuals was drawn towards Marxism and the

socialist movement, and then a series of articles and essays, appeared in different newspapers, periodicals and magazines. Many books were written on Marxism and Socialism. 'Vividhgyanavistar' was one of the old and a standard periodical in Maharashtra. From January 1918 this periodical published a series of articles written by Shri Jabali - viz. "Rajnaitic Dheyachi Utkranti", in these articles, reactions on Marx's historical materialism and on other principles of communism was given. These articles were written with the view of explaining Marxist theory as well as giving the criticism on it.³¹ 'In 1921, Comrade S.A. Dange, one of the founder of the Communist Party of India published a pamphlet "Gandhi And Lenin" in which he attacked Gandhism and upheld communism. Later in 1922, under the editorship of Dange, a English weekly "Socialism" was started in Bombay. The views expressed in the issues of this weekly clearly showed the influence of Communism and opposition to Gandhism and nationalism.

So far as the Marxist and Socialist ideas, published in Marathi literature were scattered and were not systematic. 'The credit of writing the first analytical and systematic book on Marxism goes to Shri V.S. Sarvate. In 1921 he wrote a book viz., "Samajikwad" in which we find an analytical and comprehensive discussion on Marxism. In an introduction to this book the author said - "Today the working class has developed into a force and the symptoms of their victory are clearly visible. Socialism is the way that the working

class has invented for their emancipation." In this book Sarvate raised two important questions - "Whether socialistic movement will spread in India? And if so, what form it will take?" And in his own way he tried to answer these questions.³³ 'In 1921 L.N. Joshi, for the first time in Marathi, wrote a book on Russian Revolution - 'Bolshevism in Russia.' Here the author sympathetically discussed in detail the background in which the revolution took place.³⁴

After 1920, Indian National Movement took a new momentum under the leadership of Gandhi. It marked the beginning of a new era - 'Gandhi Era'. And Gandhism exercised its own influence on the intellectuals in Maharashtra. Many socialist thinkers also came under the influence of Gandhism. Outstanding example of this kind was Acharya Jawadekar. His thoughts were influenced by both ideologies - Socialism and Gandhism.

'In 'Lokshikshan', magazine, Jawadekar started writing series of articles, on the communist revolution in Russia from October, 1928.³⁵

'Lokshikshan' continued to publish from time to time many articles on socialism and the Russian Revolution of different writers.

"Chitramaya Jagat" was another periodical which published many articles regarding the socialist and the communist movement. The June 1928 issue of the magazine was specially devoted to throw light on Russia. Very good articles concerning different aspects of the Communism in

Russia were published in this issue. One of the article in this issue was written by Comrade Dange viz.- 'Communist International and the League of Nations' in which Marxian ideas were discussed in details.

Shri Devgirikar, who became the editor of 'Chitramaya Jagat' was a socialist. When the Congress Socialist Party was formed, many articles which gave the ideology and the programme of the C.S.P. were published in the magazine. One of them was "Congress and Socialism" by Achut Patwardhan.³⁶

Dinkarrao Jawalkar wrote one of the earliest Marxist book in Marathi - Krantiche Ranashing. (The Trumpet of Revolution) an exposition of historical materialism directed to the Indian context.

Borrowing language from Engle's Socialism - Utopian and Scientific - Jawalkar outlined the process of evolution, the development of society from primitive communism to slavery, feudalism and capitalism, and the rise of socialism as 'an objective process and not a poetic idea.' He described the exploitation of peasants and workers by the tripple domination of capitalism, priesthood and imperialism - Shetji, bhatji and lathji.

The national movement upto this time he urged, had not been a real people's movement, rather it was dominated by "agents of capitalist parasites" all parties were organizations of that elite. His conclusion was that peasants must organize themselves under socialist principles.'

'Swaraja' means 'peasant day' for India, and it was crucial that national movement should not be controlled by educated elites serving the interest of capitalism, but should be the real ray of peasants and workers.

Jawalkar's writing in Tej, a newspaper he edited for some months in 1931 further illustrates his organizational proposals.

Articles such as - 'The Raising of a Peasant Army' and "preparation for the First war of Freedom," illustrates his mood and approach.

He argued that Peasants should join the nationalist movement - but on their own term and on their own autonomous class - based organization. He further argued that the freedom was definitely forth coming, but peasants must be wary that power was not simply transferred to an exploitative capitalist class but use the methods they need to destroy the British Raj against - capitalists.³⁷

'Madhavrao Bagal, wrote many books on Socialism. He got his inspiration mainly through the writings of British Socialists. Madhavrao Bagal's thoughts were also influenced by Gandhism. In 1933 he wrote a book on the problem of unemployment and discussed the issue through the Marxist point of view. Madhavrao Bagal was the advocate of materialism and opposed to religious practices. In his book 'Dharmacha Dhumakal' he vehemently attacked both the religion and priesthood. In his another book - Socialism or Capitalism - he attacked Capitalism and upheld Socialism.

At the same time his writings clearly shows the influence of Gandhism.³⁸

Hence in this Chapter an effort is made to go through the impact of Karl Marx and Engle on development of socialistic thought in India in general and its impact on Maharashtra in particular. Due to this development; Maharashtra's social and political thinkers have contributed much to the development of social thought in India.

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