

SAMPATTIDAN
and
BHOODAN
MOVEMENT

A MARXIST CRITIQUE



By
C. G. SHAH

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FOREWORD

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Unlike British capitalism in the eighteenth century, Indian capitalism is not a young, vigorous, rising capitalism with the perspective of a hectic spring of future development. It is, in fact, a weak part of the decaying, decrepit world capitalism. This is basically due to its belated historical arrival.

Since no real, free and appreciable development of the productive forces of Indian society is possible within the matrix of capitalist property relations, the economic conditions of the mass of the Indian people cannot improve within the framework of the capitalist system. In fact, the further "development" of Indian capitalism in spite of its some episodic flushes on this sector or that-can only aggravate unemployment and accelerate the process of impoverishment of tens of millions. In the social sphere, this can only result in the further accentuation of the class struggle.

The Indian bourgeoisie and their state, confronted with such a frightful perspective as well as under the impact of class illusions, have been evolving a number of techniques and programmes, to develop the productive forces of industry and agriculture on a capitalist basis. They labour under the hallucination that this is possible and can enable to exorcise the sharpening class struggle in the country. Various Five Year Plans and the Community Project (aided by American Imperialism) are the two principal among these.

There have also emerged in the country such ethico-economic programmes as the Bhoodan and Sampattidan movements which too attempt, by creating illusions among the exploited classes, to divert them from the only authentic solution of the economic debacle and their deepening poverty viz. overthrow of capitalism and establishment of socialism through class struggle. However deeply animated with humanist feeling their architects be, these movements only distract the working masses from the road of class struggle and thereby objectively help the exploiting classes to perpetuate the historically out-moded capitalist social system.

The following statement is an attempt to provide a Marxist i. e. scientific critique of these movements,

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C. G. Shah.

Akbar Manzil, 2nd Fl.
Cadell Rd.,
Bombay-28.

SAMPATTIDAN AND BHOODAN MOVEMENT

I

INTRODUCTION

The ideological collapse of Jay Prakash Narayan, the former avowed Marxist and the outstanding leader of the Socialist Party of India, is now complete. He has been irretrievably bogged in the morass of the bourgeois reformist Gandhian ideology. He has now completed his transition from the Socialist ideology of irreconcilable class struggle having as its objective the transformation of the capitalist class-stratified society into classless socialist society to the Gandhian philosophy of the change of heart, as a means to create a nebulously defined equalitarian society.

Motiff of Bhoodan and Sampattidan Movements

The Bhoodan and Sampattidan movements, based on the theory of the possibility of the ethical transmutation of the heart of those who own land and wealth so that they would voluntarily relinquish a substantial portion of their possession, are, according to Jay Prakash, the decisive means to bring into being such an equalitarian society. The hearts of the wealthy classes, however callous they be at present, will thaw when incessantly stormed by powerful ethical appeals to their essential human nature and they must, in course of time, part with their surplus wealth for the benefit of the poverty-stricken section of the population. This would result in the diminution of the present staggering disparities of incomes between the

members of the community and even their final disappearance. Thus an equalitarian society will be painlessly born.

Are not the wealthy also human beings and have, therefore, basically human hearts?

Jay Prakash Narayan rejects both mass action and legislation as alternate methods to bring about social change. Even legislation implies coercion and hence cannot help to evolve a non-violent equalitarian society. What is necessary first is to transform men's hearts so that they may be cleansed of greed, avarice and such other base impulses. When this is achieved—and that is the objective of the Bhoodan and Sampattidan movements—morally regenerate humans will spontaneously act in an equalitarian way. Their hearts will be surcharged with human emotion which will prompt them to relinquish possessions with a view to succour the needy and the suffering.

Such are, in brief, the motiff and the programme of the Bhoodan and Sampattidan movements.

Ideological Inspiration of the Movement

It must be noted that the ideology inspiring these movements is not a new one. It, historically, originated with the dissolution of primitive Communist Society and the rise of class society when, as a result of the private ownership of the social means of production, exploitation and economic inequalities came into existence in the social world. Since then, every class society—slave, feudal and capitalist—projected groups of humanists who, not comprehending the economic genetic cause of these inequalities viz. private ownership of the social means of production, engaged themselves in making perennial ethical appeals to the exploiting classes to use a portion of their wealth to alleviate the poverty of the exploited classes through philanthropic and charity schemes. The inherited religious and secular ethical literature of all peoples abounds in directives addressed to the

wealthy classes to part with a good portion of their wealth to rescue the poor from want. Christ, Buddha and, in recent times, Gandhi, too, incessantly bombarded the auditory nerve of the rich exploiters with moral admonitions to that effect. The survey of all history, however, decisively proves that this technique of liquidating poverty and economic disparities rampant in the social world has decisively failed. Before we examine the reasons of this indisputable failure, we will X-ray some of the characteristic features of the present Bhoodan and Sampattidan movements.

Characteristics of Bhoodan and Sampattidan Movements

The Bhoodan movement is distinguished from the Smpattidan movement, since the former aims at the redistribution of land, the basic means of production in agriculture, in contrast to the latter which aims at the redistribution, not of the basic means of production such as factories, and others but of the income derived by their capitalist owners on the basis of that ownership. This invests the programme of Sampattidan with a bourgeois class character since it endorses by implication capitalist private property in the means of production. It does not ask the capitalists to surrender this property which enables them to exploit the workers but appeals to them to set aside a portion of their profits born of this exploitation for relieving the distress of the poor. The right of the capitalists to own the means of production and thereby exploit labour and accumulate profit is implicitly, if not articulately, regarded moral and therefore sacrosanct. Immortality attaches only to the income from the exploitation not to the exploitation itself. Unlike in the sphere of agriculture the programme has for its objective a reshuffling of the income, not a redistribution of the means of production, the fountain source of that income. The bourgeoisie is only called upon to expand the scale of its charity and philanthropic activities. This reminds one of the incisive definition of charity given by

Paul Lafargue viz., "Charity is robbing wholesale and giving retail"

Another striking feature of these movements consists in the fact that, regarding the method to achieve their objective, their sponsors-Vinoba Bhave and now Jay Prakash Narayan who has expanded the limited agrarian programme of the former into a universal socio-economic programme—exclusively restrict the means to that of the ethical reconstruction of the consciousness of primarily the wealthy classes. Even Gandhi, who equally stood for the preservation and perpetuation of the capitalist-landlord social system, while addressing moral appeals to the capitalists periodically reinforced this ethical weapon by strikes, peasant satyagrahas and others to exert pressure on them to redistribute their incomes to a little advantage of the masses. Surely he conducted those struggles within the matrix of the fundamental conception of the basic community of interests of the capitalists and the workers, the landlords and the peasants, and the resultant class collaborationist view; still he did not discard such episodic class struggles as pressure technique to back up ethical appeals. Jay Prakash, on the other hand, regards even such struggles as socially and morally disastrous for the creation of a non-violent equalitarian society. Addressing a gathering of industrial workers in Bombay he remarked :

"By persuasion and propaganda we can change the hearts of the people...The Bhoodan and Sampattidan movements will usher in the millenium in the country. There must be no class consciousness, there must be equality. This is my conception of a free state. The Sampattidan movement, if it succeeded, would in the very near future eliminate the profit-making instinct of capitalists". He further said, "Some businessmen and industrialists have expressed in favour of the Gandhian ideal of trusteeship and, I feel, the day is not far off when that ideal will be realised without the use of force or compulsion".

Bourgeois Class Character of Sampattidan

It is no wonder that Jay Prakash Narayan, who has outdone even Gandhi in the sphere of class collaboration, is invited by industrialists and merchants to address meetings under the auspices of their class organisations such as Chambers of Commerce, Grain and Oil Seeds Merchants' Association (in Bombay) and others. These ruthless exploiters of the people, some of whom even supplement normal exploitative activity with such dark means (even from the bourgeois ethical standpoint) as blackmarketing, fraudulent accounting etc., enthusiastically greet Jay Prakash Narayan and support in words his Sampattidan programme. When asked about the donations received from the Bombay capitalists, he replied that the Sampattidan did not mean collection of funds. It was a way of life and acceptance of a new outlook on life; one who accepted the ideal need not pay donations or some contributions. He had to give up a part of his income for the wellbeing of his less fortunate brothers and sisters. Sampattidan is, in fact, "a life-long vow". So unlike Vinoba Bhave's Bhoodan movement which was a movement started with the objective of collecting land donations and distribute them among the peasants, the Sampattidan movement is to restrict itself to making moral appeals to the people to set apart in their budget a specific sum for aiding the people in distress and spend it for the purpose at the individual's will. It liberates the wealthy even from the social pressure which is exerted on them at a public meeting to make them donate a sum for a cause.

In class society, no programme can reflect the interests of all classes because the interests of the exploiting and the exploited classes are irreconcilably antagonistic. Hence, if a programme wins the support of the capitalist class, it must—and capitalists are shrewd and know their interests best—be subserving their basic interest. Lenin once remarked that an auxiliary criterion, auxiliary to that of the Marxist analysis

which he subjected his particular line of action to, was what class supported that line. If the bourgeoisie extolled it, he concluded that his line must be incorrect from the standpoint of the interests of the working class whose interests irreconcilably collided with those of the capitalists. Judged from this secondary criterion the Sampattidan movement and its sponsor Jay Prakash who receives bouquets from the Indian bourgeoisie should subserve the fundamental interests of that class. It must be noted that in the present historical phase, this class is threatened with the growing socialist movement which has, unlike the Sampattidan movement, the objective not of humanizing capitalism but its liquidation.

II A CRITIQUE

The Sampattidan movement is based, as stated before, on the erroneous theory of the social genetic causes of the poverty of the overwhelming portion of the people as well as of the possibility of liquidating this poverty through the initiative and voluntary economic sacrifice of the exploiting wealthy classes of society. It is based on the abysmal ignorance of their sponsors of the objectively operating inexorable laws of capitalist economy as well as of the social laws which determine the origin, the nature, and the functioning of the consciousness of the economic groups and classes of society.

In short, it is based on the philosophical, sociological and economical errors of these sponsors.

Poverty and Wealth in Capitalist Society

Contrasts of poverty and wealth which arise in the field of distribution are only the result, the inevitable outcome of the division of society into classes, the class which owns the means of production and the class which does not own these means, but is, therefore, compelled to sell its labour power

to the former which exploits it i.e. expropriates surplus value (unpaid labour) created by the latter. The wealth of the wealthy is built out of this surplus value which when sold in the market is transformed into profit for the capitalist owner.

The competitive struggle among the capitalist owners over market in the world of capitalist production compels them to cheapen the cost of production of commodities by such methods as wage cut, technical rationalization which creates unemployment, and others. In the present period of the organic crisis of capitalism, this competitive struggle has become more ferocious resulting in the intensifying economic offensive of the capitalists against the workers. To maintain the rate of profit, the only incentive to the capitalist, the capitalists are compelled to exploit their wage and salaried slaves more barbarously than ever. The middle classes along with the working masses are hurled in the hell of unemployment and increasing impoverishment giving rise to their militant struggles to resist this pressure and even to overthrow the very capitalist system which, as a result of the logical working out of its objectively operating laws, generates mass poverty and mass unemployment.

The capitalists inhumanly exploit the working masses not because they are inherently wicked but the exigencies of competitive struggle compel them to be brutal. Free will is a fiction of the idealistic philosophy. The capitalist has no free will as such; if he is to survive, he must intensify exploitation and generate poverty or he will perish in the competitive struggle. The working masses, too, have no free will as such; to survive they must organize strike resistance and, finally, overthrow capitalism and establish socialism.

Through the very process of capitalist production, wealth accumulates in the hands of the increasingly diminishing number of capitalists and poverty becomes the lot of

the increasing number of population. This process of polarization of wealth and poverty cannot be arrested unless the very capitalist mode of production is abolished.

Limitations of Bourgeois Charity

The individual capitalists who succeed in the competitive struggle are compelled to set apart a big portion of the profits to renew, expand or rationalize their productive technique. If they fail to do so, they would be ruined in the further competitive struggle. It is the remaining portion of profit which they spend on themselves and, sometimes, for charitable and philanthropic work.

But this portion is a very small fraction of the total profit. Under pain of not losing in the competitive struggle the capitalist needs to spend a greater and greater section of the profit in further investment in the means of production.

Compared to the increasing poverty which the capitalist system of production, governed by its own objective laws, generates, the meagre alleviation of working people's misery which the capitalists, even if they are universally surcharged with humanist emotion for the victims of their exploitation, could achieve, would be more than counterbalanced by the existing and new impoverishment which the system generates.

Even what charity or philanthropy the capitalists practise, is motivated mainly, consciously or sub-consciously by individual or class interests. The chase for limelight drives some to start or endow institutions. Others build hospitals, for, disease is infectious and the poor, when struck down with disease, can convince the rich of their common humanity by transmitting the infection to them. Some may construct workers' chawls, for, labour must be kept efficient for being exploited to the maximum, hence be provided with minimum housing. Capitalist production needs trained cadres, therefore, technical and other educational institutions

must be financed. Starvation is not infectious, therefore, no capitalist charity assures the starving that they will be provided with two square meals.

It is not the change of heart which supplies motiff to capitalist charity and philanthropy. It is mostly craze for fame or conscious or unconscious class interest.

Even when the capitalist class parts with a portion of its material profit in the form of large economic concessions to the poor, it is not mainly motivated by human regard for their suffering. It watches the growing spirit of discontent among the suffering masses and discovers in it a menace to the very capitalist social system which is the goose that lays golden eggs for it. To salvage the system, it sacrifices a part of the profit which may take the form of, as in England, the unemployment dole. It is only an economic strategy and not the result of any qualm of guilty conscience or any change of heart. It is intended something as a chloroform to dull the spirit of revolt of the masses. As the leopard cannot change his spots, so the capitalists cannot change their hearts which eternally hanker for more profits.

Is there a Free-Will for the Capitalist?

There is a vital reason why the capitalist cannot help —there is no free will for him—pursuing the road of ever increasing profit which is the fundamental urge of his psyche. Historical materialism alone can explain this phenomenon. According to it, the consciousness of man is primarily the product of the mode of his livelihood, therefore, of the position he occupies in the economic structure of society. In the existing capitalist economic structure of society, the capitalist starts with a definite amount of capital, buys means of production, hires and exploits labour, and annexes surplus value which via market is transformed into his profit. The original capital *M* returns to him, with the addition of this profit, as *M'*. The motiff of his entire economic activity is to

transform the original capital into increased capital. It is an automatic chase for profit. Perennially engaged in this profit-chasing activity, he builds up profit-chasing instincts and exploitative psychology. The postulate of a common human nature of all men as such is a false postulate of idealistic psychology. Capitalist human nature with its profit-hankering and exploitative urges is quite different from the human nature of the proletariat when the latter liberates itself from the pressure of the capitalist ideology and which then becomes co-operative socialist. The mode of material living primarily moulds the psychology of the group and the class living in class society. There are only class men with class human natures in class society. An individual human with chemically pure human nature to which a pure human appeal can be addressed with a view to persuade him to act humanly and humanely is a myth of idealistic sociology.

The profit-chasing and greedy psychology of the capitalists is determined by the position they occupy in the capitalist economic structure viz., that of exploiters of labour and chasers after profits. Marx, in *Capital*, explains this as follows :

“The simple circulation of commodities (as in the case of handicraftsmen), selling in order to buy, is a means of carrying out a purpose unconnected with circulation namely the satisfaction of wants. The circulation of money as capital is, on the contrary, an end in itself. For, the expansion of value takes place only within this constantly renewed movement. The circulation of capital has, therefore, no limits. Thus the conscious representative of this movement, the possessor of money, becomes a capitalist. His person, or rather his pocket, is the point from which the money starts and to which it returns. The expansion of value, which is the objective basis or main-spring of the circulation, becomes his subjective aim. He functions as capital personified and endowed with consciousness and will. The restless never-ending process of

profit-making alone is what he aims at.

“This boundless greed after riches, this passionate chase is common to the capitalist and the miser; but while the miser is merely a capitalist gone mad, the capitalist is a rational miser. The never-ending augmentation of exchange value, which the miser strives after by seeking to save his money from circulation, is attained by the more acute capitalist by constantly throwing it afresh into circulation”.

Thus the psychology of the capitalist human nature, his profit making instincts, his exploitative impulses, his greed for more wealth, arise out of his specific activity in the cycle of capitalist production. It is the psychological outgrowth of his practice in the capitalist economic process. Till he is a capitalist, he will have his inescapable capitalist psychology. Gandhi's moral appeals to the capitalists for over two decades to change their hearts and act as trustees of their property did not affect them by an iota. If at all, they have during and after the second world war become more inhuman exploiters of the working people, more corrupt and brutal. And they cannot help behaving so since, as Marxist materialist psychology reveals, the consciousness of a class is the product of the material conditions of its existence.

Bourgeois Philosophy : A Product of Bourgeois Society

The philosophy and the ethical theory of the bourgeoisie are the rationalisations of its class interest determined by its commanding position in the capitalist economic structure of society. Its consciousness and conscience are conditioned by this. A capitalist considers not only his ownership of the means of production but also his appropriation of profit derived out of that ownership as moral and legitimate. Likewise he regards the high standard of life he lives in the same way. He erupts with righteous indignation where his ownership is challenged or his profit questioned. For thousands of years the exploiting classes—slave owners, feudal

nobles and capitalists have been subjected to ethical appeals by saints and humanists to use their wealth for relieving the suffering of the poor but all these appeals have proved abortive. They listened but went on exploiting.

Regarding the futility of the moral appeals to the exploiting classes, Lenin used to narrate the story of Vaska the Cat. This cat had domiciled in the palace of Peter the Great, the Czar of Russia and used to commit depredations in the kitchen of the Great Czar. It used to invade and consume dishes destined for the royal stomach of the august Czar. The palace cook, a pacifist and like Jay Prakash an exponent of the theory of the change of heart, used to make moral appeals to Vaska to abstain from its immoral bandit's activity. Vaska the Cat listened but went on eating,

So our capitalists and other wealthy classes will listen to the ethical admonitions of Jay Prakash Narayan, even extol and banquet him, but will go on exploiting and piling up wealth.

Ideological Collapse of Jay Prakash

Jay Prakash Narayan was once a socialist and, in his own social democratic way, challenged capitalism and branded the capitalists as exploiters. He was the intrepid leader of the heroic anti-imperialist August struggle for national liberation. The spectacle of such a valiant fighter for national and social liberation being engaged in making moral appeals to industrialists, bankers, grain merchants and oil seed merchants, all hardened exploiters, to feel sympathy for the poor and rescue them from poverty marks the anti-climax of a noble career, looks almost obscene. But the present epoch is the epoch of titanic struggles between the forces of socialist liberation of mankind and those of capitalist reaction. Individuals, however heroic they be, disintegrate, but there is no time to feel sad over the ideological collapse of individuals

III

THEIR ROLE

The Bhoodan and Sampattidan movements are foredoomed to failure because they come in conflict with the laws of economy and psychology. Regarding the Bhoodan movement, the tempo of its advance has already slowed down. This is because the donation of land by big landowners was prompted not so much by any change of heart but by the strategic motive of safeguarding by far the greater amount of land owned by them by conceding a small portion of it mostly, fallow and uneconomic. This voluntary sacrifice on their part, in their view, would insure them against the kisan struggle which has been advancing with the slogan of expropriation of all their land. The chaotically collected land and their redistribution among the peasants could hardly help the poor and miserable strata of the peasantry. In the absence of cheap credit for livestock, seeds and other prerequisites for agricultural operations, they could not utilise even the little advantage offered to them. Only the rich capitalist section could exploit such a situation and benefit by it. Further, since the motive inspiring the big landowners was not any change of heart but that of a strategic safeguard of their remaining land against any peasant demand for complete expropriation, the process of voluntary donation was bound to slow down and come at a deadlock at some stage.

A Brake on Socialist Movement

Though the Bhoodan and Sampattidan movements are, due to the above mentioned reasons, bound to prove futile from the standpoint of the objective which their sponsors have in view, they can do harm to the growing class struggle in the country. By sowing illusions among the backward sections of the exploited classes, they can paralyse them and disrupt

the unity of class struggle which alone can liberate them from exploitation and poverty. They would also tend to kill the healthy class consciousness and the spirit of reliance on their own class action as a means of their emancipation. They would make them feel grateful to their capitalist and landlord exploiters. They would divert them from the road of class struggle, the only road to their freedom.

The sponsors of the movement eschew not only mass action, strikes and satyagrahas and others, but even legislative methods of securing favourable legislation in the interest of the poverty-stricken sections of population. The movement, therefore, sabotages both mass action as well as parliamentary struggles as means of securing economic relief for the masses. The programme of the movement is reduced exclusively to that of moral appeals to the wealthy classes. This is putting into operation the change of heart theory of Gandhi with a vengeance. This is even outdoing the Mahatma who, despite his class collaborationist theory, stood for organising strike and satyagraha struggle to back up his campaign of moral appeals to the rich. Jay Prakash Narayan may now claim to have purged Gandhism of its non-spiritual adulteration.

Class Struggle : The only Way

The poverty-stricken Indian masses cannot, however, afford to be martyrs of such illusions in the present situation. Due to the organic crisis of the capitalist-landlord system, their poverty and misery are daily being aggravated. They cannot afford to listen to and be paralysed by illusions. Impelled by the biological impulse, the very will to live, they must discard the road of this fictitious solution of their poverty and advance on the road of the only real solution of that poverty, the road of class struggle.