

## All This Phony Marxism

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*[This paper analyses the policies of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), henceforth, CPM, on three issues, namely, its land policy, its contemporary economic policy, and its policy of minority rights, keeping in mind its rein over the bourgeois state for the last thirty years. These are the crucial policies that reflect in the character of the Party.]*

The CPM argues that “the radical land reforms must be implemented and land be distributed free of cost to agricultural workers and poor peasants in all states where such measures have not been implemented... State subsidies on inputs like seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, water, and power should be made for serving the interests of agricultural labourers, rural artisans and small and middle peasants at lower rates of interest.. Remunerative prices based on the cost of production should be assured to all agricultural produce, together with an effective state procurement mechanism for major crops in all the states with financial support by the central government.” It seeks the implementation of a comprehensive and subsidized crop insurance scheme at minimum premium for all crops and supply of subsidized electricity to agriculture. It demands updating of land records in tribal areas recognizing customary ownership rights of tribals and restoration of their lands to them which were grabbed by landlords and moneylenders. Finally, it demands crackdown on usurious, private moneylenders and strict regulation on their interest rates. In brief, the CPM’s land policy seeks all the conditions that help the peasants in their rural existence. *In fact, it facilitates the creation of peasantry and fosters the ruralization process.*

Such demands, however, are not new in the milieu of social- political existence of peasants in liberal democracy in which the communist parties contest election. Long before the CPM put forth it in its manifesto and programme, the German Communist party and the French Communist Party had attempted to incorporate such demands in their programmes in 1875 and in 1892 and 1894 respectively in their Congresses held at Gotha in Germany and at Marseilles and Nantes in France. These programmes were severely criticized by Marx and Engels in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1875) and in *The Peasant Question in France and Germany* (1894). Both of them disassociated themselves from the said programmes which were contrary to their principles and refused recognition to it as these were ‘altogether deplorable’. Their disassociation with the programmes of the peasants were starkly reflected in the absence of any such peasant programme of the French workers’ party whose preamble and minimum programme were dictated by them to Paul Lafargue and Jules Guesde (who led the Party) in 1880 at Engels’s residence in London. In fact, even before it, in 1850, in their Address of the Central Authority to the League they had advised the workers to oppose the plan of feudal land distribution to the peasants as free property. In its place, they suggested, the workers ‘must demand that the confiscated feudal property remain state property and be converted into workers’ colonies cultivated by the associated rural proletariat with all the advantages of

large-scale agriculture through which the principle of common property immediately obtains a firm basis in the midst of the tottering bourgeois property relations.”<sup>2</sup> The distribution of lands, otherwise would lead through ‘the same cycle of impoverishment and indebtedness’ which the French peasants had suffered after the 1789 French revolution. Their opposition to land distribution, however, was not confined to only these reasons. It was far more serious and was premised on multi-logic.

One set of arguments were premised on the logic that under capitalism the peasants will disappear in course of time. It is structurally inevitable. The history of capitalism and its structural inbuilt reflect this inevitability. The distribution of land and extension of subsidies to peasants to ameliorate their working condition are artificial measures to prolong their existence which is an exercise in futility as one knows their *fait accompli*. In fact, such acts hamper the socialization process unleashed by the modern industries. “Small peasants’ property excludes by its very nature the development of social powers of production of labour, the social forms of labour, the social concentration of capital, cattle raising on a large scale, and a progressive application of science.” The land distribution and subsidies counter acts the process of modern industries by initiating the process of individuation that protects the small rural property relations whose world outlook hinges around small patches of lands that checks rapid cosmopolitan development. In the absence of such propped up restorative process the problems of socialist revolution would have been simplified. The ‘lands for the peasants’ which were incorporated in the *Manifesto* of the *Paris Commune* in 1871 on behest of Proudhonists and Bakuninists was strongly disapproved of by Marx and Engels in private. In public, however, they declared it to be the best offer to peasants from the proletariat. Subsequently, it was, picked up by Lenin to justify his acts in Russia glossing over all theirs’ other writings on peasantry. Later on, it became the primer of the ‘socialist’ revolution all over the world.

Coming back to Marx’s other set of arguments, his opposition to land distribution to peasants, its best elucidation is found in the *Capital* vol.3. Here, he argues that small peasants in order to survive under capitalism fragments the gross capital of society into numerous petty units and use it for individual production that results into lesser output. In comparison, the collective application of gross capital of society, on the other hand, as the science of modern industrial society indicates, yields much larger outputs. The benefit of technological developments impacts the production process rapidly. Logically, then, against social labour the fragmentation of lands retards the growth of society and their proprietors act as its bulwark in comparison to the larger production units. Marx, therefore, described the distribution of land to the peasants and the offer of subsidies to them for their cultivation as reactionary and wasteful expenditure.

Not only that, he argued, it does not benefit the peasants either in the long run, as they are wiped out under the wheel of the ever expanding larger capitalist units. The policy of land distribution, only benefits the politicians in their quest for power as it creates a rural social base for them. The Communist parties were strongly advised to desist from such programme. But the Proudhonists, Bakuninists and subsequently the German Communist Party and the French

Labour Party attempted to incorporate the peasants' demands in the programme of the international and in their parties' manifestoes respectively. Marx and Engels opposed it till their lasts. After their deaths, however, things changed. The peasants' demands were incorporated as integral part of communists' programme particularly after October 1917. Marx was relegated into the oblivion on the issue. He was substituted by Lenin and Mao whose refracted, prismatic interpretations of Marx became a standard primer for the Communist parties world over.' The CPM's land policy is the part of that legacy which has further degenerated into its application<sup>6</sup>. The Nandigram- Singur episode is the inevitable result of that individuation process that had began with the *Operation Barga* in 1970s. It was bound to erupt after the peasants' world was snatched from them by deceit and force. It is a situation of which Engels had warned to his fellow comrades long back: not to interfere in the peasants' property relations by force, against their will<sup>7</sup>. But the CPM did not heed to his advice as it had ignored his advice even earlier on the issue of land distribution. The CPM, thus, committed double sin: it initiated the individuation / fragmentation process of feudal landed property when it came into power instead of cultivating it as state/collective property, or at best, transforming it into cooperative property to be operated cooperatively; and second, it seized the peasants' property by chicanery and sold it /facilitated its sale to the bourgeois i.e. in brief, it devoured its own child.

The contemporary economic policy of this 'Marxist' party is equally bizarre. It is against the 'imperialist' led globalization, liberalization and privatization process. It is opposed to the entry of foreign capital which can have negative consequences for the country's economic and political sovereignty. It is opposed to loans which involve structural adjustment. It is against the removal of quantitative restrictions on agricultural imports. In brief, it is opposed to open market and free trade. In contradistinction to it, the CPM is committed to strengthen the small scale industries to protect this labour-intensive sector. Its focus is to develop the agro-based industries to generate higher employment and to continue with land reforms. It demands increase in import tariffs, regulation of foreign capital, acceptance of aids without any conditionalities, and special credits for rural artisans, small and middle peasants.<sup>9</sup> In brief, it favours/ stands for protectionist system to protect the 'nationalist' bourgeois society in opposition to the 'imperialist' led globalization. It stands for the small production process.

Let's now counter pose it with Marx's views on free trade and protectionist system. In his speech at the first Congress of the International Free Trade held at Brussels in 1847, and at the Democratic Association of Brussels held in 1848, he stated, "we are for Free Trade, because by Free Trade all economical laws with their most astounding contradictions will act upon a larger scale, upon a greater extent of territory, upon the territory of the whole earth. It breaks up old nationalities and carries antagonism of proletariat and bourgeoisie to the uttermost point. In a word, the Free Trade system, hastens the Social Revolution."<sup>10</sup> Here it may be informed that Marx was 'the representative of German Democracy' and was officially invited to Brussels to participate in the Congress". Its developments were being reported by Engels for a newspaper *The*

*Northern Star*. In the Congress, it may be further informed, the backward German bourgeoisie, just like the contemporary CPM, was opposing the Free Trade, then being demanded by the British bourgeoisie. Marx, in support of the Free Trade, knew very well through his knowledge of classical political economy and by his revolutionary praxis that the rural artisans, small-middle peasants, small scale industries, which the CPM now protects, shall be wiped out. Yet for three reasons he extended his support to the British bourgeoisie-led Free Trade which had converted more than half of the world territory into her colony and was waging wars with other European powers for the division of the new territories: first, “the powers of production will increase, the tax imposed upon the country by protective duties will disappear, all commodities will be sold at cheaper prices”; second, it will dissolve the intermediate classes between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and with it the extra-economic primordialities and localism of the pre- capitalist social formations, to be substituted by the standardized universal attributes of the uniform global production bases and common economic laws; and third, it shall hasten the global Social Revolution as there shall be free movement of labour-power, commodity and capital accentuating the standard labour protest against the capital. Interestingly, it was the classical political economists - Smith, Say, Quesnay, Ricardo - who had discussed the inevitability of the global free trade as inbuilt process of capitalism. Marx was only reinstating their position with an addition that it will hasten the emancipation of the proletarians. He strongly criticized Kayser, one of the deputies of the German Social Democratic Party in the Reichstag (the German Parliament), when he spoke in favour of and voted for protective tariffs in 1879. It may be stated here that one of the principles of Social Democrats elected in different parliaments of European countries during the life-time of Marx- Engels was to vote against military budget and protective tariffs. Infringement of such principles, under the pressure of popular electoral politics, brought swift and certain reactions from them who had contempt for idiocy, committed deliberately, for electoral purposes.

Further, Marx’s critique of the Protectionist system was premised on two grounds: first, it retards the global technological development and its benefits to the people by creating a national barrier of tariffs, permits and quota that denies accessibility to products and knowledge about them. In other words, the best of the global technological developments are denied to the people just for protecting a national market for the local bourgeoisie; and second, it retards the process of global social revolution by protecting the national chauvinism. The check on the free movements of labour-power, commodity and capital across the nations through Free Trade checks the growth of universalization of cosmopolitan culture of labour. In brief, the Protectionist system protects the national bourgeoisie and its localism.

The CPM by opposing the Free Trade and open market stands against Marx and the global social revolution of labour. It stands, in its economic policies, for the *Swadeshi*.

Its secularism is equally distorted as it is preeminently guided by the perpetuation of religious minority rights and its expansion in new spheres particularly in contemporary times. It has accepted the Congress’s (led by Tilak)

political compromise of 1916 with the Muslim League (as part of the ideological legacy from the CPI) and has turned it into the philosophical gospel of secularism. The 1916 compromise had accepted the creation of minorities in India as separate political community which the Moderate faction of the Congress had earlier refused to accept. Actually, since late 1870s the Muslim elite had begun to demand from the colonial state, recognition of Muslims as minority community and, simultaneously, also sought political representation in the councils at par with Hindus. Sir Syed had argued that 'let a rule is laid down that half the members (in the councils) are to be Mohammedan and half Hindu'<sup>12</sup>. While this was denied to them, the first demand was accepted. The colonial state recognized the minorities as separate political community by the 1909 Act with their separate electorate in the representative institution of the country. Seventy years later, thankfully, it was dismantled by the Constituent Assembly. Its conceptual legacy and few constitutional provisions, however, continue to exist.

Let us now analyze the minority rights, its implications on the polity, the CPM's, support to the minority rights, and Marx's analysis of secularism.

To begin with, the only religious minority right enshrined in the constitution is the 'Right of Minorities to establish and administer educational institutions' under Art 30 of the fundamental rights. The Constitution, in other words, recognizes a section of citizens as religious minority for a limited purpose, who are different from the others. Derivatively, it facilitates the creation of majority religious community and a religion based divisive paradigm in the polity. This kind of position is bound to emerge in the structurally divisive bourgeois society. The more pertinent issue, however, is the existence and perpetuation of religion based categorization of citizenship for their freedom and social upliftment instead of fixing poverty and other secular class based criteria for their benefits. The religious minorities more factually, are not monolithic themselves. There is a strong regional, gender and caste/ poverty divisions among them; but the majority are extremely poor. By creating a religious monolith, the constitution facilitates the elite to appropriate the leadership of the community and their developmental resources for themselves. In this process, it side-tracks the real issues of poverty caste eradication and of gender equality; it substitutes these issues with the agenda of protection of antiquated religious laws and customary practices that benefits the propertied male elite and maintains their dominance. The minority rights, it may be stated here, create certain special privileges and civil immunities for a section of citizens which are denied to the others. The special educational right grants them more autonomy, power, and facilities than the others. The 25th Constitutional Amendment Act 1971, further, strengthened it. It created a right of compensation for the minority educational institution in case of compulsory acquisition of its property. This right was denied to the majority community. The protection to the religious minorities by the CPM thus protects the special privileges and immunities which, in turn, largely benefit the segmentary interests of their elite. How the process actuates can be observed from a case study of the functioning of the minority educational institutions in Andhra Pradesh. In Andhra Pradesh, the percentage of Muslim population according to 2001 census is 9.5%. Their number of engineering colleges are 36 (in 2005) i.e., 15% in proportion to the population with total seat capacity for 11000

students. 8833 Muslim students appeared in the entrance test of 2005 (EAMCET, 2005) for admission conducted by the Andhra government. Out of this only 4000 Muslims students qualified for it. The rest of the 7000 seats were sold out to other non-Muslim students. Same thing happened among the Christians as well. They have 22 engineering colleges for 1.44% population. Their total numbers of seats are 7430 (in 2005). The number of students appeared in the entrance test in 2005 (EAMCET) were 2831, out of which 2176 were selected. The rest of the seats—5254 -were sold out to other non-Christian students.<sup>13</sup> In both the cases, it was the elite who was the largest beneficiary of the development and it is self-evident to understand their motives in the perpetuation of minority rights. The interests of the students, on the other hand, could have been served by expanding the capacity of seats either in the existing educational institutions or by creating the new ones without the paradigm of minority-majority division which has social political ramifications.

The other side of their educational right is that it has fostered the archaic madrasa system that has benefited largely the traditional clerics and their dominance in the rural hinterland. Once a part of the traditional social requirement, it has now hampered the development of a common secular educational curriculum, more modern and scientific in nature, among the large section of citizens on the ground that they are a special, separate religious community. The argument that the minority right has benefited a large section of students by providing them education either in the rural areas where the schools do not exist or in urban centers through modern medical-engineering institutes is just to abdicate the state from the responsibility of fostering common modern citizenship and the development of every poor. More aptly, it won't be out of place to state that the CPM has deliberately fostered an electoral constituency of minorities to sustain itself in corridors of power.

In contradiction to it, Marx never sought religious minority rights for Jews, who were persistently persecuted in history in different countries of Europe, or for Muslims in Christian dominated nations. What he sought was the abolition of state's linkages with the religion, secularization of rights and end to police method of persecuting religious sects. He did not either declare war on religion. He sought, on the contrary, freedom for Jesuits and their admission into countries, like Germany, where they were denied entry/ were exiled/ persecuted. Marx's praxis was to strive for the political emancipation of mankind from the stranglehold of religion, and, then, to actuate their real social economic emancipation leading to withering away of religion itself.

It may also be interesting here to note that 'religious' Gandhi was much more secular than the CPM and was a 'Marxist' in the secularization of state. He had explicitly commented that the religion is the concern of the individual, that state should have nothing to do with the religion and that it should not aid and recognize religious education in educational institutions. In other words, he was dead against the creation of minority education aided and recognized by the state. Like the classical liberal, he opposed the application of differential laws for different communities and creation of religious separation among the citizens, and advised universal application of a common law.

Unfortunately, the CPM did not follow even the classic bourgeois theory of secularism. What it accepted and propagated as Indian version of secularism was essentially a communal compromise of the Indian bourgeoisie with the equally communal feudal Muslim elements which should have been repudiated. The 1909 Act and the Congress-Muslim League Pact of 1916 were the crucial steps of communalization process of polity. Tragically, the CPM, instead of opposing the creation of religious community and its further segregation, fosters their divisive, reactionary agenda set by the colonial state and the Muslim elite since late 1870s.

To conclude the CPM today is politically, the part of the degenerating bourgeois establishment. It is no longer even the conscience- keeper of the Constituent Assembly whose liberal text was once the *Roman Civilitas* for an idealized capitalist modernization of post-colonial India. Its lust for electoral success has compelled it to compromise with the principles of Marxism. It is no longer the rebel that represents the historical cause of the proletariat. On the contrary, it is “compelled to advance the interests of an alien class, and to feed his own-class with talk and promises, and with the assertion that the interests of that alien class are their own interests. The Party which is put into this awkward position is irrevocably lost”<sup>15</sup> for the revolutionary cause. The history of the CPM from Naxalbari to Nandigram is the testimony of it.

#### Notes And References :

1. *Alternative Agricultural Policy*, All India Kisan Sabha Communist Party of India (Marxist), 2003, pp. 15-18.
2. K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, vol.10, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1978, p.285.
3. K. Marx, *Capital*, vol.3, Saraswati Library, Calcutta, 1946, p.641.
4. In 1864 while inaugurating the International Marx had observed “that if all the land were to get into a few hands the agrarian problem would be much simplified, that is, for the socialist revolution”. See David Mitrany, *Marx Against the Peasants*, Collier Books, New York, 1961, p.38. Such feelings were often shared by Marx and Engels in their private discussion.
5. For the history of changing debate on peasant issue in Marxism, see Himanshu Roy, *Peasant in Marxism*, Manak, Delhi, 2006.
6. For an analysis of degenerate application, see Sajal Basu, ‘*Figments of Left Politics*’ in *Communalism, Ethnicity and State Politics*, Rawat, Jaipur, 200; Atul Kohli, ‘West Bengal: Parliamentary Communism And Reform from Above’ in *State And Poverty in India*, CUP, 1987.
7. K. Marx and F. Engels, op.cit, vol.27, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1990, p.497.
8. See West Bengal Government’s *Industrial Policy : Fact And Fiction*, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Delhi State Committee, 2007.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-9, p.31; *Alternative Agricultural Policy*, op.cit; pp. 1-2, 6, 15-17, 23; Prakash Karat, *The Role of the Left-led Governments And our Understanding*, a CPI(M) Publication, 2007, pp.20-22.
10. K. Marx and F. Engels, op.cit., vol.6, pp. 290, 465.
11. For details, see Himanshu Roy, ‘*Marx on Global Trade*’ in *Frontier*, Autumn Number 2002, Kolkata.
12. See Sir Syed Ahmed Khan’s speech on 28.12.1887 in Lucknow in A.M. Zaidi (ed.), *From Syed to the Emergence of Jinnah*, vol.1, Michiko and Panjathan, New Delhi, 1975, pp.39-40.
13. This case study was conducted by a citizen group of Andhra Pradesh who had brought it to the notice of the President of India. It was stated by T. H. Choudhury former CMD of VSNL in a seminar on “Minorities and Minority Rights” held at National Museum Auditorium, New Delhi on 19.03.2006.
14. M.K. Gandhi was reacting to a question asked by a Christian Missionary in September 1946. See his *Collected Works*, vol. 85, p. 328; see also, Gandhi’s reply to Zakir Hussain in D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, vol.7, 1953, p.451.
15. K. Marx and F. Engels, op.cit., vol.10, p.470.