

HOW TO ROB THE POOR AND PAY THE RICH

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In Bernard Shaw's drama 'Man and Super Man' a small talk occurs between a brigand and the Hero. The brigand says " I am a brigand and I make my living by robbing the rich". The hero quips "I am a gentleman and I make my living by robbing the poor".

That was a satire on the middle class written a century ago. Beginning from the second half of the twentieth century the Trans National Corporations (TNCs) are playing this game openly and blatantly. The governments of different developed nations which derive the maximum benefits encourage them. The governments of the developing nations either tacitly support the TNCs or are helpless.

Before going into the details of this operation for the past decade or so, it is better to trace the history. In the 19th and 20th centuries European nations had colonized Africa and Asia. The colonization of America started in the 16th century and it was colonized entirely by the 18th century. This article is mainly concerned with the Afro-Asian nations. It was here that a phenomenon called indentured labour was started by the colonizers. Especially Britain wanted to grow sugarcane in South African countries, Madagascar, West Indies, Fiji islands etc. The local population could not be persuaded to take up the growing of sugarcane. Britain imported labour from India mainly from Bihar and Eastern UP to work in the sugarcane fields. Later on for growing tea in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) labour was imported from Tamil Nadu in India. For harvesting teak from the forests of Burma (perhaps it was a large scale destruction of forests extending over thousands of square miles) labour was imported from Bengal, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Again for rubber plantations in Malaya (now Malayasia) labour was imported mainly from Tamil Nadu. These operations of exploiting the labour are too well known and do not merit a discussion now.

A new phenomenon of migration of technically qualified persons especially doctors and engineers to England and USA started in 1950s. By 1970s Government of India expressed its concern about the 'brain drain', since lakhs of doctors and engineers had migrated and continued to do so. It is a well known fact that for training a doctor or engineer the Government spends roughly 100,000 US dollars or more. The cost for training a Doctor/Engineer in the US would be ten times. Thus when a doctor/engineer trained in India migrates to the US, India loses 100,000 dollars and USA saves a million dollars. Why should America mind? Beyond expressing their concern and anguish the Government of India did not or could not take any step to arrest the brain drain.

In the 1990s computers invaded the civilized world and virtually conquered it. Multinationals like the IBM, Apple etc. were producing the computers and marketing them. Japanese companies also joined the race. All are making money. There was a huge demand of man power for programming and operating the computers. Transnationals recruited the personnel from the third world who were euphemistically called software engineers. Many local companies in India like Infosys, Tata, Satyams etc. also joined the game. In the early stages personnel were given a short training in India and were sent to America to work at wages which were one-third or less, than what an American would be paid. Yet, when

the dollars were multiplied into Rupees the amount looked extravagant for Indians. That was the beginning of an era of intellectual labour.

As Technology advanced, computers could be operated from India for jobs in USA. At a lower level so-called Call centres, BPOs etc. sprang up in thousands. Now Indians could work in India for jobs in the multinationals or medical establishments for transcribing case histories of patients etc. for a pittance—less than one-tenth of what it would cost in the US. It is fantastic. Indians and citizens of other third world countries work hard to enable the American establishments to save billions of Dollars every year.

The transnationals have hit upon new ideas. They have seen to that the higher education in Indian Universities, IITs, IIMs etc. (perhaps in the universities of other third world countries as well) is oriented/subverted to serve the needs of the Transworld corporations. All institutions of higher education in India vie with each other and are clamoring that they have the best and most appropriate job oriented curriculum. Several Indian universities, IITs and IIMs have links with foreign universities. It is also seen that a number of universities from USA/UK/Australia etc. have centers in India or hold admission session in India for studies in their countries often linked with job opportunities.

The practice of higher learning in humanities like Philosophy, History, Economics, Mathematics etc. is on the decline. That is also the case with the pure sciences, like Physics, Taxonomy, Anthropology, Paleontology etc. Research scholars for these subjects are becoming a rare species. The days of scholars famous for their knowledge in these subjects are numbered. One has to conform and be a party to that kind of education that would lead to the path of making money or perish! How sad!

The condition of the poor people is getting worse. On the one hand the number of boys getting salaries like Rs 20,000, 50,000. One lakh or even more is going up. On the other hand, more and more people without these trendy competences are becoming jobless or get too little wages which would not provide them sufficient food, shelter and clothing. The poor in the third world countries can get some perverse satisfaction from the fact that even in the first world countries—US, UK etc. the number of poor people without a shelter and satisfaction of minimum requirements is going up. Yes, the poor in India and other third world countries have company in the first world countries. □□□