

Socialism is no Historic Blunder

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With a plethora of Socialists, Commu-nists, Marxists willing to join the long march to "Purna Swaraj," Indian democratic republic can become self-reliant without alien investment. But this prospect is being debased by tycoons, "Westoxicated" investment-operators and nascent neo-Marxist innovators who have surrendered to consumerism. A dangerous class has thus emerged with the dominant doctrine that money is more than man. The dazzle of globalisation, liberalisation, privatisation matters more to them than the rights of women, children, workers and peasants.

Indian culture of Swaraj puts humanity above commodity, sober, enlightened values above greedy glamour. Gandhiji once wrote, "In so far as we have made modern materialistic craze our goal, so far are we going downhill in the path of progress."

The hidden agenda of the capitalist North is to capture the resources of India, debunk its socialistic ambition and turn it into a mere marketplace and banana republic. The founding fathers of the Indian Constitution had on the other hand envisioned an economic democracy, a socialistic polity, a people's sovereignty.

The CPI(M), which wields state power, participates in elections, sits in the House and tells its cadre to work for a socialist transformation, is destroying its own foundational militancy. India's human capital can outstrip the monetary investments by the capitalist class which wants to rob labour from the jobless have-nots and the deprived sectors. People want radical humanism and revolutionary patriotism to pool all available talent and bring about a social change for the happiness of the lowliest. Imperialism and unbridled foreign investment have undermined the lot of the poor, devalued the Constitution and sapped the very soul of Indian *Swaraj*. It is a mistake to think that socialist transformation is an idle dream, and that MNC big business is the only pragmatic strategy without an alternative.

Kerala and West Bengal have had Marxist governments for decades. Capitalists, native and foreign, have had considerable hold over the national economy; and for nearly 20 years the American pressure on the country's governance has virtually pulverised the noble traditions and social grace. No serious socialist policy has been tried by any state. This author's experience as minister, under E M S Namboodiripad in 1957, strengthened the idea that people, whichever their party (or even if they do not belong to any party), NGOs and bureaucrats are willing to toil free for community development. Speaking generally, since 1991, the national economy has been *noxiously* contra-Constitutional and anti-people. On this, it is better to quote Shashi Tharoor: "India annually gets richer by \$200 billion. India's foreign resources have exceeded \$140 billion. Remember, the country had to mortgage its gold in London because the foreign exchange coffers were dry! In the list of the world's billionaires, 27 of the world's richest people are Indian, most of them staying in India. A large portion of the world's poorest people live in India too and you don't need to go to Davos to meet them. Our country's poor live below a poverty line that seems to be drawn just this side of the funeral pyre. 250 million people living

in conditions that are a blot on our individual collective conscience is too grave a matter to be lightly dismissed' (The Tiger Elephant, the Tiger and the Cellphone, P-6)

This writer was taken aback when Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, reportedly successful as West Bengal chief minister, declared that he was running a capitalist government. He thus ignored the fact that rural West Bengal had developed as a great paradigm with people's participation and socialistic perspective that were far removed from a feudal society. And it was equally shocking when the great Jyoti Basu—the Marxist leader who for long had inspired his people by his leftist, simple genius—strangely reversed gear, jettisoned his party fundamentals and abandoned socialism as impractical. The Indian Constitution always had a socialist bias and the Planning Commission had been set up to work out a socialistic pattern of society. Banks were nationalised, big hydel and irrigation schemes were set up, land reforms and urban land ceiling laws were enacted, public sector industries were built. These were not capitalistic moves, but socialistic.

After all, Nehru, in the Constituent Assembly had asserted, "We have given the content of democracy in this Resolution and not only the content of democracy but the content, if I may say so, of economic democracy. Well, I stand for Socialism, I hope, India will stand for Socialism and that India will go towards the constitution of a Socialist State."

Many parties and Parliaments have governed the country. The words "We, the People of India" and "Socialist Secular Democratic" have survived all these years. Every President or minister ever in power, or judge on the bench has taken his or her oath of office pledging to uphold those very words of the Constitution which sustain the Republic. Jyoti Basu and Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee took office after taking the oath to uphold this "Socialist Secular Democratic" state. How can they now betray it after gaining state power? It was perhaps anticipating such future deserters, that Karl Marx in his letter to Engels had written: "All I know is that I am not a Marxist."

Please remember the Marxian mandate : "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it."

The only hope the Indian masses have is the socio-economic freedom from feudal-colonial submissiveness. Will the Marxists renege on this?

True, a crimson economy will not be born tomorrow.

But a powerful cooperative movement, a large-scale public sector, a just land ownership with limited ceiling, a nationalisation policy, workers' organised farm policy and industrial-marketing economy can today become a reality, given the will and the vision.

Corruption has ruined Indian politics. The capitalist alternative is industrialisation, mafia menace, market racket, hospital terrorism, hotel "star wars," slum slavery and freebooter robbery. □□□

[Courtesy : The Asian Age]