

EXPECTATIONS FOR A COMMUNIST RESURGENCE : SELF-QUESTIONINGS

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Calcutta city of 1946 turned into the centre of the people's upsurge of 1945-46 for the independence and sovereignty of the subcontinent. A super-revolutionary prospect of people's unity manifested here through the general strike in support of the strike of the workers of the Post and Telegraph department. The imperialist rulers and the communalist quarters of the vested interests collected to shatter down this revolutionary solidarity. Though they were not prepared for this sudden riot, the communists and other leftists and democratic freedom fighters resisted it as far as they could. A communist youth, deeply connected with the anti-riot activities, namely Ashim Roy, wrote an epic novel about the city of Calcutta of 1946. The novel bears the name : *Ekater Katha*. The basic spirit of this novel was that of the united non-communal positions taken against communal riot.

It is this Ashim Roy who achieved a reputation at later times particularly as a writer of short stories. The book, *Ashim Royer Galpo*, published by Manisha Prokashani in Calcutta in 1981, narrates the days and nights stirred with the hopes and pains of the heroes and heroines of the revolutionary attempts of the communists of West Bengal and also of East Bengal or Bang-ladesh of the sixties and seventies. *Jhadpochhi* (Dusting off) is a bead in that string of stories.

The protagonist of this story is one one-time brilliant student of Presidency College and a bird of the Leftist Communist storm. He was initiated into the communist movement in 1948 in Dhaka and Calcutta jointly. But this story has, through disjointed memories, stretched upto the middle of the seventies. That protagonist has by that time broken away with the past, and is busy doing a lucrative job and household activities. The activities of 1948 are appearing irrelevant to him. So, this protagonist then decides to sell off the old books taken down from the shelves. Suddenly he awakens from his sleep at night, and, while selecting through the books, decides to keep

back some to himself as marks of memories. The story ends on this note of tension.

But has this story any end? Will this 'dusting off' and its protagonists be held together by shyer memories? Hasn't the 'dusting off' left behind any signal or material for consideration in the minds and activities of the generations connected with the surroundings of the eighties and nineties of both the Bengals? How will the success of Ashim Roy's creativity and striving measured today and tomorrow? How will the past be evaluated, how will be the communistic ideas of the nineties combined with the bloody harvest of the fifties, sixties and seventies in the light of Ashim Roy's dialectical compositions and thoughts? The answer to this question come out clear if we take cue from some other contemporaries of him regarding his suggestion and message of shedding and retaining. Let me first tell you a little about one of the faces I am reminded of in this connection at this moment.

An example is Satyendra Narayan Majumder. Of course, I am here, through a quite brief account of the works left behind by Satyendra Narayan Majumder, presenting a reflection and assessment of the communist movement in a different temperament and experience. Satyendra Narayan was born in 1910, and died in 1987. He had the storm-bitten life of a freedom fighter. During the British rule, he passed in jail the years 1934-45. He was indoctrinated to communism in the cellular jail of the Andamans in 1937. He built up the communist party and the movement of the tea-plantation-workers in 1946, and the years 1949-52, he passed in jail. He had been a member of the Indian Rajya Shava from 1952 to 1957 and a member of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly from 1957 to 1962. Amidst all these activities he performed notable studies in regional culture, particularly Nepalese language and culture. He probed into the depths of folk culture and national problem. Collected in some books of essays are his thoughts and ideas about the people's uprising for socialism, communism, national liberation and democracy of the century. The books are entitled *Kanchanjangha, Marxist Dristite Lokusanskriti, Rabindranath O Bharatbidya, Marxism and the Language Problem in India, In search of a Revolutionary Ideology (Autobiography), Mammamukhar*

Cellular Jail, Amar Biplab Jigusha, Rabindranather Jibandeb, Rabindranather Uttaradhikar.

It is worth remembering in this connection that Satyendra Narayan Majumder was one of the major initiators and helmsmen of the journal, Moolyayan. That means that he connected himself with the stream of uniting and exchanging of experimentative Marxist-Leninist opinions and resolving them. The only idea that can be arrived at here is the wonderful one of how Satyendra Narayan Majumder — a fighter for national liberation, engaged himself, with thoughts of commitment to socialism and with what elaborate preparations, to the works of movement and organisation for it. And one conclusion can be drawn very clearly : the worldwide drive for socialism, being connected with the struggle for democracy, did not take the shape of any seasonal fashion or craze in this subcontinent or in the two Bengals. The thought and project of socialism evolved and got arranged as the heart-centre of the people's upsurge directed towards breaking the temporary political cordon of colonialist-imperialist rule, exploitation and occupation. Almost at each step, we had to pay for the errors, confusions, mechanical thoughts, aping, laxities, con-placencies, and distortions. Through evolution of original thinking, we had to achieve the spread and development of the codified Marxist-Leninist thoughts. That's why, inspite of divisions and schisms, bases for success of the strivings and struggles were built up, and those bases got extended also.

The above-mentioned currents of 'dusting off' and activities show that the idea of joining and uniting is not a daydream. Now, therefore, I would mention two instances of little far-off places, though they are of the same group.

Let me first tell you that in the early eighties, I came across a book by Felix Green. The book was entitled : *The Enemy (US Imperialism)*. On reading the book, it appeared enigmatic to me that at the middle of the second half of the twentieth century, amidst quarrels and divisions among the socialists and communists, concept of such a character, and such thoughts in the communist and socialist camp became possible. This presentation by Felix Green I lost, but its gist I wrote down in my diary. That entry I am placing before you as it was :

In the question of the peace movement, Felix Green has quoted from the writings of the author of *Illusion and Reality* and the martyr, Christopher Caudwell who fought for the People's Republic Government of Spain and against the aggression of the army of the fascist General Franco. Green has highlighted the opinions of Caudwell, a member of the British Communist Party.

The references made to the writings of Karl Marx in Felix Green's book prove a deep confidence in and solidarity with them. He has ridiculed those western economists who avoid using concepts like 'exploitation' and 'class', only because these were used by Karl Marx. To Felix's judgement, Marx was such a great writer and fighter as had nothing non-objective in his opinions.

Felix Green's opinions prove him to be a follower of Mao Tse Tung and a supporter of Vietnam and Castro at the same time. Parallely, he was a champion of the October Socialist Revolution. It was his pride that the working people who had achieved their rights through the October Revolution were the first to send astronauts to the space.

Felix Green's another identity is that he was a first-class film-maker. He made films on the People's China and Vietnam.

Perhaps, because of our narrow division-mindedness, we did not take into cognizance Felix Green's theoretical works and his film-making. But, this man did not care for that. He did his part, said what he had to say. Those works and words were about impartiality about uniting. Today, we are realising how far-stretching is the importance of communist unity. It is in this connection that we can come to a conclusion that many others worked for creating such under-flow of thoughts and ideas. Now, when a lot of harm has been done due to errors and mechanistic ideas, we shall have to, to compensate for that loss, find out the present presence and position of Felix Green and so many other similar workers and their works. He shall have to accept them completely. In this connection, let me present another instance. This instance is Pablo Neruda.

In 1979, Jatiyo Shahitya Prakashani of Dhaka published a book, entitled *Aatmashruti O Kaieky Kobita*, that contained selected writings of the great communist poet of Chile/ Latin America, Pablo

Neruda. Its second edition came out in 1987. It contains parts of Neruda's memoirs and some famous poems written before Neruda's death. The memoir-part was translated by Mr. Mozammel Hossain. The translators of the poems are Shamsur Rahaman, Shaheed Kadri, Rafique Azad, Mafidul Haque and Khan Mohammad Farabi.

As instances of the socialist-communist unity embodied in the harvest-soaked with our blood. I here quote from two places of Neruda's memoirs:

1) "The faith of the huge working class, many of them illiterate, in the Communists was born with Luis Emilio Recabarren, who began his struggles in that desert region. From a simple worker-agitator, an old time anarchist, Recabarren became a phantasmagoric and colossal presence. He filled the country with unions and federations. Eventually he published more than fifteen newspapers devoted exclusively to the defense of the new organisations he had created. All this without having a cent. The money was raised thanks to the new conscience awakening among the workers".

2) "One morning in 1970 the Secretary General of my party (the Communist Party) and some other comrades came to my sea-side hide out. They offered me the proposal for Presidency of Chile. There was no other alternative. (At that time there was no alternative to unity), I accepted this proposal. There was a roaring impact — but news of joy came that very possibly Allende would be the candidate of Popular Unity Block. Right on that moment I withdrew my candidature in support of Allende."

The communist Party, of course, got full support on the question of standing by the socialist leader Salvador Allende. Allende came out victorious. In 1973, an army group, which was a lackey to the U.S. imperialism, killed Allende and captured power. They interned the poet in his deathbed. Neruda died also in 1973. But, Chile has freed itself from military rule through general election and at a time when in the western hemisphere, in Europe, established socialism has fallen in disaster. Here lies a simple question: if Chile can shake off within two decades' time, won't Europe stand up? □

Translated by Kajal Bandyopadhyaya.