

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

The Revolt of 1857 or India's First Independence Movement can be considered to be the principal milestone of modern Indian history. This Chapter has indicated the theoretical analysis of revolt especially associated with socialistic thought and practical implication in the nineteenth century world political and economic order.

Revolt or Revolution in engineering is a unit of circular motion. In politics it refers to a sudden change of direction¹, whether it may be to change the direction of society or it may be to change the economic order. According to the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary revolt means "forcible substitution by subjects of new ruler or polity for the old"². Why then (the nineteenth century) has Revolt or Revolution been seen as a major organizing concept? The Revolt of 1857 came when the exploitation had already paved the way for rising of the revolutionaries which included the masses, peasants, workers, soldiers. Revolt was the path to the future. It came to be seen as a social process rather than as a political event, and one which, moreover transcended existing political boundaries. Indeed the Revolt of 1857 spread from the leaders to the masses.

In the nineteenth century there were many revolutions in Europe as well as in India, but none was generally recognized as great social revolt or revolution. If we look into India during the period of nineteenth century there were unparallel social changes but it was associated with evolutionary change and emergence of a stable political order.

Revolution is political succession. It requires the replacement of one ruling group by another.³

By the turn of the nineteenth century, popular revolution had begun. The old order of Aristocratic rule was crumbling everywhere in Europe and the new American Republic was demonstrating an unexpected capacity for growth and development. Theories about the natural rights of oligarch were everywhere being challenged by competing theories about the natural rights of all men to an equal share in the good things in life. The new economic order in Western Europe was, moreover, proceeding rapidly. With it there emerged the kinds of social classes, based on wealth and power that resemble those of today.

No one in the history of social thought has made the struggle between competing social and economic classes so central a feature of society and so dominant a source of social change as done by Karl Marx. And no set of ideas has had such an enduring effect as those advanced by Marx. The French Revolution was clearly seen revolution as a spontaneous mass rising. The revolutions of 1830 and 1848, and the Paris commune, had all seen large masses in movement seeking political ends and economic transformation. We can compare this picture with the Revolt of 1857 in India, where the Revolt brings a new dimension, grooming socialistic mentality amongst the masses, bringing the peasants, tribal and rural masses within the revolt's lap.

By 'Analysis' we mean something very specific breaking down the whole pattern of events into smaller sections so that each can be examined in detail. Once this has been done and general principles established governing the nature of behaviour at each stage of process⁴, we seek to recombine them in an overall concept of revolt. In the case of revolution we are dealing with a phenomenon generally admitted to be of a major social importance which has been instrumental in the birth of socialistic thinking or mentality.

Systematic analysis of revolutions as phenomenon⁵, therefore, has been a very recent development in social thought. The great revolution of the nineteenth century greatest challenge to ideas of social and political organization and also to the challenge of economic structure.

The social preconditions of Revolution are those circumstances that bring together leaders followers, a cause and the material facilities by which they can use violence to achieve it⁶. Socialistic thinking is based upon the relationship formed by the human mind with the natural and social environment. We can identify for different social groupings or behaviors. Each group has a different relationship with its environment and therefore develops different mental tendencies. The first group (the masses) is overwhelmed by the psycho-physical waves of reality. Unable to contend with it, this group spends its energy simply trying to exist. The second group (the warriors) commands the psycho-physical reality by physical force. The third (the intellectuals) commands by psychic (mental) force and the fourth (merchants) commands by controlling the manufacture and exchange of psycho-physical objects.

Within this general pattern there are all sorts of small changes and fluctuations (thesis and antitheses) which do not substantially alter the basic social and political fabric. The substantial change can be referred to as social evolution and evolution refers to dynamic periods of progressive social changes.

A society is a composite of individual human beings. The totality of various individual flows of movement constitutes the collective social movement. Each individual flow is influenced by the collective flow. It is impossible for individuals to

move exclusively according to their individual inherent momentum. In some instances, the individual strives to maintain adjustment with the collective flow.

If we look over during the period of nineteenth century exploitation was a common factor for all classes of society. Exploitation has been a social and economic feature of every class in society. It is to be noted that Revolution as the Revolt has been the main element to the formation of the new world. A major factor which precedes the radical change in many Asian nations was the pressure of European imperial powers. For example, we can mention the imperial country like Great Britain. Great Britain had dominated India for many years. European imperialism was started in the 19th century. On the basis of world economic and political order, England, France, Germany and many other European countries being industrialized in the nineteenth century, their global attention expanded along with their demand for a variety of raw materials. This kind of dominated mentality as well as the western values created the new economic and political values which had established the new challenging platform for Asian societies in many ways. India was directly colonized by Britain starting in the eighteenth century.

Socialism revisits past struggle and movements. There is a need to study historical events in order to be aware of the battles of our ancestors, to take pride in those struggles, but, most of all, to arm ourselves with insight and examine the lessons. The Peasants Revolt for social justice was a demonstration of people power which struck fear into the hearts of the ruling class. The peasants had to work on his land for a part of the week, their unpaid labor in effect acting as rent to the noblemen. The rest of the week, they worked on their own buildings. The nineteenth century world economic and political order has provided the major element of the Revolt. We need to examine the economic

and social condition in nineteenth century Europe. Firstly Europe was predominantly rural and agricultural, but when Industrial Revolution was started the industrial capitalists found a new way for dominating third world countries.

The realization of socialism is now a practical task – a problem for which the proletariat is at least of all prepared the preconditions for the realization of socialism and the problem of this realization from a distorted perspective. This fundamental error goes so deep that it not only affects opportunists, for whom socialism anyway always remains a far off ultimate goal and leads honest revolutionary astray. After that the majority saw the revolutionary process, the ongoing struggle for power. It is impossible for us to concretely imagine the details of socialism as a completed condition. It is more important as theoretically accurate knowledge of its basic structure, the significance of this knowledge lies above all in its establishing the criteria by which we can judge the steps we take towards it. Concrete knowledge of socialism is – like socialism itself a product of the struggle for it, it can only be gained in and through this struggle. All attempts to gain knowledge of socialism which do not follow this path of dialectical interaction with the day to day problems of the class struggle make a meta-physic of it.

The problem of economic structure and class relations at the movement when the masses (who were victimized by capitalist way) seize state power, they arise directly from the situation in which the working class establishes its dictatorship and can, therefore, only be understood and solved in relation to its problems. For the same reason they nevertheless contain in relation to this and all preceding situations, a fundamentally new quality. Even if all their elements are rooted in the past, the inter-connection with the maintenance and consolidation of masses rule produces which could not have existed

either in Marx or in other earlier theories, which can only be understood and solved in the context of this essentially new situation.

Economic structure and class relations, strictly Marxist in its simplicity and sobriety, on the other hand, it is a lucid awareness of all new tendencies arising out of a new situation, unclouded by any theoretical prejudice. These apparently simple qualities rooted as they are in the nature of the materialistic dialectic in it a theory of history – are by no means easy to attain. The customary ways of thinking under capitalism have given everyone – particularly those inclined to systematic study – the tendency always want to explain the new, completely in terms of the old, today entirely in terms of yesterday.

The material basis of Socialism as a higher economic form replacing capitalism can only be provided by the reorganization and higher development industry, its adjustment to the needs of the working class, its transformation in the direction of an ever more meaningful existence. The condition of the material basis therefore determines the possibilities and path of its concrete realization. Imperialist war is the cause of socialist revolution. And this is not only because the horrors of war give rise to mass revolt – no revolt can bring about socialism unless the economic condition and also political conditions for socialism are ripe – but because state monopoly capitalism is a complete material preparation for socialism. In Europe the Proletariat still remains the weaker class and will remain so for a long time – until revolution is victorious on a world scale. Economically its struggle must therefore be based on two principles. Firstly to stop as quickly and completely as possible the destruction of heavy industry by war and civil war, for without this material basis the proletariat is bound to be destroyed. Secondly, to regulate all problems of production and distribution to the maximum satisfaction of the

material needs of the peasantry so that the alliance established with the proletariat by the revolutionary solution of the agrarian question can be maintained. The means for the realization of these aims change according to the circumstances. Their gradual implementation is, however, the only way to maintain the rule of the masses – the first pre-condition of the socialism or socialistic thinking. In the historical process which – at any given instance or phase – contain this relationship to the present whole and to the question of development central for the future in its practical and tangible totality. Those moments are brought into the open by history, by the objective development of productive forces. But it depends on the proletariat whether and how far it is able to recognize, grasp and thereby influence their further development. The fundamental and already off-quoted Marxist axiom that men make their own history acquires an ever-increasing importance in the revolutionary period after the seizure of state power. Important and more decisive in the period of transition of socialism than in the preparatory period, the greater the proletariat's active influence in determining the course of history. That is why every turning point in the development of socialism and the revolution can only be victorious on world scale, because it is only as and tactic are to be distinguished from rigid adherence to write principles, they must also be totally separated from all unprincipled, schematic real politic. The dialectically correct fusion of the general and also the specific, are the recognition of the general (in the sense of general historical tendencies) in the specific (in the concrete situation), and the resulting concretization of therefore the basis of this theory of compromise.

But the need to take into account all existing tendencies in every concrete situation by no means implies that all are of equal weight when decisions are taken. On

the contrary, every situation contains a central problem the solution of which determines both the answer to the other questions raised simultaneously by it and the key to the further development of all social tendencies in the future.

The manufacturers, products of the industrial revolution, had to defy the old order and they did not fear as yet the working class in Europe. Naturally, such an industrialist class found it to its interest to prove that all value came from the factory and consisted in labor to which the owner contributed his part. According to Marx, value is not a specific physical property of an object, it is a social property, a social relation between persons, maintained as a material exchange of products. We can understand what value is only when we consider it from the point of view of a system of social production relationships which present themselves in a mass form, repeating the phenomenon of exchange millions upon millions of times. As values, then, all commodities are only different quantities of congealed labor time.⁷

As society develops, the system of exchanges develops into a regular process of circulation, in the course of which the commodity most fittingly takes on the role of constructing itself with other commodities, becoming the universal equivalent called money. Money is a commodity that has the social function of being the measure of all values as well as the medium of exchange on the basis of political and economic order. Money and exchange play a vital role in the economic functioning of society, when money and commodity circulation become prominent for a capitalist mode of production. The workers, through their representatives, guide their own destinies and organize themselves so that international production may be purposefully controlled and planfully managed. The allocation of material and workers to a particular industry is made, not

according to the hectic fluctuations of the market, but by social analysis of the needs of man, of the productivity of the workers, and of how much strength is needed to fulfill these needs. For the first time, society rises from domain of necessity into the realm of freedom. Socialism remits industry and agriculture upon the basis of the fusion of science and collective labor. The old life of the agrarian population, with its unsociability and idiocy, is liquidated, as is the unhealthy attitude of enormous masses of population in huge cities. The population is entirely redistributed and a new synthesis is obtained. In the higher stage of social life to which socialism is a transition and which we can call communism in the narrow sense of the term. The transformation is entirely complete, as society's struggle nears the decisive hours; even small sections of the ruling class can cut themselves adrift and join the revolutionary proletariat. No class gives up power without a struggle. The masses cannot hope to dispossess the capitalist from control over the means of production without violence and bloody struggles. The necessity for violent revolution arises not only because this is the sole means to overthrow the bourgeoisie which throttles the progress of society, but also because it is the only way by which mankind can purge itself of bourgeois corruption, can burn out the putrescence of the old order and prepare it for the new. It is manifest that Marx deduced the inevitability of the transformation of capitalist society into socialism wholly and exclusively from the economic law of the movement of contemporary society. While the socialization of labor grows apace, those of the ruling class become more and more divorced from the process of production and degenerate into mere parasites. In the struggle of the workers against their enemy, whatever victories they win in the beginning are but temporary, they seem to take one step forward only to be forced two steps backward. However, this is only

apparent. Inevitably they grow stronger and better prepared as the class became regenerated. Socialistic trend is a broad array of ideologies and political movements with the goal of a socio-economic system in which property and the distribution of wealth are subject to control by the community for the purposes of increasing social and economic equality and co-operation. This control may be direct, exercised through masses, or indirect, exercised on behalf of the people by the state. As an economic system, socialistic trend is often characterized by the state or community ownership of the means of production. The modern socialist movement largely originated in the late – 19th century Working Class Movement. During this period the term socialism was first used in connection with European social critics who criticized capitalism and private property. For Karl Marx, who helped to establish and define the Modern Socialist Movement? Socialism or socialistic trend would be the socio-economic system that arises after the masses revolt in which the means of production are owned collectively. This society would then progress into communism. In the early nineteenth century the shift that precipitated many of conflict was the industrial revolution. The growing industrials based on many European countries were to encourage urbanization, often at the expense of the living conditions of the workers. This was coupled with new agrarian technologies which required fewer people to work the land whilst producing greater agricultural yields. In some countries this precipitated an industrial revolution that took place in the broad sector of world economic and political condition where urban industry played an increasingly dominant role in the economy. This process was first seen in Britain, Prussia, and Netherland in the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century whilst other countries, such as France, Italy and the United States of America were to

industrialize the late nineteenth century. Some states such as France, Italy and Austria, failed to industrialize significantly in this period, a factor that would lead to later difficulties during the First World War. The age of industry for Europe began with slow progress in the 1780's. Western Europe tended to advance more quickly than the East. Britain initially led the way. Progress remained slow until the 1850's, because most people continued to use old methods, and population increases reduced the benefits of industrialization. As a result, the industrial age did not start in continental Europe until after 1815, and was not complete in Britain until 1850. During the nineteenth century in the world economic and political order the new word added that was new imperialism. This word first used in the modern sense. In this time economic explanations have claimed that the acceptance of responsible government was the logical and inevitable consequence of the adoption of free trade in 1846. The downfall of the protectionist system and the relaxation of Britain's economic controls allowed free play at last for liberal notions of colonial government and enabled mature colonies to throw off their subordinate status.

As with the economic interpretation, great power rivalry has a long ancestry as an explanation of the imperialism. This category is intended to convey more than the idea of the diplomatic quarrels of Europe being extended beyond its borders, the arguments of A.J.P. Taylor, but is meant to include the domestic fuelling of these urges by nationalism and social Darwinism, which helped the growth of the trend of socialistic mentality. The starting point is that of crisis, the defeat of France in 1870 and the gradual collapse of the concert system. Pent up nationalistic feeling in France expressed itself in the attempted restoration of prestige by the accumulation of a great deal of what Salisbury was

facetiously to call light soil. The origin of industrial capitalism examines the social processes of both industrialization and class formation. Its relevance extends not only to other cases of developing societies, but also to the larger study of social change within advanced capitalist societies. In the chapter two (Rise of the socialistic trend in India during 1850s) making an attempt to differentiate between the mentality of the then leadership and the masses of India at the initial phases of the revolt, assessing the various causes that led to the revolt. The third chapter (The revolt of 1857: extent and dimension) will assess the revolt itself in detail. The chapter four (the role and influence of the revolutioneers on the revolt) would analysis the role of the various leaderships, the reasons behind the participation of the masses, and would try to find a link between nascent socialistic thoughts that evolved during the period of revolt. Chapter five (the impact of the revolt of 1857) indicates the role of socialistic thought in the post 1857 period among the masses and the impact of the revolt on the imperial government and to analyse and understand the growth of socialistic ideas after the revolt till the time of independence.

The revolt can be studied in various spectrums to understand the birth of the socialistic mindset that took its birth amongst the masses. Analysing the major and minor causes from a socialist prism, re-thinking the causes that could have narrowed down the traditional gap between the masses and the native rulers and princes, the exploitation that was embedded within the ranks of the East India Company, might provide a better explanation in understanding the momentous revolt that shook the mighty British Empire from its roots, ending the hundred year old exploitation of the East India Company, bringing in direct British rule in India, and innovating new techniques to divide the

Indian society for good, which had strangely unified and showed a strength that even defeated the will of one of the biggest capitalist ventures of Great Britain.

The economic aspect of the Revolt brings in new dimensions, grooming a socialistic mentality amongst the masses, bringing in the peasants tribal and rural masses within the revolt's lap. There is a need to assess the growing socialist trend after the revolt, its genesis, and its aftermath moulding the future Indian National Movement from different dimensions bringing the birth of communist parties, socialist thinking amongst national leaders and growth of a politically conscious mass even before the advent of senior leaders like Mahatma Gandhi in the political spectrum of British India.

To understand the reasons behind the birth of such consciousness amongst the masses, the causes and mentality behind the rise of peasants, workers and tribals against the imperial powers, the birth of a politically conscious urban lower middle class, demand for economic freedom and equality remain to be the primary motive behind partaking this study. As most of the analysis till date revolves around the prominent leaders of the pre and post revolt period and seldom there has been any analysis to study the mindset, the psyche of the general revolutioneers, this study might usher a new aspect in looking at the first freedom struggle in the Indian national movement.

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