

DEVELOPMENT, CULTURE AND WORKER'S MOVEMENT

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There are many differences in political and other system in various countries of Asia, but a significant similarity in socio-cultural and economic aspects is also there. The development model has been adopted by these countries of the Pacific emphasise heavy influsions of technology and foreign aids which end up depriving large number of people from their traditional sources of sustenance and support. This increasing adoption of excessively economic and technocratic development model and projects brings about a total disregard humanistic concern. This development resulting in displacements, migration, alienation from land and society. This is also causing a large scale growth of unorganised labour entering in market. This miserable situation of unorganised sector is not only severe exploitation but also has social, cultural and psychological aspect. This is resulting in dehumanisation, cultural devaluation and even ending the dignity and identity of labouring poor.

The rich, particularly Urban have fattened while the rural poor- (a) remain unorganised, marginalised and exploitative, (b) do not participate in decision making in their own development; (c) can't contribute in or share the benefits of this so called developments. The status of low-income group declined unilinearly from owner-farmer to part farmer, part tenant, share cropper and eventually a labourer and finally an unemployed

assetless man. His destiny becomes to run away towards cities and towns to fulfil his two square meals.

This so called development is a conspiracy of five percent ruling elites, high caste and class people, multinationals, big industrialists, 'black English' and other privileged sections to maintain status quo and strengthening their strangle hold.

This western style of development is based on philosophy to exploit the natural and human resources for ~~on~~ own comfort, luxury and prosperity. This is the race to gain mental satisfaction through physical means. Only bigger industries through sophisticated technology can produce such means on the one hand and help in more profit making on other. The concept of necessity of bigger production units has its own cultural outlook.

But the concept of self satisfaction in Asian Culture is entirely different. The mental satisfaction may not come through unlimited physical desires, but it comes through internal purity and eternal peace. Thus the Asian Culture teaches a man to devote his time and energy for his internal upliftment and a little to attain his minimum possible needs. This value system could be maintained only through decentralisation of economy. i.e. decentralised and small production units and their ownership; paying proper respect to human labour and maintain a friendship with nature. We don't have any concept of development which leads us to fight against nature like enemy. It is very common in tribal and rural people to worship the nature

i.e. water, forest, land, air and fire. Though the way of their worship has been deteriorated but they have a great respect for them. The roots of this value system comes through real essence of religion and spirituality. According to the spiritualism man's objective is to achieve the Eternal Joy, or totality or truth which comes through total liberation or Mukti. The cultural process to achieve this totality is a process to develop the real brotherhood with all living creatures and nature. Thus, there is no question of winning or exploiting the nature. The approach of present technocrats, scientists and rulers in against land, fire(energy), water resources, environment and forests is creating enormous terrible problems well known to every one.

The worst results of adoption of western model of development model in Asian countries and the richness of our cultural heritage require a search for alternative development strategy based on applied philosophy of our society.

It is not a visecose task, challenging the present development system is to challenging the establishment. And this requires a cohesive, strong and dedicated mass movement. In reality in Asian countries most of the people are deprived, unprivileged, ignorant and unorganised. They need to be aware of their rights and disadvantage of this present westernised development system. Workers movement is supposed to play a historic role in total structural change which may lead the society free from all injustice, exploitation and artificial disparities. They should create a mass welfare oriented alternative model of

development and be prepared to fight for its implementation. This ideal model must have its roots in the soil of the society, therefore workers movement has also to take up the cultural perspective. Because uprooting from the cultural milieu causes process of dehumanisation, disintegration and selfishness in society.

Now the question is how many trade unions of our continent are prepared to challenge this western oriented development model adopted by five percent ruling elites of our country ? How many of them struggling for gaining the fights of most down-trodden sections ? How many are these 'revolutionaries' taking up the issues related with social, cultural and ideological aspects going beyond the factory gate and the economic and trade related issues ? Do they have any vision or objective except to get the wages increases, more bonus, better living conditions, medical, and other facilities, less work load and job security etc ?

Before advocating the need of workers organisation, it is necessary to think over the existing harsh reality and try to work out a triangle among culture, development and workers movement.

a. Change in outlook-Economism

The pattern of trade unionism in India and Pacific is completely on western pattern. The western mental make-up is more industrial and trade oriented whereas 80 to 90% Asian population depend on agriculture and rural cottage industries and their mental make up is not so. Asian people consider means of production as assets of fulfilment of

of human needs. Western worker is free from traditional agricultural values and governed by exclusive industrial outlook but an Indian factory worker has agrarian mental make-up. So a homogeneous and pure bargaining culture has not been developed. The vested interest groups creation has taken place. A trend of quick compromise over economic interests is the same thing. Due to these facts trade union movements in Asia has picked up the issues related with economic interest goes against the mental make-up of the rest of the society.

b. Political Dominance

The organised sector of workers has been changed into a different superior class, alienated from rest of unorganised working masses.

The second major factor is the lack of self dependency or self reliance. Most of the big trade unions are appendix of various political parties. This dependency is responsible for many evils. For example (a) domination of political patron cause fragmentation in the same trade or factory, (b) trade unions use the workers as a means to achieve their political ends, (c) because predominance of outside leader in most trade unions local leadership has to suffer, (d) looking towards the prosperity in politics many local trade union leaders used unions as a footstep to gain the political power, (e) decline in trade union is also noticed due to decline in political system, (f) economism is also boosted to gain the electoral popularity.

C. Synchronisation With Establishment

The most disguising factor in India is that the trade unions have geared up themselves with the present Establishment. This establishment constitute the Capitalism (state or individual) castism, dominance of English language and life style, consumerism, internal colonilism, dominance of multinationals in economy etc.

The organised sector of workers has been changed into a separate priviledged class. Majority of the Urban factory workers come from rural background. Transformation in their Life style is extremely reactionary and develop a superiority complex among them. They hate to continue a diologue with agriculture labourers and rural people. This class is also changing in the caste. One of the main emerging demand in trade unions is reservation of jobs for workers children in same factory. This trend of favouring heridity rights will certainly help the profit oriented capitalist system. Demands ^{of} easy payable advanced loans from management to purchase costly luxurious item like motorbyke, television, refrigerator to maintain the standard of living is increasing rapidly. They unhasitly demand tericott uniform and Bata shoes which ultimately render unemployed a number of weavers, cobblers and craftmen. One factory union join hands with other factory union thousand miles away at the time of strike for more bonus but may not express solidarity with the demand of minimum wage of vulnerable labourers constructing the walls of factory.

The rate of consumption of liquor and luxurious items is also increasing among factory workers. This practice is strengthening the Establishment by one way or the other.

heretofore the process of workers unionisation is a process of transformation of value system, culture and vision which ultimately results in self centeredness, disintegrity and dehumanisation.

INSTRUMENTS OF RADICAL CHANGE

The stage has come the workers movement must be evaluated and a new perspective must be taken up. In India fifty percent of the population living below the poverty line, millions of organised agricultural labour in countryside and workers in various urban sectors all living in extremely miserable inhuman conditions. The plight of more than five million bonded labourers and seventy million child labourers is a scourge to the nation. The comment of the Supreme Court of India regarding bonded labourers is, "They are non-beings, exiles of civilisation, living a life worst than that of animals, for the animals atleast are free to roam about as they like and they can plunder or grab food whenever they are hungry but these out castes of society are held in bondage, robbed of their freedom and they are consigned to an existence where they have to either live in hovels or under the open sky and be satisfied with whatever little unwholesome food they can manage to get, inadequate though it be to fill their hungry stomachs. Not having any choice, they are driven by poverty and hunger into a life of bondage, a dark bottomless pit from which in a cruel exploitative society, they cannot

hope to be rescued."

In various studies, surveys and our own experiences of the seven year long crusade against bonded labour and child labour system, it has been proved that their prevailing situation is a cruel result of state development policies. i.e. construction of a big dam requires deforestation large scale, the tribes who sustain on forest resources and agricultural depend on land have to be abolished. They are devastated and compelled to lurge away. Most of the bonded labourers and other unprivileged workers engaged in construction of buildings, roads, dams, canals etc at brick kiln industries, stone quarries and other small restaurants, rural weaving industries and beautiful Act of labour welfare laws and other programmes but not a single is being implemented in any part of the country. They don't get even the state prescribed minimum wages, the minimum amount of subsistence. The other factor is that they are being utilized as tools of this development.

Efforts of awareness building organisation and movement among them is rather difficult but an essentiality to form a genuine and radical workers movement. There are two measure aspect of this strategy, :

1. If we start to organising these section with a zeal to overcome the prevailing sub-human conditions. By and large we have to attack the root cause of the situation which is ultimately, the development model. This also needs an alternative model which could generate employment at their native place. The Agriculture must be made advantageous

and the production of the local necessities at village level must not be disturbed.

2. For example, when the Bandhua Mukti Morcha (Bonded Liberation Front) started its crusade? Our emphasis was implementation of law regarding liberation and rehabilitation, but now we are emphasising against pro-elite development policies at micro to macro levels.

As soon as we enter these sectors we initiate to spread our roots in their native society. Particularly the migrant labourers become messengers of change. We are trying to organise the thousands of bonded labourers coming from hundred miles working at brick-kiln, stone quarry and various other informal sectors situated in or at outskirts of cities and town. It has been noticed that these workers are very successful in creating awareness among the other people of their community.

The methodology of work should not create economism, there are least possibilities of such diversions because of scattered work places, difference of traits and management and difference in problems. The organising activists cannot work through any readymade and common pattern. They have to take up the multi-dimensional issues related with working and living conditions. They have to touch the whole life style and deal with issues like social identity and security, rationing housing, health and other features of their overall upliftment. It has been felt in few experiments.

That the real unity comes only through the socio-cultural unity. Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha is a good example. This organisation succeed to form strong trade union of about ten thousand miners. Although this union could succeeded to raise their wages eight to ten times in past ten years, but has also taken up other major issues one of the major problems among workers is of liquor habit. There were more liquor shops than water taps. The workers slowly loss their self respect capacity to think and organise. Union had intensively launched a campaign against drinking and got success. This only thing has changed life style of that area. Now Union is running an school for workers, children, a poly technique training Institute, twenty bed hospital, co-operative banking system well equipped a cultural group etc. Every year they observe Shahid Bir Naryayan Singh birth anniversary (a local tribal martyr, who launched an agitation against British and capitalist and was hanged up by British regime in 1866). Hundred to hundred fifty thousand local tribals, apart from labourers gather to celebrate this event. This is one of the biggest social gathering among tribals. Hence they are deep rooted in cultural value and utilising all traditional cultural aspects in workers movement.

CONCLUSION

In brief we can say that the unionising among unorganised migrant, child, woman, bonded and agricultural workers on socio-cultural grounds can be helpful to build^{up} a triangle among development culture and workers movement.

Asian Cultural Forum On Development can monitor this process.

Certainly there are many unknown small groups and trade unions emerging in rural and urban areas of our country. Asian Workers Solidarity Link should dedicate itself in identifying, boosting of ideals, promoting and encouraging such groups and try to build up a linkage on common issues.

Instead of wasting time, money and energy in building up unity and solidarity among big trade unions, AWSL should involve in aforesaid process. Any radical change in our society is possible only through the mass movement based on positive aspects of cultural values and having a clear vision of alternative social order.

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