

# Liberty

(An Occasional Bulletin – 4th issue June' 87)

**Editorial:–**

## **Whither Radicalism ?**

If by radicalism is meant going to the root of a matter, man and only man has ever since his emergence remained the radical factor in the whole universe. Whether the primitive man who submitted to Tantra, Magic, Fetish etc. or his more civilised successor, the medieval man who took for granted the ubiquitous though invisible hand of an omnipotent supernatural force were all radicals in their respective times and climes. Only because, deep down their blind (by today's standard) surrender to a hypothetical supra-natural entity lay hidden their all-too-sure and relentless striving to master all that which baffled and threatened him in the real world. Quite until the advent of modern times man was a practitioner of radicalism though unconscious of the radical implications of his own doing.

With Renaissance did actually begin man's becoming aware of his own radical nature. To the pioneers of Renaissance man occupied the centre of Universe having dethroned God which having had remained so far a source of awe and reverence turned into a handy supposition to be proposed and disposed at his own will. What is known as Liberalism in politics or secularism in philosophy is but in essence a utilitarian manipulation with the concept 'God'. Be that as it may, the man having been placed in the centre of the Universe began to question all his earlier perceptions not only of the world around him but of his own self, its origin and evolution. The beginning of the secular self-questioning was but the beginning and only the beginning of the radicalism proper.

The liberal doctrine notwithstanding its acceptance of majority principle as the criterion of arriving at a decision especially in human affairs could concede to every individual his right to and capacity for holding the truth, even if all alone, in the face of a united opposition by the

whole of his fellow-beings. The classic expression of liberal radicalism could be found in J. S. Mill's statement that "If the whole mankind minus one person were of one opinion and that person alone of a contrary opinion, the mankind then would not be more justified in silencing that person than that person, if he had the power, in silencing the whole mankind."

The Marxian doctrine which started from where the Liberals had left questioned the very potential of that social organisation which was dear to the Liberal heart, for ensuring to every individual the full scale realisation of his right and capacity for free expression. To Marx the Communist Society was merely to execute into universal practice the very radicalism which the Liberals had proclaimed but failed to realise. In the scheme of the Liberals, the individual, however glorified by the doctrine, had to surrender to the state, the supposed embodiment of the Absolute Idea, General Will etc. In sum, the liberals held that the interest of the individual is conditional upon the interest of the state (or society). To Marx, the opposite was the principle that truly corresponded to human nature. As he said, communism would be realised then only when the free and full development of every individual is a condition of the development of all. Unlike under Liberal society, the individual won't be sacrificed nor in the name of the collective under communism. Here lay the highest radicalism ever contemplated by man.

The history so far has witnessed the practices of both liberal and Communist doctrines, though more of the former than of the latter. There have been occasions quite many in the past when both the systems have relapsed into totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. The liberal society so-called could worsen into Fascist dictatorship while the dictatorship of proletariat would turn into a dictatorship of the party. There is a need for intense soul-searching on the part of the subscribers of each camp as regards how far radical their respective system still remains. More particularly, it is the Communists who need to conduct a ruthless self-criticism since it is Marx who first said that "To be radical means to go to the root. But to man, the root is man himself".

## **Roots of Communal Fundamentalism – II**

In a long-term sense the Independence of India had as we have seen earlier singularly raised the question of national unity, with the dying colonial system partitioning the greater Indian nation in the context of the pervasive communal civil war and separatist strife. It was like the vengeance of imperialism against the movement for de-colonization in the South Asia. Internal communal epidemic in Indian sub-continent notwithstanding the partition-policy package of the imperial authorities- a prolonged and systematic policy of the 'British to divide and rule India'- must be comprehended in the historical context of post-World War-II Western Policy and military consideration. In a conjecture of de-colonization, national liberation movements and socialist revolutions the retreating Western imperial powers- Britain being hitherto their leader, though after 1945 the U.S.A. took over - sought to dismember India from the standpoint of their strategic and economic future. Divided India- as it is true in cases of Pakistan and Bangladesh- could be more amenable to the Western strategic pressures against the East bloc. On the contrary, a free undivided India, the British State had realised, would (like Germany) co-compete economically with the dwindling strengths of traditional imperial powers in the world markets and maintain its domestic, foreign and strategic policies free from western imperial and strategic contaminations.

At any rate the eruption of communal separatist strife before 47- leading to the deaths of 5,00,000 and the migration of 17 million enabled the British to effectively partition the country, something that would have been impossible otherwise. This imperial aspiration, realized through the problem of internal communal cleavage in India, was something that had derived its rudimentary theoretical articulation in James Mill's history of British India more than a century before Partition. The British divisive tactics and the pre-Independence ideological secessionism, actually speaking thrived on the inner movement tending to accelerate the social and economic disparity: first between the more backward regions specifically in Punjab and East Bengal which had a majority of Muslims and the relatively less backward districts and secondly between the Hindu professional and entrepreneurial people who dominated business, professions and

industry and the Muslim upper strata. The latter, not unnaturally, attempted to find an independent base from which to attack the obstacles posited by the Hindu middle and upper strata.

Among the contemporary freedom fighters, Nehru had understood this problem fairly accurately. In his 'Autobiography' he had noted that during the 1920s and 30s, the communal politicians were ..... (*illegible- Editor*) for jobs for the middle class elements. Beneath this phenomenon lay the class difference between Hindus and Muslims in Bengal and the Punjab since the former were more prosperous and urban and even exploiting class. In 'Glimpses of World History' he argued that the exploitation of the Muslim tenant and weaver in Bengal and rest of India by the merchant or the land-lord was the real cause of communal tension. Nehru's Discovery of India was more elaborate on this question. Here he discussed the regional difference in the industrial and economic development and the difference in the features of common and literate people associated with difference in provincial development. He observed that a Bengali Muslim was closer to a Bengali Hindu than he was to a Muslim from Punjab.

Such high level nationalist understanding did not reach down to the general mass consciousness not only prior to the successful British policy of 'divide and quit' but even after independence. Although the problem of national unity has, of late become a vital question for India after the Kashmir the Punjab, and Assam crises, it is always there in a diluted and potential form after 47. The assertions of regionalistic and linguistic particularisms are strong in Kashmir, the North East, Tamil Nadu etc. and all for divergent factors. The maladies in the State life and state-activities, politico-ideological policies and economic planning have been largely responsible for this. The failure to introduce scientific educational system with secular and nationalist orientation, the lack of success in decommunalising ..... (*illegible- Editor*) state-policy, the lack of inability to de-colonize Indian social and political structure, the lack of integrated social and economic development, the short sighted character of economic planning that fails to annihilate the regional variations in growth-pattern, the inability to introduce a uniform language policy etc. are by and large responsible for this.

Development of regional and linguistic particularism, as in the context of some South Indian states, are not exactly an authentic threat to national unity, except that it threatens particular aspects of the Governmental Policies. It alternatively calls for a more broad-based policy insofar as questions like national language and political representation of various regions are concerned. The problem lies more at the ideologico-political and economic levels. It is obvious that, despite the partition in '47 and the subsequent social development in India that has been studded with several communal strifes, the post-independence state has made little sincere efforts to secularize the Indian social, educational and political apparatuses. The old colonial legacy still infects the educational system, particularly the social sciences. The existent political leaders, save a few, represent a different generation of consciousness that falls far short of the anti-imperialist and secular orientation of the freedom fighters before independence. Religion and communal mentality have struck deep inroads into the domain of politics and state-life, specifically in the post-Nehru phases of development.

The uneven economic development- the original outcome of the structure of operation of the colonial economy- continues even after independence and breeds potential and actual communal and separatist particularisms. If the problems in Kashmir and the North East have mostly the outcome of their inordinate backwardness, the problem in Punjab has been due to its inorganically developed and prosperous agrarian capitalism. Both extremes need to be understood. In the contexts of backward regions, when various coordinates emanating out of low degree of development lead to communal separatism, more political hyperboles as regards integrated development and secular-nationalist consensus, turn out to be counter-productive. By talking about the necessity for equal development in all regions or by promising fair deal to the minorities, the economic contradictions leading to communal secessionism cannot be solved. The community which suffers under social and economic handicaps has actually to be accorded very strong preferences in opportunities for economic and social advancement in order to overcome the unfavourable initial conditions. The regions which are materially backward have to get more than their fair share of public investment in

India as there is a proclivity for private investment to get channelized into more advanced areas. If this can be the case in North East and Kashmir, then in Punjab the case is one of "over-development", erupting out of the World Bank investment for Green Revolution. The economic basis of the 'Sikh' separatism lay embedded in the contradiction between the agrarian capitalists (mostly Sikhs) and merchant money lending and small industrial capitalists (predominantly Hindus).

At the same time, the destabilisation theory upheld by most political parties (except BJP), has an authentic basis even in the eyes of any ordinary reader of newspapers. However, that is something which is closely connected with India's non-aligned foreign policy, her leadership in the 'third world' against Western imperialism and above all USA's strategic policy of militarizing the rest of the world against the East bloc. The element of destabilization is a matter of Western geopolitical and strategic conspiracy and hence can be dealt with the state- its intelligence, the guardians of law and the army and need little elaboration. That would explain this article's rather academic elucidation of the predominantly internal maladies in the country constituting threats to national unity.

## **Women's oppression to-day – A Review – (II)**

**Ratna Sengupta**

***(This is the second extract from review of Barrett's book "Women's Oppression To-day" by Ratna Sengupta)***

Barrett has elaborated on educational system and how it is related to conditions of oppression of women. She agrees that capitalist production ultimately depends upon the continued reproduction not only of the means (raw materials, machinery, technological innovations) but also relations of domination and subordination. In contemporary capitalism, the dominant ideological state apparatus is the educational system.

Schools take children and drill them into ruling ideology. She quotes Marx as arguing that capital's expansion into the employment of

women and children had the consequences of usurping labour necessary in the home, of depreciating the value of labour power and raising the degree of exploitation. She has cited in turn views against Marx : "In regarding both women and children as substitutes for the male labourer, Marx is clearly guilty of the naturalistic aggregation of individuals into the family unit, which feminists have criticised".

Many scholars have located the oppression of women in gender division as against class division. They hold that gender division constitutes a system of oppression which is utterly independent of class division. The book cites such authors as Firestone, Millet as saying that gender division is prior to class division. Millet clearly and categorically stresses that women tend to transcend the usual class stratifications in patriarchy. But Barrett has amplified the difficulty of such a substantiation.

A more plausible argument has been developed with a view that patriarchy can be seen as independent of class structure but as operating through analogous mechanisms. Different formulations are plausible here; one involves posing patriarchy and capitalism as two identifiably separate structures, historically coexisting in particular societies. Patriarchal control of women's procreative capacity and sexuality takes different forms for different social classes.

It is argued in the book that the division between men and women in the sphere of wage work constitutes a central element of the sexual division of labour generally. In the book "The Conditions of the Working Class in England" by Engels, he holds that where the cheap female and child labour was preferred by factory owners to more expensive male labour, it was degrading. Engels complains that this situation, as in the case of unemployed parents supported by their children, unsexes the man and takes from women all womanliness. Yet he demonstrates an insight, as the book reveals, into the ideological processes that produce this response when he correctly adds that either we must see this insane state of things as a mockery, or we must admit that such a reversal reflects a false relation between sexes in the first place. He adds that, "If the reign of wife over the husband, as inevitably brought about by the factory system, is inhuman, the

pristine rule of the husband over the wife must have been inhuman too."

The division of labour between men and women is not only oppressive for women but divisive for the working class as a whole. The question raised in the book, to what extent the specifically sexual division of labour is determined by the logic of the capitalist division of labour itself; two principles are at work. The first is separation of home and work place brought about by the development of large scale production under the wage labour system. The second is the creation of labour force divided along lines in which the labour process itself is broken down by capitalist drives for increased productivity.

The general tendency towards differentiation of labour force by skill has important consequences for women.

## Aesthetics

Karl Marx

***(An article written for 'The New American Encyclopedia', a Popular Dictionary of General Knowledge, etc., New York 1859).***

Aesthetics, the science of the beautiful in nature and art. This term has been introduced into the nomenclature of philosophy during the present century and strictly signifies 'that which relates to sensible impressions', from Aisthetikos, perceptible to the senses, which is from aisthanomai, to feel or perceive by the senses. Adopting the threefold division of human nature, as recognised by the soundest psychologists, into the capacities of knowing, acting and feeling, or the intellect, will and sensibility to which correspond respectively the ideas of the true, the good and the beautiful, the science of aesthetics bears the same relation to sensibility that logic does to intellect and ethics to will. Logic (in the most general sense of the term) determines the laws of thinking; ethics the laws of acting; and aesthetics the laws of feeling. Truth is the ultimate aim of thought; good the ultimate aim of action; and beauty the ultimate aim of sensibility. The science of aesthetics is

still in an unsettled condition, and in many respects is subject to peculiar difficulties, owing to the diversity of taste in nations and individuals, and to the comparative freedom of the domain of art. But although the laws of taste may seem to be less definite than those of logic and ethics, it cannot be doubted that they have the same foundation in human nature, and are equally capable of being reduced to a scientific system. Thus far, little unity on the principles of beauty and art has been attained by philosophers. There are only two topics in which they seem not to contradict each other, viz., that there is nothing beautiful without a beautiful form, and that this beautiful form, in order to be really beautiful or a work of art, must betray ideas, have an ideal background, be the vehicle for thoughts, satisfy all or nearly all the faculties of the human mind. There are two different ways of treating and developing aesthetics as a science; the method a priori, which strives to shift the aesthetic notions proper to the mind, and to build out of them an abstract system to which it invites the artists to conform their creations of art; and the method a posteriori, which takes its starting point from the acknowledged marks of art, seeing for what in them constitutes their pleasing effect and combining its results under practical rules in conformity with existing works of art. It is evident that neither of these methods, followed out exclusively, can attain its aim, viz., to establish a science of the beautiful; because it is apt to neglect the ideal elements in art. In the former direction the series of aesthetic philosophers, beginning with Pythagoras and Plato, and continuing with Baumgarten, Kant, Schelling, Hegel and his followers, have speculated; in the latter direction Aristotle took the lead, and Heinse, Lessing, Winckelmann, Bayle, Rousseau, and the French, English and Italian aesthetic writers have followed in his footsteps. Pythagoras, as a mathematical genius, tried to find the beautiful and its form in numerical proportions but we know too little of his ideas to dwell on their merits. Socrates, as Plato understood him, identified the beautiful and the good, calling them by one compound name, 'Kalokagathon', the beautiful-and-the-good, which he defines as the nature for the unity of the eternal ideas and their existing real form; but with him, art has no claim to the independent existence which belongs to politics and morals, or to a separate treatment as a science. Baumgarten, in Germany, was the first to vindicate the independent dignity of the beautiful, by showing that there is, in the human mind, faculty for its

perception and appreciation founded in the senses, and centering in an inferior kind of intellect (cognition sensitiva), which may be guided, but cannot be set aside by reason. Kant accepted and amended this position, by granting that it is not an inferior intellect which is effected by the perception of the beautiful, but the highest of all human faculties, the power of reasoning and judging. The beautiful is for him whatever possess a harmony and aim in itself, and is not degraded into a means for merely foreign ends, as such it exists on its own account, and is the opposite of the useful. Schiller was the first to give a strict analysis of what the beautiful is in itself, independent of what it is for our perception and taste, and the condition of its pleasing impression on the mind. Dividing the beautiful into two kinds, the 'naïve' and the 'sentimental', he finds the charm of the former in its naturalness, freedom from pretension, and self enjoyment; that of the ..... (*illegible- Editor*) in its longing to return to nature and its simplicity. Schelling, and after him Solger, indicate the beautiful as the highest degree of identity of the ideal and real, in which both are so intimately united (*illegible- Editor*) the former is the soul, the latter the body, or the infinite appearing under the finite forms entirely adequate to express its perfections. Hegel (Aesthetik, 3 Volumes, Berlin, 1842-3), and his two most remarkable pupils in that direction, V. Vischer (Aesthetik, 2 Volumes, Rentlingen, 1846-8), and A. Ruge (Neue Vorschule der Aesthetik, Halle, 1837), have developed Schelling's ideas into a more complete and genial system, and carried the knowledge of the nature of the beautiful a great step in advance, showing that it is the kingdom in which the absolute idea and its finite manifestations realize their infinite freedom over matter. In its lowest stage, in the beauty of nature and history the idea realizes itself unconsciously, and therefore imperfectly. In their sphere it is only foreshadowed, appears interwoven with the accidental and unessential. In the human mind it exists with full freedom, striving to domesticate, and idealise matter by giving it adequate form, and making it express the infinite. In architecture, sculpture, and painting, the mind labours still under the fetters of matter; in poetry it culminates, subduing matter, and reducing it to the inferior dignity of a means of expressing the idea. From this short statement of speculative ideas on beauty, it is sufficiently evident that we may thus reach certain general and abstract traits as to the nature of beauty but approach no nearer to

a clear understanding or better enjoyment of the masterpieces of art themselves. Aristotle applies his 'Categories' to the science of beauty and art, showing how all genuine productions of art embody some indispensable laws and rules which we must learn to appreciate correctly, and to produce beautiful artistic works on their model. He does this most completely in his Poetics, where it was most natural and easy, establishing the necessity of unity in time, space and plan or object, and teaching the right use of the questions; who ? what ? where ? by what means ? why ? whereby ? when ? But he does not derive his rules from the nature and wants of the human mind; and thus for over a century they led the French artistic world, under Louis XIV and his successor, into slavery to tyrannic dogmas. Winckelmann, in his history of art, does for sculpture, painting and architecture what Aristotle had done for Poetry. W.Heinse, whose merit in defining the limits of every art, and showing the power, effects and particular means of each as distinguished from others, is still perhaps not sufficiently appreciated, analyses the single beauties of several masterpieces of every art in the most minute detail. Lessing, particularly in his Laokoon, does the same under the clear light of an unsurpassed critical genius, and Goethe and J.P. and Father Richter gave innumerable happy hints on the beautiful under all its forms. Rousseou enters with the same spirit into the kingdom of music, and tries to trace back to ultimate source the significance of its means of expression. Among the British aesthetical writers, Hutcheson and Burke have enquired into the origin of our ideas of beauty with some ingenuity but with little depth, while Dugald Stewart, Alison, Jeffery and Paine Knight, have offered some superficial suggestions, but with no pretension to accurate philosophical analysis. There is still one element in the science of aesthetics which has been too little noticed, viz, the theory of proportions. Pythagoras with his ideas has not found a successor, showing wherein the beauty of forms in the very last respect is founded, analyzing all different forms of artistic expression and expressing the particular working of each on the mind according to its psychological construction. What Hauptmann (Harmonik and Metrik, Leipzig 1850) has attempted in this direction for music is not sufficient and should be applied to every branch of art. It is thus seen that the science of aesthmetics is still in its infancy. The necessary materials are wanting for speculative construction and critical arrangement. We

do not yet know what the 'line of beauty' is in architecture, sculpture, and painting nor by what features of similarity it works on the sympathies of the mind; we do not yet know wherein the charms of a given melody consist nor how it awakens such feelings within our soul; nor what in poetry gives to each rhythm, figure of speech, image and sound of the language its enchanting power. In this respect poetry and music have thus attained the highest degree of progress. In order to complete the lacking materials we must have a better psychology on a mathematical basis, like that of Herbart, but under at the same time on a rich treasure of appropriate experimental observation; we must have a complete analysis of artistic forms into the most defined details and in every branch of art and last, but not least, a systematic history of art from its earliest and simplest stages. It may take a long time for the performance of these tasks to prepare the materials for the construction of the science of aesthetics. There is still no complete and satisfactory work on aesthetics; but besides these already referred to, the student may consult the following with more or less advantage :

Weisse, System der Aesthetik, two volumes, Leipzig, 1830

Johffroy, Cours d' esthetique, Paris, 1842

Cousin, Le Vrai, Le beah, et le bon and John Ruskin's works generally.

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## **Reflections on a current feud**

**Ayaz ahmed shafi**

There has been a controversy regarding the power and position of the President of India. Even as the Constitution came into effect the constitutional experts were divided into two groups -- Jurists who held that the constitution gives real powers to the President as it says that the "Executive power of the Union shall be vested in the President". On the other hand, there were Realists who believed that since India had adopted a Parliamentary Form of Government based on the British

model the position of the President was very much similar to that of the British monarch, that is, he had no real powers.

Over the years the Realists' point of view had been taken as correct. Even then there have been conflicts between the two top offices of the country - Prime Minister and the President. Dr. Rajendra Prasad had serious differences with Pundit Jawahar Lal Nehru. However, the conflict never took the same form as the one between our Prime Minister and the President.

Although, it is stated in the constitution that "There shall be a Council of Ministers with the Prime Minister at its head to aid and advise the President", the fact is that all the decision and actions are taken by the Council of Ministers and their only duty to the President is to keep him informed.

It was abundantly clear by the framers of the Constitution that the President is only to be the nominal head and not the real head. The real powers were given to Council of Ministers. If for the time being we assume that the Prime Minister, along with his Council of Ministers is responsible to the President, it will lead to a situation where the Prime Minister and his cabinet will have dual responsibility - to the President and to the Parliament. But the very essence of Parliamentary democracy is that the government is responsible to the popularly elected parliament. Where as the parliament is directly elected the President is indirectly elected.

Again if the President were to control and command the government he would have dictatorial powers which would go totally against the spirit of democracy. But the Constitutional requirement that the President should be kept informed of the government's activities must also be fulfilled under all conditions.

### Readers forum

**Prof K.C. Boral** – The present issue of Liberty makes delectable reading. The issues presented and discussed are relevant in our social and cultural context. The historical perspective of the articles on caste system in India and also on communal fundamentalism are indeed,

informative and reflective. Once the article is completed (as they are only parts) it will be very useful for serious reading. The editorial this time deserves high applause, for the explanations on the motto of Liberty. The editor has rightly observed the crux of the present ferment regarding human Liberty. I hope in the years to come the human society will come to the realization of the fact what Liberty is at this stage modestly propagating.

**Tirthankar Ray** – The "Liberty' is a good venture and needs to be sustained. It should be a forum for debate on important issues. On any issue, it should publish for that matter, the points and counter-points of different schools and individuals. Authoritative texts should also be given space in order to carry on the debate on an issue.

**Kumud Vyas** – The editorial makes a good reading. It, however, leaves many points/ views unanswered and unexplained. For example, the article points out that liberty exerts influence in the forthcoming renaissance of universal science study – the science of man - which will render the division between science and humanities obsolete. We know that the study of man and his nature is a complex of many variables, but how does liberty influence it ? Also, the article fails to explain how liberty exerts in solving the alienation between man and man, man and nature and man and society.

*[ N.B. The 'Liberty' as an occasional bulletin was being printed in a cyclostyled form from Calcutta and circulated among a select group of readers. Though the bulletin didn't carry the name of its editor it was in fact being edited by Chitta Behera- **Chitta Behera** on 10th May 2007]*