

Kurukshetra and wherein the eternal struggle between man's essential self and his sensual self is perpetually going on. It is to be resolved, in favour of the former, with a strong will power. This was central purpose of the *Gita* to steel human will. Mahatma Gandhi's concept of "Hind Swaraj" is founded on it. For the Mahatma the *Gita* is not a book of history, but a message for life. It is a book on socio-spiritual dynamic view of life. He historicised human action which reflects 'inner voice' of the self (*atman*). It is based on truth (*satya*). He was Indian both in thought and deeds though his views are deeply entrenched in the views of Ruskin, Tolstoy, Thoreau and others who had influenced his mind. He articulated his ideology of "Hind Swaraj" (1909), theory of non-violence (*ahimsa*), social justice (*savodaya*), feminist cause and other key concepts within spiritual framework of Indian philosophy. His continuous struggle for achieving truth was not to injure the feelings of another person, but to make him conscious that he was wrong. He

was successful in testing it for achieving freedom without bloodshed. His original, written ideas have been collected in a multi-volume work, *Collected Works of M.K. Gandhi* (CWMKG). Gandhi reinterpreted truth in the context of modern socio-political scenario and was ultimately successful in getting freedom for India on 15 August 1947 without bloodshed.

In addition to the above mentioned contributions, Gandhi has drawn our attention to the western technological and materialistic civilization and the colonial rule of the English in pre-Independence era. He is against mega cities. His central problem was emancipation of the downtrodden masses of the motherland of India. There are some vital issues which have been listed in the selection of entries in the present *Dictionary*. Quotations from the original sources are of immense use for the readers to reinterpret Gandhian thought. These entries will be handy for the readers to reckon on the concepts to understand threadbare Gandhi's

relevance in the present computer age.

The *Dictionary* under review is an anthology of the entries collected from original writings of Gandhi, which appeared in the journals, *Harijan* and *Young India*. The author has listed only most significant forty-five entries derived from the original work of Gandhi. I feel pained to point out that Mr. Gupta has belied the expectations of most readers in that he has denied them the benefit of his interpretations of the philosophical terms entered in the *Dictionary*. Some insightful, original interpretations should have been given by a professor of philosophy who has taught in the prestigious St Stephen's college of Delhi affiliated to the University of Delhi. It is one of the weakest aspects of the *Dictionary*. The present compilation of entries could be done by any ordinary compiler! I failed to find out any philosophical insight of the author.

NIRBHAI SINGH

Fellow, Indian Institute of Advanced Study  
Shimla-171 005

## Window on Socialist Thinkers

Today the concern of equality, human rights (particularly, minority rights), social justice and liberation of humanity from poverty, disease and ill health transcends ideology. At the turn of the century, nations were divided into communist and liberal democratic camps, based on ideological divides. With the end of the cold war, and the collapse of communism, these divisions have become redundant. Yet it is within the paradigms of the principles of socialism and democracy (which echo these concerns), that individuals seek their liberation, as do nations their prosperity and progress. The history of socialist thought, expressing the philosophy and principles in all its varieties is indeed a fascinating study.

The present book under review provides, in the authors' own words, "a detailed and critical account of the dominant schools and theories of

socialism." In the substantive part of the book, Mukherjee and Ramaswamy structure socialist thought into sections dealing with precursors (Thomas More and Harrington); early socialists, (utopianists—Saint Simon, Robert Owen, and Charles Fourier); 19th century Marxists (K. Marx, F. Engels and A. Bebel); socialist democratic (Lassalle, Bernstein, and Cole); and 20th century Marxists (Kautsky, Plekhanov, Lenin Luxemburg, Trotsky, Bukharin, Gramsci, and Marcuse). The book closes with a discussion of the ideas of W. Morris, G. Sorrel and Mao Zedong as 'unconventional Marxists'. Notable in their absence are the writings of L. Althusser, N. Polountzas, and Habermas, whose views deserved more than a passing reference in the text.

In their introduction, the authors trace the development of socialism from its beginnings to contemporary

developments in the post-communist phase and analyze the varied controversies within socialism. As someone once said there is no such thing as 'socialism'; there are rather 'socialisms' which often overlap other ideologies.

Common to all strands of socialism, point out the authors, is a commitment to equality, human solidarity, non-exploitative relationships and socialized humanity.

The controversy over reform or revolution divided socialists into two broad subsets. Revolution and the imminent collapse of communism was the moot point in Marxian revolutionary socialism. The central themes of post war ideology of social democracy were socialization of the means of production, planning, social citizenship and equality. The 1970s proved a watershed in the history of socialism. Communism—Marxist, Leninist-Stalinist, and

- A History of Socialist Thought
- From the Precursors to the Present
- Subrata Mukherjee and Sushila Ramaswamy
- Sage Publications, 2000, Rs.350

Eurocommunism—collapsed, failing to liberate the working classes. On the flip side, the experiment of social democracy gave in to a host of movements, starting from the global revolution of the Green parties, to a surge of women's rights movements, nuclear disarmament and peace. In the 1990s, minority rights, equality and social welfare of the least advantaged, find their voice in socialism operating within democracy and the rule of law. In fact, the surviving socialism of the 90's and thereafter is by and large revisionist, reformist and democratic in nature.

Mukherjee and Ramaswamy begin the story of the history of socialist thought with Thomas More's description of the 'Utopia' and Harrington's 'Oceana', as precursors of socialist ideas, which influenced subsequent discourse on the subject. More depicts in his *Utopia*, "the abolition of private property, universal obligation to work, equal rights, right to equal wealth, state management, and control of production and the removal of poverty and exploitation." Harrington looked at property as the foundation of the state and its distribution paralleled the forms of government of one, a few or many. The authors point out that Harrington was the first to use the term 'superstructure', a term that became the key word in Marxist political theory. Socialism owes its origins to the utopian socialists, its currents stemming from the upheaval of the French Revolution of 1789. The distinguishing feature of utopian socialism, which figures in socialist thought in the 20th century, is its attempt to sketch out the ordering of a possible form of social life, a well-structured society that would provide the conditions for fully satisfied, happy and virtuous human beings. Though the Utopianists were unscientific, they provided the raw materials for the uplift and education of the working class. They also indicated trends and highlighted matters which Marx and Engels later analysed scientifically.

The schism in socialist thought between reform and revolution came to the forefront with the revolutionary ideas of Marx and Engels. Marxism

became the most powerful theory of socialism. Marx's theory has been rather simplistically presented. The theory of Dialectics, Historical Materialism, Economic Determinism, Revolution could have been discussed at greater length by the authors. Marxian thought began a process of categorization of socialist thought in the 20th century. Within Marxism, fissures began to develop, particularly, regarding the differing views on revolution—Lenin, Trotsky, and Luxemburg represented different strands. On the other hand Kautsky's Marxism was determinist and evolutionary and was castigated by both Lenin and Trotsky as 'renegade', because it betrayed the revolutionary conception of Marx and Engels. Trotsky did not denounce the revolution but "he was consumed by the revolution he helped to make".

The Marxist German SPD party dominated European socialism since 1914. From the 1930s polarization of the socialist movement took place. Marxist revisionism, festering since the early 1900s, carried on unabated throughout Europe. The German SPD moved towards a more revisionist democratic socialist stance. In the post 1945 era, chasms widened within Marxism. What began as Leninism, Stalinism, Trotskyism, went on to develop deep fissures into revisionist Marxism, Maoism, Structuralist Marxism, Euro communism and Feminist Marxism.

The chief architect of revisionist socialist thinking was Eduard Bernstein who presented the first coherent critique of Marxism. In fact the authors have dedicated the book to the memory of Bernstein as being 'the finest and best exponent of social democracy.' Bernstein rejected the fundamental canon of Marxism—the state as a class institution. Bernstein's legacy to post-cold war social democracy was his early rejection that capitalism would end catastrophically—a moot point in Marxian thought. His conception of socialism was the fulfilment of theory and practice of parliamentary democracy.

In most sections of the book the authors have highlighted the perspective of the socialist thinkers vis-a-vis

gender equality, and the position of women in society. Socialist Feminism became a cohesive movement by the First World War. Alexandra Kollantai, Clara Zetkin and Charlotte Perkins Gillman extended the Marxian framework into 20th century, particularly Kollantai, in the context of the Russian revolution. Marxist Feminism drew inspiration not from Marx but largely from Engels and more so, from A. Bebel's writings. Engels' *Origins* provided a materialist account of the origin of patriarchy and linked women's subordination with the rise of private property. The position and role of women received an in-depth and penetrating analysis in Bebel's writings. Mukherjee and Ramaswamy point out that contemporary Feminists argued that Bebel had failed to relate non-recognition of female talents to sexual domination by the male. They could have extended their arguments to show that more recent socialist feminists in widening their vision of exploitation have even suggested the expansion of free birth control, abortion, health care centers and the recognition of domestic labour.

The history of socialist thought is a subject matter too vast to be justifiably compressed into one volume covering twenty-two (select) thinkers. The text therefore is predictably not comprehensive enough, but admittedly lucid. The book will be of value to students who are looking for an understanding of socialist thinking, and to whom the likes of Kalakowsky may be beyond reach.

The book begins with an overview of contemporary socialist premises and trends, and it ends abruptly with the thought of Mao Zedong. There are issues today, which trouble individuals and nations alike, issues such as ecology, environmentalism, and international terrorism, apart from feminism, which every intellectual must address. How do contemporary socialists react to these issues? A final chapter covering these aspects would have immensely contributed to updating the socialist thought in the new millennium.

P.R. Narayanan  
Reader, Maithreyi College  
University of Delhi.