

Be truthful: So that India does not become a hypocritical nation!

Prem Singh

Since the beginning of the farmers' agitation against the three new agri-laws, there has been a series of allegations and counter-allegations between the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government and opposition parties. The pace and volume of allegations and counter-allegations between the government and the opposition increased significantly after the opposition actively supported the Bharat Bandh called by the farmers' organizations on 8 December 2020. The government has gone ahead of its earlier charges of provoking the farmers by misleading them by the opposition that the three agri-laws have been on the agenda of the entire opposition including the Congress. The opposition has said that the BJP, which calls the provisions made in the agri-laws a panacea for the farmers, has been strongly opposing them in the past. The government and the opposition have presented the documents and media footage accusing each other of double speak/character. A war of 'your reforms my reforms' has erupted between the two creating utmost confusion in the minds of people. Whatever be the meaning of this exercise of the government and the opposition in the context of mutual power struggle, this open truth is once again revealed that liberalization-privatization is the common agenda of the ruling classes of the country. However, this pertinent point regarding the reforms has not been properly discussed in the debate that arises from the agitation.

This shared agenda of the ruling classes has continued for the last thirty years. Let me reiterate the fact that when Manmohan Singh introduced the New Economic Policies in 1991, Atal Bihari Bajpai had said that "now the Congress has taken up their job". HD Deve Gowda, who became the Prime Minister of the United Front government after Narasimha Rao-Manmohan Singh, in 1996 was in favour of liberalization-privatization with the Finance Minister P Chidambaram. During his 6-year tenure, Prime Minister Vajpayee took forward the process of liberalization-privatization mostly through ordinances promulgated one after another. This process continued in a steady and strong manner during the two tenures of the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA).

Senior Communist leader Jyoti Basu, after playing a long political innings, concluded that the path of development passes through capitalism. Wiki Leaks revealed the fact that Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, who became the Chief Minister of West Bengal after Jyoti Basu, had approached the US Mission that he would like to take a long leap on the path of neo-liberalism. He made a similar leap in Singur-Nandigram igniting strong protests and an end to three decades old left regime. Regional leaders doing politics of social justice or identity, and their family heirs often remain silent on the policies of liberalization-privatization. Rather they would consider the fight for power to be the 'policy'.

During this period, the politics of the country graduated to become corporate politics. The first political party directly born out of the womb of corporate capitalism - Aam Aadmi Party - with its supremo has been dear to country's governmental (*sarkari*) communists and mostly secular democratic socialist intellectuals. Recently, after holding the event of 'Diwali Poojan' in Delhi's Akshardham temple with official paraphernalia and propaganda, he has preached to his 'liberal' friends that "they should pray, for the peace of mind"! The Anti-Corruption Movement, from which this party emerged, deeply hurt the nationwide movement waged against the onslaught of liberalization-privatization from the very beginning, and paved the way for Narendra Modi, who had become restless in Gujarat, to reach Delhi.

It can be said indisputably about the current controversial agricultural laws that their structural design is corporate-friendly and in accordance with over-all government policy. But no opposition political party/leader sought to repeal them completely as Ordinances or as Bills in Parliament. This fact becomes clear by looking at all the debates held on the Bills in Parliament. Apart from suggesting some amendments, all parties had demanded to send the Bills to a Parliamentary Panel. For example, the statement of Communist Party of India (CPI) MP Binoy Viswam can be seen: "I request the minister ... if the statement about the MSP is true and sincere ... he should move an official amendment here, saying that he will add a clause ensuring the MSP for the farmers. In that case, I promise you, even though we oppose you politically, the Communist Party of India will support this Bill." ('Indian Express', 5 December 2020) Corporate-friendly statements/documents about agricultural reforms of the progeny of the Ford Foundation, who are active in the farmers' movement, have also become more open. The demand for complete repeal of the three agri-laws was made only by the farmers'

organizations. Obviously, they will have to fight this decisive battle on their own despite the government's often-repeated propaganda of being called traitors and its divisive tactics.

Actually, the ruling classes of India oppose liberalization-privatization, citing the Constitution when out of power, and when in power, take all decisions in favor of liberalization-privatization in the name of the Constitution itself. They shamelessly do the work of the corporate houses in the name of the poor. Along with the Constitution, they also pull the icons of the country in their support and opposition to liberalization-privatization. The shabby treatment done to the Constitution and the national icons by the ruling classes is rarely done in any other country. Due to this tendency of the ruling classes, a deep hypocrisy has taken place in the political behavior of the country. This hypocrisy in political behavior also affects other life practices such as social, cultural, religious, economic etc. If India is not to be turned into a hypocritical nation, then this phenomenon needs to be addressed seriously.

In the current state of consensus on neo-liberal reforms from the education to the defense sector, would it not be better if the ruling classes honestly accept that they are a true advocate of liberalization-privatization? Leaving the Constitution aside, or amending it against its original spirit of egalitarianism, declare liberalization-privatization as national policy? For this, should they not negotiate with the labour farmer, student, trader unions, and associations/organisations of employees of various departments in a strait manner? Shouldn't they give a clear message to domestic and foreign investors/companies that liberalization-privatization is India's accepted national policy and tell the institutions like World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization, United Nations that India now come on its own in terms of liberalization-privatization policies? Don't they need to dictate in every case that India has crossed the barrier of "having too much democracy" to assure neo-liberalists like Amitabh Kant, NITI Aayog's Chief Executive Officer (CEO), that now India can compete with communist China's market socialism?

This practice can be started with a wide and serious discussion on controversial agri-laws by calling a special session of Parliament. In the debate, a proper use can be made of the ideas/arguments that have been presented and deliberated upon during the agitation on this contentious issue.

Such a suggestion from a person like me may seem shocking to some people. But if we have to avoid being transformed into a hypocritical/fraudulent nation, then there is no choice but to face the truth. Three decades of hypocrisy are enough. If there is an honest confession of truth by the ruling classes, the genuine supporters of constitutional socialism will be able to assess their position and role realistically in the ongoing discourses/struggles. If the farmers really have political understanding, unity and courage, they will find a way to deal with the corporate loot despite the laws. That path will also become a cornerstone for other struggling organizations.

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