



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Ideas Of Marx, Phule And Ambedkar In View Of The Agony Of Working Class: A Reflection On Migrant Labour Crisis In India During Pandemic.

Dr.Mohammad Abdul Malik, Associate Professor, Economics, Govt. Degree College, Chevella, Rangareddy District, Telangana, India.

Abstract

The study has been done on the thought process of political economy by Karl Marx, Phule and Dr.B.R.Ambedkar in view of the agony that migrant laborers undergone during the lock-down periods of Covid-19. The study has used historical tools for analysis. Karl Marx has contributed to understand the exploitation of working class during the economic development process in the European society. He has expected the proletarian revolution in the process which ultimately ends the trauma of labour force. Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule was an Indian contemporary of Karl Marx has given a lengthy description on the plight of Shudra cultivators in Indian society during the Peshwa's Rule in the 17th century. He advocated for funding of primary education by state as he believed education is an ultimate tool to get awareness on human rights to end the misery of weaker sections of the society. The high-altitude services of Savitri Bhai Phule, the wife of Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule during a Plague pandemic is an ultimate inspiration to do service to fellow human beings in troubled times like Covid-19. Dr.B.R.Ambedkar has given much folded solution to the problem of India's depressed classes which includes constitutional safeguards to the working classes along with Nationalization of land and industries. He proposed for proportionate representation in political and non-political administration. He wanted India with socio-political democracy which relies on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. We found that it is the utmost relevance of prevalence of socio-political-economy thought of Karl Marx-Phule and Dr,B.R.Ambedkar in a view to sensitize the political set-up and civil society on poor and for the poor in the unprecedented times like lockdowns of Covid-19.

Key-Words: state, ruling class, political economy, lockdown, capitalism, Savitri, thought, proletarian, exploitation, nationalization, welfare, education, revolution, liberty, equality, fraternity.

I. Introduction

Majority of our (Human beings') actions are predeceased by a thought or multiple thought process. When it comes to the public (government) action, it is presumed that the action is must have undergone the process of some thought. The economic thought that the ruling class/ a particular political structure/system follows is defined as the thought of political economy. The economic thought of various political systems or political parties may differ with one another and it reflects on its policy making and execution. After knowing the nature of spread of Corona Virus-2 (Covid-19), restrictions on the movement of people were legally imposed by the respective governments of various countries. During the lockdowns, all economically poor especially poor migrant laborers have suffered a lot. When the world witnessed the agony of the migrant workers, especially on the roads, it truly disturbed the sense of every human being. In this context, it is relevant to remind the thought process which talked on the poor and for the poor. The economic/social thought of Karl Marx, Mahatma Jyothi Rao Phule and Dr.B.R.Ambedkar is no doubt an asset to understand the misery under gone by the poor during the pandemic Covid-19, by doing so, we can find the causes of the suffering and may get some inputs for the solvation to the problem, eventually this paper tried for the same.

II. Statement of the Problem: The paper aim is the study of the thought process of Karl Marx, Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule and Dr.B.R.Ambedkar on the poor and for the poor in the way of solution to their problems in view of the agony undergone by the poor migrant laborers during the lockdown period of Covid-19.

III. The Ultimate Aim: The ultimate aim of the study is to getting sensitized to read and think on issue of poverty and working class labour and to offer possible solutions to the problems. So the paper has following **objectives** for its study:

- i. Understanding the description of trauma of by Karl Marx that labour force undergoes in a capitalist economy and the happenings thereafter.
- ii. Understanding Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule's work and writings on the poor farmers' plight and the services of Satya Shodak Society (which was established by Phule Family) during a Pandemic Plague.
- iii. Understanding the welfare measures that Dr.B.R.Ambedkar proposed to mitigate the hardness that labour force in their lives.
- iv. Highlighting the relevance of political economy thought on the poor and for the poor in order to sensitize ruling political class and civil society in favour of working (mostly physical) class of the country.

IV. Hypothesis: The following hypotheses have been put in mind in the beginning of the study:

- i. Karl Heinrich Marx has exposed the exploitation of labour force in the economic development process and offered his own method of solution to end it.
- ii. Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule has given the description on the plight of the farmers and his family rendered an inspired services during a Plague pandemic.
- iii. Dr.B.R. Ambedkar, though dedicated his life for the thought of social equality in India, had feathers in his thought in favour of labourers' economic welfare too.
- iv. The thought process of Karl Marx, Phule and Dr.B.R. Ambedkar have inputs to tackle the agony situations of labour force which the world has witnessed during the Covid-19 Pandemic crisis

V. Methodology: The study has taken historical political economy tools to highlight the misery of the labour force and to enlist some elements in the process of finding solution to the problem. The views of the Marx, Phule and Ambedkar were extracted to the limit of misery that labourers face and the solution to the same. Mostly, secondary sources are used to analyse the views, in few instances original text from primary source is used. The descriptive similarities are drawn in the views related to the problem. The missing part of related thought process has been traced out in the actions which caused the trauma.

VI. Karl Marx-The Pioneer in Framing Philosophy on the Poor and for the Poor

i. The life and philosophy of Karl Marx in brief: Karl Heinrich Marx a German by birth, lived during the period from 5th May,1818 to 14th March 1883. The pamphlet "The Communist Manifesto" and the three volumes titled as "Das Capital" were the famous philosophical works of Karl Marx. His ultimate philosophy is 'the Poor (working (physical) class) are exploited by Economically rich (ruling/land lords/bourgeois capitalists)' and it will end at the end as working class establish a dictatorship with proletarian revolution (Neil J. Smelsor, 2015).

ii. The Law of Increasing Misery of Masses under Capitalism: Karl Marx explains the increasing misery of the laborers (one can easily remember it when the Indian migrant laborers walked towards their home towns/villages on the all types of ways), during the process of development in the capitalist economy. As the capitalists preserve their profit as increase in organic composition of capital (with labour saving machines) decreases their profit margin by decreasing wages or increasing working hours with same wage rates, the misery of the masses increases under capitalism. This process is known as the 'law of the increasing misery of the masses under capitalism'. "Capital accumulation and concentration involve increase in constant capital and decline in variable capital. The rapid growth of constant capital as compared

with variable capital leads to a relative decrease in the demand for labour. This process supplanting labour by machines creates an industrial reserve army which increases as capitalism develops. The larger the industrial reserve army, the worse are the conditions of employed workers, since the capitalist can dismiss dissatisfied and troublesome workers, being able to replace them with the ranks of the reserve army. Capitalists are also able to cut down wages to a semi-starvation level and appropriate more and more surplus value. This is the law of the increasing misery of the masses under capitalism” (M.L. Jhingan, 1995).

iii. The thought of solution in political economy: Marx proposes the end of the misery of working force with the “dictatorship of the proletariat”. Capitalism faces the frequent demand crisis as they tend to replace labour with machines along with the cut in wages in order to preserve/increase the profit margin. “In each period of crisis stronger capitalists expropriate the weaker capitalists and along with it grows the indignation of the workers class, “a class always increases in numbers, and disciplined, united, organized by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself”. Ultimately, “capitalism leads to the proletarian revolution where by the dictatorship of proletariat is established. Poverty will disappear. The state will wither away and each individual will contribute to national income according to his abilities and receive according to his needs, Socialism replaces capitalism” (M.L.Jhingan, 1995A).

VI. Remembering Phule an Indian Contemporary of Karl Marx:

i. The Life and thought of Phule in brief: Jyoti Rao Govindrao Phule who is popularly known as Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule, is an Indian contemporary to Karl Marx as he lived between 11th April 1827 to 28th November 1890 (born in the same decade of the birth of Karl Marx and died after the three years of death of Karl Marx). Mahatma Phule is called as the father of social revolutionary movements in modern India, along with his wife, friends attributed much to the thought on the poor for the poor under the umbrella of his organization Sathya Shodak Samaj (SSS). He wrote much on plight of the poor farmers and their exploitation under Peshwa’s rule and thereafter by revenue administration under the British rule along with local administrators as Kulkarni/Karanam, Patels, Patwaris, Deshpande. All of them are from a single Brahmin community as it is the only community who got benefitted of education by then. Some of his famous works are Tritiya Ratna (1855), Manav Muhammad (1869), Gulamgiri (1873), Shetkaryaca Aasud (The Whipcord of the Cultivators-1883) and Chetavani (Warning-1885). Phule’s works describe the root

cause of the sufferings of productive workforce as unawareness of human rights, this happens because of illiteracy or ill-educated.

ii. Jyothi Rao Phule's work and thought on the over exploitation of poor Shudra farmers in India:

In the year 1883, Phule wrote "The Whiplash of Cultivators", (Harathi Vageeshan-2006), in which he has accounted the plight of the farmers during the Peshwa's rule and thereafter under British rule. He describes every aspect of farmers' life from food to death.

Farmers were very poor but not because of they would not work but because of their exploitation by rulers. Land revenue was very high in spite of the frequent droughts. If the farmers fail to pay the land revenue, they used to undergo severe uncivilized punishments. They are offered loans by the then Brahmin-Marwadi money lenders but with huge interest rates and they are often cheated by the promissory draft written by a Brahmin Kulkarni as it is always biased and in favour of Brahmin-Marwadi money lender. With the help of promissory draft, money lenders used to get judgments by Brahmin judges in favour of money lenders and against shudra-farmers. Peshwa rulers, writes Phule, never tried to provide any facility to the farmers including irrigation. The food, the farmers used to take under the Peshwas' rule is very primitive in nature mostly containing mere jawari-roti (bread), gatka (thick porridges) ambali (gruel) only boiled vegetables without any rich proteins and fats. They, male and female usually had only one long cloth to wear and replaced with a new one nearly after two years. They, women too often used to wear shredded attire. As the British rulers introduced formal system and tried to provide irrigation facilities, agony of farmers, Phule writes, tended to decline but it was not over as the British revenue administration is under the guidance of modern educated-brahmins again. Phule re-wrote these farmers' problems in his book 'Chetavani (Warning)' which was published in the year 1885 in counter to the speech given by M.G. Ranade as Ranade, a Brahmin, in his speech, ignores the plight of the farmers during the Peshwas' rule and says all is well now regarding farmers. Phule, contradicting with Ranade's speech, describes the plight of the cultivators in lengthy and asks the so-called modern-educated brahmin intellectuals to tour the villages to understand the agony of the cultivators and warns them not to advise British administration with their superficial understanding along with their mere myths or beliefs.

iii. Phule's thought of solution to end the plight of cultivators and other depressed classes:

Mahtma Jyoti Rao Phule says, British government is allocating some amount from the land revenue collected from cultivators for education but it is not reaching the poor cultivators as

most of the expenditure is spent on higher education which is pursued by only Brahmins then. Hence, Phule advocates for spending on primary education and requested British government for the same. He also reminds the British government in his letter to Hunter Commission (Harathi Vageeshan, 2006a), that, if the primary education is under the Brahmin teachers there is nothing progressive changes could be seen as most of the Brahmin teachers are under the influence of false myths and blind beliefs and hesitate to adopt modern values such as freedom, equality and fraternity. Phule also wanted proportional representation (Anil Vargheese, 2021) to other sections of the society in administration as the administrative system then, merely, filled with Brahmins and Phule, strongly feels that the British rulers were acting under the ill- advice of local Brahmin administrators.

iv. Remembering Phule Family's services during a Plague Pandemic in view of Covid-19: As Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule died in the year 1890, the Satya Shodak Samaj responsibility is transferred to his wife Smt. Savitri Bhai Phule and she fulfilled it with her full-fledged services. The live example for her services is her death during the services which she offered to plague patients in her uncle's home turned temporary hospital under the supervision of their foster son whom she called to Pune from military to provide the services to plague patients in 1897. She herself carried on her shoulder the son of Pandurang Balaji Gaikwad from a Mahar (present Scheduled Caste) Basti of Mandva village to the hospital and she was attacked by plague and died on 10th March, 1897 (Sangiseti Srivas, 2020).

VII. Dr.B.R. Ambedkar, the Crusader for Laborers' Rights in India:

Many people knows Dr.B.R. Ambedkar as an architect of India's constitution as he was the chairman of drafting committee to write constitution, and some know him as a person who fought and provided equal opportunities for the depressed classes of Indian society, however the contribution he has made in the field of economics, especially in labour economics and to political economy thought, he was ignored at large. It is an opportunity and a grave necessity

too to understand his thought on labour rights and on political economy in view of the agony the labour force, especially the migrant workers of India undergone during the periods of lockdown of covid-19 pandemic.

i. The life and thought of Dr.B.R. Ambedkar in brief:

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar who born on April 14th 1891, the very next year of Phule's death and carried forward the legacy of Phule's thought and struggle till his death on 6th December, 1956. Ambedkar recognizes three persons as his gurus (teachers) vide, Gautham Budha from Ancient India, Kabeer from Medieval India and Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule from Modern India. Dr.B.R.Ambedkar got modern education in India and abroad and has made a lengthy inquiry in to the roots of Indian society and its dynamics. He believes in radical inquirism (the continuous search for truth) and of course he is the pupil too to an American philosopher John Dewey and went beyond his teacher's reach in the subject (Dag-Erik Berg and Torjus Midtgarden,2020). He wrote much on Indian society which also includes regarding rights and welfare measures for working class (labour). He has advocated the political power to the down trodden through vote- democracy which is, he advocates a master key to get out from the centuries old discrimination, exploitation and suppression. His literary works includes the following: 1. Small Holdings in India 2. Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development 3. Philosophy of Hinduism 4. Riddles in Hinduism 5. The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India 6. The Annihilation of Caste 7. What Congress and Gandhi Done to Untouchables? 8.The Budha and His Dharma 9. Ancient Indian Commerce 10. The Problem of Rupee: Its Origin and Solution.11. Who Were Shudras?

ii. The Crusader of Rights and Welfare Measures for Laborers of India:

Baba Saheb Ambedkar is a crusader of rights and welfare measures for labour force. We can account his contribution in this regard with number of occasions. As a member of Bombay Legislature in 1938, on Industrial Disputes Bill which had the provisions for setting-up industrial courts and ban on strikes, he says the said democracy if fails to safeguard the rights of the working class is not the democracy and it is a mockery of democracy. During the debate, Baba Saheb told "A democracy which enslaves the working class, a class which is devoid of education, which is devoid of the means of life, which is devoid of any power of organisation, ... I submit, is no democracy but a mockery of democracy." In the same debate, he concluded, "Real equality between employers and employees can be brought about only by incorporating these two provisions. The employer must be compelled to disclose his budget and the government must cease to use the police force against the workers merely because there is breach of peace. Without this there can be no equality between capital and labour as to bargaining power." (Jadumani Mahanand,2020).

Babasaheb was appointed as the member for labour in the Viceroy's Executive Council- the Cabinet of Government of British India, during this tenure, he was able to formalize and execute many provisions for the labour class. To have first-hand experience with workers' problems, he has visited many places including Jharia coalfields and industries in Dhanbad which falls in present day Jharkhand where he ensured boards were set-up to universalize subsidized grains for workers and made workers as members of these boards. He had set-up central food advisory committee in which workers had a decision-making role. He argued in favour of setting-up free canteens in every industrial cluster and presidencies. Babasaheb saw the state's role as essential for the maintenance of a healthy workforce. In the viceroy's council, Babasaheb emphasized "if Government was to help the industry it would not allow the industry to exploit labour." He added "labour must be assured a living wage, fair conditions of employment and general welfare, in the interest of maintaining Labour Welfare." Babasaheb argued for a state backed life insurance scheme which would be given to all industrial and agricultural workers. During his various tenures in office, Babasaheb has made provisions for a slew of labour welfare measures that are still active today which includes the following: It was Babasaheb who instituted the eight-hour work day in India, as well as dearness allowances, labour welfare funds, revisions of scales of pay for employees, leave benefits for workers and a minimum wage. Babasaheb set up the first employees state insurance, a social security and health insurance scheme for workers, in South Asia. Further, he passed The Indian Trade Union (Amendment) Bill of 1943 which called for the compulsory recognition of trade unions by the government. The legal framework for strikes used till today was formulated by Babasaheb. He also passed a range of laws protecting female workers including the Women and Child Labour Protection Act, the Maternity Benefits Act, and created the Women Labour Welfare Fund which was used to safeguard the health and safety of working women. While addressing the Constituent Assembly (25 November 1949), Ambedkar stated: "The consciousness of social security comes to a man when he feels that he is getting his basic rights". As a representative of the Depressed Classes in the Round Table Conference, he pleaded for living wages, decent working conditions and end to exploitative dominance of landlords over the peasants (Aditi Narayani,2021).

iii. The vision of Dr.B.R. Ambedkar towards an Agony Free India: Dr.B.R.Ambedkar's way for an agony free India is multi-folded which includes the solutions for issue of land ownership, industrialization and social equality. "The serious thought that Ambedkar had given to land issues is evident from the fact that in 1946, he had submitted a memorandum to the Constituent Assembly on behalf of his All India

Scheduled Caste Federation demanding nationalization of land. This memorandum is available under the title *States and Minorities*. In this document, besides seeking Constitutional rights for the Dalits and the minorities, he had also demanded that the Constitution should determine the economic structure of India – which should be state socialism under which land, education, insurance and industries are nationalized. He said that agriculture would be a state industry, and the state would divide the land available in each village into fields of standard size and lease them out to all the residents

of the village without any discrimination on the basis of caste or religion and in such a manner that there were no landlords, no tenants and no landless labourers. According to the memo, collective farming would be the norm and the state would arrange for water, equipment, seeds fertilizers, etc. The state would be empowered to tax the produce and take action against the lease-holders who violate the terms of the lease. Ambedkar said that state socialism was imperative for the fast-paced industrialization of the country and that private capitalism would lead to economic inequalities, just as it had done in Europe” (Kanwal Bharti, 2017). In a caste-based society like India, he wanted proportionate representation to every section of the society in political and non-political administration. Dr.B.R.Ambedkar has seen the ultimate solution in socio-political democracy with liberty, equality and fraternity. In a Social democracy, that he wanted, every individual in society shall get equal status as an individual only and nothing to be related with other matter. In political democracy, every individual shall get voting and representing rights equally. Dr.B.R.Ambedkar said “.....I will therefore turn to the constructive side of the problem. There is nothing new in it. What is your ideal society if you do not want Caste is a question that bound to be asked of you. If you ask me, my ideal would be a society based on liberty, equality and fraternity. And why not?....” SaudaAruna (2015).

VIII. Findings

Karl Marx has contributed much to understand the exploitation of working class during the process of so-called development. He has expected the proletarian revolution in the process which ultimately ends the trauma of labour force. Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule an Indian contemporary of Karl Marx has given a lengthy description on the plight of Shudra cultivators in India during the Peshwa’s Rule and advocated for funding on primary education by state as he believes education is the ultimate tool to achieve human rights and empowerment to end the misery of human beings. The high-altitude services of Savitri Bhai Phule, the wife of Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule during a Plague pandemic is an ultimate inspiration to do service to fellow human beings in troubled times. Dr.B.R.Ambedkar has given much folded solution to the problem of India’s

depressed classes which includes constitutional safeguards to the working classes along with Nationalization of land and industries. He called for proportionate representation in political and non-political administration. He wanted India with socio-political democracy with liberty, equality and fraternity. We found that it is the utmost relevance of prevalence of socio-political-economy thought of Karl Marx-Phule and Dr.B.R.Ambedkar in a view to sensitize the political set-up and civil society on poor and for the poor in the troubled times like lockdowns of Covid-19.

IX. Conclusion

There is enough thought and proposed set of measures to understand and to give the solution to the agony of the laborers as we have found in the views of Karl Marx-Phule and Dr.B.R.Ambedkar. The exploitation, vulnerability, economic poverty, social insecurity, day to day deprivation, unawareness of existing rights, state's indifference all that are described in their narration on the agony of laborers are reflected and exposed to the world during the lockdowns of covid-19. But how far the public action is backed with thought process on the poor and for the poor is a matter of concern. If the governments and civil society had the sensitivity to understand the thought of political economy on the poor and for the poor that of Karl Marx-Phule and Ambedkar, the crisis that Indian migrant laborers faced during the lock-down periods of Covid-19 would have been largely avoided if not in total. The missing perception on the poor migrant labour is evidence in declaring sudden and hard lock-downs which caused the foot prints along all the ways of India with the dropped blood of India's poor working class. Hence, the time reminds us of relevance to preserve the thought process on the poor and for the poor that of Karl Marx-Phule and Dr.B.R.Ambedkar in this present crisis.

X. References

1. Aditi Narayani (2021): 'Labourers are backbone of a capitalist economy. India can't leave them unuttered in Covid' on 13th May,2021, Print- An Online Portal.
<https://theprint.in/opinion/labourers-are-backbone-of-a-capitalist-economy-india-cant-leave-them-unattended-in-covid/657103/>
2. Anil Vargheese (2021): 'Jotirao Phule: The Mahatma Who Identified with Exploited Farmers' on April 15,2021, Forward Press: An online portal.
<https://www.forwardpress.in/2021/04/jotirao-phule-the-mahatma-who-identified-with-the-exploited-farmer/>
3. Harathi Vageeshan (2006): Brief Writings of Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule (in Telugu Pages 1-16), Hyderabad Book Trust, Hyderabad.
4. Harathi Vageeshan (2006a): Brief Writings of Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule (in Telugu, Pages17-30), Hyderabad Book Trust, Hyderabad.
5. Jadumani Mahanand (2020): 'India's Pandemic Response Needed Ambedkar's Vision of Social Security and Public Health', The Caravan, an online Journal of Politics and Culture, on 24th August,2020.
<https://caravanmagazine.in/policy/indias-pandemic-response-needed-ambedkars-vision-of-social-security-and-public-health>
6. Kanwal Bharti (2017): 'Ambedkar and Land Issues', an online portal Forward Press , on April 17, 2017.
<https://www.forwardpress.in/2017/04/ambedkar-and-land-issues/>
7. M.L.Jhingan (1995): " The Economics of Development and Planning" Page-99,28th Revised Edition, Kalyani Publishers Pvt Ltd., New Delhi.
8. M.L.Jhingan 1995-A , " The Economics of Development and Planning" Pages 100-101, 28th Revised Edition, Kalyani Publishers Pvt Ltd., New Delhi.
9. Neil J Smelson, Sociology of Collective Behaviour, in International Encyclopaedia of Social & Behavioural Sciences (Pages 157-162) archived on 01.10.2021.
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780080970868320190>
10. Sangiseti Srinivas (2020): "Social Scientist Savitri Bhai Phule" (in Telugu, Page-77), Forum for Concerned BCs, Hyderabad.
11. SaudaAruna (2015): "Philosophy of Caste Democracy/Annihilation of Caste, Page-614", Dasya Theatre, Hyderabad.