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ROW OVER "OFFICE OF PROFIT"

Rank opportunism of murky bourgeois politics

Jaya Bachchan, nominated to Rajya Sabha on a ticket of Mulayam Singh's Samajwadi Party, had to lose her membership of the Upper house as she was accused of holding an "Office of Profit" by virtue of her being the chairperson of the UP Film Development Corporation. One Congress worker of UP filed a petition against her before the President and the Election Commission (EC) seeking her disqualification on this ground and EC upheld it.

The legal position

The legal position is that Article 102 (a) of the Constitution of India says: "A person shall be disqualified for being chosen as, and for being, a member of either House of Parliament…. if he holds any office of profit under the Government of India or the Government of any State". The Article, however, exempts offices of ministers from being categorized as "Office of Profit" and empowers Parliament or State Assemblies to so exempt any other offices by law. In 1959, an act titled "The Parliament (Prevention of Disqualification) Act'' was passed. While Clause 2 of the said Act stipulated the conditions of disqualification, Clause 3 gives a list of ten categories like sheriffs of major cities, chief whips of the houses, members of senate or syndicate of an university etc. which are not to be counted as ''Office of Profit''. Hence, by implication, occupation of any premier position in any organization other than the specified categories will attract disqualification. But there is no clear definition of "Office of Profit" in either Constitution of India or The People's Representation Act 1951 and, therefore, there is lot of ambiguity on this question leaving scope for everyone to have and put forth his own interpretation. However, EC ruled that Jaya Bachchan has attracted all three conditions of disqualification under Article 102(a) and hence must be dismissed from the upper House.

Turn of events

Dismissal of Jaya Bachchan and that too with such a promptitude raised a lot of eyebrows. It may be recalled that the Bachchan family cherished a very close relationship with the Gandhi-Nehru dynasty. Super star Amitav Bachchan was a bosom friend of late Rajiv Gandhi and even became an MP of the Congress from Allahabad constituency. But for last few years, their relationship became extremely strained so much so that the Bachchans switched allegiance to Mulayam Singh Yadav who was not seeing eye to eye with the Congress because of his exigency of reigning in UP state politics. So, the Congress under Sonia Gandhi was looking for a suitable opportunity to harass and embarrass the Bachchans. In the meanwhile, Jaya became a Samajwadi member of Rajya Sabha and Amar Singh, the second-in-command to Mulayam, came out with an allegation that his telephone lines were being tapped at the instance of the Congress-led Central government. Since then the focus was turned on these duo and the Congress brought to the fore the issue of "Office of Profit" to dislodge them from the Upper house.

But the euphoria of the Congress leaders over Jaya's dismissal following EC's directive was short lived as Chandrababu Naidu's TDP, a new-found ally of Mulayam, filed a similar petition demanding disqualification of Sonia Gandhi, Karan Singh and T. Subbirama Reddy on similar ground. Sonia was accused of holding an ''Office of Profit" as chairperson of the National Advisory Committee (NAC) which has the rank and status of a cabinet minister. Even fingers were pointed at the Lok Sabha Speaker, a CPI(M) member as well as a host other MPs of the CPI (M), CPI, dependable allies of the Congress at the Center. This put the Congress Party in a quandary. Immediately, the political managers of the Congress were pressed into action to rescue its bigwigs and "Left" friends from the "Office of Profit" net. Finding no other alternative, the government aborted the budget session of Parliament to bring an Ordinance amending the Parliament (Prevention of Disqualification) Act, 1959 to head off fears of disqualification. It in fact sought to amend the Clause 3 of Article 102 (a) to broaden the list of exempted categories. Notably, the abrupt termination of the budget session was announced by the government after it was heard that the President,

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SUCI condemns despotism of Nepal King in throttling voice of the people

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, general secretary, SUCI, in a statement issued on 12 April, 2006, severely condemned the way autocratic King of Nepal, being aided and abetted by the US imperialists has unleashed inhuman torture upon the anti-government protesters demanding restoration of democracy in that country by massacring innocent civilians, rounding up peaceful demonstrators, detaining political leaders, students and professionals while denying the struggling Nepalese people every basic civil and democratic rights. Comrade Mukherjee also vehemently criticized the despicable role of the Indian government of being an indulgent onlooker to this butchering of democracy and, instead of mounting necessary diplomatic pressure on the despot King to accept the most legitimate demand of the common people to bring back democracy, is continuing to maintain tie and friendship with such a repressive monarch.

Calling upon the freedom loving and democratic minded people of the world to stand by the struggling people of Nepal, Comrade Mukherjee expressed total solidarity with the struggling people of Nepal in putting an end to this barbaric regime.

Observe 58th anniversary of SUCI on 24th April in a befitting manner

Congress, BJP, CPI(M) huddle to enjoying spoils of 'Office of Profit'

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acting on persistent demands from Mulayam, TDP and Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress, had referred to the EC the petitions seeking unseating of Sonia, Speaker Somnath Chatterjee and others. But the news of such a looming ordinance did not remain secret and the BJP desperately searching for an issue to come to limelight and stymie the accentuating factional squabbles it had been ridden with, lost no time in meeting the President to, what its leaders said, "apply brakes on the willfully wayward regime." They had swipe at the Congress for protecting Sonia through backdoor, demanded immediate reconvening of the Parliament and became vocal in demand of Sonia's ouster. The calculation was that a histrionic campaign on the issue would help the party come out of the state of despair and deal a telling blow to the Congress. However, the BJP's belligerent posture and visibly vulnerable position of Sonia in particular made the Congress initially deny any move to bring an ordinance to effect a backdoor salvage operation. But if that be the truth, what prompted the Congress-led government to convert a period of recess in Parliament into an indefinite adjournment?

Sonia's gimmick

At this point, Sonia tried to give a new twist to the controversy by announcing her resignation both from the Parliament as well as from the post of NAC chairperson and cunningly wanted to wear a martyr's halo as an escape route to the impending inevitable. As usual, she played a lot of theatrics, referred to "cry of an inner voice" and in the process tried to take the wind out of the sails of the Opposition. What followed in its trail was a shameless exhibition of sickening sycophancy with many Congress MPs and MLAs, desperate to curry favour with the Congress supremo for greener pastures, offering to quit as well. However, all this did not hold water as everyone could make out that such a decision did not sprout from any spirit of sacrifice but was impelling under the circumstances to avert a catastrophe. When some of the Congress leaders, forced to admit cooking up of an ordinance, tried to argue that Sonia might not have been aware of the decision to seek adjournment of Parliament or promulgate an ordinance, there was no taker to such a contrived explanation. Sonia's declaration to contest from Rae Bareilly again showed how grotesque had been the 'martyrdom' plank or "inner voice" theory.

Despicable role of CPI(M), CPI

The most dubious had been the role of the CPI(M), CPI. The CPI(M) leaders maintained that none of their members would resign on this ground as holding such posts being classified as "Office of Profit" was within the scope of discharging legislative duties and hence there was nothing immoral in it. Of course they skirted the question as to whether any tangible economic, political or social benefit was accruing to their members occupying such posts. The CPI(M) members did not even protest when the deputy speaker conveyed the decision to adjourn the Parliament sine die. But the public outrage over the issue prompted the CPI (M) leaders have a somersault they have been famous for and claim that they were not kept in the loop over the decision and preferred legislation on the issue.

BJP's predicament

In the meanwhile, the BJP found itself napping as well. In Jharkhand where it is running a ministry on a wafer-thin margin, most of the legislators including the chief minister found themselves on a tottering base since they were holding "Office of Profit". The situation was such that unless a Bill was passed in the house and that too with retrospective effect to protect its MLAs from disqualification, the government could collapse. So while the BJP's central leadership was mounting offensive on the Congress for rescue of Sonia through ordinance route, the same leaders pushed through the controversial bill in Jharkhand to secure its ministry. Soon senior BJP leaders like V.K. Malhotra, Sontosh Gangwar, Kailash Joshi and others found them in line of fire with petitions seeking disqualification filed against them. Complaints were lodged against several CPI(M) MLAs of Tripura as well. It also came to be known that Mulayam government in UP also tried to make a last ditch attempt to insulate its members by bringing a bill exempting 79 posts from the purview of "Office of Profit".

Politics of consensus

It thus soon dawned upon all these power-hungry bourgeois parties and politicians that unless some immediate action was taken to blunt the issue, none of them was safe as everyone was in one form or the other merrily enjoying such otherwise "forbidden" positions. According to a veteran parliamentarian, if the existing rule was invoked, there would have been, so to say, an epidemic both at the Center as well as the states. So it was advisable to bury the hatchet and refrain from opening the Pandora's Box. Some sources also said that there was a strong opinion in favour of scrapping the existing law lock, stock and barrel and bringing a fresh legislation to clear "all grey areas" over the definition of "Office of Profit". While the BJP leaders indicated to be in favour of a law "to plug the loopholes" in the rule governing "Office of Profit", the pseudo-Marxists like the CPI (M)-CPI, too, consented to such a legislative consensus. Immediately, the Congress leaders began hectic parleys to arrive at such a consensus and decided to prevail upon the EC in forestalling any expedient action on any petition on the "Office of Profit" imbroglio. Priya Ranjan Das Munshi, minister of Parliamentary Affairs, initiated dialogue with all the bourgeois and pseudo-Marxist parties to finalize the modalities. The Prime Minister also indicated that the issue of "doing away with the office of profit clause" would be examined "in the light of developments." Ultimately all the controversies, charges and counter charges, mudslinging and vitriolic diatribes were put to rest and the whole episode was hushed up overnight.

"Office of Profit" — not an isolated episode

This row over "Office of Profit" and the spate of incidents following the trail are no isolated events. These are inevitable in a moribund capitalist order anywhere in the world. "Offices of Profit" is no solitary turn of phrase that attained overnight acquaintance. Every time a scam or scandal surfaces, new terms and phrases are thrown up into public discourse. From letter rogatory to match fixing, sting operations to weapons of mass destruction, non- descript expressions emerge out of blue, send people scurrying for dictionaries to find their exact meanings and rediscover the multi-facades of the murky world of corrupt bourgeois politics. Latest in the list is the row over "Office of Profit". The monopoly-controlled media also play a dubious role. Whenever any such incident of corruption, malfeasance, misfeasance, pilferage or moral turpitude surfaces, it spices up juicy stories and serve them on a palatable saucy base for being relished by the people seething in anger at the misconduct and misdemeanor of the vote-based politicians, bureaucrats, police, military and other occupants of public positions and hot seats. But after some customary hue and cry and pretensions of cosmetic remedial measures; all leaping fire is doused, everything fizzles out. The guilty goes scot free, the prime accused evades punishment, the criminals are acquitted in the court of law in absence of "evidences", and the suspects emerge unscathed. While a section of people gets confused at the skilled performance by the ensemble cast of the frauds, criminals and forces of reaction, another section does make out that the media hype and rabble rousing is something to be a touch intriguing. But the majority of the people finding even the rudiments of democracy and fairness destroyed by the rustic roughnecks and ruffians are pushed into an irredeemable morass of frustration. Disgusted at the periodic dramaturgy, staged by the hypocrite cringing flunkies, hacks and punters masqueraded as political leaders cribbing to the voters, most of the people are developing a general apathy towards politics and holding politics responsible for everything hurtling towards disintegration and degeneration. More the toiling masses develop such indifference and negative feeling towards politics, more benefited are the ruling bourgeoisie and its henchmen and political managers who thrive on people's ignorance, inadequate political understanding and lurking frustration.

Role of a legislator in bourgeois democracy

It is incumbent on every right thinking person to understand the whole episode in proper perspective and act consciously to change the aberrant situation, clear the veritable mess. Coming back to the question of "Office of Profit", it is to be understood that during the advent

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KERALA ASSEMBLY POLLS

Alliance partners at centre vie for power, people left in the lurch

Kerala is going to polls in a staggered manner for the first time, the 3 day schedule for voting fixed as April 22, 29 and May 3. For the last four decades, the state has been alternatively under the rule of either Congress led United Democratic Front (UDF) or CPI(M) led Left Democratic Front (LDF). This time also these two combinations are being projected as the main contending forces in the monopoly-controlled media and an impression is sought to be created as if the electorates' choice should remain limited within these two only. Both the Congress and the CPI(M) along with their respective associates have been in power for substantial period of time and people of the state have been witnesses to the kind of rule provided by them and the type of policies they pursued. While bo2th the combinations of power-seeking parliamentary outfits on the eve of the polls are sparing no efforts to make customary presentations of their respective "success" stories, showering promises and taking swipe at each other to score a brownie point in the hustings, the toiling people of the state wonder if both of them were so "devoted" to the "development" and well-being of the common citizens, why is the state steadily going down the ladder on all counts; why is the picture so dismal, why is there steady deterioration in all spheres of life — social, political, economical or cultural?

Degeneration in every sphere of life

In spite of the all through prevailing backwardness in industrial development, whatever little the people of Kerala through struggle could achieve in the fields of education, health care, public distribution and electrification are also on the verge of ruination. In the arena of Education from primary to higher level it is now a spectacle of devastation. Healthcare system has been systematically destroyed. Public distribution system which had earlier provided a little bit of relief to the poor is in effect done away with. Even though there is enormous potential for hydel power generation in the state that remains to be tapped, electricity charges are soaring sky high. Even drinking water has become a dear commodity in Kerala, a state blessed with 42 perennial rivers and high rate of rainfall.

But above all, the severest of the problems is that of mounting unemployment. It had althrough been as if a *fate accompli* for the educated boys and girls of Kerala to hunt for jobs outside the state or outside the country, since employment opportunities had ever been so scarce. The situation did not change a bit under the rule of either UDF or LDF. Rather it has been worsening everyday.

Now upon the advent of capitalist globalization to implement which both the Congress and CPI(M) Fronts have been in fierce competition with each other, the employment situation has accentuated to the extreme. Traditional Industries of Kerala like Coir, Cashew nut, Handloom— all have collapsed. Thousands of small-scale industries are also doomed. Fishermen have become jobless and are starving as because multinationals have been granted permission for deep sea trawling and the subsidized Kerosene quota for fishing boats have been drastically curtailed. Similarly thousands of workers who were employed in Tea, Coffee or Cardamom plantations have been uprooted and thrown out as a result implementation of the capitalist globalization and WTO directives. Already 3.5 lakhs industries have been closed rendering several lakhs jobless

Along with this, the policy of downsizing of the Government carried out under the so-called Modernizing Government Programme (MGP) which is in fact shirking off from many of the responsibilities and social welfare activities of the government eliminating many of the posts and non-filling of vacancies, has further strictured the avenues of job for the educated youths. Contractualisation of jobs in the government and other sectors has become rampant. School Teachers, College Lecturers and even Doctors are now appointed in the state on contract basis.

Added to this, the clear pro-monopoly shift in the labour policy, the anti-labour enactments and introduction of the Special Economic Zones where savage exploitation of the workers has become the order of the day have all made the employment scenario harrowing and explosive. The introduction of Value Added Tax (VAT) and the entry of big multinational corporations in the field of retail trade are further threatening thousands in their sustenance by way of self-found job of small trading. Peasants even in Kerala are committing suicide due to debt trap and extreme ruination. The official figure has crossed 498 whereas the real number would at least be double.

So it is clear as daylight that all the problems in people's life have multiplied and intensified steeply following ruthless capitalist exploitation and onslaught of capitalist globalization.

The most significant aspect of the present political situation in Kerala is hence the total subjugation of the state to the policies of Globalization as dictated through World Bank, IMF and Asian Development Bank (ADB) equally by viz. UDF and LDF and the speedy implementation of those policies. "Development of the State" has become the catchword of each government and all political parties belonging to the establishment side.

So-called hue of 'development'

The present UDF government calls itself a 'Government of Development' that stands for making the state the most desired destination of capital investment, Indian or foreign. For that it says it at any cost will bring about congenial investor friendly industrial climate and create necessary infrastructure. Huge loans have been availed from the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the purpose with stringent conditions of reform and restructuring in every field and accepting their sacrosanct dictum that "Private Capital is the real motive force of development and government should function only as facilitator of the same, itself not becoming an entrepreneur in any case". In fact the last LDF Government went a long way in this direction so that it had become relatively easy for the UDF to advance further treading the same path. LDF completed its term with a debt burden of around Rs. 30,000 crores for the State and today it stands at Rs. 49,000 crores. All the five municipality corporations of the state which are controlled by CPI(M) have decided to take hefty loans from ADB in the name of Urban Development, conditions being, inter alia, abolition of all free public water taps and compulsory collection of 'user charge' for whatever services or amenities provided, whether already in existence or newly introduced.

Let us take another example. The erstwhile UDF Government initiated the disastrous programme of DPEP in education which was then earnestly pursued by the LDF government that followed. Ultimately this out and out anti-people policy rang the death knell of public education in Kerala. Self-financing system from plus 2 onwards to higher education levels, which was spearheaded by the previous LDF government and widely extended by the present UDF government is sweeping the state. Courtesy both UDF and LDF, education right from pre-primary level to research level including professional education has become a roaring trade. Obviously, the field of education is eluding the wards of common people.

Perhaps the most surreptitious move of the LDF in line with the prescription of capitalist globalization had been the introduction of 'Peoples Plan' during its last stint in the government. The leaders of LDF argued that under this plan, decentralization of power and empowerment of people in Panchayathi Raj would take place through active participation of the people in the planning process. As a sequel to this, a wide network of local level self-employed groups, woman's committees called 'Kudumbasrees' and neighbourhood self help groups all engaged in so-called micro-financing activities have cropped up. This has become an easy means for implementing Modernizing Government Programme (MGP) and the globalization policy of passing on to the shoulders of panchayats and other local bodies all responsibilities of welfare activities and thereby allowing the government to shirk off all its responsibilities in this regard..

Already essential services like supply of drinking water, running primary health centers, educational institutions and many other activities incumbent on the Social Welfare department and ICDS have been surreptitiously shifted to the panchayats and municipalities. Outcome, as expected, has been disastrous. This had been nothing but a well-hatched conspiracy to end

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Kerala Assembly polls

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up in all-out privatization. The present UDF Government could run with amazing speed in fully implementing MGP only because the erstwhile LDF government had prepared the ground well in advance. Consensus between UDF and LDF in effecting all these anti-people pro-monopolist policies is so glaringly manifest.

This is the kind of 'development' all these vote-based power-greedy political parties of different hues sharing power at various levels has been trumpeting so vociferously. This so-called development plank of theirs has come through the channel of capitalist globalization

Mock fight on the eve of poll

Though the UDF and LDF have no basic difference in so far as policies and principles are concerned, they pose to be great rivals in the field of election. For public consumption, they make snipe at each other; even call each other by name to make it to the governmental seat. Mrs. Sonia Gandhi recently visiting the state declared that LDF is their main enemy in Kerala because it is putting up hindrances before undertaking developmental activities. The CPI(M) to prove its bona fide as a better political manager of the class in power as well as a more dependable contractor for carrying out the 'developmental activities' subservient to the interest of the ruling class took out a month-long Jatha that it called "Jatha for comprehensive development of the State" led by their State Secretary Mr. Pinarai Vijayan himself. None other than Mr.V.S.Achuthanandan reportedly to be at loggerhead with the Pinnari group flagged off the Jatha. The CPI also organized a similar "Peoples Jatha for State's Development". Not only this. The CPI(M) leaders convened an international seminar to discuss the questions of Kerala's 'development' and declared that it is they who are serious about the issue and not UDF. And, as is evident to all, the type of 'development' both of them are espousing for is one and the same, ditto of globalization schemes formulated by world imperialism-capitalism of which the ruling Indian bourgeoisie is an inalienable part, to perpetuate its moribund class rule through increased dose of loot, plunder, deceit and deception.

Politics of opportunism

The people of Kerala are also disgusted at the way the power-sharing parties and combinations of all hues, right or left, are infested with rank opportunism, limitless corruption, nasty group squabbles and all sorts of conspiratorial practices. The Congress as most trusted representative of the ruling exploiting bourgeoisie had all through been seen to practice dubious politics. By striking a deal with Mr. Karunakaran, the dissident Congress leader, swallowing whatever venom they had spit on each other till the other day the Congress and its allies in the state have virtually challenged the self-respect and integrity of every Keralite. It is known to all that Karunakaran dissociated from the Congress not on any question of principle but because of having failed to extract the pound for himself and his followers. Insatiable greed for power, nepotism and corruption of highest degree has been the hallmark of politics of the Karunakaran faction of the Congress. Yet neither the Congress nor Karunakaran is ashamed of tying knot lest both of them fail to make it to the hot seat of power.

This very Karunakaran who has now shifted to the UDF camp to get a share in the booty had been an ally of CPI(M)-led LDF till yesterday. They jointly contested last local body elections and Trivandrum by-election. Even today, many of the panchayats and municipalities are ruled by LDF with direct support of Karunakaran faction. What should one call this is changing allegiance spurred by exigency of vote? How clean can come out even the CPI(M) who did not hesitate in colluding with such rank opportunists to capture seats of power?

Sheer opportunist politics practiced by all these so-called state level or national level parties boasting of sizeable representations in the legislature beggars description. While at the centre the Congress, CPI(M), CPI are all bosom pals, in West Bengal and Kerala , they pretend to be opposed to each other. On the other hand, in the neighbouring state of Tamilnadu CPI(M) is an ally of the so-called progressive alliance of the Congress, DMK and even Indian Union Muslim League. In UP it is with Mulayam Singh Yadav to take an anti-Congress posture. In Assam the CPI(M) is in alliance with a rabid parochial force like AGP. Now in Kerala, not only Jama-e-th-Islami, even PDP, a most fanatic Muslim outfil have extended open support to the CPI(M). How different is the CPI(M) then from the Congress in so far as naked exhibition of rank opportunism and limitless double speak are concerned?

Hoax of 'development'

As we have indicated earlier, globalization is a reflection of the severe crisis the world imperialism-capitalism is enmeshed in. More is the crisis; more aggravated is the internal contradiction of the bourgeoisie class. Also the capitalist system at this moribund stage is utterly corrupt, devoid of rudimentary scruple and ruthless.

This all embracing crisis and aberration of the system is getting reflected in the conduct and activities of all these parties subserving capitalism for pelf and power. Open group quarrels, factional feuds, crass opportunism, unthinkable magnitude of corruption, abysmal fall in moral-ethical-cultural standard etc. have become rampant in them. Theirs is a politics of self-aggrandizement and of least concern for the people.

The pseudo- Marxists like the CPI(M), CPI have also jumped into the fray of wooing monopoly capital and holding brief for globalization policies. Hence, it is no wonder that they have also degenerated to such a level. It might cause pain among the left-minded people of Kerala but such is inevitable for any party masquerading as Marxists but serving the decadent moribund capitalism breeding all maladies and aberrations, plight and penury, distress and disquiet.

In West Bengal, Buddhadeb Bhattacharya under the deceptive slogan of 'development' is shamelessly advocating and speedily implementing capitalist globalization policies, offering red carpet to native and foreign monopolists, curbing legitimate working class struggles, pleading for class collaborationist approaches and ruthlessly crushing democratic mass movements. Ashim Dasgupta, state finance minister and CPI(M) leader, became the chairman of the empowering committee to enforce Value Added Tax (VAT) throughout the country as a precursor to the entry of the multinationals in retail trade by ousting small traders from the sector. All these are going on in the name of 'development'. In Kerala also, the CPI(M) is selling the same theory of poor-killing 'development'.

SUCI represents alternative politics of the people

As against this politics of opportunism, deception, doublespeak and capitulation, the SUCI, founded by Com. Shibdas Ghosh, great leader of the proletariat, is holding high the noble banner of Marxism-Leninism, representing the alternate value-based politics, organizing people's movement on the burning problems of the people of Kerala. The SUCI firmly believes that for the suffering people of the country, there is no other way but to take recourse to democratic mass movements which it has all along been trying to develop. In the course of conducting these struggles on the edifice of higher moral-ethical-cultural standard and upholding people's interest as supreme shall emerge a genuine alternative to this murky vote-based stinking nasty bourgeois politics?

Many notable movements have been led by us in the State especially in educational field, against the pernicious black-sand mining project in Alleppey Coast, solidly supporting the striking teachers and government employees and the struggling small traders and merchants against VAT etc. The prominent right-thinking personalities of the State could be arrayed in the forefront of many of such movements.

Viewing election also as a part of this struggle, the SUCI is contesting in1 26 constituencies in 11 districts of Kerala. Our candidates are all tested and tried soldiers of legitimate democratic movement against the mounting capitalist onslaught on the people. We appeal to the people to judge all the questions discussed above dispassionately on the anvil of logic and reason before deciding upon their verdict in the hustings. Should the consideration be as to who will win and form the government which inevitably will be an anti-people one implementing the capitalist globalization policies subserving the interest of the crisis-ridden ruling class of the country? Or the criteria should be who, if elected, will reflect the voice of people's resistance movement against all these disastrous policies, uphold people's cause inside the house, fight for realizing genuine demands of the people? We leave the judgment to the thinking people of Kerala.

CAPITAL ACCOUNT CONVERTIBILITY

Exposing country to inevitable catastrophe

Indian Prime Minister on March 18 last, asked the finance minister and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to revisit the subject of Capital Account Convertibility (CAC) and come out with a roadmap based on current economic realities of the country which, according to him, are very comfortable for the purpose. For long, full convertibility of rupee or in other words freedom to convert rupee into any foreign currency to buy capital assets abroad, has been seen as a Holy Grail by the proponents of capitalist globalization. In fact, in India also, there has been a cry to switch to such full convertibility since the time ruling capitalist class embarked upon so-called economic liberalization in the beginning of nineties.

Background

Based on the recommendation of a committee under Dr. C. Rangarajan, the former governor of RBI, the exchange rate of the rupee was made market-determined. In August 1994, Indian government accepted Article VIII of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and adopted Current Account Convertibility. But at that time a severe Balance of Payment (BOP) crisis triggered by severe exchange market imbalances engulfed the South East Asian countries like Thailand, S. Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippines. In all these countries whose currencies were made fully convertible fell short by 40 to 80% against US dollar leading to massive flight of capital outside their respective countries. There was almost a run on the economics of these countries. However, India could successfully ward off the contagion as it did not allow rupee to be fully convertible on capital account. Hence the Indian government then led by the Congress preferred to go slow on this count and the RBI adopted a cautious approach. It was said that unless India gained some stability and comfort in certain macro-economic areas like forex reserve, rate of inflation and fiscal deficit coupled with strengthening the position of rupee in the international market, it would not be prudent to give green signal to full convertibility.

It was during the time of former BJP-led NDA government that the issue was re-opened about three years back. The then finance minister Jaswant Singh announced that CAC would be implemented alongwith conferring dual citizenship to the Non-resident Indians (NRIs) and other extensions of the liberalization process. He hoped that such moves would facilitate inflow of NRI capital in a big way to Indian economy to boost investment, economic activities, employment generation, etc. Now the Congress-led UPA government fully backed by the CPI (M)-CPI has taken fresh initiative to complete the task. A committee headed by SS Tarapore, former RBI deputy governor, who earlier chaired such a committee, has been constituted to finalize the modalities. What is CAC, how does it differ from full convertibility of current account, what had been the stipulations by the erstwhile Tarapore Committee, whether and how far have those been met and what are the dangers the move is fraught with in case there are shortcomings in this regard, whether currency reserves and exchange rate can be sufficient ground for such a vital decision and finally despite all these considerations, what is the real moti1ve behind the government's insistence on the matter are to be judged keeping the interest of the working people of the country in the fore.

Basics of foreign exchange

Before we proceed to understand what is capital account convertibility we need to know why does the price of a currency fluctuate at the world market? Answer is simple. It depends on the demand and supply of that currency in the market. Scarcity of supply coupled with high demand pushes up the price of a currency making it dearer for other currency holders. Let us assume that dollar is such a currency in high demand and to acquire one dollar, we need to pay Rs.45/-. So price of a dollar is Rs.45/-. If we now want to import goods worth 100 dollars, we need to pay Rs.4500/-. Hence, this 100 dollars represent the exchange demand in the world market of those goods, which we acquire by supplying Rs.4500/-. On the contrary, a foreigner supplies 100 dollars to meet his demand for importing goods worth Rs.4500/- from India. Let us suppose, in the international trade, at a particular point of time, foreigners are in demand of Indian goods worth Rs.9000/-. So they pay $200 to import those from India or we export goods worth $200. But our demand of foreign goods is of $400. So we pay Rs.18, 000/- to import the stock of the foreign countries, (assuming dollar to be the only foreign currency of exchange) export merchandise worth Rs.18, 000/-. Hence, there is a deficit of $200 or Rs.9000/- on the trade or current account. In an environment where the demand for import far outstrips the export, the value of dollar compared to rupee is destined to go up if the market is free from any restrictions. So the government through RBI was till the other day pegging down the exchange rate of dollar vis-à-vis Rupee say at Rs.45/- by meeting excess demand of dollar through supply at Rs.45/- per dollar from its foreign exchange reserve of dollars. But since the foreign exchange reserve of RBI was not so abundant to meet unlimited demand, there were lots of restrictions on such exchange and RBI functioned as the exchange control authority. But with introduction of the policies of capitalist globalization-liberalization, many such restrictions began to be removed in a phased manner.

Current Account Convertibility

As a first step, the external value of rupee was allowed to be fully determined by the market forces insofar as trade account (i.e. import or export of movable goods or merchandise) was concerned. This is what is known as Current Account Convertibility implemented in 1993. The exporters could now sell their earnings at the free market rates to the banks while the importers could buy the same from the banks at the prevailing market rates from time to time. Thus all trade related expenses, interest payments of loans availed by the corporates, business travels and even remittances for family living expenses started enjoying full convertibility benefits.

It may appear that having been market determined, the value of dollar is expected to increase. So in rupee terms, cost of foreign goods will go up and concomitantly its demands will go down. Conversely, the foreigners will be able to buy Indian goods at a cheaper price and hence export demand will receive boost. But does it mean that the exchange value of dollar will stabilize at a point when declining import and expanding export will match each other? No. This cannot happen because it is not only in bilateral trade that currency exchange takes place. The domain of capital assets attracts a much larger exchange of foreign currency. For example, Indians can park their savings abroad while foreigners can invest their capital in India either in the form of direct investment in projects (FDI) or portfolio investment (purchase of shares, bonds and such other tradable capital market instruments). Hence, to peg down the value of dollar vis-a-vis rupee at a particular level is deemed to be possible only when the demand and supply of dollar will even out demand and supply of rupee in both trade (current account) and capital asset transaction (capital account).

In the globalized capitalist economy, there is a severe market crisis endemic of the system itself. Falling purchasing power of the people groaning under ruthless capitalist exploitation is triggering this insoluble crisis. Unable to find avenues for investment of capital in industry and productive areas, the ruling capitalists of different countries, desperate to earn maximum profit, are now diverting its capital towards speculative capital market, realty and such other areas. Hence, it has become imperative for the capitalist class to remove all fetters on cross-border transaction of capital assets and liberalization of speculative market operations. The move of the Indian capitalist class towards Capital Account Convertibility is to be viewed in this perspective only.

Capital Account Convertibility (CAC)

So, it is clear that Capital Account Convertibility means rupee can be freely converted into foreign currencies for acquisition of capital assets. It would also mean that banks could accept deposits in any currency and would not need any prior approval of any convertibility. So one fine morning the rich and affluent Indians will find that if they so wish, they may use their rupees to buy gold or a house or any share or bond denominated in foreign currency anywhere in the world. RBI will stand ready to accept its own paper money for such purpose. This will be a wholesale auction market of foreign currencies and wholesale dealers will compete with each other to bid for gold or foreign exchange

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Capital account convertibility

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on offer. The moneyed Indians seeking greener pastures in overseas capital investment will come as retail clients to these wholesalers.

Incidentally, there is a difference between full currency convertibility and a fully open capital account. Currency convertibility refers to the absence of any restriction on the holding of foreign currency by residents and of national currency by foreigners and on free conversion between currencies. It does not concern with the restrictions on the type and quantity of non-currency assets that residents can hold abroad or foreigners can hold in the country. What the government is currently aiming at is full conversion of both.

Road map is already being traversed

Though the RBI authorities were loath to remove all restrictions on CAC at one stroke, RBI and the government over the last few years have gradually liberalized many capital account transactions. Besides reducing procedural formalities particularly for exporters and importers, Indian companies have been allowed to undertake agricultural activities overseas and invest an amount equal to their net worth (share capital + retained earning) outside India. Resident Indians who can remit upto $25,000 annually for specified purposes, can also acquire property overseas and open bank accounts abroad. Indian mutual funds have been allowed to invest upto $2 billion in foreign capital market. Indian companies can also cumulatively raise upto $12 billion annually through External Commercial Borrowing (ECB) route (raising loan denominated in foreign currency from abroad). Indian corporate houses are also allowed to issue Global Depository Receipts (GDRs) and American Depository Receipts (ADRs) (a devise to allow overseas investors trade on the shares of Indian companies through an intermediary instrument known as depository receipts). Similarly, foreign companies have the option to list their shares on Indian Stock Exchanges through Indian Depository Receipts. Following recommendation of Sodhani Committee Report (1995), a plethora of relaxation and concessions were made available to NRIs for investment in India.

Indian Banks have also been authorized to deal in foreign exchange markets abroad - say borrow and invest abroad upto 15% of their unimpaired Tier I capital. As a step ahead, the Indian as well as foreign banks operating in India are now making a beeline for special economic zones (SEZs) in India to set up offshore banking units (OBUs) where they will keep foreign denominated accounts of business entities as well as individuals and conduct business involving non-resident foreign currency denominated assets and liabilities. Both foreign and some Indian banks will thus have the freedom to move capital in and out of these zones and thus act as catalysts to make capital more convertible. State Bank of India has already funded the Maha Mumbai SEZ near Mumbai and planning to start OBUs in the SEZ to finance projects. A good number of foreign banks operating in India are also preparing to set up shops in SEZs to take advantage of tax holidays and more operational flexibility.

Arguments in Favour of CAC

It is argued that CAC will generate three major benefits; i) augmenting investible resources in the country through greater access to foreign capital, ii) overcoming weaknesses in the domestic financial architecture through access to international capital markets and iii) enhancing domestic savings by expanding the portfolio choice of domestic savers to include foreign assets. But are all these benefits so easy to pour in and if so, for whom?

For example, if ECB route is liberalized, the prime borrowers could, instead of availing loan from Indian Banks at relatively higher interest, shift to low cost international debt causing a systematic crisis in the domestic banking sector and adverse knock-on effect on domestic saving. As a counter pressure, there can be drastic fall in interest rate on bank savings in India putting common people in severe hardship. Similarly, opening up opportunities of investment abroad is of relevance to corporate houses, monopolists and high net worth individuals (HNIs) commanding huge funds. What has it to do with the common savers or the poor struggling day in and day out to make both ends meet?

Are even preconditions fulfilled for CAC

It is said that the Indian economy is now very stable, strong and growing to be formidable enough to absorb any kind of exogenous shocks and preclude flight of capital as was seen in the South East Asian crisis as well as crisis of Mexico and Argentina. How far true is the claim? Some major requirements for CAC were stipulated earlier by the expert committees. These included bringing down gross fiscal deficit to GDP ratio at 3.5%, building up sufficient foreign exchange reserve, pegging down inflation at any average of 3-5% on a sustained basis and lowering the debt servicing ratio (i.e. the outgo of government funds towards interest payments on borrowings as a percentage to total government expenditure). The finance minister of the Congress-led government is boasting that fiscal deficit is "slated" to come down to 3.8% of GDP next fiscal year, wholesale price-based inflation rate is hovering over 4% so far, current account deficit is below 3% and country's foreign debt is lower by $20 billion than the country's forex reserve. And he is overwhelmed by skyrocketing of BSE Sensex (Index reflecting market price movement of a basket of 30-odd shares of Bombay Stock Exchange on speculative Secondary market) calling it an indication of the strength of and confidence in Indian economy which he "expects" to grow by 8%.

All these are baseless – both theoretically and factually. Gross Fiscal deficit figure as given in the last budget is a whopping Rs.1, 32,220 crores while 89% of this deficit is on account of servicing debt amounting to Rs.20, 00,000 crores. Further, the fiscal deficit is being managed by drastically curtailing the allocation towards social benefits and public welfare measures whereas spending is increased in unproductive sectors like defence and for meeting the head-heavy administration and profligacy of the ministers and bureaucrats. Non-performing assets (NPA) or bad debt figures (defaulters being big monopolists, corporate houses) are over Rs.1, 50,000 crores. India's current external debt is as high as Rs.5, 31,521 crores ($122,147 billion) including NRI deposit of Rs.l, 42,734 crores. Foreign currency reserve in fiscal year 05-06 stood at $148.6 bn and in the budget speech, the finance minister admitted that it is being eroded. Total increase of foreign exchange reserve by $6.6 bn in current fiscal year till 24/3/05 was significantly lower than $27.64 bn in 04-05. Though current account deficit is declared to be less, the fact is that trade deficit (import minus export) is up. So where is the comfort? It is well known to all that the GDP growth of all South East Asian countries as well as Mexico and Argentina were shown to be quite high. Yet they could not avert the crisis of large-scale flight of capital. The currencies of five south East Asian countries fell by 40-80% against dollar overnight and there was a run on their banks. A hoard of forex reserves proved to be hopelessly inadequate to shore up an exchange rate perceived to be unrealistic by the market.

Equally deceptive is the claim of containing inflation. We know that all sorts of manipulations are resorted to (like artificial pegging down of wholesale price indices etc) in arriving at the figure of inflation. If one takes into account the quantum of deficit financing (extra currency notes printed to meet budgetary shortfalls) and black money in circulation, the figure will jump upwards in multiples. Moreover, the government of India, subserving class interest of the ruling moribund bourgeoisie, is cunningly pursuing deflationary economics to rein the rate of inflation. Notwithstanding chronic recession in the economy, it is discouraging public spending by taking all possible steps in arresting if not systematically depleting the purchasing power of the people thereby stooping them to lowered standard of living. It has been revealed that the consumption level of the rural poor constituting 80% of the populace has plummeted to the level of the worst famine of 1943. Added to this, is the swelling number of unemployed. 80% of the rural destitute have no job for even 100 days a year and are forced to work at abysmally low wage. According to the government statistics, the number of registered unemployed in last four years has crossed 2.25 crores. Add to this the lakhs of workers loosing job everyday because of closure, lay-off, retrenchment or VRS. While the toiling millions are so pauperized, ruined in a planned manner, the wealth of a handful of rich is overflowing. A recent study has shown that a few rich Indians figuring in the list of topmost affluents in the world have amassed a fabulous wealth of that generates earning of Rs.80 crores per day as return on their investment. This is the spectacle of the "strong", "vibrant", "growing" Indian economy that the ruling class and its servitors find

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Profligacy and pilferage ransacking public exchequer

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of capitalism and parliamentary democracy as its political superstructure, certain codes and norms in keeping with the rising democratic principles and values, were envisaged for being observed by the elected representatives to the legislatures. It was envisaged that such legislators entrusted with the responsibility of framing law and play overseer role in governance ought to be men of character, selfless, fearless, patriotic and dedicated to the cause of public welfare. Hence, they were expected not to indulge in or involved with any activity, occupy any post or position that might come in the way of their discharging their socio-political obligation as members of Parliament, bias them in expressing views and opinions, lure them towards making personal gains. Even today, those who nurture the true bourgeois values and democratic principles expect the legislators to reflect that standard.

All pervasive degeneration in decadent capitalism

But as capitalism, in the course of its inexorable law, became moribund, decadent, enmeshed in insoluble crisis, an obstacle before social progress, degeneration devoured each and every area of bourgeois system including much trumpeted parliamentary democracy. More the days are rolling by, more pronounced, acute and all-pervading is this degeneration. Membership of legislatures is no longer considered to be a position of selfless social service but a hot seat of power to be grabbed at any cost and made full use of for serving narrow sectarian interest and self-aggrandizement through dubious means. As against becoming emissaries of the people, the bourgeois politicians and parties as well as anybody subserving bourgeois class interest are increasingly getting isolated from the people, stand condemned for all kinds of wrong acts and so can not expect to survive on popular support. Hence, they are resorting to all sorts of questionable means, entering into shady deals, adopting all sorts of corrupt practices in order to sustain themselves in the rendezvous of power. As is experienced by everyone, the elections are gradually being reduced to a farce, being totally manipulated by money, muscle and media power. All possible steps are being taken by the capitalist state through its various wings and organs as well as subservient governments either by severely hiking deposit money, imposing blanket ban on various time-tested modes of propaganda or curtailing inalienable rights to express free opinion to ensure that genuine representatives of the people can not get elected to the Houses. Instead, only those chosen by the class are made to flock inside the legislature to mock even the barest precept of parliamentary democracy.

So there is a rat race among the aspirant parties and politicians to curry favour with ruling capitalism, secure a space in the list of 'favourites' and resort to treasure hunting through all spurious means and fishy routes besides receiving hefty funding from the monopolists, MNCs and foreign capital. And inside the House, both the ruling party and the opposition work in tandem to indiscriminately abuse their power and position by finding newer tricks to fill up their respective coffers through swindling public exchequer as well as buttress petty-political aspirations. There has been massive raise in the parks, privileges and facilities to the ministers and legislators. Profligacy and reckless spending on the ministers have gone to such an extent that even Comptroller of Accounts could not, despite many cover up measures, hide the fact. Besides, huge chunk of money is being handed over to the legislators through one scheme or the other for being usurped without any accountability. Recent revelation of laundering public fund available

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Capital account convertibility

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ripen for Capital Account Convertibility.

Disastrous consequence the move entails

So it is obvious that all these 'fact' presentations are highly conjectural and the continuous spurt in speculative secondary stock market index is due to incessant pumping in of Foreign Institutional Investors' (FIIs) money, most of which represent speculative foreign capital and the Indian black money recycled through hawala route and sub account or Participatory Note (PN) mechanism. One would recall the brouhaha about PNs a few years back. In that last budget also, plethora of concessions and relaxation have been announced to facilitate inflow of FIIs and NRI investment in speculative capital market. Thus it is a 'bubble economy' that is being eulogized as growth. According to some analysts, Indian economy is highly overvalued, even as high as 35 times and hence one cannot wish away the apprehension that once the bubble bursts as it happened in South East Asia or Latin America, the consequence will be disastrous.

Fitch, an international rating agency, noted that while the Indian government has been taking pride in growing forex reserves it cannot conceal deterioration in the health of public finances which shows no sign of abatement in near future. A lot is being talked of stability of economy. It ought to be reiterated that instability is hallmark of crisis-ridden moribund capital economy. As pointed out long back by Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, our leader, teacher, guide and one of the foremost Marxist thinkers of the era, capitalism is now haunted by a shadow of market crisis. It is trying to somehow tackle a crisis only to be plunged into a greater crisis. Thus it is a question of moving from one instability to yet more acute instability. In the instant case also, to put it simply, what determines the demand and supply of dollar or rupee in capital account? The quantum of foreign investment whether in capital assets or in portfolio is dependant on the expected rate of return. So if rate of return is higher overseas, there will be flight of capital out of the country. If at any point of time, foreign investors think that return on investment is not adequate or the return is not commensurate with the risk involved, they would forthwith withdraw from here and search for better avenues somewhere else. Even domestic capital also will move out of the country. This will push the value of foreign currencies, dollar, pound or Euro as the case may be, against rupee. As fallout of that, import cost will go up, exports cost will fall. Prices of imported goods will soar, even the stock market will crash. There will be marked dwindle in the value of savings of the common people. Massive crisis will devour industrial and agricultural sectors devastating the economic life of the people further. The sequence of events in the wake of CAC can expose Indian economy to greater shocks in absence of fiscal consolidation and improvement of health of the banking system.

Why CAC then

The real motive behind CAC decision of the government is, therefore, not actuated by the need of hunting foreign investment in Indian for development purpose as is sought to be impressed by the ruling class and its servitors. Speculative finance capital can find a temporary destination in India but instability of world capitalism coupled with narrow base and fiscal as well as financial disorders of Indian market might well see them withdrawing massively at any time. Forex reserves and appreciation of money in a volatile world capitalist market threatened with global recession can never be sufficient guarantee. The truth lies elsewhere. As a former bank chairman observed way back in 1997, "Experiences of relatively developed nations say that there will be more MNCs on the domestic soil and only efficient players will survive."

So like erstwhile BJP-led NDA government, the Congress-led CPI (M)-backed UPA government is also wedded to the task of helping Indian monopoly capital grow multinational and be important players in the globalized capitalist market. The aspirant Indian bourgeois seeks fulfillment of its desire by emerging as an imperialist power and finding a berth in the company of the imperialist G-7 countries. However colossal may be the price to be paid by the common people as they are paying today, this is the direction of the Indian economic planners supported by all the parliamentarian parties. CAC will open up avenues for the Indian monopolists to freely venture abroad and bulge their capital no matter what ruination it might bring to the people. It is the narrow sectarian class need of the exploiting ruling bourgeoisie that is working behind the decision of CAC.

Will the Indian working people allow the country to go Mexican or South East Asian way and invite further devastation? Or they will come forward to thwart the pernicious move and join the legitimate struggle in defence of their right to live?

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Row over "Office of Profit"

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under MPLADS is a case in point. Similarly, cash-for-question scam exposed how these unscrupulous corrupt politicians of the establishment shamelessly take advantage of their House membership in making quick bucks. In the Telgi stamp fraud case or shady defence deals, involvement of political heavyweights, both from the ruling dispensation as well as opposition is an open secret.

Till the other day, there was no limit to the number of ministers that could be appointed. It often happened that to quell dissidence or secure necessary number on the floor of the House either for forming ministry or stall fall of government, ministerial berths were liberally distributed causing huge drainage to public exchequer. It became so rampant that the authorities were forced to impose some restriction on the number of ministers.

Gifting positions of benefit to distribute largesse

But that did not deter the power-brokers and power-seekers from continuing squandering of public fund by finding attractive alternative routes. A host of new posts, most of which are redundant, are being created everyday in government run institutions, various corporations and NGOs. Constitution of high power committees, formation of this or that council have become daily affairs. Those who can not be accommodated in the ministry as well as the opposition members are made chairpersons or heads of these organizations or committees with plethora of benefits, parks and other facilities. Some of these organizations are also flushed with funds mostly sourced from public exchequer which these appointed functional heads can readily lay a hand on. This route has proved to be so lucrative that even ministers are craving for such appointments 'in addition to their own cabinet berth'. And it does not require too much of intelligence to understand that by virtue of occupying these 'gifted' posts, the incumbents derive substantial economic, political as well as status-based social benefits. Viewed from this angle, none can deny that each of the posts described above is virtually an "Office of Profit". Thus, while maintaining a façade of so-called parliamentary democracy comprising government and opposition, both the treasury bench and opponent members are conniving with each other in ransacking public money as well as having a tryst with avalanche of benefits at public cost. Thus the opposition is virtually purchased by the government side and the very essence of bourgeois democracy demanding a crucial overseer role of the opposition stands brazenly flouted. Of course, besides all this, hoarding huge money through corrupt practices and pilferage goes on unabated.

Abuse went unabated disdaining prohibitive legislation

In the instant case also, all such money laundering, merry making and occupation of various privilege-generating posts without least of qualms were going on despite the fact that a prohibitive legislation in regard to holding "Office of Profit" has been in operation. After almost 40 years, when, as a sequel to settling some personal score, the legal position became public, all the parties and forces allegiant to ruling capitalism are huddled together to blunt the 'disturbing' provision. Reportedly the initial attempt was to banish the clause on "Office of Profit" from the law book. But fearing a public backlash in that event, the beneficiaries of the "Office of Profit" are now trying to work out an alternative leeway to hush up the issue. This is the real face of Sonia's 'inner voice- led sacrifice' Advani-Vajpayee's 'party with a difference', Mulayam's *samajwad* or Leftist (!) mooring of the CPI(M), CPI.

Incidentally, a debate has been floated by some quarters of interest that occupying a premier position in a private organization should not be deemed to be holding an "Office of Profit". This is no tenable an argument rather a cunning ploy to make the issue convoluted. As discussed earlier, the role of the legislators was sought to be of 'neutral benevolence' and hence it is immaterial whether the "Office of Profit" is under the aegis of the government or any private house so long material benefit, economic, political or social, accrue to the beneficiary legislator. Rather it is more pernicious if a member of Assembly or Parliament holds a private "Office of Profit" since he or she, in that event would be more likely to be disposed towards that private organization and thus become representative of vested interest. In fact, with induction of top industrialists and corporate bigwigs in the legislatures, there is already substantial dilution of the principle of neutrality as brought out in the doctrine of bourgeois democracy.

Anti-capitalist movement – sole deterrent

It is thus clear that so long capitalism will remain in power; there will be no respite from this engulfing pollution of the polity, eruption of miasma and effluvium, scams and scandals. Bourgeois politics can not be free from this deviousness, immorality, crookedness, all-embracing decay and degeneration. To provide extra lease to its moribund crisis-ridden rule, capitalism can not but be immersed in rabid corruption and try to spread corrupt practices and mentality to blunt human conscience. It is only by overthrow of capitalism by revolution that this stifling, suffocating situation can be changed. Obviously this can not happen overnight but will come through a process. But what would be the guide to action in the intervening phase, how to combat this volcanic eruption of corruption and gulping aberrations? Surely it can not be forestalled, even ameliorated by knocking at the door of bourgeois law or by way of appeals or petitions. Nor will mere frustration, disgust or an attitude of indifference lead us anywhere. It is only by developing intense democratic movement conducive to anti-capitalist proletarian revolution on the edifice of higher proletarian ethics and culture against corruption-nepotism-abuse of power as well as on the burning problems of life that effective check can be put on this massive slide. While the pressure of movement would exercise restrain on the evil doers and corrupt egregious vice regal echelons, the healthy cultural environment created by such surge of people's legitimate movement would be congenial to cleanse the social fabric from all these malaises and maladies, malice and malevolence. People must embrace this course to stem the rot.

Red Salute Comrade Sangeeta Mishra

Comrade Sangeeta Mishra, All India Council member and West Bengal secretariat member of AIDSO, a leading organizer of the SUCI, passed away in Calcutta on April 8, 2006 after a sudden attack of Septosemia and Cerebral Haemmorage. She was only 38.

Hailing from an affluent family of Bihar, Comrade Sangeeta came in contact with the revolutionary thoughts of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, the great leader of the proletariat, in 1986 and engaged herself in the struggle for developing as a communist revolutionary. Besides reflecting a good cultural standard, she had a pleasing personality and multifaced qualities that endeared her to all. At the call of the Party, she left Bihar and took upon herself the task of organizing democratic movement in West Bengal particularly among the Hindi-speaking people including students, guardians and intelligentsia. With exceptional dexterity, she developed an intense movement in demand for setting question papers in Hindi in the secondary and higher secondary level examinations in West Bengal and played a leading role in well organizing the 125th Premchand Birth Anniversary. Comrade Sangeeta was the Joint Secretary of the Chhatra Sangharsha Committee and General Secretary of the 125th Premchand Birth Anniversary Committee.

A memorial meeting to pay homage to departed Comrade Sangeeta was held in Calcutta at Moulali Yuva Kendra Auditorium on April 10, 2006. Comrade Provash Ghosh, member, Central Committee and West Bengal State Secretary SUCI, among others, paid emotional tribute to her revolutionary memory highlighting her outstanding qualities. With her sudden and untimely death, the democratic mass movement and proletarian revolutionary struggle have lost a very promising dedicated soldier.

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