

# Editorial

Saturday, September 15, 2018

## Society as a reflection of the government

Today, the state as a whole cutting across ethnic lines and communities have evidently inched itself towards the tipping point of intolerance and have given in to impulsive irrational outbursts. Demonstrations and agitations which were basically meant to be campaigns to arouse public concern about an issue, or more appropriately issues in the context of the state, has evolved into a warning call for an impending social unrest and chaos. Every declaration of protests is invariably followed with the added proviso of 'intensive', 'extreme' steps and 'activities' beyond the sanctions of the constitution of the country, and carried out with gusto. What is more disturbing is that the phenomenon is nothing new to the social and political scenario of the state and has been a salient part of the social landscape for a while now.

While agitations and unrests are part and parcel of the social process of addressing an issue or concern and are still considered an effective and necessary tool to attract attention of the government and thereby initiating the process to redress the issue, the process becomes a prelude to the destructions and disturbances which invariably follows.

The rising instances of intolerance and mob mentality are an unmistakable manifestation of the eroding law and order situation in the state. The judiciary, hampered by lack of required manpower and interventions from those in power and position has been reduced to a perfunctory service. The state and central security forces are being viewed with suspicion and often with disdain, often considered a necessary nuisance rather than the protectors of the people and the country as envisaged. The resultant breakdown in the system is the disturbing social scenario we are witnessing today. The increasing tendency of the society to take the law into their own hands and deliver instant and impulsive 'justice' speaks volume of the trust and respect the society rests on the judicial system as well as the law and order mechanism of the state. Much has been discussed, debated and deliberated on the rising trend of mob justice and failure of the state machinery to deliver effective and efficient justice, and yet the concerns and issues on the matter is being received with a lackadaisical attitude bordering on contempt. This very attitude evidently emboldens some reactive persons in the society to indulge in their sadistic whims in the name of social justice, and as such disturbing trends go unchecked, they have now become a social trend sanctioned by a few vociferous elements in the absolute absence of legal restraints and preventive actions by the law enforcers.

A substantial part if not the total of the social unrests and disturbances can be prevented if the law and order mechanism is made proactive and efficient. The first step for the present state government is to admit the reality and acknowledge the lacunae, if it really and truly desires to bring about the elusive change for the better. Honest self-evaluation, introspection, pragmatism and a proactive approach towards administration and governance should replace the denial and reactive attitude of the present government. Above all, the state government should relearn accepting and shouldering responsibility of the social situations.

Letters, Feedback and Suggestions to 'Imphal Times' can be sent to our e-mail : [imphaltimes@gmail.com](mailto:imphaltimes@gmail.com). For advertisement kindly contact: - 0385-2452159 (O). For time being readers can reach the office at Cell Phone No. 9862860745 for any purpose.

## Irabot and Capitalism

By- Dr. Malem Ningthouja

Comrade Irabot has left with us a booklet entitled *Capitalism*. It is not known accurately as to when it was written and to what extent it was circulated to the people. However, it is likely that the booklet was written without much delay after he had adopted communist ideology while he was at the Sylhet Jail (1940-1943) and after Manipur had experienced disastrous impacts of the Second World War (1939-1945). It is believed that the booklet was used for ideological propaganda among the people when movement was launched after the formation of the Manipur Communist Party in 1948. In order to discuss the historical juncture of Manipur that the book was based on and the agenda of the book it is crucial to analyse the ten years time period (1940-1950).

**The ten years period may be discussed as follows:**

(1) It was a period when Manipur had faced disastrous impacts of capitalism. On the one hand there was colonial oppression till the last moment of 14 August 1947 and on the other hand there were burdens of killings and destructions caused by the Second World War that was fought against the imperialist forces. It was also a period when peoples' movement to establish responsible government was carried out till 1947 against the feudal regime that had been protected by the colonial rule.

(2) It was a period when the Indian rulers were exerting strong pressures to establish rule over the peoples in the Northeast including Manipur. There were attempts to form new political entities such as NEFA and Purbanchal by merging Manipur with other entities with the alleged intention to wipe off the pre-existing *status quo* of Manipur. There was also large scale immigration of monopoly traders from India to control the market and Mayang war refugees from Myanmar.

(3) Despite formal declaration of British independence from British rule in 1947, adoption of Manipur Constitution in 1947 and formation of a responsible government in 1948 the political power was controlled the Imphal Valley rich landlords headed by the king who had supported capitalism. There was also a section that was hatching plots in support of the Indian policy with the intention to fill personal coffers by selling off Manipur. Indian black laws were adopted and there were unrestrained suppressive actions against democratic movements of the Hmar and Mao peoples, and peasants and others.

(4) It was a period when the communist movement was sweeping across the globe. In India, the communist movement was carried out under the guidance of Soviet Russia. Communist parties were also rising in Burma. All these had catalytic impact on Irabot. Many who supported this goal were also carrying out a movement to ensure growth and to protect democratic rights of the peasants. The State indulged in repressive actions to suppress them.

The present booklet shall not deal in length with the history of the peasants and their democratic movements. It is suffice to say that at the end there was open confrontation between Irabot and those who had supported capitalism. He tried his best to sow the seeds of a revolutionary movement through the circulation of literatures. His booklet *Capitalism* is a general outline to explain capitalism, colonialism and fascism. For all these reasons, it remains crucial to discuss Irabot's *Capitalism*.

**The central issues raised in Capitalism are:**

(1) Capitalism is a political economy characterised by the capitalists who live by extraction of surplus value from the workers and resources of the peasants establishing

themselves firmly and enjoying supreme control over the political power. Because of the exploitative policy of the profit hungry capitalists there developed class contradiction between the rich and the poor and it led to class confrontation. Wastages, destructions and unrests are developed due to profit motivated over-production and competition among the capitalists.

(2) Capitalism and colonialism went side by side. Fascism is the most brutal form of the capitalist colonial expansion. Due to capitalist propaganda many innocents are misled by blind nationalism and their lives are sacrificed in unjust wars. Unless capitalism is destroyed, even if a country might have overthrown colonial rule, there cannot be established a society where equality, collective growth and peace would prevail.

(3) A new social order where equality, collective growth and peace prevail can be possible only by revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist political economy. The new social order cannot be achieved by cosmetic reforms within the capitalist system. The revolution can be successful only by the movement under the leadership of the workers and peasants guided by the principle of classless society. However the capitalists continuously attempt to keep the workers and peasant parties weak by promoting sectarianism among them through cosmetic reforms and by bribing the leaders. In other words, to overcome these challenges there is the need of a party that adopts the correct ideology, has a farsighted strategy and committed tactics.

**Perception on India**

Irabot had challenged capitalism and the colonial rule associated with it. On the other hand, he drew a comparison among the capitalists depending on time and situation, and had termed Japanese fascism as more dangerous than British colonial rule. It is said that he had considered the Indian National Army as an enemy for its Japanese fascist connexion despite the fact that it had espoused Indian freedom. A pamphlet circulated on 12 December 1950 condemned the Nehruvian government as a fascist State. It meant that Nehru's rule was adopting capitalism and extending colonial rule under the cloak of blind nationalism. Irabot had wanted an Independent Manipur in an Indian federation under a socialist system in the same manner of the Russian voluntary federation. It would not be an exaggeration to argue that Irabot had supported the proposed federation model since the then Communist Party of India (till 1951 it incorporated the right to secession) had supported voluntary federation. He was not inclined towards keeping Manipur under a capitalist colonial system.

Irabot was not alone in opposing Nehru's policy. Internationally, in 1931, Nehru was expelled from the League against Imperialism and for National Independence on the charge of deceiving the revolutionary youth and the working masses and being a traitor to the cause of independence and an agent of imperialism. The Constituent Assembly of India debates and the correspondence letter between Nehru and Patel in 1950 would expose their capitalist and expansionist motives. The manner in which Manipur was forcibly annexed is being mentioned in the eye-witness accounts of Nari Rustomji entitled *The Enchanted Frontier* and Anandmohan entitled *Shillong 1949*. Nehru's ambition to create a super-national state stretching

from the Middle East to South-East Asia and to exercise an important influence in the Pacific region is discussed in Suniti Kumar Ghosh's book entitled *The Indian Nationality Problem and Ruling Classes*. Neville Maxwell's *India's China War* provides with descriptions about Nehru's territorial ambition that was largely responsible for the war in 1962.

In fact, India as we know today is a post-1947 invention. In 1947, the political power of British India was transferred to the monopolistic capitalist groups of Tata, Birla, Dalmia, Singhania, Bhatt, and a comprador section of the Bombay bourgeoisie, capitalists from among Gujaratis and Parsis, Marwari moneylenders, Tamil usurers, etc., who were intimately linked to the princes, landlords and British capital. They adopted a capitalist socio-economic system where social relations were based on commodities for exchange, in particular private ownership of the means of production and on the exploitation of wage labour and resources. The system has been perpetuated through means of suppression, subjective psychological propaganda, and other sectarian and counter-progressive tactics that keep many divided and caught up in a vicious cycle of self-inflicting conflicts along communal and territorial interests.

The capitalist path had necessitated territorial expansion. In other words, capital, which is both a pre-condition and outcome of capitalism, requires a territorial base to thrive on. Although territorial expansionism can be obstructed due to competition, rivalry, and protectionism among the capitalists of different countries, the Indian bourgeoisie took the advantage of imperial interregnum in South Asia in the post Second World War period to expand its territorial base wherever possible. While they selectively used blackmail or bribery or intimidation or military tactics to annex territory, they coined integrity jargons and carried nationhood propaganda to cover up forced annexation and military occupation. Till date, the Indian constitution approves territorial annexation but has no provisions on the right to secession.

The Northeast, inhabited by economically backward tribal and peasant communities, apart from strategic calculation, was important for: (a) labour, resources (water, uranium, oil, coal, precious stones, minerals, plantation, flora and fauna, tourism, carbon credits, and forest products), and market, (b) a buffer vis-à-vis presumed China, and (c) a military stockpile and commodity stocked for commercial expansion in South and South-East Asia. They annexed the Northeast, forcibly integrated it into inter-territorial division of labour and subjected it to the restructured economic order as the primary supplier of labour, raw material, market, and military stockpile for Indian capitalist expansionism. Interestingly, whether a territory should be annexed to the extent of using military force as were the cases of Hyderabad, Kashmir, Manipur, etc. or should be kept as a subordinated neighbour, as were the cases of Sikkim (now annexed), Bhutan and Nepal, or should be shown favourable treatment as was the case of Burma (at the cost of the controversial Kabow Valley claimed by Manipur) was a meticulously worked-out capitalist programme.

**Capitalism from the current perspectives**

Irabot and the Manipur Communist Party under his leadership had stood against the policy of Nehru. However, the rulers of our homeland had treated him as an enemy. In other words, those who supported Nehru's capitalism and expansionism became puppets and they launched repressive actions to root out the communist party and peasant movements. To defend the party and

the movement Irabot took up arms. In this context, the idea of "no internecine bloodshed" was discarded. Because, the internal traitors were several times more dangerous than the external enemy. It was necessary to fight and oust them. On the other hand, for the larger goal of revolutionary internationalism Irabot went to Burma and formed an alliance with likeminded parties. However, his life ended as a guerrilla soldier in the jungle on 26 September 1951.

The question that may be raised is: are Irabot's perception on capitalism and the movement for an independent and classless society still relevant in the present context of Manipur? The question is being addressed as follows:

(1) The first two decades of the 21st century were remarkable in terms of increasing collaboration of the Indian big bourgeoisie with the imperialist cartels and financial institutions. They were increasingly penetrating into the Southeast Asian underdeveloped countries for markets and resources. They played direct or indirect roles in the US-led imperialist wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere and in extractive investments. Their role in the imperialist international division of labour was visible in the collaborative cum competitive engagement with the Chinese social-imperialists, investments in post-LTTE Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, etc. They were investing in the commercial networks spreading across the extensive Mekong-Ganga Riverbed stretches. In the Northeast, apart from other multinational companies and Indian banks, the ADB finance intrusion was gaining momentum. In tune with militarisation and war pre-emption the US army was permitted to conduct a series of military exercises in the jungles of Mizoram to adapt to guerrilla warfare. US FBI operations in Meghalaya are suspected. Protected Area Permit was lifted from the Northeast in 2011 probably under the pressure of the European Union, largely to promote foreign strategic analysts in the guise of tourists.

(2) On the other hand the Indian big bourgeoisie had withheld heavy industrialisation in India. India became a warehouse and market for foreign capitalist technologies and commodities, and exporter of assembled commodities. INDIA SHINING was dominantly visible in the tertiary construction sub-sectors and in other secondary manufacturing sectors such as assembling of automobiles, expansion of telecom networks, etc. To maximise extraction of capital millions of tribals and peasants were being forcibly displaced at gunpoint to pave the way for the installation of imperialist assembling units. At the same time, a vast number of peasants were deprived of investment and impoverished due to forced extraction in order to fulfil the imperialist quota for food grains and other agrarian products.

(3) In Manipur's context, the Indian big bourgeoisie had been closely working in cahoots with the subordinate ruling class composed of landlords, usurers, contractors, commission agents, corrupt officials, petty merchants, etc., who had been dependent on the Indian bourgeoisie for political and economic power. The latter did not directly create capital through investment in constant and variable capitals. They collectively indulged in accumulation of wealth through misappropriation of rent (in the form of central grants) received in return for exploitation of Manipur by the Indian bourgeoisie. They played a crucial role in constituting puppet regimes in respectively carved out revenue blocs under the political command of the Indian State who also provided them with military back-up. (Contd. on Page 3)