

TUESDAY TALK_ January, 2024

Socialism in the Light of Rabindranath Tagore

Presented by Manolina Seth, SACT of Sociology, Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis Mahavidyalaya

Abstract

A characteristic feature of socialism is the change or progress that can be observed in the society at transition period between the end of a capitalist hierarchical society on the verge of becoming a fully communist society. One of the major conditions for the establishment of socialism is the abolition of bourgeois culture and the construction and expansion of culture among the proletariat or working class. Another goal of socialism is internationalism. The interests of all the working classes of the world should be the change of society and the state and the struggle for socialism. Above all, the desired goal of socialism is to establish a communist society without class, exploitation, and poverty.

According to Marx, in this society all the alienations present in human life will come to an end. With the disappearance of class conflict among the masses, people will become united and live in harmony with nature and society. And this very idea of unity of nature and man strikes a chord with Rabindranath Tagore's thought. Moving away a bit from Marx and other socialists, we tried to analyse Socialism through the lens of Rabindranath's ideas of liberal philosophy, nature consciousness. Rabindranath Tagore's spirituality, religious consciousness, love for nature, philosophy or literary thought are all directly related to life.

The three factors that had an important impact on Rabindranath's social thought or literary thought were: a) Brahma Samaj movement led by Rammohan Roy, b) Bankimchandra's New Era of Literature, c) Anti-colonial National Movement. All of these are closely related to our daily lives. It is important to note here that Rabindranath Tagore was born in the Tagore family in 1861 and the Tagore clan was actively engaged in reforming orthodox Hinduism at that time. Rabindranath was the fruit of his grandfather's and father's social reformist ideas and deep family wisdom.

Rabindranath's social thought mainly revolved around three elements. If we consider the time and environment that Rabindranath was born into, he stands as a representative of the bourgeois society. He was born in the era of rapid expansion of the capitalist system in Europe and naturally India became a semi-feudal country at the cost of imperialist exploitation. The source of prosperity of the Tagore family was trade and later zamindari. At that time, Rabindranath stood witness to both the progress of capitalism and internal conflicts very closely. However, in the discussed time period, the practice of socialism had evolved in the country. Soumendranath Tagore, a member of the Tagore family who believed in the communist ideology, admitted that no document or book of socialism was sufficient to appropriate the concept.

If not during Rabindranath's first visit to London in 1878, but undoubtedly during his second venture in 1890, there was considerable practice of socialism there. In 1884 the Fabian Socialists formed the Fabian Society there. Apart from the Russian letter, Rabindranath's

exposition to socialism can be seen in some of his articles published in Sadhana magazine which were in the form of three essays called 'Catholic Socialism', 'Socialism' and '*Karma Umedar o Stri Mazur*'. Rabindranath was also greatly inspired by the ideas of English communist and writer Belford Backes.

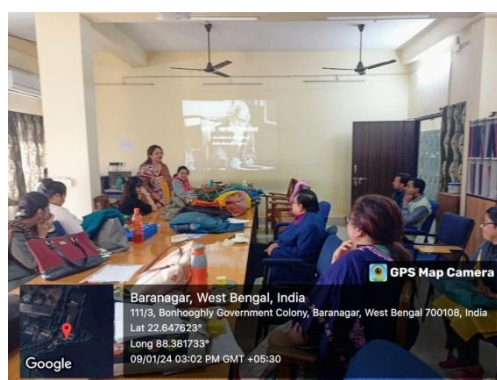
Rabindranath Tagore in his own life considered the zamindari system as the leeches of the land. Here Rabindranath is very close to communist thought even though he is not a communist. His experience overseeing the zamindari in Shilaidaha led him to think of socialism as a means of eliminating social and economic injustice.

A close observation shows that Rabindranath has a lot in common with Marxist thought in analysing the characteristics of capitalist system and the possibility of evolution from capitalism to socialism. Rabindranath's curiosity about socialism continued till his last days.

But he could not have much faith in liberal democracy. In the essay "*Sabhyatar Sankat*", he mentions that he was amazed at how in such a large country as Soviet Russia, the expansion of universal education, the provision of livelihood for every person, the provision of medical care had all been accomplished in a span of only a few short years. Rabindranath, travelled from one country to another during the First World War. The 15th poem of the book 'Patraput' reflected his expressions on the Religion of Man. Just as Marx mentioned the unity of men in each of his writings, Rabindranath asked for no different. He can pronounced, "*Mantrahiner Dharma i Manusher Dharma*". The results of his thoughts against the higher and lower division of society, the caste system, can be seen in his works like '*Chandalika*', '*Visarjan*', '*Rather Rashi*' etc.

It is noteworthy that he did not expect the socialist revolution to end all forms of exploitation. He did not find the benefits of socialism by forcefully overthrowing capitalism. He therefore had some scepticism and objections to the socialist society in Russia and expressed doubts that this social system would not last long. The collapse of Soviet Russia in 1985 stood evidence to this thought. Rabindranath's thought was to go beyond materialism to humanism - and here was his fundamental difference with the Marxists. In Rabindranath's perspective, the human mind should be developed first and then opinions.

Rabindranath, trusting in the intellect and reason of man, said that there is a need to establish a communist society which can take a permanent form.



Speaker

The Intricate Dance of Shadows: Unveiling the Art of Manipulation

*Presented by Nandita Chowdhury, SACT, Department of English,
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Abstract

In a world where shadows intertwine with reality, the art of manipulation weaves its intricate dance, influencing our thoughts, actions, and perceptions. As explored in the presentation, the depths of manipulation delve into the realms of psychology, sociology, and political strategy. Delving into the abyss of manipulation, the presentation uncovered the underlying mechanisms of how and why individuals fall prey to manipulative tactics. Love bombing and self-abasement emerged as cunning ploys, enveloping individuals in a web of false affection and diminished self-worth. Gaslighting, a term originating from the 1938 play "Gas Light," showcased the insidious nature of manipulation, where subtle changes in perception lead to doubt and confusion. Drawing parallels from political philosophy, the presentation illuminated the Machiavellian principles mirrored in strategic maneuvers, reminiscent of the ancient Indian political strategist, Chanakya. From power plays to backdoor negotiations, the political landscape echoes the cunning and calculated moves advocated by Niccolò Machiavelli in "The Prince." Transitioning to the social sphere, the presentation unveiled the manipulations orchestrated by sales personnel, exploiting psychological vulnerabilities to sway consumer decisions. FOMO, Predictably Irrational Behaviour, and the Doorway Effect exemplify how situational factors manipulate our choices and perceptions. Yet, amidst external influences, the presentation shed light on the phenomenon of self-manipulation, where cognitive biases and psychological phenomena cloud our judgment. The Baader-Meinhof phenomenon, Impostor Syndrome, the L'appel du Vide, i.e. Call of the Void, and the Third-Person Effect underscore the internal battle against self-deception. The presentation on "The Intricate Dance of Shadows" serves as a poignant reminder of the pervasive nature of manipulation, infiltrating every aspect of human interaction. By unravelling the nuances of manipulation, we empower ourselves to discern truth from deception, navigating the labyrinth of shadows with clarity and resilience. The presentation gets concluded with a friendly advice to save oneself from varied exploitations of manipulation. That is: stop believing anyone or anything without proper analysis.

Keywords: manipulation, psychology, sociology, political strategy, cognitive biases, Machiavellianism, social proof, consumer behaviour, self-deception.



Speaker