

Document

Emancipation of Women – Perspective of CPI (ML)

The Women who have been creating all the wealth, and playing an important role in reproduction are devoid of any rights or freedoms and are being oppressed by the patriarchy. They are living as slaves of the slaves.

India, where people of different nationalities live, was a British colony for almost 200 years. During this period of British colonial rule in the 19th century many reformist movements had come up against brutal and inhuman feudal social evils. The people of India moved in a large scale in the struggle for liberation of the country from the British colonialism that was plundering country's natural resources. The Indian national movement had initially drawn the women and organised them in to struggles in a large scale. This activity enabled the Indian women to tear themselves away from the traditional family ties and the backwardness of dark rural lives with patriotism and awareness to participate in struggles.

In 1930s itself the then Communist Party of India had formulated the demands of the women to resolve the problems of the Indian women who were suffering under the British imperialism and the feudal enslavement. It provided leadership to their struggles. The Communist Party led the famous Telangana armed struggle for land, food and liberty of the people against the brutal oppression exploitation by the nawabs and feudal zamindars and against reducing the people as their bonded labour in Telangana region. The struggle against the rule of Nizam and Indian army liberated 3000 villages, established village states (Grama Rajyas) and distributed one million acres of land to the poor. The Communist Party had moulded the women as fighting forces against feudal exploitation and for liberation from all sorts of oppression. In the course of the movement women on one hand were able to face repression and the other were able to run the movement and protect the fruits of the movement. Thus they made great efforts and played valuable role.

In this movement both women and men gained a progressive awareness that was different from the then existing feudal values. The Communist party made a special effort to train the women as political organizers, cultural activists and orators during this movement. It trained them in self-defence also. During this movement several women were molested and raped by the army and land lords. The women and men withstood the sufferings caused by these atrocities with the consciousness that they were the part and parcel of the oppression and learnt to cohabit in the families and society without caring the so called values of chastity imposed by the feudal society. Women were able to raise their social status. The Communist party launched an extensive campaign about the right of women to educate, to refuse the arranged marriages and to opt for marriages by consent or love. It also propagated against caste, religious and gender discriminations. The propaganda made by the Communist party about 1917 Russian revolution and anti-Fascist war inspired numerous people.

In the contemporary period so many struggles such as the revolt of tribal peasants of Worli of Thane district of Maharashtra in 1945, the Tebhaga peasants struggle in West Bengal in 1946.

In 1947 while continuing its economic exploitation and indirect control the British imperialism had transferred the power to the land-lords and comprador bourgeoisie who had colluded with it. The exploitation and oppression had further intensified on the people in the semi-colonial and semi-feudal system. The struggle against this ruthless exploitation and brutal oppression continued in the decades 60s and 70s. The Naxalbari and Srikakulam struggles have had their impact on the people of the country. They shook the ruling classes. Women had participated in these struggles militantly. They led the struggles. Hundreds of women like Panchadi Nirmala, Ankamma, Saraswati, and tribals braving the cruel oppression had laid down their lives in these struggles. They made countless sacrifices and became martyrs. The memories of their struggles and sacrifices remain in the hearts of oppressed masses forever. The women were in the forefront of the struggle of tribals of Kondamodalu in Andhra Pradesh in 1969, and they played a significant role in spreading the movement. Even today the activities connected to this struggle constitute a main part of their lives. In the struggles that are

continuity in the East-Godavari, West-Godavari, Srikakulam and Vizianagaram districts even today against feudalism, the women continue to play a daring and courageous role.

The semi-feudal and semi colonial mode of production that caters to the needs and interests of the imperialists and their comprador capitalist, land lord classes is still existing in India. In India, predominantly an agrarian country, the land is highly concentrated in the hands of a few. The vast masses of people remain as landless poor and agricultural labour. Majority of them are the dalits (lowest caste people). The women agricultural labourers are subjected to the atrocities, sexual exploitation and oppression of the land-lords. The patriarchal oppression of women has been institutionalised by the social system in the society. Both the feudal and imperialist exploitation and feudal and imperialist cultures have forced the lives of women to a walk on the burning coals. The imperialists are exploiting and plundering the labour power and resources of the third world countries very cheaply. Labour of the women is being exploited ruthlessly under heinous working conditions.

The I.T sector promoted by the imperialists in the name of development is imposing heavy work load on the women. It is distancing them from the society, social movements and social environment. On the other side, the feudal and comprador ruling classes stood as the main prop for the social economic system. They pursue the policies of exploitation oppression against the women as dictated by their imperialist masters. The state - an instrument of power - in the hands of rulers is also having the nature of male-hegemony and patriarchy. This gender hegemony of males over the women can easily be perceived in its use of severe oppression and suppression on the movements of the women against exploitation suppression meted to them.

So, the emancipation of women in our country means, in the main, emancipation of toiling women. The basis for the emancipation of women will only be laid in the new democratic system. Therefore the women liberation movements shall be a part and parcel of the movement having the objective of new democratic revolution and uniting all the oppressed classes to realise the same. In the course of such a movement alone women acquires the consciousness about their rights. They will be able to fight against various forms of economic and cultural exploitation.

The women liberation movement has to be organised with the objective of freeing them from the routine family work, social bondage and limitations in order to prepare them for a fight against various problems and society and to make them partners in the struggle of new democratic revolution.

To realise this objective, CPI (ML) has taken up the task of fighting against the system of patriarchal oppression, patriarchal ideology and patriarchal family system. The CPI (ML) is making special efforts to make the women actively participate and take part in the struggle against the feudal and imperialist exploitation. It will strive to awaken and organise the people against the imperialist exploitation and aggression in the third world countries. It has organised various protests and agitations against the US invasions against Afghanistan, Iraq, and Lebanon. It extended its solidarity to the people of those countries who were attacked by the US imperialism. Ideologically the Party fights against the imperialist culture that reduced the women into an object and commodity. At the same time the Party strives to rally and unite all these forces of women into these struggles. One of the main objectives of these struggles of the Party is to fight against the ruthless exploitation of the labour of toiling women and lower caste women besides fighting against caste discrimination and oppression. The women liberation movement stands in solidarity with all the struggles of the oppressed classes against exploitation and injustice. It will be in the forefront of the struggles carried on against feudalism, unemployment, suicides of farmers, closure of industries and struggles for equal pay for equal work, etc..

Thus the CPI (ML) is striving to organise and build up the women liberation movement in our country with a clear perspective, tasks and objectives.

The success of the new democratic revolution alone can liberate the people from the existing semi-feudal and semi-colonial system in India It alone can ensure the necessary basis for the emancipation of women. The CPI (ML) is striving to achieve this objective through an appropriate activity.

An activity different from this understanding is also in the practice. There are certain reformist trends which say that women can be liberated with some reforms within the limits of the present system. Those under the influence of this trend seek to convince or pressurise the governments to enact certain laws to solve the problems of women.

We know that on various occasions, the governments made some enactments owing to some movements. The movement for women franchise in other countries, the movement for right to abortion, the movement for the right to education for women in India, the movement for abolition of child marriages and for widow remarriages have certainly influenced the women. But these reforms were unable to touch the root of the problems. They were unable even to go nearer to the issue of liberation of women. Even the rights provided in the law have not come into practice due to so many limitations. A glaring example for this can be seen in the failure of anti-dowry act. The very idea that liberation of the women can be achieved through laws and reforms is too unrealistic. Such trend only takes the women movement far away from the task of giving politics to the toiling women.

“It is our duty to take politics to reach every toiling woman”

- Lenin

In the recent years, certain trends have come to the fore. The important among them are:

- The problems of women must be seen from the angle of women alone;
- Patriarchy shall not be considered as the question of ideology, but as the question of base;
- The contradiction between man and woman is antagonistic contradiction;
- They talk about the right of reproduction without going into the relations of production
- They demand the freedom of sexuality to women questioning the control on women's sexuality;
- They opine that women are a class since they are subjected to male domination;
- They conveniently ignore class exploitation as the main problem of majority of the women.

If one examines these opinions with the outlook of dialectical and historical materialism one can easily understand that the first division of labour was done between woman and man on the natural basis. In the work division that stipulates domestic work to women and outside work of hunting for men, there was no domination or dependency of one gender in the other. The home (a home of the primitive society) was the centre of production and distribution. The women, who conducted the domestic duties, had enjoyed certain status too. But due to the limitations to the production at home and due to the wider scope to the production outside the house, the labour outside the home has developed and a surplus in the production was accumulated. Men aspiring to give their property only to their children had, with his financial might, subjugated the women forcibly. They withdrew the freedom of women. They reduced women into instruments that give birth to their children, as entities that satisfy their sexual urges and as domestic servants.

This transformation based on personal property led to patriarchal ideology. The objective of this transformation is that the women have to handover the pious heirs. If this has to happen, women shall be pure. This very idea is the main objective of patriarchal control over women. Since it is impossible to control women with physical might alone, various patriarchal ideas of male dominance were propagated through religious beliefs and social customs. In this way the idea that women are dependant and males are dominant has been spread for generations and crystallised. Ultimately a stage has come where women themselves accept as inferior to males and they themselves propagate the same idea.

The personal property, when reached to the stage of capitalism through various stages, the capitalist pays the worker a part of his labour power as wages, but not the total value of the entire labour. A worker, who spends all his labour power of that day in the industry, has to recoup his labour power through the domestic services and go to work the next day. So the capitalist has to pay wages to the worker to the extent of domestic activity the wife of the worker who conducts the domestic activity and to tend the future generations of workers whom the wife conceives and tends-the total amount needed to this activity. But in the capitalist system of production where profit alone is the objective the capitalist pays only the wages that keep the worker alive loots the surplus value. Due to competition, value of labour is being decreased while the necessity of domestic service activities increases proportionately. Thus the capitalist is looting even the labour of the worker's wife directly. The payment for the domestic services done by her has to be paid by the capitalist who employed her husband. But since the domestic services were enjoyed by the male of the house, the opinion that he himself is exploiting her has come into prevalence. This protects the real exploiter and safeguards him.

The women working in various sectors are not only being exploited along with males but are also being exploited more than their male counterparts of their sections by way of low wages. The rulers and exploiting classes have evaded bothering about the family welfare related issues as their responsibility and are considering them as the personal matters of workers. Due to this reason conceiving, child-birth, rearing children and the looking after family welfare became a burden to the women. The real reason for this extra burden to women is the exploiting classes only. But the opinion viewing the male of the house as the cause for the exploitation of women will keep the toiling woman in the opposition to the toiling man. Such a view will ignore that the toiling male and female shall jointly oppose the exploiting classes. Finally it hinders the liberation of woman. Instead of resolving the contradictions between men and women it confuses the contradictions. In the society even the toiling men have no rights and freedom of any sort. Majority of women are sharing their lives with such men. The contradiction between the exploited women and men on one side, and the exploiting classes on the other side is only an antagonistic contradiction. So the men and women having a non-antagonistic contradiction between them have to fight against their foe. In the course of such a struggle and as a part of it the woman and man shall find out ways to resolve the contradiction among them. Only by participating in the wider struggles women can attain awareness about their rights and equality.

In this society based on personal property where the exploiting ruling classes refuse to take any responsibility about the toiling men and women and their children, the family system alone is working as their welfare system. In the degraded living conditions family alone is keeping them alive.

The system of male hegemony and dominance viewed women as a machine that satisfies sexual urges and reproduction. Woman is not only an entity of reproduction but is also a human being that has been striving for the development of society as a part of the society has been highly neglected. Only due to the male hegemonic ideology women are being viewed as only the instruments of sex.

Every human society is controlling sexual relations according to its stage of transformation. The joint sexual relations have been developed into individual sexual relations in the system of the monogamous marriage.

But this system of marriage of pairs came into existence with the system of personal property, had controlled the sexual relations of women in the family. In order to continue the system of male luxury and sexual enjoyment a parallel system of 'prostitution' came in to existence to that of monogamous family. Those women in prostitution are purely and totally are the objects of sex. A simple pairing of a woman and a man alone is the salvation for this existing contradiction.

When we state that the control of sexuality of women has started with the individual property system, a question arises whether the freedom of women can be achieved only after the individual property is abolished? To such a question the answer has been provided by Engels in his famous book "**Origin of Family, Individual Property and State**"...

"If there shall be a total freedom in the marriage, the capitalist system and the property relations that came into existence as a result of that system shall be abolished. Then only in the matter of selection of husband wife giving importance to the financial (monetary) matters will be removed (ended). Then there would be no other reason for marriage than mutual love." "The love between man and woman naturally prohibits plurality. Today this prohibition is made to be followed only by the women. So the marriage depending on the natural love of man and woman will be as the marriage of a pair only. When equality between man and woman is established then the women do not happen the liveness of many men on the contrary the experience of the previous period explains us that the man really becomes the husband of only one women."

In any society the freedom in sexual relations cannot be absolute. Coming into contact with opposite sex will lead more mutual understanding. In any society, by controlling the women the man is losing her partnership is a fact without any doubt. In the present society all the immediate burdens of the freedom of sex is borne by the women alone.

The burning urge to achieve liberty from the control and oppression alone is not sufficient. Activities based on a proper ideological understanding are needed.

The main flaw in the demand for the right to reproduction is the view that the process of reproduction belongs to the bodies of the women, and ignoring the societal angle of the issue.

The male hegemonic society considers the childbirth as an animal activity even today. On the other hand, it created the ideology that motherhood creates a higher status to the woman. The objective of this ideology is to hand over pious heirs to the male. Even today the system of exploitation is having the reproduction activity. Toiling man and woman are a matter of no importance in these activities. Exploiting class itself decides as to how many children have to give birth in future by the workers and decides the future labour power to be given birth according to its profit making requirements. At the individual level the decision is doubtlessly taken by the male. Under such conditions, to talk about the freedom of reproduction is meaningless.

In the background of the inequalities between women and men in India, people are divided in society on the lines of classes, castes and nationalities. Without talking about these inequalities, talking only about the equalities of men and women cannot be scientific. Even in the women there are varied in their classes with varied class interests. There is no ground of reality to the independent women movement that intends to collect all the women under one umbrella. There is no economic and social basis to take forward such a movement and, in the end, it only limits to the interests of the women of the elite classes.

These sorts of trends are being propagated in India mainly by NGO organisations. These organisations are debating only about the forms of patriarchal oppression widely, but not expressing or propagating the fact that individual property is the basis for patriarchal ideology. Their silence about the liberation of toiling women, who are oppressed under the semi-feudal and semi-colonial system, will ultimately lead to protecting the interests of the exploiting classes.

Therefore the liberation of women is linked with the liberation of majority of toiling masses without any doubt. So the movements of the toiling women shall be inter-linked and intertwined with the movements for the change of society.

While fighting against wrong tendencies on a proper basis, the CPI (M-L) is striving to build the movement for the liberation of women from the system of exploitation and oppression.
