

NOTE

April Opera Madhusudan Pal writes :

Strike simply means withdrawal of labour. Then there is sympathetic strike which is strike by unaggrieved workers to give moral support to aggrieved ones. Similarly there is general strike in which all workers of all trades refuse to work. Also, there are other forms of strike—sit-down strike, stay-in strike in which the workers refuse to leave place of work. In India the word “Dharmaghat” is also used to denote cessation of work. But the word “Dharmaghat” has a moral overtone and if it includes cessation of all domestic work like cooking food it becomes “Arandhan”, meaning non-cooking, a Sanskrit word lent into all major Indian languages. “Arandhan” first came into being when Lord Curzon tried to divide Bengal Province of the British India and the whole of Bengal revolted. But “Dharmaghat with Arandhan” is too mild to catch the spirit of youth who vowed to unseat and remove the British Raj from Indian soil. Revolutionary groups such as ‘Anushilan’ and ‘Jugantar’ were formed. These groups left behind economism and concentrated on political putsch which reached its acme in the siege and seizure of the Chittagong Armoury and still later, in the formation of the “Free Tamralipta State” in 1942. But “Ahimsa” or non-violence swamped and devoured all political activities and economism that is trade unionism could do little to even save itself from Mahatma Gandhi’s trusteeship theory.

Capital and Labour became brother in arms, “bhai-bhai”. Politics usurped economics and alongwith it trade unionism. Politics became Parliamentary democratic politics and trade unionism as appendages and Parliamentary democratic politics and trade unionism as appendages and subservient to politics became an exercise of creating divisions in the working class. Workers became Congress worker, Communist worker, Hindu worker, Muslim worker, Hindi-speaking worker, Tamil-speaking worker and so on. One central trade union broke into two and each into many. In this way, the backbone of the Indian working class is broken into pieces and one group of workers belonging to a Parliamentary Party has become the class enemy of another group belonging to another political party. Thus workers are fighting among themselves and looting, murdering and burning the huts and slums where families of enemy political group are living. Strange, yet true that workers, poor men are killing poor workers, while there is a tripartite bond between industrialists labour leaders and government bureaucracy.

‘The Hartal’ (or strike) dated Tuesday the 27th April 2010 was to protest galloping inflation throwing essential necessities like rice, wheat, pulses, coarse cloth, housing for people below poverty line and workers’ quarters in industrial areas, fuel, power, children’s education from primary level onwards etc. out of reach because of spiralling price rises of wage goods, theft of essential wage goods from the public distribution system, periodic stoppage of distribution without rhyme and reason, forcing separation in poor young families due to migration of one or the other, increasing number of beggars in streets, footpath dwelling that is, creating such compelling situations that families have to live in the open whether in metropolitan cities or in districts, ousting families from their

traditional habitat—all these while the government first denies that there is inflation, then admitting only ‘food inflation’—a foolish term, since inflation is a macro economic phenomenon that cannot be quarantined to selected goods only... All these while swindlers, money launderers, cheats are funding franchises and periodically administering extravagant day-and night shows around popular games and practising after-game fun-fiesta-revelry degenerating to late night-to-early morning sleaze in 5-star hotels all these requiring protests yet patronised by the high and the mighty...—all these ugly economic activities require strong protest by the basic masses of people. But sadly this 27th April ‘Hartal’ was only an eye-wash, because it was just a 12-hour show of ‘political’ strength, with an eye to next assembly elections in states and immediate municipal elections in some towns and cities. Sustained, protracted, concerted strikes are necessary. Otherwise the governments of states and at the centre and the monetary authorities including the RBI will carry out as usual the cheep money policy by announcing and giving increased dearness and other allowances, upwardly revising payscales etc. thus keeping one sector happy while suffocating, throttling and killing the basic masses without end; otherwise the money bags and black marketeers will continue to suck the vitals of the Indian masses and go on occasinally showering dirty monies putting up extravagant shows at the same time siphoning off profits for themselves; otherwise the people will never rise from their deep slumber. □□□