



FORMERS MOVEMENT IN KARNATAKA- SHIMOGA DISTRICT

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Abstract:

This Paper attempted to understand the ideology of the farmer movement, In addition to this it study the Social base for the former movement, and the role of the former movement in Karnataka agriculture-Shivamoga districts. To accomplish these objectives researcher gathered the necessary information from various secondary data sources such as Research Articles, journals, newspapers, Magazines, Websites etc. same information is analyzed systematically. After analysis, it is concluded that India is an agrarian economy and the agriculture sector employs nearly half of the workforce in the country and contributes to around 16 per cent of the GDP during the financial year of 2019-20. India has witnessed many farmer movements and has been based on myriad issues and the demands of the movements have spatial and temporal dimensions. Infact, farmer movement in India has a long history, dating back to the colonial period when farmers in different parts of India revolted against Zamindars, Landlords, British colonial masters or powers including feudal lords. These movements were the results of severe exploitation, oppression, loss of rights over land, imposition of new taxes and new agrarian relations of the farmers with the Colonial state or the feudal lords. Most of the struggles that the farmers resorted to were either carried as part of the nationalist struggle or independent of it. All these struggles brought the farmers to the nationalist movement. One such leader who organised the farmers, under political party was Chaudhury Charan Singh, the former Prime Minister of India. He organised a few rallies raising such issues as parity in prices between industrial and agricultural commodities; allowing import of agricultural input from abroad, reducing the protection given to industry, due representation of farmers in different boards and committees, subsidies to electricity, water, fertilizer, seeds, reducing the income disparity between the urban and rural people, establishing Kisan Banks as well as agricultural polytechnics etc.

Keywords: Farmers Movement, Karnataka, Agriculture, KRRS, Shivamoga Kabbu Belegarara Sangha

1. INTRODUCTION

Farmers' movements in India, against landlordism and oppression within the rural sector, are relatively an old phenomenon. These movements were greatly instrumental in breaking the old feudal order and ushering in agricultural development on modern lines. Yet, the agrarian structure that came into being was hardly egalitarian. It is at this juncture that farmers' associations and open movements on price and related issues have dominated the Indian scene. Unlike the latter, the farmers' movements are not against oppression within the rural sector, but against what they believe to be the factors behind continuing rural underdevelopment and a relative deterioration in the income of farmers. Price has naturally received the utmost attention from farmers' lobbies. While the fact of rural areas being less developed can be readily conceded, there nevertheless arise doubts about the efficacy of a strategy, which relies mainly on turning the terms of trade in favour of agriculture to alleviate rural poverty. A lively debate has ensued on this question particularly among economists, and many do not believe in the efficiency of the price instrument. These agitations have been fairly well sustained and have enjoyed a fairly wide base among farmers and also support much beyond their regional base, though they cannot be said to have covered all areas even in the state where they have been recurring often. No state government and no political party today can dare to either ignore the farmers' community or openly oppose their cause. These agitations cannot be brushed aside as sporadic or as minor lobbies in the corridors of power.

India has a long history of peasant or farmers' movement, dating back to the colonial period when farmers in different parts of India revolted against Zamindars, landlords, British colonial masters or powers including feudal lords. These movements were the results of severe exploitation, oppression, loss of rights over land, imposition of new taxes, and new agrarian relations of the peasants with the Colonial state or the feudal lords.

Most of the struggles that the peasants resorted to were either carried as part of the nationalist struggle or independent of it. Some of the important struggles of farmers or peasants during the British period were: Bhil Revolt (1822, 1823, 1837-60), Deccan Peasant Revolt (1875), Mopilla Revolt (1921), The Muzrai Satyagraha (1921-24), Struggle of Warli (1945), Birsa Munda revolt Nagas Peasant Uprising (1830-33). In this context, three important struggles that Gandhi led require our special attention. They were: Champaran (1918-19); Bardoli (1925) and Kheda (1918). In the first struggle, the primary issue was opposing the Tinkathia System imposed on the Indigo cultivators of Champaran by the colonial powers. In the second and third struggle, opposing the rent payable to the government at the

time of distress was the major issue. All these struggles had one impact: they brought the peasants to the nationalist movement. In Karnataka, the period of the late 1930s together with the Post-war period 1947-50 saw the most intense politically sponsored activity among middle and poor peasants has occurred in south India. These agitations are known as tenant's agitation, such as Kagodu¹⁸ Satyagraha in Karnataka during¹⁹ 1950-51, Uttara-Kannada during 1950-70 etc., were carried over the issues such as forcible ejection, debts and rents it took the forms of forcible occupation of lands and sometimes culminated in violent agitations

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To Understand the Ideology of the formers Movement
- To Study the Social Base for the former movement
- To study the role of farmer movements in Karnataka Agriculture- Shivamoga District

3. PROFILE OF SHIMOGA DISTRICTS

Shimoga, officially known as Shivamogga, is a city and the district headquarters of Shimoga district in the central part of the state of Karnataka, India. The city lies on the banks of the Tunga River. Being the gateway for the hilly region of the Western Ghats, the city is popularly nicknamed as "Gateway of Malnad" population of Shimoga city is 322,650 as per the 2011 census. The city has been selected for the Smart Cities project, standing in the fourth position in the state and 25th in the country as of November 2020.

4. IDEOLOGY OF THE FARMERS' MOVEMENT

It seems that the farmers' movement did not believe in a single ideology as such. This is because of the fundamental differences among themselves in addressing the issues of farmers. The Karnataka farmers' movement claimed itself as Gandhian but few of its arguments come closer to the argument of Dependency theory. It argues that the present-day retarded development of the Third World is largely due to the colonisation of the Third World by the former colonial countries. This colonisation is once again being pursued, even after the independence by way of cheap goods, dumping secretive technology, patent regimes, imposing restrictions on agricultural production, developing weak capitalism, urban biased policies etc. Similar arguments have been voiced in the arguments of the Uttar Pradesh and other farmers 'movements. However, what distinguished the Maharashtra movement under Shetkari Sangathan from other movements is the "novelty of idiom and its capacity to articulation". Its ideology is apparent in its argument of the "Bharat versus India" divide- they are the "native and traditional nomenclature of the country". Sharad Joshi argues that "India corresponds to that notional entity that has inherited from the British the mantle of economic, social, cultural-educational

exploitation; on the contrary “Bharat” is that notional entity which is subject to exploitation a second time even after the termination of the external colonial regime. In brief, the black rulers have replaced the white rulers (Sharad Joshi, 1986, p.213). This is called new agrarian thinking in the recent past.

5. SOCIAL BASES OF THE FARMERS' MOVEMENT

The Farmers' movements are often criticized for their class bias. It is often argued that the New Farmers' movement is highly biased towards market-oriented farmers than those who are living in the subsistence economy. All through their struggles, these movements have raised such issues which have helped either the rich farmers or the middle farmers. For example, their argument in favour of writing off loans, remunerative prices, declaring agriculture as an industry, abolition of tractor loans etc ultimately helped the big or the rich/middle peasantry or the farmers. Even the movements have not addressed the issues beyond irrigated areas. The issues of non-irrigated areas have received scant focus in their discourse. This is the reason why the farmers' movement began to lose its appeal in the years to come. The movement encompassing different categories of farmers, however, lost its vitality or appeal in due course. This is the reason why it is stated that its social bases are confined to rich and middle peasants including the farmers of commercial cropping and also market-oriented farmers

Secondly, there are criticisms that movements never become the movements of or for all caste groups. In Karnataka, the Raitha Sangha largely became the movement of two dominant castes- the Lingayats and Vokkaligas. In Maharashtra, it did become a movement of Maratha Kunbis. However, it tried to encompass Dalits, Other Backward Castes, artisan castes, and others. However, their proportion was less when compared to Kunbi Marathas. On the contrary, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh movements became a movement of Jats. In Tamil Nadu, it is argued that its membership derived from such castes as Naidus, Goundars, Tewars, Vanniyars and Nadaars. However, the representation from Dalits, Muslims, etc. is minimal. In Gujarat, under Khedut Samaj, the movement was largely dominated by Pattidars, although others such as OBCs are also its support bases but in less number. This wide range of social bases has made the farmers' movement confine to their agitational politics or their locality. Therefore it has become difficult to organise the farmers' movement at an all India level.

6. FORMERS MOVEMENT IN KARNATAKA

Movement in Karnataka has come a long way from the days of the Dinakar Desai-led land struggle in the 1940s and the famous Kagodu Satyagraha in 1951, in which veteran socialist Dr Ram Manohar Lohia had participated. Even if the farmers' movement never really took off as an alternative political force, there were moments when it had a great influence on political discourse and held the potential to transform Karnataka's socio-economic edifice. In the 1980s, Prof M D Nanjundaswamy

(MDN) took the farmer's movement and the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS) to its peak. Starting with the Naragunda-Navalgunda Bandaya the KRRS campaigned on various issues.

Two farmers were killed in the historical farmers uprising against a water tax imposed by the government. The then Chief Minister R Gundu Rao's harsh handling of the rebellion was criticized widely, which eventually led to the formation of the first non-congress government in the state. These developments helped KRRS to consolidate its position as a state-wide organization.

6.1 EARL CAMPAIGNS

The KRRS opposed the forceful recovery of loans and subsequent attaching of property, the imposition of levy price for sugarcane and demanded free electricity, a subsidiary for fertilizers, higher support price and so on. These demands were aimed at consolidating the gains of the green revolution.

Prof Nanjundaswamy, a lawyer and staunch Lohiaite, not only led the fight against adverse implications of the government's neo-liberal policies but also infused self-respect and pride among the farmers of Karnataka. The KRRS also staged a relentless struggle against the introduction of GM crops and biotechnology, it opposed the patenting of seeds and fought against multinational companies such as Cargill and Monsanto that promoted such technologies in India.

7. SHIMOGA KABBU BELEGARARA SANGHA

Shimoga District got their lands irrigated through the Bhadra reservoir project which came up bordering Shimoga and Chikmagalur districts. The newly irrigated land also was exposed to sugar cane cultivation. A sugar mill Tungabhadra Sugars of Mayura Industries came up in the command. The exploitation of sugarcane farmers by the sugar mills led to the formation of Shimoga kabbu belegarara Sangha. The Sangha was fighting for remunerative prices, payment of over dues and higher prices for sugar cane³⁶. This SZKBS is the former for later Karnataka Rajya Ryota Sangha. The activities of Shimoga Zilla kabbu belegarara sangha under which they carried their struggle appeared more to be a trade-union movement³⁷. At the other end the farmers of Tungabhadra command, Bellary District agitating for a better deal for farmers' appeared almost as Karnataka Rajya Ryota Sangha demands. The demands of Bellary farmers included writing-off of agricultural loans, declaring agriculture as an industry, establishment of small and cottage industries, floor price for agricultural produce. Reduced interest, scrapping of agricultural income tax, exemption of taxes on agricultural machinery, dissolution of land tribunals, increase in the ceiling of irrigated land, low input price, restoring the lands, remunerative prices for sugarcane, cancelling of collection of market cess, construction of irrigation tanks, scrapping of levy of paddy etc.³⁸, Many of the demands of the Bellary Farmers sowed the seeds for the later Karnataka Rajya Ryota Sangha in the 1980s.

8. CONCLUSION

The problem of small farmers and Agricultural labourers is a serious issue in rural India. To remove these problems the government should declare Agriculture as an industry argues the Karnataka Rajya Ryota Sangha (KRRS). Then all laws of Industrial labour should be extended to the agricultural labourers. In addition to scientific prices for its products, it is also important scientific wage for the labourers should be implemented⁶³. It is also important that the wasteland should be distributed to the landless and the state should assist them for cultivation; this reduces pressure on the existing agricultural land. Also starting Cottage Industries, Small Industries to generate employment should be taken up argues the movement⁶⁴. With this housing for the agricultural labourers who have been neglected for a long time, have to provide. So that they can start a new social living, free schooling for their children, health facilities and pension for their old age⁶⁵-argues Karnataka Rajya Ryota Sangha (KRRS). To increase the participation of the children of the agriculturist in various walks of life like, education and employment, 50 per cent of the reservation be given to them⁶⁸ argues Karnataka Rajya Ryota Sangha. The Karnataka Rajya Ryota Sangha also indicates to achieve success in writing –off of all loans, Revenue and to get the scientific price for agricultural produce, to realize healthy villages and to change the planning priorities it needs a persistent agitation⁷⁰. The states which are treating rural India in a step-motherly attitude, to take control of them, controlling beauracracy which keeps troubling always, the looter of agriculture, the corrupt officials, industry and trade and commerce, we have to identify ways to control them through our agitation to establish equality with other sectors of the Indian economy.

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