

'Pundit Hoi So Haat Na Chadha'

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(This article was written as a tribute to Kishan Patnaik (30 July 1930 – 27 September 2004) on his demise. Its edited version was published in 'Jansatta' in two parts. Kishan Patnaik memorial special issue of 'Samayik Varta' was brought out with the title Vaikalpik Sabhyata Ke Swapndrashta (A visionary of alternative civilization) in January 2005. This article was published in that special issue along with other obituaries. Most of the old comrades would have read this article earlier. An entire generation has come of age in the last two decades. There are many keen readers among them. The article has been reissued in its original form for their study. An English version of the article has also been released for the first time.)

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"What, after all, is the end result of intellect and knowledge? It's primarily to help human society understand its problems and internalize its predicaments. Intellectual guidance from thinking minds in the country can facilitate this further and in a deeper manner. However, the big irony of the second half of the 20th century in India is that in post sixties, intellectuals have done nothing to explain any of the issues being faced by civil society. Poverty, disease, illiteracy, unemployment, corruption, slavery, war, humiliation and suicides have left their mark on the age, but the intellectual class of India can hardly claim to have offered or suggested even a remote solution to a single problem among the many who is pretending to have entered in any [new] millennium..." Kishan Patnaik

Kishan Patnaik is no longer with us. However, we have substantial legacy and memories of his struggle and thoughts. It would be appropriate to recall that very legacy as a form of tribute to him. His views were expressed often through his writings in the monthly Hindi magazine 'Samayik Varta'. 'Samayik Varta' was founded by Kishan Patnaik in 1977 from Patna. Prior to that he had been associated with two magazines 'Jan' and 'Mankind' brought out by his political mentor Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia.

He considered the year 1977 to be of special significance in relation to the country's political development and indigenous philosophy (*deshiya chintan*). He viewed this juncture as important even in his own political life. He believed

that after this point, no one person or leader could remain an independent force in his life. Contemplation became necessary for him. This contemplation emerged and developed independent of the ideological limitations of any one thinker or ideology. It also proved its independence against the prevalent ideas/ideologies/beliefs which were mostly supportive of modern civilization to the extent of its blind worship.

Kishan Patnaik presents a critique of modern civilization, its technology and model of development, with clarity and depth. He does not create an autonomous zone of thoughts. Rather, modern civilization is perceived by him against the concrete context and plight of the vast underprivileged population of the world including India. The decay of human dignity is at root of Kishan Patnaik's critique of civilization (*sabhyata-samiksha*) It is driven by the goal of accountability, responsibility and concern for the marginalized population. He, in the real sense, fulfills his task as an intellectual, whose perception is not selective but acutely conscious of the last man standing in the shadows.

Kishan Patnaik has accomplished his intellectual task in the capacity of a political worker. He states, "My own way of thinking is political. I have no achievements in politics. But political action has proved to be a great medium to understand society and the world. This experience and understanding is very important, especially in assessing the rebellious politics of developing countries. Probably the best ideas and practices that appeared in the colonial countries in the 20th century had close contact with the political sphere. The rebellion of the colonial countries happened to be a vast domain of an arduous and indomitable attempt to revive oppressed humanity. The framework of this rebellion still exists in minds creating certain foundations. Efforts should be made to keep those foundations alive in literature, ethology (*shastras*) and politics." Kishan Patnaik does not curse politics and politicians for every single evil, like most intellectuals today. On the contrary, he holds the (intelligentsia) themselves responsible for the problems. He criticizes politicians too, but in relation to the intelligentsia.

Kishan Patnaik designates his conceptual thought as *deshiya chintan* (indigenous contemplation). He describes the phrase *deshiya chintan* in a broad sense, but he does not link it to a particular ideology. Not even with Gandhi although Gandhi is accepted as the founder of this stream of contemplation. He writes, "In an article in the American 'Time Magazine', Nelson Mandela remembers Gandhi as the man of the century. He calls Gandhi the 'father of renaissance of indigenous intellect, spirit and endeavor'. Mandela states this in the context of the whole world - 'When the colonized race had

stopped contemplating and their sense of being capable of action had died, Gandhi taught them to contemplate and revived their sense of capability.' "

Kishan Patnaik assesses the responsibility and role of the Indian intelligentsia against the touchstone of this conviction. It is an important dimension of his writings which is usually skipped over by those who write and talk about him. Modernist-progressive intellectuals have been turning a blind eye to Gandhi also, who was troubled by the hard-heartedness of intellectuals and viewed it as a long nightmare during his life.

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In this article, an attempt has been made to present and analyze this particular dimension of Kishan Patnaik's writings. Being introductory, the article is quote-rich in order to present the topic clearly and directly from Kishan Patnaik's perspective. A detailed analysis and evaluation of the intellectual class is found in his book 'Vikalpneen Nahin Hai Duniya: Sabhyata, Samaj Aur Buddhijiviyon Ki Sthiti Par Kuchh Vichar' (The world is not without options: Some reflections on civilization, society and the role of intellectuals). The book is a compilation of his writings particularly on this subject. Therefore, these writings are the main subject of my analysis.

In this book, Kishan Patnaik draws a detailed sketch of the current state of India's intelligentsia. His first thesis on the subject is that the intelligentsia plays the role of a regulator in society. He holds this to be true for every age. Apart from the immediate, relatively long-term concepts - religion, God, life, world, nature, object, time, society, education, culture, future etc., which remain in the consciousness of man for a long time, are created, explained, and reinterpreted by the intelligentsia. The second unpleasant but correct premise propounded by Kishan Patnaik is that a large section of India's intellectual work is the product of a slave and marketable mentality. This thesis is reminder of Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh's poetic line '*buaddhikvarghaikreetdas*' (the intellectual class is a purchased slave). Both Muktibodh and Patnaik explore the role and the responsibility of intellectuals in new India.

Kishan Patnaik raises the fundamental question of the crisis of modern civilization by linking it with the role of the intelligentsia. To understand this, it would be appropriate to quote him: "The crisis of modern civilization is a fundamental question in our thought-research (*vichar-anusandhan*). This issue is not important for traditional Marxism. According to him, modern technology is the backbone of modernity and it also gives its glory to capitalism.

“If you are overwhelmed by the new mechanical wonders, then you have to say that let us also enrich and bless our lives by living even on the periphery of its aura. For those who are thrown out of this exclusive circle, it will be said that they are totally unfit for life and they can go and drown themselves. This perspective is a new phenomenon and has become popular among many highly educated groups. This pronouncement is being heard time and again and this stance finds expression in debates among intellectuals and in ‘*guru-gambhir*’ seminary debates. The trend can no longer be ignored, but has to be examined by bringing it into the debates of nation-building. Can it be a valid opinion that such a part of the population is unnecessary and avoidable? One whose development or underdevelopment should not be considered at par with the development of the society in total? It is a brutal question, requiring an honest and a precise answer (without any beating around the bush). What will be the place of the humans thrown out by technology in society, how should they be understood in human society and how should they be treated? People of sociology, economics and all intellectuals who make social policies have to give their clear opinion on these inexorable questions.”

One of the reasons why Kishan Patnaik's ideas about the intellectual class are ignored or bypassed by the intellectuals, even the so called progressive intellectuals, is that they want to shut their eyes to these searing questions. About technology and development that marks the modern civilization, their arguments are no different from those given and propagated by those who are declared supporters of colonialism-neo-imperialism-globalization. Foreign capital and foreign technology are not merely commodities in modern development. They are, in fact, strong and all-embracing notions of economic colonization. Under their auspices, colonization takes place between countries as well as within countries. Progressive intellectuals consider foreign capital and technology as necessary for the development of the country. But as stated above, the disturbing point is that India's vast population has absolutely no share in this development. Arguments like a 'happy' survival of the common people on the residual of the development of the upper classes; or that this is the transition period, everything will be equal for everyone in the future, should not be supported, at least by the progressive intellectuals. But this is exactly what is happening.

If the supremacist/hegemonic notions of economic colonization continue, there will be no space remaining for the creation and promotion of the notions of economic equality based on the concept of decentralization. Then, it will be hard if not impossible to construct a new *shastra*. If the struggle of concepts that registered their position in debates till the end of the sixties has come to an end, then the role of India's intelligentsia is responsible for it, not the political leaders.

Kishan Patnaik writes: "Intellectuals are responsible for all the progress and misery of the society. If India is getting prosperous, then it is the thinking intellectual of India who deserves praise, if India is suffering, then it is the same group who is to be condemned. This is not an assessment of any particular person. Every nation has an intellectual group. Evaluation of intellectuals as a class is more important than evaluation of a writer, journalist or scientist. There comes a chapter in the history of different societies by the name of the Dark Age. Perhaps this 'dark age' is the result of the "debauchery" of the intellectual group of these particular times. The intellectuals of our time have to be put in the same dock. Those who believe that unqualified people are going to hell let them go, but they should at least try to speak their words in academic (*shastriya*) language."

Kishan Patnaik, in making this scathing comment on the Indian intelligentsia, is one of the very few people in the country who recognized the danger of mental slavery in the country due to globalization. It was the new incarnation of modern civilization which Patnaik recognized early in the seventies, and launched a sustained ideological struggle to counter it. If a crisis has threatened the independence of the country, and the intellectual class of the country is knowingly or unknowingly supporting it, then there remains little hope. Patnaik's plea is without polite frills, it puts forward the truth without any sugar coating. If the crisis weighing upon the economic, political and cultural sovereignty of the country becomes a reality tomorrow, then the 'debauchery' of today's intellectual class will be responsible for it.

Kishan Patnaik disagrees with the notion of considering an intellectual as an individual, and considers him as a regulatory class in society. He says that the operation of the society is performed through certain notions and the task of creating notions is done by the intellectual class of the society. This class either reinforces the existing notions or constructs new notions and spreads them. The consciousness of the common citizens of the society is determined and controlled by the notions constructed by the intelligentsia. The transformation of common citizens' discretion (*vivek*) and impulse (*aveg*) into frustration or

enthusiasm also depends on when and in what form the intellectual class plays its role.

Kishan Patnaik writes: "The common man cannot make *shastra*. Can't even explain the *shastra*. The 'self-control' of the society rests in the hands of those who do this task. Thereby the society is controlled by the intellectual groups. Artists, interpreters of poetics, critics, commentators and others, together create/facilitate the thoughts and feelings of the general public. This happened to be the social mind and collective character of a period. The meanings of words arise for the common man only by the consensus of the intelligentsia. What is standard of living? What is poverty? What is development? What is controversy? What is encroachment? What is attack? It is determined by the intelligentsia. If the determination made by the intellectual groups is compatible with the attitude/trend of the common man, then the general public accepts those values with enthusiasm. New values are accepted even if these are against their wisdom/intellect. This makes the mind of the common man obtuse. What we call apathy or regression is probably the result of this predicament."

The work of creating or changing any situation cannot be done by a few intellectuals, philosophers or writers. It is the result of the solidarity of intellectual groups of many levels. In this form, Kishan Patnaik considers everyone from writers-artists to lawyers, administrative officers, managers, etc., who carry out that work due to the claim of their ability to be included in the intelligentsia. It means that whatever values and beliefs are formed in the history of human civilization and whatever black and white happens because of it, the role of the intellectual class is at its root. Kishan Patnaik examines the position of the Indian intellectual class in particular and of the world in general from this ground.

He believes that the social regulatory intelligentsia is responsible for various forms of inequality and immorality found in society in the past as well as today. In this proposition of Kishan Patnaik, a new vision is proposed to understand the history of human civilization: "The more regressive an intellectual of a country, the more inert and indifferent its people will be. Perhaps the analysis of the eras of decline and defeat can be done only by this. By such a study, a *shastra* can be formed and *shastriya* (academic) norms can be made under which the intellectual class of existing societies can be evaluated, and it can be made responsible. Canons will also be ready for self-criticism (*aatm-samiksha*) of the intelligentsia, for understanding its sense of responsibility. The social review of art and literature will also be possible."

Kishan Patnaik underlines the regulatory nature of the intelligentsia by giving a variety of examples from the past and present, India and the world. In modern times, especially in developing countries that had been under colonial rule, there is a deep divide between the common citizen and the intelligentsia due to high economic inequality, high illiteracy, and the dominance of foreign languages. Due to this phenomenon, he believes, the intelligentsia affects perceptions of the people of these countries in a more capricious manner. Kishan Patnaik writes: "India is growing fast. Africans are less qualified than American whites. People never made these assumptions. Not even adopted. These notions have entered their mind because the intellectual society either creates or adopts these notions." The divide-line between the common citizen and the intellectual is not that much of a big problem as much as the fear that the mind of Indian intelligentsia is subjugated. The notions of the slave mind remain even more strange and unrealistic to the masses. Kishan Patnaik enumerates a long list of notions about the colonial and post-colonial experience that the Indian intelligentsia has made a part of popular thinking.

His article '*Ghulam Dimag Ka Chhed*' (The Slave Mind's Pit) is very revealing from this point of view. He writes: "As many of our national intellectuals (some English-speaking intellectuals are called 'national' intellectuals in the same way as English newspapers are called 'national' newspapers), except for a few exceptions, no one has believed that due to the defeat in the Battle of Plassey in 1757, India was ruined and it suffered irreparable loss. They often begin with, "Losing freedom is a bad thing but..." The tone is as if losing freedom is a matter of some regret, but at the same time, we have gained so much that one should be grateful to the British. How many English-speaking intellectuals are there in India who do not give credit to the British rule for the modernization of India?

"Some of our famous historians have written with reference to the failed revolution of 1857 that what happened was not so bad. Had the revolution of 1857 been successful, India would have been drowned in the darkness of ignorance and superstition. Actually, one has to think about the mind of those who believe like this. The question is whether there is a pit in their brain, otherwise how do they ignore the facts right in front of them."

According to Kishan Patnaik, following Mao's advice, a large part of the Chinese intelligentsia agreed to stay away from the modern consumerist lifestyle for a long time in order to lay the foundation of the country's economic development. However, the intellectuals of India did not accept Gandhi's point in this regard. "They felt that it would be considered vulgar and unscientific if private motor

vehicles and modern luxury items were not available." It's a known fact that after the independence the English-savvy intellectuals established islands like India International Center (IIC) for themselves, spending a good share of public money. In the higher institutions of education and research, they got luxurious facilities for themselves. They were not satisfied just by consuming the hardearned money of the people of India; they also consumed a lot of foreign money. *Bhashayi* (who write/speak in Indian languages) intellectuals also dabble in all this as soon as they get a chance. The tendency of Indian intellectuals to sell intelligence for money and comforts would be discussed further."

An example of the slavery of the mind is given in the above-mentioned article in the context of China: "These days the average Indian intellectual is heard saying, 'China has accepted liberalisation, why should we not do likewise?' That is, can't we be more sensible and adventurous than China. But those who give the argument of China completely forget that China has not built a mountain of foreign debt on itself. That's why China will not bow down to foreign pressure as soon as foreign capital comes in." Kishan Patnaik has cited China and Japan only to explain the mental slavery and greedy attitude of Indian intellectuals. He explores the root of the disease of slavery of the intellectual class in the Freedom Movement and finds that at that time the emphasis of all the leaders was on defeating political slavery. Only Gandhi was able to foresee that political freedom won't be of much use if it is not removed from intellectual and economic slavery. However, the article goes on to state that here in India, the inspiration for people pursuing and preaching alternative solutions is not the Asian or Indian experience, but the European environmental movement. He calls most of the NGOs working in this direction with foreign funds a ridiculous and cruel joke.

It would be called an unprecedented miracle of the intellectual establishment of modern civilization that it has succeeded in making the intellectual class of its colonized countries addicted to slavery in such a way that it not only feels safe in slavery, its modernity is also defined and authenticated by slavery. In other words, slavery keeps the intellectual class in the grip of the fear of being called 'un-modern'. The tough challenge associated with being non-modern is that it presents them with the difficult task of creating a new *shastra* of an alternative civilization. In fact, the enslaved mind loses the ability to experience the joy and fulfilment in undertaking hard work and taking tough decisions. When Kishan Patnaik says that we have entered a *shastra-viheen-vichar-viheen* era, it implies that due to the intellectual slavery of modern civilization, the possibilities of real

alternatives have been blocked. He writes: "The continental relocation of knowledge centers that took place in the 1950s had a tremendous alternative in those days. In 1945, America was declared *chakravarti* (universal ruler) of the West. In the same period, one hundred countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America were attaining their political independence. The national movements that raised the dignity of man, those that led to the political resurgence of such a great humanity, had the potential of an intellectual resurgence as well. The elite class of the above mentioned three continents thought that the welfare of the entire human race could be achieved on the strength of the readymade *shastras* of the West. Therefore, it did not seem necessary to take the initiative to create new knowledge. With this historical exodus of non-white intellectuals from these three continents, the ideological supremacy of the West was re-established through America. This American version of Western *shastras* is more useless than it was earlier. Now the human race is being pushed into a *shastra-viheen* (ethology-less) age. We are entering the Age of Ignorance at the beginning of the twenty-first century. If you understand this thing from now, you will be able to recover from it in twenty-thirty years."

The first step towards recovery, he believes, would be for the intelligentsia to become aware that its intellect (*vichar-buddhi*) and desires are influenced by slavery. Kishan Patnaik shows the courage to be non-modern, to push back against modern civilization, its technology and development patterns. He says in the end of the article 'Slave Mind's Pit', "The alternative to the modern developmental model would only be non-modern. Non-modern means lagging behind. The mind used to slavery is afraid of being non-modern. This creates panic that someone will say that you want to take the country backward. Hearing this allegation, even the biggest Gandhians and Indianists (*bharatiyatavadi*) pause for a moment while speaking their point. Hesitation is a big obstacle in the way of liberation of the intellect involved in the creation of *deshiyachintan*. Gandhi's intellect does not hesitate on this path. Kishan Patnaik writes: "The beauty of Gandhi's 'Hind Swarajya' was that there was no hesitation or indecision in it. 'Hind Swarajya' was a call to take India back to the 18th century, so that we could start our new journey standing in the pre-slavery position. Those who accuse us of regressing are really great fools, because in their philosophy of time (simple linear time) regressing never happens. Don't hold back people, keep moving forward, Dunkel Document has come to make it sure and legal."

At one place, while commenting on the question of entry of foreign media into India, he writes: "This was known from the time the discussion about the Dunkel proposal started. Why is there panic now? ... Why won't foreign newspapers and news agencies come, how won't they come? Every Indian has a foreign debt of Rs 6000. A law has been made to give ownership of India's mines to foreigners. Foreigners have got the right over the fishery wealth of the sea. Trees are being planted by the grace of foreign money. Their control over the seeds of our fields is going to happen soon. They have to manage our entertainment, so if they don't do the work of informing us and introducing us to the latest ideas, then who will?"

It is worth noting that Kishan Patnaik's vision which looks back at the eighteenth century could clearly foresee the disastrous consequences of the Dunkel Document. Apart from mental slavery, according to Kishan Patnaik, the other tendency of the intellectual class is to sell their intelligence in exchange for money and facilities. The pressure on the intellectual class to sell their intellect arises because of the fast spreading culture of marketism (*bazarvadisanskriti*) in the country and world over. The already enslaved mind, when subjected to the pressure of marketism, readily agrees to surrender its intellect to it. In this way the intellectual class of the developing countries comes under the grip of double slavery. Intellectual weakness happens due to colonial slavery whereas slavery of 'marketism' leads to perversion of intellect. The intellectual groups can be contained mainly to journalism, education, higher studies, literature and religious discourse. The intense pressure of marketism can be witnessed on all these groups. Especially in journalism, education and higher studies. However, literature and religious discourse are also not untouched by it.

There is an interesting article titled '*Professor Se Tamashgir*' (Professor Turned Show-runner) in the book which attracts attention of the readers. In this article, the general tendency of the Indian intelligentsia to sell intelligence for the sake of money and fame is discussed through the story of Prannoy Roy, professor of the Delhi School of Economics, Delhi University, who was well paid and considered to be progressive. Prannoy Roy leaves his profession of education and joined Doordarshan as a program producer under the lust of abundant money and glare of electronic media. After earning 25-30 lakhs annually from Doordarshan he becomes owner of his own private television company. Citing the program presented by Prannoy Roy of Finance Minister Manmohan Singh's budget presented on February 28, 1,994, Kishan Patnaik explains how New Economic Policies (NEP), electronic media and intellectuals unite to make crores of ordinary people of the country irrelevant in their own country.

Some lines written on this situation of an Indian intellectual in the article can be seen: "Multinational companies compete to use his talent by paying him a lot of money. Care is taken that he does not become aware that he is a salable commodity, so he is employed in such a way that he has the impression that he is miraculously engaged in an intellectual task." It goes without saying that a large number of scholars in all the developing countries including India, accepts funds for intellectual assignments. Foreign funds in many NGOs and institutions of higher studies and research are seen as intellectual necessity. It is ironical but a blatant truth that while progressive intellectuals of India strongly condemn those few intellectuals who implement the agenda of the *Sangh Parivar*, *they forget to recognize that* their own work is being conducted under an imperialist agenda!

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The practice of selling one's intellectual self is not carried out only by scholars. In the era of liberalization and globalization, journalists and editors are also trading their intelligence at high prices. In the article '*PratikrantiAurPatrkarita*' (Counterrevolution and Journalism), Kishan Patnaik writes: "... Main columnists and editors of omnipotent magazines have started getting Rs 50,000 to Rs 1 lakh per month so that articulate writers can happily sell themselves." In case any small magazine (*laghupatrika*) of Indian languages asks these expert and famous writers for an article, they will never oblige. It has also become the fate of some small magazines that they keep busy publishing the translated version of the articles of English scholars!

Famous Hindi poet Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh, in his poem 'Andhere Mein' (In the Dark) written in the sixties, has written the line: '*Bauddhikvarghaikreetdaas/kirayekevicharon ka udbhas*. (The intellectual class is a purchased slave/ the expression of hired thoughts). The phrase *kreetdas* in the poem contains both - slaved and purchased - meanings. Like Kishan Patnaik, Muktibodh also includes in the intellectual class all those who play their role in various fields of social-economic-political-cultural life on the claim of their merit. Muktibodh recognises this group's role in plunging the country into darkness and gets horrified:

*'Vichitr procession
Gambhir quick march
chamakdar band dal..... band ke logon kechehre
miltehain mere dekhehuon s
lagtahaiunmen kai pratishthitpatrkar/ isinagarke!!
... colonel, brigadier general marshal
kai aursenapatisenadhyaksh/chehreve mere jane-bujhe-se lagte
unakechitrsamacharpatronmeinchhape the,
unakelekhdekhe the yahantakkikavitayenpadhin thin
bhai wah/unamen kai prakandalochak, vicharak, jagmagatekavigan
mantribhi, udyogpatiaurvidwan
yahantakkishahar ka hatyarakukhyat
Domajiustad'.*

Whimsical procession
Solemn
Quick march ...
Glittering band-party ...
... the faces of the band's men
resembles those I have seen
it seems that several eminent journalists
of this city!!
... Colonel, Brigadier, General, Marshal
Many more Army chiefs
They look familiar to me
Their pictures were published in newspapers,
Had seen their articles
Even read poems
Bhai wah
Among them many eminent critics, thinkers, shining poets
Ministers too, industrialists and scholars / Even the notorious city killer
Domajiustad).'.

It is said that Kishan Patnaik had written a review of Muktibodh's poem 'Andhere Mein' long ago in 'Kalpana'. (This poem was published in 'Kalpana' (November 1964 issue) after the death of Muktibodh.) This review is not easily available nowadays. But it can be noted that Kishan Patnaik's attraction towards the poem 'Andhere Mein' was due to the serious consideration given to the predicament of the role and responsibility of the intellectual class.

A lack of guilt is found in the Indian intelligentsia regarding its subjugated position, affected in the past by colonization, and now by globalisation. This is sense of guilt from which the motivation and consciousness to overcome once and for all from the predicament of slavery could have arisen. Some intellectuals who are found fuming in this direction, soon go into the blind alley of sectarianism. Kishan Patnaik does not take notice of such intellect. He believes that the evils of religion and culture need to be pointed out or boycotted with the same ruthlessness with which we criticize modern science. He gives his knock only where there are possibilities of creation and development of indigenous thinking. The "dead intellect" does not concern him. His concern is basically with "awakened intelligence" which sometimes gets challenged by the "dead" intellect. In such a situation, there is the doubt that whether India's awakened intellect will ever be able to earn and establish its independence against the modern intellectual establishment?

In the given conditions, Kishan Patnaik sees the source of "awakening" intellect in smaller and less flamboyant groups. These constitute the Dalit, tribal and backward groups and people's movement groups, fighting democratically against the campaign of modern development and globalization. This potential domain of intellect in such less recognized groups too is not without worries due to their constriction and slipperiness, but it is ample for current hope.

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The consciousness against the subordination of the intellectual is quite old. In Malik Muhammad Jayasi epic 'Padmavat', a poor Brahmin approaches a caged parrot brought for sale in the market at *Singhaldeep* and asks it whether it is virtuous/knowledgeable "*guni*" or completely empty of virtues/knowledge "*nirgun*"? If it claims to be a pundit, then the Brahmin wants him to recite the Vedas. The parrot has a very poignant reply to give to the Brahmin:

*'Tab gun mohi aha ho deva
jab pinjar hut chhootipareva
ab gun kaun jo band jajmana
ghalimanjushabechahiana
pandit hoi so haatna Chadha
chahonbikaybhuligapadha.'*

(O divinity, I certainly had virtues when my soul was free from the cage. O host, what virtue I would have when I am captive? I am brought here for sale locked in the cage. A pundit is one who does not allow himself to be bought in the market for sale. I am here to be sold, that is why I have forgotten all knowledge.) Ahead of this episode, the narrative goes like this – “What can I say? In such a situation, my face has turned red and my body has turned pale. I have recognized that the two red and black stripes on my neck are nooses lying around me, which frighten me. I don't know what these traps will want me to do? Despite contemplating for long, this fear is haunting me deeply. I have lost control over my intelligence and the whole world seems hazy to me.”

The core of the episode is that the wise man who is sold as a slave, loses his intellectual personality. His knowledge is lost. The underlying resistance against subordination is a natural response. The parrot recognizes and accepts its condition of being caged and being salable in the market, it is because of this clarity and consciousness that it has this strong craving to be free from that bondage. Kishan Patnaik looks at this awareness of being held in subjugation as the key to intellectual freedom. India's intellectual class cannot change its condition until there is a consciousness about the traps, the manipulations and disguises of intellectual slavery. This consciousness is what is often absent today. There is no awareness and no remorse. Recently some Indian intellectuals presented a very embarrassing example. Some of them became Atal Bihari Vajpayee's bard (*charan*) and some Sonia Gandhi's sycophants (*chatukar*). Not only Sanghis and Congressmen, even Gandhians, Marxists, and Socialist intellectuals of all shades were included in the race.

It is true that Kishan Patnaik is quite ruthless in his criticism of the intelligentsia. But, at the same time, he considers the same as the regulator of society and civilization. He believes there is hope for a future when the intellectual class will reclaim the role of the regulator of the society in real sense. By recognition of the masks of slavery, it can create a new and alternative option to the popular notions of 'modernity'.

In the article '*Adhunik vigyan aur taknik ka dambh*' (Conceit of Modern Science and Technology) Patnaik has underlined the possibilities contained in the articles which are compiled in the book 'Science Hegemony and Violence' edited by Ashish Nandy. It can be a blue print in the direction of alternative *shastra*-making. However, he has also expressed his "prejudice" that the "criterion for criticism of modern science should be poverty or exploitation and not violence." In this article itself, he has praised Prof. Prabhakar Sinha's research on

alternative production systems. Considering the predicament of the intellectual class, he welcomes all kinds of possibilities of all types and all places.

Note:

All quotations/references in the above article are given from the book Kishan Patnaik, 'Vikalpneen Nahin Hai Duniya: Sabhyata, Samaj Aur Buddhijiviyon Ki Stithi Par Kuchh Vichar' (The world is not without options: Some reflections on civilization, society and the role of intellectuals), Rajkamal Prakashan, Delhi, 2000.

Other books by Kishan Patnaik:

'Bharat Shudron ka Hoga' (India will belong to Shudras), Second Edition, Setu Prakashan, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, 2022

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