

CHAPTER VII

**RENU'S PERCEPTION OF VILLAGE POLITICS
AND FACTIONALISM.**

CHAPTER VII

RENU'S PERCEPTION OF VILLAGE POLITICS AND FACTIONALISM

Political life : The political institutions are embedded in social system and they have much bearing on the social net work. Politics relates to the organization and manifestation of power in public, the supreme embodiment of power is the state. The government exercises power on three levels, (a) to protect the territorial integrity of society; (b) to provide for the general welfare, (c) to preserve the constitutional order. Power is an aspect of social relationship and Max Weber has defined it as the degree to which an individual or group can get its own way in a social relation.¹

Power has two forms according to sociologists, authority and coercion. Authority is that form of power which is accepted as right and legitimate and is thus obeyed and accepted by the members of the society. Coercion is that form of power which is not regarded as legitimate by the members of the society.

Talcott Parsons regards power as something which is possessed by the whole society. It is "the capacity to mobilize the resources of the society for the attainment of goals for which a general public commitment has been made".² In this sense the greater the degree of goal

-
1. See a) Gerth & Mills (ed). **From Max Weber**
b) Robert, A. Dahl, **Political analysis**
c) S.M. Lipset, '**Political Sociology**' in **Sociology to-day**
ed. by R.K. Merton.
 2. Tolcott Parsons quoted in M. Haralambos, **Sociology: Themes and Perspective**, Oxford University press 1980 p. 99.

attainment in a society, the more the power exists. In other words since goals are shared by all members of society, power is used in the furtherance of goal. Some sociologists argue that Parsons has failed to appreciate that power is sometimes used to further interest of a particular group rather than for the benefit of the whole society.

A Marxian analysis of power provides an alternative to Parson's functionalist approach. Opposed to Parson's view that power is possessed by the whole society and is held in trust for the benefit of all. Marxists point out that power is held in the hands of a particular group only at the expense of the rest of society. This dominant group uses power to further only its own interest and these interests are usually in direct conflict with the interest of the rest of the society.

According to the Marxian view point the source of power in society lies in the economic infrastructure. In all stratified societies the forces of production are controlled by a minority which forms the ruling class. Consequently all the powers in the society are vested in this ruling class. Therefore, the only way to return power to the people would be equal distribution and communal ownership of forces of production. Thus power in the capitalist society is monopolized by the bourgeoisie. The only way to end this monopoly involves communal ownership of the forces of production.¹

1. See a) T.B. Bottomore, and M. Rubel (eds) **Karl Marx: Selected writings in Sociology and social philosophy**. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth 1963 b) Karl Marx, **Critique of political Economy** Charles H. Kerr Co. Chicago, 1904.

As far as the Indian society is concerned, India is a democratic country. It is a multi-lingual, multi caste and multi faith country. There is a complex system of life in Indian society. It was only after independence that it was found that India was deeply divided culturally, economically and politically all of which were barriers to national prosperity. This led to the belief that only in a democratic Government total development and integration of the nation was possible.

Democracy is not a mere form of Government. It is a type of State as well as an order of Society. Lincoln's well known definition is **Government of the people by the people and for the people**. But present day experience shows that democracy of the pure and direct type is an absolutely unattainable ideal. The only type which is possible today is mixed type or the indirect or representative type. In other words, the actual administration of affairs is taken from the hands of the people and is vested in delegates.

India is the biggest democracy in the World. It has large number of voters, due to a large population, but the percentage of voting people is rather low because of their apathy. Besides there is a large amount of bogus voting. Though the right to franchise has been given to the Indian people with the advent of independence, studies on voting behaviour show that in most of the Indian villages votes are controlled by a handful of village leaders. And in some part of the country the weaker section is not allowed to vote.

In India to-day there are several political parties. Further there is a lack of clear political ideology, political affiliation and orientation among the leaders and among the members of the political parties.¹ Whatever participation there is among the members it is to a great extent guided by sentiments, and emotions and greed for power and money. Some studies have shown that the reason behind all these above mentioned causes and consequences are lack of political education and political awareness.²

Before independence the whole of India was united on the basis of political ideology, the main goal being independence of the country, hence most of the people both in the rural and urban areas participated in the national movement. But after independence situation has been undergoing change. Rural elites are coming up in the ladder of power structure.

To-day, in villages, politics is centred more on personalities than on issues. Leaders encourage and thrive on inter-personal disputes; for this reason factionalism has become widespread. It exists in almost all the spheres of life. There are factions based on economic cultural and religious disparities, though caste can also be a major factor

-
1. See a) Smt. Phullara Sinha, "Political Socialization and Democratic stability" **Patna University Journal**.
 2. Rajani Kothari, **Caste in Indian Politics**. Orient Longman Delhi 1970.

responsible for the formation of factions. Thus the impact of factions upon the rural society is to divide the society vertically, on the basis of caste, economic interest, political out look and religious commitments.

All these aspects of power and politics can be visible in the writings of Phanishwarnath Renu. At the same time the Gandhian impact on Renu is clearly visible in the way he has handled the political situation. His disillusionment with all political parties and politics in general is also apparant in most of his novels.

Political ideals, political goals and political atmosphere of a society, are a creation of the social system. And since the novel is the mirror of society hence the political dimension depicted in **Maila Anchal** by Renu is a reflection of the society of that particular period. He has taken into account the political situation from the year '42 to '48. Maryganj village of Purnea district, is a symbolic village of political activities of that time. Through this village Renu has tried to show how political awareness is brought about even in the remote village through the freedom movement. And the village has become highly politicized and has staunch followers of Gandhi and the Congress party in the guise of Baldev, Bavandas and Chunni Gosai This exposure to political ideas lead to political competition and political rivalry, between Congress, Socialist and Communist parties. There is emergence of socialist party of which Kalicharan is a representative, then there is the Jansangh and the Communist Party. Though all these parties have one common goal, Independence, their approach and ideals are different.

As a result of this rivalry each party thinks itself to be superior to other parties. Sociologically speaking, the emergence of new political parties and subsequently the growing awareness of a new political consciousness, has sowed the first seeds of modernisation. The pre and post independence period present duality of nature and process of change not only in terms of situation but also in terms of attitude.

But this process of modernization also becomes dysfunctional due to the working of known variable, exposure of the ruling party to power, sets into motion the process of gradual decline in political honesty. In the pre independence period there was a feeling of comradeship among the leaders and the workers. Even the simple, illiterate villagers like Baldev, Bavandas and Chunni Gosai had the opportunity to say something in the meetings addressed by national leaders like Gandhiji and Jawaharlal. people like Ramkisun Babu, Abharani, Bavandas and Baldev were inspired by the simplicity, high ideals and sacrifice, purity, practised by their leaders. In contrast to this plain living and high thinking, after independence, we find that most of these people gradually became attracted to the comforts and pleasures of life, people like Baldev, who was known for his firm character and his willingness to sacrifice everything for his country, gradually gave in to the temptations of flesh by living with Lakshmi in the Math. This is symbolically suggested by the writer.

One of the major causes of this decline was that the power position was not held by the real believers and followers of Gandhi

but was in the hands of such people as Dularchand who were not only corrupt, but also did not believe in Gandhism. Dularchand and the others who were self centred and materialistic, declared that Dr. Prashant was instigating the tribals, hence he was a communist and must be sent to jail. When in reality Dr. Prashant was helping the poor and orphans. Hence the real workers were disillusioned and dejected, some gave in, like Baldav, and deviated from the path of honesty. But some like Bavandas did not weaken under the pressure ^{and} instead got murdered, lay forgotten on the railway line, like the forgotten values of Gandhi. Renu has in fact, tried to show that this corruption pervaded not only the Congress party but all the other parties as well, though the leftist inclination of the writer is clearly visible when he tries to glorify the character of Kalicharan who remains strong and firm in the storm of corruption.

Thus we see that politics is the catalyst which brings about the change in the social conditions and the attitude of the people of Maryganj. The author has, shown that people who are in power are usually people with money and resources. Renu has also emphasized how power leads to the decline in moral values. The ruling party irrespective of caste, creed and political affiliation, controls the whole social system.

In **Maila Anchal** the Independence movement, act as a catalyst to wake the sleeping village of Maryganj. And the whole village is in a turmoil as social change is taking place as a response to innovation

of new ideas about health, social tension between class and caste, new type of morality, a new system of power, based on class and not caste.

Another significant structural trend is that of segmentation within the elite structure. Before Independence, Indian elites whether in the field of administration, business, army or politics were recruited from the same class or status groups. So the relative difference in their cultural background and social origin was minimal. This has widened much since independence, specially between the political elites and the rest of the elite subgroups. It is in the light of theory and research findings about social change that we shall make an indepth study of Renu's work. These kind of change can be found in Renu's **Parti Parikatha** also, when zamindari was abolished and new political leaders emerged from different caste and class instead of the traditional leaders from the upper caste and class, that is the elite group. Lutto of the Congress Party and the leader of the village is one such example. Lutto's father was a servant of Shivendra Mishra the then Zamindar of Paranpur, and was branded by an iron rod and killed by the Zamindar's men when Lutto was very young. Lutto, after independence, became an influential congress worker and leader of the village, and tried to take revenge from Jitendra Mishra, son and heir of Shivendra Mishra.

Another political character is Makbool, who belongs to the Communist party and is the General Secretary of the Kisan Council. His real name is Pitamber Jha but he has changed his name to Makbool to influence the muslims. Hence, Makbool's birth as a Communist leader is also inspired by the new trends which emerged as a result of

structural change. Makbool is the representative of those instincts and drives of the society in which people talk of secularism but infact they are ready to accept any religion and religious behaviour for political and personal gains. Makbool's character symbolises all those qualities which make a person stoop to any level for political gains. We find such characters even today in the political field.

In **Kitne Chaurahe**, the emergence of national consciousness in the north-east part of Bihar in 1920s, impact of Gandhiji and the concept of patriotism are all indicators of modernization and the influence of all these factors on Araria Court can be felt in the novel. Renu shows how the staid lives of the people of the town and the life of the hero undergo a revolutionary change - Manmohan, the village boy becomes Mona the patriot and ultimately Swami Sachidanand, of course he is helped in this transformation by his schoolmates also. Thus Renu has also elucidated the effect of peer groups in the socialization, or rather, the political socialization of an individual. **Kitne Chaurahe** was first published in, 1966 and was his last novel after **Julus**.

The novel opens with a foggy winter morning in a rural setting, with the musings of the protagonist Manmohan, nicknamed 'Munji' by his family members and 'Mona' by his schoolmates. In the very beginning of the novel the rural-urban conflict start surfacing. It centres around education, which has been presented by the novelist through the psyche of Manmohan, scholarship holder student who is being sent by his family to a high school at a mofussil town-Araria Court for his further education.

Manmohan's mind is like a foggy winter morning harbouring vague imaginings and fears for the future. His father thinks that the English education of Araria Court School will help in making his son a 'gentle-man student' and in the long run a promising lawyer. His father's wish is marked by a sense of social prestige and at the same time indicates vertical social mobility.

The shaping of national consciousness in the North East of Bihar during the year of 1920s and the impact of Gandhiji on the national scene is also one of the major themes in this novel. Incidentally the Araria Court School where Manmohan has been sent for formal education, turns out to be a training ground for him and imparts not only formal but also informal education. This transforms him completely for a new kind of future. 'Munji' becomes 'Mona' in the company of Priyoda, Suryanarayan, Ibrahim and others. The companionship of his schoolmates shapes his personality considerably. As a result, Manmohan starts receiving things in a new light, a new perspective. This new outlook helps him to understand life and in a way this is the real education he gets at Araria Court School.

The social aspect of National movement such as picketing at the wine shops and social service at the hour of natural calamities like plague and earth-quake (of 1934) have been portrayed vividly in this novel. Priyoda is the inspiration behind these activities.

Gandhian influence left a significant mark on the political and

social geogrp^hy of the country. Gandhiji created a mass consciousness, initiated the people into a new 'Faith' and new hope, and inspired them with a new confidence in their power to fight for freedom. Priyoda and Manmohan are also inspired by a new confidence. And as a result of this new confidence of Priyoda 'Kishore Club' is formed. But there is another aspect to this consciousness which is reflected in ^{/the} thought of Sarbatia, the widow of a martyr, Sunder Sahaya, who lost his life during the days of 'Simon Commission go Back Mission' Gandhiji is a legendary figure for her, he is an incarnation like Rama and Krishna, capable of performing miracles, endowed with magical powers. When she comes to know about Gandhiji's arrest, she laughs away the matter because it is beyond her imagination that Gandhiji can be arrested. Sarbatia is an uneducated, sympathetic and hapless widow nurtured in the social tradition of blind faith, devotion and superstition, that it would be beyond her ken to think Gandhiji as an ordinary human being.

Yet another important social aspect of the National movement ^{/strike} was ^{/and} boycott as a consequence of Gandhiji's arrest. All these are interwoven in the plot of this novel. When Priyoda breaks, this news to Manmohan he is taken aback. Together with Priyoda and the members of the 'Kishore Club' Manmohan decides to boycott classes and participate in the general strike, though he is a scholarship student and he knows fully well that there are chances of a strict harsh punishment from the school authorities.

Generally, in such cases like strike, boycott and so on the children of government servants, officers and rich lawyers, and even the students receiving 'Freeship' and Scholarship do not participate. Participation of Manmohan in the strike and ultimately his coming in the school premises makes him a hero among the students.

The rise of a strong youth movement was another result of the Gandhian upsurge, and was a clear indication of how the entire social structure was being stirred by the new forces at work. "Student's Home" an organisation in the novel **Kitne Chaurahe** erected on the pillars of fellow feeling, communal amity and selfless service to humanity. In the novel, gradually an unprecedented awakening among women is discernible. It is no less remarkable that a widowed and uneducated woman like Sarbatia comes to the foreground. She is sympathetic towards the students like Priyoda, Manmohan, Suryanarayan, Ibrahim and others. Sarbatia is requested to lay the foundation of "Shaheed Balika Vidyalaya", a school exclusively for girls, as she is the widow of a martyr. Neelu, another female character in this novel has also been portrayed in this light. She also takes part actively in the feast organised by her father, for the students and Sanyasis of 'student's Home'. Of course, her brother Dipu and Tapan are also ultimately pulled in the Nationalist movement. As compared with Sarbatia on the social scale Neelu is more advanced. **Kitne Chaurahe** is a social document dealing with the most compelling themes. In this novel, communal riots which are the dysfunctional aspect of religion and also a by product of social tension, take place. The school teacher Hafez Saheb and the 'Kishore Club' volunteer Suryanarayan are sacrificed in the raging flames of this communal riot.

Later, Priyoda, Manmohan, Krityanand, Bhola and Tapan form a procession to hoist the national flag on Araria Treasury. Except for Manmohan, all the others are killed in police firing, who manages to hoist the Flag. While performing the last rites and lighting the funeral pyre of his friends Manmohan is arrested and sent to jail. After he was set free, he renamed himself as Swami Sachidanand and formed a 'Students Home' in Dehradun. Manmohan harbours a guilt complex for being the only alive person of that procession. There is a perpetual conflict in his mind that he was unable to sacrifice his life for the cause of nation while the rest of his friends died in the police firing.

The novel ends on the note that Manmohan has finally succeeded in finding inner-peace and decides to visit his parents. This was made possible in 1965, when there was a war between India and Pakistan, he read ^{/in} a paper that his younger brother Lt. Jagmohan was killed while attacking enemy base. It is through the sacrifice of his brother that he feels that he has also sacrificed something personal - his self - for the cause of the nation. He had at last become patriotic in the true sense.

Thus we see that through his novels Renu has tried to expose the forces and the causes of change in a society. He has also depicted the effect of these factors on a particular society..