

# MARX'S CONCEPT OF STATE

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OUR UNDERSTANDING of the State, as a social phenomenon, is coloured by three pre-conceived notions :

(1) Our traditional attitude, centred round our ideal of a benevolent Monarch, loosely ruling over a rural community governed by its own autonomous village panchayats.

(2) Our newly-acquired preference for a parliamentary democracy, and for a State, which interferes least with social institutions and undertakes, only when direly necessary, social welfare measures.

(3) Our ambivalent attitude towards a State which undertakes rigorous planning, taxation or investment programmes. We desire to have a benevolent, socialist dictatorship, but we equally desire to have decentralization, freedom of capitalist enterprise, etc.

It is necessary, here, to say a few words about the welfare State and its role. Its welfare measures and social legislation (e.g., labour laws, anti-untouchability laws, anti-cartel laws in the U.S.A., etc.) mean a departure from the concept of a *laissez-faire* State. But, the departure is limited by the fact that State-action is inhibited where existing property rights and relations confront it.

The socialist measures in a capitalist structure and State-action to promote these measures can be compared, of course in a converse way, to the capitalist measures in a socialist structure, and State-action to safeguard them. The Keynesian approach and the Liebermanian approach, in capitalist and socialist economies respectively, show the meeting-ground of the two mutually confronting systems. This phenomenon, however, should not confuse the distinction between the two systems. The 'meeting-ground' only indicates that co-existence and mutual competition between the systems and a peaceful transition from capitalist to socialist system is feasible. Against this background the concept of a welfare State can be understood, not as an alternative form, but as a bridge to help peaceful transition.

2. Our political thinking from Rammohan Roy and Ranade to Gandhiji and Vinobaji expresses all these attitudes in varying