

FASCISM

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INTRODUCTION:

- The philosophy of Fascism is a 20th century ideology which emerged after the First world war in Italy and in the neighboring European countries.
- The term 'Fascism' has derived from the Italian word 'Fascio' which means a bundle of wood.
- It was the national symbol of the ancient Roman empire.
- The bundle of wood was the symbol of unity and axe was the symbol of strength.
- Hence Mussolini used this word in order to indicate the national strength and unity.

MEANING:

- ⦿ Fascism is the totalitarian organization of government and society by a single party dictatorship, intensely nationalist, socialist, militarist and imperialist are its essential nature(Ebenstein).
- ⦿ Fascism is a kind of extremism whether rightist or leftist.
- ⦿ Fascist ideology under Mussolini changed Italy into a strong and centralized government and created Italy a great international power.
- ⦿ Fascism created a strong sense of nationalism.
- ⦿ He crushed all opposition parties and did not allow the people to enjoy any individual liberties and ruled over Italy dictatorially.

BASIC TENETS(PRINCIPLES) OF FASCISM:

- ◎ Basic principles of Fascism are as follows -
 1. Absence of theory and emphasis on action,
 2. Belief in one man dictatorship,
 3. Distrust in democratic institutions,
 4. Belief in violence, force and imperialism,
 5. Opposed to Internationalism,
 6. Fascist state,
 7. Corporate state,
 8. Opposition to socialism, communism & individualism,
 9. New economic system, etc.

1. ABSENCE OF THEORY AND EMPHASIS ON ACTION:

- ⦿ It is not a political theory but believed in action.
- ⦿ It was more practical than theoretical.
- ⦿ Mussolini often said, my programme is action, not talk.
- ⦿ Fascism is a body of ideas taken from different sources put together to fit exigencies of the situation(Sabine).

2. BELIEF IN ONE MAN DICTATORSHIP:

- ⦿ Fascism has no room for democracy.
- ⦿ It believed only in the duties of the people and do not bother about the rights and liberties of the citizens.
- ⦿ According to Fascism, nature has not made everybody equal and hence, the capable and incapable people cannot be treated as equal. But it considered the national leader as capable of guiding all the people.
- ⦿ He crushed all opposition parties and stopped all criticisms against the government by censoring the press.
- ⦿ He commanded responsibility, obedience to one leader and discipline.

3. DISTRUST IN DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS:

- Fascists do not favour democratic institutions and also the conception of popular sovereignty.
- It believed that the state and not the people which was important.
- The people had to only obey the commands of the state.
- Fascists believed that the people do not have time or knowledge to understand the complex problems which could be understood by the government and its few leaders.
- They holds that the real will of the state was different from that of the popular will.

4. BELIEF IN VIOLENCE, FORCE & IMPERIALISM:

- ◎ Fascism believed that it was not at all possible to use peaceful means for bringing about any change and hence violent means needs to be used.
- ◎ Fascists glorified war.
- ◎ Mussolini said that a man who was unwilling or unable to be a ruthless despot was not fit to be the head of the state.

5. OPPOSED TO INTERNATIONALISM:

- ◉ Fascism was opposed to internationalism as it believed that it was impossible to settle any international problem through peaceful means.
- ◉ He gave up the membership of the League of Nations and adopted the policy of military alliance and war.
- ◉ It was due to his disregard for internationalism, the second world war broke out resulting in the large scale destruction of men and material.

6. FASCIST STATE:

- ◉ Fascism holds that the state is an end in itself.
- ◉ The state has a life and existence of its own.
- ◉ To them state is more important than the individual.
- ◉ Individual was insignificant without the state.
- ◉ State was an end and the individual was to be the means through which the state should attain its glory.
- ◉ They believed that the war was essential for the enhancement of nation's prestige and peace.

7. CORPORATE STATE:

- ◎ The Fascists supported the concept of a corporate state.
- ◎ They said that the state was not a collection of people but it consisted of many corporations which could be considered as a unit of social and political life.
- ◎ Fascists wanted to bring all these corporations under the state control so that they could function according to the will of the state.

8. OPPOSITION TO SOCIALISM, COMMUNISM AND INDIVIDUALISM:

- Fascists do not believe in socialism and communism.
- They say that the capitalists and the labourers should give up their selfish interests and should work in the interests of the nation.
- Fascism also opposed to individualism as it believed that every individual should work for the welfare of the nation without any selfish motive and he should seek his interests in the interest of the nation.

9. NEW ECONOMIC SYSTEM:

- ◎ The fascists considered all economic questions from the stand point of national unity.
- ◎ Their economic system neither believed in complete state interference in the economic affairs of the individual nor in the socialization of industries.
- ◎ They did not allow the capitalists or the workers to work against the national interests as the national interest was superior to all other interests.

CRITICISMS OF FASCISM:

- ◎ The fascist ideology has been criticized on the following grounds -
 1. Denies individual liberty,
 2. Extreme nationalism is dangerous,
 3. Violence causes hatred and repulsion,
 4. Dictatorship destroys democratic institutions &
 5. Absence of distinction between nation and the state.

1. DENIES INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY:

- ◉ This theory denied individual liberty which is its greatest drawback.
- ◉ Individual freedom is sacrificed at the altar of state interest.
- ◉ Individual is treated as a means to promote the interest of the nation.
- ◉ Freedom of the press and expression has been censored.
- ◉ All opposition has been crushed and promoted one party and one man dictatorship.

2. EXTREME NATIONALISM IS DANGEROUS:

- ◉ It believed in the extreme form of nationalism.
- ◉ This nationalism is dangerous as it is based on racial superiority and false national pride.
- ◉ It prevents world peace, universal friendship and cooperation.
- ◉ It also prevents the pacific settlement of disputes.
- ◉ It justifies the use of war and violence and propaganda has been widely used so as to mislead the people.
- ◉ Thus, it is opposed to international cooperation and the very idea of internationalism.

3. VIOLENCE CAUSES HATRED AND REPULSION

- ◉ Mussolini justified the destruction of property and killing of people as morally and practically necessary.
- ◉ This violence which was employed during the period of revolution remained the core of Mussolini's policy at home and abroad.
- ◉ This caused lots of hatred and repulsion which are undesirable.

4. DICTATORSHIP DESTROYS DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS &

- ◉ Dictatorship leads to secrecy and absence of democratic institutions.
- ◉ Fascists substituted the liberty, equality and fraternity for duty, discipline and sacrifice.
- ◉ It has no faith in the majority rule.
- ◉ Democratic institutions were absent due to the absence of voting, elections, free press, opposition parties, etc.
- ◉ Thus, the ideology of Fascism is completely opposed to the practice of democracy.

5. ABSENCE OF DISTINCTION BETWEEN NATION AND THE STATE.

- ◉ The state was the organic structure of the nation. The state stood for absolute sovereignty.
- ◉ By society the Fascist meant the existence of a nation and a nation to them was the state.
- ◉ Thus the Fascists did not make any clear-cut distinction relating to state, nation and the society.

CONCLUSION:

- ◉ Ebenstein claims that Fascism is a post-democratic political system which cannot be understood except as a reaction to democracy.
- ◉ Fascism is an ideology which was one of the manifestations of dictatorships, opposed to humanism, democracy and socialism.
- ◉ Progress, discipline, patriotism, unity of the nation are some of the plus points of this ideology.
- ◉ One party and one man dictatorship and absence of individual liberty are the drawbacks of this theory.
- ◉ Thus, Fascism is the expression of authoritarianism and the worship of the state and opposed to everything that is liberal and democratic.