INTRODUCTION

Peasants as defined in the social sciences especially in social anthropology literature are based on two major assumptions. First, peasants represent a particular stage in the history of human society and secondly, they constitute a segment of the larger society or whole.¹ Peasants are viewed as part society with part culture i.e., segment in a town centred economy and society. There have been different perspectives from which such co-existence has been seen. The Marxist's view peasantry essentially as a suppressed and exploited segment of pre-capitalist society. Other traditions take the cultural aspect as something crucial and view peasants as representative of earlier national tradition.²

Two major criteria have been brought to the centre of problem of the definition of peasants: These are (i) the mode of livelihood, and (ii) the relation of peasant with larger social structure. In A.V. Chayanov's writings peasants are defined mainly in terms of the way the family farm operates. The household farm as the unit of production and consumption.³ R. Firth who

defines the peasant exclusively in terms of mode of livelihood characteristic. He uses the term peasants for any society of small producers who produce for their own consumption, but he restricts the term producers with above characteristics to only those who are dependent on the cultivation of land.

Thus peasants become small scale producers using simple technology and equipment and often relying primarily for their subsistence on what they themselves produce. The primary means of livelihood of the peasant is the cultivation of the land. E. Wolf comes close to R. Firth when he posits three elements to define peasants (i) peasants are agricultural producers; (ii) peasants retain effective control over land; (iii) peasants aim at subsistence and not at profit with reinvestment motive. As against this there are others who tend to define a peasant exclusively in terms of his relation with larger society. G.M. Foster, defines peasants as communities which historically speaking have grown up in a symbiotic, spatio-temporal relationship with more complex components of their greater society.

R. Redfield and T. Shahnin tried to remove the inadequacy inherent above by using the term peasant for any society of small producers; who produce for their own consumption through the cultivation of land and who

form a segment of town centred economy and society. Following E. Wolf he too differentiates peasants from farmers. The latter term he restricts to those who produce for market.\(^7\) Shahnin's attempt to define peasant is broadly in line with that of R. Redfield except that the former is more exhaustive. He defines peasant as small agricultural producer who with the help of a single equipment and labour of his family produces mainly for their own consumption and for the fulfillment of the obligation towards the holders of political and economic power.

Formulation of definition in the Indian Context\(^8\)

E. Wolf introduces the criterion of effective control over land. This implies the proprietary right or in the Indian context the occupancy right. T. Shahnin states that ownership could lie with the state, community, individual or family. Dependent peasant cultivators such as tenants and sharecroppers, who can be evicted at the will of landlords are therefore brought within the purview of the definition of peasant. Equally important is the criterion of small producers to whom the peasant is generally restricted.\(^9\) Small producers may be defined as those with a component of single equipment and production mainly for subsistence. The existing definition lays considerable

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stress on production for subsistence. This is in fact, the central theme to E. Wolf, R. Firth, R. Redfield's definition. Now in a concrete empirical situation marketing of a part of the produce can't be altogether ruled out even though production is primarily for subsistence. This indicates an encroachment of market and state power and the existence of surplus to some extent which is usurped by the state authorities or put at the market for disposal. The use of family labour as an important component of definition has been underscored in most of the definitions. This means that the family and economic activity on the farm are closely interwoven. It is the family which supplies labour and it is the farm which meets the consumption needs of the whole family.\textsuperscript{10} In view of these features we may define peasants as small producers who produce mainly for their own consumption through cultivation of the land to which they are attached in some way by the use mainly of family labour and hold inferior status in a town centred economy and society. The major components of peasants in a social situation like that in India are:

(a) peasants are small producers who use simple equipments; (b) they primarily produce for their own consumption. In saying so, the marginal production for market in order to pay tax to the state or buy the essential commodities of life is not ruled out yet they are essentially different from

those who produce primarily for the market, making capital investments and realising profits; (c) they derive their livelihood primarily from land which does not preclude the possibility of them contributing to their family income through other part time or seasonal works. (d) that they confine labour needed to cultivate the land largely to the members of family. (e) they are attached to land in some way. (f) they enjoy an inferior economic, political, social and cultural status in view of the domination by the town centred economy. 11

What defines peasant is, therefore, the production of surplus appropriated by outsiders within the broad frame work of family based subsistence farming. All peasants are not equal and every peasant community indicates definitely complex structures of internal neighborhood exploitation often located within the network of patron-client relationships. Yet, most of inter peasant inequality and exploitation are secondary to the one external to peasants both in terms of share extracted and in the way the structural dynamics of class structure bear upon them. 12

The concept of ‘class’ (i.e. agrarian class) has been used in a Marxian sense to imply objective economic conditions or unity of economic interests only. It does not suggest that those who occupied the same class position were necessarily aware of political consciousness of their collective ‘class

interests.' To be precise, the use of term 'class' implies Karl Marx's 'class in itself rather than his notion of 'class for itself'.

The term 'peasant movement' and 'agrarian movement' refer to all kinds of collective attempts of different strata of the peasantry either to change the system which, they feel, was exploitative, or to seek redressal for particular grievances without necessarily aiming at overthrowing the system. It includes all kinds of resistance movements, violent or non-violent, organised or spasmodic, pre-political or political.

Similarly the terms 'rebellion', 'uprising', 'insurrection' and revolt have been used synonymously implying that, though falling short of full scale revolution in a modern or contemporary sense, they involve large scale peasant violence as a part of resistance.

The Model of Agrarian Classes in India

Denial Thorner has attempted to reduce the diversity of land system or social arrangements of land in different parts of India into precise social categories on the basis of three following criteria:

(i) Type of income obtained from the soil (a) rents (b) fruits of own cultivation (ii) The nature of rights (a) proprietary or ownership (b) tenancy (c) sharecropping rights (d) no rights at all (iii) The extent of field work actually performed (a) absentee, who does not work at all (b) those who perform partial work (c) total work done by actual cultivator with family labour (d) where work is done entirely for others to earn wages.

Taking these criteria D. Thorner has outlined the model of agriculture in India:

I. Maaliks: Whose income is derived from proprietary right in the soil and whose common interest is to keep the level of rents up while keeping the wage level down. They collect rents from tenants, sub-tenants and sharecroppers.

(a) Big Landlords: Holding rights over large tracts, absentee owners/rentiers, no interest in land management or improvement, more generalised or common name is landlords.

(b) Rich landowners proprietary with considerable holding residing in same village taking personal interest in land management and improvement.

II. Kisans, working peasants having proprietary interest in the land but actual rights inferior to those of the Maliks.

(a) Small landowners: having sufficient land holding to support a family, who cultivate land with family labour and who don’t employ outside labour or receive rent.

(b) Substantial tenants - tenants holding leases under either Ia or Ib; tenurial rights fairly secured; size of holding usually above the sufficient level.

III. Mazdoors, those earning their livelihood primarily from working on land of others.

(a) Poor tenants, having tenancy rights but less secure, holding too small to suffice for a family’s maintenance and income derived from land often less than that earned by wage labour.

(b) Sharecroppers, either at will, leases without security; cultivating land for others on sharecropping basis, and having least agricultural implements.

(c) Landless labourers

D. Thorner’s sub-categories are nearer the realities of the Indian agrarian social structure but the specificity of the internal differentiations within Indian agrarian society requires such broader and more comprehensive model as can redesignate them by more commonly used

16. Ibid pp. 4-6.
concepts and criteria in the study of peasant societies. Such models can be drawn from the works of V.I. Lenin and Mao tse Tung.

I. Landlords - D. Thorner’s Ia II. Rich peasants - IIa i.e. D. Thorner’s IB, IIb III. Middle Peasants - IIa, IIb (Throner’s). IV. Poor peasant - IV a (D. Thorner’s) V. Landless labourers - (D. Thorner’s IIIc).\textsuperscript{17}

Some cautions are necessary. First, all the five class situations and their sub-categories are region specific. Secondly, more often ‘rich’, ‘middle’ and ‘poor’ peasant categories can be distinguished from each other only in qualitative rather than quantitative terms.

In the sociology of social movements there is a well entrenched tradition of analysing socio-political movements - including peasant movements - in a ‘class’ framework that is rooted in Marxism.

A general question is often raised regarding the role of different agrarian classes play in peasant resistance and revolts. The question has become somewhat polemical owing mainly to the sharp increase in diverse sets of empirical data being produced by researchers dealing with great variety of historical cross-cultural settings. Since this study is concerned with peasants’ movements’ that occurred in India between 1926 and 1951, it would be worth while to set out with an examination of the main ways in which the question

\textsuperscript{17} Lenin, V.I., Capitalism and Agriculture, pp. 57-9.
has been approached, conceptualised and formulated from time to time.

First, we start with Karl Marx, he thought that the peasantry could be a possible ally of the industrial proletariat in the latter's struggle against the bourgeoisie. Contrary to his expectations the French peasantry didn’t support the working class at the time of the 1848 revolution. Therefore, he criticised the peasantry and characterised the peasantry as a class struggling to restore the old property relations within the framework of new social order. Despite such criticism his views are basically ambivalent, for him the possible sources of mobilization, resistance and revolutionary action were complex, multiple and comprehensive. Therefore, they included all those who symbolize alienation and exploitation in a given society. Moreover, Karl Marx’s did draw a distinction between the small peasant and the large landowners as two different and opposed classes. In any case, the social differentiation within peasant or agrarian societies was not basically germane to Karl Marx general thesis on the political orientation and revolutionary disposition of various social classes.

F. Engles had a more balanced view of the peasantry, a clearer understanding of the internal differentiation and differentiation within a

peasant society. According to him the 'farm-labourer' or 'peasant proprietors' were the most natural of the urban-industrial proletariat. All the same he mentioned the notion of pre-eminence and leadership of the proletariat in a revolutionary movement. Therefore he too viewed the peasantry as internally split, unorganized and politically impotent unless mobilized by the organised working class. The decisive contribution of the peasantry to the Russian Revolution precipitated the question of the peasant's revolutionary potential, in a more concrete and acute form.

The classical concept of the peasantry modified by Karl Marx, was challenged in China where the peasantry and the leadership of Mao tse Tung played a decisive role in Chinese Revolution of 1949. In this instance the peasants not only formed the great bulk of the fighting forces and party cadres but also provided a good part of the leadership.

Now B. Moore's approach regarding the peasantry is slightly different. Although he relegates the phenomenon of 'class-exploitation but to him it is the power structure which determines the parameters of radical change and modernization. The concrete manifestations of the revolutionary

21. Engels, F. The Peasant war in Germany p. 4-11.
22. Ibid.
23. Lenin, V.I., What is to be done? Moscow p. 78-93.
potential of peasants hinge largely on the power structural alignments and class alliances in a given society at a particular time. Thus in England the peasants proved themselves to be non-revolutionary, and were wiped out by rapidly growing rural and industrial capitalism. B. Moore classified three ‘ideal-type’ routes to radical change and modernization, namely:

i) The bourgeoisie - democratic revolution (as in England, France, America) ii) The Fascist Revolution (Germany, Japan) iii) The Communist Revolution (Russia, China)

While the peasantry has traversed each of these routes elsewhere, confoundingly, the Indian peasantry has not. The lack of revolutionary experience in India has been explained by Moore partly in terms of traditionally docile and passive character of the Indian peasantry, and partly with reference to the structural peculiarities of the village social organisation, caste sanctions and religion - ethical precepts that dominate peasant life in India. One of the reasons why Moore found the record of the Indian peasant so ‘unimpressive’ is that he searched for a revolutionary phenomenon that could well stand parallel to any of three types. Secondly B. Moore didn’t realize that given a socio-culturally plural and complex society such as India, with her institutional

peculiarities, prolonged subjugation to colonial rule and a sustained anti-imperial first freedom struggle, a full fledged revolution turmoil was less likely to occur. In the recent writings some contemporary Marxist sociologists and social scientists have concurred consciously or unconsciously with Barrington Moore’s general thesis. For example, Paul Sweezy argues that ‘the revolutionary role and leadership of a certain social class is essentially the product of historical circumstances and objective forces and that ‘no revolutionary path is immutable or invariable’.

Keeping this in mind Theodor Shahnin has emphasised that the whole question of revolutionary potential of a certain social class must be treated as historical, relative and changing.

Participants

Studies on peasant movements in India are centred around two questions regarding the participants. One, who among the peasants participated in the movement? Two, which class of peasants has the greatest potential to bring about revolutionary or radical changes in the agrarian structure? Most of the categories are more or less similar to what other scholars have used except the category of middle peasant.

28. Dhangare, D.N. Peasant Movements in India, p. 45.
31. Shah, Ghanshyam - Social Movement in India A review of Literature, p. 49.
However, the middle peasant has generated a lot of debate among the scholars. Kapil Kumar argues that there were no middle peasant, as classified by Hamza Alavi in Oudh during 1886-1922. As many as 98 percent of the tenants did not enjoy occupancy rights. They were tenants at will. Like H. Alavi, some scholars dump all tenants together into one category. Kapil Kumar classifies the tenant-peasant on the basis of the rent they paid. David Hardiman classifies peasants on the basis of size of land holding.  

On the basis of analysis regarding the role of various classes of the peasantry in the freedom struggle of China, Russia and India, Hamza Alavi argues that the middle peasants, who are economically somewhat more independent have greater potential than other peasant classes to play a revolutionary role. He argues that the poor peasants are initially the least militant class because of their dependence on landlords or rich peasants. Robin Jeffrey suggests on the basis of his study of Kerala that the middle peasant who are most likely initially, to become active participants in such a movement. Though poor peasants may be involved later in villages where the movement acquires a firm hold.

32. Ibid. pp. 52-53.
D.N. Dhanagare argues H. Alavi’s contentsions regarding the potentialities of middle peasants for a revolutionary role says, that it is basically a substitution of one myth with another. For example, the structural independence of the middle peasant has been overemphasised by H. Alavi and E. Wolf, and they have overestimated the political mobility and strategic position of the middle peasants in agrarian class structure as the chief source of agricultural credit for the middle peasant in India was, until recently, the money lender, landlord or rich landowner. In terms of class solidarity D.N. Dhanagare viewed that the middle peasants are weaker than other agrarian classes. Moreover, they have always been a transitional and fluid social category. Also increasing polarization of agrarian relations has tended to eliminate the middle peasant as a very significant social category in India. He agrees with H. Alavi that most of the leaders of Kisan Sabha in Bengal belonged to middle peasants, but they didn’t participate actively in the Tebhagha because some petty Jotedars and under Raiyats, active in Kisan Sabha, employed Bargadars for cultivating their lands, and the Tebhagha demand had affected many of them as much as it had affected the rich peasants and big Jotedars.\footnote{Dhanagare, D.N. \textit{op. cit.} p-2, 19-20, 221-22.} Bary Pavier’s and D.N. Dhanagare’s studies on the Telangana movement also don’t support H. Alavi’s contention.
Barry Pavier observes that 'initially the Telangana movement was indeed a multi-class movement against the Deshmukhs. No doubt initially most of the leading cadres of the Andhra Mahasabha and the Communist Party of India came from 'rich' or 'middle', peasant families. It is also clear that the nature of movement changed. The people who carried on the movement from 1948 were the agricultural labourers and poor peasants; they were the people who were doing most of fighting and who along with declared people from the other peasant sections, were Communist Party of India cadres.\(^{36}\)

David Hardiman on his study of Kheda Satyagrata argues that bulk of support came from middle peasants. Further he said that the movement also received support from the subsistence peasant.\(^{37}\) However, one has to examine as to what extent 'the middle peasant of kheda were close to rich peasants in terms of their income. It should be noted that Kheda was the most fertile part of Gujarat.

Neil Charlesworth holds the view that D. Hardimans characterisation of 'middle peasant' of Kheda was inappropriate as they were relatively richer than the rich peasants of south-west Maharashtra.\(^{38}\)

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\(^{36}\) Pavier, B. 1984 The Telangana Armed Struggle, Economic and political weekly 9 (32-34).

\(^{37}\) Hardiman, David, Peasant Nationalist of Gujarat, p-208, 47.

(The Bardoli Satyagraha) and Sunil Sen also argue that the rich peasants played a leading role in the abolition of feudal system as they were interested in improving farming and selling food grains and cash crops in the market.

Kathleen Gough identifies the poor peasants and agricultural labourers as having the potential for organising revolutionary movements in India. D.N. Dhanagare also takes the same point.39 Robert Hardgrave in his study on the Moplah Rebellion of 1921 shows that the poorest tenant cultivators of Kerala were more militant than the middle and rich peasant owner cultivators.40

Kapil Kumar asserts that there are different sources of peasant mobilisation and political action. As a section of the peasantry succeeds in meeting its own demands, it either withdraws from the agitation or curbs the agitation of those who are poorer. In several cases, the rich peasants and zamindars succeeded in seeking support of poor peasants and labourers to meet their own class interests.

Some scholars argue that it is difficult to arrive at a theory regarding the revolutionary scale of a particular agrarian class because the struggle was of a complex nature during the colonial period.

Partha Chatterjee while studying the region of Bengal argues that the analysis of the agrarian class struggles in Bengal in the last decades of colonial rule shows us the appropriateness of any simple linear explanation. Even if we reduce these struggles to relations between a small number of fundamental elements, we are still left with a variety of possible alignments and combinations, differing from region to region and from period to period according to specific structural formation and the historical conjuncture. The same holds good in various peasant movement of India from 1926-28.

Nature of Agrarian Discontent and Peasant Revolts before 1926

Through the first 100 years of British rule, the series of civil rebellions were often led by deposed Rajas and Nawabs or their descendants, uprooted and impoverished zamindars, landlords and poligars (landed military magnates in south India), and ex-retainers and officials of the conquered Indian States. The backbone of rebellions, their mass base and striking power came from the rack-rented peasants, ruined artisans and demobilized soldiers. The elementary issues underlying the agrarian crisis are the pressure of over population on agriculture, through the blocking of

41. Azad, Nirmal Recent Farmers Agitation in Punjab, EPW, 10(7), April, 26, 1975.

other economic channels, the effects of land monopoly and the burdens on the peasantry, the low technique and obstacles to the development of new techniques, the stagnation and deterioration of agriculture under British rule; the increasing impoverishment of the peasantry, sub-division and fragmentation of holdings and dispossession of wide section; the consequent increasing differentiation of classes, leading to an increase in the proportion of the peasantry from one third to one half to the position of a landless proletariat. The major cause of all these civil rebellions taken as a whole was the rapid changes the British introduced in the economy, administration and land revenue system. These changes led to the disruption of the agrarian society, causing prolonged and widespread suffering among its constituents.43

Above all, the colonial policy of intensified demands for land revenue and extracting as large an amount as possible produced a veritable upheaval in Indian villages. The new courts and legal system gave a further fillip to the dispossessors of land and encouraged the rich to oppress the poor. The ruin of Indian handicraft industries as a result of imposition of free trade in India and levy of discriminatory tariffs against Indian goods in Britain, pauperized millions of artisans. The misery of artisans was further compounded by the disappearance of their traditional patrons and buyers, the princes, chieftains and zamindars. Another major cause of the rebellions was the very foreign

character of British rule. Like other people, the Indian people too felt humiliated at being under a foreigner’s heel. This feeling of hurt pride inspired efforts to expel the foreigner from their lands.  

The civil rebellions began as British rule was established in Bengal and Bihar, and they occurred in area after area as it was incorporated into colonial rule. There was hardly a year without armed opposition or a decade without a major armed rebellion in one part of the country or the other. From 1763 to 1856 there were more than forty major rebellions apart from hundred of minor ones. Displaced peasants and demobilized soldiers of Bengal led by religious monks and dispossessed zamindars were the first to rise up in ‘the Sanyasi rebellion’ that lasted from 1763 to 1800. It was followed by ‘Chuar uprising’ which covered five districts of Bengal and Bihar from 1766 to 1772. Other major rebellions in Eastern India were those of Rangpur and Dinajpur, 1783, Orissa 1804-17.

In South India, the Raja of Vizianagram revolted in 1794. The poligars of Tamil Nadu during the 1990’s, Devan Velu Thampi of Travancore organised a heroic revolt in 1805. The Mysore peasants too revolted in 1830-31. In Western India, the Kolis of Gujarat 1824-28, the Bhil uprising 1818-31, the Satara uprising 1841; Northern India was no less

44. Ibid, pp. 258-65.
turbulent. The present states of Western U.P., And Haryana rose up in arms in 1824. Other major rebellions were those of Bilaspur 1805; the Bundelas of Jabalpur 1842, and Khandesh 1852 etc.\textsuperscript{45}

These almost continuous rebellions were massive in their totality but were wholly local in their spread and isolated from each other. They were the result of local courses and grievances and were also localized in their effects. They often bore the same character not because they represented national or common efforts but because they represented common conditions though separated in time and space. Socially, economically and politically, the semi-feudal leaders of these rebellions were backward looking and traditional in outlook. They still lived in the Old World, blissfully unaware and oblivious of modern world which had knocked down the defences of their society. Their resistance represented no societal alternative. It's basic objective was to restore earlier forms of rule and social relations. Such backward looking and scattered, sporadic and disunited uprising were incapable of fending off or overthrowing foreign rule. The British succeeded in pacifying the rebel areas one by one. The more recalcitrant were physically wiped out. The historical significance of these rebellions lies in that they established strong and valuable local tradition of resistance to British rule. The Indian

\textsuperscript{45} Chandra, Bipan - India's Struggle for Independence pp. 43-44.
people were to draw inspiration from these traditions in the later peasant struggles.46

There was a certain shift in the nature of peasant movements after 1857. Princes, Chiefs and landlords having been crushed or co-opted peasants emerged as the main force in the agrarian movements. They now fought directly for their own demands centred almost wholly on economic issues, and against their immediate enemies, foreign planters and indigenous zamindars and moneylenders. Their struggles were directed towards specific and limited objectives and redressal of particular grievances. The territorial reach of these movements was also limited. They also lacked continuity of struggle or long-term organisation. Once the specific objectives of a movement were achieved, its organisation, as also peasant solidarity built around it, dissolved and disappeared. Thus, the Indigo strike 1860, The Pabna agrarian leagues and the social - boycott movement of the Deccan ryot left behind no successors. Consequently, at no stage did these movements threaten British supremacy or even undermine it.47

These movements often represented an instinctive and spontaneous response of the peasantry to its social condition. It was the result of excessive and unbearable oppression, undue and unusual deprivation and exploitation

46. Ibid pp. 46-47.
and a threat to the peasant’s existing, established position. The peasant often rebelled only when he felt that it was not possible to carry on in the existing manner. The peasant also adhered to the notion of legitimacy. That’s why he fought against eviction and undue enhancement of rent and not against the state’s right to collect a tax on land. He objected only when the level of taxation overstepped all traditional bounds. In these movements, the Indian peasants showed great courage and a spirit of sacrifice, remarkable organisational abilities, and a solidarity that cut across religious and caste lines.48

A major weakness of the 19th century peasant movements was the lack of an adequate understanding of colonialism - of colonial economic structure and the colonial state and of the social framework of the movement themselves. Nor did the 19th century peasants possess a new ideology, and a new social, economic and political programme based on an analysis of the newly constituted colonial society. They lacked a positive conception of an alternative society, a conception which would guide the people in a common struggle on a wide regional and all - India plane and help develop long term political movements. However, this weakness was, of course, not a blemish on the character of the peasantry which was perhaps incapable of grasping on

its own the new and complex phenomenon of colonialism. That needed the efforts of a modern intelligentsia which was itself just coming into existence.49

The first all-India body, the Indian National Congress in its earlier stay was basically an elitist organisation concerned with the problems of economic development of the country but not the economic betterment of isolated segments. The leaders had to give priority to ending that exploitation rather than to taking up 'class demands'. Since the landed classes - zamindars, landlords, Talukdars were allied with the British, the India bourgeoisie collaborated with the professional classes, intelligentsia and urban middle classes, all of whom were predominant in the Indian National Congress between 1885 and 1915. Since it was these classes which determined the economic outlook of the Indian National movement, the neglect of agrarian issues and problems was inherent in the class character of Indian politics.50

Links between the urban commercial, trading and industrial capitalists, and the peasantry were established for the first time in India after Gandhi arrived on the scene in 1915. His main emphasis was on the socio cultural revival and regeneration of the village community, its solidarity and self sufficiency. The Ghandhian political idiom of 'village uplift' - 'swaraj' ‘swadeshi’ and satyagraha undoubtedly endeared the Indian rural masses the
peasants and village artisans but the substance of his economic programme was far from what the masses really needed.51 His central idea towards all movements was to form a united anti-imperialist front incorporating all the classes of the Indian society the peasantry being the bulk of the masses.

**Champaran Movement**

Champaran is a district situated in northern Bihar along the international border with Nepal. The history of the Champaran movement started in the early 19th century when the European planters after taking the tracts on lease from the local zamindar, involved the local tenants in agreements of growing indigo on 3/20th parts of their holdings and in coming terms forced them on this contract as a matter of right, that too, legalised by Tenancy Act of 1885. The above said arrangement was called 'Tinkhatia System'.53

The local peasants had various grievances - first, within the few years of this Indigo cultivation extreme scarcity of food was observed because 'Indigo' a cash crop replaced all the food crops. Secondly, the local affluent peasants couldn't indulge in this project oriented process of indigo cultivation. Thirdly, German synthetic dyes forced indigo out of the market and the

52. *Id*.
European planters of Champaran, keen to release the cultivators from the obligation of cultivating Indigo, tried to turn their necessity to their advantage by securing enhancement in rents and other illegal dues as a price for the release. Fourthly, the resistance by the local peasants in 1859-60, 1876-78 and 1908 could not bring relief and exactions of the planters continued.54

At this juncture, Raj Kumar Shukla, a middle class peasant, Congressman and resident of Champaran district invited Gandhi to intervene on behalf of the peasants.55 After a little hesitation (because Gandhi didn’t want to disturb the English government during the first world war) Gandhi arrived in Champaran and learnt enough to become anxious to investigate the facts for himself. He went to Patna, Muzaffarpur and Motihari, the headquaters of the district of Champaran. Here, he was served with a notice to quit the district by the next available train as his presence was considered a danger to public peace. Gandhi refused to comply and argued the Magistrate on April 18, 1917: "As a law-abiding citizen, my first instinct would be, as it was, to obey the order served on me. I couldn’t do so without doing volience to my sense of duty to those for whom I came ....... I am fully conscious of the fact that a person holding in the public life a position such as I do, has be

to more careful in setting example .... I have disregarded the order served upon me; not for want of respect for lawful authority; upon me; not for want of respect for lawful authority; but in obedience to the higher law of our being - the voice of conscience.56

To offer passive resistance or civil disobedience to an unjust order was indeed novel. The Government not willing to make an issue ordered the local government to retreat and allow Gandhiji to proceed with his enquiry. Gandhi was not at liberty, his method of investigation - cross examining each witness searchingly and discouraging exaggeration, touring the villages, meeting number of peasants, recording their statements was striking and unique. His associates during this process were Brij Kishore, Rajender Prasad, Mahadev Desai, Narhari Parikh J.B. Kriplani and C.F. Andrews.57

To diffuse the situation Craddock, the Home member suggested viceroy to appoint a commission of enquiry on which a seat should be offered to Gandhi as well. With the evidence of 8000 tenants, knowledgeable, persuasive and firm Gandhi made out an irresistible case for the tenants. The Committee unanimously recommended the abolition of the tinkhatia system and the illegal exactions. As for the illegal recoveries, the committee

recommended a 25% refund. Many of Gandhi's colleagues wondered why he had not held out for a 100% refund. Gandhi's reason for these restraint was that these planters had been able to lord it over the ryots; because of their prestige, the mere fact that they had been obliged to give up a part of the enhancement and to refund a part of the cash was enough to damage if not altogether destroy their prestige.

The Kheda Satyagraha

The labour dispute at Ahmedabad has scarcely been settled when Gandhi was drawn in to conflict between the peasants seventy villages of Kheda district in Bombay Presidency and the local administration on the remission of land revenue.

The Kheda district of Gujarat was a land of Kanbi-Patidar peasants proprietors producing foodgrain, cotton, tabacco for nearby Ahmedabad. Repeated famines and plague after 1899 blighted the crops in this district and made revenue payments difficult. The peasants of this area were in extreme distress due to failure of crops and rejection by the Government of their

appeals for remission. Though, the revenue code provided for a total remission of the land when the crops were less than 25% of the normal field. Yet the opinion was sharply divided on the exact damage to the crops. On-the-spot enquiries by the members of servants of Indian society and by V.J. Patel, then a member of the Bombay legislative assembly and Gandhi put the damage at more than 3/4th of a good year’s yield. The officials belittled these estimates as emanating from ‘outsiders’.

The initiative for no-revenue earlier came from local village leaders like Mohan Lal Pandya of Kapadvanj Taluka in Kheda in November, 1917; but couldn’t bring result. The Gujarat Sabha of which Gandhi was president played a leading role in the agitation by appeals and petitions but failed. Gandhiji then called on the peasants to ‘fight unto death against such a spirit of vindictiveness and tyranny and refused to pay land revenue. This was the first real Satyagraha which Gandhi organised in India. The basic problem was to free peasantry form fear; the fear of officials, the fear of

62. Ibid.
forfeiture of land and property. Gandhiji and Vallabhai Patel toured the villages.\textsuperscript{66} The peasants were asked to take a solemn pledge that they wouldn’t pay; those who could afford to pay were to take a vow that they would not pay in the interests of the poor ryots.\textsuperscript{67}

The ryots, mostly a low caste Baraiyar showed much courage and fortitude; but the repression told severely on a district already suffering from the after effects of drought, plague and high prices.\textsuperscript{68} Gandhi felt that the peasantry had reached on the verge of exhaustion and it was prudent to prevent it from being driven to utter ruin.\textsuperscript{69} When the Government issued instructions that land revenue should be recovered only from those who had the capacity to pay and that no pressure should be exercised on poor peasants\textsuperscript{70} Gandhi felt justified in calling off the no tax campaign.

Undoubtedly Gandhi’s constructive programme helped the Congress sustain its basic liberal, political and economic reformism and to draw the rural masses into the mainstream of the national movement but both these

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{66} Sarkar, Sumit, \textit{Op. cit.}, p. 84-85.
\item \textsuperscript{67} \textit{The Bombay Chronicle, April 10, 1998 Gandhiji’s Speech at Navajam, April, 17, 1918, collected works of M. Gandhi, Vol. XIV pp. 314-15.}
\item \textsuperscript{68} Chaudhary, Sukhbir, \textit{Peasant’s and Worker’s Movement in India 1905-29}, New Delhi, p. 38-39.
\item \textsuperscript{69} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{70} \textit{Situation in Kheda District : Confiscation of land and Crop. Home Department (Political) File No. 18, May 1918, The Tribune April, 5, 1918.}
\end{itemize}
movements involved local issues and left more fundamental questions relating to land control and antagonistic class relations.\textsuperscript{71} He preferred to compromise with the authority and terminate the movement just when it began to gather momentum.\textsuperscript{72}

The basic principle in the Malabar Land System have been protection and supervision rather than ownership in the modern sense. The ruling magnates made grants to Nambudri Brahmans, who were at the top of several tiered social structure, for the management of temples and other institutions and also to the feudals and subdued chieftains to protect their territory with their personal equipments. The landed magnates ‘jenmis’ retaining only a small portion as personal farms to be cultivated by the bonded slave, gave the remaining to the ‘Kanamdars’, the ‘verumpattamdar’ and the agricultural labourers. These grants were hereditary and implied customary sharing of the produce between the Jenmi and the other classes below him.\textsuperscript{73} ‘Kanam’ was a tenure, whereby the tenant offered a sum to a Jenmi, either as security or as advance rent, in return for land leased out for a specific period.

The Britishers too, after subduing Malabar recognised the Janmi as an absolute owner of the land. It was a long term gain for the Britishers by

\textsuperscript{71} Home Department (Political) File No. 18, May 1918.
\textsuperscript{73} Malabar District Gazetters Vol. 2, Madras 1905-33, p. 75.
creating a class of landlords and securing allies who will assist them in continuation of their rule in this area.\textsuperscript{74} Obviously, the Jenmi landlords, backed by police, the law courts and the revenue officials, tightened their grip on the subordinate classes. The moplah peasantry also called the Verumpatamdars, were the worst sufferers. With the newly established law courts, Jenmis were able to extort more renewal fees and rents from their leaseholders whom they threatened with legal eviction if they refused to pay. By this way, each superior right holder could extract a larger share than previously from the one immediately below him in the chain of subinfeudation.\textsuperscript{75}

When the Moplahs could not find an amicable solution of this problem, they started to revolt against their oppressors. There were several outbreaks in 1836 and 1854. The high handed method of Government, instead of checking these events ignited the Moplah spirit further.

The Government appointed various commissions for the investigation of these disturbances but the reports attributed the Moplah outbreaks in southern Malabar not to any oppression of tenants by the landlords, but to the Moplah tenantry’s process to evade their obligation and to resort to false and litigious pleas.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{74} Munro, Thomas, His minutes and other official writings, Sir A.J. Arbuthnot 2 vol. p. 172-3.

\textsuperscript{75} Dhanagare D.N. Op. cit., p. 61.

The Moplahs deciphered a new way out for their legal eviction. The Mosques and Thangals (Moplah Priests) acquired prominence. In the changed circumstances, the Thangals began to act as a quasi-political organisation. A mosque was an ideal place for both mass meetings and religions congregations, and the distinction between the two tended to become more and more blurred as the source of livelihood of the Moplah tenantry was increasingly threatened by legal evictions. Several Moplah lease holders surreptitiously erected mosques in the lands of their Hindu landlords. This was a defensive tactic to prevent eviction. Once they had defiled the sacred land of the Jenmis, yet the landlords required great courage to institute legal proceedings for eviction, for such attempts were likely to be resisted by the entire Moplah Community.

An another method was to enhance the numerical strength of the Moplahs. From 1831 onwards, the Muhammadan population increased significantly in Malabar, it was 269624 in 1831, 382330 in 1851, 900000 in 1901. For the Moplahs each new convert not only improved their collective strength but also helped to paralyse cultivation of the jenmis family farms and to render the Jenmis weaker in the bargaining position. Thus this

78. *Ibid., pp. 462-64.*
79. *Census of India, 1901, Vol. XV B Table IV, Religion pp. 25-32.*
enhancement by conversion though seemingly a religious process, had strong secular and political overtones.\textsuperscript{80}

The Moplah peasants during 1885 and 85 renewed their rebellious activities by looting jenmi’s property, burning landlord’s houses, seizing and defiling Hindu temples and attacking army barracks. However, these disturbances were easily suppressed by the Government as they were ill organised.\textsuperscript{81} Half-hearted attempts were made by government by appointing the Logan Commission and a land Tenure Committee. Both these measures proved futile. The Logan Commission criticised the high officials of the revenue and judicial administration, so its report was shelved, and the land tenure committee too couldn’t reach on consensus, it’s failure was inevitable because of its constituent members, representing all classes, Jenmis, verumpatamdars etc.\textsuperscript{82}

Most of the Moplahs were concentrated in the southern talukas, particularly in Ernad, Walluvanad and Loonai, which together accounted for nearly 60% of the Moplah population. The cultivation of land was the principal source of livelihood. The overwhelming population was illiterate and unskilled. Nearly 6% of Moplah population living in town was involved

\textsuperscript{80} Logan, Manual, pp. 82.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid, pp. 595-7.
in trading and business.\textsuperscript{83} Insipite of occupational and economic differences within the community, the egalitarian idea of Islam helped the Moplahs to maintain solidarity.\textsuperscript{84} But the gross neglect of basic questions of tenurial security, the deterioration of landlord tenant relations and the political alienation of the poor peasantry were the most important formative conditions which led them to rebel in 1921. Sidy by side, the two National movements Non-cooperation and the Khilafat gave impetus to the already accelerated process.\textsuperscript{85} These movement afforded them an opportunity to voice their economic grievances as well as to demonstrate their religious and cultural identity.\textsuperscript{86} The agrarian grievances of the Moplah peasantry had never previously had an political clout.

The rebellion started in August 1921 in Pookhottur village, following a widespread rumour that the police and the army had raided the famous Mambrath mosque of Thirurangade. Angered by this, bands of armed Moplahs, mostly peasant rushed to the mosque and clashed with the police. The Police opened fire, a frenzy of riotous destruction, killing, looting and arson began. The hostility of the Moplahs was clearly directed against the Government and

\textsuperscript{83.} Census of 1881 Vol. II, Table XVI pp. 231-7.
\textsuperscript{84.} Miller, Eric, 'Caste and Territory in Malabar' vol. IV pp. 410-20.
\textsuperscript{85.} Dhanagare, D.N. Op. cit. pp. 76.
\textsuperscript{86.} Ibid.
the jenmis. Railways and telegraph lines were cut, paralysing communication, while post offices, banks and police stations were either looted or burnt. By the end of August the whole of the Malabar except Palghat region was under the control of the rebels.\textsuperscript{87} The Government had to ask the army to take over the civil administration although the famous leader Ali Musliar had surrendered by September 3, yet until October 20, 1921 the rebellion was not suppressed.\textsuperscript{88} It became difficult for the rebels to sustain the ongoing movement due to absence of adequate firearms and supplies. Despite the political alliance, there was no harmony of thought, word and action among the leaders and supporters of campaign in Malabar. After the arrest of main leaders such as Yakub Hasan, C. Rajgopalachari, Madhavan Nair, P. Moidenkoja and U. Gopala Menon of Malabar, the entire movement was left in the weak hands of the local committees in the rural areas.\textsuperscript{89}

Thus by December 1921, the Moplah rebellion had been completely suppressed. According to official reports 2337 rebels had been killed 1652 wounded and 45404 rebels surrendered before the Government.\textsuperscript{90}

\textsuperscript{87} Madhavan, Nair, K., Malabar Kalapar pp. 110-25, Pannikar, Malabar rebellion of 1921 pp 28-29.


\textsuperscript{89} Ibid pp. 21-23, 35-7.

\textsuperscript{90} National Archives, New Delhi, Govt. of India, Home Deptt. (Political files) 1923, F.No. 1929.
RAMPA AGENCY PEASANT ARMED STRUGGLE 1922-34

The vigorous popular militancy came in early 20th Century from 'Rampa' region of the Godawari, it was a scene of veritable guerilla war between 1922 and 1924 led by Alluri Sitarama Raju. The main reasons of discontentment were the exploitation by moneylenders, forest laws restricting shifting cultivation and age old grazing rights. Among all these the most striking reason was the restriction on the traditional system of 'podu cultivation' which had been prevalent in this area for a long time. The other means of cultivation were costly affairs. Many forests were declared 'reserves', the forest department usurped the right of collecting even for the minor forest produce. The forest contractors in collusion with the forest officials overlooked the tribal labour rights. Besides these, there were certain forms of oppression such as vetti labour, unpaid or free customary labour and gathi labour a form of debt bondage which often descended from the father to the son.

The immediate cause of the uprising was the extraction of the Vetti labour for the construction of a highway, penetrating thick jungles and across

92. A. Aiyappan, Report on the Socio-Economic conditions of the aboriginal Tribes of the Province of Madras, 1948, p. 10.
low hills from Narsipattam to Chintapalli. A highly arrogant staff led by Tehsildar of Bastion was given charge of this project. The Tehsildar made unlawful demands from the tribal peasants and deteriorated the condition when he used force by attaching their agricultural implements and checking inflow of foodstuffs from outside.94

Alluri Sitaram Raju, who led this movement from 1922 to 1924, was a resident of the Krishna District of Godvari region, most popular and credited as a man of knowledge by the local tribal population.95 He won the sympathy and confidence of the hillmen by commencing social work in the Rampa region.96

The atmosphere was ripe for discontent and disaffection among the Koyas, further it was given impetus from the synchronising events such as non-cooperation movement started by Gandhiji, peasant radicalism in Pedanandipad (Guntur distt.) and nulitant civil disobedience in Polnad.97

Soon the activities of Raju caught the attention of the British authorities, who later kept him under surveillance.98 So, Raju, who had earlier

96. Reports by M. Annapurniah, op. cit. p. 231.
made up his mind for organizing a violent struggle against the Britishers, started practising archery secretly and the use of fire arms in the forests of Jeypore (Orissa), where Gosain Shrebadasswa was organizing the Khonds and Savaras through ‘Prayer Associations’ to make the hillmen realise their strength. After acquiring proficiency in technique of war-fare, he returned to Gundam and started to raise an army among the hill people to overthrow the Britishers and to achieve ‘Swaraj’. 

Since August, 1922 he made several raids on police stations, prisons looting arms, setting free his associates. The first victory came in September 3, 1922 Sita Ram Raju pushed back the Government forces and established his command in the area. The hill area after this incident started making weird stories about his miraculous powers. He became a charismatic leader who “bragged of bullet proof powers”, invulnerable and finally a “devudu” (God). The rebels defeated the police forces in various encounters. The Government of Madras too recognised Sita Ram Raju’s spies, guerilla tactics, organization and strategy as more superior than that of their own police force.


100. Home Department (Political) File No. 898, 1922.


In reality, the success of rebels lay in the fact that they had a very strong social base in the hills. That’s why despite a severe repression, crushing tactics on the local population, the government could not get any information about the rebels.\textsuperscript{103}

The first serious set back which the rebels suffered at the hands of police, was on December 6, 1922 at Peddagudapalam; four of the rebels were killed in encounter, several injured, huge quantity of ammunition seized.\textsuperscript{104} The defeat at Lingapuram further demoralised the rebels. Sita Ram Raju decided to suspend the movement and withdrew into the interior of the forests for another trial of strength.\textsuperscript{105}

The next expedition of Raju started on April 18, 1923 at Annavapuram Police Station.\textsuperscript{106} He became the hero, saint and a large crowd thronged the place to have his ‘darshan’, blessings and benediction. This popularity boosted up the morale of the rebels.\textsuperscript{107}

These activities of rebels alarmed the Madras Government. Rutherford, was appointed as the commissioner in charge of the operation

\textsuperscript{103} M. Vankatarangiya (ed.) \textit{op. cit.} pp. 84-85.

\textsuperscript{104} \textit{Fortnightly Report, February 1923, Home Political File No. 1189/A-1 Public}, p. 54.

\textsuperscript{105} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{106} \textit{Id.}

\textsuperscript{107} \textit{Ibid}
which came down heavily on the rebels. Sita Ram Raju was forced to surrender on May 7, 1924. He was brought to Koyyur and killed.

The rebels however, continued to fight for a few more days under leadership of Gantam Dora but several of them were captured and dealt ruthlessly by the authorities.

This movement was quite different from earlier movements - outrightly an anti-imperialistic from very beginning with local grievances, local participation and absolutely local leadership, with own tactics and with aim of ‘Swaraj’. A letter of Sita Ram Raju to Paniherla Satyanarayana is significant “I have commenced the battle ... I have started the campaign thinking that battle is inevitable in the interest of country’s safety ... the fact that the main motive behind this was the establishment of Swaraj”.

So far we have discussed peasant movements in which left has no or marginal role to play. These movements were largely amorphous and had class antagonism. The Indian National Congress peasant movements were by and large led by middle peasantry and supported by poorer section of the peasantry in general. Some movements like Malabar had communal face.

108. Id.


110. Ibid, pp. 301.
However, beneath the Communal face it was largely a movement where class antagonism played a decisive role. Other movements like Santhals etc were tribal in character. Forest laws as well as imperial exploitation were the main causes, which were instrumental in creating dissent among the local leaders. Some of these movements were millennium in character. Most of these leaders such as Sita Ram Raju were charismatic personalities. The peasantry had total confidence in them. However, there were some areas such as Punjab where peasants preferred to seek power from British Government. These movements were also controlled by the middle peasantry.

Leftism made its first appearance on the Indian scene only after the World War I.1 Prior to this, throughout the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, changes were taking place in the social, economic and political fields which gradually prepared the grounds for the emergence of the Left after the war. Under the impact of British rule a transformation of the socio-economic structure of the Indian society took place, leading ultimately to the establishment of modern industries. The first impact of the Industrial Revolution as in the west, came as an indignant surprise to the people immersed in an altogether different social, economic and cultural environment and gave rise to the sporadic protest movements of workers and peasants

against the new order. At this stage a few educated Indians, inspired by the ideals of the Russian Revolution started grouping towards Marxism. Their motive being a desire to promote the National struggle on the basis of class struggle. No sooner did the communist came in power in Russia, then they paid particular attention to India because they hoped that India would play the most important role in the task of winning an international victory over imperialism by the Russian Revolution. In 1918 a Russian Communist leader K.M. Troianovsky emphasised such intention, “if Russia is justly considered to be citadel of World revolution, then India can be definitely called the citadel of the revolution in the East, a revolution which is bound to resound most strongly in the West and in the World in General”. The Communist International (CI) was officially established in March 1919 for propagating and establishing communism and to accelerate the developments of events towards world revolution. This was an association of the socialist parties of the world and its purpose was to establish a Universal Communist dictatorship with Moscow as the centre. This organisation gave special attention to India, when M.N. Roy as a delegate of the communist party of Mexico took

112. Das R.A. The Labour Movement in India pp. 36.
part in its second congress from July 14 to August 7, 1920. India was represented by Abani Mukherj. At this congress M.N. Roy elaborated that the communists in colonial and semi-colonial countries should pursue a militant and uncompromising policy in their fight against imperialism. V.I. Lenin was in favour of lending support to the “bourgeois - democratic liberation movement” in the colonies in their fight. This was the fundamental difference of opinion between these two leaders.

In the second world congress of Communist International both theses prepared by M.N. Rao and V.I. Lenin were accepted and submitted to the national and colonial commission for its consideration. After some revisions both theses were adopted. In the revised version of V.I. Lenin thesis the Comintern was advised to support only “revolutionary movements of liberation”. It advised against supporting all bourgeois - democratic liberation movements, as stated in the original draft. In this way the distinction, M.N. Roy made in between different types of bourgeoisie democratic liberation movements, was incorporated into V.I. Lenin’s thesis. Elaborating the distinction V.I. Lenin had observed “The meaning of this change is that we will, support bourgeois liberation movements in the colonial countries, only when these

movements are really revolutionary and when the representatives of these movements don't hinder us in training and organising the peasants and the broad masses of the exploited in a revolutionary spirit".118

On the contrary M.N. Roy had believed that the united front policy was inappropriate for India and the communist support for national movements in colonial and semi-colonial areas must be differentiated. As far as India is concerned, he had doubts that the bourgeoisie democratic nationalist leaders might betray the national revolution.119

M.N. Roy also had confidence in the strength of Indian proletariat and peasantry. Unlike Karl Marx's Faith, he lacked faith in "spontaneous" development of class consciousness. It was because of that he saw an essential difference between the proletariat and the socialist. He was less trustful of the national bourgeoisie then V.I. Lenin and laid greater emphasis on developing independent communist parties in colonial and semi-colonial areas. Then on supporting existing national movement, he wanted only co-operation with the nationalist movements, while V.I. Lenin urged temporary relationship or even unions with such movements.120


119. Haithcox, J.P. Communism and Nationalism in India. pp. 15.

The Communist International chose M.N. Roy to organise the communist movement in India and made strenuous efforts for it. After the conclusion of the Second Congress M.N. Roy was shifted to Taskent, where a group of Indian leaders, who were members of Pan-Islamic movement and Khilafat Muhajirs joined him. Roy intended to indoctrinate the Muhajirs in communism, he believed that driving the British out of India would be no solution, if it was succeeded by replacing foreign exploitation by native ones. The Muhajirs proposed to form a communist party of India and thus the emigre communist party of India was formed in October 17, 1920 at Tashkent. Muhammad Shafiq was elected its secretary and the other prominent members were M.N. Roy, Evelyn Roy, Abani Mukherjee, Rosa, Muhammad Shafia, Muhammad Ali and MBP Maurya. To elaborate the activities of the Communist International 'the Yugantar' maintained that the third Congress of the Communists met in June-July 1921, gave the slogan of the unity among the Left parties. It further emphasised the necessity of winning the masses.

A greater stress was laid on the formation of an indigenous Communist Party of India with the full support of the Comintern, Roy made sincere efforts to

123. Ahmad, Muzaffar op. cit. p.32.
make contact with Indian radicals like S.A. Dange to train a number of Indians who could be sent to India to carry out propaganda and organizational work.124 By 1921-22 Communist Centres were established in Bombay, S.A. Dange published a pamphlet 'Gandhi and Lenin' started first socialist weekly, 'The Socialist'; in Bengal Muzaffar Ahmad brought out 'Navyug' and later founded the 'Langal' in cooperation with the poet Nazrul Islam; in Punjab, Ghulam Hussain and other published 'Inquilab'; and in Madras, M. Singaravelu founded 'the Labour Kisan Gazette'. They all started independently of each other but also ventured upon the task of building an all - India party and their epicentre was the Communist International.125

These amorphous groups in India were neither strong nor influential. They started as illegal bodies in the beginning. Numerically weak as they were, they existed more on paper than in reality. Communism still existed at the level of ideas only and communist groups were, mere pressure groups than a party. The strength of communism in India at this stage was mainly intellectual. Thus, they couldn’t form a party, but they succeeded in forming a nucleus around which communist activity was to develop and extend later on.126

M.N. Roy, the guiding spirit of the communist movement in India, expressed his views in the conference of the representative of the working class at Lahore. He thought that the communists should not lose sight of the final goal of communism, namely, the end of class domination and the establishment of a classless and stateless society. Yet the attainment of this objective in India was closely linked up with the question of National liberation, and therefore, the working class party must face and solve the problem of national liberation. This programme proceeded on the assumption that Indian revolution was not going to be socialist but bourgeois - democratic in the first instance, and the whole strategy was to see that its leaders, if possible, should be communist vanguards.127

During this period the communists made frantic appeals to the Indian National Congress to adopt a more revolutionary programme. M.N. Roy in December, 1921 acknowledged the Indian National Congress is "the leader of the movement for national liberation and appealed for the adoption of a liberal economic programme dedicated to raising the standard of living of poor workers and peasants."128 However, the manifesto was not accepted by the congress. Again M.N. Roy sought to influence some congressmen the most important

128. Manifesto to the 36th Indian National Congress, Ahmedabad 1921, quoted in Adhikari p. 345.
among them being C.R. Das, the President of the Gaya Congress. M.N. Roy issued a programme for the Indian National Congress to be placed before the Gaya Congress. But the Communists suffered a clear defeat at Gaya and Roy's programme met with general hostility. Efforts by the Communists in this direction continued. But in 1922 Gandhiji, being disappointed with the progress of Non-cooperation movement suspended it. M.N. Roy denounced it severely and criticised it as a 'vertiable betrayal of the revolutionary rank and file by the non-revolutionary and reactionary leadership. He was of the view that "a powerful revolutionary movement had been sacrificed at the altar of Gandhism. Now the tactics of Roy changed not to capture the congress, but on building the Communist Party of India that would eventually capture the leadership of the national revolutionary movement. Roy wrote in August, 1922 to the Communist Party of Britain to send two suitable men for propagation and distribution of Communist Literature. The Communist Party of G.Britain despatched Charles Ashleigh, who contacted S.A. Dange and Muzaffar Ahmad, but soon his mission was discovered by the British authorities. Not only the Ashleigh mission failed but most of the Muhajirs

130. Roy, M.N. and Evelyn, One year of Non-Coperation from Ahmedabad to Gaya p. 60.
131. Roy - ibid
132. Kaye, Sir Cecil, Communism in India, with unpublished sources from the National Archives of India (1919-1924) calcutta edition, p. 16.
trained by Roy at Tashkent and Moscow, were also arrested in 1922. They were all tried in famous Peshawar Communist conspiracy case, however, this trial couldn’t suppress the zeal of Communist activities.\footnote{Shukla, V., \textit{Soviet Revolutions and the Indian National Movement}, p. 98-99.}

Although various ideological centres were present in India, yet due to the vacillating, confused and even contradictory advices tendered to the Indian Communist by the Communist abroad and the ideological confusion among the indigenous communists, the emergence of the Communist Party of India was delayed.

In 1924, shortly after the Communist Conspiracy trial case, Satya Bhakta had decided to organise a legal communist party. On September 1, 1924 the legal Indian Communist Party was formed at Kanpur by a group of UP Communists led by Satay Bhakta.\footnote{The Leader, 2 Sep., 1924.} This party convened an all India conference in Kanpur on December 26, 1925 attended by S.V. Ghate, K.N. Joglekar, R.S. Nimbarkar, C.K. Iyanger from Madras, Sapurji Saklatvala, an Indian Communist British MP. Maulana Hasrat Mohari, chairperson of the reception committee emphasised that the party was not connected with Communist International and was purely an Indian organisation.\footnote{The Patriot, 27 Dec., 1925.} This led to
serious differences within the party. M. Ahmad, S.V. Ghate, K.N. Joglakar and M.N. Roy who were critical of his opinion remarked that they couldn’t imagine a movement in India having no relation with the World Communist movement.\(^{136}\) This group brought together the scattered communists and constituted a central committee of communist party at Kanpur.\(^{137}\) The executive met on December 28, 1925 which included among others J.P. Bhagrhatta, K.N. Joglekar, R.S. Nimbarkar, M. Ahmad, Abdul Majid and C.K. Iyanger. S.V. Ghate was the General Secretary.\(^{138}\)

The main form of political work by the early communists was to organise peasants’ and workers’ parties and work through them. The first such organisation was the labour-swaraj party, Congress Labour Party and Kirte Kisan Party etc. The basic objective of these parties was to work with Congress, to give it more radical orientation and make it ‘the party of the people’ and ‘independently organise workers’ and peasants in class organizations, to enable first the achievement of complete independence and ultimately of socialism.\(^{139}\)

\(^{136}\) Ahmad Muzaffar, op. Cit. p. 413.
\(^{137}\) Sinha, L.P. op. Cit p. 159.
\(^{138}\) The leader, 29 Dec., 1925.
The emergence of Communist movement in India between 1919 to 1926 was marked by the slow growth and tardy progress. The leaders and rank and file of various groups had terrorist background. Consequently, there was a suspect faith in communism and its ideology. It was because of this fact that most of the leaders fell from the grace in the Comintern. The infighting within them for power and also the conflicting influence of Indian Communists who were in other countries roadblocked the progress to a large extent. M.N. Roy in this period played a major role and provided ideological support to his fellow comrades. S.A. Dange also made his impact felt among the Indian Communists. On the issue of peasant, peasant struggle, their religious background, their social structure, and sub-group within them were issues, which were generally accepted by the strands within the communist groups of India and abroad. The opinion of those leaders were largely conformity with each other. However, the implementation part differed. Thus implementation and the emphasis on the peasant question was many a time quite different in shade and colour. It is generally believed that some of these leaders earlier had Islamic Orthodoxy in their mantel frame, also there was a large group who had
terrorist background. Moreover, these leaders came from educated middle classes of India, having their own weaknesses which they carried in the early communist movement in India as well.