IDEOLOGY, PROGRAMME AND TACTICS

A strong Left stream developed in the ongoing struggle against an alien imperialist British power in India, contributed to the radicalization of the struggle. The goal of political independence acquired a clearer and sharper social and economic content. The idea of social and economic emancipation of the masses acquired roots in the Indian soil.

The 'Left' leading the workers and the peasants as the class, had shaken the masses at grass-root level and made them conscious about their just rights and power, sharpening their resolve to fight for the underprivileged and play a progressive role in the Indian freedom struggle. The various peasants' and workers' organisations led by 'Left' came forward with a declared intention that the time will come when the united forces of the country (peasants & workers) would take a forward step and launch an attack on the imperialistic domination itself for the complete national independence and to build a democratic State of Indian people leading ultimately to the realisation

1. *Chandra Bipan, India's Struggle for Independence 1858-1947, pp-296.*
of a 'Kisan-Mazdoor Raj'\textsuperscript{4}.

The term 'Left' has its genesis in the French Revolution. There were three ideologies in the National Assembly. First, those with prejudices against change in the establishment (monarchy and the privileges of Nobility), second was a liberal type, moderate group that favoured limited reforms, and the third was of radical type which demanded a new constitution to limit and regulate the powers of the monarchy and insisted on drastic reforms. The seating arrangement of these different streams in the French parliament was such that the conservative group sat right to the speaker, the liberal moderate sat in front, and the third radial one sat left of the speaker.\textsuperscript{5} Since than these right, left terminologies came into prevalence.

**Ideology**

Ideology may be regarded as a body of expressed ideas, opinions and thoughts containing ultimate values, images, key symbols regarding desired social order, its manifestations, empirical knowledge regarding the present or past socio-economic and political situation, and recommendations for further action.\textsuperscript{6}


\textsuperscript{5} Sinha, L.P. *The left wing in India 1919-47* pp-XI.

The articulation of basic political, economic and social values as a body of ideas that serves as the basis for an ideal social system is "Way of Life".

An ideology is concerned with the nature of the political system, the exercise of power, the role of individual, the nature of the economic and social system, and the objective of society. It not only incorporates a society's basic values but itself becomes the major value to be defended.\(^7\)

Historically, ideology has constituted a divisive force when rival systems have existed coterminously and the adherents of each have sought to achieve victory over others. A set of ideas can win over human minds without the use of organised power, but the ideologies are seldom spread without ideological campaigns supported by organised powers. Thus an ideology constitutes a dynamic factor in the power equation since the unity and vitality it creates can be directed against other states or groups.\(^8\)

The Leftists, in general consist of all those parties and movements which demand mass participation in the government and drastic change in the society. The Left as an international movement believes in the ideology of Communism and Socialism. Actually, the ideology of all strands of socialism, Communism are more or less surrogated to each other.

\(^7\) Plano Jack C., the International Relations Olton Roy, Dictionary p-106.
\(^8\) Ibid
Socialism

This stream disfavours individualism, private ownership, and private profits in favour of a system based on economic collectivism, governmental society, or industrial group ownership of the means of production and distribution of goods and social responsibility. The doctrine of Socialism have varied from those who espouse democratic values to those who call for forms of absolutism and dictatorship. The differences among groups professing the ideology have involved the means for winning power and instituting socialism. In strategy, Socialists fall into either of two categories: democratic Socialists, who strive to use the political machinery of the State to achieve their goals by winning power democratically and modifying the existing system peacefully; or Marxian Socialists, who believe that their objective can only be achieved through violence and the destruction of existing Capitalist and democratic institutions. They also differ in their objectives, between those who wish to establish a centrally organised system utilizing the power of the state and the syndicates; who aim for a decentralised system with groups of workers owning and controlling all industries.9

Communism - Elimination of capitalist institutions and the establishment of a collective society in which land and capital are socially

9. Ibid, p. 111
owned and in which class conflict and the coercive power of the state no longer exist. A Socialist programme carried out under a “dictatorship of the proletariat” will then end class warfare, eliminate the need for the state; and move the society into the final, classless, stateless stage of pure community.¹⁰

V. I. Lenin - a Russian leader founded the Communist International (CI) which at one time used to guide the international communist movement and guide different countries of the world for the chosen path they should follow.¹¹ The communists believed in the proletarian internationalism.¹² Soon there arised a controversy that whether the communist parties world over should pursue the same or identical forms of revolution?¹³ Later it was decided that the proletarian internationalism and the International Communist movement could be developed on the basis of bilateral and multilateral contacts and through World conferences.¹⁴

The 1917 Communist revolution was the first revolution in the world which believed in the Communist ideology of Karl Marx (1818-1884) in

¹⁰. Ibid, p. 82
¹². Ibid.
¹⁴. Ibid.
Russia.\textsuperscript{15} According to his thought Socialism is achieved after the working class gains power and destroys the capitalist who owned means of production appropriated their properties and turned them into public Socialist properties.\textsuperscript{16} It is the central tenet of Marxist Communism that the task of leading the masses to a successful proletarian revolution can be undertaken by the workers or the proletariat.\textsuperscript{17} Hence the necessity of dictatorship of the proletariat. It is through this dictatorship of the working people, led by the working class and revolutionary leaders that the Socialist State is created.\textsuperscript{18}

After socialism has been established, through the dictatorship of the proletariat, distribution takes place on the principle: “From each according to his ability, to each according to his work”. But later, when productive forces reach a higher level and surplus product is available in sufficient quantities, distribution will be on the principle “From each according to his ability, to each according to his need.” It is then that the highest stage of socialism, namely, ‘Communism’ is reached.\textsuperscript{19}

The dictatorship of the proletariat may, however, assume different

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15. David, N. Druche, Soviet Russia and Indian Communism, pp-7-14.
18. Ibid.
\end{flushright}
forms.\textsuperscript{20} In the Soviet Union it assumed the form of soviet power, concentrated in the hands of two classes, namely, the workers and the peasants.\textsuperscript{21} In China the dictatorship took the form of people's democracy, this included the working class, all strata of peasantry, the middle strata of urban population, a section of intellectuals and a part of middle bourgeois.\textsuperscript{22} The tactics followed by these countries were different. In Russia, the socialists relied on general strike of industrial workers followed by country-wide insurrection.\textsuperscript{23} The Chinese relied on partisan war of the peasantry as the main weapon of revolution. In Italy, France and in England, they participated actively in elections.\textsuperscript{24}

In India, the overriding feature was the supremacy of the question of 'National Independence' which was the prime concern of all political movements.\textsuperscript{25} The Indian National Congress which dominated the entire political scene in India, stood for the entire nation in the cause of national freedom.\textsuperscript{26} The Left-wing movements, however, emphasized the social and

\textsuperscript{20} Chalmers, A. Johnson, \textit{Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power}, p-175.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{22} B Kmmel, J.H. \textit{Communism in S\&E Asia}, p. 36.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid
\textsuperscript{24} Chalmers, A. Johnson, \textit{Op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{25} Roy, M.N. \textit{India in Transition}, p-1-14.
economic problems of the Indian peasantry and workers and sought to bring them to the forefront of the national movement.\textsuperscript{27} The distinctive features of the Left parties are, first, they wanted to play a radical, militant, uncompromising and anti-imperialistic role inside the ongoing national liberation movement, secondly, they didn’t regard the national movement as mere political movement for freedom but sought to link it with the broad socio-economic demands of masses and with their independent class-organizations, thirdly, they had link with, and their movements bore the impact of the International socialist movement by which, they meant the movement based on ‘Marxian Socialism’.\textsuperscript{28}

According to F. Engles the peasantry and the peasant proprietors are the most natural allies of the urban industrial proletariat. He too, viewed the peasantry as internally split, unorganised and politically impotent unless mobilized by the organised working class. V.I. Lenin - internal differentiation within the peasantry becomes more and more elaborate with the introduction of capitalism in agriculture. Due to the transitional position of the middle peasantry, and 'their income being somewhat lower than the average expenditure; their position in the rural social structure is most unstable. To Lenin, the middle class 'provides more workers than it hires'; except in the

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Ibid}

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Sinha, L.P., Left Politics in India p-2-14.}
best years, the middle peasant's position is an extremely precarious one. Lenin thus considered the middle peasants as more akin to the poor peasants particularly in terms of placement in the socio-economic hierarchy, but not in terms of their political orientation, although this is not explicitly stated. To achieve the revolutionary objectives, he did stress on 'mobilizing all classes and on arousing discontent wherever possible.\textsuperscript{29}

To Mao Tse Tung 'a middle peasant derives his income from his own labour and as a rule doesn't exploit others, in many cases he himself is exploited by others. Although some well to do middle peasant do practise exploitation to a small extent that is not their regular or the main source of income. Thus Mao too does not bestow any vanguared role on middle peasantry.

To him the peasantry along with the proletariat could play the revolutionary role. In this instance the peasant not only formed the great buld of the fighting forces and party cadres but also provided a good part of the leadership.\textsuperscript{30}

M.N. Roy - a leading Marxist and an emigre revolutionary envisaged 'the Indian revolution originating from the workers and peasants

\textsuperscript{29} Lenin V.I., What is to be done; 1969, pp 78-109. The Development of Capitalism in Russia, collected works, III, 1960, pp 79-192.

\textsuperscript{30} Collected works of Mao Tse Tung pp
on the Russian model.\textsuperscript{31} That's why he pleaded for comintern's exclusive assistance in the formation of Communist Party of India (CPI), since that alone could organise the masses for the class struggle to end British imperialism and thus accomplish the Indian revolution.\textsuperscript{32} Therefore, he advised his comrades to adhere to 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. Consequently the efforts were made in the direction of mobilizing workers and peasants in the struggle against foreign domination.\textsuperscript{33} This programme would proceed on the assumption that Indian revolution was not going to be socialist in the first instance but the whole strategy must be to see that it's leaders, if possible, should be communist vanguards.\textsuperscript{34} On the question of subsidiary nature of Communist leadership in the freedom struggle, he asserted that in all dependent countries there were two distinct movements. One was the bourgeois national movement with a programme of political freedom and the other, the

\begin{enumerate}
\item[] Hindi, A.K. M.N. Roy The man who looked ahead, 1938 p. 106.
\end{enumerate}
mass movements of the peasants and workers for the liberation from exploitation.\textsuperscript{35} It was because M.N. Roy entertained the belief that from the outset there existed in India a movement of the peasants and the workers. He unequivocally criticised. Gandhi and the Indian National Congress and argued that if from the outset the leadership of the liberation movement in the colonies was in the hands of a Communist vanguard, then the revolutionary masses could have a right direction (way to socialist state).\textsuperscript{36} But in early years of the Communist movement, there was hardly any organised revolutionary party in close touch with the workers and peasants.\textsuperscript{37} Later on another Communist Party member Sardesai affirmed that in such circumstances, "how on earth was a Communist Party in a subject country to secure the leadership of its freedom movement from the outset?"\textsuperscript{38}

R.P. Dutt, a member of Communist Party of India, too, stressed the need for paying greater attention to the organisation of peasants and workers. Along with others he constantly worked to end class division, exploitation and the common entry of the whole people into the possession of their country.\textsuperscript{39}

'Swaraj' as defined by him, was economic Swaraj which would usher in a

\textsuperscript{35} Roy, M.N. \textit{Future of Indian Politics} p. 90-104.

\textsuperscript{36} Arnot, R. Page, \textit{Revolutionary Movement in Colonies} p. 45.

\textsuperscript{37} Roy, M.N. - \textit{The way of Indian Revolution February, 1929} pp 39-47.

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{39} Dutt, R.P. \textit{India Today}, pp. 143-144.
classless society, the system of society based on common society, the system of society based on common ownership..... of the means and instrument of production and distribution of wealth in the interest of the whole community of India.40

S.A. Dange a prominent leader urged to organise the masses on the basis of class struggle. He laboured to prepare Indians to fight the government in two ways - constitutionally and by revolution. He observed that Indians had no arms and ammunition. As such according to them the revolution could not be successful. He said “You must go on the constitutional way.... We must try to win our people on our side and throw away the government... We will purge the evil out and hand over administration to workers and peasants”.41

Strenuous efforts were made to organise Indian masses in the form of workers and peasants.42 M.N. Roy stressed the necessity of a board-based party which would stand for a programme of revolutionary nationalism and would organise all the exploited sections of Indian society.43 If we analyse the proceedings of the first five congresses of Communist International (CI) since 1920, we can draw the inference that there was an idea in air that the

40. Ibid
41. Dange, S.A. Gandhi and Lenin
42. Roy, M.N. Political letters, p-44, Sinha, LP, p -176.
43. Ibid.
agrarian issue is of foremost importance in majority of the countries of the East.⁴⁴ Only agrarian revolution aiming at the expropriation of the large land owners can rouse the vast peasant masses, destined to have a decisive influence in the struggle against imperialism.⁴⁵ The revolutionary movement in the backward countries of the East cannot be successful unless it is based on the action of the masses of peasants.⁴⁶ Consequently, various peasants' and workers' parties surreptitiously started coming into prevalence.⁴⁷

In India, all socialists favoured the organisation of peasants' and workers' parties. Through this the Communists could find their way to the masses.⁴⁸ M.N. Roy, used these new parties as the rallying ground for all the nationalist revolutionary elements into a revolutionary nationalist mass party.⁴⁹

Though these workers' and peasants' parties were not purely communist in character, yet the Communists were the main driving force. The members of the Communist Party of India worked inside these organisations

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⁴⁵. *Spratl, Philip Blowing up India*, p - 35.
⁴⁶. *Fifth World Congress*, p -102.
⁴⁷. *Ibid*
and were indeed its life and soul. The leaflets of these parties were all drafted by the central committee of the Communist Party. They acted as a caucus within the workers' and peasants' parties.\textsuperscript{50}

During 1925-28 period the communists helped to organise four workers' and peasants' parties in Bengal, Punjab, Bombay and U.P. The first origin of the party came as 'Labour Swaraj Party' of Indian National Congress in November 1925. This new party sought to attain Indian independence by organising workers and peasants.\textsuperscript{51} It showed the simmering discontentment of the broad masses with policies and programmes of Indian National Congress and declared that since all means of achieving independence had proved fruitless; so we would strive to achieve it by organising workers and peasants; who comprised 80% of the population, otherwise, the Congress and the Swaraj Party which were dominated and contributed by the landlords and capitalist classes will have the field day.\textsuperscript{52}

These newly emerged groups considered it necessary to liberate the Congress from the stranglehold of the class interests of its leadership. The Indian National Congress must be persuaded to declare complete independence as its goal, based on economic and social emancipation and

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Ahmad, Muzaffar, Ibid, pp 44-46.}

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Sinha, L.P. Op. Cit., p 175-182.}

\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Communist International 5th - 6th Congress p. 475.}
political freedom for all. It sanctioned non-violent mass action for the attainment of its goal. The main demands of the Labour Swaraj Party were reductions of land tax, fixity of tenure and non-ejectment. They propagated their view through Bengal’ Weaklies ‘Langal’ edited by Quazi Nazrul Hasan and ‘Jagaran’. In Bengal, the Labour Swaraj Party was led by Muzaffar Ahmad, D. Goswami and Sarkar. In U.P. and Bombay its leader were P.C. Joshi, L.N. Kadam, Gauri Shankar, B.N. Mukherjee, K.N. Joglekar, S.A. Dange, S.V. Ghate and R.S. Nibarkar etc.

**Kirti Kisan Party** - This party was founded by Sohan Singh Josh, the area of spread was Punjab and its headquarters was at Amritsar. The object of this party was to win freedom from British Imperialism by every possible means and to liberate workers and peasants from every sort of political, economic and social slavery and to establish their united Socialist Republic. Some terrorist elements of the Hindustan Socialist Republic Army and Nawjawan Bharat Sabha were also attached with this organisation of peasantary.

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THE BIHAR PROVINCIAL KISAN SABHA

The Congress Socialist Party, the Communist Party of India, pro-kisan congressmen and some peasant organizations were working at the provincial and regional level. In terms of ideological predilections and the class base of the party they had little in common, but they share in common a sense of disillusionment with Gandhi, Nehru and the Congress, because of their failure to accommodate a sufficiently radical agrarian programme within the framework of the Indian National Movement. The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha was such an organisation, Swami Sahajanand was its distinguished leader. This organisation engaged in a campaign against landlordism, landlord tenant compromises and in defining of the occupancy rights of tenants. Earlier assessment of its work made it clear that this organisation never contemplated the overthrow of either the Government or of the landlords and it worked with the conciliatory frame of mind with the leadership.56 Provincial Kisan Sabha came in contact with Congress Socialist Party and Communist Party of India’s, programme. However, in their ideological frame they were largely more radical and had faith in Marxist - Lennist theory.57

However, Swami Sahajanand changed his tactics by saying that the distinction between poor peasant and landless labourer was fast vanishing

57. Hauser, Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, pp 95-100.
and the problems of rural proletariat were becoming more and more urgent than the middle peasant and most prosperous farmers. He criticised the rich farmers leading the Kisan Sabha who often used this for their own ends. He argued that agricultural proletariat should form the class base of Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha and not to induct other agrarian classes.

**Andhra Provincial Ryot's Association** - This association was founded by N.G. Ranga in Andhra Pradesh. His earlier efforts were aimed at preventing revenue enhancement in the resettlement process. He demanded revenue remissions, famine relief and agricultural credit on liberal terms. His programme of agrarian reforms and rural reconstruction continued to reflect the aspiration of the status seeking 'ryot' of Andhra.

In Bengal Labour Swaraj Party was changed to Peasants and Workers Party of Bengal. All these Workers and Peasants Party WPPs were united in 1928 in Calcutta in All-India Workers' and Peasant's party. The motive was the establishment of a federal republic, where the means of production, distribution and exchange would be in the hands of the people and used in the

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59. **Proceedings of All India Kisan Sabha, 3rd Annual Session, S.S. Saraswati's Presidential Address, Page 13-15, May 1938.**

60. **Ranga, N.G., Rural India, March, 1939, pp. 267-73.**


62. **Thesis of All India Workers and People's Party, Calcutta, 1928.**
interest of the society, and emancipation of workers and peasants from every sort of political, economic and social slavery and establishment of their united socialist republic.  

As far as the mutual relations were concerned the workers and peasants of various provinces wanted to unite for the purpose of common action and a common programme. In 1927 session of Madras they also provided common meeting place. In net shell their relations or contacts were fragile and there was not a single common movement to which they extended their support as a whole. 

The composition of Workers' and Peasants' Parties was mainly of middle class families. The sizeable membership was prejudiced with the cause of Trade Union Movement, having precedence of the working class over that of peasantry in the revolutionary movement. They drew their ideological inspirations from classical Marxism and Leninism. However, the party ideology had to be related to a programme of specific demands and

actions. Although while doing so the Workers' and Peasants' Party leaders seldom gave serious thought to the imponderables of the Indian situation and consequently, couldn't maintain consistency on clarity of aims.  

69. Ibid.

For example, they defined peasant as 'One who does agricultural work with his own hand and whose acreage does not exceed 60 bighas of land. Field labourers, small artisans and menials in the villages were also to be organised along with the peasant.  

70. All India, Worker's and People's party's conference Report, M.C.C.E. Appendix, NIP - 669, p- 81.

It implied that lower strata of peasantry was included but rich peasants and commercial farmers were excluded from their frame.  

71. Ibid.

This notion became clear when Workers' and Peasants' Parties behaved in an ambivalent manner towards Indian National Congress led Bardoli (1928) Satyagraha in which exploited patidars (rich peasants) were fighting against imperialist British Government. They extended vague and halfhearted support and lambasted it saying that it was an anti-imperialist agitation of mixed class character, constantly working for the real interests of rich landlords.  

72. Dhanagare, D.N., Agrarian Movement and Gandhian Politics pp. 31-42.

69. Ibid.

70. All India, Worker's and People's party's conference Report, M.C.C.E. Appendix, NIP - 669, p- 81.

71. Ibid.

72. Dhanagare, D.N., Agrarian Movement and Gandhian Politics pp. 31-42.
There were some other certain issues such as nationalization of land, distribution of all cultivable land to the tiller and abolition of Zamindari, Ryotwari and Taluqdari Settlements\textsuperscript{73} whereas in same pattern of demands, they promised to establish (Bengal Workers and Peasants Party) peasants proprietary in land-and demanded institution of graduated income tax on agricultural income above Rs. 2000 per annum.\textsuperscript{74} Whatever, may be the consistencies and contradictions in the Workers and Peasants Parties but one thing which was most important that they were successful in creating was common platform for workers and peasants. For the first time this workers' and peasants' group behaved as a class and the success of future peasants movements depended on this organised and conscious group.\textsuperscript{75} The Communists Party of India too, succeeded in its aim of using Workers' and Peasants Party as a legal protective cover otherwise, it would had been the herculean task for them to “work openly under constant surveillance and repression experiences”.\textsuperscript{76} The Communist Party of India successfully convinced the workers and peasants for united action for the achievement of Socialism. The Socialist doctrine thus found its expression in ideology, strategy

\textsuperscript{73} Resolution, in the need WPP (n.d.) MCCE II P-720, pp 55-55; Constitution Bengal WPP, (1928, MCCE, U.P. 459 (8), p. 10-II).

\textsuperscript{74} Chattopadhyaya, G. Communism and Bengal Freedom Movement, I, 1917-29, N. Delhi 1920, pp 169-170.

\textsuperscript{75} Thesis of WPP, The labour monthly, vol. XI, 3 March, 1929, P. 159-60.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
and tactics of the workers peasants parties. These parties however, use at best the legal cost for them to strengthen their base, among the worker and peasants.77

The Communist International which was a constant watchdog regarding development of its theory of socialism in colonial countries earlier made it clear that in Indian situation the Workers' and Peasants' Parties should not be treated as a substitute for the Communist Party of India. It blamed M.N. Roy for his busy role in Workers' and Peasants' Parties and neglecting the actual task of organizing the Communist Party of India.78 An international report between 1924-28 depicted weaknesses of the Workers' and Peasants' Parties regarding its limited activities to look within the Indian National Congress and attach more importance to collaboration with it than to its independent role as a party.79

The VIth Congress of Comintern on the advice of its Russian leader Stalin emphasized anti-capitalist strategy.80 The Communists maintained their connection with the Indian National Congress. However, the real task was to utilise its existing base to strengthen the Communist Party of India.81 The

77. Overstreet and Windnullar, Communism in India, M. Ahmad, CPI, p-7.
79. Ibid
80. Ibid
81. Ibid 6th Communist International
Workers and Peasants’ Parties could not continue their existence for long and after 1929 they gradually passed in oblivion.\textsuperscript{82}

During the period between 1929 and 1934 there was a vacuum and hiatus was created in the gradual development of the Left movement. M.N. Roy, the giant among the leaders of the Communist Party of India was expelled from the Comintern for his deviation from the party line.\textsuperscript{83} On the other hand the British imperialist Government checkmated the emerging Left movement by arresting its top leaders. As many as 31 Leaders in Meerut conspiracy were put on trial in 1929.\textsuperscript{84} In the absence of Left leadership, Gandhi and his Indian National Congress emerged stronger.\textsuperscript{85} Another jolt came from within the party itself, when it broke into fragments. The British government found the right opportunity to crush the Left movement. The Allahabad High Court’s appellate judgement declared Communist Party of India an illegal organisation on 23rd, July 1934. The Government of India declared the Communist Party and its Committee and sub-Committee as unlawful.\textsuperscript{86}

The sudden shift in the tactics and programme of VIth Communist International resulted in the complete isolation of the

\textsuperscript{82} Shankar Ghose, Political Ideas, p 429-31.
\textsuperscript{83} Inprecorr, Vol. 8, No. 78, p. 1472.
\textsuperscript{84} Expulsion of Roy from the Comintern,"Inprecorr, IX, 69 (1929); pp -1470.
\textsuperscript{85} Dhanagare, D.N. Op. Cit., p. 137.
\textsuperscript{86} The Communist, Vol. I, No. 3, April, 1935.
Communist Party of India from the National movement at the very moment when it was gearing up for its greatest mass struggle and conditions were ripe for massive growth in the influence of the left over it. The Communist movement, however, was saved from disaster in 1934 when a group of young Indian National Congressmen disenchanted and dissatisfied with Ghandhian strategy and leadership came together and formed the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) at Bombay in October, 1934 under the leadership of Jaiprakash Narayan, Acharya Narender Dev, Minoo Masani and Ram Manohar Lohia.

Since its genesis, this party adopted four basic principles; the primary struggle in India was the national struggle for freedom and nationalism was a necessary stage in the way to socialism; the socialists will work within Indian National Congress for transforming and strengthening it. The Congressmen will be persuaded to adopt a socialist vision of independent India and a more radical pro-labour, pro-peasant stand on current economic issues. If we fail, we will try again but definitely not to desert the Indian National Congress. The Congress Socialist Party was to develop as the nucleus of

87. Ibid
the alternative socialist leadership of the congress. On the other hand, they were also critical of the policies of the Indian National Congress. Their view was that the Congress was not seeking revolutionary change of the Indian economic structure but wanted the existing structure to be intact. They said, if the ultimate object was to make masses politically and economically free then socialism must be the destination. They believed in democratic socialism. They understood the dangers of Communism which claimed to be working for the path of revolution. The bourgeois revolution was the mother of bourgeois democracy, the social revolution is the mother of socialist democracy. Regarding Karl Marx’s dictum of end justifying means, the socialist understood to have followed Gandhi. The Congress Socialist Party's view was that, 'the means are ends, good means could produce good results'. Therefore, purity of means is essential. Good society will enables workers and peasants to work and achieve socialism through peaceful means.

Regarding their different approach to achieve socialism or communism they quoted Karl Marx’s speech in 1872 at the Hague conference

94. Ibid.
96. Ibid.
“We don’t assert that the way to reach this goal of communism is the same everywhere. We must consider the institution, the manners and the customs of various countries...... that there are countries like England, America where workers may attain their object by peaceful means. "He conceived two ways to establish socialism. One peaceful, the other violent, their use would depend upon the values, traditions and political set up of a country".97 He believed that after independence India would adopt democratic system and in the conditions of a fully democratic India the transition to socialism can and should be achieved through a peaceful democratic process.98 Jai Parkash Narayan in 1946 in Meerut Session of Congress asserted, that Marxism was only one form of socialism. It is a science of social change on which no dogmatism or fundamentalism is necessary.99 Too much nationalisation implied dictatorship of the State, so far the smooth functioning of democracy under socialism is concerned there should be no curbs on political association of the working people and freedom of expression of opinion. In his book ‘My picture of socialism’ he narrated that the economic and political democracy should be the ideal. Men will be free neither under capitalism nor under State mass revolution of the Soviet type. He accepted Gandhi’s non-violent means

97. Lohia, R.M. Marx, Gandhi, Socialism, 1962, p. 120-27.
98. Ibid.
as a matter of convenient policy rather than a creed.\textsuperscript{100}

Their (J.P., Ram Manohor Lohia, Mehta) analysis evolved a new ‘democratic socialism’ related to Indian conditions and realities: the aim was democratic socialist society - a synthesis of realism, Gandhism and Marxism.\textsuperscript{101}

From the beginning, the Congress Socialist Party leaders were divided into three broad fronts. The Marswns, the Fabians and the Gandhijians. This should not have been a weakner - infact it might have been a source of strength for the Congress Socialist Party as the opposition to it was muted and the party was thus free to follow its programme without the apparent resistance within the Congress or the ruthless suppression from the Government. Unlike the Communist Party of India, their existence was tolerated if not appreciated.\textsuperscript{102}

Again, international affiliations of the Indian left movement showed a new path, or a strategy to be adopted for the next course of the Indian freedom struggle. It was professed all over the world under the threat of the rise of Nazism in Germany and Fascist political parties in Japan and Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{103} So in 1935 in the Seventh Congress of the Communist International

\textsuperscript{100} J.P. Socialism Sarvodya, Democracy, p 1-21.

\textsuperscript{101} Ghose Shankar, Political Ideas and Movements in India, p 320-29.


\textsuperscript{103} R.D. Dutt, B. Brandley, The Anti-Imperialist Front, International Press Correspondence, Vol. XVI.
was the direction given to organise an anti-imperialist front, comprising working class, peasantry and the middle class, through consolidation of all leftist elements. This new technique was named ‘United Front’ strategy.\textsuperscript{104} The main issues on which the united front was sought to be forged were to establish a United Anti-Imperialist Front, to start work on the basis of the National Congress and to make it truly a mass organization, to advocate for this purpose an association of mass organisations of peasants and workers by way of collective affiliations; to press the congress into adopting a minimum programme of the masses; to move the Congress to resume national struggle.\textsuperscript{105}

The Congress Socialist Party was, by and large, the most important and most enthusiastic initiator and supporter of this front; the atmosphere of unity first developed from the platform in this party.\textsuperscript{106} The other participants in the process were the All India Kisan Congress; the All India Trade Union Congress, the hesitant Roy group, the communists and to a lesser extent, a few Left of congressmen like Nehru and Bose. At this juncture, the Indian National Congress was no longer the ‘bourgeois reformist political organisation’ but the revolutionary party of the Indian people; and leaders like Nehru and Bose.

\textsuperscript{105} Sinha, L.P. The Left Politics in India, 1819-47, p-385-86.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.
Gandhi were no longer to be regarded as reactionary but were to be regarded as 'the popular leaders of the mass movement.\textsuperscript{107} Earlier the Communists too, criticised the Congress Socialist Party as reactionary and appendage of the bourgeois, but the 'United Front' strategy converted it to sister Marxist Parties.\textsuperscript{108}

However, from the beginning there were some basic differences in the policies of Communist Party of India and the Congress Socialist Party such as on the 'abolition of zamindari', 'recognition of the occupancy rights of tenants in all the landlords-tenants areas', 'debt freeze' and agricultural wages.\textsuperscript{109} The Congress Socialist Party limited itself to economism while the Communist Party of India took a primarily political stand and overheaded it by not emphasizing economic aspect sufficiently.\textsuperscript{110} Whatever may be the differences between these sister Marxist Parties but definitely during this period of United Front Strategy the Congress Socialist Party served the interests of the Communist Party of India.\textsuperscript{111} Due to the conciliatory gestures of the Communist Party of India and keeping in mind 'United Front' strategy


\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{111} \textit{Communist Plot against, The Congress Socialist Party, in V.B. Karnik.}
both the Congress Socialist Party and the Indian National Congress opened their door to communists in 1935.\textsuperscript{112} As a result, the Communist made full use of this opportunity by securing key positions in its provincial and National executive committee. They preferred to work at the grass-root level leaving the Indian National Congress and Congress Socialist Party isolated at the top.\textsuperscript{113} The basic reason for this infiltration was to utilise the organizational base of these two parties spread over towns and villages. Later, the Communist Party of India utilized that organisational base in founding their own peasant organization: All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) in 1936.\textsuperscript{115}

The Congress Socialist Party (CSP) too had a considerable base in particularly in Bihar, Bengal and the United province.\textsuperscript{116} Its leaders established contacts with the peasantry either by organising new kisan sabahs or by infiltrating those who were already functioning under the Congress banner.\textsuperscript{117} Ideologically, the Congress Socialist Party was more closer to Marxism, Fabian Socialism and equally influenced by Gandhi.\textsuperscript{118} Its programmes were more

\textsuperscript{112} Dhangare, D.N. Peasant Mov. in India, p 138-39.

\textsuperscript{113} Indian Communist Party Documents, 1930-56 Bombay, pp 36-45.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{115} Id.


\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.

radical than Congress but having clarity and better relations with it than Communist Party of India and Workers' and Peasants Party.  

The Consolidation of the Left (Communists, and Socialists) forces received a significant push forward and acted as a spur to the formation of all India body to co-ordinate the Kisan movements, a process which was already underway through the efforts of N.G. Ranga and other kisan leaders. The Culmination was the establishment of the All - India Kisan Congress in Lucknow in April, 1936 which later changed its name to the All-India Kisan Sabha. Swami Sahajanand, the militant founder of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha (1929) was elected the President and N.S. Ranga, the pioneer of the Kisan movement in Andhra and a renowned scholar of the agrarian problem, the General Secretary. A Kisan Manifesto was finalised at the All India Kisan Committee Session in Bombay and presented formally to the Congress working Committee to be incorporated into its forthcoming manifesto for the 1937 election. This manifesto considerably, influenced the agrarian programme adopted by the Congress at its Faizpur Session which

119. Ibid.
122. Ibid
123. Malaviya, H.D. Land reforms in India, N. Delhi p 60-65.
included demands for fifty percent reduction in land revenue and rent, a moratorium on debts, the abolition of feudal levies, security of tenure for tenants, a living wage for agricultural labour and the recognition of peasant unions.\textsuperscript{124} Later, addressing N.G. Ranga declared, "We are organizing ourselves in order to prepare for the final destination of a Socialist State and Society".\textsuperscript{125}

The leadership of this All India Peasant Organisation (AIKS) came from middle class, those who were land holders of moderate means and had political ambitions too.\textsuperscript{126} Socially they belonged to upper caste families such as Bhumihars a dominant caste in Bihar, Rajput, Brahman and Kayastha etc. However, caste factor was definitely not the major impulse that brought to life the peasant movement and organisation.\textsuperscript{127} For example, if most of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha leaders were Bhumihars so were most of the zamindars, though ninety percent of the tenantry came from the Kurmi and Keori castes, traditionally associated with cultivation, forming the bulk part of this party. This may be the reason that the Sabha gradually emerged as a class-oriented organisation.\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{125} Ranga, N.G. Revoluntionary Peasants, \textsuperscript{129} pp. 45-65.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{127} All India Kisan Sabha - `Organisational Report, 3 1940-42, p. 1-7.
\textsuperscript{128} Hafaer, Op. Cit., pp 77-78.
The problem of class-differences within the peasantry, and of tensions between landholding peasants and landless labourers, continued to stay and plague the Kisan Sabha. N.G. Ranga stood for the cause of the rich and middle - peasant Kammas, while Swami Sahajanand had resolved in favour of abolition of Zamindari's and this had considerably upset those who were themselves substantial tenants, petty landholders and small zamindars and members of Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha. Later Swami Sahajanand narrated in 1942 that since the distinction between poor peasants and landless labourers was fast vanishing, the problems of Rural proletariat were becoming more urgent than those upper in hierarchy of peasants.

The early activities of the Kisan Sabha included the holding of spectacular peasant marches, the celebration of All India Kisan day (1 September, 1956 and numerous local struggles). The Chief form of mobilization was through the holding of kisan conferences at the thana, taluqa, district and provincial levels at which peasants demands were aired and resolutions passed. These were addressed by local, provincial and all -India leaders. Cultural shows too were organised at these conferences to carry the

129. *Ibid*


message of the movements to the peasants in an appealing manner.\textsuperscript{133}

The formation of the Congress Ministries in a majority of the provinces in 1937 marked a new phase in the growth of the peasant movement.\textsuperscript{134} The political atmosphere in the country underwent a change, there was a heightened sense of expectation to make the 1937-39 the high water mark of the peasant movement. The different Ministers introduced varying kinds of agrarian legislations, this provided an impetus for the mobilization of the peasantry either in support or for asking changes in its content.\textsuperscript{135} First, in this chain was the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha who could not be satisfied by the ministry's proposals, led the peasants and started with methods of satyagraha and forcible measurers like forcible sowing and harvesting of crops. Punjab was another centre of Kisan activities, here the efforts of Naujawan Bharat Sabha, Kirti Kisan and Akali activities were given a new sense of direction and cohesion by the Punjab Kisan Committee, formed in 1937 which followed the activities of Bihar Provincial Kisan Party.\textsuperscript{136}

The full swing of the peasant awakening was checked by the outbreak of World War II which brought about the resignations of the

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., pp 200-25.
\textsuperscript{134} Ranga, N.G. All India Kisan Movement, pp. 260-80.
\textsuperscript{135} Ranga, N.G. All India Kisan Movement, pp. 260-80.
\textsuperscript{136} Saraswati, Sahajanand, The otherside of the progress of congress ministeries 1939 pp 1-5.
Congress Ministers and the launching of severe repression against left wing and Kisan Sabha leaders and workers.\textsuperscript{137} Another setback came from the policy of Communist Party of India to support the so called People's War, the Communists criticised the Quit India Movement and supported the war efforts of the Allied powers when the Soviet Union also joined the war against the Fascist and Nazi powers.\textsuperscript{138} The party line created the rift in the Kisan Sabha ranks resulted in the split in 1943, three main leaders N.G. Ranga, Swami Sahajanand and Indulal Yagnik left the All India Kisan Sabha.\textsuperscript{139}

Nevertheless, during the war years the Kisan Sabha continued to play an important role in various kinds of relief works, for example in the Bengal Famine of 1943.\textsuperscript{140} As the war ended, the masses in anticipation of freedom acquired a new spirit, new encouragement among various social groups i.e. peasant and labours was witnessed.\textsuperscript{141} There was new enthusiasm among the peasantry. As such the struggles of the peasantry were renewed once again. The Organisation of agricultural workers in Andhra took the form of violent struggle in which most of the participants belonged to

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item \textsuperscript{137} Hauser, Op. Cit., pp 48-66.
\item \textsuperscript{138} Druhe, Soviet Russia and Indian Communism The CPI Policy in War, pp 100-240.
\item \textsuperscript{139} Adhikari, G., National Unity Now People Age 8 Aug., 1942.
\item \textsuperscript{140} Chandra, Bipan Op. Cit., pp 352-53.
\item \textsuperscript{141} Organisational Report 3, 1943-45, Bombay Aug., 1945, p- 7-10.
\end{thebibliography}
Similarly the peasants of Kerala and Bengal (Tebhaga Movement) started with the renewed strength and Vigour. Notwithstanding, the War was a blessing in disguise for both the CPI and All India Kisan Sabha as due to their support for the war effort the government liberalized its attitude forwards these two organisations. The left leaders under detention were released and the party work improved considerably.143

142. Ahmad, M. Communist Party of India, PP 1-12.

CONCLUSION

To sum up we can say that the ideology, programme and tactics of the left parties all over the world differed from one another. The role of the peasant was defined differently by various parties where revolutions materialised such as Russia and China. During the revolutionary period before 1917 and after, the Marxists in Soviet Union assigned the role of Allies to the peasantry in the revolutionary proletariat. The communists in China while fighting against the nationalist forces however, treated the peasantry as a revolutionary class, though many a time it was conceded by many that the peasantry into excesses while fighting for the revolution.

In India however, the Communist Party of India failed to provide any theoretical basis for the role of peasantry in the concrete situation of Indian social, economic and political life. Consequently, the Soviet formulation on the question of peasantry was copied without taking a note of the Indian situation. As a result the workers were assigned a revolutionary role. Though in reality the level of political consciousness of the working class was subdued and they were hardly willing to cross the limits posed on them by the Indian capitalists and the British Government of India. India being predominantly an agriculturist country, it was expected of the left parties to
focus on peasantry in a bigger way. The peasantry was the worst sufferer under the British Raj. It was possible to educate this class of its rights and prepare them to play a meaningful role in the economic life of India as well as the role of vanguard against the British Imperialism. Due to internal weaknesses of the Communists and Socialists in India as also the hegemony of the Congress in Indian National Movement, those parties could not lead the peasantry. This task was however, taken by other parties some of them being sectarian. These parties were highly localised and their influence was mostly confined to certain specific regions of India. The role of Gandhi was another factor which roadblocked the influence of the left parties over the peasantry. Consequently in case of ideology there was confusion among the left groups due to their inherent weakness in organisation. The left group couldn’t provide decisive leadership in matters of programmes for the peasantry. Their understanding of their problems was questionable. They were enable to understand the psyche of Indian peasantry their religious attitude, their family commitment, their caste and communal loyalties as also their fixation of their village clan or region etc. Same can be said about the left party's tactics as their parties were weak and were incapable of taking independent action on their own. Their dependence on Indian National Congress, the fear of the British action and also their numerically weak strength, forced these parties to remain hanger
on and thus the only alternative left to them was to walk all alone on crutches provided by the non left parties and groups.

The above assessment however in no way diminishes their role. They were the pioneers and they did succeed in locating the problems of the peasantry and focused them to some extent by providing a substance if not the real ideological platform. Same can be said about their programme and tactics which they followed from time to time when they were called upon to lead the peasant movements.