Conclusion

The study of Nehru's relations with the Indian Communists in the broad framework of ideological tussles between nationalism and communism, reveals both conflict and collaboration on various policies and issues. Nehru, one of the principal heroes of the nationalist struggle was a nationalist to the core, his leaning towards Marxism notwithstanding. The Communists were rather late in appreciating the strength of nationalism and based their attitude towards Nehru on the basis of their ideology.

Shifts and changes in their attitude were evident frequently in the pre-independence period. Nehru was receptive to various influences, ranging from emotional feelings of nationalism under the influence of English education to Marxism. However, he questioned everything before accepting anything. These lingering influences submerged under the influence of Gandhi. In his intellect he was attracted towards Marx but Gandhi came as a tremendous force and Nehru gradually started seeing things as the Mahatama did. Despite his differences with him he bowed to his persuasive charms. Passion for freedom, peace and non-co-operation were his underlying urges under Gandhi's influence. This lead many to argue that without his impact Nehru would have remained unaware of the elements of Indian civilization and a stranger to India's peasants. His exposure to these influences at times showed him more on the side of the Marxists and his emphasis on radical policies distinguished
him from most of his colleagues. But the dominant urge to fight for the goal of independence threw him in the arms of his colleagues and elder congressmen and he agreed to go slow in his zeal for socialism. Evidently his popularity did not necessarily imply that his views found acceptance among the rank and file of the Congress. This was apparent specifically in the context of his economic ideas.

Communists too were changing rapidly. From an attitude of co-operation in mid 1920s with a view to capture the nationalist movement they adopted ultra leftist course in the late 1930s that in fact alienated them from the nationalists. This coincided with Nehru’s presidentship of the Congress, his defence of the accused in the Meerut Conspiracy Case and his attraction towards Marxism at that time. The communists lost an opportunity to befriend Nehru and strengthen the Marxist influence on him. By the time the communists decided to walk along the nationalists Nehru had learnt to compromise with Gandhi and the process of failing under his influence had begun. He was becoming clear in his intellect and sounded radical in his approach to policies to be adopted later. He charted out a course for himself and laid the road to democratic socialism.

Nehru and the communists stood thus with Socialism between them. Communists had a brief spell to work from within the Congress bodies, an experience to which they later on repeatedly
referred whenever they had to remove the stigma of being anti-national and violent. Not for long did the gestures of co-operation and friendship continue. In the course of the Second World War and the attitude towards the Quit India movement, a clear picture emerged and revealed where Nehru and the communists stood in their relationship. The culmination was the expulsion of the communists from the Congress in 1945. It was Nehru's liberalism and profound sense of judgement that he found communists to be ardent and hard workers for their cause and appreciated their organizing capacity but could not carry them along with his party.

A decisive drift was discernible and they entered the post-independence phase in the background of conflict and confrontation. Nationalism had proved to be a dominant urge for Nehru and for the Communists ideology and theory was the guide to decide what course was appropriate for them.

Nehru was clear in his attitude towards the communists after the Second World War which became more crystallised while dealing with them in the Telengana struggle. He knew where he stood in relation to them and had no hesitation in admitting that he followed a strict attitude towards them. Co-operation was not foreseen from the communist quarters too, because of their recent spell under Mao's influence to promote the theory that revolution lay in the strength of peasants struggle. Telengana movement was a departure from
their earlier concentrating on the industrial proletariat. The drift and the gap widened because the communists approached the Indian situation with a premise that India had not attained independence and Nehru was a reactionary. The experience of rough handling they received from Nehru in Telengana annoyed the communists but their own weaknesses in the struggle made them reassess their role. They came closer to Nehru's oft repeated criticism that situations differ in each country according to its traditions and circumstances. The communists express it later when they argued that it was wrong on their part to presume that theories propounded by Mao could be applied mechanically because despite similar economic situation the political conditions radically differed. When they were fully convinced that they could not execute the 'Telengana way,' they decided to work within the constitutional framework envisaged by Nehru. Not because they accepted it but because they found no other alternative. And to some extent they interpreted their electoral success as a revenge for their Telengana failure.

The ideological tussle between nationalism and communism was carried on in the battlefield of electoral politics too. Nehru raised no objection to the communist decision to participate in the election because otherwise they would have carried on their underground activities. On the communists side their decision to contest the election was
a departure from their ideological stand. It was an opportunity for them to remove the stigma of being anti-national and extra-territorial in their loyalties. They could reach the masses through the elected platform which otherwise would have been very difficult. In the election campaigns they (Nehru and Communists) posed to be still apart offering scathing criticism against each other but both played the game of winning votes.

Having assumed this role the communists had to shed the idea that national independence could not be attained by non-proletarian and bourgeois elements. They accepted the fact of Indian elements.

The involvement in power politics led the communists to drift them away from this ideological adherence. And in the course of the three general elections ideological considerations never inhibited them from seeking alliances. This was so perhaps because they realised and understood the Congress influence and knew that no single party could replace Nehru Government.

Electoral success apart, the mere participation had assigned the communists the role of a parliamentary opposition. However, when they tested power through the ballot box in Kerala, communists also got the opportunity to use power. They provided the world the first example of communists,
assuming power through elections. They had to cope with the problems of administration and were even seen conciliating Indian capitalists and became milder in propagating land reforms because these classes had big hold over large blocs of votes. They started identifying the progressive and reactionary groups within the Congress and side with the former. They could not ignore that Nehru took his own time and was not very receptive to the views of his partymen against the reported 'mai-administration' of the communists in Kerala. He was reluctant to accept their view and visited Kerala to judge the situation.

The paradox was that Indian parliamentary democracy best suited the communists in their search for power. The Communist Party could register its victory through this system which they had earlier refused to accept. In past this was due to Nehru's impartial handling of the situation. Though he forcefully condemned them he gave them full opportunity to work within the electoral system. This was to help remove the charge that he criticised them because of his anti-communist feelings. He rather referred to those who considered him to be a 'pal of Stalin.' In fact the way he accommodated the communists and his relationship with V. K. Krishna Menon considered to be a 'disciplined communist' gave many non-communists the impression of his inclination towards the communists. By not curbing their activities Nehru was not being concessional to the communists, it was his role as a
liberal democrat, advocating individual liberty and
Fundamental Rights. In this role he was regarded by the
non-communists as a friend of communists.

In fact communists themselves became soft towards
Nehru even when he condemned them. Though not at home with
Nehru in domestic policies, communists had little to criticise
when Nehru strengthened his friendly links with communist
countries without seeking the help of the Indian Communists.
They were confused because while they criticised him on
domestic issues, Nehru was being hailed as the great friend
of Soviet Union and China. As a result came the communist
contention that they supported him on his foreign policy
though continued their opposition on other issues. Because
of their varied demands and assessment of the international
situation communists became ambiguous and vague in their
statements, supporting him at times without any 'ifs' and 'buts'
and condemning him too strongly at other times.

Apart from friendship with communist countries which the
communists fully appreciated, Nehru had also captured their
socialist slogans and propagated them in terms of planning.
He provided a major ideological break-through in the Congress
by harping upon slogans which the communists claimed to be
their own. Normally, this should have pleased the communists
but in the context of electoral competition, the communists
had more reasons to be disturbed and annoyed. They accused
Nehru of raising socialist slogans and going slow on
implementation. The criticism of slow implementation was not uncalled for, because Nehru could not have gone too far to antagonise many of his colleagues. He was charged of surrendering to Patel. Nehru could not have ignored the rightist domination in the Congress. Hence his consensus and compromises which the communists never liked. But Nehru also had the impression that socialist revolution by consent was under way and felt that if he could succeed in bringing about socialist changes in a peaceful way, it would make communism look both old fashioned and barbarian by comparison. In process of advocating socialism Nehru had not only bewildered the communists but he had also laid down the democratic road to Socialism.

The increasing friendly relationship with the communist countries and a drift away from western influence led the communists to come closer to Nehru. The emergence of Swatantra Party was an additional reason for them to support Nehru in his efforts to keep the Congress to the left. However, the dismissal of the Kerala Government and Nehru's role in Hungary disturbed the Soviet Union as well as the Indian Communists. Coupled with increasing western economic co-operation, these events cautioned communists of a possible dominance of rightists in the Congress.

Although communists were pleased by Nehru's handling of China, the disturbance in Sino-Indian relation due to border dispute embarrassed the communists. They had to grudgingly
reject their contention that no socialist country could commit aggression.

The communists were in dilemma at home and abroad. In the wake of the border dispute it seemed apparent that Nehru, an exponent of non-alignment, would look for support from any quarter irrespective of the ideology of the country that agreed to support. His falling into the arms of the West, would have given the West an opportunity to fight its anti-communist crusade under the garb of economic and defence assistance. To combat Western control over India, the Soviet Union came into the forefront and supported Nehru against the Socialist country China.

Though Nehru was never considered one amongst the communists he was recognised as one who could be very useful at times. Many times he exerted his influence in the favour of the communists and was considered their friend.

This was true to a large extent in international arena. He was clear in his thinking and attitude towards Indian communists and found them out of track of Indian situation. He never feared that communism would gain ground here in India so long as his government could satisfy the economic urges and aspirations of the people. Communism was not to be combated by force which was against his ideals but by looking into the objectives and aspirations for which it stood. He regarded Indian communists weak because he did not find them inclined to look into things in terms of India and
repeatedly emphasised that Communism could gain strength where it went hand in hand with nationalism. In India, more specifically, Communism had to be defined in terms of nationalism to reach the masses. Its weakness lay in the fact that instead of supporting, it rather opposed nationalism, a point which some of the communists came close to realise in the wake of Sino-Indian border skirmishes.

Though he regarded himself to be nearer to economic theory of the communists than of other political parties Nehru did not accept Marxism in its entirety. Hence his emphasis that economic policy whether it was marxian or Communist was to be Indian and related to her condition. In this appreciation he used Communism and Socialism as synonymous terms but when he understood them in their practical role he did not hesitate to equate Communism with communalism and saw no possibility of co-operation with either of them.

Nehru's relations with Indian communists is a story of missed opportunities. Socialism in some form or the other could have been common bond between them if the communists could have combined marxism with Nationalism as Ho-Chi Minh did in Vietnam. They carried for themselves the role of an opposition, although, with some ingenuity they could have found ground for collaboration, too. Perhaps ideological clash and electoral arithmetic pitted the two as rivals for powers rather than collaborators for social change.