SUMMARY

“I am convinced that the only key to the solution to the world’s problems and of India’s problems lie in Socialism, and when I use this word, I do so not in a vague humanitarian way, but in the scientific economic way….. I see no way of ending the poverty, the vast unemployment, the degradation, and the subjection of the Indian people except through Socialism. In short it means a new civilization radically different from the present. “

(JawaharLal Nehru, annual session of Lucknow Congress, 1936)

Socialism is a term which is very much talked about and debated in our time. Being a heir to Renaissance and Enlightenment, it emerged out as a reaction to the material contradictions of the modern capitalist society. As a term socialism denotes double reference. On the one hand it refers to ideals, values properties of what is often called the ‘Socialist vision’. On the other hand it refers to empirical features of social and political institutions which are supposed concretely to embody the vision.

This study is an effort to situate the philosophical – political – ideological aspect of Socialism in India. It is also to comprehensively trace down the underpinning of Socialism as a movement being grasped by a major section of leadership ranging from Pre – Independence to post Independent India. There is an aim of tracing the evolutionary phases of Socialist movement, contextualizing in the backdrop of most rigorous and conflictual battlefield of Indian Democracy – Uttar Pradesh, under the leadership of Mulayam Singh Yadav and Samajwadi party and also the transmutation of the Socialist ideology due to its interaction with operational democratic populism of Indian society and politics.

The first chapter of the study emphasized on tracing the ideological and philosophical roots of socialist movement in India where it appears that Socialism in the west emerged first as an intellectual force before it gathered strength as a political force. But in the colonial countries like India, on the other hand, its emergence as political force preceded its emergence as an intellectual force.
The Socialist movement in India started as a group within the National Congress under Lohia, Acharya Narendra Dev, Masani and others, who all have played significant role in the formulation of the Socialist ideas, policies and programmes. Indianized Socialism became a peculiar example of the blending of Marxism, Gandhism and Western Democratic Socialism. It was originally manifested in two tendencies by communists and by Congress Socialists but in course of time the Socialist protagonist, discarded violence, complete nationalization, extra parliamentary means and retained the concept of parliamentary – civil resistance in order to achieve freedom and equality in Indian society and policy. As in India, the choice of Socialism as both strategy of mobilization and a set of goals to be achieved was inexorably dictated by many compulsive features of Indian Society. Sometimes Gandhian appeal moderated it and most of the times the splits and mergers in Socialist parties moderated its impact as an ideology.

In fact the quest for Socialism took its leaders along diverse ambitions and very often contradictory paths, leaving the movement to spend itself out. During its course in 1960’s itself, Masani joined Swatantra party, Ashok Mehta joined back the Congress, JP Narayan devoted himself as Jeevandani to Bhooman movement creating a big intellectual and organizational vacum of a large magnitude in the Socialist movement. Socialism as a movement contained a huge baggage of beliefs and positions including Militant nationalism. Anti – imperialist policy, support for public sector, nationalization and planning in the domestic economy, a public policy aimed at welfare and distributive justice, caste and class mobilization, a secularist preservance, a modern and progressive outlook and of course a meta narrative of history.

While making assessemnt of Socialism as a way of social transformation in India. One has to be enough pragmatic in recognizing that all of above said elements are not necessary inter – related, yet can be combined with ever-emerging purmutations and combinations of Indian politics. Socialism in India got manifested itself in aspects such as Preamble, in the objectives of national planning, in the constitutional articles, in legislative enactments, in the organizing of Socialist parties, in Congress party programmes, Thus seems like an reigning
ideology of India with its all pervasive presence in public – political discourse. In fact even while moving away from it, all political parties, be it at the ‘Right’ or ‘Left’ of the spectrum invoke Socialism in order to legitimize their political programmes. But if we judge it not as a political strategy, but as a relevant force, then the real essence is missing, having little presence left. No Socialist political formation in its pure form has come anywhere close to what the original league of leaders set out to achieve and the failure lies in the implementation and not in the planning or conceptualization.

In second chapter, the study revolves around an elaborative explanation of the Socialist tendencies, events, decisions, political and organizational dynamics, in order to trace down its strengths and fault lines. The Socialist movement in India appeared more a saga of splits – mergers – unifications – reunification, and deideologization than anything else. Socialist ferment just kept on changing its name. from Congress Socialist party 1934, Socialist party 1948, KissanMazdoorPraja Party 1952, Praja Socialist party 1953, Lohia Socialist party 1955, Samyukta Socialist party in 1962, SSP Lohiawadi 1972 to SamajwadiJanata party of 1988 and finally more visible than any other faction, Samajwadi party under Mulayam Singh yadav inn 1992. The movement itself failed to make any remarkable and long lasting impact on Indian politics despite of having an enforcing ideology. Lohia’s policy of Non – Congressism succeeded in breaking the congress monopoly of power and set the course for the new alternative mobilization strategies to be used, but it also bred opportunism and lust for power and contaminated the principled edifice of socialist movement for allyears to come.

In the third chapter, the emphasis is on marking the distinguished trends appeared in the Socialist movement, where a bifuracative sectioning is done in order to get the impact and essence of Lohia’s touch in Socialist movement, since he was the one who emerged on the scene with utmost shine and laid down the pragmatic aspects of Indian socialism. The reasons for nailing down this great ideology and movement in India includes lack of action oriented mass mobilization, failure in institutionalizing the political processes and procedures by almost all Socialist parties, weak organizational back – up personal ambitions
overriding the leadership, radical elitism, lack of political training, failure in understanding the politically prudent fashion, misuse of explosive democratic energies at the grass root level, politicization of social base and most essentially the failure in translating the socialist ideology into a working political strategy.

It is not to deny the crucial role played by Lohia’s Non – Congressism in order to reap the energies released by great agrarian changes and the emergence of a politically conscious class and caste base electorate. Socialist movement witnessed the joining of a whole new breed of leaders and politicians at this political juncture including Chandra Shekhar, Lalu Prasad Yadav, George Fernandes, Sharad Yadav, Ram Vilas Paswan, Nitish Kumar and of course Mulayam Singh Yadav.

The fourth chapter deals with the emergence of Samajwadi party in the backdrop of the narration of Socialist movement in the political sensitive state of India – Uttar Pradesh. Here the rise of cleavage politics is marked. It was the social churning and the polarization of the UP society along caste and religious lines due to Mandal and Mandir – Masjid dispute. Which sparked a sharp polarization in UP of which Samajwadi party emerged as the most prominent beneficiary. With inadequate and inequitable development of different sections of the Uttar Pradesh, the Socialist movement acquired a new ‘Politically relevant’ avatar, a new orientation where it appeared as the oppositional legitimization strategy. In fact it witnessed the change of idioms. From Non – Congressism to Non – BJPism or Non – Communalism.

As compare to other political players in UP’s battle area, Samajwadi party appeared aggressively on the political scene, making most out of Mandal commission’s implementation of 27 percent quota to other backward classes (OBCs), prepared a social base combining Yadavs and Muslims. Gillian Wright has aptly remarked that the rise of Mulayam was the decline of Congress in UP. Having Lohia as ideological mentor and Chowdhry Charan Singh as the political one, Mulayam Singh Yadav occupied an undeniable position in UP politics with help of identity and cleavage politics. The political assertiveness and ideological
pragmatism helped Mulayam Singh Yadav in having a flexible alliance making strategy. This allowed him to taste to BSP kind of politics also from 1993 to 1995.

Not denying the fact that the mobilization of OBC’s in UP was quintessentially politically governed and driven largely by the logic of political power, it had the potential of the changing the social economic order based on the domination of upper castes, which was partly utilized by Samajwadi party.

In the fifth chapter, the phenomena called ‘Mulayam Singh Yadav’ has been studied, keeping in mind his personality and role played in the forwarding of Socialist movement, there appears some progression as well as certain diversions too. As being a minister, a defence minister and chief minister a consistence urge for consolidation is reflected as far as the role of Mulayam Singh Yadav is concerned. While assessing the electoral performance of Mulayam Singh Yadav one must also observe the fragmented and divisive nature of UP electorate on caste–class lines. It appears that Mulayam Singh Yadav has been able to retain and evolve a solid social base. He has also been successful in the formation of a cleavage as well as also in overcoming it. The multilayered Inclusive policy as reflected in 2004 results has broadened its political profile.

More importantly with his pragmatic and redefined Socialism he has pushed a new trend in the coalition era, where both the national parties have failed to reinvent themselves according to the emerging political and ideological situation. In fact trends such as criminalization of party cadre, deideologization, money power, weak internal democracy, domination in organizational structure are present in almost all parties, so as Samajwadi party is also afflicted by them, but not to negate its role in providing a consistent alternative to the masses of Uttar Pradesh. The present coalition politics is reflecting upon the fragile status of National parties and the growing rise of regional parties where Samajwadi party is playing the role of a savior of UPA government at the center in the time of crisis, hinting at the possibility of a national role for Samajwadi party. There emergence of Samajwadi party in 2012 assembly elections is reflecting upon two important facts. One, the growing Sanskritization of regional parties where the regional parties by emulating the mannerisms of
National parties are re-inventing themselves. Secondly the successful retention of Socialism as a working political-electoral ideology in Indian politics whereby it has appeared that ideology cannot be understood as a fixed variable rather in order to sustain itself it has to keep on evolving while making use of cultural milieu and local idioms. It is also supposed to be accommodative to the specific demands of socio-political reconstruction.