CHAPTER III

BIFURICATION IN THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

A) Historical survey upto Ram Manohar Lohia
B) Till today
The year 2004 witnesses a “Janata Family” suffering from numerous splits and countable mergers. Fractured not only due to the Political – Societal compulsions of the present society of India but also due to its internal fissures. The political parties championing the cause of Socialist movement were once famously designated as “the decisive alternative” (1977) and “the third force” (1989 – 96).(1) Quite shockingly in the present scenario are specified by some political analysts as Ethenic Parties” (2)mobilizing the mass through “pre existing clientelistic relations”.

What caused such a massive change in the role and status of those parties which came into existence by championing the socialist argument? There must be some aspects, which require a close scrutiny which drastically altered the great idea logical movement into a ‘fragmented family’ concept at the political or economic level.

This chapter essentially deals with those elements causatious. Interwoven within the movement’s progress. Sometimes appeared to be manipulated by its own leadership. Sometimes acquired their location in organizational aspect and many a times with cutting the ideal logical edges of socialist movement. All contributing magnificently in dismantling a movement gradually. As Bipin Chandra aptly remarked.

It is one of the major enigmas of the modern India as to why did a party with such great promises come to a nought. Since its inception the party had everything going for it. It had prestigious leaders, it was able to establish a strong and integral relationship with nationalism and national movement. Despite zig – zags it did arrive, at least pragmatically at a correct grasp of most issues. Perhaps the one single answer lies in the Immaturity and ineptness of the leadership itself.”(3)

There is a bifurcation in the study as regard to the time period; before and after Ram Manohar Lohia. The reason for applying this kind of division lies in the position and role played by him in the evolution of socialist movement in India. After the demise of Lohia we have witnessed a long series of debacles downfalls a marked shift in the socialist movement in terms of “Principled Politics”. The phenomena of Regionalization played a dominant role in terms of crystallizing the Janata family. This chapter deals
with analytical understanding of the events, causes before and after Lohia determining the fate of socialist movement in India.

**Socialist Movement on an ‘Ideological Wave’**

Emerging as a political force in 1930’s the Indian Socialist movement was firmly rooted in ideology and principled politics. Before independence it was a strong amalgam of radical nationalism, democratic, socialism, Superficial Marxism and Gandhian principles. The Indian Socialist panorama included in its ambit a galaxy of leaders such as Lohia, J. P. Narayan, Acharya Narendra Dev, Achyut Patwardhan, Minoo Masani and many more who asserted that Socialism was not merely a code of personal conduct and a theory of individual reform, rather was an ideology for the reorganization of the entire social and economic life of the people. A comprehensive socio – economic, cultural, political transformation of the country including its forms.

The socialist were revisionist who thought that the Marxist doctrine ought to be suitably revised in the light of Indian Experience. The establishment of Congress Socialist Party in 1934 revealed its dissatisfaction from the Gandhian techniques and the passive constitutionalism of Congress. The leaders of the socialist movement used the readymade base of the Congress without aiming at destroying its functionality as J. P. declared in 1935, “It is not our purpose to convert the Congress party into a full-fledged party of socialists rather we seek to change the content and policy of this organization so that it comes truly to represent the masses having the object of emancipation not only from the foreign power, but also from the native system of Exploitation.”(5)

Indian Socialists followed a policy of moving ahead with the mainstream political activities, aiming at acquiring independence and side by side preparing ample ground for a society based on socialist programme as reflected by their active participation in 1942 movement. One aspect which demands a more close scrutiny is the relationship between the socialists and Gandhiji on the ‘Route’ to be taken for country’s upliftment. As a prominent socialist leader Masani once remarked.

‘Gandhiji never try to persuade us to give up our socialist principles.’(6)
Yet there appears certain aspects of the programme adopted in 1934 by the socialists, objected by Gandhiji which appears as follows:

1. Gandhiji regarded socialist proposal of progressive nationalization of all instruments of production, distribution and exchange as too sweeping to be admissible.

2. Regarding the socialist resolution on state monopoly of the foreign trade Gandhiji posed a counter question ‘should not the state be satisfied with all the power it will possess? Must it also exercise all the powers in the sweep whether necessary or not”.

3. For the elimination of landlordism he said, ‘I am not for the elimination but for just regulation of the relations between landlords and tenants”.(7)

This cleared the notion that Gandhi championed voluntary socialism and not the state led forceful socialism. In fact Gandhi had a strong impression on almost every thinker and leader related to the socialist movement where morality and principled politics was dominant.

PERFORMANCE OF COHESIVE FACTORS IN SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

As Samuel Eldersveld has defined party in a way saying

‘A party is an intermediatory group representing and exploiting multiple interests for the achievement of the direct control over the power apparatus of the society. (9)

One can easily deduce that party along with distinct leadership and ideology which play the role of cohesive forces tend to recruit different even divergent interest to increase its support and strength in legislature. There is also a natural tendency of pulling the organization in different directions in any party due to different motivations and goal perceptions.

Applying these parameters we can differentiate following elements, whose performance can provide us a criteria to judge the socialist movement upto Lohia.
Judgement Parameters:

1. Ideology
2. Leadership
3. Organizational strength
4. Electoral strategy and performance

IDEOLOGY AND SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

In course of the development, the CSP, which was formed by a group of young congressmen faced ideological dilemma. Actually during the initial years itself, it was clear that in CSP, there was ideological differentiation binded by the urge of liberation of India. J. P. and Narendra Dev admired Marxism initially. Ashok Mehta and Masani were advocating democratic socialism Lohia and Patwardhan wanted to incorporate Gandhian technique into it as H. K. Singh maintained

In so far as the socialist party has had its hesitations crisis and failures they can generally be traced back to the difficulty of achieving a satisfying synthesis between these seemingly incompatible ingredients’.(11)

Socialist party along with the movement repeatedly faced ideological challenges. The rank got divided between Marxist and Democratic Socialists. Redefinitions became inevitable as the question of adopting socialist ideology to Indian conditions could not be postponed after the independence of course Gandhian aspect had moderated them in a quite manner. Girija Shankar aptly remarked

“Many of them had been drawn to socialism in their youthful idealism but as they grew older faced actual situations, they revised the ideology and gave up many strands of socialism”. (12)

The quest for socialism took its leaders along diverse and contradictory paths leaving the movement to spend itself out. J. P. Narayan after spending a whole time in socialist path, dedicated himself to Bhoodan Movement. The areas which gave
him more concern were related to inefficiency of party system, role of state in society, in comparison to the future of socialist movement.

Masani after reconsidering socialism turned his back on it and later became the general secretary of the Swatantra Party which stood almost for a Laisse-faire economy. In fact he became quite critical of Social Democrats and felt that under the cover of ‘inevitability of gradualness the managerial state is dominating the mass.’(14)

The greatest ideological controversy in the PSP appeared between Ashok Mehta thesis of ‘compulsion of the backward economy’ and Lohia’s notion of equi-distance. Where the earlier notion asked to co-operate with congress and latter one on the conflictual path with congress led to its further split. On this issue Madhu Limay a notable socialist maintained;

The most fatal mistake was to raise the utterly irrelevant and destructive notion of cooperation with congress which it had left in such fun fare in 1948, as, this move divide and paralyse the movement from 1953 to 1955 this from 1953-55. The Socialist movement never recovered from this bloodletting. The movement first broke into 2 streams than further disappeared into the sands of party politics”.(15)

Afterwards Ashok Mehta found his way back to the congress despite of being a Marxist theoritian, accepting the Deputy Chairmanship of Planning Commission. In fact the socialist leaders failed to agree upon a common strategy of action, especially in 60’s they indulged in ideological personalization diverting energies to causes which were not truly socialist’.

On most of the issues concerning state constitution, economy, society, and social issues the socialists have rendered themselves redundant by not having a distinct stand from other parties especially congress. This was more feasible because a chip of the socialist bloc, J. Nehru functioned as an able and willing recipient to the socialist current. He kept on injecting larger and larger doses of socialism into the Ruling Party Abolition of the Zamindari tenancy act, Co-operative farming, huge public sector enterprises, nationalization of banks by Indira Gandhi etc. Socialists never had the satisfaction of implementing their own programme.
Most of the time the party professing socialist ideals be it CSP, SP, SSP, PSP, they behaved impulsively trying to seek populist applause.

Its iconoclastic impulse directed against the statutes of British Rule, its misplaced enthusiasm for the elimination of English and its purposeless parliamentary obstructionism led to the creation of a nationwide intellectual revulsion and the alienation of the sympathies from many corners, affected the development of socialistic movement adversely.

II. LEADERSHIP AND SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

The CSP’s objectives, programmes, strategy, role it played in Indian politics, its failures, were to a large resulted by the political behaviour of its leadership.

In the beginning, “a great sense of brotherhood, trust and camaraderie intense personal relationships appeared on the scene which started eroding first with J. P. decision regarding Communists entry in CSP in 1938. Later, furthered by Nehru’s invitation for talks in 1953, left many leaders disillusioned with J. P. and Lohia. Unluckily there was no towering personality but distinct leaders with different minds clashed who were still in the process of making and remaking. The Top Brase always functioned in different directions. In fact Madhu Limay blamed the failure of J. P. and Lohia to adjust and work together not only for the first split of 1955 but for the downfall of the entire socialist movement.

Non-Cooperation of Ashok Mehta and Lohia group during various Conventions, Rebellious nature of the reactions indiscipline open criticism of each other in party conventions, all this failed to give any positive direction to the lower ranks of the party.

Many a times the rigidity of CSP’s leadership in certain matters proved detrimental for the future of the party as well as affected the longetivity of the movement here the composition nature of the leadership played a pivotal role as Girija Shankar maintained;

“The leaders were not drawn from the working class, trade unions, rather led by middle class intellectuals, who had no experience of field work, or the techniques
required for ideological – political survival, effected the decisions taken on various issues. (20)

Like the leadership decision of not participating in the Assembly elections of 1937, interim govt. of 1946 Constituent assembly of 1947, all deprived the workers of electoral – political – governmental experience.

(3)(4) ORGANIZATIONAL DILEMMA AND ELECTORAL POLITICS IN SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

Post 1947 the socialist party, in order to emerge as a national alternative to congress decided in Patna conference 1949 to change their structure from a cadre base to a mass-base party. However, they paid little attention in fulfilling this objective as since beginning they relied on the network of congress itself. They paid small effort to fulfill the gap after being separated from Congress. They did little for checking the mass following instead of creating public awareness from below they wore the ideology and force it from above by using Congress long carrier advantage.

Despite of the fact that socialism has been favoured by an influential section of the Indian intelligensia and had a high degree of mass appeal the socialist party failed to convert this popularity into voting – turnouts as revealed by the great set back in the first general elections.

In order to sustain in the system, political parties need to capture power; In order to enhance its ideological aims as well as to furthered it mass support the power is required. In return all these provide credibility to any party. Socialist party’s failure in understanding the nature of electoral appeal proved crucial in breaking this power cycle for them.

The leaders never paid due attention in shaping or maintaining the class base required for the institutional or political survival of the party itself, supplemented by the scarcity of Financial resources. (22)
ASSESSMENT OF SOCIALIST MOVEMENT UPTO LOHIA AND UNDER LOHIA’S LEADERSHIP

Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia is best known as the original socialist theoretician played undoubtedly an important role in the development of Indian Socialism. He must be praised for the vast theoretical knowledge about Marxism, Communism, Western Socialism and Capitalism.

The reason for bifurcating this Chapter before and after Lohia lies here as Lohia visualized socialism from an independent outlook. In his Doctrinal foundation of socialism he urged for an spontaneous and dynamic philosophy. Unlike J. P. he continued his political life certainly with timely adjustments.

However, there appears a kind of rigidity and uncompromising attitude also which was his major characteristic. As Dr. Bhasin once mentioned

‘He had never hesitated to turn away from any group or organization that had foreshaken the path he had chalked out even if he had been instrumental in bringing it about and nurturing it with his life blood.’(24)

The events such as clash with Ashok Mehta, where he moved on to form his own party leaving PSP in 1955 calling Mehta’s notion as ‘Paralysed Socialism’ as said by G. S. Bhargava where he highlighted the non adaptability of Lohia and sometimes his disregard to party discipline, where he failed to build up any second line of trained leaders or any concrete mass support. (25)

One dimension which requires attention is evoking of caste sentiments for electoral gains. When socialists thought of forming an alternative to congress, they faced a western notion of Marxism, which stood for the ‘Dictatorship of the Proletariat’. However, like all other 3rd world countries, India lacked the organized working force due to the absence of large industrialization. Here the oppressed people belonged mostly to the lower castes. Dr. Lohia the ideologue of SSP described these castes as Proletariat and people from the upper castes as bourgeois. Thus SSP mobilized these new Social groups or castes for a true upliftment. In fact he once mentioned that Banias rule over
the body, while Brahmin over the minds of Indian people. The true emancipation of the
country can come only when this bondage is done away with. Therefore Socialism of
Lohia variety was based on caste structure of the society without denouncing the
western structure.

Having understood all we can take help of S. N. Dubey for a note of praise for
socialist movement development upto Lohia where he maintained

‘No doubt we fail to develop as an viable alternative which was our first aim, we
splited fought amongst ourselves were hopelessly divided. Yet Democratic Socialism as
a theory has come to stay. It is positive it is neither a imitation of social Democracy of
Europe, nor of Marxism. Our efforts to prevent India from going to the way of Traditional
capitalism have been successful to an extent. Supplementing this, we have found a
place in the preamble of the Constitution.” (26)

BIFURICATION OF THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT 1967 – 2004

Political parties in the 3rd world have been described as a long shadows of a few
tall leaders. Apart from others, in Socialist Movement and its further parties it seems to
play an overwhelming important role for splitting, for forming a new political outfit or for
rancorous factionalism.

Post 1967, on this particular matter witnessed a sort of vaccum, the leaders with
the required charisma and ideological face with which the rank and file of the party
could identify with, acted as the cohesive bond till now. Like in 1949 Acyut Patwardhan
left the socialist party, Yusuf Meherally died in 1950. In 1952 Aruna Asif Ali left in 1954
J. P. Narayan took sanyas from active politics. Ashok Mehta deserted the socialist party
for congress in 1964 and lastly in October 1968 Lohia passed away.

Year 1967 witnessed a whole new recruits in the socialist party. In contrast to the
older ones, they had only a smattering of education, no use for the civilities of the
behaviour and were quite willing to resort to dubious means to attain their power ends.
All this changed the nature of political actions and decisions carried out in future. The
breaking of congress dominance in 1967 introduced a whole new set of conditions
which shaped, reshaped the further political course of India. It paved way for the alternative mobilization strategies as well, partially enlightened citizens due to Democratic upsurge supported this. All led to the new entrances in Indian politics, determining the fate of socialist movement as well.

1967 – POWER POLITICS AND SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

MAJOR TRENDS

1. IDEOLOGICAL DILUTION

To achieve power a party needs to build up itself and recruit support. This is done through establishing itself as an independent organization with a distinct ideology thereby creating a special appeal. The SP or SSP were not successful in the efforts to attract support on the basis of ideology.

The new generation of leaders by and large were not fired by ideology though used ideology as an effective workable instrument in the power struggle. Most of the leaders build their support, structure on the basis of primordial appeals to caste and lineage alignments. Most of the internal organizations conflicts though posed as conflict of ideology in effect represent the conflict between two or more dominant caste factions for supremacy and political power.

In fact socialism in India, around 1967 was defined in political language as Non-Congressism, where its champions tried to topple the congress dominance and formed SVD (Sanyukta Vidhayakdal) government in various states. Obviously the sustainability level of such ‘ANTI’ postures were quite low. Amitabh Mishra while analyzing Non-Congressism anti differentiate it in following ways:

2. On the level of parties – 1977 (Janata govt.)
3. On the level of personality – 1989 (National Front)(30)

But none of them was on the basis of ideology. In fact it was a total reversal of the original policy of Lohia aversion to coalitions in the starting phase of socialist policies.
1972 manifesto of SSP was a clear revelation where the obsessiveness for power remained the only ideology. “The document was silent on the nature and form of socialism nowhere it is attempted to define its philosophy. As a result there appears considerable ambiguity and flexibility. The framers have carefully avoided dogmatizing the concept, left it evergreen for opportunists.

Balraj Puri had accused J. P. for his withdrawal from politics or deidealization of Indian politics as for leaving it in between. In fact for him, J. P. assisted Indira Gandhi in dividing and Politics on the basis of Pro-Anti power rather on ideology by his re-emergence and formation of Janata government in 1978. The events of 1977-80 were defined as deintellectualization of politics. (32)

The fate of Janata party proved very clearly that political outfits put together in hurry for power without taking into account the ideological variation of the combined elements (RSS, BJP, BSP) at any time favoured disintegration. Lately, now the ideology seems to be at its own peril where Samata party has joined NDA or JDU received support of BJP all give primacy to political survival.

2. SOCIALIST MOVEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL DILEMMA

The main weakness of the Janata family of parties is and has always been lacking of proper organizational setup. They have been the most weekly organized among the major political parties in India. As maintained by Ajay Mehra “Intra Party Democracy is an important principle to strengthen a political party and to give it dynamism. Parties also required to have well knit multilayered organization and a string of leaders at different levels to sustain the party. Political parties recruiting openly in multiethenic societies are prone to disputes. Intra party democracy guarantees autonomy to local unit leadership. Thus reducing the load on National unit. It also strengthen the feedback mechanism and when a party shows disregard to these grass root principles the “Success – Spirit” may go down to its peril, for in such a situation political parties may bank upon mobilization based on EMOTIVE rather than substantive issues.(33)
Viewed in this conceptual perspective above. The Janata family parties never managed to evolve even state level organizational structure in their strong hold states, never had credible organizational elections.

One reason for the failure of Janata government was that the party leadership avoided the mechanisms of party democracy, resorted instead to decisions by Respected ‘Genortocrat’ failed in integrating the functional organizations of the parties merged. Again in 1989 at the historical opportunity V. P. Singh failed in institutionalizing the procedures and processes, rather relied on short cuts in party building.(35) The Janata dal future was decided by the same set of leaders who have been changing party badges and alliances personal aggrandizement and benefits were easily available and visibly achievable goals. Thus all important space in the polls of 1991 went to BJP instead of socialist outfits.

The Janata family had ample time for introspection and party building in 1991-1996 but was wasted in fighting and political wrangling. Adhocism became the fashion upto 1997, no inclination was shown for party building. The failure to build party institutions forced the party to depend excessively on some of the regional leaders with vote catching capacity, means compromise on important issues of public morality, and political ethics, Institutionalization of the party was further eroded (37)

3. PERSONALISED AMBITIONS.

The phenomena of splits, deflections found its most accurate manifestation in Janata party and its further family. Not always the principles or social forces were involved in the split, rather it was the personal ambition – concerning power in the party or government played havoc with socialist movement.
Since its inception of course one can find variation in the degree whether politicians reveal themselves as opportunists or luckily hide their aims. In fact leadership conflict in the socialist movement has been only partially disciplined by normative strains and hardly at all by institutional restraints. The normative cover for concealing the power struggle was rather thin be it 1972 Rajnarain case, Charan Singh act of 1979, Chandrashekhar creating new party in 1990, formation of SP in 1993, JDU in 1994 etc.

4. PUZZLING SOCIAL BASE IN SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

With the realization that the Marxist doctrine in its classical form could not be applied to the Indian situation already existing disparities of the Indian society like landlord farmer cleavage, caste disparity proved handy to the parties professing socialism to acquire a readymade social base. The interest of the lower or middle castes provide them a political agenda to effectively participate in the electoral scene. So the Janata family parties have been based largely on Rich peasant proprietors belonging to relatively numerically large, intermediate and backward castes whose interests were not adequately represented in the caste coalitions. Post mandal environment also gave entry to new social group.

a) From the general elections of 1989-91, 1997, 1999, 2004 the meaning of social justice was elaborated, expanded and used, misused by almost all parties which snatched the monopoly of OBC from Janata family.

b) With the growing caste identity there appears a kind of internal differentiation within the lower castes led to the scattering of loyalty with fastly emerging caste based, ST caste based like (BSP) in various regions, loosened the grip of Janata family of parties.
c) The aspect of horizontal aggregation also effected the Janata party family. The lower caste upsurge has been fairly effective in putting it in power at the state level but due to the variations of ‘Social Cleavages’ failed to give Janata a National Base.(42)

   d) Various splits with which this family is effected proved detrimental as the peasant proprietor base went in different directions in different states like to Samajwadi party in UP to RJD and JDU in Bihar, Biju Janata Dal in Orissa.

       All these events only highlights the puzzle of social base for Janata family parties.

5. MANDALIZATION AND POLITICALIZATION OF CASTE AND COALITION ERA

Terms such as federalization of Indian policy or Democratization of Indian politics(43) indicates the change in the nature of Indian politics which in a way is manifested in the kind of governments formed since 1989 where regional players participates frequently in coalition govt., behind the causation, somewhere lies the mandalization of the social groups. After the implementation of Mandal Commission report in 1989, asking for reservation for the OBC along with SC / ST in government institutions, turned the Janata Dal in a major opposition force in 1991. Where it derived its power from a new Vote Bank through the passport of mandal, steered the class caste conundrum in direction earlier unknown to Indian political history. However, proved detrimental to the future where the regional aspirants distanced themselves from the main party, creating space for themselves in their states. All this led to the Regionalization of the socialist movement (44) where the Janata Dal as a power or as a Third force missed the bus due to its family diplomacy. The politics of polulism and postures replaced the structural ideological claim of party.

CONCLUSION

Of course, it is quite pre-mature to talk of the death of the Janata family of parties. Although the individual parties and splinters within the family have gone through
Rise – Decline – Extinction. Some are aligned with totally opposite ideological political outfit like Samata party to BJP. Some are riding high all alone take strong ideological commitment from Lohia like SP in U.P. Some may have reasonable prospects in other states, notwithstanding the fact the emerging tides of factionalism, splits, swapping of ideology is having a presence in other parties also. The factor of institutionalization of procedures and process is the only crucial factor which makes them low. In fact the mobilization strategy is required to be updated in order to provide sustainability to the parties championing socialist ideals, of course, in the presence of so many regional players to represent the whole country as a single constituency cohesively organized is not possible. The state level variations in agrarian relations, intra and inter caste variations required political pragmatism and not just political populism.

There is a need to link the contribution of socialist ideology to the current electoral political mileage. They need to endeavour a new set of values which can provide them a true identity as nobody in present scenario can dare to show agitation against socialism Political parties professing socialist argument need to learn the art of being political yet ideological in present scenario.

REFERENCE

4. J. P. Narayan, Towards Struggle, Page 100. 1935
5. Gandhian letter’s except dated 29 May, 1934, Masani reproduced in Masani’s Bliss was it in that Dawn, Page 55-56.


