CHAPTER II

KRIPALANI'S EARLY LIFE AND THE EVOLUTION OF HIS THOUGHT

The Amils who are a middle-class small community of Hindu Kshatriyas, scattered in the different towns and cities of Sind, have come to be known as Dewans. At one time the Amils seem to have been the only literate community in the whole province of Sind. Therefore they enjoyed a virtual monopoly of executive employment both under the Muslim rulers and the British in the recent past.

Among all the Amils of Sind, the Amils of Hyderabad (now in Pakistan) formed the most extraordinary and snobbish class. Essentially and absolutely they were bourgeois. They, with all the virtues and vices, belonged to a petty bureaucratic tradition. It was observed that "They are a self-assertive and self-complacent community of intelligent men who dread originality, of educated men who hold learning in little esteem, of respectable men who do not waste time in mere cultural pursuits. They are smart and sensible but neither subtle nor sensitive, bold but not brave, active but not adventurous." 1

In such a family Jiwatram Bhagwandas Kripalani was born in Hyderabad (Sind) in 1880, three years after the birth of the Indian National Congress. The exact date and month of his birth are not available. Once asked by a journalist about these, he said, "I have lost my horoscope and have kept no account of it." Even the information sought by the researcher and provided by the registrar, Fergusson College, Poona, from where Kripalani graduated, did not throw any light on this matter.

Jiwatram's father, Bhagwandas (1842-1922), was a staunch Vaishnava who lived a very simple and austere life in a cottage built in front of the Poona house of the family. Jiwatram's father was affectionately called "Kaka Bhagwandas." As has been already said, the Amils had a hold in the administration. Kaka Bhagwandas was also attached to that profession. He was a tehsildar. His loyalty to the administration was beyond doubt.

It is regrettable that no information is available about Jiwatram's mother. However, she bore eight children (seven sons and one daughter) to Kaka Bhagwandas.

Jiwatram was the sixth child of the family. It is interesting to note here that the then prevailing situation in Sind and elsewhere in India disturbed Jiwatram's family. His second and fifth brothers denounced their religion and embraced Islam. The eldest brother died as an absconder during the Khilafat movement and was believed to have intrigued with the Afghan for the invasion of India. The fourth brother died in Turkey while defending it against the Greeks before the first Greek war. The third brother was the first Aml to open the first Swadeshi shop, a leather shop, in Hyderabad. The seventh brother who became a mere carpenter suddenly put on the robe of a Sanyasi. The last child of the family was a daughter — Kikiben — who dedicated her life to the national cause.

J.B.Kripalani's family was one of high-strung individuals, with thin lips, pinched faces but alert eyes and warm hearts. They had sharp tongues. They had strong likes and dislikes. They slept very little. The family was basically religious minded in a community which had little value for religion. Kripalani wrote, "I do not know if I am a Hindu. I know that my parents were devout Hindus." 4

Though Kripalani disbelieved in the usual dogmas of Hinduism, he had a belief in the five basic principles of Hindu morality — truth, non-violence, non-exploitation, continence and avoidance of greed. Kripalani seems to have inherited at least some aspects of Hinduism from his parents. Kripalani does not seem to have inherited his austerity from his father.

Kripalani's father was a man of stern disposition. The temper of his father influenced not only his children but also the children of the neighbourhood. The violence of temper was a common family trait. According to Kripalani he was the most gentle-tempered person in the whole family. Even so, he was a born rebel. His family consisted of uncompromising individualists. It was a strange family.

In his childhood Kripalani was wild and wayward. He was agile and adventurous. When he was six years old, he was admitted to a school. From the very beginning he had a healthy contempt for book-learning. In the school he used to quarrel with his friends. He was always up to some mischief or the other. He used to climb trees with a great joy. Even as a young boy he was fond of gambling. He was a permanent headache to his

5. Ibid.
teachers during his school days. He read as little as he could and experienced as much as he could.

Kripalani's father had retired when Kripalani was still studying in the school. His father had no landed property or wealth except a house. After his retirement the whole family was to depend on his pension.

Kripalani had no plans of his education or career etc. If Kripalani had remained true to the traditions of the Amil clan, he would have been a good administrator in the British set-up.

Though he was not a bright student, he was able to get through his Matriculation examination in the year 1905. Kripalani's primary and secondary education thus came to an end without much hindrance.

Kripalani, at the instance of his father, joined the Wilson College, Bombay. During his college days in Bombay he was much influenced by Bal Gangadhar Tilak's agitation against the partition of Bengal. Those were the days of chaos and tension throughout the country. Kripalani started taking interest in the agitation. He came under the direct influence of Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal.
Kripalani believed in violence. Kripalani had created a lot of trouble for Mr. MacKichan of his college. He was expelled from the Wilson College for his radical political views against the Britishers.

Next, Kripalani went to Karachi and joined the D.J. Science College. In Karachi also Kripalani used to take interest in politics. In an unfortunate moment, while addressing a students' general meeting, Principal of the college, Mr. Jackson betrayed himself into saying "You Indians are contemptible liars." The young and violent-minded Kripalani could not tolerate such remarks made by an alien on his country-men. He was a student of the B.A. class then. He actively participated in the college strike in 1907. Again he was expelled from the college.

Such drastic actions against Kripalani compelled him to migrate from one place to another to receive education. In June 1907 he was admitted to the senior B.A. class at the Ferguson College, Poona, from where he graduated in 1908. During his college education too he was non-bookish. He always disliked text-books. Though he hated the English rulers, he was

fond of English poetry. Kripalani was also fond of 'baits' of Shah Abdul Latif, the greatest Sufi poet of Sindh.

The grown-up, young Kripalani took interest in studying subjects like history, politics and economics. After a gap of four years he decided to pursue further education. After seeing the economic exploitation by the British, Kripalani thought that he should acquire a thorough knowledge of economics and history, so that he could serve the country in a befitting manner. He obtained his M.A. degree from the Bombay University in 1912 with history and economics as his subjects.

Since then he took more and more interest in reading and writing. His attitude to education and public affairs underwent a considerable change.

Kripalani received his first lesson of patriotism during his college days. After his graduation he took to teaching in a school at Sukkur near his home-town. Even after becoming a teacher he did not give up his outspokenness. Once he got into trouble with his English Inspector. During the inspection the boys were cowed down by the presence of the 'Sahib' and would not answer his questions. Kripalani turned to the boys and told them in Sindhi, "Why do you funk? Is he a wild animal who will
eat you up? It's a shame that you should lose your nerves just because he is an Englishman.\textsuperscript{8}

Since the English Inspector did not understand the Sindhi language, he charged Kripalani and demanded to know why he was tipping off the boys. Kripalani translated to the Inspector what he had told the boys. The Inspector became irritated and sent a strong report against Kripalani and also asked the headmaster of the school to take necessary action. The headmaster replied, "Sir, we can't take action against such a man. You don't know him."\textsuperscript{9}

Kripalani's non-conformism made him migrate from school to school in Sind. Finally he had to leave the job of a school teacher since he had chosen a way of infecting the young students with his political ideas. The school authorities considered him dangerous.

After his M.A., Kripalani was appointed as Professor of History in Bihar Bhumihr College, Muzaffarpur, in 1912. Mr. W.R. Balkani, a neighbour and a distant relative of Kripalani, was

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  \item \textsuperscript{8} L.M. Thapalyal, "A Unique Personality" in P.N. Tandon (ed.) Acharya J.B. Kripalani (Bombay: Hind Kitala, 1948), p.70.
  \item \textsuperscript{9} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
also appointed as a Professor in the same college. Tripalani served as a Professor in Muzaffarpur from 1912 to 1917.

In the beginning, in Muzaffarpur, it seemed he was settling down. But he had to cut short his professional career in 1917 when he came into contact with Gandhiji.

Evolution of His Thought

The Hindus of the Sind were in a pitiable state when the British captured Sind in 1643. The Hindus could hardly keep an idol or ring a bell in the temples. K.R. Malkani writes, "The rise of the Sikhs in the Punjab did come as a moral boost to the Sindhi Hindus, who had promptly put up a few gurdwaras." 10

Islam had always been a challenge to the Sind Hindus. Besides, Christianity also emerged as a challenge to them. The Christian missionaries started visiting Amil houses to teach English to the little children. Though they posed as teachers, their real object was to convert these people to Christianity.

The British, after capturing the Sind, started looting it. That is what the Sindh Times wrote on 20 May 1884, "Nadir Shah looted the country only once. But the British loot us every day. Every year wealth to the tune of 4.5 million dollars is being drained out, sucking our very blood. Britain should immediately quit India." 11

With the establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885, the freedom movement spread like fire in almost all parts of the country. Since Sind was the most affected area, it took active role in the movement. The Britom Dharma Sabha was set up in 1888 in Shikarpur. The Sabha not only involved itself in social reforms but also started inspiring people to set up Swadeshi mills like those for the production of sugar, soap and cloth. The literature produced by the Sabha was considered by the British authorities to be so revolutionary that Seth Chetumal, Virumal Bagraj and Govind Sharma were all sentenced to 5 years' rigorous imprisonment in 1909. The Judge Boyde said in his order, "These young men are members of a religious organisation. Their influence on the people therefore will be great. Their writings and activities are so seditious that they deserve death. But in view of their tender age I am handing out a lesser punishment." 12

12. Ibid., pp. 88-89.
These were some of the incidents which influenced the young Kripalani. The evolution of political thinking in Kripalani took place in the year 1905 itself when Lord Curzon ordered the partition of Bengal. The "Vanga Bhanga" (partition of Bengal), triggering the Swadeshi movement, came as a moral boost to the freedom movement in Sind. Kripalani, while a student in school, used to oppose British people. The situation in Sind as well as the partition of Bengal and its consequences influenced Kripalani deeply.

The purpose of the partition of Bengal has been conveyed upon by the Bengalee of July 1905 in the following words, "The real objects of the partition scheme are three-fold, namely, to destroy the collective power of the Bengali people, to overthrow the political ascendancy of Calcutta, and, lastly, to foster in East Bengal the growth of Mohammedan power which, it is hoped, will have the effect of keeping in check the rapidly growing strength of the educated Hindu community."

The year 1905 undoubtedly serves as a landmark in the history of India's freedom struggle. The three stalwarts, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal,

popularly known as "Jal, Bab, Bal," intensified the stir against the partition of Bengal. Those were the days when Kripalani was a student in Bombay. In 1906 he was stirred by the agitation against the partition of Bengal. Kripalani's efforts to organise the students to oppose the Bengal partition and his outspoken views made him unwanted in the college. As stated earlier, he was expelled from the college. In Karachi, where he studied next, he could not tolerate the remarks made by Principal Jackson on Indians. Here again in 1907 he took active part in the college strike. He was learning his lessons of patriotism.

It is important to note here that a new development had taken place in the history of the Indian National Congress within two decades of its inception. There were two groups in the Congress known as moderates and extremists. L. L. B. Mehta, Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Surendranath Tagore led the moderate group, while the extremist group was led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghose. Since Kripalani was revolutionary-minded from his childhood, his sympathies were with the extremists. Kripalani had also developed connections with some Bengal revolutionaries.

Kripalani believed in violence as a means of attaining freedom. According to Kripalani, "... in those days, no one..."
except the moderates believed in non-violence. And the moderates believed in constitutional action when India had no constitution.\textsuperscript{14}

The sense of patriotism among the young revolutionaries grew stronger when their leader Tilak was sentenced to six years' imprisonment in 1908. In the same year Kripalani had been appointed as a teacher in a school at Sukkur. The news of Tilak's imprisonment further strengthened Kripalani's spirit and activities. He did not worry about his job. He started infusing a sense of patriotism among his pupils. He boldly asked his pupils to hate the British.

Kripalani, from the beginning of his appointment, used to spend a good portion of his salary for the revolutionary activities. He never cared to save money.

During 1908-1910 Kripalani was thrown out from school to school for his radical political activities. But he did not give up his activities. He was least bothered about his job.

In 1910 Kripalani, along with Baka Kalelkar, Swami Govindanand, Dr. Choithram and many others, set up a Brahmacharya Ashram in Hyderabad. The purpose of the Ashram was not only to produce patriotic young men through song, drama and gymnastics but also to provide shelter for the revolutionaries.

Kripalani had played a key role in making plans and strategies for the fight against the British rulers. The Brahmacharya Ashram was a part of his plans. Kripalani and his friends, Dr. Choithram, Swami Akarsh, Pandit Bhende, Vachaspati and Swami Satyadev, went on a cow protection tour in Sind singing "Baal Sahab ko karo Salam" (Salute Sir Bullock). The Sindhi people generously donated money for the Brahmacharya Ashram.

Kripalani, as earlier stated, was appointed as a Professor of History in the B.B. College, Muzaffarpur, in 1942. By this time he had gained considerable fighting experience. He was instrumental in supporting and spreading the terrorist activities. To him, the only way left now was winning freedom.

from the aliens. His revolutionary speeches attracted a number of young men, some of whom were later actively associated with the terrorist movement of Bengal.

During this long five year term, i.e., from 1912 to 1917, as Professor in Muzaffarpur, he used to send a major portion of his salary to Dr. Choithram. Gandhiji in his autobiography noted, "Acharya Kripalani, when I first met him in 1915, was already a seasoned warrior. He was then earning Rs.400 per month but was a Brahmachari, taking only Rs.40 for himself and sending the balance to Dr. Choithram who was conducting a Brahmacharya Ashram at Hyderabad (Sind)."16

The government authorities took a serious note of it and started an enquiry on the subject. A kind-hearted Principal explained that since Kripalani had no dependents, he spent money on his friends. The explanation did not satisfy the bureaucrats. They were distrustful of young Kripalani. The government had kept a strict vigil on his activities.

Kripalani had once met Gandhiji in 1915 at Santiniketan. Gandhiji had just returned from South Africa. Kripalani had heard about Gandhiji's activities in South Africa. It was but

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natural for Kripalani to be eager to meet Gandhi in the context of India’s freedom struggle. In Kripalani’s own words, "My desire to meet him was due to the knowledge of what he had done for the Indian residents in South Africa by his novel movement of Satyagraha. It was due also to the fact that at that time India was bereft of all dynamic leadership. Political life was at a low ebb. The 1907 split at Surat had left the Congress impoverished by the withdrawal of its most active, youthful and revolutionary elements. The Congress had thereafter failed to inspire, enthuse or educate the people. It had become a body without a soul. The government had effectively suppressed the revolutionary movement. Bipin Chandra Pal was no more the inspiration that he used to be. Lala Lajpat Rai was in America. Sri Aurobindo Ghose had retired from politics long before and had sought a quiet retreat at Pondicherry. Tilak had returned from Mandalay only a few months before, after serving a long term of imprisonment there." 17

The revolutionary heroes of India, Lal, Bal, Pal and Aurobindo, in one way or the other, were not in a position to guide the revolutionary activities. Even in the absence of those leaders Kripalani continued his activities in the hope

that one day or the other this great country will have a
dynamic leader. With this hope he went to Santiniketan to
meet Gandhiji. There he spent a week with Gandhiji. Kripalani
writes, "If it had been merely a week of political talks, it
might not have meant much to me. But in this week I was
privileged to see his reforming zeal and organising capacity
at work." 18

Those were the days of the Champaran indigo-growers'
movement against the exploitation by the British. Champaran
is in the Muzaffarpur district. One late evening in 1917
Kripalani received a telegraphic message from Gandhiji informing
him that he was arriving at Muzaffarpur that night. Gandhiji
was on his way to Champaran to lead the movement. Kripalani
did not know what to do. He was the warden of the hostel. He
did not have his own house. He was living in a small room of
the hostel. He went to the station to receive Gandhiji, having
made an arrangement to put up in Professor Malkani's house.
Gandhiji was received properly. The students who went to the
station with Kripalani welcomed Gandhiji with Arati. But for
a proper Arati a coconut was needed. Kripalani was a good
climber. He climbed a coconut tree and plucked a coconut.

18. Ibid., p.53.
Kripalani was proud to receive Gandhiji as his guest. He informed the Principal that Gandhiji was his guest. The irritated Principal asked, "You mean to say that notorious man Gandhi of South Africa is your guest?" Kripalani said, "Yes" and added, "Why do you call him notorious? He has rendered service to the Empire for which he had been awarded the Kaiser-i-Hind medal." The Principal shook his head and said that Kripalani should have made some other arrangement for him. Kripalani said, "It is not customary in India to put one's guest in a hotel." 19

Gandhiji went to Champaran to lead the indigo growers' movement. Kripalani was eager to go to Champaran. But the time did not permit him as it was the examination period. He did not give up the idea. In April 1917 he wrote a letter to Gandhiji asking him if his services were needed in Champaran. To this letter Gandhiji sent the following reply on 17th April 1917:

"I read your affection in your eyes, in your expression, in your postures. May I be found worthy of all this deep love! Yes, I know you want to help. You shall have your choice. Either

19. Ibid., p.61.
go to Ahmedabad and work there for the experimental school or come and work here even at the risk of imprisonment...  

Kripalani joined Gandhiji in Chauparan after 15 days when the college vacation began. The government which was watching Kripalani's activities took a stern action. Kripalani lost his job of professorship since he came into direct contact with Gandhiji. The so-called violent Kripalani switched over to non-violence. The evolution of his thought and his contact with Gandhiji made him non-violent.

20. Ibid., p.67.