CHAPTER-IV

ROLE OF THE COMMUNIST POLITICAL PARTIES IN INDIAN FEDERAL SYSTEM

The federal form of government posits two sets of governments: one at the centre and other at the periphery. The governments at the provincial level represent the urges and aspirations of the local people; it is the solemn responsibility of achieving development from the lowest strata. On the other hand, the government at the centre, represents national interests; it is the mirror which shows the index of the whole country. The central government has the responsibility of national growth and national security.

To quote William Livingston: "The essential nature of federalism is to be sought for, not in the shadings of legal and constitutional terminology, but in the forces-economic, social, political, cultural that have made the outward forms of federalism necessary. The essence of federalism lies not in the constitutional or institutional structure but in the society itself. Federal government is a device by which the federal qualities of the society are articulated and protected."\(^1\)

Federalism and political parties are closely intertwined. They play a very significant role in determining the federal process. Political parties represent the urges and aspirations of the people, and they are instruments by which interest articulation is carried out. Federal policies are formulated by political parties and parties are institutional links, which bring cordial centre-state relations, which will lead to a formation of rational federal system.\(^2\)

Political parties play a prominent role in determining federal policy and centre-state relations. The relationship between the centre and the state depends upon the nature of relationship between the party at the centre and the party at the state level. If there is only one party ruling both at the centre and states, there will be no question of centre-state conflicts.

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Political parties are an important mechanism to run the federal system. According to Riker, "of the numerous political factors, such as pressure groups, elite groups, political attitude and political movements, party system is probably the most important factor in the federalising process."\(^3\)

The success of a federal system depends upon the nature of centre-state relations. The centre-state relations are influenced by several factors like public opinion, pressure groups, state level politics, media, leadership and political parties.

As rightly pointed out by W.H. Morris Jones, "Indian federalism is a kind of co-operative federalism where bargaining took place between the centre and the states, but ultimately a solution came out and both agreed to co-operate. The nature of centre-state relations in India is determined by the way in which the centre and the states, manage the powers allotted to them, and how the centre maintains its relations with the states depends upon the fact that there should be co-operation between the centre and states."\(^4\)

So political parties play a significant role in the formulation of public policy. In this regard the role of ruling party or parties is more important than the opposition parties. Opposition parties have less important role in formulation of public policy. It is generally accepted that political parties constitute a major institutional variable in determining the content of public policy, which will in turn determine the nature of federal process in a country. Therefore, any attempt to understand federal process from the perspective of political parties is significant.

For three days in New Delhi from November 20\(^{th}\) to 22\(^{nd}\), 2009, an international meeting of the Communist and Workers Parties of 47 countries, 55 parties was held fruitfully. This was called the 11\(^{th}\) meeting. Starting from the first one held in 1960 in Moscow when the socialist camp was at the Zenith of its

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power influencing the course of events in the World, and perhaps also within most of the individual countries.

This meeting was hosted jointly by the CPI(M) and CPI. They issued a joint invitation selecting more than a hundred parties; but all those which bear the name of Communist or Workers’ Parties were not invited. Within India, no other Communist or Workers’ Party or Left Party was invited. Naxalites, Maoists or some other parties, each claiming to be the true Communist Party such as the CPI(Marxist-Leninist), CPI(Maoist), Satya Shodhak, Communist Party (Maharashtra), Periyarist Marxist Communist Party (Tamil Nadu). The most vociferously revolutionary phrase-mongering Socialist Unity centre were not there. Only those parties who accepted Marxism-Leninism, Scientific, Socialism, Class Struggle were qualified to be invited by the two sponsoring parties.5

Centre-State relations constitute a major component of India’s federal process. This chapter concentrates on the approach of the CPI and CPI (M) towards centre-state relations. Since its inception, the CPI and CPI (M) has expressed its concern on several issues, pertaining to Indian Federal System, such as Article 370, giving special status to Jammu and Kashmir, Use of Article 356, Appointment of Governors and Distribution of Revenue, Deployment of CRPF and Policies and Programme of the CPI and CPI (M).

The Communist Parties have however adopted an ambivalent attitude towards federalism. They do want a strong centre but at the same time they emphasize the need for substantial autonomy to the states.

Since 1990, centre-state relations have become a major variant in India’s domestic political affairs. In India, issues regarding centre-state relations occupy a significant place for the study of scholars, journalists, elites, and also, it is prominent policy issue in the programme of major Indian political parties. Issues a regarding federal affairs occupy priority in the policies and programmes of almost

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all the parties in India. So, it is significant to understand the Indian federal system from the party perspective.

**Approach of Communist Party of India towards Centre-State Relations:**

Centre-State Relations constitute a major component in a federal form of government. The policies of the central government have a major impact on the federal process of a country. Almost all the political parties give a large content of issue of centre-state relations in their ideology, policies and programmes.

Since its inception, the Communist Party of India has taken a critical stand of various issues pertaining to Indian Federal System. Therefore, it is quite pertinent to understand the attitude of the CPI towards Indian federal system.

According to its Constitution, the CPI "is the political party of the Indian working class, its vanguard, and its highest form of class organization. It is a voluntary organization of workers, peasants and toiling people in general, devoted to the cause of socialism and communism." 

Ajoy Ghosh assimilated all that was new in the Indian and World situation. The CPI became the second politico-social force within Parliament and in the largest society, next only to the congress. More than that, it is the Communists to whom other political forces and people in general turned for the solution of national and class questions: public sector, nationalisation, development of economic infrastructure and structures, democracy, the communal fascist menace, struggle for peace and disarmament, the rights of the masses, and friendship with socialist countries, and so on. The Communist were everywhere and at the head of the events, often setting the nation's agenda.

In the meantime, the CPI restructured itself to play a more effective and meaningful role in the country. Its Amritsar Special Congress of 1958 was a world event. The CPI announced that opposition parties have a role to play in future socialism, gave up the concept of dictatorship of the proletariat, and adopted a three-tier organizational structure, which is in existence even today. E.M.S.

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Namboodripad wrote in the very next issue of New Age after the Amritsar Congress that by so doing, the CPI was only carrying the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi forward. The CPI along with other progressive forces managed to isolate the Communal-Fascist and Right Reactionary forces; the latter were cornered.8

Ajoy Ghosh further says that this party, “Upholds freedom of conscience and the right of all minorities. It fights for the rights and welfare of the people of tribal areas. Fighting against all separationist and disruptionist trends and movements, it struggles for balanced development of all regions, for equality and equal treatment for the people of all linguistic regions as a sure foundation of Indian unity.”9

Ideologically, the Communist Party of India stands committed to the principles of Secularism, Democracy, Marxism-Leninism, Non-Alignment and opposition to Imperialism and Colonialism. Ideologically, it has been near, till recently, to the policies and programmes of the Soviet Communist Party. After the emergence of Anti-Communist Movements in the Soviet Union and other Socialist States, rather former socialist states of Europe, the CPI, like other Communist Parties all over the world, has been struggling to define clearly its ideological commitments.

While accepting that socialism is the final goal, the CPI holds that keeping in view the Indian environment, it cannot be projected as the immediate goal. For the present, the CPI stands for democratization and socio-economic reconstruction of the system. This can be achieved, believes the CPI, only by a leftist and democratic unity.10

For the preservation of secular democratic set-up, the CPI favours an all out struggle against the forces of secessionism, protection of the interests of all the minorities and prevention of the misuse of religious places for the spread of communalism and hatred among different communities.

8 Ibid., P.91.
9 Ibid.
The CPI firmly believes that for the progress of the nation as a whole, the most essential necessity is the preservation of the unity and integrity of the nation. We must ensure and preserve the secular democratic structure and social justice, provide for decentralization and grant of greater autonomy to the states of the federation.

For securing decentralization and greater autonomy for states, the CPI suggests that,¹¹

1. Centre-State relations should be remodeled in the true spirit of federalism.
2. Greater autonomy should be given to states.
3. The division of legislative, administrative and financial relations between the centre and states should be restructured.
4. Suitable measures should be adopted for preventing misuse of powers by the President and the Governors.
5. Art. 356 should be deleted from the constitution.
6. The fate of every state government should be determined on the floor of the house.
7. For securing decentralization more powers and resources should be transferred to the local level institutions.

The Communist Party of India feels that centre-state relations should be restructured in real spirit of federalism giving greater powers and financial resources to states, as recommended by the Sarkaria Commission.¹²

Communist Party of India holds that the fate of any state government should be decided on the floor of the house, and arbitrary use of Art. 356 for dismissing state governments should be stopped. Communist Party of India will revive and make the Inter-State Council functional.

Communist Party of India will carry out real decentralization by conferring more power and financial resources to elect bodies at district, block and panchayat levels.

Communist Party of India defends Article 370 of the constitution in connection with Jammu and Kashmir. It will also rectify the erosion that had taken place in it.

Communist Party of India has evolved an economic and political package on the basis of consensus among all national and state parties.

CPI views that, “matters in the concurrent list like education, electricity are being arbitrarily decided by the centre, curtailing the powers of the states. The federal structure should be strengthened. The Inter-State Council should be revived. We are for more power to the states.”

While rejecting nationhood as defined by Hindutva, the CPI will actively promote the principle of federalism and reaffirm its respect for the plurality of civilization and culture of our people of all regions of our country.

CPI will work for devolving more powers -economic, political and administrative to the states through constitutional amendments.

**ABUSE OF ARTICLE 356:**

Article 356 of the Constitution, which provides for imposition of President’s Rule when there is a “failure of Constitutional Machinery in the state”, has been most controversial. The ambiguity of the expression. “If a situation has arisen in which the government of the state cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the constitution” has led to the Article’s persistent abuse by all governments.

The Provision under which the central government can supercede a state government and take over the entire government of the state including the

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powers of the legislature has made some people believe that federalism in India has been either modified or has lost its original meaning.

The assessment of the situation that necessitates central intervention is primarily a task of the Governor. In the context, he is President’s adviser on the spot, and its inevitable outcome is a changed position of the Governor from the independent head of the state to that of an agent of the centre. However, if the Governor fails in his duty to report to the President, the President is competent to act “otherwise” also and impose his Rule on the State.¹⁵

A doubt still exists whether the central government can issue a proclamation on the ground of maladministration and charges of corruption against the ministry of a state. For Instance, when H.N. Kunzru asked, “Is it the purpose of Article 278 and 278A to enable the central government to intervene in the provincial affairs for the good government”?¹⁶

Ambedkar replied, “No, No, the centre is not given that authority. Whether there is a good government or not in the province is not the centre to determine”.¹⁷ Hence, it seems that the Article does not give any discretion to the President or the Government of India to consider whether the government was good or bad. That is the inherent problem of Democracy.

President’s Rule was imposed six times when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was Prime Minister, twice during Lal Bahadur Shastri’s regime, nine times when Moraji Desai was the Prime minister, five times during Charan Singh’s regime and forty eight times during Indira Gandhi’s rule as a Prime Minister, that is between 1966-77 and 1980-84.

During the Nehru era (up to 1964) President’s Rule was imposed in Punjab in 1951, PEPSU in 1953, Andhra Pradesh in 1954, Kerala in 1959 and

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¹⁷ Ibid.
Orissa in 1961. It is important to note that on each of these occasions the imposition of President's Rule was controversial.  

In 1977, this Article really proved itself alarmingly unfederal. The Janata Party at the centre, by a Presidential proclamation, dismissed nine democratically formed state governments, and the centre assumed to itself all the powers exercisable by the state legislatures. It requires no mention that these nine states were run by opposition political parties, and as such, the Janata Party with its advantageous position in the centre chose to spread its influence to those areas applying this short cut method available in Article 356. Their argument was that the overwhelming victory of the Janata Party in these states in Parliamentary Election proved that these state governments by other political parties had no moral right to rule.

The legitimacy of the central action was widely suspected, and the political system put to severe strains. The Congress leaders then described the Union Government's decision to dissolve the nine Assemblies as politically motivated, unconstitutional and as an attempt to distort the basis of our federal polity. 

Ever since Nehru quoted Article 356 and got rid in 1959 of the Namboodripad government in Kerala the First Elected Communist regime anywhere in the world- the left have consistently veiled against what they have regarded as one of the most undemocratic provisions of the constitution. The Left was even more convinced of the need to oppose the article tooth and nail. In their pleadings with Sarkaria Commission appointed to revive centre-state relation, the left parties asked, in unambiguous terms, for its abrogation.

Art. 356, to be suitably amended so that the power of the centre to dismiss state governments is curtailed, adequate provisions may be made to tackle

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extreme contingencies such as threat to national unity and secular foundation of the state activisation of Inter-State Council and empowering NDC with adequate powers on planning. All national languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the constitution to be equally promoted and developed.21

How is the power to dismiss a state government conferred by Art.356 to be exercised? In the Constituent Assembly, a hope was expressed by no less a person than Dr. Ambedkar that Art. 356 would be used most rarely. Why was it used so often? Are there any parameters established for its use? In S.R. Bommai vs. India, the Supreme Court held that the exercise of power under Art. 356 is justifiable. The Court actually held invalid the dismissal of the governments of Karnataka and Nagaland but upheld the dismissal of the government of Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan. However, proper parameters for the exercise of the power under Art. 356 must develop through political process.

The Supreme Court has observed in Bommai vs. India that up until 1972, Article 356 has been used 82 times for dismissing the state governments and 13 times for dismissing governments of the Union Territories. We are also not quite sure that judicial review would be the appropriate method of preventing the abuse of the powers under Article 356. There are questions of political nature which cannot be accessed through judicially manageable standards.

Concern over the abuse of Article 356 since its past record on that score hardly inspires confidence.

The Indian Constitution provides (Art. 355) that it is the duty of the union to protect the states against external aggression and internal disturbances, and to ensure that the government of every state is carried on in accordance with the provisions of the constitution. However, if on receipt of the report from the Governor or otherwise, the President is satisfied that the government of the state cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the constitution, he may issue a proclamation under Article 356, taking over any function of the state government including those of the Governor and other state authorities. But the

21 Ibid.
satisfaction of the President, of course, means the satisfaction of the Union Government and President’s Rule is actually the rule of and by the Union Governments.

At this juncture, it would be interesting and revealing to note the use and misuse of Art. 356 since the operation of our constitution.

In our Federal set up, the Legislative branch of the government is required to pass Acts and Laws; the Judiciary is required to interpret the same, while the Executive branch is to execute the enacted Acts and Laws. The Role of the Judiciary apparently seems to be limited to interpretation. Over the years, however, judiciary has assumed significant role, especially in regard to the interpretation of various provisions of the constitution, including the basic structure of the constitution.\(^2\)

Partisan role of Governors came into scrutiny of the judiciary, and through various judgments, the judiciary has been able to limit the discriminatory functions of the Governor by evolving certain parameters for impartial actions. Recently, in 2006, Governor of Bihar, Buta Singh had to resign due to a Court Judgment which exposed the biased role of the Governor. However, the judgment on the famous Bommai case was the landmark judgment, which set the process of institutionalizing the institution of Governors as truly “Constitutional”. Supreme Court, while dealing with the famous Bommai case laid down certain parameters with which the central government has to operate in regard to Article 356.\(^3\)

The role of Judiciary is increasing day by day with regard to safeguarding the federal spirit and structure of our country. In the past the Governors had behaved in a biased way in the formation and governance of the state. Even Central Government had dismissed many state governments suo-moto, on the ground that respective ruling parties in the states have lost popular support. The Governors are expected to behave more judiciously, lest they are held accountable and have to pay the price for it. Buta Singh, then the Governor of Bihar, had to go

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\(^3\) Ibid., P.2.
because of the alleged partisan role in the states. This shows Federalism has come of age and maturity.\textsuperscript{24}

Revoking President’s Rule in Bihar under BJP-led Coalition Government in 1998 has brought the issue of the utility of Article 356 into sharp focus. For, the first time, the checks and balance provided in Art. 356 of the constitution have made it non-operative. Dr. Ambedkar would have been the happiest man on earth if he had been alive today.\textsuperscript{25}

Sometime back, on January 19\textsuperscript{th}, 2000 the central cabinet decided in favour of President’s Rule in Bihar, but President K.R. Narayana became the first Constitutional Head of State to send back for reconsideration a union cabinet recommendation for the imposition of President’s Rule in state of the Indian Union. So, it is opined that the reasons for the imposition of Art. 356 in the Bihar case are not only the periodic report of the Governor of Bihar on the deteriorating law and order situation and the failure of the Constitutional Machinery in Bihar, but also the incidents of Massacre of Dalit at Jehanabad (1999). The observations of judiciary and the reports in the media added a strong basis for the use of Article 356.

One of the more conspicuous and widely used instruments of centre over the states is the provision for President’s Rule under Art. 356. This was meant as a “safety valve” in the political system to prevent an authority vacuum in case of a breakdown of Constitutional Machinery in a particular state. The experience with the working of Article 356 suggests that during the days of one-party dominance, the President’s Rule was used as a device to manage the transitional problem, and a short spell of this was usually effective in restoring stability in the states. Now the use of this emergency device has become more frequent and the critics feel that the centre has used this as a political weapon against the state governments formed by opposition parties. For example, President’s Rule in

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., P.3.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
Tamil Nadu (1976) discovered altogether new and novel dimensions for the application of Article 356 of the Constitution. \textsuperscript{26}

The Communist Party of India also strongly opposed the misuse of Article 356 it held the opinion that Article 356, has been used by central government to destroy the Indian Federal System. The Governor’s office has also been used for the selfish purpose of the centre.

Including all other aspects, as a new dimension emphasis has been given in Article 356 of the Indian Constitution. “That Article 356 a knife, placed in the hands of the centre for use against state government in defense of the constitution now seems to pose a more real threat to the life of the present coalition government.” \textsuperscript{27}

The Communist Party of India views that “Article 356, needs to be suitably amended so that the power of the centre to dismiss state governments based on reports by biased and pliant governors is curtailed.”\textsuperscript{28}

The party was of the opinion that Article 356 represents an undemocratic and totalitarian character of the centre, because it has the power to abridge or even take away the autonomy and internal sovereignty of the functionary has not functioned in the spirit of federalism.

Since the establishment of Indian Federal System, Article 356 has been a key issue in centre-state relations, and it had brought significant impact on Indian Federal System. The Congress Governments fused this Article as an instrument for maintaining their monopoly. It tried to dismiss the Non-Congress governments in several states on the basis of one or the other reasons. This turned our Indian federal system into a Unitarian Model. As aptly pointed out by K.Ranga Rao and M.Ravi Teja, “Article 356 of the constitution has become one of the main factors of tensions between the centre and states. This Article gives special powers to the centre to take the responsibility of the state’s administration

\textsuperscript{26} Fadia, Babulal., \textit{State Politics in India}, Radiant Publishers, New Delhi, 1984, P.165.
\textsuperscript{27} N.Ram., “Article 356, Bommai and Fair Play”, \textit{Frontline}, 17\textsuperscript{th} July, 1998, P.12.
when its machinery is not in a position to work freely according to the constitution."\textsuperscript{29}

**ARTICLE 370:**

The Communist Party of India is in favour of defending, "Article 370, of the constitution in connection with Jammu and Kashmir. It will also rectify the erosion that had taken place in it."\textsuperscript{30}

The Kashmir Valley has seen a spate of attacks in Srinagar and other areas which have targeted both soldiers and civilian population. The spurt in attacks is also accompanied by the efforts to step up infiltration during the summer season, though the scale of this is less than earlier. However, the army was responsible for a serious attack on the civilian population. In a shocking incident in Kupwara, three young boys were killed by the army in the night, mistaking them to be Terrorists. This tragic incident underlines how important it is to prevent such excesses which further add to the alienation of the people.

It is necessary for the central government to immediately initiate talks at the political level with all the parties and forces in Jammu and Kashmir. Such a political dialogue should accompany the Indo-Pakistan talks. Without such a political initiative there can be no improvement in the situation.\textsuperscript{31}

The level of extremist violence has come down sharply in the state after the last assembly election. However, alienation of the people is being expressed through mass protests whenever there are instances of state repression, beginning with the Sophian incident where there have been a series of mass agitations. The separatist forces have been active in mobilizing the people for the protests.

The central government has announced that it is ready to have talks with all shades of political opinion. The Hurriyat led by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq has welcomed the move while Sayyed Geelani has dismissed the offer. The UPA government should come forward with specific proposals for provision of


maximum autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir along with regional autonomy for the three regions. ³²

CPI will work for, “Maximum autonomy for the state of Jammu and Kashmir by maintaining Art. 370 of the constitution and regional autonomy to Jammu and Ladakh regions within this framework, nothing is known about the basis of Advani’s talk with the Hurriyat. Any attempt at trifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir as suggested by the Revolutionary Socialist Party would be a blow to India’s secular character.” ³³

Although the makers of the constitution contemplated strong central government, they also visualized strong states. A strong centre meant that the nation and the national priorities ought to prevail over sub-national /regional loyalties. It is bad, to note, what in fact emerged over the years was not a strong centre but hegemony of the centre and subservient states. It has emerged partly because of the abuse of some provisions in the constitution and partly because of the non-establishment of proper conventions and practices of which all political parties have been responsible. For example, Article 370, of the Indian Constitution provides for limited powers to the central government and grants maximum autonomy to the state of Jammu and Kashmir, in practice, the Article was never applied in its true spirit. The Communist Party of India also felt that giving special status to Jammu and Kashmir is against the territorial integrity of India.

All India Forward Bloc will not allow abrogation of the Article 370. It feels, it is necessary to grant Jammu and Kashmir maximum possible autonomy under the constitution of India. It also believes while working out solution to problems of Jammu and Kashmir all sections of people of the state must be involved to the extent practicable. ³⁴

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³³ Ibid., P.8.
The Congress which came to power immediately after the independence, has witnessed the Kashmir dispute right from its genesis as a ruling party. It has been persistently stating that Kashmir is an integral part of India. Further, the party views that Kashmir issue is purely an integral issue of India and it has to be sorted out by a dialogue. But there should also be the involvement of Kashmiris. In this regard, the Congress opines that, "Jammu and Kashmir is an Integral and inalienable part of the Union of India."35 Further the party holds that it adhered to the spirit of Article 370, that grants special status to Jammu and Kashmir. It is of the opinion that all wills and aspirations of Kashmiris can be protected by respecting the essence of constitutional provisions laid down in Article 370. Hence, in its 1999 Election Manifesto states: "The congress stands committed to respecting Article 370 in letter and spirit."36 The views of Bharatiya Jana Sangh on the issue of Kashmir are radical and revolutionary. Its position is the reflection of its view that the entire problem of Kashmir is the result of the partition of the sub-continent. Its ultimate solution for it is the reunification of India and Pakistan. Hence, it can be opined that the provision of Article 370 is a compensatory provision and the government of India wanted to safeguard the wills and aspirations of the people of Kashmir by granting special status.

The BJP is an ardent proponent of the idea of abrogating the Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. In the opinion of the party, due to domestic disturbances in the state and international pressure from across the border, status of Kashmir is in question. Hence, the only solution to stabilize its status and protect the national security is the abrogation of Article 370. In the 1991 Election Manifesto the party asserts, "The Pakistani-inspired violence against Hindus has caused those Kashmiri’s to become refugees in their own land. The BJP will end all uncertainty about the future status of the deleting Article 370 of the country."37

The CPI criticised the governments both at the centre and in Jammu and Kashmir for not evolving prudent policies for dealing with Kashmir problems.

36 "Indian National Congress Manifesto", Lok Sabha Elections, New Delhi, 1999, P.64.
The party opines that due to the faulty policy formulation by successive governments both at the centre and in Kashmir, the Kashmir problem amplified. It is of the opinion that national endeavour should be made to resolve Kashmir imbroglio. For this a concerted effort should be made by political parties, social groups and individual of the entire nation.

The CPI states: "The present alarming situation in the valley of Kashmir is not a creation of a day. Actually the successive governments, both at the centre and the state have, by their anti-democratic and anti-people policies, alienated large sections of the people of the Kashmir valley. The 16th Congress of the CPI appeals to all secular, democratic and patriotic force in the country to mobilize public opinion in favour of resolving the valley problem of Kashmir through a comprehensive policy." 38

The CPI is in favour of giving more autonomy to the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The party says that it is the only solution to bring the people out of alienation which they are being pushed into due to the long drawn political-economic problems. It expresses "our party holds the view that for this, it is necessary to give maximum autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir, as well as regional autonomy to Jammu and within this framework. For this, the center should open a meaningful dialogue with Kashmiri leaders including the Hurriyat and others." 39

**Communist Party of India's Perception on Governance:**

The Governance is not the main issue in the election manifestos of CPI. It stressed more the welfare of the people than accountability, transparent and responsive government. Unless we improve the quality of governance, welfare measures are meaningless. Its stand on uprooting corruption can be a good move towards achieving effective governance because corruption is one of the worst impediments in achieving democratic governance.

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In the 1991 Election Manifesto, the CPI stressed democratization of socio-economic structure. It claimed: "While firmly adhering to socialism as the goal, the Communist Party of India does not press it as the immediate objective in the present stage of our country’s development. It calls for a thorough democratic restructuring of our entire socio-economic system."\(^{40}\)

It also states, "It requires the speedy implement of comprehensive measures of social justice, including job reservation for OBCs on the lines of Mandal Commission Report, with 27% reservation in central jobs for the OBCs and 10% reservation for the economically weaker sections of the forward castes, and 30% job reservation for women in all categories; land reform in the interest of the landless and poor provision of jobs and reasonable Wages for Urban and Rural Workers".\(^{41}\) In 1996 and 1998 Election Manifesto CPI mainly stressed on economic development, agricultural development, health, social security, defense of rights of SC/ST, women, minorities and other special provisions for Tribals etc.

The 1999 Election Manifesto of CPI stressed more land reforms, economic development, agriculture, rights of the working class, secularism, federalism, national security and for the rights of dalits and tribal people, minorities etc.

The 2004 Election Manifesto of CPI stands for land reforms, health and education programmes, protecting agriculture and small scale sectors, privatization and disinvestments of PSUD, women and child welfare, rights of dalit’s and tribal and minorities.

The 2009 Election Manifesto of CPI stressed alternative path of development. Even while extending outside support to the UPA government, the CPI joined forces with working class, peasants, agricultural workers, employees, youth and students and women who fought glorious battles against disastrous effect of the policies of liberalization, privatization and imperialist globalization.

\(^{41}\) Ibid., P.6.
Communist Party of India, Trade Unions and other Mass Organization
have been putting forward alternate economic policies which are based on
agricultural development, employment-oriented industrial growth, on building our
social and physical infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, roads and
communication, which will ensure access to education and health for all our poor
people. The CPI will strive for the development of our domestic market by putting
money in the pockets of our workers and peasants and our youths, looking for
jobs. This will stimulate the economy, rather than all the bail-outs to the
corporate. The CPI will struggle for these policies both outside and inside
Parliament.42

Echoing the same view, the CPI Election Manifesto also (1957) stated that
in those states, “where the democratic movement is especially strong, the
Communist Party of India will strive to create conditions in which democratic
governments based on a coalition of democratic parties and individual can be
formed.” It reiterated that “the Communist Party of India will do everything in its
power to achieve unity among the left and democratic forces in the coming
elections.”43

The first organized attempt at coalition making began from the very First
General Elections before which the CPI already decided to participate in the
process. The 1951, programme of the party “regards as quite mature, the task of
replacing the present anti-democratic and anti-popular government by a new
government of people’s democracy created on the basis of a coalition of all
democratic anti-feudal and anti-imperialist forces in the country.” 44

In its Election Manifesto 1951, it depicted the Nehru government as “A
Government of National Betrayal”, the “Government of land lords and
monopolists” etc, and called for the replacement of it “by a government of all
democratic parties, groups and individuals representing workers, peasants, middle

42 Communist Party of India, Election Manifesto, General Elections, CPI Publications, New Delhi, 2009,
P.5.
44 Ibid., P.58.
class and the national bourgeoisie, the bourgeoisie that stands for genuine industrialization of the country, and for the freedom and independence of India."45

The Election to the 14th Lok Sabha is very crucial for the future of our country. It will decide the direction in which the country will move in the coming years. The CPI and other Left secular parties solicit support in this poll.

The CPI wants secular parties and forces in the states to reach, as broadly as possible, mutual adjustments and alliances and avoid splitting anti-BJP votes, in order to replace the NDA rule by that of a secular democratic coalition government. Such a coalition obtaining a majority, should agree on a Common Minimum Programme, which will take the country forward from its present state.46

During the five years, the CPI has been in the forefront of the struggles against anti-people, anti-national policies of the Vajapayee government. It joined forces with working class, peasants, and agricultural workers, employees of PSUs and other units, youth, students and women who fought glorious battle against disastrous effects of economic neo-liberalism, the policies of Liberalisation, Privatization and Globalization. It pledges to continue this struggle against the effects and the cause, that is economic and neo-liberalism both inside and outside the Parliament. It proposes an alternative path of development.

CPI, reverses its views about the BJP's deliberate steps to weaken federal structure of the country. Financial resources have been concentrated in the hands of the centre, and states have to stand as supplicants, for 'packages'. Such packages favour some and discriminate against others, there by strangulating them.

The CPI appeals that in addition to election laws in the matter, political parties should refrain from giving tickets to mafia dons, criminals and such like, so as to keep the democratic process free from muscle and money power. Public

45 Ibid.
The CPI appeals to all voters to cast their votes for electing secular and progressive candidates and giving a secular majority in parliament so that a secular coalition government can emerge after the polls. It is not a choice between charismatic leaders, but between policies and programmes that will shape the country’s future. It is with this in view that we call for a much larger and stronger representation of CPI and other Left parties in the Lok Sabha.

The CPI’s strategic perspective is to build a Third Front, so as to avoid the pitfall of a two-party system in the country. But the priority task in the present poll is to defeat the communal fascist BJP and its allies who opportunistically bolster it up.

The CPI’s ultimate goal is socialism, which alone will free our great country and its talented people from exploitation, oppression, inequality social backwardness and injustice.

In between 1928-34, the CPI changed its attitude towards the Congress. It now described the Congress as a “Class organization of the capitalists working against the fundamental interests of the toiling masses of our country.” The Communist Party of India soon realised that the extreme Left and Anti-Congress views entertained by them had practically isolated them from the political life in India which was gathering tremendous force under the leadership of Gandhiji. It now adopted a policy of infiltration into INC. During the Ramagarh Session of the Congress, (1940) the CPI issued new statement of policy and entitled “proletarian path”. It demanded an Indian should “make revolutionary use of the war crisis.”

During the war, there came a change in the attitude of CPI. It is told that as, “blood is thicker than Water, so is Communism, thicker than Nationalism.”

49 Ibid.
Never was this more clearly established than by the complete change in the policy of CPI, when, on 15th December they passed the following resolution.

"We are a practical party and in a new situation, it is our task not only to evolve a new form of struggle for it, but also to advance new slogans..... The key slogan of our party (now) is making the Indian people play a people’s war."\(^{50}\)

The CPI is opposed to the proposal for a review of the constitution. Its intention is to change the basic feature of the constitution which is secular and republican, and to do away with parliamentary system, which appropriately reflects India’s diversity and unity. Absolutely necessary amendments to the constitution can be undertaken when needed through consensus.

The CPI will work for:\(^{51}\)

- Separation of religion and politics.
- Measures for a speedy judicial verdict of Ayodhya Dispute, referring it to the Supreme Court under Art. 138(2).
- Enforcement of the “Protection of places of Worship” (Special Provision Act 1991).
- Protection of the basic rights of religious belief and for practicing one’s religion.
- Stringent punitive action against those fundamentalist organizations and individuals who instigate communal strife.

General Elections for the 11th Lok Sabha are round the corner and the country is flooded with manifestoes. It has been a usual practice that political parties release their manifestoes at the time of General Elections so that electorate are familiar with the policies and programme of the party. Though a wide range of policy matters and programmes used to find a place in the manifestoes, only a few have direct concern to the general public among which education is one such

\(^{50}\) Ibid.

important area. In the present write-up, manifestoes of only five major political parties, namely, Indian National Congress, BJP, CPI and CPI (M), Janata Dal are analysed with particular reference to the above in the mind.

The CPI will strive for:\footnote{Ibid., P.489.}

- Compulsory primary education accompanied by free midday meals, provision of textbooks and other education materials.

- Free and universal education must be guaranteed for all children up to the age of 14 years. The 83\textsuperscript{rd} Constitution amendment making education a basic right should be adopted for children up to the age of 14.

- Free secondary level education to girls.

- Rapid expansion of primary school network and recruitment of primary school teachers to man them.

- Upgrade the salaries of elementary school teachers and provide school equipped with at least minimum facilities.

While fighting against communalization and commercialization of education the CPI will strive for:

- Syllabus and curriculum to inculcate secularism, national unity, scientific temper, and progressive human values.

- Allocation of 10\textpercent \ of union budget and a minimum of 30\textpercent \ of states budget for education, to reach the target of 6\textpercent \ of GDP within five years.

- Support to mass literacy programmes.

- Democratization of the higher education system and development of vocational education.

\footnote{Ibid., P.489.}
DEMAND FOR NEW STATES:

India is a multi-lingual and multi-religious country. It has a diverse society and cultures. In India sub-nationalism plays a prominent role in socio-political processes. Indian society is characterised by regionalism and linguistic chauvinism. All these factors led to a demand for new states.

Since independence, there were several sub-nationalist groups which were active in demanding the creation of new states to preserve their individual identity. The most important movements for creation of new states were the movements for creation of Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand and Jharkhand. These movements manifested in the creation of these new states: Jharkhand carved out of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, out of Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand, out of Uttar Pradesh. “All the newly formed states, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand and Jharkhand represent the fulfillment of the aspiration of the people of these areas, who have been agitating for many years for their cause.”

The Communist Party of India opines that, “CPI will work for the separation of religion from the state, from politics, and negotiations to be conducted with all those groups in the North-East who are advocating separatism while firmly defending the sovereignty and integrity of the Indian union and the territorial integrity of states like Manipur and Assam.”

Communist Party of India believes that the government of India should take initiative for dialogue with the insurgent or militant movements in the north-eastern part of our country without any pre-condition from any side so as to find lasting solution to the problem.

The party firmly believes that constitutional as well as administrative steps shall be taken to form a separate state of Uttarkhand without which its backwardness and neglect cannot be overcome. The CPI, as the first national party to support the demand, shall strive for it in all possible ways.

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53 Deccan Herald, 18th November, 2000, P.3.
54 Ibid., P.7.
Communist Party of India takes note of this reality and is committed to fight for the genuine demands of such regions. The Ruling parties have ignored this. It has led to a demand for separation. This can only be considered on the merits of each case through a commission, and by taking into account the democratic linguistic integrity of the concerned states. The CPI will work for the special packages, and attention to be given to the development of the North-East region, Jammu and Kashmir and other backward states, a step of discrimination against states that are ruled by parties other than those at the centre.  

The CPI plans to vote against the proposed bill on granting statehood to Uttarkhand both in the Uttar Pradesh assembly, and later in Parliament, if it gets passed in the state legislature. The CPI has consistently taken the line that carving out new states on ethnic considerations is not a solution to economic backwardness of a particular region. It has repeatedly criticized the parties which are supporting the demand for a separate Uttarkhand and described their support as politically motivated.

CPI Election Manifesto (2009), states that, "The Foreign Policy of a country is an extension of its domestic, particularly economic, policies. The UPA government that gradually went ahead with its commitment to shamelessly pushing forward the policies of economic neo-liberalism dictated by international Finance capital in the name of Globalization, Liberalization and Privatization, its impact on foreign policy, also became evident."  

The Episode also exposed the BJP, the main opposition in the 14th Lok Sabha. Though it opposed the Indo-US nuclear deal on record, the maximum number of MPs who violated the decision to oppose the deal belonged to it. Actually, BJP never reconciled to the fact that people of the country have rejected its unashamed pursuance of Economic, Neo-liberalism and Pro-imperialist policies while attempting to communalize education and culture.

56 Ibid., P.9.
Actually the Left had also to play the role of opposition in Parliament. The Report issued by the Lok Sabha secretariat after the last session of 14th Lok Sabha on February 26, 2009, confirms that, it was the block of the Left MPs which excelled in every matter, attending the session and participating in the debate on important bills and legislations. The Five years of UPA rule has made two things very clear: first, as far as the country’s economic development is concerned it is the class perception that matters most. Both the UPA and NDA are committed to an economic course pursuance of an economic neo-liberalism that only leads to disaster that we face today.

The Centre-State relations in India have been flooded with numerous issues which have already been discussed due to the currents and cross currents of centre-state relations and the turmoil which the centre-state relations have witnessed. The Indian Federal System has lost its character of centralized federalism.

Finance is a very significant prerequisite of the development of the states. The Constitution of India has devised the Finance of the states in such a manner that the central government has supreme domination in deciding the shares in revenue for the states. The states have very less powers to impose tax and also to spend the collected taxes. So, states have to depend entirely on the centre for grants to assist their development.

Since inception the CPI has been strongly criticising the financial policy of the centre. The party holds that the government’s financial policies are discriminative in nature, which had led to unequal development levels in various states of India.

To resolve centre-state financial crisis, Sarkaria Commission has made certain suggestions, “The Commission has favoured the demand of the states to have more financial resources. The Commission has recommended the inclusion of corporation tax in the divisible pool to case the resource problems of states. The periodical review and the revision or imposition of duties (Article 268) will make available more resources to the states. The Commission recommended an
expert committee with representation from the states for changing the tax structure and financial relations in consonance with the changed circumstance. The Sarkaria Commission also says that the union government should not, as far as possible, deviate from the recommendation of the Finance Commission."

As it claims in 1998 manifesto, "increased allocation of resources to the states in real terms. This, coupled with greater functional autonomy, can go a long way in making states stable, strong and prosperous.

To achieve this end, we will:

- Increase the state’s share of gross proceeds of Central Tax Revenues to 33 per cent.
- Give adequate assistance to the states to lessen the burden imposed by the recommendation of the Fifth Pay Commission.
- Allow states the freedom to raise funds by issuing tax-free bonds.
- Transfer external assistance to states on the same terms and conditions on which it is received from external assistance to states on the same terms and conditions on which it is received from external donor.
- Treat loans against small saving as loans in perpetuity.
- Increase plan assistance to states in real terms."

The Financial relations have to be completely reviewed. If we want to preserve our federal structure a change should be brought through a constitutional amendment to chapter 12th. The states should be assigned more roles in central finance commissions and they should be given grants not on the basis of partisan interest, but on the basis of necessity.

The suggestions of Tenth Finance Commission are very rational to restructure federal fiscal relations. "The Tenth Finance Commission had outlined (chapter XIII of its Report 1994) a scheme of devolution as an alternative to the

59 Ibid.
scheme of centre-state transfers on the non-plan revenue account, which it had recommended in the main body of its report based on existing constitutional provisions. Tax rental arrangements and other principles and practices followed by Finance Commission.  

Centre-State Financial relations have witnessed major changes in the 1990's. After foreign exchange crisis in 1991, the Congress government implemented a new economic policy. This policy brought greater liberalization and new industrial policy; the states were allowed to accept foreign direct investments for the development projects. This facilitated the flow of more resources to states for their development, but this policy proved to be lopsided, because it favoured only a few developed states.

Approach of Communist Party of India (Marxist) towards Centre-State Relations:

Centre-State relations constitute a major component in a federal form of government. The policies of the central government have a major impact on the federal process of a country. Various issues of centre-state relations have played a key role in the federal process of India.

Almost all the political parties give a large content to issues of centre-state relations in their policy and programmes. Since its inception, the CPI (M) has taken critical stand on various issues pertaining to Indian federal system. After analysing, the views of CPI to various issues of Indian federal system. It is quite essential to understand the attitude of the CPI (M) towards centre-state relations in India since 1990.

Unlike the CPI, the CPI (M) has more respect for federal principles in India. Though CPI wanted to convert the Indian polity into a unitary model, the CPI (M) embarked upon strengthening the state governments and bringing a balance of power between centre and states. It wanted to give more autonomy to the states. To help the socio-economic development it did not want to make the

centre dominant, as the balance would tilt towards the centre. The party hoped to preserve the principle of unity in diversity for maintaining peace and prosperity of India. In the 1998 Election Manifesto the CPI (M) declared that it would take the following steps to attain its goal.

"The CPI (M) is a Leftist party committed to the objective of socialism. Even after the decline suffered by the socialist states and the ideology of socialism, the CPI (M) continues to voice its adherence to socialism."\(^{61}\)

For strengthening the democratic system, the CPI (M) advocates: a) the need for fighting the forces of authoritarianism, b) Grant of more fundamental rights to the people, c) Better protection of the fundamental rights, d) Termination of all repressive laws.\(^{62}\)

The CPI (M) stands for: a) A reconstruction of the whole system of centre-state relations in India b) The grant of more powers and autonomy to the states, c) Deletion of Art.356 from the constitution, d) Support of the progressive policies of the leftist governments."\(^{63}\)

For preserving the unity and integrity of the nation, the CPI (M) wants the mobilization of people for opposing the forces of separatism, communalism and secessionism, and for maintaining a strict vigilance over the forces of imperialism, which are trying to weaken the nation.

Regarding the Ram Janmabhoomi vs. Babri Masjid issue, the CPI (M) favours an end to all movements being run by various groups over this issue. The dispute should be resolved either by direct talks or through a decision of the court. Further, a law should be enacted for maintaining the status-quo prevailed on 15\(^{th}\) August 1947, in respect of all religious places.

In respect of the problems of Assam, Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab, the CPI (M) holds that the legitimate demands of the people of these states be accepted. Within the framework of the Indian constitution, the people of these


\(^{62}\) Ibid.

\(^{63}\) Ibid.
states should be ensured their distinct identities, and immediate steps should be initiated for resolving these problems.

The CPI (M)'s urge to secure unity in diversity for a smooth running of the federal process in India is contradictory to some of the principles and ideology of the party.

The CPI (M), as we have already seen, denounces CPI as a gang of revisionists out to pursue their opportunist line of class collaboration. It claims itself as the only party that stands firmly and consistently for socialism. Its policies and programmes cover four important spheres – Constitutional, Political, Economic and Social.

In the Political sphere, it desires to bring about a new form of government called 'People's Democracy'. A proletarian state should be established that allows no room for exploitation. It rejects the idea of parliamentary road to socialism. The judiciary should function as an instrument of people's will. The people should have the right to dispense with the service of the judges who hold up the march of progress. India should follow an independent foreign policy based on opposition to imperialism and support to all freedom struggles. It stands for the policy of peace and friendship with all peace-loving countries, and a firm solidarity with the people of Afro-Asian countries. It reiterates its desire for having good relations with all socialist countries of the world.64

In the Constitutional sphere, it desires to establish a state of People's Democracy led by the working class. That is, it wants a new constitutional system giving no place to the emergency powers of the President. The office of the governors and second chambers in the union and state legislatures should be abolished. It also favours devolution of more powers in favour of the states, equal rights for all citizens, equality of languages and complete control of the state governments over the officers of the Indian Administrative and Indian Police Services.65

65 Ibid.
In the Economic sphere, it desires total liquidation of landlordism, cancellation of debts owed by the peasants, equitable distribution of food to the people of rural and urban areas. It also advocates reduction in defense expenditure, abolition of land tax on all essential items, irrigation cess and surcharges on uneconomic holdings etc. There should be no foreign capital investments in rubber industry, plantation, mining, industry, trade, and big industries should also be nationalized. The Five Year Plan should be substituted by people-oriented economic plans of development.66

After more than sixty five years of independence, the people of India are still not free from the basic problems of poverty, hunger, illiteracy and disease. The social and economic emancipation of millions of Indians remains an unfinished agenda. There can be no real advance towards a more democratic society accompanied by economic and social justice for all citizens without breaking free from the policies pursued by successive governments after independence which have favoured the owners of big capital, landlord and the tiny section of the rich in India. It is only the CPI (M) and the Left parties who present alternative policies which can bring about basic social transformation.

Since the BJP Coalition government was formed after the 1998 elections, the Party had concluded that it was a dangerous situation for the Left and Democratic forces, for secularism and for national unity. It was to meet this situation that the central committee decided that we should make all efforts to defeat the BJP government in the confidence motion in March 1998 when the government was formed, and to support an alternative government led by the congress from outside.

This was spelt out by the April 1998 Central Committee meeting, when it stated, “No question arises of having any front or alliance with the Congress. But in order to prevent the BJP from consolidating its hold over state power, and the infiltration of the administration that it seeks to do, we had decided to support the Congress, if and when the situation arises, from outside.” 67

66 Ibid., P. 442.
Again in July 1998, when Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalitha threatened to withdraw support to the Vajapayee government and the issue of an alternative government came to the force, the Central Committee stated: “Our Party indicated that in the eventuality of the downfall of the Vajpayee Government, there has to be a secular alternative government as Mid-term elections cannot be thought of immediately. In such a situation, we re-treated the stand taken at the time of the confidence vote, that we would extend support from outside to the formation of a Congress-led government in the framework spelt out in the last Central Committee Report.”68

Referring to this July Central Committee stand, the organizational report of the recently concluded XVI Party Congress, states:—“Underling the stand was the understanding that we would not enter into any alliance with the Congress, but have an approach of issue-based support to the Congress Government from outside.”69

While supporting a Congress alternative government from outside, our Party should also strive to get all other allies of the erstwhile United Front to adopt a similar position which would help us to rebuild and strengthen the third alternative in the coming days.70

The struggle for such alternative policies is part of the basic platform of the CPI (M). In the present elections, the party wishes to set forth a set of policies which is relevant for the advance to a new India.

One of the main goals of CPI (M) is to promote secular values:71

• The CPI (M) stands for the separation of religion and politics and necessary legislative measure to firm up this separation.

• Enforce the Protection of Places of Worship Act to prevent raising of disputes on religious places.

68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid., P.4.
• The Ayodhya Dispute should be decided by the judicial process. The final judicial verdict should be accepted by all.

Its purpose has been to strengthen federalism:\(^72\)

The CPI (M) advocates greater powers for the states in the economic and political spheres, institutionalising the federal system through the Inter-State Council and empowering the National Development Council with sufficient powers.

• Constitutional amendments for devolving more powers in the economic, fiscal and administrative areas; decentralization of powers to the district bodies and panchayats; ensuring local participation in formulation of plans and projects.

• Replacing Article 356 with suitable provisions so that the draconian powers of the centre to dismiss state governments are curbed.

• Maximum autonomy for the state of Jammu and Kashmir to be provided for within the ambit of Article 370 of the constitution; regional autonomy to be provided to Jammu and Ladakh regions.

• Special provision for the development of the north-eastern region with employment opportunities.

• Reversing the process of central dictates on developing finances to the state by imposing conditionality to pursue the central government’s economic policy directives.

**CPI (M) on Article 370:**

Indian Political parties have expressed unanimous views regarding the significance of Kashmir issue in the realm of Indo-Pakistan relations. They accept the centrality of the issue among the various contentious bilateral issues enveloping Indo-Pakistan relations. But they differ in their views regarding the

\(^72\) Ibid.
means to solve Kashmir issue and they have often indulged in criticising each other’s policy towards Kashmir when they are in office.

The constitution has already envisaged asymmetric relations with the states by providing special status for Jammu and Kashmir and the North-Eastern states under Article 370 and 371, respectively. And there is no doubt that Jammu and Kashmir historically and constitutionally has had a distinct relationship with the union, different from all other states.

If we set the Kashmir problem aside, there are only a few problem areas in centre-state political relations that need to be discussed. In the nineties political debate has been dominated by inter-community conflicts of religion and caste, militancy or insurgency in northern states and deteriorating governance in every region. With the increasing fragmentation of political parties -regional as well as national party many states and the centre as well have come to be ruled by minority governments and coalitions, often short-lived. In this situation, although regional parties continue routinely to call for ‘greater federalism’ and the national parties have reluctantly come to support the idea, it is never elaborated, and the matter is obviously not of any immediate political concern.73

As aptly pointed by Chandra Pal, “The solution to the problem of the centre-state tensions lies in co-operative federalism, and that calls for a continual consultation between the centre and states.”74

Demand for greater state autonomy has witnessed a new dimension. Recently, the Jammu and Kashmir government started demanding greater state autonomy. To Jammu and Kashmir, the government also set up a committee to probe into the feasibility of revoking pre-1953 status to Jammu and Kashmir. The report submitted by the Jammu and Kashmir autonomy committee was placed in the Kashmir assembly for discussion “at the end of five day debate the state assembly of Jammu and Kashmir on June 26th, 2000 approved a resolution of the

National Conference government to implement state autonomy, endorsing a report by a state committee. The Resolution was opposed by legislators from both the BJP which dominated the federal government and the opposition Congress (I) party, but the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference held some two-thirds of the seats in the assembly. This plan proposed that Kashmir revert to the special status it held between 1947 and 1953, when the state enjoyed complete autonomy, except in matters of defence, foreign relations and communications.75

"Demanding that Article 370 should be replaced, the CPI (M) party said it had not only been a psychological barrier between the people of Kashmir and the rest of the country but had also encouraged divisive forces in other parts of the country to demand a special status on the basis of the religion or region."76

The party is of the opinion that Article 370 represents a psychological hurdle between the people of Kashmir and rest of India, and it infuses a sense of division in the minds of Indian citizens in the name of religion. The party holds that Article 370 is a hindrance to union-state relations. The preferential treatment given to Jammu and Kashmir in Article 370 wills demoralize other states. This is a serious threat to federal process in India and it is a danger to union-state relations.

Further the Congress party holds that it is adhered to the spirit of Article 370 that grants special status to Jammu and Kashmir. It is of the opinion that the wills and aspirations of Kashmiris can be protected by respecting the essence of constitutional provisions laid down in Article 370. Hence, in its 1999 Election Manifesto states, "the Congress stands committed to respecting Article 370 in letter and spirit."77

The Congress criticizes the opposition for raising the issue of Article 370. It apprehends that raising the issue of Article 370, the opposition seeks to gain a political mileage by misguiding the people of Kashmir. The Congress expresses

75 Keesings Record World Events, New Digest, Vol. 46(6), June, 2000, P.43625.
77 Indian National Congress Manifesto, Lok Sabha, General Elections, INC Publication, New Delhi, 1999, P.64.
its solemn resolve to bring a pacific settlement to Kashmir issue. In doing this, the party states that it will not accede to any populist demands for the revision or abrogation of provisions laid down under Article 370.

The successive central governments have failed to fulfill the demand for a more federal structure; even the Sarkaria Commission Report has been ignored. The BJP is a party which has never subscribed to the concept of state's autonomy. The CPI (M) rejects the contention which equates autonomy with separatism. Elaborating the stand on this, CPI (M) Politbureau said that all democratic political forces are committed to Federalism. Waiting the case of Jammu and Kashmir Politbureau said, the demand for autonomy has a specific background Jammu and Kashmir has a special status given the circumstances of the accession of the state to the Indian union. It is the fact over the year governments at the centre have eroded and whittled away the scope and content of autonomy within the ambit of Article 370. There is a recognition of this fact in the Indira Gandhi - Sheikh Abdullah Accord of 1975.78

The CPI (M) does not subscribe to the scope of autonomy as defined in the resolution adopted by the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly which is going back to the pre-1953 status. However, the reality is that even within the ambit of Article 370, there has been a steady erosion of the rights of Jammu and Kashmir.

While CPI (M) stands for greater autonomy within the scope of Article 370 of the constitution, it also advocates regional autonomy for Jammu and Ladakh within the state. The National Conference must realise the harm that has been done by allying with a Communal Party like the BJP which negates Article 370.79

The Politbureau of the CPI (M) opined that the question of more autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir must be taken up seriously by the Vajpayee government and it must take steps to address the demand and consult all political parties on the matter.

79 Ibid.
The Communist Party of India (Marxist) condemned the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani’s “provocative” statement ruling out any discussion on the question of autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir.

It said the country was keen to allay the fears of the Kashmiri people and fulfill the promises on which the state acceded to India. Article 370 of the constitution, it said, was specifically drafted for the purpose.

The BJP has expressed very radical views on the issue of Kashmir. As an opposition party, it condemned the Indian government for not devising a prudent policy towards Kashmir. It viewed that the policies of Congress government did not give a proper need to the internal problems, pertaining to the socio-economic and political development of the state. The BJP held: “The absence of political far-sightedness and clarity of national objectives has resulted in our nation continuing to have to pay a price even fifty years after Jammu and Kashmir became a part of the republic.”

The BJP is against giving more autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir. In view of the party, if greater autonomy is granted to the state, it will lead to the strengthening of anti-democratic fundamentalist forces, which is detrimental to the vital security interests of the nation. It will create more socio-political instability in the state. The party is critical of those groups who argue Jagmohan viewed; “Today, the whole continent is being swept by the waves of fundamentalism. New philosophy, new ideology has come and the people’s minds have changed, their attitudes have changed. How do you meet the onslaught of these forces?”

The CPI (M) General Secretary, Mr. Harkishan Singh Surjeet told a correspondent that over the years, the provisions of this Article have been under continuous erosion and this had led to dissatisfaction amongst the people of the state. The extremist forces and India’s enemies had exploited the mood, he added. “The question of autonomy to Kashmir cannot be clubbed with the issue of

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81 Ibid., P.38.
centre-state relations and giving greater powers to the states within India’s federal constitution. The special status to Kashmir must be accepted. Any attempt to try and negate this will only fuel greater dissatisfaction and bolster extremist activities,” he said.82

Mr. Surjeet charged that at a time when Pakistan was “fully encouraging extremist activities” in Jammu and Kashmir, Mr. Advani’s statement would bolster such activities. The party demanded that the centre engage in wide-ranging consultations on greater autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir, and ensure the implementation of the provisions of Article 370.

Mr. Surjeet said that when Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao was the Prime Minister, on a question of granting autonomy, he had stated that “sky is the limit.”83 Even the Sheikh Abdullah-Indira Gandhi accord of 1975 recognized the erosion of the implementation of provisions under Article 370 and made a commitment to correct them.

The Politbureau of the CPI (M) has issued the following statement: The issue of autonomy and more rights for the states has been a predominant concern for all democratic forces that are committed to federalism. The CPI (M) has consistently maintained that more rights should be accorded to the states and a unitary system will not be able to strengthen Indian unity.84

For more than three decades, the demand for states autonomy has been raised by several political parties. In the 1980’s, the Sarkaria Commission on centre-state relations was setup to go into the question. There have been many proposals for devolving more powers to the states by various state governments and political parties including the CPI (M). The successive central governments have failed to fulfill the demand for a more federal structure. Even the Sarkaria Commission Report has been ignored. The BJP is a party which has never subscribed to the concept of state’s autonomy. The CPI (M) rejects the contention which equates autonomy with separatism.

83 The Hindu, 5th July, 2000, P.11.
84 Ibid.
The CPI (M) does not subscribe to the scope of autonomy as defined in the resolution adopted by the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly which is going back to the pre-1953 status. Over the decades, the developments in the political system and the political administrative structure in the country has warranted certain changes which are justified. It is not possible to accept the definition of autonomy which assigns the centre only external affairs, defence and communications. However, the reality is that even within the ambit of Art. 370, there has been a steady erosion of the rights of Jammu and Kashmir. While the CPI (M) stands for greater autonomy within the scope of Art.370 of the constitution, it also advocates regional autonomy for Jammu and Ladakh within the states. The National Conference must realize the harm that has been done by allying with a Communist Party like the BJP which negates Art.370.

The Politbureau of the CPI (M) is of the firm opinion that the question of more autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir must be taken up seriously. The Vajapayee government could not evade the issue. It must take steps to address the demand and consult all political parties on the matter.

The CPI (M) has criticized the congress government for not taking adequate political initiatives to resolve Kashmir entanglement. Due to this, the CPI (M) considers that alienation among the Kashmiris has increased. Condemning the Congress the CPI (M) said “The CPI(M) has criticized the Congress for not devising sagacious policy to counter terrorist activities. The party states that because of Congress government's improper policies and measures to tackle the problem of terrorism, the problem has aggravated, leading to the increase in the suffering of Kashmiris.”

The CPI (M) is criticizing the BJP led coalition government for internationalising Kashmir issue. The Party argues that some pro capitalist elements in the top political circles have paved a way for the US to play its meddling game in connivance with Pakistan in order to worsen Kashmir situation. The party blames the BJP government's importance to resist US pressures. According to the CPI (M) this attitude of the BJP led Coalition government was
clearly highlighted in the Kargil Conflict, "The BJP led government appealed to
the US to intervene to resolve the conflict. This opened the way for American
intervention and internationalising the Kashmir issue, because Pakistan has
already fanned the intrusion in order to focus on the Kashmir issue."  

In Jammu and Kashmir, contrary to the general opinion that polling would
be badly affected by the call of separatist forces, the overall percentage of polling
was 62 percent in the entire state. In the valley, even in the areas where the
separatist influences was strong, polling was better than the last election. The
large participation by the people has given credibility to the democratic process.
The National Conferences emerged as single largest party winning 28 seats. The
PDP won 22, the Congress 17, the BJP 11, Jammu and Kashmir Partner Party 3,
CPI(M) 1 and others 3 seats. The Party had contested in seven seats supported one
independent.  

The successful holding of the elections should not be interpreted as a
negation of the Kashmir Issue. The alienation of the people still exits, and unless
concrete steps are taken for a political settlement revolving around the provision
of maximum autonomy, the problem cannot be solved by administrative and
security masters. The national conference has a stand for maximum autonomy.
The Congress party should realise that without provision of maximum autonomy
for the state and autonomy for the regions, a durable settlement cannot be arrived
at.  

Prior to that, the Central government as to the Farooq Abdullah
government announced that Arun Jaitley, one of the General Secretaries of the
BJP, is being empowered to hold talks with the state government and others
concerned regarding "devolution of powers" to the state. The official
announcement scrupulously avoided using the term autonomy. This is in keeping
with the stand of the BJP which is opposed to giving autonomy for Jammu and

86 "Report on Current Development at meetings of the Central Committee," CPI (M) Publication, January,
87 "Report on Political Developments, adopted by the Central Committee", CPI (M) Publication, 25th
October, New Delhi, 2009, P.14.
Kashmir under Article 370 of the Constitution. The Arun Jaitley mission was meant to provide the National Conference with a plank to say that due to its fight for autonomy the centre has now decided to discuss the issue. This step is not taken seriously by anyone in Jammu and Kashmir, and is obviously seen as a maneuver.88

Our Party will be participating in the elections, notwithstanding the difficult conditions. The Party will contest in some seats where it has maintained its links with the people and has been taking up their problems continuously. We cannot have an understanding with the National Conference, unlike the last time, as it has joined hands with the BJP and the NDA, and due to its record of misrule. Our Party will oppose the fundamentalist, extremist forces and advocate a peaceful and democratic settlement based on provision of maximum autonomy.89

Vajpayee government, after seeking US intervention in its confrontation with Pakistan after the December 2001 attack on Parliament, is now facing continued pressure from the Bush administration. Further, the United States put pressure on Gen. Pervez Musharaf to halt the infiltration of the extremists across the border, and got a commitment from him that he would check it. The Americans are putting pressure on the Vajpayee government to hold elections by widening the participation by involving the separatist groups. It is in this light that the last minute clumsy efforts made by the Vajpayee government to have some talks with the Hurriyat and the Separatist groups must be seen. The BJP’s basic stand denies autonomy for Kashmir under Article 370. With this approach, there is no scope for any meaningful political settlement which can help to rally the Kashmiri people and isolate the fundamentalist pro-Pakistan elements.90

An analysis of the attitude of Communist Parties towards Kashmir issue indicates that the approach of both the parties is almost similar to each other. The position of both the parties depends upon two significant aspects: Firstly, they are

88 “Communist Party of India (Marxist), adopted by the Central Committee”, CPI(M) Publication, 28* August, New Delhi, 2002, P.9
89 Ibid., P.10.
90 Ibid.
vociferous in criticising the policies of various governments towards Kashmir. The parties share the common view that due to faulty policy formulations by the government at the center and the various governments in Jammu, the Kashmir problems were aggravated. The Communist parties have viewed that the American has pursued imperial designs in Kashmir. Finally, it may be opined here that the view of the Left parties in India regarding the issue of Kashmir is primarily guided by their ideological consideration and hence both the prominent left parties are great critics of American role in the affairs of Indo-Pakistan relations, especially with reference to the Kashmir problems.

The state has witnessed a substantial reduction in violence perpetrated by the militants and extremists. However, this has not led to any reduction in the alienation of the people in the valley towards the Indian State. The mass protests which took place in the summer months of 2010 resulted in the deaths of 120 young men and teenagers. These youth, who were protesting by pelting stones at the security forces, were brutally gunned down. Stationing of the army in large numbers and the oppressive security apparatus is a constant source of irritation and anger for the people. The central government, as is its wont, has not acted upon the assurances which it gave in the aftermath of the mass protests.91

The Party should advocate the political steps required as spelt out in the resolution on Jammu & Kashmir adopted by the central committee in its November 2010 meeting, and mobilize the democratic and secular forces in the country to see that a political solution is found for the long standing problem of Jammu & Kashmir.

Use of Article 356:

The Federal System of India has been devised in such a manner that the centre has got preponderance over the states. India reflects the qualities of a unitary system, because the union possesses more powers than states. So, India is called a centralized federalism. One of the most distinguishing characters of

Indian constitution, which makes Indian federal system more Unitarian, is the presence of emergency power in the hands of the centre. Part 18th of the Indian constitution deals with nine unique Articles, which provide for emergency powers of President, Article 352 to 360, deal with three kinds of emergencies, Article 352 deals with National Emergency, Art. 356 deals with State Emergency and Article 360 deals with Financial Emergency.

Since the inception of Indian constitution, the central government has invoked Article 356 a number of times. But this Article has not been used in its real spirit, because, the ruling party had a biased outlook in using Article 356, and the ruling parties have made it a partisan issue. "That the ruling parties at the centre, be it Congress or Janata, misused the Article for the source of narrow and immediate partisan gains is undoubtedly true."92 The CPI (M) has voiced a strong protest against misuse of Article 356 since its inception. The party is of the opinion that Article 356 has been used in an unconstitutional manner.

Article 356 provides for imposition of Presidential Rule in states. The Article says that if there is a breakdown in the constitutional machinery in the states, the centre has power to impose partial emergency, that is to keep the state government suspended and transfer the powers to the Governor, who is under the supervision of the President or impose full emergency, that is, dismiss the state government, and bestow power in the hands of President. So, this means that whenever there is any reason which will make the central government think that government at the state concerned has failed to function in a constitutional way, then the centre will invoke Article 356.

Siwach, in his article, aptly described how Article 356 was used frequently by the centre for its partisan interests.93

Firstly, the centre dismissed the state governments keeping in view the party interest. The State governments have been dismissed so far under this Article 356, when they not only had majority but were also prepared to prove the
majority on the floor of the house at a very short notice. For example, Gian Singh Rarewale in PEPSU (1953), Namboodripad in Kerala (1959), Rao Birendra Singh in Haryana (1967), and J.N. Hazarika in Assam (1979). All of them which were dismissed were the non-Congress (I) governments.

Secondly, opposition was not given a chance to form the government on the plea that stable government is not possible. This happened when the electoral verdict was indecisive, but the combination of the opposition parties was prepared to form the government and prove its majority on the floor of the House even when it proved its majority in the Raj Bhavan when the Governor made his assessment. This happened in Kerala in 1965 and in Rajasathan in 1957.

Thirdly, after the defeat of ministry on the floor of the House, opposition was not allowed to form the government. Ordinarily, in a Parliamentary democracy, whenever the Ministry resigns after its defeat on the floor of the House, the opposition is given a chance to form the government but this has not been done in some cases in the states on the ground that a stable government was not possible, and the Assemblies were dissolved. For example- Andhra Pradesh 1954, Assam 1981.

Since the adoption of constitution, Article 356 has become an intensely controversial issue, a plaything in the hands of political parties and a manifestation of anarchy at the supreme level. The number of times for which the Article 356 is used indicates the extent to which it is mishandled.

As aptly pointed out by K. Ranga Rao, and M. Ravi Teja, "Article 356 of the constitution has become one of the main factors of tensions between the centre and the states. This Article gives special powers to take the responsibility of the state's administration, when its machinery is not in a position to work freely according to the constitution."94

A structural change has occurred in the use of Article 356 by the central government. In the 1990's we do not find government misusing Article 356

merely to dismiss the state governments run by the different parties. Because, now we are living in the age of coalition politics. The one-party dominant system has paved a way for a multi-party coalition government wherein the regional parties play a dominant role in the central government. As the centre has to be run with the help of regional governments who also have the regions of power in the states. The centre will not dare to dismiss any state government by the use of Article 356, because there lays the question of survival. So, centre-state relations are managed on a bargaining spirit that is, given and take. That is why we find a gradual decline in the imposition of Presidential Rule in the 1990’s.

Article 356 was used by the ruling party at the centre to suspend or dismiss state governments, which were having divergent viewpoint with the centre. Because, if the state governments did not belong to the party ruling at the centre, then the central government tended to show a step-motherly treatment towards those states.

The BJP-led government faced a real challenge in the Bihar issue after reports of violence and disturbances were received from West Bengal and Bihar. The government sent a team of experts to review the situation. The opposition parties severely condemned this act of the government and questioned the power of the government to send such fact-finding teams, and the opposition also questioned the validity of the report given by the fact-finding teams.

Despite all this, after seeking the report, the cabinet recommended invoking of Article 356 in Bihar and to dismissing of the Rabri Devi government. But when this matter was sent to the President K.R. Narayanan, he turned down the union cabinet’s recommendations to impose President’s Rule in Bihar on the ground that the “constitutional machinery in the state has not broken down.” the President asked the cabinet to consider its decision. The cabinet on 22nd September 1998 had recommended that RJD government in the state be dismissed and Assembly be put under “suspended animation”. In his communication to the government, the President alluded to the Rabri Devi government proving majority in the assembly on the eve of the Cabinet’s recommendation, and noted that in the
circumstances, any dismissal of her ministry would be "constitutionally untenable".95

Prakash Karat, Politbureau member of the CPI (M), states that by its very nature, Article 356 of the constitution lent itself to immense misuse. Hence, he says, the CPI (M) is of the view that it should be replaced in a suitable manner.

In most of the cases, the use of Article 356 has been undemocratic and unjustified. The most reprehensible aspect of the provision is that there is no redress. The only thing since 1994, that is, after the Bommai Judgment, is that it has been made open to judicial scrutiny. The significance of the Bommai Judgment is that it has laid down certain parameters for the use of Article 356. It pointed out that Article 356 is not meant to be used by the ruling party at the centre to settle scores with political rivals. It has tried to put limits on the draconian provision as such judicial intervention has contributed to 'checking' misuse; but it cannot 'eliminate' misuse.96

The real solution is to amend the constitution suitably to replace Article 356. There is no doubt that Article 356 in the present form cannot continue. Prakash Karat further said that, we have been proposing in various forums that the constitutional provision be so amended that a state government can be removed only in the case of a grave threat to national unity arising from the action of the state government or a separatist movement by that government. This is our position after the experience of December 6th, 1992, when the BJP state governments did pose a threat to national unity. Many political parties think that the use of Article 356 to suit their own interests is all right. What we are saying is a more basic thing -get rid of this Article in the present form and amend it suitably to solve the problem of its misuse.

Article 356 of the constitution, the circumstances, if any, in which it should be applied and safeguards against its misuse continues to be the most contentious issue in the centre-state relations. Formally, the problems associated with Article

356 are before the Inter-State Council for Resolution. Meanwhile it is not without irony that leaders of some political parties who in the past have been vocal in demanding the abolition of Article 356 on coming to share power at the centre have been urging the use of this power to remove governments of rival parties in the states. Actually the issues surrounding Article 356 have been satisfactorily resolved over the last decade.  

First, as to whether there is any need at all for this power. The acute phase of militancy in the Punjab, several occasions of collapsing governments in the North-East, and the collusion of the UP government in the destruction of the Babri Masjid with all India repercussions were all instances where the imposition of President’s Rule, removing elected state administrations from office, was clearly necessary.

The commission’s observations had no impact on political behaviour till the Supreme Court’s historic decision in the Bommai case imposed a constitutional restraint on the misuse of Article 356. The decision made Presidential orders imposing Article 356 subject to substantive judicial review, requiring the central government to reveal to the superior courts the precise reasons why a state government was being dismissed; the courts could then consider whether, in fact, the constitutional government had broken down.

The CPI (M) will not oppose central intervention in defence of democracy and against “authoritarianism” of the state government. Mr. Varadarajan, state CPI(M) Committee Secretary, who took part in a human chain campaign launched by the opposition parties said, it was the allowed party stand that the centre should not interfere with the state’s affairs in view of the fact that more than eighty state governments had been sacked during the last 56 years. The party also favoured the safeguarding of the state’s rights. However, in the prevailing situation, the party favoured retention of Article 356 in the constitution but with adequate safeguards, such as invoking the provision with a two-third majority in Parliament.

Mr. Varadarajan said the human chain was link in the continuing struggle against the government’s political and economic policies. The party favoured strengthening opposition unity for defending democracy, even while opposing the “anti-people” policies of the National Democratic Alliance government led by the BJP at the centre.  

CPI (M) holds that Article 356 should be used when there is a total breakdown of the constitutional machinery in the state and only if the centre gets an authentic information about it. As expressed by opposition leader L.K. Advani in the Lok Sabha, “unless there was a total breakdown of law and order, imposition of President’s Rule could not be justified.”

The party has always blamed the Congress for the misuse of Article 356. The party holds that Congress used Article 356 as a weapon against its opposition parties. The Congress also used Article 356 even to topple state governments of Congress if they opposed the centre.

Speaking in the same tone, “The Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajapayee accused, the Congress (I) at not respecting federalism and said it had ‘misused’ Article 356 over 100 times to oust elected governments.”

The BJP wishes to change the nature of Article 356, by changing the modality of using it. The party wants to bring in the President’s Rule in the use of Article 356. The party wishes to implement the recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission for this purpose.

CPI (M) holds that, “Replacing Article 356 with suitable provisions so that the draconian powers of the centre to dismiss state governments are curbed.”

An analysis of the CPI (M) approach to Article 356 depicts that as opposition party the CPI (M) had an extremist view about the Article. And after coming to power it continued the same tendency. The CPI (M), both in opposition and government is critical about the misuse of Article 356. When it came to

100 The Hindu, 1st September, 1999, P.1.
power it made strenuous attempts to bring sanctity to the use of Article 356. So some degree of consistency can be seen in CPI (M)'s view on this issue.

Appointment of Governors:

To begin with B. L. Fadia, "The role of the Governor has emerged as one of the key issues in union-state relations." The post of Governor occupies a prominent position in Indian Federal System. He is regarded as a federal officer, who plays a key role in managing the centre-state relations. He acts as a channel of communication between the centre and states. But in course of time, Governor has not merely remained a channel of communication between centre and states, but, by virtue of his being the agent of centre and state, has completely subverted the position of an agent of the centre, without having responsibility to the states. This has led to an intense controversy between the centre and states.

As aptly pointed out by Sandeep Shastri, "Over the last three decades, tensions in centre-state relations have more often than not, been in some way or the other linked to the office of the Governor."103

Indian Constitution provides that the Governor shall be appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal vide Article 156, but the state governments have misinterpreted this Article, and have said that the formal consent of the Chief Minister of the state is required to appoint the Governor. This was the convention prevailing at the time of Nehru and Lalbahadur Shastri, but later, government at the centre has displayed a hegemonistic attitude in selection of Governors. The centre has tended to appoint the party men to the post of governors without keeping in mind the requirements of the states.

The centre has also used the post of Governor as an agent to blunt the edge of the authority of state governments, especially by the medium of imposition of Article 356, that is President's Rule. All these developments have had a serious

bearing on the Indian Federal System and a Governor, who has to be a federal functionary, has subverted to be a mere camp follower of the centre.

As observed by Sandeep Shastri, "The Sarkaria Commission has suggested that the following criteria should be born in mind while appointing Governors;- a) They should be eminent in some walks of life, b) must be from outside the states, c) Not too intimately connected with local politicians, d) Not actively involved in politics especially in the recent past. A strict adherence to these norms would go a long way in restoring the credibility of the Governor’s office."104

According to S.K. Jain, "The role of the Governor is perhaps the major irritant between the centre and the states. The partisan role of the Governor has created a major controversy and conflict between the centre and the states (especially with the opposition ruled states) with the latter even demanding abolition of this constitutional provision."105

"Governors in all states were asked to tender their resignations, to enable the centre to replace some of them. The President R. Venkataraman sent on January 14th, 1990 a communication to the governors after the Home Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed had apprised him of the new government’s intention to change governors in about half-a-dozen states. The Home Minister told the President that these governors were not in tune with the changed political scenario following the Congress’ defeat in the Lok Sabha Elections.106

In centre-state relations, the role of the governor has emerged as the key issue which has strong political implications. The Governor, who is supposed to be the link between the centre and the state, is looked upon as a ‘Spy’ or an ‘Agent’ of the centre by some states. The conflicts arise mainly in the sphere of the exercise of discretionary power by the governor and his role in the ministry making and recommending President’s rule."107

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104 Ibid., P.9.
An assessment of this event shows that the centre shows partisan considerations while appointing Governors. The Janata Dal government asked all the governors to resign, because they were appointed by the Congress government. The Sarkaria Commission has made various recommendations to make the Governor's office more impartial. "Only eminent persons, who are not active politicians, should be appointed as governors. The appointment should be made in consultation with Chief Minister of the state concerned, the speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Vice President of India. The Governor should test the claim of majority by leaders for the appointment of a Chief Minister on the floor of the assembly. Rival claims should also be tested on the floor of the House. It will save the governor from embarrassment and error or judgment. The Governor, while sending reports to the President, should take the Chief Minister into confidence, unless there are overriding reasons to the contrary." However, government has not yet implemented the recommendations of Sarkaria Commission.

It is a historical record that the Congress party, which was dominant, did not like the idea of Non-Congress parties holding office in states and it made attempts of preventing such parties from coming to power or managed to bring about their removal from office after they came to power. It is the ambition of every party to hold power at the centre and in as many states as possible, unless it happens to be a purely regional party. In an atmosphere like this it is natural for the party in power at the centre to bring pressure on the Governor to exercise his discretionary power in a way that suits its interests. He yields to such pressures because he holds his office during the pleasure of the President, which means that party in power at the Centre.

In this way the centre is, on occasions, able to use him as its instrument in setting up of a state a government over which it can dominate or remove from office when proves hostile. Such a use of his discretionary power results in the

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erosion of state autonomy of a state tends to be carried on not in accordance with
the wishes of the local electorate but of the party in power at the centre.

With the advent of Multi-party Coalition Governments, the role and
position of Governor has undergone qualitative changes. Under the One-Party
dominant system of Congress, the Governor was a mere tool in the hands of the
centre. He was a link between the centre and the states, and was over shadowed
by the hegemony, but lately due to the increased participation of the regional
parties in central government, the state governments are now commanding greater
influence over the governor. The Governor now has become more active. But
sometimes due to situational compulsions, the governor may act in a wrong
direction and the centre’s intervention will become very important.

If we observe the case of Tamil Nadu, the state Governor Fatima Beevi,
appointed Jayalalitha as the state Chief Minister, because Jayalalitha’s party
AIADMK grabbed absolute majority and she was nominated as the leader of the
government. So, Fatima Beevi had to invite her to form the government. Since
then a great constitutional crisis rose over the selection of Jayalalitha as Tamil
Nadu Chief Minister, because the constitution has a provision that the person who
is the leader of the part which commands majority in the lower house, he or she
can become the Chief Minister, even though if he or she is not the member of the
house, subject to the condition that he or she should be elected to any house
within six month. On this provision, Fathima Beevi had to invite Jayalalitha to
form the government. But Jayalalitha was facing charges of corruption and she
was under trial, so the governor of Tamil Nadu had to face severe criticism ,and
this cost her the post of governorship.

The other main agenda taken up by the council was the role of the
Governor. The Governor has been used as the agent of the centre, and repeatedly,
Governors have acted against elected state governments and the legislature,
throwing democratic norms to the wind. The use of Article 356 is only the worst
manifestation of these arbitrary powers vested with the Governor as a
representative of the centre. As against this, in tune with a genuinely federal set
up, the Left-led governments have been arguing for a basic change in the nature of the post.

The Chief Minister of West Bengal, Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, reiterated a proposal, first mooted in the council by Jyoti Basu that the Governor should be appointed by the President from a panel of three eminent persons suggested by the state Chief Minister. The constitution should be suitably amended for this. The Sarkaria Commission had recommended that the state Chief Minister should be consulted about the person appointed as Governor and the procedure of consultation should be prescribed in the constitution.\(^{110}\)

Whether it is the earlier Congress governments or the present BJP-led government, they have been appointing Governor to serve the political interests of the ruling party or coalition at the centre. The Congress had made it a practice to put in cashed-out Congress politicians as Governors in the states. Vajapayee government had appointed a senior, RSS-BJP leader, Sundar Singh Bhandari as the Governor of Bihar to facilitate the toppling of the RJD government.

In present dispensation under the constitution, the Governor is seen as a representative of the union government. The CPI (M) would like the Governor to represent the interest of the state too. The process of “consultation” would be a mere formality as it does not mean concurrence of the state government.

The other recommendations accepted by the Inter-State Council pertain to prevention of arbitrary action and misuse of the post of Governor, especially on the question of the Governor’s powers to appoint the Chief Minister. The Council accepted that where there is no absolute majority, the Governor should call the leader of the largest party or group of parties to form the government. It should be mandatory to seek a vote of confidence within thirty days and the claims of majority strength cannot be decided by the Governor outside the Legislative Assembly. The decision that Governor, after retirement, should not take up any public office or private appointment, and on retirement should be given a pension should also be enforced.

The CPI (M) holds that the governor’s office has been misused by the previous governments, specially the Congress. According to the party, the previous governments have used the Governor’s office to impose their will upon the state governments. The party feels that the appointment of Governors has not taken place in an impartial manner.

The Governor, as an appointee of the President, has come to be looked upon as chief instrument of centre’s alleged conspiracy to topple the Non-Congress governments, in the state. The state governments, ruled by the Non-Congress parties just after the Fourth General Elections, felt that the gubernatorial offices were being filled by the Union Government with leaders of the Congress party who had been defeated in the polls and that the ruling party at the centre was utilising them to topple United Front Government and to promulgate President’s Rule.

In West Bengal, the Governor dismissed the Ajoy Mukherjee ministry in November 1967 because he had an idea that the Chief Minister did not enjoy majority support in the Assembly. After dismissing the United Front government, the Governor appointed a new Chief Minister. It was questioned whether the inclusion into the office of a defector was a sound decision on the part of the Governor. The constitution is quite clear on the appointment of the Governor. Article 155 provides that “the Governor of a state shall be appointed by the President.”111

The role of Governors of states continues to be a controversial issue in centre-state political relations, and not only in the contest of imposition of President’s Rule. The prestige of the institution of the Governor declined in the nineties with a number of cases where the propriety of actions by incumbents became matter of public debate. Governors have a dual role under the constitution, except where a state has been brought under President’s rule when they become an agent of the central government. The Governor, as the constitutional head of a state government, is expected to play the same role in

relation to it as the President does in respect of the government at the centre. The Governor's dual role has been set out by eminent former Governors in terms that have been endorsed by the Sarkaria Commission. Unfortunately, not infrequently governors have tended to see their role primarily as that of a representative of the central government.\textsuperscript{112}

In the decade since, the Sarkaria Commission considered the Governor's role, with increasing political instability in most states, there have been more controversial decisions by them. But the Commission's proposals for reform, which have remained unimplemented, have not been improved upon. What needs to be done is to set out the qualifications for holding the position, eliminating working politicians; have a transparent selection procedure through a committee; ensure security of tenure; provide that on retirement a Governor shall be ineligible for other positions under government.

**Demand for New States:**

India is a large and diverse country. It has wide range of natural resources. But these natural resources have not been distributed among all the regions, in an equal proportion. So there exist regional disparities and regional imbalance within India. Due to disproportionate distribution of resources among various regions in India, the development levels vary from region to region. Apart from this, there are some large states within India and distribution of resources is unequal within the regions of the states. So, regional disparities exist within those states.

India is a multi-lingual and multi-religious country. It has a diverse society and culture. In India sub-nationalism plays a prominent role in socio-political processes. Indian society is characterised by regionalism and linguistic chauvinism. All these factors led to a demand for new states.

In India, some of the large states which have regional disparities, has led to low level of development of a particular region within those states are Uttaranchal

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., Pp. 213-215.
in Uttar Pradesh, Chattisgarh in Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand in Bihar, Telangana in Andhra Pradesh, Vidarbha in Maharashtra and North Karnataka in Karnataka. For several years a movement for separate state has started in these regions, due to the step motherly treatment meted out to these regions. Several elites and political parties have criticised the concerned state governments for neglecting these backward regions.

The CPI (M)'s contention is that what is required is a policy which ensures economic development of the region, generate employment and draw the people of Uttarakhand into the national mainstream. In its opinion, most of the parties which are clamoring for a separate state of Uttarakhand are the same which have been responsible for its economic stagnation resulting in poverty and high levels of unemployment.

More importantly, the party is worried about the political fall out of the decision. It fears that granting statehood to one region would have a “cascading” effect and lend legitimacy to similar demands in other parts of the country. Demands for a separate Jharkhand state, a separate Bodoland and Chhattisgarh would gain further momentum with the grant of statehood to Uttarakhand, according to the CPI (M) leaders.

The CPI (M) leaders point out that the United Front’s commitment to federalism is on test in Uttarakhand and other regions where similar agitations are taking place. In an article that appeared in the News Daily recently, Mr. Surjeet reminded the United Front that it had “committed itself to strengthening the federal structure and to granting more powers to the states.” with all that it entailed in terms of giving them enough financial resources etc.

The party expects the UF governments to translate this commitment into action, and supplement this with policies aimed at paying special attention to the backward regions. In its view, a federal and development- oriented approach towards the state, rather than quick- fix solutions like conferring state hood is what is required to meet regional aspiration.

"All the areas which have now become the territories of the new state, share the common characteristic of backwardness, within the parent states, which themselves are among the poorer states of the union. Both Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand are tribal dominated and Uttaranchal consisted of UP hill districts, which have long been neglected by the plains dominated governments in Lucknow. Apart from the chance, at the political level, to have their own governments, the new states also gave the people of these regions the opportunity to work for faster economic and social development and for better expression of their cultural identities." 114

Despite all the political difficulties and constitutional constraints, the BJP was successful in achieving the support of all the political parties, on the floor of the Parliament to pass the three bills for the creation of new states. In November 2000, three new states, Uttaranchal, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand came into existence. "We also thank all political parties for their support in ensuring the smooth passage of the statehood. We call upon the government to expedite follow up action so that the popular expectations of the people of these three regions can be met and their rapid socio-economic development be ensured."115

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) will work for negotiations to be conducted with all those groups in the North-East who are advocating separatism, while firmly defending integrity of the Indian Union.

The party firmly believes constitutional as well as administrative steps shall be taken to form a separate state of Uttarakhand without which its backwardness and neglect cannot be overcome. The CPI (M) has been the first national party to support the demand, and strive for it in all possible ways.116

CPI (M) has consistently taken the line that carving out new states on ethnic considerations is not a solution to economic backwardness of those particular regions. It has repeatedly criticized the parties which are supporting the

114 Deccan Herald, 18th November, 2000, P.10.
demand for a separate Uttarakhand and described their support as politically motivated.

The fact that the Prime Minister, Mr. H. D. Devegouda has gone ahead and announced his government’s decision to give statehood to Uttarakhand despite the CPI (M)’s known opposition to the idea has annoyed the party. While there was no official comment from the CPI (M) sources, it planned to convey its unhappiness to the UF leadership, and reiterate its position on reorganization of states.

The question of protection of identity and the interests of tribal people has led to various movements in the last two-three decades. This has assumed the demand for separate state such as Jharkhand or Bodoland. Our party stand has been that where tribal people live in contiguous areas and constitute the majority, there should be regional autonomy provided. The CPI (M) pioneered the development of the Tripura Tribal Autonomous District Council in this regard. The present powers given to the autonomous councils under the sixth schedule of the constitution should be amended so that adequate powers may be devolved to them for the development of the autonomous areas.

The tribal people who inhabit the North-Eastern region have a social, economic and cultural environment distinct from that of the Adivasis in the rest of India. In all the North-Eastern hill states (except Tripura and Manipur), the tribal people are in majority. In states like Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya, Christians constitute the dominant population. Unlike the tribal people in central India, they are not subject to the ruthless explosions of contractors, landlords and capitalists problem in the North-East are different. It is also more complex.\textsuperscript{117}

For the CPI (M), the tribal question is not just a question of protection of ethnic identity or defending the rights of a significant minority. It is also a class question. They constitute an important part of the proletariat in India. They have to be organized to fight for the rights as workers, agricultural labour and poor peasants. At the same time, an emphasis has to be given on their special problems

\textsuperscript{117} \textit{Frontline}, Vol.18, No. 3-4, July-December, 2001, P.10.
of alienation from their land of their access to forests and its produce of ending the brutal exploitation of the bourgeoisie landlord classes and protection of their identity, language and culture.

Deployment of CRPF:

The Central Reserve Police Force is constituted by the Home Ministry to deal with emergency situations. The CRPF may be deployed by the centre on its own initiative or on the demand made by state government at the time of crisis. Even the CRPF deployment has become a major issue of controversy in union-state relations; several times, the centre had deployed CRPF against the will of the state government.

Inviting the CRPF on the grounds that, it was against its internal autonomy. All these developments have a serious impact on centre-state relation in India. Even the centre had deployed CRPF in West Bengal which was opposed by the then Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu of West Bengal, who held the view that this was an unwarranted intervention in the affairs of states. So, deployment of CRPF has been a serious issue of centre-state tensions, and there is a need to bring reforms in this sector.

When the constitution was framed, the functional allocation in the area of law and order simply carried over the pre-independence position as between the provinces and the centre. 'Public Order' and 'Police' including railway police were in list II. List I had only Central Bureau of Intelligence and Investigation. The huge increase in the central police formations since then has been effected under implied powers: forces for union territories, the CISF and the RPF for protecting central establishments. CRPF was to maintain forces that can be deployed in aid of the civil power in the states, to discharge the centre's responsibility to protect states under Article 355. In addition, there are the paramilitary forces and intelligence units created in connection with external security. The only explicit constitutional provision was introduced after the Emergency; entry 2A of list I provided for the deployment of forces ..... in states in aid of the civil power. So far as criminal investigation (Including cases of
corruption) is concerned, the CBI was first set up in Delhi and its jurisdiction was extended to all central establishments. It can operate in other cases only at the invitation of states.\textsuperscript{118}

It would be desirable to enumerate all the central policing functions clearly in the constitution, making it clear that the states’ responsibilities under ‘public order’ were not being diminished.

Another issue where a constitutional clarification may be desirable is in relation to central police forces sent to the states ‘in aid of the civil power’. Some states had argued before the Sarkaria Commission that (a) Central forces could only be sent if requested by the states, and (b) Their actual deployment should be under the state’s control. Both contentions were rejected by the commission. But position (a) remains arguable, because Article 257A which set the matter beyond doubt had been inserted after the Emergency and was subsequently withdrawn. In the event of an Ayodhya - like situation recurring in any state, the central government’s response should be more robust. It may consider whether an explicit provision is needed to cover the dispatch of central police forces against the wishes of a state government in such a situation, possibly with some safeguards. Such a provision would be less wide in scope than the abrogated Article 257A.

The constitution makes the state government responsible for maintenance of public orders as well as protection of the central government property located in the state. The properties of the centre and its undertakings are spread all over the country. To avoid such a situation, the constitution authorises the centre to give directives to various state governments. In case of non-compliance of any state governments to central directives, the centre could resort to the extreme step of taking over the administration of such state under Article 356.

Apart from regular armed forces, the centre has the Central Reserve Police (CRP) constituted under the Act of 1949. The CRP is described as a “force charged with the maintenance of public order”. Police is a state subject. It is not even in the concurrent list. The central government has built up a huge and ever

\textsuperscript{118}Ibid., P. 215.
increasing Central Police Force. In the last two decades, the expenditure of CRPF has gone up by sixteen times, from Rs. 32 cores to Rs 510.30 cores between 1965-66 and 1984-85. The basic problem arises from the role of the centre in periods of strife, like strikes, bandhs, gheraos and general lawlessness.\textsuperscript{119}

For example, on 17\textsuperscript{th} September 1968, the Kerala government turned down the centre's request that the provisions of the central ordinance be promulgated as a sequel to the central employees strike. Under such circumstances, when the CRP was deployed in the state, it led to centre-state confrontation. Similarly, one may recall the Durgapur and Cassipore episodes in West Bengal where the deployment of CRP units gave rise to similar centre-state tensions. As recent events (Andhra 1984) have shown, central forces were deployed purely for political reasons.

When the central government employees went on a strike in September 1968, the union government without informing or seeking consent of the Kerala Chief Minister, moved the CRP in the state. As maintenance of law and order is the obligation of the states, this step was considered a serious violation of the constitutional provision.

On 24\textsuperscript{th} March 1969, the Central Reserve Police fired at a mob in the administrative building of the Durgapur Steel Plant as a result of which sixty people were injured. The West Bengal, Home Minister, Jyoti Basu, sharply reacted to the CRP action and urged the withdrawal of the CRP units from the state. He argued that the maintenance of law and order, including the protection of all types of property-centre, state and private was within the constitutionally delimited jurisdiction of the state government.\textsuperscript{120}

As Jyoti Basu said, “there cannot be two parallel forces in the states”. The action of the CRP was justified by the Union Home Ministry on the ground that the Central Police had to move into action because the local police expressed their difficulties in providing protection.

\textsuperscript{119} Fadia, B.L., \textit{Op.Cit.}, P.302.  
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid, Pp.304-305.
Kerala, Chief Minister, E.M. S. Nambroodripad said in May 1967 that if the centre failed to fulfill commitment to the state, he would be compelled to make arrangements from China. He demanded Kerala’s foreign exchange earnings. In April 1979, the central government expressed the desire to put the state list subject of cow protection into concurrent list, but it was opposed by the state governments of Kerala and West Bengal.

However, there are some pertinent issues as to why the CRP forces or other armed forces of the centre have been established in our constitutional framework, and whether there can be two parallel agencies-state police and the central armed forces-for the protection of law, order and property of the country. If so, what are their specific fields of operation, and how to reconcile their operational roles for maintenance of public law and order? Secondly, what are the precise implications of the vast directive power the centre under Article 256 and 257, particularly when the centre has a separate administrative machinery for safeguarding its own establishment?

In this perspective, it would therefore be apt to trace out the origin of the CRP. It is formally known as the crown’s police, was first raised in 1939 for helping the Indian states in the protection of law and order. In 1949, it was clothed with legality by enacting a legislation known as the CRPF Act 1949. The section (1), (2) of Act extends the union authority to the whole of India as its jurisdiction. In March, 1955, under section 18(1) of the Act, the union government enacted certain rules known as ‘CRPF rules’ 1955. Under rule 25(a), the centre enjoys an unfettered right to deploy the CRPF in any constituent state as it has assigned a wide field of operation as its ‘duty’ for the restoration and maintenance of law and order and ‘for any purpose’ as directed by the central government. It was then expected that the CRPF would be used to supplement, and not supplant the state police, in safeguarding the law and order situation including protection of public property, as being a ‘state subject’. 121

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Gradually, following the techno-industrial advancement and enlargement, the CRPF was also considerably enlarged and sanctioned a strength of 58 battalions, especially when the states were increasingly finding their resources meager and inadequate to cope with the emergency law and order situations on account of wide-spread linguistic agitations, communal disturbances and other terrorist activities in several parts of the country.

A sharp controversy may arise between the centre and a state on the employment of these forces and cause strain and stress at a time when a state government of political complexion different from that of the central government is in office. This sort of situation cropped up in 1968, when the central government dispatched its CRP units in Kerala to give adequate protection to the various central government offices in the wake of the proposed strike of September 1968, threatened by the central employees. The then communist dominated ministry headed by E.M.S. Namboodripad vehemently protested against such deployment of the CRP forces, especially because these were sent in the state without concurrence of the state ministry.\(^\text{122}\)

A similar tension between the centre and West Bengal was experienced on the issue of the development of the units of the CRP to protect the central government’s property within the state without its concurrence, when the firing in the Administrative Building of Durgapur Steel Plant in March, 1959 and in the Cassipore Gun and Shell Factory, a central installation, took place in April, 1969. The state government sharply reacted to the central police action and urged forces from the state. Later on, on April 10\(^{th}\), 1969, there was a state wide strike in West Bengal as a protest against firing by the CRP guards of the central defense ordinance factory. The state government miserably failed to give protection against obstruction in the functioning to the central service within its field and the UF ministry publicity refused to co-operate with the CRP forces from the state. The union government took a serious view of such an attitude on part of the state government.\(^\text{123}\)

\(^{122}\) Ibid., Pp.430-431.  
\(^{123}\) Ibid.
It is really a healthy precedent in our Federal polity that on crucial moments, the ‘co-operative spirit’ instead of ‘centralism’ has gained strength between the centre and the states and the former has deliberately taken care to seek the reticent concurrence of the state government before virtually exercising its power to deploy the armed forces regarding the preservation of public order, with the objective, in this behalf, to exist the state government. It would, therefore, be a healthy convention if the states are practically consulted by the Union before using in the states the armed forces of the Union in aid of the civil power, which is both necessary and desirable to strengthen the spirit of natural confidence in the centre-state relationship.

**CPI (M)’s Perception of Governance:**

The CPI (M) in its manifesto mainly highlights the issue of corruption, protection of rights of minorities and oppressed classes and social security etc. In 1991 election manifesto it stated the CPI (M) has always tried to provide an alternative economic policy aimed at alleviating the miseries of our people.

The party states: “The CPI(M) and the mass organizations in which it is working, have been constantly active in the defense of the rights of the working class, agricultural workers, peasantry, youth, students, women and various sections of employees. It has tirelessly worked for forging united struggles of different sections of the people.”

In 1991 elections, CPI (M)’s main stress was protection of minority rights and social justice which play a very important role in democratic governance. The manifesto of the CPI (M) reveals that it wants to empower the people in the real sense.

There is no reference to governance in the 1996 Election Manifesto of CPI(M). Its stress is mainly on corruption, economy, improving living conditions of the people, social justice, strengthening secularism, federalism and decentralization, defending national unity etc.

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The words ‘governance’ and ‘accountability’ figured for the first time in its 1998 Election Manifesto:-

The 1998 Election Manifesto of CPI (M) was mainly in favour of:-

- A strong secular-democratic system
- A just socio-economic order for all oppressed sections
- Corruption free governance and accountability.

The 1998 Election Manifesto of the CPI (M) was divided mainly into four parts:125

1. Secularism and Federalism: Cornerstone of Indian Unity; It includes strengthen federalism, defend national unity and foreign policy.

2. Strengthening Democratic system:- included elected reforms, curbing corruption and judicial reforms.

3. For Betterment of Citizens’ Lives:- It include education, health, employment, women, dalits and adivasis, youth and culture, science and technology.

4. For an Alternative Economic Policy:- It included land reforms: key to progress, agricultural workers, industries and public distribution system.

In 1999 Election Manifesto the CPI(M) appealed to the people to defeat the BJP and its allies and strengthen the CPI(M) and other left parties. In 1999 and 2004 Election Manifesto it was stated to strengthen secular foundations, federalism for national unity, economic policies, water resources and judicial reforms.

The CPI and CPI (M) are the two main Left parties in India. The term ‘governance’ had not been used by both CPI (M) and CPI in other Election Manifestos until 1998. The CPI (M) claimed that it will try to attain corruption-free governance and accountability.

125 Ibid.
National situation:

We have to take note of the major developments which have taken in the country during the last three months since the last central committee meeting held in the beginning of June 2005. The horrific bomb blasts in suburban trains in Mumbai, followed by the explosions in Malegaon were meant to create communal tensions, and provoke violence. Due to the efforts of our Party, the Indo-Us nuclear issue came into sharp focus, and was discussed in parliament. The decision to resume the Indo-Pakistan dialogue is also an important development. During the August political campaign of the party, we were able clarify on several matters to like the major political and policy issues and the party’s stand to large sections of the people.¹²⁶

Indo-Us Nuclear Agreement:

At the time of the July 2005 joint statement between India and US, the CPI (M) had warned that the nuclear agreement would be used to bind India into a close strategic alliance with the U.S. During the negotiations to implement the agreement, the Bush administration started shifting the goal posts and introducing new terms and conditions. The agreement had promised reciprocity and sequencing the agreement. Based on the, seeing the changes and the new conditions, the CPI (M) issued a detailed statement against the provisions of the U.S. legislation and called upon the Indian government not to accept them. The Bill debated by the house committee talks of India taking a “Concurrent” foreign policy. But the Party concluded that if the agreement is reached with such terms and conditions it will harm the independent development of India’s Nuclear Technology and compromise its independent foreign policy.¹²⁷

The CPI(M) and the Left Parties insisted that the nine points where the U.S stand deviates from the July 18th agreement should be clarified and the government’s position should be stated in Parliament. The stand taken by the Left Parties got independent confirmation and support when eight retired nuclear

¹²⁷ Ibid., P.8.
scientists sent a letter to the Prime Minister spelling out their reservations and concerns. Because of the firm stand taken by the Party and the eminent nuclear scientists, and the growing public opinion, the government was compelled to agree to a discussion and a detailed reply by the Prime Minister. The reply of the Prime Minister covered all the major issues raised by the Left. The Left and some other parties declared that the Prime Ministers reply can be taken as the sense of Parliament.  

BJP’S Disruptive Role:

The BJP has not been able to make any worthwhile impact, given the fact that the Hindutva issues that it periodically raises have not found response from the people. The government decided to celebrate the “Centenary” of Vande Mantaram on September 7th which has no historical basis. The HRD Ministry sent out a circular to the states asking that Vande Mataram be sung in schools on that date. But BJP utilised this to condemn the UPA government as appeasing the minorities and showing disrespect to the “National Song”. The BJP directed all the state governments led by it to make the singing of the song compulsory in all schools including madras’s.  

The CPI M) took the stand that singing of Vande Mataram cannot be made compulsory, and it should be Left to the state governments concerned to decide on the matter. The BJP sought to communalize the issue and condemn the Muslims. During the freedom struggle the content of song was highly debated and on the advice of Rabindranath Tagore, the Congress decided to stick to the first two stanzas of the song only as the rest of the song contains invocations to a goddess. Among the many streams of the freedom struggle, the Congress volunteers sung Vande Mataram while equitable Zindabad was the slogan of the Left and the radical circles. It is ironical that the RSS and its outfits who had no role to play in the freedom struggle are championing the cause of Vande Mataram.

128 Ibid., P.9.  
129 Ibid., P.14.  
130 Ibid.
In the UP elections, the BJP is faced with a difficult situation. The Ramjanma Bhoomi issue evokes no response and the BJP now claims that the building of the Ram Temple is not a political issue. It has condemned the UPA government on resumption of dialogue with Pakistan and after the Mumbai blasts even talked about launching attacks on terrorist camps in Pakistan administered Kashmir.\textsuperscript{131}

**Attitude of UPA Government:**

In the June Central Committee (2006) meeting, it was noted that the UPA government is making a concerted bid to push ahead with neo-liberal policies. It was decided that we should take a firm position against such policies and assert this more vigorously inside parliament and mobilize the people outside. The UPA government’s foreign policy should also be taken up as a priority. The Central Committee 2006 a document should be submitted which critiques the role of the government, demands corrective steps and implementation of the pro-people measures.\textsuperscript{132}

During the last three months, the Party and the Left have firmly asserted our stand and expressed our opposition to certain policies. On the Indo-Us Nuclear issue, it was our relentless stand which compelled the government to spell out in parliament the minimum framework in which the agreement can proceed. The Left parties presented a comprehensive note on the two year performance of the government. The discussion on this was not held as the nuclear issue had to be given priority. In the meantime, because of our firm opposition, the government tried to modify the proposal to allow FDI in banking and the privatization of the pension funds.

According to CPI (M) Election Manifesto 2004 said that “The CPI(M) will work for:–”\textsuperscript{133}

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., P.16.
\textsuperscript{133} Communist Party of India (M), *Op.Cit.*, P.10.
1. An Independent and non-aligned foreign policy which defends India from imperialist pressure; initiatives for South-South Co-operation and reviving the non-aligned movement on a new basis.

2. Special attention to promote SAARC Co-operation and improving relations with all neighboring countries in South Asia.

3. Promote multi polarity in International Relations; special attention to improving all-round relations with China, fastenings close ties with Russia and special efforts to coordinate relations between India-Russia and China.

4. Dialogue with Pakistan should be pursued seriously without US Intervention; promotion of people to people relations the two countries."

CPI (M) will work for:

1. An Independent and Non-aligned foreign policy which defends India from imperialist pressures; Initiatives for South-South Co-operation and reviving the Non-Aligned Movement on a new basis

2. Opposing US Military interventions, distancing from US-sponsored War on Terror:

3. Strengthening multilateral forums like the UN to deal with all disputes between countries democratising the security council and the UN structure.

4. Giving special attention to promote SAARC Cooperation and improving relations with all neighboring countries in South Asia

5. Pursuing Terrorism and religious extremism economic cooperation with South East and East Asian countries.

According to the manifesto for General Election 2009, the CPI(M) sets out the alternative path for the country. This platform is based on the following major components.134

1. defense of secularism and national unity;
2. for a democratic transformation of agrarian relations and land reforms;
3. for a self-reliant economic system and path of development which will develop the productive forces, maximize employment and reduce economic and social disparities;
4. for a democratic and federal political system with necessary constitutional changes.
5. defense of the rights of the working people, their livelihoods and social security;
6. Social justice, end to caste discrimination and protection of rights of women, dalits, minorities and tribal people
7. for an anti-imperialist, independent foreign policy.

According to CPI (M) manifesto, it is necessary that both the Congress and the BJP are defeated by the people in the forthcoming elections. The country requires alternative policies i.e. Pro-people economic policies; provision of social equity; consistent secularism; genuine federalism; and an independent foreign policy. The CPI (M) appeals to all democratic and secular forces to support such alternative policies. For this, an alternative political platform is required. The CPI (M) will work for the creation of a Non-Congress, Non-BJP government which will strengthen democracy, ensure equitable economic development and social justice.

RSP/Forward Bloc Stand:-

In the case of the Left parties, we were in constant touch with all the Left parties on the developing situation. In fact, we had passed the issue before them last year itself. While the CPI fully agreed with our approach, the RSP and Forward Bloc stated that they cannot extend support to a Congress government. The Forward Bloc initially stated that while it disagreed with our stand, it would, in the interests of the Left Unity, adopt a flexible position if the situation so
warranted. However, later it refused to change its position. Despite these problems the BJP could not succeed in winning the Vote of Confidence.135

**Alternative Government:**

After the fall of the Vajapayee Government, the Politbureau met on 18th -19th April 1998 year. It decided that we should pursue a line of support to a congress led government from outside and try to rally all our allies to adopt a similar position. In the given situation where there were differences and conflicts amongst the Non-Congress opposition parties, the viable option would have been in the first stage to have a Congress minority government supported by all other parties from outside. The Congress also made statements that they are prepared to consider a coalition government.

The RSP and Forward Bloc’s opposition to any form of support to a Congress-led government, combined with the Samajwadi Party’s position, created a deadlock and contributed to the failure to secure agreement for an alternative government.

The CPI (M) has been consistently opposing the Congress Party’s politics, particularly in the realm of economic policies. It had clearly stated that given the priority to dislodge the BJP from power at the centre, there is no other way but to allow the second largest party, the congress, to make a bid for government while the Left gives it issue -based support from outside. This would have helped us to accomplish our main task of removing the BJP government, while at the same time safeguarding the interests of the working class and the common people at this particular juncture. The sectarian stance of these two parties has harmed the interests of Left Unity.136

The CPI (M) on Sunday warned the UPA government that the country would revolt if it tried to push the Indo -U.S. Nuclear deal in case it lost the trust vote in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday 5th May, 2008.

136 Ibid., P.5.
Asserting that the government and the nuclear deal would be “doomed” on 22nd July 2008, the day of the trust vote, CPI(M) General Secretary Prakash Karat, said the UPA government had not only bypassed Parliament but had also gone back on its public pledge that it would go to the International Atomic Energy Agency only after winning the Trust Vote.137

“We wish to warn these governments that in case you lose the trust vote, do not try and push the nuclear deal. The country will revolt, “Mr. Karat told journalists after a two-day meeting of the Party’s Central Committee. The Central Committee fully endorsed the decision of the Party’s Politbureau to withdraw support to the UPA government on 9th July, 2008.”138

Maintaining that the struggle against the nuclear deal would continue, he said that one phase of this struggle was the trust vote. He accused the government of “criminal neglect” in tackling price rise and runaway inflation.

Attacking the UPA government for taking recourse to “desperate and unscrupulous steps to engineer defections”, Mr. Karat said the Congress and the Samajawadi Party were trying to mobilize the support of unaffiliated MP using “Money power and unscrupulous methods.”139

“This time the SP has betrayed over “Nuclear deal after opposing it on the platform of United National Progressive Alliance (UNPA) and speaking against the deal in both Houses of Parliament” he said. “Today, The Samajawadi Party, at the behest of the Congress Party is supporting American President Bush. There was a time when Mulayam Singh was giving direction to politics in U.P. Today, he has lost that position and he is hurling accusations at US.”140 Asserting that the nuclear deal was an issue of the Left parties which had put up a struggle against it for the past three years, Mr. Karat said it was not the issue of the BJP which supported strategic relations with the US.

138 Ibid.
139 The Hindu, 2nd April, 2008, P.12.
140 Ibid.
The objective of the CPI (M) is only to stop the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal and not to destabilize the government. If the government goes ahead with the deal leading to destabilisation, it will not be because of the CPI (M), Politbureau member Sitaram Yechury said on Tuesday 28th March, 2008.

The Nuclear deal called for a congruent foreign policy with that of the U.S. Clauses such as defense co-operation and logistics support would only make India an appendage to the U.S. imperialist actions. An independent foreign policy was the strength of India in this region, he said. Thus, the context of the deal was dangerous.141

The CPI (M) only wanted the Prime Minister to give nine assurances, the primary one being permanent and continuous uranium supply for reactors. But, as per the agreement, the deal could be terminated by either side with notice. In the event of termination of uranium supply, India’s huge investments would become idle. The U.S. would also force the group of nuclear supplier countries to stop uranium supply, the CPI (M) leader cautioned.142

Mr. Karat says the CPI (M) and the Left have fought against the emerging strategic alliance with the United States. “Attention has been focused on the Indo-U.S. civilian nuclear co-operation agreement since last August 2007. However, this is only one part of the strategic alliance. The CPI (M) will ensure that the one part of the strategic alliance. The CPI (M) will ensure that the nuclear deal does not go forward. But there is a long struggle ahead. The defense framework agreement should be nullified. What has to be accomplished is the disentanglement from a strategic tie up with the U.S.”143

The CPI and the CPI (M) see the strengthening and consolidation of Left unity as a crucial element in moving towards a “Left Unity and Democratic” third alternative in the country.

141 Ibid., P.14.
142 Ibid.
At the inaugural session of the 20th National Congress of the CPI here on Sunday, General Secretary of the party, A.B. Bardhan and CPI (M) General Secretary, Prakash Karat had stalled some of the “more harmful measures” of the UPA. 144

Mr. Bardhan said though the policies and actions of the Left - generated support from large sections, the parties were “equally conscious of their weakness in a large part of the country. It is on the bedrock of Left Unity that our future advance will take place. Left initiative is required for creating and presenting a third alternative before the people”, Mr. Karat said.145

Speaking at a condolence meeting organized by the CPI (M) to pay homage to its former General Secretary, Dr. Singh said that at the young age of 15, Surjeet held the national tricolor afloat and was inspired by revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh. Recalling that Surjeet had been jailed several times during the British Rule Dr. Singh said, “One can have differences with the leaders of the Left parties but the quest for social justice unites many Indians. He had fought for removing poverty, hunger and disease and this was his burning desire.”146

“As Communist leader and General Secretary of the CPI(M), Surjeet became the authorized voice of democracy and secularism, a voice which was well respected, and guided our path and of those who sought his views and advice”, Mr. Karat said.

Communist Party of India, General Secretary A.B. Bardhan said Surjeet was a dedicated soldier of the freedom struggle and a guiding light of the Communist Movement. “He always fiercely opposed communal forces, and the best tribute to him would be to take a pledge for defending national unity, integrity and fighting communal forces”, he said.147

Talking to newsmen on Tuesday 5th August 2008, Ms. Karat described the incidents on July 21st and 22nd in Parliament as “nothing short of a murder of

145 Ibid.
147 Ibid.
democracy”. The UPA government had establishment its majority” through use of money”, she said.\textsuperscript{148}

Referring to the statement of the U.S. Ambassador that Indian could not ask for any unconditional nuclear deal. Nuclear deal was linked to conditions and was linked to a foreign country’s domestic Act, namely, the Hyde Act. “In spite of it, this minority government is pushing this country on this disastrous path. Therefore, we are mobilizing people all over the country for a big common campaign on the issues facing them”\textsuperscript{149} she said.

Ms. Karat said that while the consensus of Parliament was against the nuclear deal, the Union government did not think the deal was shrouded in secrecy. “The government has got the majority on the basis of black money, manipulation and bribery. We are going to see the impact of the nuclear deal in the erosion of India’s foreign policy, on Foreign Direct Investment in the nuclear power sector, and the educational institutions. This is a struggle, which is going to be fought not in Parliament, but by the people of this country.”\textsuperscript{150}

The restructuring of centre-state relations will be one of the key principles on which the third alternative is forged, CPI (M) General Secretary Prakash Karat stated on Wednesday 15\textsuperscript{th} April.

Delivering the 12\textsuperscript{th} K.M.Basir memorial he said the Left wanted centre-state relations redefined to make the exercise more democratic and ensure devolution of greater powers and finances to the states. The Left raised their issue strongly in the past, especially when there was a raging debate over the Sarkaria Commission recommendations.

**Distribution of Revenue:**

S. Guhan, opines, “The current regime of centre-state transfers has evolved in a piece meal fashion, and inevitably, lacks any rational design of direction. By the same token, the transition to a simple, transparent and rational system cannot

\textsuperscript{148} The Hindu, 6\textsuperscript{th} August, 2008, P.15.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid.
take place in one move, but will have to be comprehensively visualized and implemented in a phased manner".151

Financial relations have been a vexing issue of tensions between the centre and the states. For many years, the constitutional provision made for federal financial relations is such that the centre can dictate its terms in financial matters. Here, the centre stands like a colossus virtually relegating the states to position of mere beggars. This has turned Indian federal system into a Unitarian model and destroyed the latter's spirit of the federal process.

The inter-state council also plays a significant role in the Indian federal system. So, to restructure federal fiscal relations, inter-state councils are very important, but along the years, the Inter-State Councils failed to play any major role in restructuring federal financial relations. So, in 1996, "The Inter-State Council has decided to create a standing committee to go into the structure of centre-state financial relationship with a view to promoting decentralization."152

The financial relations have to be completely reviewed. If we want to preserve our federal structure, a change should be brought through a constitutional amendment to chapter 12th. The states should be assigned more roles in central finance commissions and they should be given grants not on the basis of partisan interest, but on the basis of necessity. The suggestions of Tenth Finance Commission are very rational to restructure federal fiscal relations.

As aptly pointed out by J.V.M. Sharma, "Inter-governmental sharing or financial powers and the resultant fiscal transfers have always been controversial in federal system."153

Centre-State financial relations have witnessed major changes in 1990's. After foreign exchange crisis in 1991, the Congress government implemented a new economic policy. This policy brought greater liberalization and new industrial policy; the states were allowed to accept foreign direct investments for

152 Ibid., P.354.
the development of projects. This facilitated the flow of more resources to state for their development, but this policy proved to be lopsided, because it favoured only a few developed states.

Finance is a very significant pre-requisite of development of the states. The constitution of India has devised the finances of the states in such a manner that central government has supreme domination in deciding the shares in revenue for the states. The states have very less powers to impose tax and also to spend the collected taxes. So, states have to depend entirely on the centre for grants to assist their development. In addition to this the states should also depend upon independent aid giving agencies like the UGC. This has rendered the states a very weak financial position and resulted in strong resentment from states. So, centre-state financial relations are a major source of tension in the federal system.

"A second channel of resources flow from the centre to the states with central assistance for state plans. The State plans are financed partly by state owns resources, and the balance, by central assistance. Central Assistance is provided as a block assistance of which 30 per cent of grant and the remaining 70 per cent is a long term loan."154

So, all in all, it appears that due to faulty distribution of financial powers between centre and states, Indian Federal System is witnessing grave tensions and there are cries for greater financial autonomy from among the states. To resolve centre-state financial crisis, Sarkaria Commission has made some suggestions.

The states receive their sources for development mainly from the centre, because Article 280, which provides for the creation of Finance Commission, says that the Central Finance Commission will decide how much revenue each state will receive. The centre will give development grants from the central taxes.

"An important aspect of the devolution of central tax revenues under finance commission dispensation is that it has an in-built bias in favour of fiscally

weak states."\(^{155}\) So, there is disparity in the distribution of central revenues to states which has led to centre-state relations.

If one analyses the CPI (M)’s views on centre-state relations, it appears that the party has not given a prominent place for centre-state financial relations in its policies and programme. This is evident by the fact that since 1991, though there were Four General Elections, only 1998 election manifesto speaks about centre-state financial relations. So, it appears that the party had denied the most significant component of centre-state relations, that is, financial relations.

Since its inception, the CPI (M) has been strongly criticizing the financial policy of the centre. The party holds that the government’s financial policies are discriminatory in nature, which had led to unequal development levels in various states of India. The CPI (M) promises to restructure centre-state financial relations for appropriate development of every state. As it claims in 1999 manifesto, “The insurance sector should remain in the public sector; LIC and GIC should be streamlined for greater efficiency. Foreign companies should be barred entry into this sector. The trend of privatizing the banking sector should be halted; reforms should be introduced to make banks accountable and restore social priorities. There should be proper regulation of non-banking finance companies to safeguard interests of depositors.”\(^{156}\)

Resource mobilization: a) Broaden the direct taxes base: instead of reducing taxes on the rich, raise the tax rates on the affluent sections and ensure strict compliance is firmly dealt with. b) Unearth black money kept inside and outside the country and trap it for productive purposes. c) Wasteful expenditure and the growing misuse of public money by officialdom and public servants should be stopped.

Finance commission is a statutory body appointed every five years under the provision of Article 280 of the constitution. Its chief function is to make recommendations on the distribution of the net proceeds of sharable taxes

\(^{155}\) Ibid.

between the centre and the states. The state demanded that clause 3, sub clause (a) of Article 280 which provides for the distribution of the net proceeds of the taxes which are to be divided between the union and the states should be deleted and redrafted in such a way that makes clear that the duty of the Finance Commission is only to make recommendations to the President on issues related to the allocation among the states of their respective shares of the proceeds.

The government of West Bengal demanded that 75 per cent of the total central resource should be shared with the state following the Finance Commission's recommendations instead of sharing the proceeds from selective taxes and duties as spelt in the Constitution. The party claims that it should not be the job of the Finance Commission to decide on the proportion that each state should get from the 75 per cent of the total financial realization of the centre. In this connection it should be mentioned that even though the 10th Finance Commission (1992) recommended that 29 per cent of the proceeds from all taxes and duties imposed by the centre should be brought under divisible pool with a view to enabling the states to enjoy the buoyancy of central Taxes, the concept of "Totality of Resources" seemed to encompass a much larger domain of the centre's resources.

One of the suggestions was about some kind of joint effort of the centre and the states for resource mobilization aimed at augmentation of resources of both. The issue demands a closer detailed examination for analysis. At present, some taxes are levied and collected by the centre and then shared with the states. Instead of this existing system, the state suggested that the taxes be levied by the centre for reasons of uniformity in tax rate etc, but be collected by the state which will thus augment the resource of both the centre and the states.

The state government of West Bengal suggested before the Tenth Finance Commission to take up the programme of unearthing "Black Money" through the centre-state co-operative efforts for the benefit of the both. It was expected that with a built-in-incentive for the states in the form of sharing part of the additional resources thus mobilized would benefit both the centre-state government. In this
effort West Bengal government intended to help the centre with relevant information to the extent possible within the limited ambit of state’s power.¹⁵⁷

Amal Ray says, “The states have practically little or no autonomy to plan in the constitutionally delimited spheres….to evolve autonomous development impulses, programmes and strategies in their legitimate spheres of activities.”¹⁵⁸

Even the Ninth Finance Commission, in spite of its pronounced pro-centre bias, has to say “it is worth noting that the proportion of shared taxes in state’s revenue is lower now than before.” The decline however, as government claims, has been compensated by a rise in the share of grants, especially discretionary grants. But the makers of the constitution relied more on the shared taxes and other statutory devolution than on discretionary transfers for reducing fiscal imbalances between the centre and the states.

For the Eighth year in succession, the states are facing huge financial imbalances, particularly on the revenue account. The Gross Fiscal Deficit (GFD) of states, according to RBI, was Rs. 23,706 crores in 1993-94 up by 18.6per cent against 5.6per cent in 1992-93 highlighting the deterioration in the revenue account.

Currently, as much as 70 per cent of total resources raised in the public domain are retained by the union government and only 30 per cent is available to the 22 state governments. This kind of lopsided distribution of financial resources is without parallel for a federal polity. The more elastic sources of revenue are reserved for the centre. The states are not allowed any share of the proceeds of corporate tax which these days exceed those from Income Tax.

While the slogan of “more powers to the states”, the key slogan of liberal and regionalist bourgeoisie and their politicians, does have some democratic content, it is clear that decentralization need not be always pro-people.

¹⁵⁷ Memorandum of the Government of West Bengal to the Tenth Finance Commission, Finance Department, Government of West Bengal, 1993, P.60.
West Bengal CPI (M) government is one of the states which articulated the federal aspirations of the states on centre-state relations. Later it turned out that Jyoti Basu became a frontrunner in directly luring the MNCs into West Bengal, even going to the extent of heaping sly praise on liberalization policies of the centre without giving a serious thought to the implications of the prospects of different state governments led by different bourgeoisie landlord parties, establishing direct close relations with various imperialist quarters.

The CPI (M) took great pains to clarify the New Industrial Policy of West Bengal government in their political-organizational report of 15th Congress of their party. "Central committee statement explains the background of discrimination against West Bengal by the centre because of the existence of the Left Front government and the earlier policies which militated against the industrial development in the state such as the fright equalisation and the partisan use of licensing policy, West Bengal, which was a premier industrial state at the time of Independence, fell back and was only producing 8 per cent of total industrial output by 1985. The party programme had envisaged our participation in state governments which cannot bring about major policy changes in the economic and industrial spheres as these powers vest with the centre." 159

The CPI (M) commits, in policy and practice, to fight for women's rights in every sphere at a time when women face the worst assault on their rights. 160

- While holding the NDA government squarely responsible for the shameful failure to pass the Women's Reservation Bill, the CPI (M) pledges to continue its firm support for one-third reservation for women in the legislatures and to work for its passage in the new parliament.

- The CPI (M) supports a huge expansion in employment opportunities for women in the organized sector and in rural areas with equal wages. It will fight all attempts to remove protective legislation for women in the name

159 Ibid.
of labour reform. It supports legislation for unorganized sector workers and domestic workers.

- The state should provide credit at low rates of interest to self help groups and assistance to market their products.

- Condemning female feticides and the alarming decrease in sex ratios, the CPI (M) pledges to strengthen existing laws against female feticides, to implement them and support social campaigns in favour of the girl child. It will strongly oppose any coercive population control measures or promotion of hazardous contraceptives for women.

- The CPI (M) advocates equal rights for women of all communities. It demands compulsory registration of marriages and eradication of the practice of dowry as a national mission.

- It also stands for a comprehensive media policy to check the growing trend of co modification of women.

The public health system is in a state of disarray. The trend towards privatization of health services must be reversed. The CPI (M) advocates:\(^{161}\) a) Increasing the expenditure on public health by the government to 5 per cent of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) b) Provision of an adequate network of primary health centre that guarantee the delivery of all basic services and have sufficient stocks of medicines that are procured through a transparent drug procurement system based on the list of essential drugs. The primary health care infrastructure should include a National Community Health Worker Scheme to deliver basic health services at the habitation (village/urban settlement) level. c) Ensuring supply of essential drugs at prices affordable to the common people. All essential drugs should be under price control. d) Increasing the outlay on preventive medicine and eradication of diseases like malaria, tuberculosis etc.

The CPI (M) which is leading the governments in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura, has been striving to see that adequate provision is made for education in

\(^{161}\) Ibid.

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the state budgets. At the national level, the CPI (M) will strive for: 162 1) Introduction of compulsory primary education accompanied by free mid-day meals, provisions of text books and other education materials. 2) Free and universal education to be guaranteed for all children up to the age of 14 years. The 83rd constitutional amendment bill, which lapsed, must be revived and adopted to make education a basic right for children up to the age of 14 years. 3) Rapid expansion of primary school network. 4) Up gradation of the salaries of elementary school teachers and providing schools equipped with minimum facilities. 5) Syllabus and curriculum to inculcate secularism, progressive values, scientific temper and national unity. 6) Allocation of '0' per cent of union budget for education. 7) Support to mass literary programmes. 8) Democratization of the higher education system and development of vocational education.

In the present elections, the CPI (M) wishes to advance the struggle for such police who strengthen secular foundations; the CPI (M) advocates: 163

a) Legislation for separation of religion and politics in light of the Supreme Court judgment in the Bommai case.

b) Effective prohibition on the use of religions issues for electoral purposes.

c) The CPI (M) stands for the separation of religion and politics and necessary legislative measures to firm up this separation.

d) Implementation of the Protection of Places of Worships Act to see that no disputes on religious places arise.

e) The Ayodhya Dispute to be referred to Supreme Court under Article 138(2) for a speedy judicial verdict.

f) Special steps to prosecute all those found guilty by the Sri Krishna Commission for the Mumbai riots of 1993.

On one occasion, the party declares that the desired balance of ensuring state autonomy and strengthening the centre should be set on radical restructuring.

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163 Ibid., P.9.
of the existing class relations and on another the party seems to accept the existing class relations while stressing the need for upholding and protecting national unity in order to combat the ongoing secessionist movements within Indian territory.

The demand for more autonomy to the states, made by the party comprises the following: 164

a) Provision of Internal Emergency enabling the centre to interfere in the affairs of the states under Article 249 of the Constitution to be removed.

b) All residuary powers which are not included either in the centre or state or concurrent list are transferred to the states. Concurrent list, however, has been one of the most contentious issues of centre-state relations.

In order to preserve the state's autonomy it was claimed that the state legislatures must be the supreme authority in the states sphere and no interference by the centre in this sphere should be allowed on any ground. West Bengal government demanded abolition of Article 200 and 201 of the constitution which empower the Governor of the state to reserve bill passed by the legislative assembly of the state for President’s assent.

However, demand for complete restructuring of the Indian federal set up may be traced in the CPI (M) Election Manifesto of 1967 even before the United Front Government came to power. In its Election Manifesto of Fourth General Elections CPI (M) expressed its view on the centre-state relations in general, and vehemently opposed the existing framework of the federal structure of India which the party observed, tended to be unitary than federal. The manifesto (1967) declared, “The Congress government denies real autonomy to the states and union territories. By transferring more and more powers to the centre, the government is negating the autonomy of the constituent units and turning the federal structure of the Indian Union into a unitary state.” 165

CPI (M)’s Attitude to Formation of the Government:

The CPI (M) had set out three goals in these 1967 elections while working out its election tactics. They are: defeat of the BJP alliance, formation of a secular government at the centre and increasing the strength of the CPI (M) and the Left. It is gratifying that all the three aims have been fulfilled.

The CPI (M) has won 44 seats (Including one supported independent) and the Left, as a whole, has won 61 seats. This is the best performance of the Left in parliamentary elections and the CPI (M) highest tally since it began contesting as a party in 1967. The increased strength of the Left bloc will heighten left intervention in national politics, and aid the advance of the Left and democratic forces.166

The CPI (M) has won a big victory in Parliament elections from West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. It has got 41 out of 44 seats and the Left parties 53 out of the 61 from these three states where the people responded in a big way to the call to defeat the BJP alliance and to reject the Congress as an alternative.

The increased strength of the Left has been mainly contributed by its strong bases in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. The independent role of the Left is assured because of this strength which has been built up by relentless struggle against the Congress and its anti-people policies. Even in the weaker states, building the party and expanding its influence requires the independent role of the party.167

The CPI (M) is conscious that it must intervene to mobilize the people on their issues of livelihood and other problems, and channelise the discontent in a manner which can strengthen the Left and democratic forces.

A common charge against the CPI (M) is that it wants “power without responsibility”. This is a canard spread by bourgeois cementations and the superficial television journalism which seeks to tar all parties with the same brush.

167 Ibid., P.20.
The CPI (M) is not in the business of sharing power, or, exercising power at the present juncture. Whatever happens, the party will continue to champion the alternative policies of the Left and mobilize the people for struggles and movements to enable the Left and democratic forces to advance.  

The CPI (M) recognizes that a large number of well-wishers, prominent personalities and intellectuals were for the party to join the government. The central committee was of the view that the party will be a better place to defend the interests of the democratic and secular forces by supporting the government from outside. The increased strength and prestige of the Left currently stems from the independent role it has played in fighting the communal forces and the policies of imperialist-globalization.  

The CPI (M) and the Left are in a favourable position today. The new government led by the Congress has also to function with the support of the Left. After the formulation of the CMP which should be the guide for the government, the CPI(M) will consistently work towards isolating the BJP and the Communal forces, intervening to protect the interest of the working people and being vigilant to see that imperialism does not push the government towards policies which are not in the national interests.  

India has a constitutional and political system which has some federal features. The centre has the power to reorganize the states through Parliament: Governors appointed by the centre can withhold assent to legislation passed by the state legislature; the Governor can play a role in the formation of state governments, and the centre is vested with the power to dismiss the state governments under Article 356; residuary power is vested with the centre, and the major taxation power, with the central authority. On the balance, the Indian Political System has federal features which are circumscribed with a built-in unitary core.  

168 Ibid., P.21.  
169 Ibid., P.22.  
170 Ibid.  
171 Ibid, P.179.
The history of federalism and centre-state relations in India is marked by political mobilization and intermittent struggle to fashion a more federal set-up. In the first phase lasting till the late sixties, the task of nation building and development was the main concern of India's rulers. There were separatist problems in Jammu and Kashmir and Nagaland in the North-East, but these were seen more as challenges to national unity and issues of national security.\textsuperscript{172}

The Seventies and Eighties, therefore, saw a tussle between the Congress on the one hand, and the regional and Left parties on the other for greater power to the states. Beginning with the Rajmunnar Committee set up by the DMK government in 1969 to the memorandum on Centre-State relations by the Left-front government of West Bengal in 1977 to the opposition conclave on centre-state relations in Srinagar in 1983, the framework for the restructuring of centre-state relations and a more federal political system was prepared.

For the first time, in 1989, a National Front Coalition government headed by V.P.Singh, which had major regional parties like the TDP, DMK and AGP, took office at the centre. The entry of the regional parties in Coalition government at the centre became a regular feature in 1996 with formation of the UF government and in all subsequent ones- the 1998 and 1999 coalitions headed by the BJP and the current United Progressive Alliances headed by the Congress Coalition. Both the National Front Government of 1989 and the UF Governments of 1996-1998 were supported by the Left parties, who are strong supporters of the federal principle.\textsuperscript{173}

\textbf{The CPI (M)'s stand and Presidential Election: BJP's Utter Failure.}

The Presidential Elections will be over by the time this issue of people's democracy comes out. A number of issues were thrown up in the run up to the election of the 13\textsuperscript{th} President of India. Now that the election is over, it is necessary to deal with some of these questions and explain how the CPI (M) views them.\textsuperscript{174}

\textsuperscript{172} Ibid., P.180.
\textsuperscript{173} Ibid., P.182.
\textsuperscript{174} Ibid., P.305.
The CPI (M) and the Left parties were of the definite view, given the record of the Kalam Presidency, that it was necessary to have a person with a political background as President. The choice of a candidate for President is a political one. When Abdul Kalam was chosen as a candidate in 2002, it was through a political decision initiated by the BJP and the NDA that got the support of the Samajwadi Party, and the eventual endorsement of the Congress and other parties. But the CPI (M) has always stated its political position with regard to the choice and support of a Presidential candidate.\footnote{Ibid., P.306.}

It is in this period from 1967 to 1987 that the CPI (M) supported the candidature of Tridib Chaudhury, Justice Khanna and Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer. Even in this period, the CPI (M) was clear that the role of the President cannot be such as to override the Prime minister and the cabinet. It is at the instance of the CPI (M) that Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer was put up as the opposition candidate.

The situation changed by the time of the 10th Presidential Elections in 1992. The Congress had failed to get a majority in 1989 and the 1992 general elections. The CPI (M), assessing the political situation, decided that the next President should be a person with a firm commitment to secular values. The CPI (M) and the Left parties were also in favour of K.R. Narayanan as the Vice-Presidential candidate with the implicit understanding that they would succeed as the next President. It is this approach, which ensured that for two successive terms from 1992 to 2002, the BJP and the Communal forces had no say on who should be the President.\footnote{Ibid., P.307.}

The CPI (M)'s approach has been, therefore, always a political one as far as the Presidential election is concerned. It is the BJP and some ill-informed media commentators who seek to camouflage the real nature of the Presidential Elections.\footnote{Ibid.}

An Incidental issue which arose in the Presidential Election was the speculation that the CPI (M) may propose one of its leaders as the Presidential candidate.\footnote{Ibid.}
candidate. As stated earlier, the CPI (M) considers the post of the President in the constitutional scheme as one representing the Indian state and the Government. The role of the President is circumscribed by the cabinet and parliamentary system in our country. The CPI (M), at present and in the immediate future, can be expected to oppose many policy decisions and legislations initiated by the Government. To have a President from the CPI (M), would be to declare that the party has no basic difference with the bourgeois-landlord policies and governments. So, it is inconceivable for a member of the CPI (M) to be playing this role at the current juncture.178

After the election defeat, the BJP has steadily plunged into a crisis. The differences first came out in the open regarding the issue as to who should be the leaders of the opposition in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. This was followed by the expulsion of Jaswant Singh at the time of the chintan baithak on his book on Jinnah and partition. This led to further recriminations and open criticism by some leaders.

Underlying these differences and quarrels about leadership is the contradiction which is unresolved in the BJP. After 2004 Lok Sabha defeat, efforts were made by the BJP to broaden its appeal and get more allies on board. But this comes up against its Hindutva ideology and the RSS position. Advani had to resign from the Presidentship after the Jinnah episode in Pakistan. New again after the 2009 elections, the differences on the ideological political course to be adopted have sharpened.

The crisis in the BJP will be overcome only with the RSS intervention. The fiction that the RSS is a cultural organization and does not direct the affairs of the BJP is being fully exposed. The RSS Chief Bhagwat, during his visit to Delhi, met all the leaders of the BJP, and his decision will be final.

178 Ibid., P.309.
It is expected that Advani will step down from the position of opposition leader before the next session of parliament. When the term of Rajnath Singh is over by January 2010 a new President will be elected chosen by the RSS.179

We have to continue to expose the reactionary and disruptive character of the RSS-BJP combine and it’s Hindutva Ideology. The disarray in the BJP and their failure to act as an effective opposition provides us an opportunity to go among the people and rally them on major issues affecting their lives. If this work is done along with the Political-Idealogical Campaign, it will provide us scope to advance in new areas. At the same time, strengthening our ties the non-Congress secular parties will help further isolate the BJP.180

The report of the Justice Rajinder Sachar Committee on the socio-economic and educational status of Muslims has revealed the deplorable social and economic status of Muslims in our country. The Committee has made a strong case for boosting the community’s share in jobs and educational institutions. It has exposed the divisive and completely false, but widely disseminated propaganda of the BJP and Sangh Parivar that the Muslims have been ‘appeased’ by various central and state governments. It is also an exposure of the neglect by successive governments towards the genuine needs and grievances of the community.

The Sachar Committee report has its own weaknesses. For example, it totally ignored the important issues facing rural Muslims that have the right to land- both agricultural and homestead. Landlessness among Muslims in rural India is high and therefore the issue of land reforms and distribution of land to Muslims should have been included in the Sachar report. The Muslim peasantry has been discriminated against in terms of credit facilities. The report does not pay adequate attention to the needs of Muslim women. But in spite of these drawbacks, the report does underscore the need for concrete, time-bound

180 Ibid., P.22.
programmes backed with adequate financial allocation aimed at advancing the condition of the Muslim community.

However, the Congress-led government's approach towards implementing the Sachar Committee recommendations has been halfhearted, partial and cosmetic at best. Most of the wide-ranging recommendations of the Sachar Committee like ensuring urgent delimitation of seats to ensure better representation of Muslims in all legislatures, promoting education in Urdu, building new vocational training institutes, polytechnics, ITIs in minority-concentrated areas, granting equivalence to Madarsa certificates and degrees for subsequent admission to higher education institutions, improving the functioning of Wake Boards, having more centrally sponsored and centrally planned schemes for Muslims, including minorities in selection boards, setting time-bound targets for improving employment share of minorities and correcting anomalies in OBC lists have been ignored.

The CPI (M) held a National Convention on the recommendations of the Sachar Committee followed by state level conventions across India. The Party adopted a 'Charter for Advancement of Muslim Community' and submitted it to the Prime Minister on April 5th, 2007. The Party mainly demanded a 15% budgetary sub-plan for the Muslim minorities in addition to other wide-ranging demands. The CPI (M) has consistently demanded setting up of time-bound targets, increased financial allocation and transparency in the implementation of schemes for the advancement of the Muslim minorities. However, the piecemeal approach of the Congress led UPA betrays a gesture of tokenism towards the Muslim minorities. Only a few recommendations of the Sachar Committee have been identified for follow-up. Even they are being implemented in partial measure along with the half-hearted implementation of PM's 15-Point Programme for Minorities.

The CPI (M) believes that urgent measures are required to ensure that the deplorable condition of the Muslim minorities is redressed at the earliest which include:
• Forming an Equal Opportunity Commission with adequate powers to redress discrimination against minorities.

• Formulating a sub-plan for the Muslim minorities on the lines of the tribal sub-plan in order to implement Sachar Committee recommendations; special initiatives in the sphere of employment, education and health to be undertaken targeting districts where the Muslim population is concentrated.

• Making public the Ranganath Mishra Commission report and ensuring full public debate; as an immediate measure all OBC Muslims which form the vast majority of the Muslim community to be included in the OBC quota with specific state-wise allocations.

• Earmarking 15% of priority sector lending by banks for the Muslims; subsidised credit to be ensured for the self-employed Muslim youth.\(^\text{181}\)

The Samajawadi Party has been expressing its discontent and anger against the Congress after the elections. The Congress Party does not require the support of the Samajawadi Party as it has been able to master a majority without them. The Samajwadi Party has been demanding a co-ordination committee. The Samajwadi Party has been criticising the UPA government policies. It has attacked the government on price rise, the joint statement with Pakistan and on the supply of gas and pricing issues involving the two Ambani brothers.

The Samajwadi Party held its National convention in Agra in August 2009. In this convention it came out against the Mayawati government in UP and called for jail bharo movement in January. The SP leadership is trying to bargain with the Congress by saying that they should not take a soft approach to the BSP. They want the Congress to refuse the BSP’s support to the UPA government.\(^\text{182}\)

The BSP also extended support to the government. It did so immediately after the SP declared support. However, in Uttar Pradesh, its conflict with the Congress got sharpened. The fact that the Congress could get one more seat than

\(^{181}\) http://tntmagazine.in, April, 2012, P.1.

the BSP has riled Mayawati. Every effort that the Congress makes to extend its base is being opposed by her vigorously. The UP Congress President Rita Bahuguna’s objectionable remarks in a speech against Mayawati and the retaliatory arson attack on her house and her arrest have embattled relations. 183

In Uttar Pradesh, there were by-elections to four seats in July 2009. The BSP won three and Ajit Singh’s RLD won one. The BSP gained one seat from the BJP and two from the SP. This shows that the BSP still commands substantial support.

The Janata dal (S) also extended support to the UPA government. They did so keeping in view their situation in Karnataka where the BJP government is in power. They were interested in a limited co-operation with the Congress but were upset with the fact that the Congress is not willing.

In Tamil Nadu, the AIADMK called for a boycott of the by-elections to five assembly seats. They did so without consulting the Left parties. The PMK and the DMK, its election allies joined the boycott call even though there were election malpractices on a large scale by the DMK of Vijayakant fought on file seats. As expected the DMK-Congress won all the five seats.

In Andhra Pradesh, Communist Parties have been taking a joint stand with the TDP on some issues inside the assembly. We have also sought to have joint actions with all the opposition parties except the BJP on issues like price rise and drought. Chiranjeevi’s party, the PRP, has suffered desertions with some of its leaders and cadres quitting party. One of the key leaders of the TDP who had defected and joined the PRP in Telengana.

In Bihar, by-elections to 18 assembly elections were held in September. The JD (U) suffered a setback as it could win only two seats and along with its ally the BJP, a total of five seats. The RJD-LJP alliance won nine seats, the Congress two and BSP one. The Left parties, the CPI, CPI (M) who fought the Lok Sabha.

183 Ibid.
The Lok Sabha elections together had a partial seat adjustment for these by elections our party fought 5 seats and the CPI 5 seats. The CPI (M) who contested 8 seats in which they clashed with us in 3 seats. The Left parties could not win any seat. 184

Approach and Tactics: 185

The review of the Lok Sabha election has highlighted the importance of expanding the independent activities of the party. In the present situation, without the independent strength of the party being increased, we cannot undertake the political tasks set out in the central and state levels we must take up the mass issues for campaigns and struggles. As noted in the election review, we must also build up state level movement on major issues.

1) The left parties have to take joint initiatives and we must carry forward the united work of the Left parties.

2) We must continue to oppose the neo-liberal policies of the government. This extends to areas outside the economy like health, education and basic services. Our orientation should be to take up the issues of the working class including the unorganized sector, agricultural workers and the mass of the rural and urban poor.

3) Already the stance of the UPA government on depending its strategic alliance with the USA is evident. We have to pick up all the issues regarding the alliance with the United State and build up the anti-imperialist movement.

4) Centre-State relations: A number of issues concerning centre-state relations have arisen. Even in education some of the pronouncements of the Education Minister, Kapil Sibal, violated the rights of the states. The Rights to Education Act can be implemented only if centre gives necessary funds and did not ask the states to do it. Similarly, whether it is drought or

185 Ibid., Pp. 24-25.
calamity, the centre has to provide more relief and assistance. We have to see how we can mobilize the various states to take common positions.

**Attitude of Non-Congress Secular Parties:**

Our emphasis should be on independent activities followed by United Left initiatives. We should maintain relations with the non-Congress Secular Parties. This will take the shape, mainly at present, of co-operation within parliament and state legislatures.

Outside parliament, we can cooperate with the concerned non-congress secular parties as and when required. We should not see this in terms of continuance of the electoral alliance with these parties. Such an understanding was formed only for the elections.  

We should seek the cooperation of the non-congress secular parties on issues, and by keeping the needs of joint movements in mind. It may not be possible to draw some of these parties into joint actions outside parliament. But, we must maintain relations with them especially in the light of the disarray in the BJP. As and when the political situation develops and mass discontent occurs, the scope for joint actions will increase.

**West Bengal: Concerted Attacks**

A concerted bid to attack and isolate the CPI (M) and the Left Front government has been going on in West Bengal. Political forces ranging from the extreme right to the extreme Left have been ganging up to organize violent agitations and to create disruption of normal life. After the Maoist attempt on the life of Chief Minister Buddhadev Bhattacharya through a landmine blast in west midnapore district, an agitation was conducted in Lalgarh area to protest against police operations. Roads were cut off the area blockaded. The Trinamool Congress, the BJP, the Jharkhand Party and the Congress all combined to support the agitation with the active backing of the Maoists. After patient efforts at negotiations to address the genuine grievances of the people, the party and the

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administration were able to isolate the Maoists and other disruptive forces, and rally the mass of the people. 188

The concerted attack in West Bengal is part of the overall plan to isolate and weaken the party at the all India level. Both imperialism and the reactionary forces are behind this effort. These are not isolate attacks. The entire party in the country must expose this anti-CPI (M) onslaught and rally all the democratic and progressive forces to counter this campaign. 189

Political Situation:

The October Central Committee Report had noted that "Both the Terrorist violence and Communal riots are being utilized by the BJP to create a communal polarization which will help them in the elections". This was stated in the background of the prolonged attack on Christians in the Kandhamal district of Orissa and the attacks on Christians in Mangalore and other places in Karnataka. Though a big majority of those killed in the attacks and in the police firing were Muslims, the BJP-AGP have been conducting a widespread campaign against the minority community, utilizing these incidents.190

The BJP leadership has had a meeting with the leaders of the RSS to formulate the election platform to coordinate their election work. The BJP is trying to finalise all its candidates by the end of January. After having drawn the AGP and the INLD into electoral alliance, the BJP did not succeed in getting any worthwhile ally in Andhra Pradesh or Tamil Nadu. Within the NDA, the BJD-BJP alliance is under strain in the past Kandhamal situation. In Orissa there is going to be assembly as well as Lok Sabha elections.191

In the Congress-UPA camp, the Congress-Samajwadi Party is working to finalize seat sharing in Uttar Pradesh. The Congress has joined hands with the

188 Ibid., P.15.
189 Ibid.
190 Ibid., P.16.
191 Ibid.
National Conference to form the government in Jammu and Kashmir, and this should open the way to fight the Lok Sabha elections together. 192

As decided in the October Central Committee meeting, the electoral tactics in Andhra Pradesh were successful in getting the CPI to arrive at a common approach for an understanding with the TDP. Subsequently, district-level political conventions are being held with the activists and workers of the three parties. There is a possibility of the Telangana Rashtra Samiti coming to an understanding with the combination. 193

In Tamil Nadu, after the State Committee discussed the matter, the politbureau decided that we should have an electoral understanding with the AIADMK. The AIADMK is a regional party with the same class character as other regional parties. From the outset, the AIADMK had come out strongly against the India-US nuclear deal. Like the DMK and other regional parties, it has shown itself to be opportunist in joining hands with the BJP in the past. However, after the 2004 Lok Sabha Elections, it has not been going with the BJP, and the AIADMK leader expressed her willingness to have an understanding with the Left Parties. The CPI and the CPI (M) have both decided to have an electoral understanding with the AIADMK. 194

The Party should conduct a vigorous political campaign in the run-up to the Lok Sabha polls. We should call for the defeat of the BJP and the NDA alliance to ensure that the communal forces are kept out of power at the centre. The campaign should attack the UPA government’s anti-people economic policies and the harmful consequences of the strategic alliance with the United States for national sovereignty. We should call for defeat the Congress and the rejection of the UPA in the election. We should demand alternative policies to protect the jobs and livelihood of the workers, peasants and all sections of the working people. The Left parties along with the secular parties should work together to make a non-congress, non-BJP alternative realizable.

192 Ibid., P.17.
193 Ibid.
194 Ibid., P.19.
With the experience of two state governments in Kerala (1957) and West Bengal (1970) led by the CPI (M) being toppled by the central government, still fresh and bitter, the attack on the existing framework of federal structure was brought to the fore with further strength of the 5th Lok Sabha Election (1971) Manifesto of the CPI (M). In this manifesto the party demanded abolition of the posts of Governors and the centre’s right to impose President’s rule in this state concerning other areas of the centre-state relationship, the party demanded transfer of most subjects provided under the concurrent list to the state list and provision of greater resources to the states.195

Although the main thrust of the memorandum was on constitutional amendment in order to ensure more autonomy for the states in the economic, fiscal and administrative areas. It was clearly stated in the memorandum that the demand for strong states does not have any contradiction with a strong centre. Instead, the party wanted the power balance between the centre and the states to be distributed in such a way that “their respective spheres of authority are clearly marked out” which would automatically lead to a true federative structure. Since as far back as in 1972-73, the CPI (M) had been simultaneously advocating for strong centre and strong autonomous states.

Thus, the party considers that strong centre is urgently required to defend the national unity and sovereignty of India. There have been two perceptions on the question of national unity that is two versions of the bourgeoisie approach to centre-state relations as described by the party. One version argued in favour of centralization at the expense of state autonomy, and the other favoured even weakening of national unity for the sake of state autonomy.

The party felt that the issue of national unity is being subverted by these elements as one of the major objectives of these movements is to attain state autonomy at the expense of the central authority. But autonomy of the states by no means, as the party demands, ought to be achieved by disrupting the unity and integrity of the Indian federation.

195 Ibid., Pp.93-94.
Strengthening the centre, the party felt, did not stand in contradiction with the demand for constitutional restructuring in order to ensure greater state autonomy. They considered, it was the necessary condition to make possible any meaningful transfer of power and resources to the states, but it was not inherently an anathema to the cause of national unity.

Thus, the CPI (M) on one occasion lays great emphasis on fundamental restructuring of the Indian federation through basic amendment to the Constitution with a view to ensuring autonomy of the states while at the same time strengthening centre and upholding the national unity. According to this position, real autonomy of the states cannot be achieved unless the issue of class conflict is addressed and mitigated. This, however, marks the difference of the CPI (M) from both the Congress and Non-Congress Parties. On both occasions, all and sundry political forces except the Left democratic parties like CPI (M) want to restructure the centre-state relations within the same socio-economic and class structure. That apart, the difference between the CPI (M) and Non-Congress parties lies also in the fact that either the latter legitimize centralization in the name of upholding national unity or tend to weaken national unity in the name of strengthening the state autonomy whereas, the CPI (M) strikes a fine balance between the state autonomy and national unity, a strong centre, that is.

In the field of domestic policies that are more basic than the International questions, both the parties took opposite directions but have now converged into commonality of policies. The CPI corrected its pro-Congress line and opted for a Left Democratic Alternative in 1977 itself. Its Kerala Chief Minister, P.K.Vasudevan Nair, resigned, breaking with the supporting Congress party and joined the LDF. In Bengal the CPI joined the CPI (M) led Left Front.196

The CPI (M) too started disengaging itself from the Rightist forces, Jan Sangh, RSS, Janata Party and Jaya Prakash Narayana in the 1980's. Jaya Prakash's total revolution was a deceptive and bogus slogan for a Rightist

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takeover. EMS’ advocacy that the party would join even with the devil to defeat and dislodge the Congress led not only to support the RSS-dominated Janata Party but even EMS could win the state assembly elections only with the support of the Jan Sangh, by a margin of 5000 votes defeating the CPI, rival, Gopalkrishna Menon. Jana Sangh leader Balraj Madhok issued a statement in support of EMS stating: “It is the CPI that is more dangerous. The CPI (M) in today’s context is not a danger.”

But all these events have been left behind by the CPI (M) that is now willing to join even with devil to dislodge the fascist oriented RSS-BJP from power and to prevent their comeback.

Both the Communist Political Parties of India have always stood for “changes in the federal constitution of the country so as to divert the union government of its overriding powers to interfere in the affairs of the states and in order to widen the autonomy of the states, especially in the matter of finance and state economy.” They also favour the abolition of the institution of Governors, establishment of autonomous districts and regions with the states. Thus, the Communist Political Parties of India have adopted an ambivalent attitude towards federalism. They do want a strong centre, but at the same time, they emphasize the need for substantial autonomy to the states.

The CPI (M) argues that there is no inherent contradiction between the unity of India and state autonomy. It firmly believes that the unity of India cannot be preserved without devolution of powers to states. The West Bengal Marxist Government in its memorandum on centre-state relations (1977) envisages the role to the centre of co-coordinating and issuing general directions in the areas of economic planning, price fixation and inter-state relations. Even in this role of coordination, it should be with the willing consent of the state and not by way of imposition from the centre.

197 Ibid., Pp.88-89.
198 Ibid
If a general analysis of the CPI and CPI (M) approach towards centre-state relations specially in the 1990’s is made, it appears that the party has made structural changes, in its ideology, principles, policies and programmes. The 1996 General Elections marks a new beginning in the Communist Political Party’s history because now the CPI and CPI (M) had realized that if it wants to play any significant role in the Indian political scenario it should change its hard line ideological stance. So the CPI (M) had considerably moderated and remodels its various policies to suit its electoral ambitions. So, in the 1990’s the federal policies of CPI (M) laid down in its electoral promises show that the CPI (M) has tried to dilute its hard thinking to impress its coalition partners to win elections.

The May Central Committee meeting had also decided that we should examine the common minimum programme to be prepared by the UPA and decide our attitude to it. The CMP which was adopted by the UPA was broadly endorsed by the Party and the Left parties.\(^{199}\)

At the political level, there is a provision for a model comprehensive law to deal with communal violence which can be taken up by the states for adoption. There is also a statement that generally profit making public sector units will not be privatized. The idea of automatic hire and fire is rejected and a commitment made that changes in labour laws which are required would take place after full consultations with trade unions. As far as the right to strike it is stated, the “Right to strike according to law will not be taken away or curtailed.”\(^{200}\)

The CPI (M) and the Left Parties have extended support to the UPA government to ensure that there is a secular government at the centre. Further, in the present situation, after the ouster of the BJP from the central government, it is important to continue to work for the isolation of the BJP and its allies so as to prevent a comeback by the force. The approach to the UPA government is based on our political tactical life.\(^{201}\)


\(^{200}\) Ibid., P.8.

\(^{201}\) Ibid.
While extending support to the UPA government, the party will have to play an independent role. That role consists of supporting such measures of the government which are in keeping with the CMP, making a break from the political agenda of the BJP-led government and those which are in the interests of the people. That role also implies demarcating and opposing such steps of the government which are against the people's interests, or are a departure from the CMP and which a continuation of the same type of policies as the previous government. \(^{202}\)

The independent role of the party does not mean confining to dealing only with the CMP and government related issues. It means the taking up of the demands of the Left and democratic programme set out in the 17\(^{th}\) Congress of the party. The issues of the basic classes have to be championed and fought for. Not taking up such issues would mean undermining the independent role of the party and weakening the struggle of the Left and democratic forces. \(^{203}\)

In the present situation, after the defeat of the BJP alliance and the formation of the UPA government, the situation is favorable for the CPI (M) and the Left forces. The party must realize that the coming period is crucial for utilising the favourable situation after the elections. We have to act now, as the advantage gained will not last long. In the states where the party is weak, people are looking up to the party and the Left to play the role of guardians of their interests. The entire party should move, reach out to these sections of the people.

In order to take the party political message and the policy issues to the people, we should conduct a week long political campaign from August 25\(^{th}\) to 31\(^{st}\).

This campaign should focus on the following issues: \(^{204}\)

1. The dangers posed by the BJP-RSS combine seeking to revive the communal Hindutva agenda.

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\(^{202}\) Ibid., P.9. 
\(^{203}\) Ibid. 
\(^{204}\) Ibid., P.16.
2. Necessity to weed out the communal ideology and elements entrenched in the state institutions and steps taken to enforce the secular principle.

3. Observe September 1st as "Anti-Imperialist and Anti-War Day". Project the necessity for an independent foreign policy to correct the pro-American and pro-Israeli strategic collaboration of the previous BJP-led government.

4. Implementation of the pro-people measure in the CMP such as the National Employment Guarantee Act, central legislation for agricultural labour, 1/3rd reservation for women in legislatures, increased credit for farmers and increase public expenditure in education and health.

5. Immediate relief and assistance to drought-affected area by provision for "food for work" programmes, free distribution of food grains where distress exists regarding drinking water and fodder. In the flood affected states, the centre should provide adequate funds for relief and rehabilitation measures. The centre should take up comprehensive flood control measures within fixed time frame in the flood prone area of eastern India.

CPI (M) and Tribal of Tripura: Beneath the Surface

The CPI(M) in Tripura is known to have an almost impregnable bastion among tribal voters - so much so that in the last Assembly Election in 2008 the CPI (M) led Left Front had won 19 out of altogether 20 seats reserved for Scheduled Tribes in the sixty-member state assembly. Subsequently, in the election to Autonomous District Council (ADC) for tribal in 2010 the CPI (M) had made a clean sweep of all 28 elective seats in the thirty-member Council where two members are nominated by the governor upon recommendations of the state government. Yet again in the Election to the 527 Village Committees-counterparts of Panchayat in the ADC areas-held in 2011, the CPI (M) led Left Front had captured 472 Village Committees, leaving a meager 55 to be picked up by the opposition Congress-INPT combine. Going by electoral records the CPI (M) is deeply entrenched in the tribal electorate but now legitimate questions are
being raised by non-CPI (M) tribal’s leaders, intellectuals and scholars on what the tribal have gained in lieu of their committed support to the Marxists. What lends an element of urgency to the question is a spate of incidents of killing and rape of tribal men and women by cadres of CPI (M). In a tragic incident on the night of 25th March 2011, three innocent tribal school students had been physically assaulted by armed CPI (M) cadres in Jirania, twenty kms east of Agartala on the mere suspicion that they were Congress supporters. One tribal student Rabiranjan Debbarma had died on the spot, the second one, Liton Debbarma succumbed to injuries in hospital on March 30th and the third injured student Samprai Debbarma is battling for life in hospital.205

All these happened during the rule of CPI (M) but the Goebbelsian propaganda machinery of the CPI (M) have pushed these gory tales under the carpet. The undivided Communist Party of India precursor of the breakaway CPI (M), had built its political base in hilly areas of Tripura through a mass literacy movement led by late Chief Minister and legendary tribal leader Dasharath Deb since December 1945 under the banner of Jana Shiksha Samiti. The Samiti later merged wholesale with the Communist Party of India’s Tripura unit, but before long, Dasharath Deb lost his prime position as top leader to Nripen Chakraborty and other leaders deputed to Tripura by the CPI’s central leadership from Calcutta. Since the 1952 Lok Shaba polls Tripura and, mainly its tribal electorate, has provided political sustenance to the CPI and later CPI (M) consistently but the party did precious little to provide safeguards to the tribal people. Nothing illustrates this phenomenon better than the position taken by the Marxist vis-a-vis the influx of non-tribal refugees into Tripura. Since the partition of the country and Tripura’s merger with the Indian union on October 15th 1949, the main threat to the tribal existence was the influx of refugees which ultimately reduced them to minority. But the Marxists kept on harping on the tune of ‘proper rehabilitation’ of the refugees. Actually it was the Central Congress government that had enacted the momentous Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms (TLRLR) Act in 1960 to provide basic protection to tribal land that was being fast alienated.

Apart from this, the Marxists kept playing second fiddle to the demand for ADC for tribals on the provisions of 5th schedule of the constitution whereas the clear need was for 6th schedule which ultimately Prime Minister Indira Gandhi gave to Tripura tribals in August 1984 by amending the constitution. In fact the CPI (M)'s initial ambivalent attitude towards the tribal demand for 6th schedule was a result of its vote-bank politics. But the greatest injustice perpetrated on the Tripura tribal by CPI (M) was the denial of Chief Ministership to Dasharath Deb in 1978 when the Left Front had made its maiden entry to state power. Late Politbureau member of the CPI (M) Pramod Dasgupta had made an announcement in Calcutta that Nripen Chakraborty would become the Chief Minister even before assessing the opinion of the CPI (M) state committee members here.

The issue had figured in the CPI (M)'s tenth party congress in Jullundur where Tripura CPI (M)'s tribal delegate late Vidya Debbarma had raised the issue in a stirring speech. For this, however, Nripen Chakraborty's diehard followers Khagen Das, Samar Chowdhury at all reacted furiously and Dasharath Deb narrowly escaped being beaten up. What brings to light the CPI (M)'s unconcerned attitude towards the welfare of the tribal community is its near total inaction in providing relief to the impoverished community from the scourge of annual drinking water crisis and outbreak of water-borne disease like malaria, enteric disease, cholera etc. During the past three decades severe drinking water crisis and outbreak of this disease in the dry spell from February to June resulting in hundreds of deaths of indigenous people have become calendar events. But the CPI (M) dominated Left Front is yet to take a comprehensive action programme to prevent the outbreak of water crisis and diseases.

With timely and planned action such deaths can be easily avoided year after year but the Left Front remains totally unconcerned over these sensitive issues. It is only when the crisis overwhelms the people that the government indulges in tokenism with appropriate noise of propaganda over its concern over the plight of the tribal's who otherwise remain expendable beings. The CPI (M)'s
cynical and cavalier treatment of tribal is also reflected in other spheres: the way the CPI (M) dominated Left Front has been dragging feet over transferring power to ADC and sanctioning funds for development is eloquent testimony to its designs. Besides, senior and capable tribal leaders like cabinet minister Jiten Chowdhury and ADC’s chief executive member Ranjit Debbarma have been kept out of the party’s powerful state secretariat. It also proves the party leadership’s chicanery and callousness to issues of vital interests of the tribal community. But going by the changing trend and pattern of state politics it seems the CPI (M) is likely to learn soon that tribal people can no longer be treated as captive vote-banks.

In the previous Central Committee meeting report it was noted that in the recent period there have been differences in political understanding and other conflicts of opinion with the CPI in various states. Such differing positions have been seen in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. In West Bengal from the Singur Project controversy, the CPI, Forward Bloc and RSP have been taking, a different stand. After the January 3rd incidents at Nandigram, they began making public criticism of the government and the party. With the March 14th Police action, these differences became more acute. After two rounds of meeting of the Left Front some understanding has been arrived at about improving its functioning. Outside West Bengal, the CPI and some of the mass organizations associated with it have been condemning the Left Front government on the Nandigram issue. This has happened even after the March 17th Meeting of the Left Front in West Bengal. This has caused some strains in the relations within the Left parties.206

The party, as the major contingent of the Left, has to take the steps necessary to repair the relations with the other Left parties. In the present national political situation, where the BJP is adopting an aggressive position and the Congress/UPA is on the defensive, it is all the more important that Left unity is

maintained for effective intervention. While taking the initiative in this regard, we should counter any political or public attacks on the party.207

June 2007, will make the thirteenth anniversary of the West Bengal Left Front Government. This occasion should be utilized to launch a big campaign on the Left Front government’s record of achievements, and to counter the propaganda of the political opponents and the anti-communist media.

Immediately, the Party has to conduct a campaign to explain to the people the true situation in Nandigram and to counter the false propaganda and Anti-CPI (M) policies of the gang-up of the BJP to the naxalites. The Central Committee will issue party letter which helps to equip the party cadres and members to conduct this campaign.

Political Situation:

The Political situation has been marked by the erosion of support for the Congress and the UPA. In the Punjab Assembly Elections, the Akali Dal-BJP alliance was able to win a majority and form the government. In Uttarakhand too the BJP won the elections, though it fell short of a majority narrowly. The defeat of the Congress in these elections reflects the discontent of the people against the policies and performance of these state governments. Further, the steep price rise had its direct impact by eroding support for the Congress.208

At the political level, the Congress Party adopted a wrong and undemocratic stand regarding the imposition of President’s rule in Uttar Pradesh. The demand for the dismissal of the Mulayam Singh Yadav Government began building up after the withdrawal of Ajit Singh’s RLD from the coalition. The BJP and the BSP went to the President with this demand. The Congress Party also decided to withdraw support to the government. Our Party opposed the imposition of President’s rule. We stated that the question of the majority of the government should be decided on the floor of the assembly. After the state government requested the convening of an assembly session a vote of confidence was taken on

207 Ibid.
208 Ibid., P.13.
January 25th in which the government got 223 votes (out of 401) with the opposition parties walking out. The state committee of the CPI (M) took the stand that though the Party is opposed to many of Mulayam Singh government's policies and measures; it will be undemocratic to outset the government just on the eve of the elections when the people will be giving their verdict. 

The Politbureau strongly opposed the move to invoke Article 356. It stated that any question about the majority of the government should be tested on the floor of the House. The firm stand taken by the party prevented the Central government from going ahead with the imposition of President's Rule.

The BJP's morale has been boosted after the victories in Punjab and Uttarakhand. After adopting an aggressive communal stand as decided by its Lucknow session in November 2006, the BJP is on the one hand trying to rally its traditional Hindutva consistently and on the other seeking to cash in on the discontent generated by price rise and other policies of the UPA government. The disruptive stand on the BJP continued in Parliament during the Budget session. First it raised the Quattro chi issue to stall Parliament and also to shut down the Railway Budget. After that, the Nandigram incident was utilized to disrupt Parliament for five successive days. Ignoring the BJP's growing attacks, the Congress leadership made a serious mistake in targeting Mulayam Singh's government for dismissal. The BJP came out in full support of the move for dismissal. In Uttar Pradesh, the BJP senses a revival of support with upper castes moving back towards it. The Central legislation for OBC reservation in higher education has angered these sections.

The Left Front government has also shown the way for the country on the vital question of observing the secular principle of the state and maintaining communal harmony. It is a remarkable achievement that a state, which saw communal violence and partition when a part of Bengal i.e. East Pakistan, is today a bastion of communal peace under the Left Front government. Subsequently,

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when large-scale communal violence erupted all over the country during the infamous "Rath Yathra" of the BJP and the demolition of the Babri Masjid, all attempts of communal mischief in West Bengal were put down with a firm hand.\(^211\)

The Left Government has, in the recent period, paid priority and special attention to the industrialization of the state. In doing so, special attention is being paid to generate employment opportunities. This task is being undertaken in a situation where, for the last one decade, the overall policies of the centre have been for liberalization and privatization. The Left Front government is fashioning policies to meet the new situation. As in the past, it will show that it is possible to implement pro-people policies, despite the policies of the centre.\(^212\)

In the words of Jyoti Basu, who was the Chief Minister of West Bengal for 23 years: "We had a reasonable clear agenda before us when we started, even though we had no model to guide us. We have been pursuing an arduous path in our efforts to consolidate the Left, democratic and secular forces. Our present experiments and experiences will help us in our long-drawn struggle to achieve the goal of people's democracy and socialism."\(^213\)

The Collapse of the 'Left Front' in West Bengal and the way ahead for the Indian Left:

The inevitable has finally happened. The Left Front government of West Bengal, the longest-serving government in India's parliamentary history, has been trounced quite miserably in the recent Assembly elections. The defeat certainly has not come all of a sudden – all recent elections including the 2008 Panchayat Elections, 2009 Lok Sabha Elections, 2010 Municipal Elections and several by-elections had clearly revealed that the CPI (M)-led dispensation had been losing ground quite alarmingly. The 2011 Assembly elections marked the culmination of this process of decline of the CPI (M) in West Bengal.\(^214\)

\(^{212}\) Ibid.
\(^{213}\) Ibid., P.3.
\(^{214}\) www.google.com/Left, April, 2012, P.1.
Large sections of the mainstream media, in West Bengal as well as elsewhere, have tended to treat the defeat of the CPI (M) and its allies in West Bengal as a turning point signifying an end of sorts for the Left in India. They also understandably rush to attribute it to the Left’s dogmatic opposition to neo-liberal policies and Indo-US strategic partnership. The advice naturally follows that if the Left has to stay relevant it will have to shed its dogma and reduce Left politics to just providing better governance without challenging the policy environment and the politico-economic direction chosen by the ruling elite.

The problem with this analysis is that it has nothing to do with what has actually happened in West Bengal. In fact, the Left Front government of West Bengal had precisely begun to follow this much advised path of ruling class wisdom. A few years ago, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee was the greatest darling of the corporate media, much like Chandrababu Naidu in his heyday or Narendra Modi, Naveen Patnaik and Nitish Kumar in their current phases. Some media houses had even enthusiastically elevated him to a new brand of Left politics in India, ‘Brand Buddha’ as they fondly called it. The CPI (M) has not gone down in West Bengal resisting the LPG policies; it has just paid the price for daring to implement those policies by trampling upon the rights and interests of the rural poor and the labouring peasantry.215

If the dominant media analysis of the CPI (M)’s West Bengal debacle is totally misplaced, and the therapy suggested mischievously motivated, the CPI (M)’s own response is nothing but characteristically evasive and hollow. Ever since the peasant protests started in Singur five years ago, the CPI (M) dismissed them as an anti-industry campaign and accused whoever stood by the protesting peasants of Singur of being a Narodnik or Luddite. When Nandigram happened, the CPI (M) called it an anti-Left conspiracy hatched jointly by the far-right and the ultra-left. When Lalgarh revolted against police atrocities, the CPI (M) made common cause with the Centre to unleash a combined paramilitary campaign. It is

215 Ibid.
only after the drubbing in Lok Sabha elections that the CPI (M) started admitting
that something had gone wrong and promised to rectify and bounce back.

Trying to put up a brave face, CPI (M) leaders now present the West
Bengal debacle as a mere defeat in one election after seven victories in a row.
They would like us to believe that the people of West Bengal had desired change
just for the sake of it, perhaps because of some time-induced fatigue, and there is
nothing more to it. They also tell us that elections are just a part of their overall
political activity, and a poor showing in one election has therefore no political
implication. But however much they may try to downplay the impact of the
Bengal blow, the fact remains that West Bengal is not just any average state for
the CPI (M). For three and a half decades now, West Bengal was the biggest
bastion of the CPI(M) and what the CPI(M) has just experienced in Bengal is not
a normal election defeat as it experiences in Kerala in every alternate elections,
but a veritable collapse of its ‘impregnable fortress’.

We are reminded time and again by CPI (M) propagandists of their
achievement in carrying out land reforms in West Bengal and establishing the
panchayat raj in West Bengal. This inspires little conviction today when the
CPI(M) is being indicted by the rural poor precisely for reversal of land reforms,
eviction of peasants and share-croppers and large-scale denial of routine
panchayat benefits to the deserving and the needy. It is quite like the Congress
talking of bringing independence and parliamentary democracy at a time when the
people experience growing US domination in every sphere, and systematic assault
on democracy through draconian laws and military campaigns.

The Mamata Banerjee-led dispensation has now taken over. As reflected in
the thumping win of the TMC-Congress combine, one can clearly see expressions
of a massive popular euphoria on the streets of West Bengal. Perhaps such early
euphoria is quite understandable at this hour of change and transition, and there is
undoubtedly an element of spontaneity in it, but one can also clearly discern the
beginning of a very conscious, concerted and comprehensive campaign by the
Right to use this euphoria as a veritable license to launch all kinds of attacks on all
streams of Left politics and ideology. An aggressive rightward shift would, of course, be out of tune with the overwhelming spirit of the West Bengal verdict and revolutionary communists will have to boldly invoke and nurture the popular democratic core of the protest movements of the recent past to challenge and confront the unfolding rightwing agenda.\textsuperscript{216}

It remains to be seen how the CPI (M) proposes to reinvent itself as an opposition party in West Bengal. After 34 years of government-centric existence, the implications of the party being forced to go back to the people as an opposition party, and what is more, as a professed party of class and mass struggle, will be quite interesting to watch. For revolutionary communists and all sections of sincere Left forces, the present juncture is surely an hour of profound possibilities and challenges both within West Bengal and on the national political plane. The CPI(M) model of government-centric ‘Left unity’ has suffered an unprecedented blow and the time has surely come for the fighting Left to regroup and march ahead with the agenda of people’s struggles.

In December 2007, the CPI (ML)’s 8\textsuperscript{th} Congress held in Kolkata had issued the clarion call: “People’s Resistance, Left Resurgence”. There has been no dearth of powerful struggles in the country during the last two decades of neo-liberal offensive the Left can move forward only by forging stronger ties with the people and organically championing and leading the struggles of the people through to the end. And with the government-centric, CPI(M)-centric image of the Left getting a body blow, it is indeed time that the role of the Left as a consistently democratic and fighting force acquired greater prominence and the revolutionary Left came to the fore as the driving force of the Left camp in India.

\textbf{Safeguarding Democracy and Democratic Rights:}

The Left Front Government has made sustained and serious attempts to strengthen democratic institutions, and has guaranteed the democratic rights and civil liberties of the people of the state. This has one with the understanding that deepening of democracy represents the essential; precondition for advancing the

\textsuperscript{216} \textit{Ibid.}
interests of the toiling masses and ensuring that the fruits of development actually accrue to them.217

The state had experienced 6 long years of semi-fascist terror unleashed by the congress central and state governments between 1971 and 1977 which was directed at liquidating the base of the CPI (M). Rights were trampled upon and any opposition to this murder of democracy was met with severe repression.

The CPI (M) holds all this to be contrary to a Marxist understanding, for only “a limited and conventional character of bourgeois parliamentary. The CPI (M) believes that the bourgeois-democratic constitution besides being a cover for the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie over the working people denies democratic rights even to the oppositional elements within the ruling classes. Hence, the cry of bourgeois democratic parties against “the one party dictatorship of the Congress”.218

The CPI (M) Programme points out that “When the people begin to use parliamentary democracy, the reactionary bourgeoisies and landlords may not hesitate to trample under foot Parliamentary democracy and even replace it with military dictatorship.”219

General Secretary, Prakash Karat, Communist Party of India (M) says, “The CPI and the CPI (M) held their party congress three years ago. If we see the record of the last three years, it is clear that the Left has made advances in terms of putting forth its politics and policies more effectively and more productively. The Left has stood out for its firm defense of secularism and exposure of the divisive and pernicious communal politics of the BJP and its RSS mentor. The Left has not only fought against communalism but shown in practice that communal politics can be isolated and the people rallied in defence of secular values as is evident in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. In the coming days, we

217 Ibid., P.10.
219 Ibid., P.70.
should redouble our efforts to fight the Hindutva forces politically and ideologically so that the path is barred for their return to power.\textsuperscript{220}

What we have achieved in these last three years is in great part due to the unity in thought and action of the Left parties. Coordination and the united approach of the CPI (M) and the CPI are crucial in this respect as for the Left parties. It is not abnormal to have differences on certain issues on occasions. But, nothing should be done which would weaken Left unity. That is what the imperialist circles and the ruling classes would want. It is on the bedrock of Left unity that our future advance will take place. I wish to assure the Congress that on its part, the CPI (M) will sincerely work to strengthen Left unity.\textsuperscript{221}

\textbf{XX\textsuperscript{th} Party’s Political Tactics:}\textsuperscript{222}

1. Party will independently and jointly fight with the other Left parties and secular democratic parties on people’s issues; we will fight against poverty, unemployment and corruption and strive to improve the conditions of our people.

2. The party will make every effort for the success of other Left parties, so as to ensure that the strength of the left as a whole goes up in Parliament and state assemblies. The objectives are to forge and strengthen left unity for playing a bigger role in the country’s politics.

3. The core of Left Unity has to be the cooperation and united action of the two Communist parties-The CPI and CPI (M) The CPI holds the view that it is necessary to move ahead towards communist unity on a principles basis. That is the only way to make a decisive breakthrough in the country’s politics and take it towards a socialist future.

4. We must strengthen fraternal relations with the Forward Bloc, RSP and hold frequent consultation with them. We must try to draw other Left groups so as to broaden Left unity.

\textsuperscript{221} Ibid., P.19.
\textsuperscript{222} Ibid., Pp.79-80.
5. The party will make every effort to build a Left and Democratic Alternative to both the Congress and BJP rule. Through struggles and by evolving an alternative Left and Democratic Programme

Attitude to the Centre:

One of the most important issue on which fundamental differences arose between the CPI and CPI (M) right from the inception of the United Front Ministry was the question of the attitude to be adopted towards the centre. The “Joint Declaration” of the seven parties before the 1967 election has stated that “the Centre is seeking gradually to deprive the states of even those powers given by the constitution and thus cut at the autonomous powers and status of the states. The government will strive to defeat this attempt to win more powers for the state government and mobilize the people’s support for this.”

We have already seen how the understanding of the CPI (M) regarding the role and functioning of the United Front Governments was that, situated as they were, the state governments were in no position to find solutions for any of the fundamental problems facing them, and that for this purpose it would be necessary to lead determined struggles against the centre.

We have also noted that the CPI was of the view that the United Front Parties could and must give necessary relief to the people within the framework of the state government. As the party put it, “it is the responsibility of the party to demonstrate through the achievement these ministries that it is possible, even with the limited powers they have, to satisfy the urgent demands of the people and implement the programme they have undertaken”.

In another early policy statements, the CPI (M) declared that “The basic reality is that the levers of economic power are in the hands of the big capitalists and landlords, that the entire might of the law, constitution, bureaucracy and administration supports the maintenance of this vested interest” and that “every

issue from team fare to people’s food will be an arena of class struggle.”225 This indicated well the general orientation of the CPI (M)’s attitude and its likely position on the attitude to the centre.

In May, 1968, the CPI (M) started another campaign against the CPI for its unwillingness to concentrate on the struggle against the central government. In June, the CPI (M) accused the CPI of hatching a plot to overthrow the CPI (M) led United front government and set up an alternative United front government with the support of the Congress party.

In June again, E.M.S.Namboodripad and A.K.Gopalan declared in a joint statement that while the CPI and other parties thought that they should somehow maintain good relations with the centre, the CPI (M) believed that the existence of non-congress government itself depended on the struggle against the Central government as proved by the experience of West Bengal and other non-Congress states. The CPI (M)’s campaign against the centre reached its high water mark in September, 1968 when the CPI (M) Chief Minister refused to arrest Central government employees for taking part in a strike. These differences continued to sour relations between the CPI and CPI (M) to the last days of the United Front Ministry in Kerala.

We have already noted that the attitude of the CPI is one of regarding the Congress largely as a force of progress, of uniting with the masses rallied behind the congress, and winning over those rallied behind the rightist parties in a joint struggle against their right reactionary leadership combined with the rightist wing of the Congress leadership.

In connection with the attitude to be adopted to parties other than the congress, the only correct approach for the Communist Party would be to recognize that all these parties are in a greater or lesser degree parties of the Indian bourgeoisie. The Communist Movement should adopt the tactics of separating and supporting the democratic essence of the various demands put forward by these parties essence of the various demands put forward by these

225 Peoples Democracy, April, 1967, P.10.
parties and of fighting the anti-democratic twist given to them by the leadership of these parties. No question should arise of extending mechanical support to the congress party because it is the party of the progressive bourgeoisie as against these parties, as they are led by reactionary elements.226

A Brief Discussion of the Attitudes of Important Political Parties Follows:-

The Congress (R) party, led by the Mrs. Indira Gandhi emerged as the successor to the undivided party and continued to form the central government. The congress was aware of the fact that instability of governments was rampant before 1971. Hence, the congress wanted a strong centre. As such, as in the past, the centre-state relations did not get a mention. Further, in the context of the threat from an alliance of four parties, the importance of a strong and stable centre was emphasized by Mrs. Gandhi during the election campaign. Thus, it seems that anything other than stable and strong centre were to be treated as unimportant.

The Samatha Party in 1971, in an unusual move, accepted the Congress (a) resolution of June 28th 1970 as its Election Manifesto. The party in this manifesto defended the present constitution and also subscribed to the demand for an impartial judicial body for setting inter-governmental disputes. Commenting on this issue M.R. Masani said:

"We do not, however, believe that the constitution needs any change. We believe that the constitution, if properly worked in a spirit of give and take, can meet the needs of what we want, which is some more autonomy for the states."227

In 1971 the Jana Sangh, however departed from its traditional advocacy of a unitary state for India. The Jana Sangh demanded "A commission on Constitution" to make recommendations for changes, if any, in the light of the experience of the last two decades. The party emphasis in its 1971 election manifesto, for the institutionalization of the centre-state relations. It demanded

appointment of an inter-state council under Article 263 & also suggested that inter-state boundary disputes as well as the demands for separate states should be passed on a statutory commission.

The CPI adopted the most moderate line. It, in its manifesto, demanded a constitutional amendment “to produce for more powers to the states consistent with the basic unity of the country.” With this change, the party departs from its 1967 position. The CPI also demanded abolition of the past governor.

The CPI (M), which now holds the most extreme view on the subject, vehemently opposed to the existing framework of centre-state relations. The party unit’s manifesto (1971) demanded a fundamental change in the system of centre-state relation and made those specific demands:—

a) Abolition of the posts of Governors and of the Presidents rule in the state.

b) Revision of the allocation of powers and functions between the states and centre with a view to making the states power real.

c) Complete control by the state governments over all its officials including those who belong to All India Services.

An analysis of the manifesto of major political parties shows that all except the Congress (R) and the PSP-treated the centre-state relations as an issue. As contrasted with 1967, in 1971, most of the political parties, their manifestos and even included demands for changes, thereby enhancing the issue awareness. It may be perhaps political parties might have been quite aware of the A.R.C report on centre-state relations, 1969. Specific mention of centre-state relations was made also because of the experiences gained by the opposition parties in toppling operations by the centre. Therefore, most of them thought not all favored more power for the states. The CPI and CPI (M) as usual cried for the unity of the Left and Democratic forces and for more autonomy of the states.

The Eleventh Congress of the Communist Party of India considered that:

“Political and Constitutional development in our country have reached a stage when a comprehensive review of the constitution and other laws, as well as

the practices governing the centre-state relations is necessary. The 11th congress of the CPI also supports the demand for national dialogue for restructuring centre-state by suitable amendments to the Constitution and by other measures, in the light of experience. It called upon all Left and democratic forces to raise the united voice for re-examination of centre-state relations with a view to giving wider powers to the state and provide them with greater financial resources.”

The CPI (M), on the other hand, has obviously enumerated its attitudes towards in the West Bengal’s Memorandum on centre-state Relation adopted on 1st December 1977. They are:- “The CPI(M) in its Memorandum points out while criticising the constitution of India and centre, that, the constitution that came into existence in 1950, though described as federal, was essentially unitary in character. If further remarks, since 1967 the demand for greater autonomy has been growing to make state’s autonomy real and effective.”

Whereas, the CPI viewed centre-state relations in its National Council meeting in quite a different way. The Party Resolution, after going through the state of affairs, had made concrete and constructive proposals for restructuring centre-state relations on a rational basis.

The CPI, however, in its National Council meeting, while criticizing the Congress leaders, did not reconcile them to the new reality and continued to act in manner which could hardly import a sense of belonging to the states and promote a sense of national integration. It further states that since most of the time in the post-independence period the congress leaders have been in power at the centre, as well as in the state they have utilized this situation for according the federal concept and governing the country as if we have a unitary constitution.

The programme of the National Council meeting of the CPI states:

“Although our state structure is a federal one, practically all power and authority is concentrated in the Central government. The Constituent states of the

229 Ibid.
230 Ibid., P.22.
Indian Union enjoy limited autonomy and power. This restricts their rapid economic and cultural growth.”231

“Centre-State relation is fundamentally a class issue. However, certain urgent steps can and must be taken to reduce the present imbalance in centre-state relations by providing for more powers and greater resources to the states and thus by strengthening their autonomy.”232

The BJP, in its Lok Sabha Election Manifesto of 1984, pledges to defend the Unity and Integrity of India. It believes in unity in diversity as the hallmark of Indian culture. It further says India has a democratic Federal Constitution. It envisages strong states, with a strong centre. Indeed the whole cannot be strong unless the constituent parts are strong too. The party is concerned over the fate of the states and it points out that they are reduced to glorified municipalities. The party stands for restoring the balance between the centre and the states as visualized by our constitution makers. And to that end, it will:-

1. Support and strengthens state governments and not destabilize and topple them;

2. Appoint state governors in consultation with state governments

3. Give the states a fairer share of central revenues and increase the financial powers of the states;

4. Delete the temporary Article 370 of the Constitution.

In a similar strain, the CPI (M) responded to the Sarkaria Commissions’s questionnaire. It criticized the Congress (I)’s requirement for centralized rather than a federal state. It therefore, argues in favour of its earlier commitments to the federal set-up and state autonomy.

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232 Ibid.
E.M.S. Namboodripad, the leader of CPI (M) in his letter to Justice Sarkaria, writes his experiences as a Chief Minister and also presents some of the suggestions on the issue of centre-state relations:233

1. That the functions and powers of the Governor (if that office to continue) should be re-examined with a view to avoiding all possibilities of that office being used as a 5th wheel in the constitutional set-up of the state;

2. That Article 356, along with consequential provisions should be removed;

3. That the state Legislature and Executive should be made supreme in the legislative and executive work concerning subjects which have been put in the state list.

He then says this would not “Weaken the Centre” because the Centre would lose only those powers which it has assumed to itself by violating the federal spirit of the Constitution.

On the other hand, the Congress(S) Party President Mr. Sharad Pawar commenting on Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi says that, Mr. Gandhi is contradicting himself by stating that the coming Assembly Elections (1985) would be one-sided due to “Weak Opposition”. But, Mr. Gandhi also said that different parties should rule at the centre and the states because the opposition ruled state were aided more by the centre and got a better deal.

Thus, on the basis of the attitudes of different parties towards federalism, the political parties can be classified into three groups. First, parties like Congress (I) who does not advocate any change in the structure and pattern of the centre-state relations. The Second group consists of those parties which accept the constitutional structure and the need for a strong centre but who would like to see changes in the machinery and the style of the centre-state relations. The Congress (O), the Swatantra Party, the Lok Dal, the Jana Sangh and the BJP are such parties. The Third group represents radicalism on the issue of centre-state

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relationship. They demand restructuring entire framework of the centre-state relations. This group consists of the Janata, Congress(S), CPI and CPI (M).

We have noted the CPI's view that the Congress Party represents the progressive and anti-monopoly and anti-imperialist forces among the bourgeoisie and that it can be used as a vehicle for the implementation of the “Non-Capitalist Path”. As a corollary, the CPI would appear to think there is a genuine possibility of achieving socialism through elections, in which it would be prepared to align itself with the Congress Party against reactionary parties like the Jana Sangh, Swatantra and Congress (A). The CPI (M), on the other hand, would adopt the strategy of making the best possible use of the existing legal and parliamentary facilities so long as they are available, continuing to build mass movements and organizations of workers and peasants and encouraging partial struggles to prepare for the eventual struggle for capture of power. 234

The Article entitled “The Communist Party of India (Marxist)” deals elaborately with the background and the reasons for the split of the undivided CPI; it also lays down the policies, programmes and strategies of the CPI (M) and hence is of relevance to our analysis relating to the state of India. The basic programme of the party is oriented towards developing the day to day struggle of the working people towards a well coordinated political imperialism or Foreign monopoly; economic and political institutions within the country and rapidly growing monopoly capital with its foreign collaborators. The leading force in the struggle is the working class; it however does not fight on its own, but together with all the exploited and down trodden sections of the people toiling peasantry above all.235

The 20th Congress of the CPI (M) calls upon the entire party to take up these tasks and endeavor to fulfill them. The Party has to be in the lead to fight against the neo-liberal policies which are harming the interests of the working people. We have to conduct the struggles for land, food, employment and social

justice. The CPI (M) has to counter the forces of communalism and divisiveness and defend secularism.

We have to combat the imperialist pressures in all spheres.236

(i) We shall resolutely counter the attacks and the efforts to isolate our Party by relying on the people.

(ii) Imbued with Marxism-Leninism, the Party will ceaselessly work among all sections of the working people to mobilise them around the left and democratic platform.

(iii) Let us build a powerful Communist Party throughout the country, a Party capable of mobilizing all sections of the people.

(iv) With renewed determination we shall continue the struggle to end class exploitation and social oppression of the Indian people so that we can go forward towards a new, alternative path - towards people’s democracy and socialism.

Ajay Ghosh was the General Secretary at the undivided CPI, during a very crucial period in the history of the party. It adds significance to note that it was during this period that the first elected government of the CPI headed by E.M.S. Namboodripad, in Kerala, was dismissed by the Central government headed by none other than Jawaharlal Nehru and it is not a mere confidence that it took place when Mrs. Indira Gandhi, daughter of Nehru, was the president of the Congress Party. We just bring on record a few of the observations of Ghosh on this most undemocratic act of the Congress government at the centre. When Nehru was enjoying the highest euphoria that he was a great democratic socialist, heading one of the largest democracies of the world. 237

These details were incorporated in an article entitled "Kerala". The event took place on 31st July 1959, when the President of India Dr. Rajendra Prasad, on

the advice of the Union Cabinet, issued a proclamation, dismissing the government of Kerala, dissolving the elected state legislature, suspending even the limited autonomy of the state and imposing President’s rule on the state. This brought to an end the first Communist- led Government in an Indian States.

To conclude, it can be visualized that the centre-state relations have undergone sporadic changes in the 1990’s. The currents and cross currents of various issues of centre-state relations like the imposition of President’s Rule, Appointment of Governors and Demand for Greater State Autonomy with special reference to Jammu and Kashmir have had a major bearing on the Indian federal system. The Indian federal system has also undergone qualitative changes due to the advent of a multi-party coalition politics.