CHAPTER -III
ORIGIN, GROWTH AND ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTIES OF INDIA

Introduction:

A political party acts as motivator of the expressions of the people. The political parties are like channels of communication between the government and the citizens. Parties are like engineers of public policy. It is very pertinent to study the political parties in relation to their role in policy making as political parties in almost all the forms of government are involved in policy making function. Both domestic and foreign policies are the results of the expressions made by the political parties.

The term 'Party' is derived from the Latin word 'partier' which means to share or divide. Giovanni Sartori states that, "A party is any political group that presents at elections and is capable of placing through elections, candidates for public office."¹

Edmund Burke describes the political party, "as a body of men united for promoting, by their joint endeavour, the national interest, upon some particular principle on which they are all agreed."²

Political parties may thus be termed as the bedrock of modern democracy, and they provide it with the motive force which moves the entire machinery of the government. They contend for supremacy and make an earnest effort to seize political power.

The existence of a political party or political parties is a phenomenon that is common to all states-Liberal, Democratic, Marxist or Totalitarian. Hence the structure of government is influenced by the nature of the party system.

Gettle defines, "Political party as a group of citizens, more or less organized who act as a political unit and who by the use of their voting power aim to control the government and carry out their general policy."³

A political party plays a very important role as a mechanism to steam the ship of democracy. It acts as propriety of the interest of the citizens. It mobilizes public opinion and also acts as a redresser of the grievances of people. "In the course of the analysis, two functions, or two major systemic roles of parties, have come to the fore; expression and channelment. A third function-communication-needs to be entered for the completeness of the argument."⁴

India is a country of a multitude of political parties. Their growth rate has been phenomenal since 1952. In the First Lok Sabha Elections in 1952 there were 56 parties, where as in 1989 their number crossed the 100 mark and in 1996 over 200 parties were in the fray. This time 169 parties tried their luck at the hustling. There are 650 political parties currently registered with the Election Commission.⁵

One of the most important political parties is the ruling Communist Political Party. The major party is the Communist Party of India, which is still strong in two or three states, and is considered to be one of the national parties for its prominent role in the Indian National Politics. In simple terms, Indian Communism has been pressure to increase power. After the split in the CPI in 1964, and CPI (M) emerged on the Indian Political horizon.

In 1951-52, as many as 14 national and 50 state-level political parties participated in the First General Elections. However, only four political parties, Congress, Praia Socialist Party, Communist Party and Jana Sangha could gain recognition as national level parties. Since then the number of political parties, both national and regional has been increasing.

The nature of the party system has been changing continuously because of both the splits in the existing parties and the emergence of new parties. The BJP, Congress, BSP, CPI(M), CPI, PSP, FB, KC, AGP, SAO, TDP, DMK, AIADMK, SP, Janata Dal (S), Janata Dal (U), JMM, ML, National Conference, TMC, Shiva Sena, Trinamool Congress, PMK and several others have been all active political actors in Indian politics. The Indian party system has all along been a multi-party system, though it remained virtually dominated between 1947-77 by a single party (Congress).

With this brief background, now I would like to discuss the origin, growth and organization of the Communist Party of India and the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

**Origin and Growth of the Communist Party of India:**

The Communist Party of India was inspired by the Russian Revolution. It had its roots in the erstwhile Soviet Union. The party was born in Tashkent in 1920 as the brainchild of M.N. Roy.

Ever since India achieved political independence in the late 1940's, The Communist Movement in the country has been increasingly under pressure from the domestic solution within India. Its crucial problem has been how to gain control of national or local affairs and escape direction from communist fountain heads outside India.6

In simple terms, Indian Communism has been under pressure. After the split in the CPI in 1964, the challenge of India, its social and political culture and systems has been, and continues to be, the principle preoccupation of the two Communist Parties – CPI and CPI (M).

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.”7

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Some British Communists and M.N. Roy inspired a group of young Indians, who were great admirers of Marxism and the Russian revolution to set up in India an organization to spread the Marxist ideology. This organization came formally into existence on 26th December 1925, and was named as the Communist Party of India. Shortly after, the CPI was recognized on Roy’s advice, as a branch of the Communist International.8

The Communist International not only determined the programme of the CPI, it also trained many Indian Communists in the art of fomenting discontent and rebellion among the people, of preparing them for armed insurrection, of organizing worker’s strikes and the freedom struggle and of infiltrating into government and institutions so as to wreck from within. A few of the communists who were trained in Moscow were M.N. Roy, S.A. Dange, G.M. Adhikari, C.P. Dutt, Dr. Hafiz, Nalini Gupta, Ayodhya Prasad and Shaukat Usmani.

The Communist Party of India is a major political party in India. There are different views about the exact date of birth of the Communist Party of India. But commonly accepted date about the CPI is 26th December 1925. Whereas, the Communist Party of India (Marxist), which split-off from the CPI, claims that the party was founded in the USSR in 1920.

Communism during the Colonial Period:

The Communist Party of India was founded in Tashkent on October 17th 1920, soon after the Second Congress of the Communist International. The Founding members of the party were M.N. Roy, Evelina Trench Roy (Roy’s Wife), Abani Mukherji, Mohammad Ali (Ahmed Hasan), Mohammad Shafiq and Acharya.

The CPI began efforts to build a party organization inside India. Roy made contacts with Anushilan and Gugantar groups in Bengal. Small Communist Groups were formed in Bengal (led by Sigarvelu Chettiar), and Punjab (led by Ghulam Hussain). However, only Usmani became a Communist Party of India’s party member.

During the 1920’s and beginning of 1930’s the party was badly organized and in practice there were several communist groups working with limited national coordination. The British colonial authorities had banned all communist activity, which made the task of building a united party very difficult. Only in 1935 was the party ready to be accepted as the Indian section of the Communist Third International. However, only Usmani became a CPI party member.⁹

Between 1921 and 1924 there were four conspiracy trials against the communist movement: First Peshawar Conspiracy Case, Second Peshawar Conspiracy Case, Moscow Conspiracy Case and the Cawnpore Bolshevik Conspiracy Case.

In the first three cases, Russian trained Muhajir Communists were put on trial. However, the Cawnpore trial had more political impact. On March 17th, 1924, M.N.Roy, S.A.Dange, Nalini Gupta, Shaukat Usmani, Ghulan Gussain, and R.C.Sharma were charged, in Cawnpore Bolshevik Conspiracy case. The Specific charge was that they, as communists, were seeking “to Deprive the king Emperor of his sovereignty of British India, by complete separation of India from Imperialistic Britain by a violent revolution”¹⁰.

On 25th December 1925, a Communist Conference was organized in Kanpur. Colonial authorities estimated that 500 persons took part in the conference. The conference was convened by a man called Satyabhakta. At the Conference Satyabhakta argued for a “national communism”, and against subordination under Committee.

Being outvoted by the other delegates, Satyabhakta left both the Conference Vince in protest. The Conference adopted the name “Communist Party of India”. Groups such as LKPH dissolved into the minified CPI. The émigré CPI, which probably had little character anyway, was effectively substituted by the organization now operating inside India.

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¹⁰ Ibid.
Soon after the 1926 Conference of the workers and peasants party of Bengal, the underground CPI directed its members to join the provincial workers and peasant’s parties. All open Communist activities were carried out through workers and peasant’s parties.

The Sixth Congress of the Communist International met in 1928. In 1927 the Kuomintang had turned on the Chinese communists, which led a review of the policy on forming alliances with the national bourgeoisie in the colonial countries. The colonial theses of the 6th comintern congress called upon the Indian Communists to combat the “National – Reformist leaders” and to unmask the national reformism of the Indian National Congress and oppose all phrases of the Swarajists, Gandhists, etc, about passive resistance. The Congress did however some differentiation between the character of the Chinese Kuomintang and the Indian Swarajist Party, considering the latter as neither a reliable ally nor a direct enemy. The Congress called on the Indian communists to utilize the contradictions between the national bourgeoisie and the British imperialists.

On March 20th 1929, arrests against WPP, CPI and other labour leaders were made in several parts of India in what became known as “the Meerut Conspiracy Case.” The Communist leadership was now put behind bars. The trial proceedings were to last for four years.

As of 1934, the main centre of activity of CPI were Bombay, Calcutta and Punjab. The Party had also begun extending its activities to Madras. A Group of Andhra and Tamil students, amongst them P.Sundarayya, were recruited to the CPI by Amir Hyder Khan.

The Party was reorganized in 1933, after the Communist leaders from the Meerut trials were released. A Central Committee of the party was set up. In 1934 the party was accepted as the Indian section of the Communists International.

When Indian Leftwing elements formed the Congress Socialist Party in 1934, the CPI branded it as Social Fascist.
In connection with the change of policy of the committer toward popular front politics, the Indian Communists changed their relation to the Indian National Congress. The Communists joined the Congress Socialist Party, which worked as the Left wing of Congress. Through joining CSP, the CPI accepted the CSP demand for Constituent Assembly, which it had denounced two years before. The CPI however analyses that the demand for Constituent Assembly would not be a substitute for Soviets.

In July 1937, the first Kerala unit of CPI was founded at a clandestine meeting in Calicut. Five persons were present at the meeting, E.M.S. Namboodripad, Krishna Pillai, N.C.Shekhar, K.Damodaran and S.V.Ghate. The first four were members of the CSP in Kerala. The latter, Ghate, was a CPI Central Committee member, who had arrived from Madras. Contacts between the CSP in Kerala and the CPI had begun in 1935, when P.Sundarayya met with E.M.S and Krishna Pillai. Sundarayya and Ghate visited Kerala at several times and met with the CSP leaders there. The contacts were facilitated through the national meetings of the Congress, CSP and all India Kisan Sabha.

In 1936-1937, the Cooperation between Communists reached its peak. At the 2nd congress of the CSP, held in Meerut in January 1936, a thesis was adopted which declared that there was a need to build a united Indian Socialist Party based on Marxism-Leninism. At the 3rd CSP Congress, held in Faizpur, several Communists were included into the CSP National Executive Committee.

In Kerala, Communist won control over CSP, and for a brief period controlled Congress there. Two Communists E.M.S.Namboodripad and Z.A.Ahmed, became all India Joint Secretaries of CSP. The CPI also had two other members inside the CSP executive. In July 1942, the CPI was legalized. Communists strengthened their control over the All India Trade Union. At the same time, Communists were politically cornered for their opposition to the Quit India Movement.

**Communists After Independence:**

During the period around and directly following Independence in 1947, the internal situation in the party was chaotic. The party shifted rapidly between left-
wing and right-wing position. In 1948, at the Fourth Party Congress in Palghat, B.T.Ranadive was elected General Secretary of the party. In several areas the party-led armed struggles took place against a series of local monarchs that were reluctant to give up their power-such insurrections took place in Tripura, Telangana and Kerala. The most important rebellion took place in Telangana, against the Nizam of Hyderabad. The Communists built up a people's army and militia and controlled an area with a population of three million. The rebellion was brutally crushed and the party abandoned the policy of armed struggle. B.T. Ranadive was deposed as a ‘left adventurist’. In the General Elections in 1957, the CPI emerged as the largest opposition party.11

In 1957, the CPI won the state elections in Kerala. This was the first time that an opposition party won control over an Indian state. E.M.S. Namboodripad became Chief Minister.

A serious problem surfaced in 1962. One reason was the Sino-Indian war, where the Soviet faction of the Indian Communists backed the position of the Indian government, while other sections of the party claimed that it was a conflict between a socialist and a capitalist state, and this took a pro-Chinese position. There were three factions in the party internationalists; centrist and nationalist backed India. Centrist took a neutral view prominent leaders inducing S.A.Dange, A.K.Gopalan and E.M.S.Namboodripad were in the nationalist faction. B.T.Ranadive, Sundarayya, P.C.Joshi, Jyoti Basu and Harkishan Singh Surjeet are among those who supported China. Ajoy Ghosh was the prominent person in the Centrist Faction. In general, most of Bengal Communist leaders supported china and most others supported India.

Ideological differences led to the split in the party in 1964 when two different party conferences were held: one of CPI and one of the CPI (M). There is a common misconception that the lifts during Sino-Indian War led to the 1962 split. In Fact, the split was Leftists vs. Rightists, rather than internationalists Vs nationalists. The presence of nationalists A.K.Gopalan, and E.M.S.Namboodripad

and internationalists P. Sundharayya, Jyoti Basu and Harkishan Singh Surjeet in the CPI (M) prove this fact.

During the period 1970-77, CPI was allied with Congress. In Kerala, they formed government together with Congress, with the CPI leader Achutha Menon as Chief Minister. After the fall of the regime of Indira Gandhi, CPI reoriented itself towards cooperation with CPI (M).

The Communist Party of India was founded on 26th December, 1925 at an All-India Conference held at Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, in late December 1925 and early January 1926. Communists participated in the independence struggle, and as members of the Congress Socialist Party, became a formidable presence on the socialist wing of the Indian National Congress. They were expelled from the Congress Socialist Party in March 1940, after allegations that the Communists had disrupted party activities and were intent on cooping party organizations. Indeed, by the time the Communists were expelled, they had gained control over the entire Congress Socialist Party units in what were to become the southern states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.12

Communists remained members of the Indian National Congress although their support of the British war effort after the German invasion of the Soviet Union and their nationalist policy supporting the right of religious minorities to secede from India were diametrically opposed to Congress policies. As a result, the Communists became isolated within the Congress. After independence, Communists organized a peasant uprising in the Telangana region in the northern part of what was to become Andhra Pradesh. The uprising was suppressed only after the central government sent in the army. Starting in 1951, the Communist Party of India shifted to a more moderate strategy of seeking to bring Communism to India within the constraints of Indian democracy. In 1957, the CPI was elected to rule the state government of Kerala only to have the government dismissed and President’s Rule declared in 1959.13

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12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
In 1964, in conjunction with the widening rift between China and the Soviet Union, a large leftist faction of the CPI leadership, based predominantly in Kerala and West Bengal, split from the party to form the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

Present Situation:

CPI is recognised by the Election Commission of India as a “National Party.” To date, CPI happens to be the only national political party from India to have contested all the general elections using the same electoral symbol.

At the national level they have supported new Indian National Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government, but without taking part in it. The party is part of a coalition of Leftist and Communist Parties known in the national media as the Left Front. Upon attaining power in May 2004, the United Progressive Alliance formulated a programme of action known as the CMP. The left bases its support to the UPA on strict adherence to it. Provisions of the CMP mention to discontinue disinvestment, massive social sector outlays and an independent Foreign Policy.

In West Bengal and Tripura the party participates in Left Front governments. It is also taking part in the state government in Manipur. In Kerala the party is part of the Left Democratic Front. In Tamil Nadu, it is part of the Progressive Democratic Alliance. The current General Secretary of CPI is A.B.Bardhan. The party has fraternal relations with other communist-aligned parties like CPI(M), RSP and FB.

The principal mass organizations of the CPI are –

1) All India Trade Union Congress
2) All India Youth Federation
3) All India Students Federation
4) National Federation of Indian Women

\[14\] Ibid.

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5) All India Kisan Sabha (Peasant Organization)

6) Bharathiya Khet Mazdoor Union (Agricultural Workers)

The Communist Party of India : A Profile

The emergence of the Communist Party of India was the direct result of the October Revolution in Russia. Between 1921 and 1925, some Communist groups were operating in different parts of the country. In December 1925, these groups gathered together at a conference in Kanpur and formed the CPI.

As a first task the CPI put forward a programme for the national movement based upon the idea of Marx and Lenin. They demanded complete independence in place of dominion status, initiated the Kisan Movement and functioned actively inside the Congress, backing up the radical section in it. During the period 1926-29 the party made considerable progress and mighty working class movements were launched. But the party suffered serious setbacks in 1929 on account of the famous Meerut Conspiracy case against the whole leadership of the party and again in 1942 on account of its attitude towards the Quit India Movement. The party had its first congress in 1943, and also took part in the 1945-46 General Elections in a limited way.15

However, by 1947 the party had matured and acquired the status of a major political party. After Independence, the party had its second congress in February 1948 and the third in 1953.

The third congress confirmed a programme adopted by the CPI in 1951 which pointed out that the anti-imperialist revolution was neither complete nor truly socialist in character. It also issued a policy statement which pointed out that it was not feasible to apply Russian or Chinese revolutionary techniques in Indian conditions.

They resolved to achieve their aim by building a national united front of the working class, kisan and what they called petty and national bourgeoisie. The

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idea of forming a united front created flutter in the party and was sharply opposed by a powerful section of the party. It was this section which finally broke away from the CPI and formed the CPI (M) in 1964.

The CPI went to the polls in 1952 in India’s First General Elections. The outcome of elections was remarkable and the party emerged as a principle opposition group in parliament. The results of the Second General Elections registered further advance for the CPI which was now the second largest party in the country and the main opposition party in the country and the main opposition party in parliament. In the states the party ousted Congress in Kerala and formed Communist-led Government. But after 28 months, following large scale disturbances and turmoil, the communist ministry of Kerala was dismissed by the centre.\textsuperscript{16}

At the Fifth Congress at Amritsar in 1958, the party, for the first time, accepted in principle that transition to socialism by peaceful means was possible. The Sixth Congress at Vijayawada in 1961 reiterated the party’s resolve to build up a National Democratic Front. The Congress was followed by the Third General Elections in 1962 in which the CPI secured 32 seats in Lok Sabha and 205 seats in State Assemblies.

The year 1964 witnessed a split in the party with 32 members of the 106 members of the National Council breaking away from the CPI and forming the CPI (M).

At the Fourth General Elections, the party again emphasized the need for the unity of all the Left and Democratic parties. The party captured 23 Lok Sabha seats and 121 Assembly seats. The CPI (M) had an edge over the CPI in West Bengal and Kerala. In the Lok Sabha mid-term poll in 1971 the party again secured 23 Lok Sabha seats and in 1972 Elections 89 Assembly seats only. The CPI secured Seven Lok Sabha seats and Four Rajya Sabha seats in 1977 General Elections.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ibid.}
The party held its Ninth Congress in Cochin in 1971 which put forward a 27-point mass movement programme and again emphasized the need for Left and Democratic unity. The Tenth Congress of CPI was held at Bhatinda in 1978.

In the 1981 Lok Sabha mid-term poll the party had slightly improved its position when 11 of its candidates were returned. In 1981, following differences on policy towards Congress (I), Mr. Dange resigned from the Chairmanship of the CPI. The party subsequently abolished the post of the Chairman.

The CPI, in its 11th Congress in Bhatinda, in April 1978, adopted the resolution stating that it was a mistake to have supported. The emergency had stressed the need for unity among the Communist parties. The tension in the CPI started before January 1980 parliamentary elections when the chairman of the CPI resigned from the chairmanship of the party to protest against its alliance with the CPI (M), Congress (U) and Lok Dal in the elections. This difference of opinion led to a further split, of the CPI in March 1981, Dange's followers met in Meerut and formed the All India Communist Party. As a result Dange was expelled from the CPI. Thus, the CPI was reduced to a small faction as its all India character disappeared in 1964. The All India Communist Party was against participation in election and condemned both the CPI and CPI (M) for participating in parliamentary democratic elections.

After the fall of Janata Government the General Elections were held in 1980. The CPI (M) got 35 seats and the CPI could get only 11 seats. Thus, the CPI was reduced to a minority party whereas CPI (M) got the third position in the Lok Sabha. The CPI (M) came to power in West Bengal and Tripura and also joined the Left coalition government of Kerala. During October 1981, Kerala coalition government lost power.

In the Lok Sabha Elections held in December 1984, the Communist Parties did not do well and this was admitted by the CPI (M) saying that they were "signs of erosion" in the party's influence in its strong holds of Kerala and West Bengal.  

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As such, the CPI (M) secured only 22 seats, [one in Andhra Pradesh, one in Kerala, two in Tripura and eighteen in West Bengal] and the Communist Party of India, only six seats out of sixty one seats that the party contested. Whereas in March 1985 Assembly elections, CPI secured 34 seats from six states[eleven from Andhra Pradesh, eleven from Bihar, four in Karnataka, one in Maharashtra, one in Orissa, six in Uttar Pradesh].

Support Base:

The CPI membership is concentrated in four states of Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and West Bengal. Three other states have significant enrolments: Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Punjab. In the CPI, the workers and wage-earners constituted 17 per cent of the party membership. The 1982 report of the party says that agricultural workers constitute a sizeable section of the party membership and, in some states, account for more than 50 per cent of the membership. The Party officially bemoans the long standing indifference to the task of building mass organizations, particularly Trade Unions, Kisan Sabhas and Agricultural Worker's Associations.19

Ideology and Programme:

The CPI is committed to the parliamentary road to socialism. In its manifesto the CPI reiterated its demands for weeding out of criminals and corrupt men from body politics, tilting the centre-state relations in favour of the latter, ending indifference to the welfare of the working class, agricultural labour, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, generating more jobs, reducing foreign debt by restricting imports, and above all, arresting the steep rise in prices.20

The CPI favours co-operation with all democratic and progressive forces including ‘the centre’ and the ‘the left’ of the Congress party. They hope to enlarge the party’s parliamentary strength through electoral pacts with the ruling party. Today, the CPI which has to play secondary role to the CPI (M) since 1978, is very much in the doldrums.

20 Ibid
CPI : Manifesto:

The party is gradually losing its influence among voters. The CPI General Secretary Mr. A.B. Bardhan, told media persons after a meeting of the party’s national executive that the Congress(I) had been “Most Unrealistic” in projecting itself as being capable of coming to power on its own. This did not go down well with the people and the campaign “boomeranged” he said.²¹

The CPI’s criticism of the Congress (I) was on the same lines as of the CPI(M)’s. It held the Congress (I)’s political arrogance responsible for the victory of the BJP-led alliance arguing that its bid to project itself as a single party government of the future did not convince the people.

Meanwhile, Mr. Bardhan acknowledged that the CPI’s poor performance in elections called for serious introspection. He denied that CPI was in danger of losing its status as a national party. He said that it satisfied one of the three criteria required for being recognized as a national party. The party won only four seats as against nine in 1998.

The Election Manifesto of the CPI, states that 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 your support in this poll.

The party today is called upon to join forces with other Left and Secular forces to save our country from the Communal fascist offensive mounted by the BJP. This Party’s parent organization, the RSS, played no part in the Freedom Struggle. It is weaned on the philosophy of Communal-Fascism, whatever mask it wears. It came to power at the centre by rousing communal passions, and taking advantage of the sins of omissions and commissions of Congress Rule, and the weakness of the Left.²²

CPI appeals that (2004), 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.

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 the CPI and other Left parties in the Lok Sabha. 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.  

The CPI Releases Lok Sabha Election Manifesto:

The elections to the 15th Lok Sabha are being held at a time when the country faces serious threat to its economic and political independence due to right-ward shift in economic policies under the garb of economic neo-liberalism and pro-imperialist tilt in the foreign policy.  

To halt the ruling classes from pursuing this disastrous course, the CPI and the Left are joining the electoral battle with the slogan of providing a non-Congress and non-BJP alternative that should carry forward the glorious tradition of anti-imperialism, secular polity and independent economic development ensuring economic and social justice to all. We seek your support and vote for this sacred task.

Communists were in the force front in the struggle against princely states, and for integrated India; continuing the heritage of the freedom struggle, communists courageously initiated struggles for defense of secular polity, national integrity, for the rights of workers, for self independent economic development, dominance of public sector in the national economy, for land reforms, fair wages

23 Ibid., P.4.
to agri-workers, gender justice, education to all, social security and health care for each and every citizen. They consistently stood up for the rights of the minorities, dalits and other deprived sections. They upheld the banner of parliamentary democracy that is constantly coming under threat in recent days.

Aims and Objectives of the Communist Party of India:

The Communist Party of India claims to be the political party of the Indian working class in high forms of class organization. It is a voluntary organization of workers, peasants and of toiling people in general, devoted to the cause of socialism and communism. The Communist Party of India sets itself the goal of ending all form of exploitation of man by man and establishing a socialist and ultimately a communist society in which individual liberty, freedom of speech, press and association as well as the right of political organization including the right of opposition to the government shall be fully safeguarded.25

Emblem: The emblem of the party shall be a crossed hammer and sickle in white against a red background with a circular inscription in white “Communist Party of India.”

Flag: The Flag of the party shall be a red flag of which the length shall be one and a half times its width. At the centre of the flag, there shall be a crossed hammer and sickle in white.26

Party Organization:

Until 1958 the CPI had been organized as a cadre party on the democratic centralist lines spelt out in the comintern’s principle of party organization. This was applied in the 1948 (Calcutta) and 1954 (Madurai) constitutions to the Indian context. Following the CPSU 20th Congress of 1956, the CPI adopted a new constitution at Amritsar in 1956, more suited to peaceful transition, and to working within a system of representative democracy.

26 Ibid., P. 277.
Party units, formerly known as cells, Central Committees and Politbureau came under the mass democratic nomenclature, branches, State and National Councils and Central Executive Committee. The National Council was fixed at 101 members and the Central Executive Committee at 25, while congress was now to be held every two years.27

Currently, there is a 9-member central secretariat of which one is General Secretary, which acts as the day to day executive of the 31-member Central Executive Committee, the whole elected by the 125-member National Council. In turn the National Council is elected by the Party Congress whose 1,000 plus delegated are elected by State Councils on the basis of one representative for 500 members and so on.

Organisation of the Communist Party of India:

The organization of the CPI as on January 1st, 1988 is as follows28:

1. Principal Holders of Office
   a. General Secretary
   b. Leader in Parliament
   c. Treasurer

2. CPI Central Control Commission
   a. Member – Eleven

3. CPI Central Executive Committee
   a. Members – Twenty Four

4. CPI Central Secretariat
   a. General Secretary – One
   b. Secretary – Eight

General Secretary : A.B. Bardhan.

Founded : 1920.

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CPI : Performance

Under the impact of the successful Socialist Revolution (1917) in Russia as well as under the influence of the growing popularity of Marxism, several socialist labour organizations were formed in India. In 1924, several such organizations held a joint Conference at Kanpur and formed the Communist Party of India. The CPI expressed full faith in the ideology of Marxism – Leninism. It advocated that complete independence of India can be secured only through the adoption and use of Marxism as interpreted and used by Lenin. In 1934, the government banned the CPI and arrested its leaders. The Communists, thereupon, decided to work through the Congress.29

In 1942, when the Communists opposed the Quit India Movement and supported the Soviet involvement in the Second World War on the side of the allies, the ban of CPI was lifted. Thereafter, the CPI started gaining more and more popularity.

After Independence, the CPI decided to participate actively in the political process and to contest elections. It accepted that peaceful and constitutional means can also be used for promoting the interests of the working class. In the first three elections held in 1952, 1957 and 1962 it got 28, 27 and 32 Lok Sabha seats. In 1957 it became the First Non-Congress party to form a government in Kerala.30

However, towards the end of 1950’s, internal conflict developed among its members over the question of support for Soviet Communism Vs Chinese Communism. In 1962, when Chinese aggression took place, this conflict became

30 Ibid.
more marked and aggressive. While the rightist among the leftists condemned the Chinese aggression against India, the staunch leftists refused to brand China as an aggressor.

While leaders like Dange, Nayar, Dr. Ahmed and Yogender Sharma gave full support to the policies of Nehru's cabinet, others like Jyoti Basu, Sundrayya, Namboodripad and Harkishan Singh Surjeet et.al. refused to condemn China. They resigned from the CPI and in April, 1964, 32 out of 96 members of the National executive of CPI boycotted its meeting. A split in the CPI became inevitable. In September 1964, eleven out of 32 members of the Lok Sabha led by Gopalan formed a new party—the CPI (M) and got recognition as a separate party. It gave a big setback to the CPI.31

Since 1964, the CPI has been participating in the Indian political process and trying to increase its popularity vis-a-vis the CPI (M).

For the last 10 years or so, the CPI and the CPI (M) have been trying to come closer. Both have come forward to cooperate on a common platform—the Left Front. The changes in International Communism under the impact of 'Perestroika' and 'Glasnost' in the USSR, rise of Anti-Communist regimes in the socialist countries, the adoption of liberalization, decentralization, democracy and market economy as objectives by all the former socialist countries and the changes in Indian political system resulting from the emergence of the National Democratic Alliance, the growing popularity of the BJP, the power loss suffered by the Congress and the declining popularity of CPI in general and for playing an active role in the Indian political system.

CPI finds itself closer to the Congress. Between 1996-98, the CPI joined the United Front Government but the CPI (M) decided to extend only outside support to the United Front Government (1996-97 and 1997-98).

The CPI is a well-organized and ideologically committed national level political party of India. Its popularity has, however, been on the decline

31 Ibid., P. 415.
particularly since 1977. Up to 1971, the CPI used to secure between 25 to 30 seats in the Lok Sabha Elections. Thereafter its share has been decreasing. It got just 7 seats in 1977 and only 6 in 1984 elections. It got 13 seats in the First Lok Sabha, 12 seats in the Eleventh Lok Sabha, 9 seats in the Twelfth and 4 seats in the Thirteenth Lok Sabha. It enjoys a popular support base of just 2 per cent. It got 10 seats in the 14th Lok Sabha and 04 seats in the 15th Lok Sabha. It enjoys a popular support base of just 1.43 percent. 32

Electoral Performance of the CPI:

In the May-June, 1991 elections, the CPI could secure only 13 seats in the Lok Sabha. Its success was mostly in Bihar. In 1989 elections it had secured only 11 seats. In fact, right from First General Elections of 1952, the CPI has never been in a position to secure even 30 seats.

The following table-1 gives an idea about the performance of CPI in Indian politics at the National level.

\[32 \text{Ibid., P. 418.}\]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Seats won</th>
<th>Total seats</th>
<th>% of voting</th>
<th>Seats contested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>489</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>137</td>
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<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>106</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>87</td>
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<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>07</td>
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<td>2.8</td>
<td>91</td>
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<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>48</td>
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<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>66</td>
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<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>1991</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>543</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>43</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


After the split of 1964, the CPI was in a position to retain its position by capturing 23 and 24 seats in 1967 and 1971 elections. However, after that it began suffering a decline. In 1977 it got only 7 seats and thereafter it has been securing

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around 10 seats. In 1984, it touched the lowest mark with only 6 seats; with 13 seats in the Tenth Lok Sabha it played a minor role as one of the constituents of the National Front. In 1996, when the United Front formed its government at the centre, the CPI joined the government and its General Secretary Indrajit Gupta became the Home Minister. It was also a partner in the Second United Front government which remained in power from April, 1997 to March, 1998.\textsuperscript{34}

Ideologically, the CPI is currently in a dilemma. It now accepts the need for interaction with the capitalists. It holds that while certain sectors should continue to be state controlled, there are many other areas which could use private investment and that the state should help private entrepreneurs in developing economy. Since such a view is very close to the congress thinking, the CPI finds it possible to extend support to the Congress and to have electoral adjustment with it.

In September, 1999 Lok Sabha Elections, it had some sort of electoral understanding with the Congress in Punjab. The CPI, however, finds it difficult to reconcile with the CPI (M), even though both adhere to the Left. The CPI (M) now happens to be more popular than CPI. The latter has been trying to increase its popular support base but has not been really successful.\textsuperscript{35}

**Origin and Growth of Communist Party of India (Marxist):**

The CPI (M) was formed at the 7th Congress of the Communist Party of India held in Calcutta from October 31\textsuperscript{st} to November 7\textsuperscript{th} 1964. The CPI (M) was born in the struggle against revisionism and sectarianism in the Communist Movement at the International and National levels in order to defend the scientific and revolutionary tenets of Marxism-Leninism and its appropriate application in the concrete Indian conditions. The CPI (M) combines the fine heritage of the anti-imperialist struggle and the revolutionary legacy of the undivided Communist Party which was founded in 1920. Over the years, the party has emerged as the foremost Left force in the country.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
The CPI (M) has grown steadily since its formation in 1964. The membership of the party, which was 118,683 at the time of its formation, has grown to 703,263 in 1997. The party has sought to independently apply Marxism-Leninism to Indian conditions and to work out the strategy and tactics for a people's democratic revolution, which can transform the lives of the 950 million Indian people.\(^{36}\)

The CPI (M) is engaged in bringing about this basic transformation by carrying out a programme to end imperialist, big bourgeoisie and landlord exploitation. The CPI (M) as the leading Left party is committed to building a Left and Democratic Front which can present a real alternative to the existing bourgeois landlord policies.

While various Communist Parties had changed their names and abandoned the ideology of the working class, the CPI (M) maintained its ideological and political unity. This is not to deny the fact that these developments should lead to a reassessment and fresh look at the experience and history of the Communist Movement. Fourteenth Congress of the CPI (M) adopted an ideological resolution spelling out the CPI (M), understanding on these developments. It marks the beginning of the reappraisal of past experience, learn from it and renew our Marxist outlook to meet contemporary challenges.

The principal mass organizations of CPI (M) are:\(^{37}\)

1. Democratic Youth Federation of India.
2. Students Federation of India.
3. Centre of India Trade Unions.
4. All India Kisan Sabha.
5. All India Agricultural Workers Union.
6. All India Democratic Women's Association.
7. Bank Employees Federation of India
8. All India Lawyers' Union.

\(^{37}\)Ibid.
Communist Party of India (Marxist): A Profile

The party, as a separate identity, came into being in 1964 as a result of the split in the undivided CPI. However, in a way, the party is as old as the Indian Communist Movement since it claims to be a continuation of the same.38

The emergence of the party is linked with the transfer of power in India in 1947 when the undivided CPI was faced with the problem of correctly assessing the implications of the transfer. The acute inner party ideological and political crisis that followed resulted in crystallizing the two distinct viewpoints. One of them found that with the leftist orientation given to the Congress by Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, the Congress has joined the progressive movement. On the basis of this assessment they decided to cooperate with the Congress and also to join a coalition government if possible. The other group was sharply opposed to this pro-Congress policy and held the view that the Congress was still a party of the big bourgeoisie. The conflict came to the open at the Fourth Congress of the CPI at Palghat in 1956. In the end the pro-Congress line was rejected. But the Chinese aggression in 1962 administered a heavy blow to the opponents of this line. They were branded as pro-China. They condemned bracketing their anti-Congress line with the “pro-China” line and insisted that “their opposition to the Congress government’s China policy and part of their opposition to the class enemies, the Congress and its government.”39

Two great developments in the international field provided further confidence to the pro-Congress line in the CPI: the new orientation given by 20th Congress of the CPSU to the problems of the world revolutionary process and the differences that cropped up between the Communist Party of China and that of Russia. This made the inner-party conflict still more serious which finally reached its climax in 1964 when 32 members of CPI National Committee Left the party, took some states, districts and local party units with them and organized them in a

39 Ibid.
party based on what they called Marxism-Leninism and the line of militant struggle against the Congress party.\footnote{Ibid.}

The party secured 22 seats in the 1984 Lok Sabha Elections. The CPI (M) held its Twelfth Congress at Calcutta in December 1985 in which its constitution was amended.

**CPI (M) Manifesto:**

The CPI (M) has focused on the BJP and its 13 month rule of “unmitigated disaster” and appealed to the people to “defeat the BJP and its allies” in the coming Lok Sabha Elections.\footnote{Ibid., P. 56.}

Reflecting on the contention that the people have to choose between the BJP-led combine and the Congress, the manifesto stressed the need to increase the CPI (M) and Left’s strength in the Lok Sabha. “The effective intervention of the left would enable all the democratic and secular forces to work for an effective third alternative”. But in chalking out its dual life – one for Left stronghold areas of West Bengal, Tripura and the Kerala, and the other for the rest of the country.

Even while the manifesto emphasized that the Congress was not the alternative to BJP, it just about stopped short of openly soliciting votes for the former ruling party in regions where the Left or other secular forces did not count for much. “We differentiate between the Congress and the BJP and that is why we have said that there can be no equi-distance.”\footnote{Ibid., P. 57.} Mr. Surjeet said to a query, in an indication that the CPI (M) would not mind propping up a Congress-led alternative to keep the BJP at bay.

**Manifesto for the 15\(^{th}\) Lok Sabha Elections 2009:**

Elections to the Lok Sabha are a significant event in the politics of the country. For the 15\(^{th}\) time, the people of India are being called upon to elect a new government.

\footnotesize
\[40\] Ibid.
\[41\] Ibid., P. 56.
\[42\] Ibid., P. 57.
In the May 2004 elections, the people rejected the BJP-led NDA combine, which had ruled the country for six years with disastrous effects. The CPI (M) was committed to keeping the BJP and the communal forces out of power. Accordingly, the CPI(M) and the Left parties extended support to the Congress-led government formed at the centre. This was done with the understanding that the UPA government will implement its own Common Minimum Programme (CMP).

The CPI (M) and the Left parties consistently worked to see that the UPA government implemented the pro-people commitments made in the CMP. Legislations such as the Rural Employment Guarantee Act and the Forest Tribal Bill were adopted only due to the continuous pressure of the Left. The CPI (M) constantly demanded increased allocations in agriculture, education and health in keeping with the promises in the CMP. It demanded measures to curb the communal forces & strengthen the secular principles, and it emphasized the pursuit of an independent foreign policy.43

Support Base:

The CPI (M) draws its support from middle and lower classes. Its support base is working class, agricultural labour, poor peasants and employees. The strength among the peasants is however, largely continued to West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. The party has begun to make significant inroads among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes - notably in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The CPI (M) in West Bengal has developed a vast base in the countryside. “The CPI (M)’s main support base is more concentrated in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura and also in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Maharashtra, Orissa and Punjab.”44

Support CPI (M):

The CPI (M)’s role in the past five years speaks for itself. It has intervened consistently in parliament and elsewhere to defend the interests and the

43 Communist Party of India, Election Manifesto, General Election, CPI Publication, New Delhi, 2009, P.l.
44 Fadia, B.L., Op.Cit., P. 691.
livelihoods of the people, protect national sovereignty, curb communalism, ensure social justice and fight against growing imperialist penetration.

Scores of members and supporters of the CPI (M) became martyrs by laying down their lives for the cause of the working people, fighting communal and divisive forces, and in police firing.

The three Left-led governments of West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura have shown that alternative policies can be implemented despite the constraints of having a central government pursuing Neo-liberal policies. Over the years, Kerala, West Bengal and Tripura have implemented land reforms and have broken up large scale landlordism. They have institutionalized and ensured the democratic functioning of the three-tier panchayat system. Despite the limited resources and the constraints that state governments work under, the Left-led governments have protected the interests of the peasants and agricultural workers by ensuring agricultural development and have taken steps to promote industrial development. The public distribution system which is under attack by the centre, has not been dismantled.45

**Electoral Performance:**

At present, the CPI (M) is in power in the state of West Bengal. It has a solid base in Kerala and Tripura. The Marxist-led Left Front in Tripura secured as high as 50.3 percent of the popular vote in the February 1988 State Assembly Elections. In the 1984 Lok Sabha Elections it was able to capture 22 seats and in 1989 elections it won 32 seats. The CPI (M) has polled 6.28 percent votes in the Tenth Lok Sabha Elections (1991) and won 35 seats. The CPI (M) has polled 5.66 percent votes in the Fourth Lok Sabha Elections (2004) and won 43 seats and the CPI (M) has polled 5.33 percent votes in the 15th Lok Sabha Elections (2009) and won 16 seats. It has a strong cadre-based organization and has emerged as a political force in India’s political system.46

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46 Ibid.
Ideology and Programme:

The CPI (M) has modified its pro-Chinese stance and has sought to direct the Communist Movement in accordance with the political and historical realities existing in India. Under the able leadership of Jyoti Basu and E.M.S. Namboodripad, the party adopted an independent course for Indian Communists, maintaining distance from both the Chinese and Soviet Communist Parties.  

The CPI (M) favoured a tactic of United Front from below, of alliance with peasants and workers to defeat the Congress, which it regarded as a party of the bourgeoisie and landlord classes. Elections were to be used as a means to mobilize the masses; the constitution was to be used as “an instrument of struggle.” The Marxists sought to “break the constitution from within.”

Today, the CPI (M) is characterized as a radical democratic party. Its emphasis is on the preservation of democratic institutions. It lays emphasis on the unity and integrity of India and favours the restructuring of centre - state relations.

Prof. Rasheeduddin Khan observes, “the CPI and CPI (M) differ in their policy perspective on a few important aspects of Indian politics, such as the nature of the Indian state, the role of the national bourgeoisie and the evaluation of the Congress party as a factor in the completion of the democratic revolution, the strategy for achieving the goal of socialism, and in the tactics to be followed towards other parties at this stage of political development for the progressive socio-economic transformation of India.”

Aims and Objectives of Communist Party of India (Marxist):

The fundamental aims and objectives of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) are “Socialism and Communism through the establishment of the state of dictatorship of the proletariat. In all its activities the party is guided by the philosophy and principles of Marxism and Leninism.” Which alone shows to the toiling masses the correct way to the ending of exploitation of man by man, their

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47 Ibid., P. 690.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
complete emancipation? The party keeps high the banner of proletarian internationalism.

The Organization of Communist Party of India (Marxist) as on March 12th 2002, is as follows:\textsuperscript{51}

1. **Principal Holders of Office**
   
a) General Secretary
   
b) Leader Parliamentary Party

2. **Central Committee of CPI (M)**
   
a) General Secretary
   
b) Members – Seventy Nine

3. **CPI (M) Politbureau**
   
a) General Secretary
   
b) Members – Seventeen

4. **CPI (M) Control Commission**
   
a) Members – Three

**The Communist Party of India (Marxist): Performance**

The birth of CPI (M) in the Indian political system came as a result of the 1964 split in the CPI. However, the CPI (M) leaders like E.M.S. Namboodripad hold that the history of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) is as old as history of Communist Movement in India. What happened in 1964 was only a formalization of the ideological differences which had been developing since the independence of the country.

E.M.S. Namboodripad was right in so far as the emergence of CPI (M) to the existence of ideological difference among the Communists of India. However, he was quite unconvincing in holding that history of CPI (M) in India was as old as the history of Communism in India.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., P. 306.
In 1964, the split in the CPI came over two issues:  

1. Nature of relations of the Indian Communists with the Soviet and Chinese Communists, and  

2. The nature of relations with Congress which was in power in India.  

Some top leaders of the CPI decided to form another party, the CPI (M), because they were not prepared to brand Chinese Communism as an aggressive ideology favouring expansionism. They were not happy with the acceptance of peaceful co-existence with the Soviet Communist.  

These members, prominent among them being E.M.S.Namboodripad, Jyoti Basu, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, P. Sundarayya and R.D.Gupta, formed a separate party – The Communist Party of India (Marxist).  

Since 1964, the CPI (M) has been an important actor in the Indian political system. Over the years it has emerged as a more popular party than the CPI. In 1967 elections, it polled 4.4 per cent of popular votes and secured 19 Lok Sabha seats. However, it now remains stable at about 7 per cent of the popular votes. It has been continuously securing 32 seats in the Lok Sabha since 1996. It has a strong presence—a ruling status in West Bengal. It is also quite strong in Tripura.  

But its popularity in other parts of the country remains limited. The following table-2 gives an idea about the performance of CPI (M) in Indian politics at the National level.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Seats Contested</th>
<th>Total Seats</th>
<th>Seats won By CPI (M)</th>
<th>Percentage of Voting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1967</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>19</td>
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</tr>
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<td>1971</td>
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<td>1998</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>5.66 (Approx)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The CPI (M) believes in Marxism-Leninism, Socialism, Secularism and Democracy. It is opposed to imperialism and colonialism. It is a helpful means of securing the objectives of socio-economic and political justice of Indian society—the intelligentsia, the labour class, the small farmers and peasant workers, the
youth and the students. The CPI (M) has now started accepting the principle of Socialist-Liberalism or the principle of socialist market economy.\(^{54}\)

In West Bengal, Tripura and Kerala in particular, the CPI (M) has been greatly popular. Since 1980 the CPI (M) has been in power in West Bengal. In May-June 1991 elections, the CPI (M) won 27 Lok Sabha and 187 West Bengal Vidhan Sabha seats, and thus repeated its performance of 1987 and 1989 elections. In 1983 elections, Left Front led by the CPI (M) captured two-thirds seats in the Tripura Vidhan Sabha. It remained in power in Kerala for about 6 years.

It was only during May-June 1991 elections that it suffered a stunning defeat. The CPI (M) and its ally the Forward Bloc continue to rule the West Bengal since 1982. In April 1993, the CPI (M) was in a position to win three-fourth of the 60 seats of Tripura State Legislative Assembly. It formed the government along with its alliance partners. In 1996 elections to Eleventh Lok Sabha and West Bengal Vidhan Sabha, the CPI (M) almost maintained its popularity and support base. It got 32 seats in the Lok Sabha and 150 out of 294 seats of West Bengal Vidhan Sabha. At the centre it extended support from outside to the United Front Government, while it along with its alliance partners, formed the government in West Bengal for the fifth time in row.\(^{55}\)

The CPI (M) is opposed to both the Congress and BJP, but more opposed to BJP than Congress. It is now even prepared to support the Congress or get its support for keeping the BJP out of power.

In the 1990’s the CPI (M) enjoyed the most political strength of any communist group. Nationally, its share of the vote had gradually increased from 4.2 per cent in 1967 to 6.7 per cent in 1991, but it had largely remained confined to Kerala, Tripura and West Bengal. In Kerala, the CPI (M), in coalition with other parties, wrested control from the Congress and its allies (frequently including the CPI) in 1967, in 1980 and in 1987. Support for the CPI (M) in

\(^{54}\) Ibid., P. 427.

\(^{55}\) Ibid.
Kerala in general elections has ranged from 19 per cent to 26 per cent but the party has never won more than nine of Kerala’s 20 seats in parliament. From 1977 to 1989, the CPI (M) dominated Tripura’s State government. It won two parliamentary seats in 1971, 1980 and 1984, but it lost all of its seats in 1977, 1989 and 1991.

In West Bengal, the CPI (M) has ruled the state government with a coalition of other Leftist parties since 1977, and since that time, the party has also dominated West Bengal’s parliamentary delegation. Support for the CPI is more evenly spread nationwide, but it is weak and in decline. The CPI share of the parliamentary vote has more than halved from 5.2 per cent in 1967 to 2.5 per cent in 1991.

In 1999 Lok Sabha Elections, it maintained its tally of 32 seats but failed to strengthen the Third Front from the Left Front or Anti-BJP Front in Indian politics.

Several Marxist as well as Non-Marxist scholars are now becoming increasingly critical of CPI (M)’s links with some cattiest leaders. It is also evident that there exists or at least existed a difference in the approach of its two major leaders Harkishan Singh Surjeet and Jyoti Basu, over the question whether CPI (M) should not join the UF government at the centre. Meanwhile CPI (M) continues to enjoy a good deal of support but only in the states of West Bengal, Tripura and Kerala.56

Thus, CPI (M) has been quite categorical in its views on various issues and problems. It has been a position to enlist meaningful support for its view at least in some parts of the country. It has been a national party and has the distinction of ruling a state of the Indian Union – West Bengal for more than 25 years. It still continues to hold power in West Bengal. Despite the strength being gained by Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, which got 8 Lok Sabha seats in 1999 Lok Sabha Elections, the CPI (M) continues to rule West Bengal.57

56 Ibid., P. 428.
57 Ibid., P. 434.
The CPI (M) General Secretary, Mr. Harkishan Singh Surjeet said the Congress (I) as the major opposition party failed to put up an effective fight in many states. Giving his party’s assessment of the results, he told that the BJP managed to put the Congress (I) on the “defensive” by turning the campaign into a “Vajapayee versus Sonia” issue. The Congress (I) was not able to fight off the BJP’s challenge because of poor “organizational and ideological state.”

Mr. Surjeet said, its difficulties were compounded by its claim to provide a stable government on its own, a claim which had no basis in reality and was not taken seriously by the people.

The central committee, according to Mr. Surjeet, also attributed the good show by the BJP and its allies to the fact that the opposition was not able to form an alternative government after the Vajapayee ministry was voted out.

**Party Structure:**

The 16th congress of the CPI (M), held between 4th to 11th October 1998 at Nazrul Mancha, Calcutta, elected a 67 member central committee. The Central Committee at its meeting held at the congress decided upon continuing the last politbureau till state elections were over. Later the Central Committee meeting held at New Delhi between 16th and 17th December 1998 elected 17 member politbureau.

The party congress, held every three years, is the highest decision-making body of the party in between two congresses. It is the central committee which is the highest decision-making body. There is a central secretariat to assist the work of the politbureau at the centre.

The CPI (M) has its organization in most of the states of the Indian Union. Party units in the states are guided by the respective state committees, who have under them district, zonal, area and local committees. The branch is the primary unit of the party.

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Right now, the CPI (M) is a political party with a strong base in West Bengal and Tripura. It split from the Communist Party of India in 1964 because of what it describes as the latter’s revisionism and sectarianism. It claims to have 814,408 members as of 2002.

**Party Organization:**

CPI (M) took 5.66 per cent of votes in last parliamentary election (May 2004) and it has 43 MPs. It won 42.31 per cent on an average in the 69 seats it contested. They supported new Indian National Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government, but without taking part in it.\(^{60}\)

The General Secretary of CPI (M) was Harkishan Singh Surjeet. The CPI (M) MPs. Somnath Chatterjee was the speaker of the Lok Sabha (2004). The 17th Congress of CPI (M), held in Hyderabad March 2002 elected a Central Committee with 79 members. The Central Committee later elected a 17 member politbureau. Harkishan Singh Surjeet, Jyoti Basu, E. Balanandan, E.K.Nayanar, V.S.Achuthanandan, Prakash Karat, Sitaram Yechury, S.Ramachandran Pillai, P.Ramachandran, R.Umanath, Anil Biswas, Biman Bose, Manik Sarker, Pinarai Vijayan, M.K.Pandhe, Buddadev Bhattacharya, Kortala Satyanarayana.\(^{61}\)

At present, Communist Party of India (Marxist) has elected Prakash Karat as the General Secretary replacing veteran leader Harkishan Singh Surjeet. Mr. Karat said the party would continue to oppose sectarian forces and India’s economic reform programme. The CPI (M) is the third largest party in the Indian Parliament and is a key ally of the country’s governing Congress-led coalition.

Mr. Karat’s wife Brinda has become the first woman to be elected to the 18 member politbureau, the supreme decision making authority in the party. Outgoing General Secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet and veteran Marxist leader Jyoti Basu have been retained in the politbureau which has four new members. They are the only two members of the original nine (9) member politbureau, when the CPI (M) broke away from the CPI in 1964.\(^{62}\)

\(^{60}\) *Ibid.*
Mr. Karat said, he was keen on making the party a major national force in Indian politics. "The party will focus its entire energies to strengthen the left and democratic forces in the country", he said. "We have adopted a political resolution to continue the struggle against communal forces... intensify the struggle against the economic policies of liberalization and privatization" he added.63

The CPI (M) has forced the Indian government to turn some of the economic reform plans, particularly plans to privatize loss making state owned companies. But in what is seen by some as a shift in its politics, the party has said it will not oppose foreign investment in those sectors of the Indian economy that needs it, especially infrastructure.

The Left has been an integral part of Indian politics, in the post independence period. It has been regularly participating in electioneering since 1952. In the 1960's two streams of thoughts surfaced in this monolithic organization: one section led by the late S. A. Dange fawned on the Congress, and the other treated it as an enemy. Their divergent perceptions of the 1962 Sino-Indian war, led to the 1964 split in the party. One section led by the late E.M.S Namboodripad was called the CPI (M). Mr. Dange continued to lead the CPI.

In the 1970's the CPI accepted the CPI (M)'s leadership in the stridently Anti-Congress Left Front. The two other formations—the Revolutionary Socialist Party and the Forward Bloc—also joined the Front. Its anti Congress stand brought it to power in West Bengal since 1977 and it has ruled Kerala for eighteen years, and Tripura for seventeen years.64

The Four main Left Parties- the CPI (M), CPI, RSP and the Forward Bloc—entered the poll arena on the basic premise that their representation in the 13th Lok Sabha has to be increased.

In the 1998 elections, the Left Parties totaled 48 seats, of which 32 belonged to the CPI (M), 9 belonged to the CPI, 5 belonged to the RSP and two to

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63 Ibid.
the Forward Bloc. By all indications, the Left was aiming at 70 to 80 seats this time. In order to enhance their parliamentary strength, the Left parties had to improve their position not only in the states such as West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura, where they already have a strong base and are in power, but in other areas, where they have no strong moorings of their own.65

The CPI (M)’s primary task was to ensure the defeat of the BJP in the forthcoming General Elections, which may not throw up a clear verdict this time too. With that objective in mind, the party kept its options open in backing the Congress in areas where the Left, Secular and Democratic Forces were weak.

After, a two-day meeting of the Central Committee, the party’s highest policy making body, the CPI (M) made it clear that in areas where there is a direct confrontation between the Congress and the Left and Secular Forces – as in West Bengal, Tripura and Kerala the party would fight the Congress and strive to increase the influence of the left and democratic forces.

Communist Party of India (Marxist)

ECI States : National Party
General Secretary : Prakash Karat
Leader in Loka Sabha : Basudev Acharia
Leader in Rajya Sabha : Sitaram Yechury
Founded : 1964
Headquarters : 27-29, Bhai Vir Singh Marg,
               New Delhi- 110001
Alliance : Left Front
Seats in Lok Sabha : 44
Seats in Rajya Sabha : 14
Political Ideology : Marxism-Leninism

65 Ibid.
Communist Unity:

The Draft Political Resolution of the CPI for its forthcoming 19th party Congress to be held at Chandigarh (March 29 to April 3, 2005) has stressed the urgency of communist unity as the key to building a left and democratic alternative in India. This is a more explicit reiteration of the position taken by the CPI in its 17th and 18th Party Congresses. It might be useful to quote the relevant section at some length:-

Consolidated and unified Left will remain unstable without Communist Unity. The two are complementary. The role played by the CPI and CPI (M) in defeating the communal forces in the elections and in evolving a Common Minimum Programme, has generated a new enthusiasm among the sympathizers and supporters of the communists.

Given the fact that both the CPI and CPI (M) have travelled a long distance from their earlier positions, there is more or less commonality of views on national and international situation and their political tactical line flowing from this situation. The sympathizers and supporters of our movement rightly question our failure even to debate the issue in a dispassionate manner. It is true that the bitter debates of the past, and more than forty years of separate existence have given rise to many problems, and subjective factors have emerged among the main hurdles to unity.66

The question of Communist Unity cannot be ignored for long. It is not as if one party is pleading for the other for unity. It is a political necessity for facing the challenges that face the Indian communist movement. Both the parties have to encourage internal debate on the necessity movement. At the same time the mechanism for better coordination between the CPI and CPI (M) has to be revived at all levels. The challenges that we are facing today and the opportunities that have opened up have made this an urgent task.67

The question of Communist Unity has to be looked at from the ideological point of view as well. There are certain ideological and programmatic differences between the CPI and CPI (M). These have to be discussed and sorted out. Besides, the general ideological level of the communist ranks has to be raised.

This statement and the public response of the CPI(M) to it (as spelt out in a speech delivered by its General Secretary, Harikishan Singh Surjeet, on February 9th, 2005), has caused considerable confusion within the ranks of the CPI. There are several issues that need to be discussed and clarified. We shall return to the response of the CPI (M) later.68

First of all, there is the fundamental question whether communist unity implies organizational unity, that is, the physical merger of all communist formations within India which have a political and ideological understanding that is broadly similar to that of the CPI.

Related to this is the issue of identifying those formations which are to be “reunified”. Is this just a matter that has to be resolved between the CPI and the CPI (M), or are there other communist party groups as well which the CPI might visualize as being ultimately part of a unified communist movement? If so, how does the CPI characterise other formations which have the label “Communist” in some form or the other. Such characterisation is crucial in order to determine who is are to be included and who is/are to be excluded. This question is not entirely irrelevant when we recall that the CPI has had a working relationship with the CPI

67 Ibid.
68 Ibid., P.12.
(M) in many parts of the country and that it had an electoral alliance with it is Bihar for some time.

The overall impression one gets- and one thinks that is how it is intended, is that the appeal for Communist Unity is addressed only to the CPI(M), since only the CPI(M) is referred to in the text and there is no mention of other formations being associated with the effort either formally or informally. It may of course be argued that Communist Unity primarily involves two main Communist Parties in India- the CPI and CPI (M).

It goes without saying that communist unity will involve a process of negotiation, particularly if the CPI envisages organizational unity. For this process to be set in motion it is necessary to indicate the parameters within which discussions can be initiated. In order to work out our parameters there has to be an assessment of the positions of those who are to be a part of the process of negotiation. This boils down to taking into account the perceptions of the CPI (M) that is, assuming that communist unity is to be interpreted as organizational unity essentially of the CPI and CPI (M).

According to reports appearing in the media, the CPI (M) General Secretary Stated in his inaugural speech at the state conferences of the West Bengal CPI (M) that “Those who had called us splitters are now insisting on communist unity, But I say why go for bargaining if you feel, you may come and join.”69

The response of the CPI (M) General Secretary refers to both the organizational and ideological issues that are involved in the proposal. In organizational terms communist unity can mean one of three things.

First, that CPI (M) might consider returning to the parent party. This is a sensitive issue and would take us back to the bitter controversies of the 1960’s. The CPI would have to clarify whether or not it regards itself as the parent party, and then one would have to see whether this is acceptable to the CPI (M). It is

only in this context that the seemingly intemperate reference to the CPI having for
long described the CPI (M) as “Splitters” of the communist movement makes
sense.\textsuperscript{70}

Second, that the CPI might dissolve itself and merge with the CPI (M). This is in
effect what the CPI is invited to do. Apart from the resistance that this
idea would be likely to encounter within the ranks of the CPI, one is certain that
the CPI (M), given its fairly rigorous procedures for enrolment of members, does
not intend to incorporate the entire membership of the CPI.

Communist organizations have structures which are very different from
those of bourgeois parties. The process of the merger of communist parties
cannot be the same as that of bourgeois parties where only top-level unity is
envisaged. Yet it is likely that the paradigm of the CPI’s proposal is, in essence,
one in which the concern is mainly with adjustments at the topmost levels of the
leadership. Hence, the reference to “Bargaining” in the CPI (M) response. Not
to say that the CPI leadership is actually engaged in bargaining. But not having anything
to say about how organizational unity will operate at the lowest levels and how
the bulk of the party members are to be integrated can only lead to the conclusion
that a relatively smooth arrangement, applicable to higher positions in the states
and at the centre, is sought to be worked out once merger is accepted by both the
parties.

Third, that CPI, the CPI (M), and other communist formations might give
up their present identities and come together to constitute a new political party. In
this case, the structure, the constitution, the programme and the nomenclature of
the new formation would have to be agreed upon Elections for positions from the
lowest to the highest levels would then have to be held with members of all the
constituents collectively participating in the elections with equal rights. Any such
entity would have a much higher proportion of members who would have
belonged originally to the CPI(M) and this would give to them effective control

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., P.12.
over the party, thereby marginalizing members drawn from the CPI. Alternatively, it might be possible to think of forming a federation.\footnote{Ibid., P.12.}

As for the ideological hurdles in the path of Communist Unity, the CPI Draft has noted that “both the CPI and the CPI(M) have travelled a long distance from their earlier positions; there is more or less commonality of news on national and international situations and the political tactical line flowing from this situation. At the same time it also points out that “there are certain ideological and programmatic differences between the CPI & CPI (M).”\footnote{Ibid., P.13.}

Unfortunately there is no attempt to outline either the major issues on which the two parties share similar views or the main ideological and programmatic difference. The CPI (M) General Secretary did, however, focus on one important aspect of the divergent ideological positions of the two parties.

It would not be inaccurate to say that this issue was absolutely central to the disagreements between the two Parties in the past. Moreover, as the Draft itself states, there are programmatic differences as well. Rather than just stating that there are programmatic differences it would have been much more fruitful had the core issues been clearly stated. Only then can the debate be carried forward.

The Draft Political Resolution for the 19th Congress of the CPI, to be held at Chandigarh, March 29th - April 3rd, 2005, has raised the question of “The reunification of the communist movement.” As we know, in 1964 the communist movement in India split into two; since then, CPI (M)’s attitude to the world communist movement has undergone a change- the party is distancing itself from the world communist movement, veering more and more to an independent position.\footnote{Kaviraj, Narahari., “On the Question of Reunification of the Communist Movement in India”, Mainstream, March 11th, 2005, P.24.}

The CPI has been an internationalist party from the day of its birth. In its policy resolutions it has broadly adhered to the guidelines suggested in the main
documents adopted at the successive Congresses of the COM intern. After the dissolution of the COM intern (1943), the CPI maintained close links with the COM informs (1949). It took an active part in the deliberations of the 81 parties’ conference (1960). At the same time, while being CPI has always been careful to preserve its autonomy and formulate its own programme in accordance with the peculiarities of the India situation. It is this internationalist tradition that imparted to the CPI its distinctive mark-an identity of its own.\footnote{Ibid.}

Now a few words about the CPI (M), since 1964, the CPI (M) has been keeping aloof from the mainstream of the communist movement, pursuing an independent line of its own, mainly based on the resolutions adopted by its own party congresses. So far as relations with other communist parties are concerned, it is in favour of maintaining fraternal relations with other communist parties through bilateral meetings and meeting in international conferences, as a part of a single movement is not the same thing.

Before the split, the main controversy within the united communist movement centered on the question of desalinization. Khruschev’s Secret speech at the Twelfth congress of the CPSU (1956) sparked off the controversy over the role of Stalin. After the split, when the CPI (M) came into existence, the new party took a negative view of the Twentieth Party congress and its decision on the process of desalinization and the little bit of liberalization which become a part of it, remained a major source of irritation for the CPI (M) and over these two issues, as the years rolled on, the gulf between the CPI and CPI (M) became wider and wider. All this is now a part of history.

I do not want to say that the CPI (M) must give up its position and return to the parent party. If they think they can better serve the people by adhering to an independent line, they are free to do so. My point is this: the CPI must not, in any circumstances, submit to that position.

Regarding the unity of the Two Communist Parties, my position is absolutely clear. I strongly support the effort of the CPI to forge unity with the
CPI (M) on all issues of common interest. But I am firmly opposed to any sort of merger. If the merger takes place, if the present party merges with the splitters, the CPI will lose its identity. In that case, the worse sufferer will be the CPI and the first casualty will be the internationalist tradition for which the CPI worked and fought for nearly a century.

Comrade Harkisan Singh Surjeet’s recent remarks on the question of unity between the CPI (M) and CPI are unfortunate. Since these were made at the West Bengal State Conference of his Party at Kamarhati near Kolkata, in the presence of its top leaders like Jyoti Basu, Prakash Karat and others, there cannot be any mistake about the meaning and import that they carry. Moreover, they followed an appeal for unity made by Comrade A.B. Bardhan at the Andhra Pradesh State Conference of the CPI at Nalgond. The conclusion was inescapable; the communist movement must remain split.75

Surjeet also said that the CPI had propounded different theories, but theories have to be put into practice. Pointing to the CPI (M)’s successes in West Bengal he said that it proved that, “We are on a correct path”.

At the Kamarhati Conference another politbureau member of the CPI (M) claimed that “Ours was the biggest Communist Party of the Capitalist World”. This is true, but only in a formal sense.

Comrade Surjeet’s remarks are surprising because of the context in which they were made. For some time now the CPI and CPI (M) have been working together in close coordination. On major policy issues their positions are similar if not identical. There are no differences among them on the economic policies pursued by the UPA Government. They are together and there are no differences in their policies on agrarian and peasant question. There are no perceptible differences on the foreign policy of the UPA Government as well.76

None of the two parties can claim that it stands for the same policies that led to the split of 1964. Four decades later the Indian communists find themselves

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76 Ibid., P.26.

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in entirely changed circumstances. The issues in the international communist movement which precipitated the split have been overtaken by the events. The differences in the united CPI over the assessment of the domestic and foreign policies of the Indian National congress were another factor underlying the split. The CPI (M) for a long time refused to see the danger of Right reaction. The CPI on its part rallied behind the Congress during the Emergency. Both these positions of the two parties stand reversed now.

An indication of this mood is provided by an important leader of the CPI (M), the Secretary of its Andhra Pradesh State Committee, B.V. Raghavulu. In a fraternal message delivered at the Andhra state conference of the CPI, mentioned already, he said that though the decision for the merger of the two parties had to be taken at the national level, the unity level between the two state units should be enhanced; otherwise we cannot instill confidence among the people.

The CPI has not thought it fit to respond to the issue in the wake of Surjeet’s latest pasturing. The two parties are currently completing the round of their provincial conferences. The process will culminate in the congresses of the two parties in end- March and April at Chandigarh and New Delhi.

In its own draft political resolution, the CPI has stated that “a consolidated and unified left will remain unstable without communist unity” and has noted “Commonality” of views on the national and international situation. The CPI draft has called for a discussion of ideological and programmatic issues between the two communist parties. 77

Every practitioner of bourgeois democratic political theory in India has suggested, even disserted, that the withering away of the congress dominance over the whole political system after ruling for forty years of post-Independence phase of democratic politics has brought to an end the system of dominance of any single party over the centre and the states of India.

77 Ibid.
The first short-lived coalitional system of government at the centre was in 1977 and this experiment came to an end in 1979. The context of 1977-79 coalitional experiment should be kept in mind because it was first time in the history of post-independence India that the Congress party was decisively defeated in the elections and replaced by a coalition government at the centre. The Internal disputes and personality clashes among the leaders of 1977-79 Janata government at the centre rocked the boat and the verdict of Lok Sabha elections of 1979 was in favour of Indira Gandhi Congress. Indira came back to power after a brief exile of two years and in 1984 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress secured three-fourth of the Lok Sabha seats.78

It deserves to be mentioned that short-lived V.P. Singh-led government of 1989-1990 had created and intensified social conflicts and cleavages based on caste versus caste politics, the Narasimha Rao government from 1991-1996 has divided the country on “religious basis’ because the government completely failed to face the challenge of Hindu communalism of the Sangh Parivar. 79

The Coalition phase of politics at the centre has been V.P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar, H.D. Deve Gowda, I.K. Gujral, A.B. Vajpayee and Man Mohan Singh, as Prime minister from 1989 to 2009. The forty years of Congress dominance had Jawaharlal Nehru, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister, and the withering away of the Congress dominance over political system gave birth to a galaxy of prime ministers some of whom do not have any place in the footnotes of Indian politics.80

The critics have maintained that multiple groups decide to join a coalitional government with the sole purpose of controlling the levels of power, and there is nothing in common which bids diverse heterogeneous groups to come together and form a government. The Vajpayee-led coalitional government at the centre during 1998-2004 had consisted of members of BJP and practitioners and believers of Hindu Rashtra.

79 Ibid.
80 Ibid, P.2.
The Manmohan Singh-led coalition government from 2004 to 2009 was maintained and sustained by the “outside” support of more than sixty members of the communist parties. This marriage of convenience or inconvenience came to an end when the communists decided to withdraw their “outside” support from the Man Mohan Singh government on its pro-American foreign policy and Nuclear Agreement between India and the United states. When the Communists withdrew their support, a vote of no-confidence was moved against the government in the Lok Sabha and the Man Mohan Singh government survived the vote of No-confidence because the loss of votes of the communists could not adversely affect the government since Mulayam Singh’s Samajwadi party decided to extend its support to the government.81

The India of 1990’s and the first decade of the twentieth century has operated on the basis of broad consensus among the diverse strata of the coalition of exploiting ruling classes by following pro-imperialists, pro-American policies based on the model of free market-led competitive capitalism. The Model of economic and pro-imperialist policies followed by the BJP-led coalition from 1998-2004 was also followed and full continuity of policies was maintained by the new coalition-led by the congress from 2004-2009. The Communists of India were kept out of coalition of the exploiting ruling classes, whether led by the BJP or the Congress. The Communist parties have remained on the margin of political power system because they had led an opposition to the model of policies pursued by coalitions of the multiple strata of the exploiting classes.

Left with little choice:

Communist’s are ideologically and politically anti-congress and anti-BJP and their outside support to the UPA government at the centre is at best a marriage of convenience. Further, the Left’s attempt to maintain an equal distance from both the Congress and the BJP has created a situation where it could play any role in shaping public policies at the centre.

81 Ibid., Pp.3-4.
In fact, it was only in 2004 that the Communists, as a part of the UPA coordination committee, came to occupy the centre stage of Indian Politics. They agreed to support the UPA from “Outside” on the basis of a Common Minimum Programme. CPI (M) General Secretary Prakash Karat has repeatedly stated that unlike earlier experiments of Left and Third Front Politics. The New Third Front would have to emerge from “Common struggles”, on “Common issues” among the associates for any future Third Front.82

The Communists because of their anti-BJP and anti-Congress politics, will have to seek allies to influence public policies at the centre. What are the options for communists in such kind of multirole party system? First, they can go along with any non-Congress and non-BJP Front and try to influence policy-making at the centre. However, such a government with this kind of political arrangement would not last long. The coalition experience since 1989-1990 substantiates this argument.83

Second, the Left parties can support or oppose the UPA Government on specific public policy issue. The political arrangements are workable because the UPA and the communists can agree or disagree on specific issues. Issues in politics are important, and support or opposition to issues should be mainstay of Communist Politics.

Electoral Strategy of the Left:

The Communist parties have played a crucial role in the processes of formation of multi-group based central government since the 1990’s and a situation arose in 1996 when many political groups, for the first time in the history of liberal parliamentary democracy, knocked at the door of Jyoti Basu, a communist leader, to agree to occupy the past of the Prime Minister.

The Communists have never looked back from 1989, when V.P.Singh became the Prime Minister on the basis of the “outside” support of the Communists and up to 2009 when Congress-led UPA Government, irrespective of

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82 Ibid., P.53.
83 Ibid., Pp.54-55.
political divorce in 2008, could survive only because of the support of a solid
group of 58 Communist MPs.84

The Communists had fought major ideological, political and electoral
battles primarily directed against the Congress party’s national dominance. The
15th Lok Sabha Elections of April-May 2009 are taking place at a time when,
according to the communist parties, it is not the BJP government of 2004, but the
Congress-led UPA government which has to be opposed. So their target is to
defeat the congress and the BJP by forming “Non-BJP and non-Congress”
alliances.

Communist parties have made efforts to create an alternative alliance, and
on March 12th , the four Left Front members along with H.D. Devegowda of
Karnataka, Chandrabhabu Naidu of Andhra Pradesh and a representative of
Jayalalitha assembled in Karnataka to formally announce the alternative policies
and programmes of the Third Front.85

Prakash Karat and Sitaram Yechury, along with A.B. Bardhan of the CPI,
have stated that, “If India has to be strengthened, an alternative to Communalism,
an alternative to the economic policies which need to be changed to be pro-
people, an alternative which will keep the independence of our foreign policy and
our dignity in the international community has to be created.”86

The Communists themselves have to form alliances in different states to
contest Lok Sabha elections with a view to increasing their own seats. The Left
Front is already in place in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura but in other states. If
the CPI (M), is a pre-eminent player in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura the TDP
is an important anti-congress force in Andhra Pradesh.

While the Communists are emphatic in their assertion that political
situation in 2009 “is not a repeat of the one obtained in 2004 when six years of
BJP misrule and communalism had to be fought as a central goal.”87

84 Ibid., P.151.
85 Ibid., P.152.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid., P.153.

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Further, Prakash Karat expects there will be a polarization of political forces after the polls which would keep both the combinations led by Congress and the BJP at bay. The Third Front, according to him, would occupy the “Central Stage with crucial role of the Left Parties.”

The CPI versus CPI (M):

The CPI is considered as right faction while the CPI (M), as the left faction of the Communism in India. The CPI (M) was linked with China and the Marxists were viewed as pre-Peking while CPI was considered as pro-Soviets. For the CPI, India’s independence was a historic event and India was now on the path of Independent development. For the CPI (M), the transfer of power was only a “settlement” between British imperialism and the Congress, and what had happened since were the efforts of the Indian bourgeoisie to establish a compromise with feudalism and imperialism at the expense of the people.

The CPI’s slogan was the establishment of national democracy; the CPI (M)’s slogan was people’s democracy. The CPI emphasized national identity while the CPI (M) tended to underline regional identity and the CPI saw the proletariat as the principal force of revolutionary change while the CPI (M) accorded an important place to the peasantry. The CPI consistently supported Indira Gandhi and her government while the CPI (M) considered the Congress (I) politically ‘untouchable’. The CPI (M) staunchly opposed Indira Gandhi’s emergency rule as well as her subversion of the federal system in India.

Conclusion:

The two Communist Political Parties, the CPI and CPI (M), that arose as a result of the split, represented totally divergent views of the strategy and tactics of revolution and their attitude towards the Congress party.

While CPI wanted a revolution from above through a National Democratic Front, the CPI (M) was for a revolution from below based on a People’s Democratic Front to destroy the bourgeoisie landlord state. As regard the attitude

88 Ibid.
89 Ibid., P.690.
towards the Congress, while the CPI vowed to follow the tactics of 'Unity and Struggle', the CPI (M) was in favour of building a Left and Democratic unity in which co-operation with bourgeois-landlord-dominated Congress was out of question. The Communist Party's vision is of India entering the 21st century as a secular, democratic and developed country where equality and social justice prevail.

The analysis of the origin, growth, aims and objectives and organization of Communist Party of India and Communist Party of India (Marxist) shows that the parties have made strong progress in terms of parliamentary strength and percentage of votes. The support base of the CPI and CPI (M), which was very limited in their initial days of establishment has also widened now. The CPI and CPI (M) have emerged as a strong force in the Indian political system.