

## **Comparison between the Congress and the Left:**

India began its independent existence with the Indian National Congress Supreme at the Centre and in all State Legislatures. In its various manifestations, it has controlled the government for most of the years since Independence in 1947. Founded in 1805 the Indian National Congress known after 1947 as the Congress Party (CP) was the most powerful mass movement fighting for independence in British India. It became the ruling party of free India by reason of its national popularity and because most leaders of the independence movement were among its members, including Indian first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. In its progression from independence movement to ruling party, the CP spawned many offshoots and continues to do so to this date, as often for personal reasons as far matters of party policy. The first to do so was the Socialist wing that split off shortly after independence to form a party in its own right again several times thereafter.

Other major parties at the time of Independence, the Communist Party of India (CPI), with its origins in the peasants and worker parties of the past, were representing, like them, the Communist left. The CPI began the Independence period under a cloud because of its Moscow directed cooperation with the British during World War II. On the right were parties like the Hindu Mahasabha (HMS) doomed to ignoring when one of its kinds killed Mahatma Gandhi in 1948. Within the political system, the HMS, nonetheless, reflected a vital Hindu nationalist strain that has seen several party iterations in the years since and continues to be force in the Hindi speaking belt of north India. Parties in the left, right and centre have continued to divide or split off over the years, and more recently, with the decline of the Congress Party, there has been a rise in the number of single state linguistic, sectarian, and regional parties capable of governing only at the State level but available for coalition building at the Centre.

The Congress Party platform supports a secular democratic State with Planned Economic and Social Development. In November 1969, as Indira Gandhi consolidated her political position as Prime Minister, she and her supporters split the party. Her splinter group called itself the New Congress Party and advocated a stronger Socialist line with the

other Congress Party group. In elections held in March 1971, New Congress Party (which later resumed calling itself the Congress Party) won an overwhelming majority in the Lok Sabha. Prime Minister Gandhi's declaration of a State of Emergency in 1975, followed by the arrest of thousands of her political foes, led several opposition parties of otherwise divergent viewpoints to form the Janata (People's) coalition, which campaigning against her "dictatorship", scored a major election victory in March 1977. The Janata Government began a judicial enquiry into Mrs. Gandhi's activities as Prime Minister (along with investigations of her son Sanjay and others), denied her a Parliamentary seat that she had won in a by-election in late 1978 and briefly had her jailed.

Rather than disgracing the former Prime Minister, these measures revived her popular following as the Janata coalition leadership began to unravel Mrs. Gandhi and her re-organized Congress I Party – 'I' for Indira – re-emerged as the nation's dominant political force, winning a large majority of seats in elections to the Lok Sabha in January 1980. Congress I subsequently won control of 17 to 22 State Governments.

In the 1990s three changes took place in the government. In elections in the fall of 1989, the Congress I lost its majority, and although it remained the largest single party, Rajiv Gandhi resigned as Prime Minister. Viswanath Prathap (V.P) Singh, leader of the Janata Dal formed a government and became Prime Minister with the help of two other parliamentary groups in December 1989. Eleven months later, he lost a confidence vote and was replaced by Chandra Shekhar, a former Congress leader who formed a government with Congress I support, only to resign himself four months later. During the 1991 election campaign that followed, former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated, but the Congress Party I was swept back into power under P.V. Narashimha Rao, a former minister in both Gandhi governments and Rajiv Gandhi's successor as party leader. Rao became Prime Minister in June 1991.

The election results of June 1991, as modified by Party shifts later that year established the following party standings in the Lok Sabha: Congress (I), 245; The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), 119; the CPI M 35; the Janata Dal Party (JPP) of V.P. Singh 31; the breakaway Janata Dal (JD) of Ajit Singh 20; the CPI 14; the Taegu Demas 13; the

AIDMK 11; others 38 (including five parties which fewer seats) and nine vacancies. Congress strength rose to 256 by July 1993 when Rao narrowly survived a confidence vote, but in December, Ajit Singh and nine JD members (with 16 other seats vacant). Flux continued in June 1994 when the former Prime Minister V.P. Singh and 13 others left the JDP and sought recognition from the Speaker of the House as a separate Party.

Vajpayee had difficulty holding his Government together aimed several corruption scandals. However, he was replaced in 1996 by Dave Gowda, leader of the dozen small factions that formed the 176 United Front in the Lok Sabha. Gowda lost a no-confidence vote in April 1997 and resigned. He was replaced by Foreign Minister I.K. Gujral. The BJP rose to power as the country's most popular party in the 1996 election. When it won 161 in the Lok Sabha and its leader, A.B. Vajpayee was named Prime Minister. Meanwhile Congress I was in decline as corruption charges rocked the party, and won only 30% of the vote.

Several scandals affecting major political figures erupted in the summer of 1997. In June, Laloo Prasad Yadav, President of the Janata Dal was arrested on conspiracy charges in his home State of Bihar. Though he resigned from the Janata Dal, he subsequently formed the breakaway Rashtriya Janata Dal party. Former Prime Minister Narashimha Rao was charged with corruption and criminal conspiracy. Results of an investigation into destruction of the mosque at Ayodhya in 1992 also resulted in criminal charges being brought against senior BJP figures such as L.K. Advani and Shiv Sena's Bal Thackeray.

In May 1997, Rajiv Gandhi's widow, Sonia Gandhi, formerly joined the Congress Party I, a move many hoped would help to restore the Party's alienating fortunes. Sitaram Kesari was re-elected President of Congress I in June. Within six months, Congress I brought down the United Front Government after Gujral rejected its demand that DMK, the Tamil Nadu based Party allegedly linked to Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, be expelled from the UF Coalition. As neither Congress I nor the BJP could form a coalition government, new elections were called for February-March 1998. Sonia Gandhi campaigned actively for Congress I, but no party was able to gain an absolute majority in the elections. The BJP emerged as the largest party with 182 seats in the 546 seat Lok Sabha, followed by

Congress I with 142 seats. A.B. Vajpayee, Parliamentary leader of the BJP was appointed Prime Minister and asked to form a coalition government. He succeeded in putting together a fragile 14 party coalition that survived a vote of confidence on 28 March by 13 votes. This narrow Parliamentary majority, however clearly hampered Vajpayee's Legislative Programme. In July for example, the Government was forced to shelve a bill that would have reserved one-third of the seat in the Lok Sabha and state Legislatures – for women because of strong opposition from (mostly male) disputes.

Sonia Gandhi began to take a more active role in Congress Politics in 1998, and shortly after the election, she was elected to the post of President of Congress I. Towards the end of the year, Congress showed signs of recovery by regaining Delhi and Rajasthan, both traditional BJP strongholds in regional elections. However, this did not carry over to the national elections resulting from the fall of Vajpayee's Government in 1999, following the AIDMK leaving the coalition. In the run up to the September-October 1999 elections, both Sonia Gandhi and her daughter actively campaigned for Congress. The party split, however, over the issue of whether a foreign-born individual (i.e. Sonia Gandhi) could become leader of the Country. Gandhi resigned as President of Congress in May 1999, although the Party refused to accept her resignation. Shortly afterwards, Congress I expelled shared power. P.A. Sangma and Tariq Anwar, the chief opponents of Gandhi within the party.

Sonia Gandhi won a seat in Parliament in the October 1999 elections and was also elected the Congress I Parliamentary leader. The Gandhi name, however, did not halt the doctrine of Congress. The Party won only 112 seats (as compared to 142 in the 1998 elections) and with the alien controlled only 135 seats, and once again A.B. Vajpayee was asked to form a Government. He succeeded in putting together a coalition government, the National Democratic Alliance, which controlled 298 seats in the Lok Sabha. For the first time in four years, an Indian government – albeit a coalition government – appeared to have a decisive working majority in the legislature. As the leader of the BJP's moderate wing, Vajpayee has sought to control the party's more extreme Hindu nationalist members.

Left Parties vote varied from nine to seven percent between 1957 and 2004. Between the two CPI has considerably declined, while that of the CPM has improved. It however, between five to six percent from the time of its formation to the present. The electoral support for the Communists in some States, such as Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu has declined. But this loss is more than compensated for by their consideration in Kerala and West Bengal. Most of the Communist members in the Lok Sabha come from the two States of West Bengal and Kerala. That the Congress or no other party could replace the Communist government in West Bengal since 1973 shows the extent to which the Communists entrenched themselves in that State. However, they were not able to grow beyond the three States of Bengal, Kerala and Tripura despite their restore and attempts to do so.

The most vigorous opposition to the Congress on the basis of ideology came from the Communists. Soon after Independence they waged an armed struggle in some parts of the country to overthrow the Indian State, although they soon gave up that course and participated in the first General Election. The ideological debates on the character of the Indian State, path to resolution in India and strategy are factors led to several splits in the Communist Party. However, their participation in elections and success in forming and running government at the State Level firmly placed them in the arena of Parliamentary Politics. India is the only country in world where a Communist Party could come to power through Parliamentary means and control governments within a capitalist state. But the sailing was not easy in the initial years. The dismissal of the Communist Government led by E.M.S. Namboodripad in 1959 sparked a bitter struggle between the CPI and the Congress.

Interestingly, the inner party debates on the character of the Indian State and revolution in the undivided CPI got entwined with the controversy on the character of the Congress Party and cooperation with it. In the process, a major section of the CPI moved closer to the Congress to form a United Front with it. The other section took a hostile attitude, which formed the CPM in 1976. The split in the CPM and the formation of the CPI (ML) and other revolutionary organisations based on Maoism in 1967 and the splits within splits of these groups and parties show the salient of differences over strategy and tactics for the Communists. However, a closer examination of the splits among the

Communists reveals the interpenetration of leadership rivalries, personality clashes, organisational matters and programmatic positions.

Except in the initial years after Independence, ideology did not become a bar to forge alliances among parties. The Communist and the Muslim League fought elections in Kerala together. Both the Congress and the CPI could forge alliances and together they could arrive at electoral understanding with caste loaned politics in that State. The coming together of the Socialists farmer-based Congressmen and the Jana Sangh to form the Janata Party showed that ideology is not a hindrance in party chemistry that the Communist played an important role in bringing the non-Congress non-BJP Parties together and these parties offered the position of Prime Minister to Jyoti Basu, the Polite Bureau Member of the CPM, shows that the ideologies have different meaning on the Indian soil. The case with which the parties had changed sides far long and forged new alliances, and at times with those who were treated untouchables is surprising.

Congress still seems to be a type in itself. Since Independence it remained a loose and open organization, approximately to the four theoretical constructs of party proposed by Eldesveld. Congress leaders tolerate local autonomy, initiative and inertia. Dissent and factional rivalry are recognised. Some treat it as a healthy sigh and desirable one at that some times the top leaders even encourage factional activity at the State Level to ensure that no single leader or faction gets entrenched. The party appeared for long as a coalition of caste and factions without the pretence of organic unity. The party appeared for long as a coalition of caste and factions without the pretence of organic unity. It had also evolved norms for cooption of leaders from different castes and communities. Perhaps because of these the Congress proved to be resilient in Indian politics despite recurring electoral debacles. As recent studies have shown, this feature of the Congress did not work in the States like Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh, which was why the backward classes and Dalits deserted the party in those States.

Parties in India on the whole acted as they agencies of democratic transformation in the country. In a society that had a long history of social inequalities and dogged by poverty and backwardness it is not easy to bring freedoms to all in an equal measures that too swift manner. At the time India became a republic, the democratic political structure

came in a big way. Its polity was much ahead as its social and economic structure. Leaders of India are aware of these contradictions between political democracy and socio-economic structure. Political parties had precisely tried to grapple with this new situation and tasks. Change in social relations and values cannot be brought in a jiffy nor can be forced at will. In any democracy it has to happen only through reconciliation of all sections to the changing realities which are more slow and irritating to those who want swift radical changes. Parties popularised notions of equality and freedom among people and also moderated the extreme demands for individual liberty and social equality. Both change and stability are important. Thus, even those parties that stood for radical changes are compelled to implement incremental changes when they come to power.

Central Government made its effort to reduce the problem of poverty and underdevelopment. But it was stated that Government's role are also important to detect the problematic issue and solve it. Over 200 million people in that nation are living in conditions of object poverty. In India poverty will only be alleviated in the long run as national wealth growth or that revolutionary change will remain a prerequisite for meaningful redistribution. The more sophisticated policy-oriented literature, prosperity "policy package", to alleviate poverty, has often suffered from political naiveté based on the belief that failure to adopt appropriate policies can be blamed on the absence of "political will", as if leaders were free to bring about anything they wished. The alternative line of analysis of this issue requests a focus on the state and societal interactions in the process of planned capitalist development.

It is important to note at the outset that a judgement of India's poverty at a significant problem is not merely an imposed scholarly judgement on observed phenomena. Poverty has long been considered a significant political issue within India. Gandhi and Nation were ideologically always committed to the cause of the poor. Indira Gandhi also made "Garibi Hatao" a central slogan in her mobilization strategy. India's Planning Commission as well as several international organizations that are in a position to influence India's policy thinking, have of late tended to treat poverty as a basic problem. The recognition that there is considerable stubbornness in the country and that this requires state intervention is thus part and parcel of contemporary India's political idioms.

West Bengal the State ruled by the Communist Government continuum the maximum governmental efforts in mitigating rural poverty. The Communist Government of West Bengal of West Bengal, more social-democratic than Communist in practice, possess most of these attributes. This pattern of rule results from the existence of a relatively well institutionalized, dominant political party, and it is here that impressive benefit have been made towards eradicating rural poverty.

With the introduction of Fourth Plan Programmes were taken for re-employment and in the Interim of programmes. Fourth Plan was introduced in March 1969 but in 1961 the Third Plan had also demanded "to utilise to the fullest extent the possible manpower resources of the country and to ensure a substantial expansion in employment opportunities".

But throughout the Plan (Third Plan) period the programme progressed slowly and more as a doing agency distributing bits of money and patronage than or a dynamic development pivot as was envisaged in the Plan. Even, the employment opportunities created were for too insignificant to make any visible in fact anywhere in the countryside.

Congress Government was failed to full implement of the programme and the result was flopped Third Plan. Congress Government had conducted a Programme Evaluation Organisation to find the reasons behind the failure of Third Plan's rural worker programmes.

- (a) Delays in release of funds and technical sanction of schemes were reported during all the years.
- (b) Shortage of technical and experienced staff and rising cost of the schemes were experienced.
- (c) Due to limitations of resources as a result of unexpected developments, the scale of efforts was drastically curtailed and only a sum of Rs. 19 Crores (as against the Plan outlay of Rs. 150 crores) was made available during the whole Plan period.

- (d) Insistence on sharpener as a precondition to execution of specific projects under the programme, not only hampered progress but also led to the exploitation of the very sections of the population for whose benefit the programme was expressed conceived.
- (e) Investments made disintegrated fact due to the almost total neglect of regular repair and maintenance of the workers under the programmes.
- (f) Mobilisation of available manpower resources fell short for lack of emphasis on publicity and training to enthuse people's participation.

In West Bengal it was the Purulia where first Plan of "Garibi Hatao" was introduced for the improvement of derelict lacks in Purulia district and so provides employment to local unskilled labour. The project was failed due to red tape and bureaucratic mishandling.

During Congress rule, Central Governments effort was great to eradicate the rural poverty and increased employment prospect but lack of proper technical programmes were ended in the middle of the terms also made hopeless rural people from the optimism of develop rural India.

During the Congress regime in India critics used to say 'one party dominate' state. And few states after the Fourth General election faced problems because of a non-Congress government. After that Centre-State relations had gained great prominence as an issue in the political system and all political parties had found it necessary to express a position on it. The issue than so prominent before 1971 election where Centre-State relation's problem came into the election manifestoes. After independence, the issue of Centre-State relations was relatively dominated and generally received low political awareness from the political elites and parties. The major reasons for this development was the fact of the dominance of the Indian National Congress over both the Central and almost all the State Governments. The strong-Centre or supported by a strong national party organisation, centralized administration and resources. There were certainly conflicts among States and between specific States and the Centre. Thus, for the dominant party the Centre-States relations were not an issue and the non-Congress

opposition parties were too weak, disorganised and inexperienced to articulate this as an important issue.

An analysis of manifestoes of 17 national and regional parties for the Fourth General Election shows that only four of these parties made special mention of Centre-State relations. They were: Jan Sangh, CPI, CPM and DMK. The Congress Party was not expected to present Centre-State relations as an election issue. Its manifesto, however, made a brief mention of "the relatively under-developed areas in the country". The non-Congress Parties on the other hand, blamed the Congress for all the mess in the country including regional imbalances, linguistic controversies, inter-State disputes on boundaries and rice water and other problems. Since Congress was in power at both levels of the government, this anti-Congress did not, pursue, and signify talking positions on the issue of Centre-State relations.

Some National Parties of India seemed to have recognised that some conflicts between different governments will be inevitable. Therefore it sought to set up a High Power Commission to inquire into and arbitrate on all disputes between the States and the Centre.

The Communist Party of India demanded over through of Congress power and asked for "far reaching radical changes in one present economic and political structure", devoted a separate section to "Justice and More Powers for States" in its manifesto. It said:

The Communist Party of India stands for removal of all injustice and discriminations against states, for removal of regional disparities. It demands wider power and authority, particularly in financial and economic matters, be given to the States of the Indian Union. The Seventh Schedule of the Constitution must be revised and amended so as to enlarge powers of the State and abridge those of the Central Government.

The Left had charged the Congress Party with "disuniting" India. It said "The Congress Government denies real autonomy to the States and Union Territories. By transferring more and more powers to the Centre, the Government is negating the autonomy of constituent units and turning the federal structure of the Indian Union into a unitary

State". The demand for more powers to the States was implied although not specifically stated in the manifesto of the CPM.

The four year period between the Fourth General Election and the Fifth General Election in 1971 was qualitatively significant for both Centre-State relations and the experiences of the political parties. The 1967 election led to loss of Congress power in half of the States although at the Centre, the Congress maintained its predominant position. Later the era of defections in the State Assemblies provided greater opportunities to the non-Congress parties to exercise the power of a hostile Central Government.

The Congress Party led by Indira Gandhi emerged as the successor to the undivided party and continued to control the Central Government. It was therefore natural that to it, the relations between the Centre and States did not appear as an issue of any significance. Hence, like in the past, Centre-State relations did not get a mention in its manifesto. Among the different parties who are advocating varying degrees of greater power to the States, the most virulent attack on Central dominance was made by the CPM – it was because CPM's experience of the Centre's hostility to it, both in West Bengal and Kerala, was still fresh and bitter in the 1971's election.

The Communist Party of India adopted the most moderate line in 1971, although its manifesto was one of the longest only one small paragraph was adapted to Centre-State relation. The CPI demanded a constitutional amendment to provide for more power to the States consistent with the basic unit of the Union. The CPI also demanded that the post of Governor should be abolished. The CPM perceived extreme concentration of both political and economic power in the Centre and sought to change it in favour of the States. It warned that "This monstrous concentration of power in the hand of the Centre is creating the degree of a bureaucratic police state, spelling abrogation of all democratic rights". The CPM also viewed the creation of the Industrial Security Force in Central establishments as "an open assault on the States Power regarding maintenance of law and order". The CPM wanted fundamental change in the system of Centre-State relations and made these specific demands:

- (a) Abolition of the post of Governors and the President's Rule in the States

- (b) Revision of the allocation of powers and functions between the States and Centre with a view to making the States' power real.
- (c) Most of the subjects in the concurrent list of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution to be transferred to the States'
- (d) Greater resources to the States: 75% share of all the taxes centrally collected to go to the States, to begin with.
- (e) Complete control by the State Governments over all its officials including those who belong to all-India Services.

Communalism is a core problem of Indian politics, and Indian politics is known as the Congress Politics. The opposition always tried to find out the relation but when Congress and the 'Communalism' E.M.S. Namboodripad gave statement that the left forces in the country – which he specified to mean the CPI (M), CPI, RSP and 'other Left Parties' – would have to fight against the "authoritarian and anti people" policies of the Congress (I) on the one hand and the "pre-imperialist, communal and anti-national" policies of the BJP.

In the apportionment of the grounds for opposition as between the Congress (I) and the BJP, communalism has been assigned by Namboodripad to the latter and the Congress (I) absolved of it. The Congress (I) is not as dangerous one. To be sure, this is the outcome not of the ideology of the Congress (I) but of its political calculations. The Congress (I), or to be more precise the Prime Minister, appears to have decided to bare here political appeal to the people, especially in the crucial Hindi speaking areas of the north on her role as the saviour of the country's unity and integrity, threatened by Sikh terrorists in Punjab, by Muslim anti-national elements in Kashmir and by assorted tribal formulations in the north-east - all them aided and abetted by India's external enemies, with Pakistan looking large among these. This is the framework within which Congress (I) propaganda has consciously and literately projected the army action in Punjab and recent developments in Jammu & Kashmir, culminating in the dismissal of the Farooq Abdullah ministry.

Failure to focus attentions sharply on the communal strategy and tactics of the Congress (I) and to make them together with the Party's authoritarian and anti-people policies the basis for the Left parties opposition to it only serves to confuse the political situation.

It was interesting that practice the Left Parties are being led to this. Thus the Left Front in West Bengal, which was dominated by the CPI (M) has decided to launch a state-wide campaign to expose the Congress (I)'s and Indira Gandhi's methods of inciting and instigating forces opposed to secularism. Saroj Mukherjee, West Bengal State Secretary of the CPI (M) and Chairman of the Left Front, planned that it had been decided to launch the progressive because caste, communal and divisive forces are encouraged (by Indira Gandhi) to precipitate one crisis after another so that she can declare 'I am saving the Country'. The CPI (M) General Secretary's statement referred to at the beginning on the other hand, glosses over this 'nefarious game'.

During the Congress regime within the headship of Mrs. Indira Gandhi communal problems of Assam, the Bhiwandi-Bombay complex in Maharashtra, Kashmir and the Punjab and the astute use of religion by the Congress (I) in the most media including reshaping the content of the educational and other schooling process, have revealed the limitations of Communist Parties by India in analysing the use of religion made by the Congress Party to sub serve the interest of the bourgeoisie in India.

The Communist Parties of India have systematically avoided forthright analysis of the use of the religion (particularly by Hinduism) made by the Indian National Congress headed by Jawaharlal Nehru and subsequently by Indira Gandhi to sub serve the interest of the Indian bourgeoisie and to connive and divide they exploited and appraised masses. These parties have not made uphill now a tough class analysis of the reasons which promoted the Indian National Congress headed by Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru and others, vociferous crusaders against communal vivisection of the country, to take a partition India on exactly the same religious-communal basis, and hardly forge a suitable stab apparatus for the Indian Union appropriate for Indian capitalism. These politics have not even thought it necessary from the proletarian class point of view to assess how the Indian National Congress visualised the role, functions and uses of religion in the debates in the Constituent Assembly.

The CPI and CPI (M) needed to the co-state theory of revolution and un-favouring to realise the first stage of revolution basically through the Parliamentary path and it is interesting to see that one section of the bourgeois – that were represented by the Nehru and Indira led Indian National Congress – as basically progressive, anti imperialist, democratic, secular and anti-communal. They are also considered the rest of the bourgeoisies as compradors, closely tied to feudal, semi-feudal and other reactionary sections of the people, stooges and agents of the imperialist bourgeoisie and basically responsible for utilising communal, consist, semi-feudal, religious, obstruct ional ideas and practices obstructing the realisation of the national democratic or the people's democratic revaluation . According to the Communist Parties the comparator, semi-feudal and other sections of the reactionary classes are spearheaded by the RSS and the main fire of the Communist Parties is directed at the RSS and BJP.

The Communist Parties had articulated this position through various documents and the publications and through of number of seminars and conferences organised by the National Integration Committees officially launched by the Congress. In August the background of growing communal and upper caste violence in the country, the Communist Party of India published a pamphlet entitled "National Integration for Democracy and Socialism". It provides a clear insight into Communist Party's analysis of communal, artliest and other forms of movements which according to the party, 'have become the greatest danger to our national unity and hence to our democracy, integrating and national independence.

The Communist Parties have further astutely shifted the analysis of the role of religion in Indian policy, to what they call the role of 'communalism' in Indian polity. The party weeded to the strategic alliance with progressive, national, anti-imperialist section of bourgeoisie for realising the first state of revolutions and that too by Parliamentary methods, have systematically conjured up and strengthened the myth that the Indian National Congress in secular and anti-Communal.

The Congress Government was very cleverly introduced an uncritical, religious content in the educational system, in the name of inculcating moral and spiritual values as well as what is called a spirit of national integration among teachers and students. This in

calculation openly started with Shri Prakash Committee Report published in the late 50's and continues unabated, through a series of measures.

In the name of respect for different religions and also in the name of not hurting the susceptibilities of various religious communities, the Congress Government is very systematically suppressing critical movements which challenge the very basis of religions and the bizarre practises and beliefs prescribed by them. Communist Party has not exposed how this approach harms and insults the susceptibilities of no-believers, humanists, atheists and materialists. Communist Party explained its stand about Communalism. It is said:

The extent to which communal harmony has been ensured in West Bengal during the 25 years rule of the Left Front can be fully understood only in the context of the escalation in communal tension in India in the same period. This period, especially from the mid-1980s, has been the rapid rise of communal forces, represented by the RSS-BJP and other outfits of the Hindu Rights. This process has been accompanied by growing communal polarization and heightened attacks on the minorities in large parts of the country leading to the loss of thousands of innocent lives. The recent State sponsored carnage of minorities in Gujarat. In contrast to this West Bengal has represented a picture of communal amity and peace throughout this period. It is only the principled policies of the Left, backed by a strong secular movement among the people which has kept West Bengal away from the horrifying violence that has accompanied the growth of communalism. Maintenance of communal harmony and defence of rights of the minorities would not have been possible without the Left Front being in power in Bengal during this trying period.

It is not as if communal forces and elements are absent in West Bengal. The opportunistic role of the Congress vis-à-vis communal forces and the alliances of the Trinamul Congress with the BJP have provided scope for communal forces to extend their sphere of activities into West Bengal. Attempts by such forces to create communal tensions and riots have not been lacking and continue till date. In the aftermath of the assassination of Smt. Indira Gandhi concerted attempts were made to unmask anti-Sikh riots. The late 1980s and early 1990s which saw the extensive vote campaign by the

RSS-BJP and their associates, leading to widespread riots were other such occasions. In all these cases the designs of the communal forces were effectively thwarted by the firm intervention of the Left Front Government accompanied large scale mobilisation of cadres of the Left Parties in defence of communal harmony and the minorities at the ground level. The continuous ideological campaign among the people for defence of secularism by both the State Government and Left Parties created the atmosphere in which attempts to disrupt communal harmony could be quickly and decisively deflected.

It is correctly said that protection of the interests of the minorities is the litmus test of democracy which is de facto majority rule. The Left Front has taken several steps to ensure that the minorities get their due share in development. The advance of secular and democratic practice under Left Front dispensation has provided equal opportunities for minorities, especially Muslims who constitute 24% of the State's population. These opportunities have enabled them to launch struggles for better living standard, educational and other facilities and a life of dignity in general Muslim peasants have received their due and proportionate share in the over one million acres of land distributed, without any discrimination. Similarly, large numbers of Muslim peasants are among those one and a half million sharecroppers who have been registered under Operation Barga, thereby assuring them of their agricultural rights and freedom from rapacious exploitation by the land lords.

The Left Front Government has set up a specific department of Minorities Development and Welfare. Working under its aegis, the West Bengal Development and Finance Corporation has started several projects for self-employment to minorities. Rs. 1781 lakhs were disbursed under such schemes in 2001-2002. This allocation for disbursement for the year 2002-2003 has been increased almost three times to Rs. 5083 lakhs. The Government has provided financial assistance towards hostel accommodation for girl students from educationally backward sections of the minorities, besides, providing similar assistance to technical/professional institutions run by organisations of educationally backward minorities and pre-examination coaching to these sections. It also sanctions stipends to minorities for training different crafts and vocations.

The Left Front Government has made a coconscious effort to promote the rights of linguistic minorities in the State. Urdu speaking Muslims constitute both a religious and linguistic minority. Keeping the cultural identity and needs of this section in mind the Left Front Government established the Urdu Academy at same time as the establishment of the Bangla Academy. The Urdu Academy brings out a large number of publications besides providing the text books at subsidised rates for students from the secondary to post-graduate stage. Effective steps have also been taken to promote the Nepali language. Another example of the Government's commitment to meet the cultural requirements of the minorities is that of development and provisions of the Alchiki script for the Santhali language.

At a time when communal forces control the levers of state power and are doing their best to promote communalism and impose their sectarian vision of a unitary form of culture, the Left Front Government stands out a war they example of defence of secularism, communal harmony, the rights of religious minorities and the promotion of the cultural needs and aspirations of different linguistic minorities.

In the 1998 Lok Sabha election Manifesto Communist Party declared about the secularism in this way:

Secularism has been defined as a basic feature of the Constitution by the Supreme Court. This Constitutional Principle expresses the reality of the daily life and experiences of the millions of Indians who live and work harmoniously together irrespective of caste, creed and religion. However, secularism has come under continuous assault by the forces represented by the BJP and its mentor, the RSS. There can be no compromise with those who wish to erode the secular basis of the State and the political system.

The Left Parties will work for:

Legislation for separation of religion and politic.

Prohibition on use of religious issues for electoral purposes by political parties.

References of Ayodhya dispute to the Supreme Court under Article 138(2) for a speedy judicial verdict.

Protection of the basic right of religious beliefs and practicing one's religion.

Implementation of the "Protection of Places of Worship Act" which prohibits change of character of religious places of worship after 1947.

In Manifesto of 2004 Left Parties promised about maintenance of the Secular Value of nations:

CPI (M) is in favour to make "distinguish between politics and religion and to make this separation stable. They are supporters about the enactment of law.

CPI (M) in favour to resolution a bill to protect the hostility over religious places.

Ayodha controversy should be solved by Judicial Department. Ultimate decision of the Court should be obliged by every body.

And in regarding the Foreign Policy CPI (M) said:(2004 Manifesto)

Imperialistic foreign policy of NDA Government has to be changed. CPI (M) will try for the following:

In 1998's Election Manifesto (Lok Sabha) in the area of foreign policy the Left Parties will ensure that:

India is projected at an independent power which plays a constructive role in defending the interests of the Third World and promoting South-South Co-operation.

India does not sign any discriminatory treaty on nuclear weapons like the NPT or the CTBT.

Further, steps are taken to strengthen and improve relation with South-Asia countries and promote SAARC cooperation. Special efforts to improve relations with Pakistan and promote people to people ties.

Relations with India's biggest neighbour, China, are strengthened and economic ties increased. Relations with Russia to be further strengthened.

The Indo-US Military Cooperation Agreement is cancelled.

Nuclear weapons are removed from the US Military base in Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

It is a grim reality those fifty years after independence 400 million Indians live in object poverty. India has the largest number of illiterates in the world with only half the population literates. Child malnutrition figures are the highest in the world, excepting Bangladesh.

The policies ushered in, in the name of economic reforms since 1991, have only worsened the situation. Liberalization has meant a bonanza for the big business houses, landlords, financial collators and big graders who make super-profits and accumulate incomes. Under the IMF-World Bank dictated model, the profits for India's economic growth are determined not in the interests of the Indian people but for the narrow affluent section and home and foreign capitalists. By these policies 10 percent of the population have enriched themselves at the expense of the remaining 90 percent of the people.

The Left Parties have consistently advocated an alternative set of policies.

As against the policies of total deregulation of the economy giving full play to the market, rampant privatisation, disbanding of the public sector, indiscriminate entry of foreign capital and import liberalisation; subjecting Indian agriculture to the vagaries of the international market by promoting so called export oriented agriculture and withdrawal of the state from development of infrastructure and public economic and

social investment, the Left Parties advocates an alternative path of self reliant economic development.

### **Land Reforms: Key to Progress**

The main cause for poverty in the unequal and exploitative land relations, parasitic landlordism with it attendant social and economic oppression is the major obstacle to ensuring a better life for the majority of the Indian people.

60 years after independence only 52 lakh acres of surplus land have been taken over and distributed out of a total 75 lakh acres declared surplus which itself is a gross under estimate. On the contrary, under like realisation, land ceiling laws are bin diluted to favour of big business and foreign companies; waste land and degraded forest lands are sought to be allowed to these big companies and that to the landless. It is only the Left-led Governments of West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura which took up land reforms seriously and implemented them. West Bengal alone has distributed 20 percent of the total surplus land distributed in the country. The Left will ensure that there is no dilution of land reform legislation.

The Left Parties will work for:

Speedy and comprehensive measures for implementing radical land reforms.

Takeover and distribution of surplus land above the ceiling, cultivable waste land to be give to the landless;

Correction of land records;

Security for tenants;

Issuing joint pattern for women.