

CHAPTER - VII

A Comparative Discussion on the Socialistic Ideas & Thinking of Jawaharlal Nehru, Rammanohar Lohia and Asoke Mehta.

7.1 Prelude

In the foregoing chapters, we have thoroughly discussed and analysed the ideas, visions, conceptions and thought patterns of Jawaharlal Nehru, Rammanohar Lohia & Asoke Mehta, on socialism and social justice. In this chapter we endeavour to make a comparative discussion of the three notable thinkers about their ideas and convictions on Marxism, Socialism, democracy, equality and social justice. We also seek to discuss and analyse the socialistic views, ideals and thinking of these three important personalities, namely, Nehru, Lohia and Asoke Mehta, who were deeply involved in advancing the socialist movement in India in pre and post independence period. Their role and contribution will be analysed in the general background of socialist movement in India. In the present chapter the extent and nature of their thinking and programme of action will be detailed as also the limitations and failures. We also intend to examine and pinpoint the differences regarding the socialistic thinking and other related issues of Jawaharlal Nehru, Rammanohar Lohia and Asoke Mehta. Moreover, the similarities and dissimilarities regarding their mental make-up, ideals, attitudes, beliefs and thought patterns in general are being examined and analysed.

7.2 CSP & Nehru, Lohia & Asoke Mehta.

The socialist movement has contributed to the making of a new ethos in India. Jawaharlal's left and radical views added a new momentum to the left politics in 1920's and 1930's. In 1920's Jawaharlal came into contact with the

peasant movement. The sympathetic attitude and love for the poor and distressed rural people confirmed Nehru's faith in socialism at a later stage. Nehru's sojourn in Europe in 1926-27 further strengthened his socialist beliefs and convictions. After returning from Europe Nehru was a different individual espousing the favour of socialism. After becoming the President of the Indian National Congress in 1929, Nehru emphasised the necessity of a socialistic order. In this way, Nehru could revolutionise the character of the Indian National Congress. A section of the Congress leaders and activists drew inspiration and fillip from his progressive ideas and wanted to establish socialism in India. With this end in view the Congress Socialist Party was formed in 1934. In 1933, Nehru wrote a series of three articles - published in various newspapers entitled "Whether India." These articles impressed the radical youths and leaders who were keen to see the social and economic development of the country along socialist lines. Surendranath Dwivedy states : "In those articles he had analysed the world political and economic situation and suggested certain proposals. His perspective was new and language refreshing. He related the events of our country to what was happening in the world."¹ The articles were written from a new viewpoint and they pleaded for relating the Indian movement to the movements in the world. Dwivedy writes further : "A leader of his stature writing explicitly that we have to work within the fold of a socialist world federation created excitement in my mind. Many people started discussing socialism in various parts of the country."² It should be admitted that Nehru's "Whither India" had made an impact on Congress Workers.

R.C. Gupta Succinctly observes : "If history gave a theoretical perspective to Jawaharlal's Politics, economics gave a practical edge to it. He saw political liberty not as an end in itself, but as the means of a new social economic order ... He was able to give a new content to the national struggle, which was both radical and socialistic. He emphasised that the fight against the British was not only political but economic."³ The younger generation looked up to Nehru as

representing their aspirations. Nehru could go forward with his mission of propagating the socialist ideology among congress workers and the intelligentsia.

The formation of the CSP was considered a challenge to Gandhiji and Gandhism. Marxism which was upheld by the Party had little in common with Gandhiji's truth and non-violence. Still the Socialist leaders wanted to secure Gandhi's support. This was not only because of Gandhiji's influence, but also because JP and others had close personal relations with him. Many CSP leaders had a similar weakness for Nehru. In spite of his differences with Jawaharlal Nehru, JP continued to address him as Bhai.⁴

When the CSP was formed Nehru was in jail. At the first socialist conference in Patna, its Chairman Acharya Narendra Deva had hoped the Nehru would be happy to learn about the formation of the CSP and it would not be deprived for long of his valuable advice, direction and leadership. But the Acharya's wish remained unfulfilled. Nehru was not willing to join the CSP. Surendranath Dwivedy remarks : "On the contrary, he tried his level best to weaken the socialist movement."⁵

About the formation of the CSP Sumpurnananda writes : "Pandit Jawaharlal had nothing to do with it. He tried to exploit it once or twice, but on the whole, his attitude towards it was one of amused contempt."⁶ It was a fact that Nehru had great deal of attention and regard for many socialist friends, but he did not want to be connected with the organisation of the socialist movement.

Rammonohar Lohia and Asoke Mehta were connected with the CSP from the very beginning. Lohia dreamt of socialism in the form of a new socialist civilization which would be free from all types of exploitation - social, economic and political. To Lohia, Socialism has its own doctrine and ideology. Its object is not only to liquidate capitalism, but also to lay the foundation of socialism. Lohia

considered both 'capitalism and communism irrelevant to the whole of mankind.⁷

When CSP was functioning tussle and confrontation arose between Congress Socialists and the communists. The difference between the Congress socialists and the communists was that the former gave priority to the country's independence. So, they showed great respect and consideration for national leaders. The socialists considered nationalism and socialism as two sides of the same coin. Every socialist had to become a primary member of the congress to ensure full co-operation with the national struggle for freedom. The communists, on the other hand, regarded the congress as a bourgeois organisation and opposed the freedom struggle.⁸

The socialist communist conflict is not a new thing. It has been all over the world. The real differences between the socialists and the communists centered on national interest. The Congress Socialist Party firmly upheld national freedom and national honour and decided to consolidate national forces. This naturally affected the growth and influence of the Communist Party. That is why, the communists regard the socialists as their principal enemies.⁹

Asoke Mehta was a chief exponent of democratic socialism in India. He was influenced by the European democratic liberal strand of thought. He repudiated Marxism as it gave importance on class. Struggle and violence. He had a remarkable contribution in organising the trade union movement in India. Mehta took leading part along with Jayaprakash Narayan in bringing about the merger of the Socialist Party with the K.M.P.P. Mehta's contribution was great regarding the formation of the Praja Socialist Party.

7:3 Influence of Marxism on Nehru, Lohia & Asoke Mehta.

The philosophy of Marxism exercised considerable influence upon Nehru's mind in early years. In his pioneering work, 'The Glimpses of World History,' Nehru admits that 'the theory and philosophy of Marxism lightened up many a dark corner of my mind.' According to Nehru, the world faced two rival forces - capitalism and Socialism and there can be no permanent compromise between the two.

Jawaharlal was attracted to Marxism on account of its scientific outlook and freedom from dogma. But he despised the ruthless violence and oppression prevalent in erstwhile Soviet Union. Despite his leaning to communism he was not prepared to call himself a communist. Nehru envisaged a socialistic pattern of society to ameliorate the sufferings, discrimination & disparities among the people.

It appears that Nehru was greatly impressed by communist philosophy but he did not accept all the fundamental postulates of Marxism. Frank Moraes has correctly stated that during the thirties, Jawaharlal was a 'Marxist theorist wedded to democratic practices.'

According to Michael Brecher : "Nehru is a convinced socialist but he is not a communist ... He drank deeply of Marxist literature in the thirties but he never became intoxicated. Indeed, at the very high of his attraction to Communism he remained the sceptic, impressed by certain Soviet achievements but repelled by their methods"¹⁰

It can be said that Jawaharlal Nehru who was under the spell of Marxism in the early thirties, was no longer hypnotized by it in the forties and fifties of the present century. Nehru's love and infatuation with socialism was gradually shifted

and changed with the passage of time. He strongly felt that many of the Marxian tenets could hardly offer a solution to the economic problems of a backward under developed country like India. Nehru said : "For my part, I would like to have a socialist economy all over India and I think that the Soviet form of government, with certain variations and adoptions suited to India, may well fit in here."¹¹

Jawaharlal was profoundly influenced by Gandhi's theory of means and ends. He had beliefs about innate spiritualism of man kind. Moreover, in the later half of his life, Nehru was allured by moral idealism. Nehru took some of the good aspects of Marxian socialism, not in toto. Abid Hussain says : "He did not adopt it wholesale, but subjected it to a critical examination ... On the whole, it gave him a new historical perception and a rational and critical outlook on life."¹²

Rammanohar Lohia propagated Indian brand of socialism. He presented a compromise between the two opposing views of Gandhi and Marx. In his words, "There are priceless treasures to learn from Gandhi as well as from Marx." He wanted to make a synthesis between two ideologies. Hence he makes an attempt to integrate the two into a coherent whole.

Though Lohia was influenced by Marxism yet he did not accept all the fundamental tenets of Marxism. Lohia does not accept Marx's theory of class war. He denounces this theory as inadequate and substantially wrong. He denounces communism as practised in Russia outright. He repudiates regimentation, oppression and coercion.

Lohia considered both capitalism and communism irrelevant to the whole of mankind. To him, they are two parts of the single complex of existing civilization.

Gandhian ideas influenced Lohia greatly. Lohia incorporated Gandhian

ideas in the socialist thought. Lohia was profoundly impressed by the Gandhian technique of Satyagraha and decentralisation of power. Due to the influence of Gandhiji, he formulated his socialistic conceptions with his eyes specially to suit his own country. He wanted to integrate socialism with Gandhian ideas.

Asoke Mehta favoured liberal democracy than Marxism. Like Nehru, Mehta favoured soft democratic methods to raise the standard of living of the people. As a democratic socialist Mehta does not want regimentation and totalitarianism while advocating the philosophy of planning. Mehta stated that communism is a dangerous type of socialism which should be shunned by all means. He detested the tendency to import the techniques prevalent in communist Russia. Mehta sought to evolve an indigenous brand of socialism which would not be a replica of Russia or Chinese model. Asoke Mehta denounces Marxism on the plan that it has ended in 'a flight from freedom into, forget fullness.' In his 'Studies in Asian Socialism' Mehta says " "The reasons why marx's dream took on night marish shapes are to be traced to his stubborn indifference to certain sociological and psychological realities."

7:4 Democratic Socialism and Jawaharlal Nehru, Rammanohar Lohia & Asoke Mehta.

The socialist movement in India has a chequered but scintillating history. In the beginning the movement was deeply under the influence of orthodox Marxism, but gradually the socialists realised that it was Gandhi and the Indian National Congress that represented the fundamental urge of the nation for freedom.¹³ There were differences of opinion among the socialists and the communists regarding policies, strategy and programme of action. The socialists gave importance on both the achievement of national freedom and the establishment of socialist society. The communists were not very keen to gain freedom. Here the communists differed with the socialists.

With the passage of time, the influence of Gandhian ideas and thoughts on the socialists increased. The socialists gradually realised the nuances and implications of Gandhian ideals and principles and they understood that a conglomeration and synthesis of Gandhian thought with Marxian ideas would be suitable to Indian conditions. Though they were not perfect Gandhites or ardent Marxists. The realisation showed them the way to democratic socialism and they have stuck to the path ever since.¹⁴

Jawaharlal Nehru, Jayaprakash Narayan, Acharya Narendra Deva, Rammonohar Lohia, Asoke Mehta and Minoo Masani were all influenced and impressed by democratic socialism and they strove hard for the dissemination and inculcation of democratic socialist values and ethos in India keeping ultimate faith in the establishment of a socialist society having social justice, individual freedom and a just and human social order. During the freedom movement, Nehru's socialistic ideas influenced the youth and the intelligentsia of the country.

Jawaharlal Nehru was the champion of socialism in India. It should be admitted that Nehru did his best to spread the ideology of socialism in India. He did not like to sever connections with the congress party. He made sincere attempts and efforts to popularise the concept of socialism in India. Nehru wanted to imbue the congress leaders and workers on socialistic ideas. Remaining within the congress. Nehru sought to convert the congress organisation and activists to socialist, ideology but he failed. To quote Nehru : 'I wanted to spread the ideology of socialism especially among congress workers and the intelligentsia...' He was trying to make socialism a national goal, and for this he was educating the masses and converting his party men. Paul Brass says : "Nehru's personality, attitudes, and style of leadership influenced profoundly all aspects of the functioning of the Indian political system during the period of his dominance."¹⁵ Paul Brass writes : "Nehru articulated a clear set of ideologi-

cal and policy goals, which included a commitment to a non-dogmatic form of socialism, to secularism, economic development through state-directed planning, and non-alignment in international affairs. Success in achieving specific policies included under these broad goals was often limited, but they provided always a clear social and economic orientation, direction and cohesion to state policies."¹⁶

Rammonohar Lohia, Jayaprakash Narayan and Asoke Mehta contributed much to the spread of democratic socialist movement in India, Jayaprakash was influenced much by Marxian socialism in his early age but later his passion was changed to the socialist vision. Lohia stressed emphasis on indigenous socialism. He discarded Marxism and wanted to develop socialism in India assimilating Gandhian ideals and principles. Mehta also shared this view. The socialist thinkers realised that an Indian brand of socialism or in other words, Indianization of socialism were the ultimate panacea to remove the societal ills and problems which the Indian masses were facing. So we notice a departure or ideological shift from Marxism to democratic socialism. They realised that foreign techniques prevalent in foreign countries would not suit Indian conditions. So they sought to devise a system or set of ideas and principles which would be conducive for the Indian masses. The influence of Gandhi was great on them.

Prof. Mukut Behari Lal maintained that the congress brand of socialism is no socialism. He found in democratic socialism the room for moral and cultural advancement of the people, because he felt 'Socialism stands for the democratic way of life and consequently for the reorientation of the entire social life on democratic principles of liberty, equality, justice and fellowship.'

In 1955 at its Avadi session, the objective of the congress was declared to be 'the establishment of a socialistic pattern of society.' In yet another reso-

lution entitled 'Economic polity', it was declared : 'The national aim is a welfare state and a socialist economy.' The reaction to the professed ideology of Nehru as exposed in Avadi session was mixed. Many hailed it as a step towards socialism and many strongly denounced it as the half-hearted and tricky way of diluting the concept of socialism through the phrase 'Socialistic Pattern of Society.' R.A. Prasad opines that "It is interesting, however, to note that none claimed it as socialism pure and simple."¹⁷

The Congress, at its 68th Session held in January 1964, adopted a resolution on 'Democracy and Socialism', wherein the goal of the congress was described to be 'democratic socialism'. It was stated that -

The congress is working for a revolution in the economic and social relationships in Indian society. The revolution is to be brought about through radical changes in the attitudes and outlook of the people as well as the institutions through which they have to function This change has to be achieved by peaceful means and with the consent of the people, while preserving and fostering the democratic methods and values as enshrined in the constitution of India. The congress ideology may thus be summed up as democratic socialism based on democracy, dignity of the human individual and social justice.¹⁸

7:5 Drawbacks and limitations on the growth of Socialism in India

There were some impediments and hurdles on the growth of socialism in India. The reasons for the failure of socialist movement and the growth of socialism in India may be attributed as : Diverse socialist parties preaching socialism, tussle and confrontation between Socialist Parties and the Communist Party of India, weak political ideology and organisation, influence of Gandhi and Gandhian ideas, Gandhian leanings of some socialist leaders, failures of CSP to assert its independent ideology a weak organisational network, vacil-

lating attitude of Jawaharlal Nehru and Jayaprakash Narayan, illiteracy of the general masses, lack of knowledge about Marxism, personality clash between Socialist leaders.

The Indian socialist leaders were inspired by Soviet Communism but they repudiated the regimentation, purges and authoritarian attitude of Soviet Communists.

There were other limitations also. Jawaharlal Nehru did not lend his full support to the building of a socialist movement in India. Nehru was not inclined to become a member of CSP. He wanted to motivate the movement remaining within the Congress. He wanted to strengthen the Congress Party. He discouraged the move of CSP for separation from the Congress Party. Moreover, Nehru was put in a dilemma. Gandhi did not like his socialist leanings. Nehru has to act as a cementing bridge between the CSP and the right-wing leadership of the Congress. Nehru had to continue his activities regarding preaching socialism despite opposition from the right-wing old guard of the Congress Party. His was curious job - he had to socialise the right-wing leadership of the Congress for the need and importance of socialist ideology, on the other hand, he buttressed the need to push the country to the path of socialism. But Jawaharlal failed to deliver the goods. Moreover, Gandhi always wanted to contain Nehru's drift towards socialism. One author correctly points out : "In the anxiety to sail on two boats, his first 'flush of love' for socialism, to an extent, paled."¹⁹

The Indian socialists realised more and more the need to emphasise the value of individual, his dignity and liberty, decentralization of political power, greater reliance on man than on institution, and more reliance on co-operation than on competition in life. These lessons of indigenous socialism or Swadeshi socialism generally came to be incorporated, consciously or unconsciously,

into the ideals of Indian socialism. But socialism minus Marxian basic tenets is not really socialism.

It must be pointed out that the influence and impact of Gandhi on all the socialist thinkers were great. Gandhian ideas and principles exerted so much influence on the socialist leaders and Jawaharlal Nehru that they could not come out from the spell of Gandhi. But it should be admitted that a synthesis between Marxism and Gandhism as envisaged by Lohia is an utopian approach and the attempt is bound to fail.

The democratic socialist movement in India did not have a smooth sailing. Ideological indecision and the clash of personalities leading to divisions and mergers have been the bane of socialist movement in India. The socialist movement has always been a divided house, and it has never been able to exercise any appreciable impact on the Indian political scene.²⁰

The personality factor is another major reason which shattered the socialist movement in India. Ego clash to some extent marred the prospects of growth of socialism. Rammanohar Lohia was temperamentally incompatible with other leaders. He had no tolerance and got angry easily. JP was polite and far more tolerant. So JP was liked by everybody.

If Jayaprakash and Lohia, the two most important leaders of the socialist movement, could work in unison then the socialist movement would get strengthened. Lohia's caustic remarks alienated many workers. Disappointed and dejected at Lohia's behaviour, Jayaprakash quit politics and joined the Bhoodan movement. Jp's retreat from active politics marked the departure of an important cohesive factor in the party.

Surendranath Dwivedy points out " "Socialist unity was a basic goal of

the socialist movement. Ever since the beginning of the congress Socialist Party, the objective was to unite all socialists under one flag... The Party declined day by day."²²

After the 1953 talks between Jp and Nehru, Lohia repeatedly accused Narayan of being soft on Nehru and being unable to divorce his personal relationship from his political relationship. Lohia's group held this 'softness' towards Jawaharlal as being primarily responsible for the downfall of the party. Madhu Limaye observes : "Jawaharlal Nehru, even after we separated from the congress tried to maintain his moral, spiritual and intellectual hold over us, and for this he operated mostly through Jp. This was the root of our tragedy. Jayaprakash's relationship with Nehru marred the prospects of the Socialist Party in myriad, subtle ways."²³

Ideological heterogeneity of the socialist thinkers is another major reason which hampered the building of strong socialist movement in India. Jawaharlal Nehru and Samparnanand were influenced by the Vedantic approach towards the problems of man and society. Jawaharlal cherished an ethical and philosophical approach to life and society. In the later period of life, Nehru was inclined to accept the spiritual entity of the individual. Lohia was impressed by Gandhian philosophy of End & Means and Sarvodaya. In Lohia's thought-patterns we find strong Gandhian leanings. Asoke Mehta, on the other hand, was profoundly influenced by the liberal democratic values. He upheld the ethical aspect of socialism. Jayaprakash Narayan sought to harmonies the material and spiritual aspiration of man. As the socialist leaders belonged to the different strands of thought they could not concentrate and work unitedly. Their attempts and efforts got diffused. Thus, the ideological fluidity of the C.S.P. was its greatest handicap.

Moreover, tussle and confrontation arose between Lohia and Mehta about

the ideology of the party. At the Betul convention in 1953 Mehta put forward his thesis on 'Compulsion of a Backward economy' advocating co-operation and areas of agreement with the congress Party. Lohia opposed this line of thinking and it generated a controversy. It also tended to Polarise the party into two camps 'co-operationist' and 'anti-co'operationists.' A writer points out : "While Lohia's attempt at Pachmarhi had been to sharpen the boundaries between the Socialist Party and the other parties and gave a more distinct identity to the socialists, Asoke Mehta's line had the opposite effect of blurring the distinction between the socialists and the congress."²⁴

Though the socialist movement in India remained insignificant yet it had some positive aspects. The views of Surendranath Dwivedy, a socialist leader, is worth mentioning. Dwivedy observes :

"I have no regrets that the best period of my life was spent in the socialist movement. We socialists played a glorious role in Indian politics. Our number was small and we could not develop as an alternative which was our aim. We split, fought amongst ourselves, were hopelessly divided, so much so that we became almost insignificant and failed miserably in the power game of post-independent India. None-the-less our achievements are positive and significant. Democratic socialism as a theory has come to stay. It is positive. It is neither an imitation of social democracy of Europe nor of Marxism... Individually and collectively, we might have failed to provide a stable, institutional base for the socialist movement, but the people of India have taken to the path of democracy and socialism and there is no turning back. The theory and philosophy of democratic socialism, as evolved in the course of the long years of socialist movement, still remain sacrosanct."²⁵

7:6 On Democracy

Jawaharlal Nehru was a perfect democrat. He had a genuine desire to serve his people, and see them happy and prosperous. It was his faith in the dignity of men, both individually and collectively, which led him to lay faith in the democratic system of government.

Jawaharlal put emphasis on peaceful methods and co-operation and consent of the people to build a democratic system. He believed that democracy cannot work successfully and achieve its aims or ideals without the goodwill of the people and their fullest cooperation. It is the duty of a democratic government to take its people into confidence and make them feel their presence and participation in its every decision or action. As he says : "Parliamentary democracy is not something which can be created in a country by some magic wand ... Parliamentary democracy naturally involves peaceful methods of action, peaceful acceptance of decisions taken and attempts to change them through peaceful ways again."²⁶

Nehru's concept of democracy was a broad one, resting on at least four main pillars :

1. Individual freedom, the freedom of the individual to grow and to make the best of his capacities and abilities, and tolerance 'not merely of those who agree with us, but of those who do not agree with us';
2. Representative government, based on popular sovereignty and elected representatives;
3. Economic and social equality, calling for a proper balance between freedom and equality, and a 'socialist pattern of society'; and
4. Social self discipline. Above all, to him democracy was 'something of the mind, ... a mental approach applied to our political and economic problems,' and 'a scheme of values and moral standards of life.'²⁷

It is a truism of history that democracy is the best form of government, because it preserves the highest human values. That is why, India has adopted a democratic system, observes R.C. Gupta. The purpose of a democratic society is 'to provide the individual with the condition of creative development.' In a democratic structure of society freedom is cherished and in which human values can best be attained. The authoritarian systems do not permit the growth and development of the individual. So Jawaharlal favoured a democratic society. Jawaharlal noted that democracy would cease to exist without a wide area of freedom for the realization of human values. Nehru depicted democracy as a structure of society in which social and economic equality was gradually attained. Jawaharlal stated, 'Democracy means equality and democracy can only flourish in an equal society.'

Nehru gave emphasis on the attainment of economic democracy. He thought in terms of synchronising socialism with democracy. Nehru said : 'Democracy must mean removal of disparities.' He stated, 'If the economic problems are not solved, then the political structure tends to weaken and crack up.'

Bimal Prasad observes : "Nehru's commitment to democracy was not merely a matter of form ... He took great interest in and played a major role in the framing of India's constitution. Indeed, along with Patel, Prasad, Azad and Ambedkar he will go down in history as one of its Founding fathers."²⁸

In India the democratic experiment is working and purliamentary institutions are more firmly established in the way of life of the Indian people than they are in that of many a country in Europe. Michael Brecher opines, "This achievement must be credited largely to Nehru. He has frequently declared his faith in the democratic process."²⁹

Rammanohar Lohia was a democrat by conviction. Lohia had firm faith

in democratic form of government as it is based upon the consent of the people. But he discarded the tendency of centralisation of power and authority and the menace of bureaucratisation. He opined that the democratic government should not function in a partisan manner. He upheld the principle of equality and shared the view that fruits of democratic government should reach to the common people. Lohia thought that the meaning of democracy gets shattered if the government caters to the affluent sections and nurtures a discriminatory attitude to the rural masses. He believed that political democracy bears no meaning without economic democracy. Lohia talked about decentralisation of power & authority. Socialism appealed to him as a way of life. Like Nehru, Lohia upheld the view socialism and democracy should be synchronised and they are complimentary to each other. Lohia wanted to have democratic socialism which suits Indian traditions, ethos and culture. He sought to adapt the democratic values to the Indian conditions and circumstances. Hence he dreamt of 'a new civilisation' having the attributes of equality, individual freedom, democratic government ensuring social justice and democratic values and culture.

Asoke Mehta, like Nehru and Lohia, was a democratic socialist and loved the ideal of democracy. Like Jawaharlal and Lohia Mehta nurtured deep faith & conviction about democracy and democratic values. Mehta also shared the view that socialism be established within a democratic form of government. He upheld the view that democracy could function well within the free functioning and activities of myriad political parties. Asoke Mehta liked European social democracy and democratic socialism than Marxism. Mehta was in favour of social and economic reforms and soft methods to achieve socialism. He despised the violent means and oppression and tyranny perpetrated by the authoritarian regimes. Like Lohia Mehta upheld the view that in India democratic socialism would be in consonance with Indian traditions and culture reflecting its own milieu and democratic values and ethos. Mehta accorded importance to the individual and society. He felt that in a democratic society the

needs and aspirations of the people should be fulfilled and the democratic government should address to the alleviation of societal ills and problems.

Asoke Mehta was in favour of political pluralism and a pluralistic state. Mehta pleaded for decentralisation of power and production. He opposed the concentration of power and authority in a few hands. The socialist vision of Mehta finds fruition within the ambit of democratic order & values. Mehta maintains that democracy is the very heart of socialism and he emphasises on the adherence to the principle of democratic planning for the all-round development and progress of the country and for the betterment of the conditions of the people. He thinks that without economic growth and prosperity a nation cannot march forward.

7:7 On Equality, Social Justice And Freedom.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was a champion of equality, social justice and individual freedom. Asoke Mehta writes about Nehru in these words : "the deep respect and concern for man's dignity made him a fighter for freedom, a democrat and a socialist... The mantle of leadership sat easily and naturally on Pandit Nehru. To see him was to acclaim him. With that charisma in him he used to lift men's thoughts and emancipate their hearts and minds.... Whatever the heights to which the wings of men would carry them, he filled them with the desire of the blue sky. Anything narrow he abhorred because he saw vista and vitality inextricably linked together."³⁰

Jawaharlal had a passion for asserting the first principles unequivocally. He progressively pushed the congress to the acceptance of democratic socialism though he recognised many compromises. Nehru believed in the doctrine of equality. He was opposed to the continuation of the capitalist system. As such, he emphasised the necessity of a socialistic democracy. His passionate

devotion to democracy and socialism resulted in his acceptance of the idea of a welfare state. Nehru held the view that without democracy-social, economic and political-and socialism, real freedom or progress is not possible.

Jawaharlal Nehru was not wedded to any dogma or religion. He wanted to abolish superstitions, dogmatism, fanaticism and communalism from the Indian society. He was inspired to establish a secular society based on justice and equality in an intensely religious country like India.

Jawaharlal remarked : "We are building a free secular state where every religion and belief has full freedom and equal honor, whose every citizen has equal liberty and equal opportunity."

Jawaharlal Nehru was a humanist. Jawaharlal believed that human approach was indispensable in the field of action with a view of promoting human happiness, human co-operation and human progress. He pleaded that all human beings should be treated equally. Hence, there must be 'a knowledgeable approach and an open minded approach and always a human approach.' Nehru had a genuine love for the poor. He was deeply interested in the common people, their way of life, their problems and pursuits, and had dedicated himself to the uplift of the underdog. He thought that it was in a democratic system that the interests of the common people were best served, Jawaharlal remarked: "Above all, we believe in liberty, equality, the dignity of the individual and the freedom of the human spirit. Because of this we are firmly wedded to the democratic way of life."

Rammanohar Lohia highlighted the concept of equality, individual freedom and social justice. In his article 'The meaning of Equality' Lohia states : The primary issue is to feel the joy of being one with the universe, of being equal with everything in it. Such a spiritual and emotional kinship appears to

be a main quality of equality as a high aim of life. In a family, this kinship obtains. Its foundation is built on an almost total material equality.³¹

Lohia described 'equality and prosperity' as the best definition of socialism. Lohia dreamed of a new civilisation based on equality, social justice and individual freedom. The centre of this new civilization was man's total personality. Lohia states : 'It is obvious that the development of such a personality could be achieved only in a social order based on maximum possible equality.' Lohia talked of equality not only within a nation but also amongst nations. Lohia felt that if differences could be little regarding power and prosperity among various states then none should be able to dominate over others. To make India economically strong and self-reliant Lohia suggested economic planning on the basis of small-machine technology.

Lohia preached humane socialism. Lohia advocated decentralised economy. The most important contribution of Lohia is political decentralisation. He pleads that power and authority should be decentralised and dispersed so that individual freedom and dignity is restored. He feels that in a centralised society man's spontaneous movements and freedom get eroded. He detested bureaucratization of power and authority. His insistence on the four-pillar state bears his faith on the decentralisation of economic and political power. He advocated democratic planning to root out the differences and disparities prevalent in our societies among the affluent sections and the poor and deprived communities.

Asoke Mehta as a democratic socialist emphasised on economic planning to ensure equality and social justice and to remove social and economic disparities from the society. Mehta accorded importance to planned development of the country to achieve prosperity and progress. He gave importance on social and economic reforms. He noted that social reforms have their im-

pact on economic development of the country. He harped on parliamentary ways and methods to attain egalitarianism and social and economic justice. He eschewed dictatorial methods and coercion.

7.8 On Philosophy of development and Industrilisation.

Gandhi aimed at transforming society through ahimsh, satya and brahmacharya. Jawaharlal with his modern mind emphasised on the development of science and technology, on the one hand, and socialism and planning, on the other. Gandhi and Nehru did not differ on the basics of socialism, only on the methodology. But the differences were so vast that a meeting ground was a remote possibility.

Nehru was convinced that India cannot make progress without industrialisation. This was the reason that in the Five Year Plans he attached great importance to the development of basic and key industries.

One commnetator remarks : "The pattern of economic development as we know it today, particularly the vast expansion in industry that has taken place since independence, is entirely Nehru's idea and achievement."³²

Gandhi and Jawaharlal had differences of opinion regarding industrialisation. Gandhi said : "Pandit Nehru wants industrilisation because he thinks that if it is socialised, it would be free from the evils of capitalism. My own view is that the evils are inherent in industrialism and no amount of socialisation can eradicate them." For Nehru, industrialisation was the foremost necessity in independent India as the vehicle for all round development. Jawaharlal repeatedly reithrated that political independence was worthless without social and economic justice, which should get a top priority for the eradication of the lot of the impoverished masses. Nehru derived his inspiration from

socialism, but he discarded violence and coercion. His belief was that the development of basic and key industries like steel, machine tools, machine-building plants, fertiliser factories and the fostering of agriculture, irrigation and power, would provide the impetus for an advance on all fronts, enabling the country to cross the economic burden in fifteen or twenty years, and attain the stage of self-sustaining growth. All this interlocked with his desire to see India break the social and economic obstacles and bondages of the ages and to enter the modern era with the help of science and the new technology.³³

We find Gandhian influence in the thoughts of Nehru. Though Jawaharlal gave importance on heavy industry, yet he did not rule out the importance of village industries. To quote Nehru : "I call myself a socialist and as such, I do believe that large-scale industries have a place in this country ... But we shall never be able to move the India of the rural masses through mere multiplication of the big factories. It can only be reached through khadi and village industries ..."³⁴

In his economic thinking, Rammanohar Lohia came out with a new approach. He was allergic to power and authority and was against a centralized despotism. Lohia pleaded for devolution and decentralisation of power and anotherity in order to make the democracy a participatory one. Freedom of thought and expression along with equality in every walk of life constitute the core of his political thinking.

Emphasizing decentralisation and dispersal of power and authority Lohia harped on the need for a small machine technology. Lohia has espoused the cause of four Pillar State. Lohia wanted the participation and involvement of mass people in the political process through fragmentation of state power. He suggested a decentralised framework in which village, district, state and the centre should function as 'four pillars of the State.' He wants the village, the

mandal (district), the province and the central government to retain their respective importance and constitute an integrated system of functional federalism.

Like Gandhi, Lohia favours small machines and small scale industries. He feels that large scale industries result in economic centralization whereas small scale machines suit well economically decentralised structure.

For industrialization, Lohia conceived the revolutionary ideas of economic decentralization, democratization and small-unit-machine. His small-unit-machine does not ignore the advance of science and technology. He suggests that small machines would be conducive and beneficial to India and other economically backward countries. Here we notice the influence of Gandhi's concept of decentralisation and his disliking for heavy industries on Lohia's mind. Rammanohar Lohia advocated for 'decentralised socialism.'

Asoke Mehta pleaded for decentralized power and production. He asserted : "That would have meant coalescence of administration and economy and would have made democracy an organizational adjunct of economic endeavour."³⁵ Like Gandhi, Mehta also lays stress on 'Panchayats with power.'

Mehta, like Jawaharlal Nehru was in favour of industrialisation. He does not accept Gandhi's opposition to industrialisation. Unlike Gandhi Mehta does not advocate rural civilization and visualize the dawn of self-sufficient autonomous villages. According to Mehta, the village economy should be the integral part of the whole economy. Mehta is of the view that though the planned development of the country is to be undertaken by the state itself yet the state is not to be totalitarian in character.³⁶ Mehta is one of the chief exponents of pluralist concept of the state. He denounces centralizing tendencies in the planned economics of communist countries. By 'pluralism in authority,' Mehta contends

that the institutional framework should be decentralised and designed in such a way as the village corporations and trade unions can take part in the discharging of powers & functions.³⁷

7:9 On Planning And Mixed Economy.

Jawaharlal Nehru was plan minded since early thirties He spoke of planning during his Presidential address at Lucknow in 1936. With the advent of freedom, Nehru aimed at achieving the social objectives and broaden welfare of the masses through planning Jawaharlal was eager to give a planned economic content to the democratic structure of Indian society so that equality and social and economic justice might be attained. He adopted planning not as an end but as a means aiming at the well being and advancement of the people as a whole, at the opening out of opportunity to all and the growth of freedom, and the method of co-operative organisation and action." B.R. Nanda correctly says : "Indeed from Nehru's standpoint, the task of nation-building was a continuation of the freedom struggle. He had always envisaged that struggle as a prelude to a massive reconstruction of the polity and economy of India."³⁸

Jawaharlal Nehru felt that democracy and planning are inextricably linked together. He suggested that in a planned democracy, the system of free market should be subordinated to social ownership of means of production .According to Nehru unless the gap between the rich and poor is reduced and equality is ensured to the maximum extent possible freedom is apt to remain a theoretical concept." Nehru looked at planning as an integrated way of looking at a nation's manifold activities. To Nehru the plan was meant to bring about a new social order free from exploitation, poverty, unemployment and injustice. Nehru wanted his democratic planning to be welfare-oriented.

Nehru also looked upon agricultural as a vital part of the Indian economy.

Another significant contribution of Jawaharlal to the developmental process was the importance he accorded to science and technology in the plans.

Nehru found it difficult to give up any of the three basic tenets of his political creed : secularism, democracy, and socialism. Above all, he was not prepared to jeopardize the stability and unity of India. He persevered in the strategy which had appealed him during his association with the National Planning committee. Jawaharlal wanted to establish socialism with gradual degrees, keeping pace with the needs of the country. He devised a new scheme, a midway between capitalism and socialism, commonly termed as mixed economy. Explaining the doctrine of mixed economy, B.R. Nanda writes : Nationalization of key industries was to be undertaken, but a wide field was to be left for private enterprise; both the public and private sectors were to coexist in a system of 'mixed economy.'³⁹

Nehru was conscious of the limitations of both capitalism and communism and wanted to avoid their demerits in the model of development he envisaged. His welfarism demands a purely democratic-socialistic state. According to Nehru, welfare state demands a mixture of socialist principles mostly with a fair share of capitalism. This mixture is achieved through planning. He argued that public sector and private enterprise should coexist. He was emphatic that private sector should work within the parameters set by national objectives. Nehru said in 1958 : "I do not want state socialism of that extreme kind in which the state is all powerful and governs practically all activities I should like decentralization of economic power My idea of socialism is that every individual in the state should have equal opportunity for progress."⁴⁰

Rammanohar Lohia believes that private property leads to economic exploitation. Lohia feels that private property is the source of unpleasant or evil passions that clog the human mind. It not only creates disharmony and

discord between the rich and the poor, but also brings war between different states. Hence Lohia emphasizes on social ownership of the means of production. Lohia concedes that the institution of private property is responsible for the existing social and economic inequality and unjust social order. Lohia, therefore seeks to destroy and abolish the private ownership of the means of production replacing it with social ownership of methods of production for the eradication and removal of economic exploitation from the society.

Lohia was in favour of decentralised economy. Lohia argued that in absence of decentralised economy, the menace of bureaucratization would severely affect the fruits of development to yield good results and the freedom and liberty of the individuals would be curbed. Lohia therefore pleaded that economic planning would act as a panacea and the planning apparatus should be decentralised.

Lohia was impressed by the Russian system of planning but he argued that it did not have the unique problems which India and other third world countries were facing. Lohia emphasised the need of overhauling both the production apparatus as well as the property relations.

Lohia denounced the tendency of accept foreign economic assistance. He argued that economic dependence to another country would affect the nation's identity and sovereign authority. He highlighted the fact that the donor countries impose certain restrictions and conditionlities wich are to be regoriously adhered to. He serverly criticised the acceptance of foreign aid for India's planning process as it affects the total economy and act as a bottleneck to the country's progress and development.

In though orientation, Asoka Mehta is close to Nehru than to anyone else. He is influenced by Berustein's Revisionism, ideology of the British Labour

Party, and the philosophy of Social Democracy.⁴¹ Asoké Mehta traces the impact of the Indian Liberals on the socialist thought of India and describes Gandhi and Lohia's socialistic views as 'utopianism' or 'upsurge of utopianism.' He is of the view that an agrarian, thickly populated country like India facing paucity of capital can hardly ignore industrialisation as suggested by Gandhi and Vinoba.⁴² Mehta was in favour of a planned economy to be controlled by state apparatus, To remove and eradicate inequality and discrimination among the people belonging to different stratas and to ensure social and economic justice Mehta emphasised his faith on democratic planning. He took note of the fact that India is an industrially backward country and agricultural development was not good enough, so to root out social inequality and to have distributive justice, Mehta stressed emphasis on economic progress and development of the country. He noted : "Development is the primary principle of Indian socialism and the first need for the realization of socialistic objectives It is, therefore, clear that unless development gather speed early enough, growing population can retard further development."⁴³

Mehta realised that in such a planned development of the country, industrialization and mechanization have a important role to play. He opined that a National Planning Commission is the only agency through which proper direction and coordination of such a development is possible. Mehta suggested the method of austerity as the only method of capital formation in India.

As a democratic socialist Mehta stressed emphasis on the concept of planned development of the country and industrialisation. He suggested priority of growth of tools and techniques. As such, iron, steel, coal and power industries should receive precedence. Mehta did not advocate wholesale nationalization. He wanted to retain private sector as well as the public sector.

Mehta suggested enhancement of agricultural production and introduc-

tion of planned village economy. According to him, the village economy should be the integral part of the whole economy. Mehta was critical of Nehru's efforts for the rural development for which three programmes were launched. They are (a) Community Development, (b) Panchayati Raj, (c) Cooperative Farming. Mehta argued that "none of the three schemes, no matter how nobly conceived, showed authenticity or vitality."⁴⁴ Mehta was influenced by Gandhian concept of decentralisation.

SUMMING UP

If we compare and contrast the ideas, beliefs, convictions and thought patterns of Jawaharlal Nehru, Rammanohar Lohia and Asoke Mehta on socialism, social justice, equality, freedom, democracy, planning and other related issues, it appears that all these thinkers were influenced by marxism and socialism and also by Indian traditional values and ethos. However, they did not accept all the fundamental tenets of Marxism and they gradually deviated from Marxism and their love, inclination and infatuation with democratic socialism developed. They strongly affirmed their faith and conviction on democracy and democratic planning. They wanted to build an egalitarian society where individual freedom and initiative would thrive and equality and social justice would be the hallmark. They detested repressive measures to gag the dissenting voice in a democratic society. They keenly wanted the adoption of democratic planning to achieve economic progress and development along with self reliance and to raise the conditions of the masses and to eradicate the socio-economic problems and sufferings which the Indian people were experiencing.

Asoke Mehta was imbued by the doctrine of democratic socialism and he wanted to build an egalitarian society where social equality and distributive justice would be the touchstone. Mehta strongly believed that economic plan-

ning' is the tool by which the economic progress and development of the nation could be achieved. He even advanced the argument of cooperation with the Congress Party in order to achieve economic development and progress of the country.

Rammanohar Lohia put forward a distinct Indian brand of socialism with a conglomeration of Marxism and Gandhian ideals. Dr. Lohia presented an original theoretical formulation of socialism. Surendranath Dwivedy stated : "Perhaps, no one had formulated such a fundamental and well integrated theory of socialism after Marx. It seemed as if there was no other ideology before us except capitalism and communism." Lohia advanced the thesis of Equi-distance from both congress and the Communist Party. He refuted Mehta's thesis of co-operation with the congress Party as based on faulty and mechanical reasoning. His social ideas and thoughts are remarkable and socially relevant for the upliftment of the society and the people.

Lohia held that life was not all economics and yet to cast it in economism would tantamount to uncalled for narrowing of its processes. Emancipation of socialism from the stranglehold of economism was Lohia's primary concern as a socialist thinker, and to it, he addressed his own 'Modern Socialism.'

Jawaharlal Nehru was a humanist to the core and his humanism led him to resort to socialism. He was attracted and enamoured by socialism in his early life. In the later period of his life, practically after assuming the office of Prime Ministership of India, we find Nehru's departure from socialism which was strong and vibrant in his early thirties and forties. His pragmatism led him to believe that the establishment of a 'Socialistic Pattern of Society' would be suitable for India as it will help to remove and eradicate the social and economic problems of the Indian people and to uplift the conditions of the down-trodden and the deprived sections thereby enhancing the standard of living of

the Indian people.

An overview of Jawaharlal Nehru's versatile activity as a politician, public figure, philosopher and historian brings us to the conclusion that the best about his legacy is rooted in his gravitation towards socialism and progress, in his interest in the scientific theory of socialism that in fact considerably influenced his world outlook and policy.

Jawaharlal was strongly influenced by the traditional Indian thinking and values on the individual and the progress and development of the society. Nehru was influenced by the ideals and thought-patterns of Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Gandhi and Tagore, They were all colossus and great souls of India and hailed as great humanists of all times.

It should be admitted that for all the ambiguity of Nehru's socialist ideal, he was undoubtedly one of the first leaders of the national liberation movement to realise the limitations of anti-imperialist nationalism and the need to transform it along socialist lines. This constitutes the historic achievement of independent India's first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

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