

CHAPTER - II

Development of Socialist Ideas in India

1. Introduction

The growth of socialism in India during the First and Second World Wars can best be studied in the political and social context of the time. To be more particular, it began to develop in India after the success of the socialist movement in Soviet Russia. Its growth was not in a straight line, rather suffered from false start and setbacks; "it was affected by the hostility of the British authorities, recurrent economic crises, the changing international scene and the rather violent shifts in the attitudes of the Communist International towards the nationalist struggle in India."¹ No doubt, it was only after the Russian Revolution, that socialism was attracted all-over the world. In India too, the success of the Russian Revolution, attracted a large number of intellectuals to be acquainted with the socialist ideology, particularly, for her revolutionary change - a change linked up the welfare of the masses of workers and peasants. Besides, the formation of the Communist Party of India in the twenties of the twentieth century, and its failure to remain in the mainstream of the national movement, the formation of the Congress Socialist Party in 1934 and the personal influences of Jawarlal Nehru, may also be cited as other immediate causes of the development of socialist ideas in India.

A careful analysis of the left movement in India reveals that two different tendencies were developed from the very initial stage of Leftism in India - the Communists, adopted the path of proletarian internationalism and the Socialists within the Congress with the idea of radical nationalism² without any affiliation or allegiance to the Communist International. The socialist group, more correctly, the Congress Socialists, in course of time, led the socialist ideology and movement in India and added a new dimension in the Western Democratic Socialism, because, the protagonists who developed this school, were Marxists in the beginning and retained the concept of class struggle and the possibility of the dictatorship of the proletariat. But they discarded violence and advocated democratic means including both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary

means, such as, civil resistance, satyagraha etc. for the furtherance of their aim. Gandhism is another interesting feature in Indian socialism. As a result, Indian Socialism became a peculiar synthesis of Marxian Socialism, Western Democratic Socialism and Gandhism.

II. Indigenous ideas on Socialism — an overview

Before analysing the recent socialist ideologies, a bird's eye view about the socialist thought in ancient Indian Texts, probably, would not be out of context. The ancient Indian culture, particularly, the revivalist ideology suggests that the socialist principles and ideologies were nothing new. Rather in the ancient socio-economic order, the principles of socialism were already present to a considerable extent. The revivalist movement itself had some economic content in the sense, as B.B. Misra explained, that the class which greatly stimulated this movement was the economically unemployed discontented men of the lower middle class.³

The pioneer of the 19th century renaissance, particularly Raja Rammohun Roy, Vidyasagar and the organisations like, Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, Theosophical Society went far in softening the crudities of the traditional social life and dogmatism and these, no doubt, helped in changing the social outlook. Socialism never came to them as a new outlook.⁴

The first contact of resurgent India with socialistic thought was through Raja Ram Mohun Roy, the 19th Century progressive Bengali thinker. When he was in England, he met Robert Owen who sought to convert Roy to socialism. But Roy was really interested in social reforms than in socialism. Roy studied European Liberalism and humanism. He was the first person in promoting contact between the East and the West. Roy, the foremost leader of Indian Social reform movement in the 19th Century, was impressed by modern western values-like freedom, democracy and socialism. According to Rabindranath Tagor, Roy inaugurated the new modern age in India and wanted reconstruction of society on modern lines. In the words of Tagore himself, "It was Rammohan alone who realised that the challenge of this age is the challenge of deeper unity. He extended wide his heart and invited Hindu, Musalman and Christian there, for in the expanse of his heart there was no lack of space for any one of them"⁵ and thus he revealed the real heart of the Indian people.

According to A.R. Desai, Rammohun Roy was essentially a democrat and humanist.⁶ He wanted the solution of social problems by the considerations of humanity and wanted to see freedom and fullest development of all throughout the whole mankind, abolishing all division of society into castes and sub-castes.

Rammohun Roy was the founder of the 'Brahmo Samaj' and western education in India. He tried most in softening the crudities of the traditional social life, caste rigidity and dogmatic superstitions. This, no doubt, created a new social outlook through the awakening of social consciousness and the spread of education which made the people receptive of new ideas. Bankimchandra Chatterjee, another reformist of the age, raised his voice against the colonial regime and against exploitation of the peasants by the landlords.

Rabindranath Tagore supported this concern of the reformists and wrote in his Article "Socialism," (1892) that "socialists want the production and distribution should be vested in the society in general and not in the hands of some powerful individuals. They say that the production and distribution of wealth is a function of the entire society. At present common people are deprived of the possibility of full development of their personalities because it now depends on the whims interests of the propertied men. Freedom is impossible without material prosperity. Therefore, wealth should be distributed among the people, otherwise freedom can never spread to everyone. Socialism seeks to distribute wealth equally among all and thereby reunify society. Its object is a reconciliation of community and freedom in human society".⁷

Tagore was a humanist with broad social outlook, and "To him freedom of India was connected with the freedom of the whole world"⁸ and though politically detached, he condemned the imperialism and fascism,⁹ protested against the partition of Bengal, against all injustices and brutality of the British upto the extent of surrendering his Knighthood. He was a strong supporter of international brotherhood.

Dayananda Saraswati : Dayananda Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, "... devoted himself to the socio-economic as well as spiritual depravity of social order flowing from the orthodox beliefs of a society from within and imperial exploitation from without."¹⁰ He had great contribution in the field of social equality and in the mitigation of the evils of the caste-untouchability,

the concerns of the socialistic. Dayananda was influenced greatly by “Manu Smriti” and the concept of 'Vaidic Samyabad' and became the pioneer of social equality. These ideas of equality and abolition of caste system, are no doubt, main concerns of the socialists, even today, which Dayananda accepted as the mission of his life and his 'Arya Samaj'. He may be regarded as the pioneer in the field of social equality.

Annie Besant : Annie Besant was so profoundly influenced by Indian religion and philosophy that the spiritual and ethical motivation and not the materialistic idea alone formed the basis of her own socialistic ideas. Being influenced by Kautilya's Arthashastra, she was moved by the poverty of Indian masses and advocated the economic transformation of society even without the aid of state legislature and regarded the building of a sound economic system as vital.¹¹ She also persuaded to make determined efforts for its achievements with a sense of reality and urgency.

She was greatly inspired by the ancient village order and its autonomous governance system and wanted to revive the same. She was well aware about the economic conditions of the people, their ill-nourished bodies, their poor slums and general conditions of their health, for which she pointed out the methods of remedy should be put to them, so that they should come forward and be persuaded for anything else.¹²

Bhagavan Das : Bhagavan Das, probably, was the most prominent exponent of the “Ancient Scientific Socialism” in India based on the principles of 'Varnashrama Dharma'. His work 'Ancient Vs. Modera Scientific Socialism' inspired Jayaprakash Narayan to formulate his own 'Marxian' socialist ideas in 'Why Socialism', where he (JP) tried to repudiate the ideas of Bhagavan Das and others.¹³ With reference to the place of individual and family, Das observed, “... an individual, as such, is an incomplete personality with unfulfilled destiny and cannot be regarded as unit of society. The family is the unit of society. The family home is the first and the best school of true socialism. Without the heart experience which the Family provides, it is not possible to realise why and how one can and should sacrifice his own case, health, even life itself, if and as necessary, for any one else. The joint family patently embodies and acts upon the essential principles of socialism, 'To all according to their needs, from all according to their capacities. Each for all,

all for each".¹⁴ He also stressed upon the human nature and the psychological factors. He observed, "of course, strict economic or any other equality is impossible and a monotonous sameness is even desirable. Evolution is differentiation. But the avoidance of extreme inequality is possible and very desirable".¹⁵ He also pleaded for plain living and stated, "India's slogan should be not the merely materialistic interpretation of History, but the Spirituo-Materialistic Interpretation of History, since the universe is obviously compounded of both spirit or Mind and Matter, Purusha and Prakriti, not class war ... but 'Class cooperation' through class balance and class reconciliation, not a classless society..."¹⁶

Swami Vivekananda : Vivekananda was, probably, the first Indian thinker to claim in clear terms that "I am a socialist". Ever since Bhupendra Dutta depicted him as the first socialist of India in 1929, attempts have been made to trace the roots of socialistic ideas into his writings and speeches.¹⁷ During his visit to Europe, he gathered knowledge on socialism including Anarchism and also met Kropotkin, Plekhanov, the great anarchist and Russian Communist respectively.¹⁸ He wrote "The doctrine which demands the sacrifice of individual freedom to social supremacy is called socialism while that which advocates the cause of the individual is called individualism"¹⁹ Vivekananda, as a revivalist devoted himself to the understanding of the original caste system and found it to be socialistic in nature.²⁰

He, however, admitted the original form of the caste system and not the present degenerated form. He was fully conscious of the strength and the importance of masses, the poor, the downtrodden classes in society and of the role and importance of the labourers in society. He stated that, "If the labourer stop work, your supply of food and clothes also stops... they have worked so long uniformly like machines guided by human intelligence and the clever educated section have taken the substantial part of the fruit of their labour..."²¹ His two points of thought have similarities with later Gandhian thought-one was the need for diffusion of power and the other was the distrust of machine and machine-made products. Regarding diffusion, he said, "... If this diffusion be withheld, the destruction of that society is, without doubt, near at hand."²² This decentralised socio-political order, proposed by Vivekananda, was also supported greatly by the latter socialists. He also opposed the material prosperity rather supported the old Vedantic philosophy and revival of the

pattern of original communal and collective sort of Indian living. The Vedantic philosophy gave a direction to the growth of socialism in India and later some of the socialists - like Sampurnanand, Nehru derived great inspiration from Vivekananda's Vedantic teachings.²³

Vivekananda believed in class equality. He did not believe in levelling down, rather in levelling up. His motto was "From caste to socialism through culture".²⁴ He was aware of the fact that unless social inequalities were done away with and privilege were given, class conflict would be inevitable and the upper classes might be "blown off" completely. Thus the socialistic thought of Vivekananda (also of Tagore) was an adaptation of western ideas to what was progressive in the religious and philosophical tradition in India. It appealed to the rich to love the poor and to justice to them. It never attempted for radical transformation of society through the struggle of the exploited masses, rather their attempt to uplift the masses mainly depend upon the philanthropy of the rich.

Dadabhai Naoroji : Naoroji, for the first time elaborated the causes of Indian poverty systematically. He explained the exploitatin of India by England through his famous 'Drain Theory' which formed his famous treatise, "Poverty and Un-British Rule in India". He explained through this, how the drain of wealth passes away from India to England and maintained that this drain was the chief cause of India's misery and poverty. To him, in the programme of eradication of poverty of India, the material production is of prime importance. This Drain theory was the first attempt to examine the nature of imperialism and its impact and image was so great and enduring that Gandhiji, including other leaders, "... had not to give a second thought to the reality and the magnitude of exploitatin."²⁵

According to some, Naoroji is the beginning of Indian socialist thinking. In August, 1904, he attended the International Socialist Conference at Amsterdam as a delegate of British India, where he appealed to the working people of the world for help and sympathy to the Indian National movement. It is also said that the Drain theory of Naoroji explained the laws of colonialism.²⁶

Naoroji undoubtedly has discussed the economic nature of imperialist exploitation, particularly in India, but he is, in fact, not the beginning of

modern socialism in India. Socialism in India, in fact, came and developed in the 20's and 30's of the twentieth century. The indigenous ideas on socialism, as mentioned above, are scattered and individualistic in nature with religious bias and hence these ideas could not gather any definite socialist ideology or outlook. Individual thinkers, rather, intellectuals gathered some experience on the socio-economic condition of our country and attempted to overcome the miseries based mainly on the religious faiths and ideas. Some of them, having knowledge about the western social order, wanted to uplift the Indian society by socio-economic ideas followed in western countries along with religious courses. Thus in true sense, no socialistic ideology or outlook could develop in India before the early 20's & 30's of the last century, more particularly before the success of the Soviet Socialist Revolution.

However, Gandhian concept is another interesting feature in the development of socialist ideas in our country. So, before going through the development of modern socialism in India, a short analysis of the Gandhian brand of socialism is necessary, because with out referring to his ideas and style of thinking the present study would remain incomplete. Same is true about Nehru. Gandhi and Nehru, though are not subjects of our present study, without referring to their ideas and role in the development of socialistic ideas in India, no study on socialism would be completed. There are galaxy of works upon Gandhi and Nehru - their bio-graphies, socio-political ideologies etc., for which our intention is to confine our study within the Congress Socialist leaders. However, a brief analysis of Nehru & Gandhi is being made for better understanding of the various courses of socialist movement and leadership in India.

III. Gandhian Brand of Socialism

In the next phase, Mahatma Gandhi appeared in the Indian Political scene with his great affection with the problem of poverty of the masses. He was well aware about the labourers, who were not paid their due wages and not even their living wages. The capitalists exploited them for their profit-motive attitude only.²⁷ He was also aware about the peasants who were also deprived of their labour by their landlords and they were progressively becoming landless. Gandhi understood that this problem was not only limited to the poverty of a class but was spreading over the masses as a whole.²⁸ He realised

that the Indian society was overcrowded by castes and communal cleavages for which the urgent need was to bring about social equality in India.

This understanding of the Indian condition constituted the background of Gandhi's socio-economic thought. Gandhi being influenced by Ruskin, Tolstoy, Henry David Thoreau and the Holy Scriptures like, The Bible, The Mahabharata, The Geeta etc. could not compromise with the violent philosophy of Bolshevism. For Gandhi, Socialism was love and identification with the poor and service to the needy and dispossessed. His socialism was a combination of democratic socialism with some unique techniques of his own with some ethical and moral values. Gandhian techniques of mass contact and direct action carried politics and public affairs to the level of villages and to the masses.

Gandhi spiritualised politics and coloured the whole trend of the Congress politics for over twenty five years by his unique ideas of nonviolence and truth. Gandhi was a servant of mankind and attempted to marshal public opinion by appeal to human reason. "Persuasion and conversion formed consistent strategy of his warfare. Gandhi did not destroy his opponent, he simply disarmed him..... His voice was the voice of truthfulness, his aim was the aim of honesty... he preached spiritual awakening of mankind."²⁹ He fought ceaselessly for the upliftment "... of the downtrodden peasants and workers, especially the harijans; but the type of socialism he preached is so uncommon that it has been labelled as humanistic and moral socialism."³⁰

Gandhi's socialism and entire thinking had a metaphysical basis. According to him, religion signified a dominant emphasis on moral values and believed in the creative force of religious attitude to political problems. To him, devoid of religion there is no politics. "Politics bereft of religion are a death trap because they kill the soul."³¹ But his religion was free from any positivism, dogmatic scholasticism or theoretic papalism. His only intention for use of religion was in search of the good of humanity. "Thus Gandhian concept of socialism is deeply rooted in religion. To Gandhi, socialism did not come as a result of his studies of Marx and Engels, nor was it a reaction against the evils of capitalism. It evolved out of his predominantly religious temperament"³² In fact, his religion was natural to him. In his own words, "Socialism was not born with the discovery of the misuse of capital by the capitalists. As I have contended socialism, even communism is explicit in the

first verse of Ishopanishad. What is true is that when some reformers lost faith in the method of conversion, the technique of what is known as scientific socialism was born. I am engaged in solving the same problems that face scientific socialism”³³ Gandhi had good faith in reforming the human nature and thus to the establishment of a socialist society of his own vision. Referring to the western societies, he observed, “when some reformers lost faith in the method of conversions, the technique of what is known as scientific socialism was born.”³⁴ He had given stress on this conversion as he thought any kind of material wellbeing or equality was related to the human nature and its sociability. He had a firm faith in the feasibility of conversion of human nature and pleaded for indefinite waiting for peaceful transition to socialism through change of hearts of the wealthy people. As a result, Gandhi thought socialism from ethical view points. With all these in mind, Gandhi suggested his theory of 'Trusteeship' and 'renunciation' or 'voluntary poverty' for establishing equality in society. Whatever talents, physical strength, wealth or other capacities a person might possess, he should take them as having been given to him as a trustee, for the benefit of the world-in-trust for society and not for themselves.³⁴ He said that the buld of the greater earnings by a man of intellect must be used for the good of the society.

Thus, Gandhi believed in the existence of soul or of the 'Atma' and suggested ethical and spiritual solution for equality. Gandhi had a desire to end capitalism as much as the most advanced socialist or communist desire. But he differed fundamentally from the orthodox and revolutionary socialists regarding the means. Gandhi was a champion of Ahimsa, and did not believe in coercive method. He had supreme faith in the eternality and essentiality of the soul of man and accepted that by a process of prolonged 'Tapasya' or purification, human nature could be changed. He visualised the use of 'Satyagraha' weapon against the rich property owners for bringing about socio-economic changes. He condemned the use of violence and foresaw the failure of Bolshevism in India. He wrote, “India does not want Bolshevism. The people are too peaceful to stand anarchy. They will bow to the knees of anyone who restores order. Indeed we have made religion subservient to peace.”³⁶ Gandhi insisted on his socialism to be based on non-violence and harmonious cooperation of labour and capital, land lord and tenant. He advocated class collaboration and social cooperation for attainment of his goal. To him, “The

problem is not to set class against class but to advocate labour to a sense of its dignity.”³⁷ He wanted a harmonious relationship between the labour and the capital. In fact, Gandhian Socialism was a mode of conduct and was neither a gospel for the expropriation of the rich, nor a programme for the violent socialization of the means of production. He suggested class collaboration, not class antagonism and made Indian aware of the weakness and taught them socialist courage and inspired them to selfless action for the social and economic emancipation of the people. Economic equality, to him, was the basis of socialism. By economic equality he means the abolishing of the eternal conflict between capital and labour. It means levelling down of the concentrated wealth on the one hand, and on the other, levelling up of the 'semi starved, naked millions' for common good.³⁸

He pleaded for equal distribution and desired equality of wages not only for labourers but also for others engaged in different profession. But Gandhi did not mean absolute equalization of the possessions of individuals. To him, possession for tomorrow or not requiring immediately, is no better than a thief. To him, “A seeker after truth... follower of the law of love cannot hold anything against tomorrow .. our ignorance or negligence of the Divine law which gives to man from day to day his daily bread and no more, has given rise to inequalities with all the miseries attendant”.³⁹ Such thinking of Gandhi was the resultant of his faith in Bhagabata, Upanishad etc. He was born into and bred up into a Vaisnava family, which led him to think of such equality. He gave importance to personal efforts than state action in bringing equality. According to him state will be there only for carrying out the will of the people.⁴⁰ Gandhi insisted on individual labouring of every person for his food, which he called as 'bread labour'. If, this system of bread labour is practised properly, not only the moral and social atmosphere for realization of full equality be established but also the dignity of manual labour be established. To him, man and his moral development is the essence of socialism. So all his thought is centred on human happiness and development. In this respect, he placed man to be the starting point of social regeneration. He declared, “The supreme consideration is man. The end to be sought is human happiness combined with full mental and moral growth”.⁴¹ He stressed on both Individual freedom and benefit of the society and attacked collectivism which suppresses individual freedom. For the sake of this individual freedom he criticised vehemently the

introduction of big machines and factories on a vast scale in India. He put the problem in this way, "What I object is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such Man go on saving labour till thousands are without work and thrown on the opens streets to die of starvation.... today machine merely helps a few to ride on the backs of million. The impetus behind it all is not the philanthropy to save labour, but greed; It is against this construction of things that I am fighting with all might".⁴² Gandhi was not a doctrinaire socialist believing in the state ownership of the means of production. His socialism was village socialism. In his own words, "My socialism means even unto this last. I do not want to rise on the ashes of the blind, the deaf and the dumb ... I want freedom for the full expression on my personality ... under the other socialism, there is no individual freedom, you own nothing, not even your body."⁴³

For this upliftment of the downtrodden and to restore the freedom in society, he formulated his theory of trusteeship, by which he advised the capitalists to be the trustees of the wealth produced by the workers. To him, class-struggle was not inevitable for the establishment of socialism. If trusteeship is followed, socialism will automatically be established. Gandhi wrote in *Young India* in 1929, "The idea I want to realise is not spoliation of the property of private owners but to restrict its employment so as to avoid all pauperism, consequent discontent and the hideously ugly contrast that exists today between the lives and surroundings of the rich and the poor."⁴⁴ If the capitalists and the landlords, refuse to be trustees, Gandhi suggested *Stayagraha* to be resorted to against them and also suggested steps "... to be taken to deprive them of their possessions though the state with the minimum exercise of violence"⁴⁵ His main intention was not to use violence but to resort to truth and non-violence. In reply to Pierre Crresole's (1935) queries about the percentage of wealth to be kept by the rich, Gandhi replied to allow 5 to 25 percent to be kept by them, "... because to him 75 percent given voluntarily was better than 100 percent surrendered at the point of bayonet."⁴⁶ To him violent action cannot benefit society, rather society will be poorer.

Gandhi was an optimist, for which, knowing his difference with the Indian socialists, he had a firm faith in the feasibility of conversion of human nature and pleaded for indefinite waiting for peaceful transition to socialism through change of hearts of the wealthy people. Towards the close of his life, he realised the necessity of state ownership of key industries and went on

upto the extent that "... the products of their labour would be vested in the workers, skilled as well as unskilled, through the state."⁴⁷ But still then he urged for the willing cooperation of the propertied class, for transforming private property to state ownership.

Thus ,Gandhi preached socialism from a new angle-intermingled with religion and moral values. He, "... pressed religion into service to purify politics and regenerate man from moraldecadence."⁴⁸ But by religion he wanted to bind men and God to be found more often in the lowliest. He wrote, "I do not know any religion apart from human activity. It provides a moral basis to all other activities which they would otherwise lack, reducing life to a thing of sound and fury, signifying nothing."⁴⁹

Thus, Mahatma Gandhi became an ethical and a humanitarian socialist. He, in fact, was an spiritual humanist, "a lover of man and not ideas"⁵⁰ He analysed the capitalist society and capitalism to be an immoral and exploitative character and hence he tried through all of these theories of truth, nonviolence, Satyagraha Swadeshi, Equality, Trusteeship, bread labour etc. for moral regeneration of humanity as a whole and upliftment of society, particularly of the weaker section, without any discrimination. He equated his socialism with Sarvodaya, the rise of all and complete development of one's personality. His society of equality and justice to be achieved was described by him as Sarvodaya, the welfare of all. His main concern was not with any class but with the people as a whole. He considered both the rich and the poor would be afflicted with similar maladies-the poor by their poverty and the rich by their lust for wealth and he pitied for both. He, therefore, suggested the idea of Sarvodaya - the classless, stateless democracy, where he wanted the establishment of greatest good of all instead of the utilitarian formula of "greatest good of the greatest number", in which according to him, the interests of a substantial minority could be sacrificed for the good of majority. Truth and nonviolence would be the basis of such society where no distinction between intellectuals and physical labour would exist rather everybody would live together in the silken net of love.⁵¹

Gandhi made Indians aware of their weaknesses and inspired them to selfless action and fought for social and economic emancipation of the people based on ethical and moral foundations. Gandhian socialism, thus, stands for

the abandonment of all possessions and service to the people and the realization of material, moral and spiritual well-being of all, and suggested decentralisation of power through Panchayati Raj and the ideal of cooperation.

IV. Development of Modern Socialist Ideas in India

The above indigenous ideas were not the sole foundation stones on which the socialist ideas in India developed in the twentieth century. As said earlier, the growth of socialism in India can best be studied in the political and social context of the time. Dr. V.K.R.V. Rao in his inaugural speech in a seminar on Socialism in India 1919-39, has mentioned about four principal influences which worked for the development of socialist ideas in this country — The influence of Russian Revolution and the atmosphere created by it, the establishment of the Communist Party of India and the role of M.N. Roy, the formation of the Congress Socialist Party and the influence of Jawaharlal Nehru.⁵²

In fact, socialism in India was not the resultant of any particular reason, rather it was the outcome of several factors including socio-economic and political situation of the period under study. Moreover, the ideals of the British Labour movement alongwith the implications of the Russian Revolution are also important factors operating upon the scene in the post war period. The fresh wave of political movement under the dynamic leadership of Gandhi involving new methods of strategy is another factor in developing socialist ideas in India. During this time, the theory and practice of the British labour movement was penetrating India in the post world war I, "... but after repeated attempts, projects for an Indian Labour Party shaped in the likeness of its British counterpart failed to materialize."⁵³ In fact, the beginning of the twentieth century has changed the social-political and economic structure of our country, which prepared the grounds for the development of socialist ideas in India.

V. Dynamics of the Indian Polity

Indian national movement reached a critical situation during the first part of the twentieth century, due to the fact that on the one hand, the National Congress, the only national organisation for the movement, was facing several

opposite theories among its leaders — the moderates and extremist views, and the indigenous views of Mahatma Gandhi, and on the other hand, there was organisation like, Muslim League (formed in 1906) which was demanding separate state for the Muslim Sectarian views. At the same time, Hindu communalism was also growing up. The Punjab Hindu Sabha, was formed in 1909 by U.N. Mukherjee and Lal Chand, who criticised the National Congress as the 'self-inflicted misfortune of Hindus' and for sacrificing Hindu interests to appease Muslims. The first session of the All India Hindu Mahasabha was held in April, 1915, but it remained for many years “a rather sickly child” compared to the Muslim League.⁵⁴

The British empire, on the contrary, was playing a role of weakening the nationalist movement based on religious issues and adopting more repressive measures against the nationalist leaders. The British Government banked heavily on Muslim communalism than on Hindu communalism. British Government encouraged the communal differences for their own interest of retaining their position in the Indian soil, and highlighted the view that India “... consisted of structured, mutually exclusive and antagonistic religion based communities,”⁵⁵ and supported, rather patronage were extended to the communalists, and readily accepted communal organisations and their leaders as real spokesman for their communities. British support to Muslim communalism, has been nicely explained by Bipan Chandra, stating “... while the Congress could get none of its demands accepted from 1885-1905, the Muslim Communal demands were accepted in 1906, as soon as they were presented to the Viceroy. Similarly, in 1932, the Communal Award accepted all the major communal demands of the time.”⁵⁶ This Communal Award, “... accepted virtually all the Muslim communal demands embodied in the Delhi Proposals of 1927 and Jinnah's Fourteen Points of 1929.”⁵⁷ At the same time, British Government tried to disrupt the Indian unity by giving more importance to the Indian States, by encouraging reactionary elements, by promoting divisions and encouraging group-antagonism of both religious and provincial groups, for the interest of perpetuating their imperial rule.

Vivekananda and other leaders of the Hindu renaissance, wanted to restore this communal unity in India. According to Romain Rolland, “Vivekananda wanted India to have an Islamic body and Vedantic heart.”⁵⁸

In this situation, the traditional view points of the then leaders could not satisfy the educated and westernized young and growing leaders of the national movement. As a result, several movements and agitations were taking place almost all over the country. The Home Rule movement led by Dr. Annie Besant, "... agitation against Rowlatt Act, the Jallianwala massacre and the events following the Non-Cooperation movement ..." ⁵⁹ were the main agitations during early thirties of the twentieth century. The result was the easy attraction of the people towards the new ideology in search of socio-economic and political regeneration of the country. The socialist and Marxist ideas became much more acceptable and applicable to the Indian polity.

VI. Socio-Economic Condition

The socio-economic condition of India, during the advent of the British, can best be explained following Marx, that, "... England has broken down the entire framework of Indian Society, without any symptoms of reconstruction yet appearing. The loss of his old world, with no gain of a new one, imparts a particular kind of melancholy to the present misery of the Hindu, and separates Hindustan, ruled by British, from all its ancient traditions, and from the whole of its past history." ⁶⁰

In fact, it was the British domination in India that transformed the feudal economy of pre-British India into a capitalist economy. And surprisingly, unlike other European countries, this substitution in India was accomplished mainly by the capitalist class of Britain and not by any indigenous capitalist class. ⁶¹ As a result of this, the Indian capitalist economy was developed and determined by the needs and interests of British Capitalism. The British Capitalist interest forced to breakdown the prevailing Indian economic structure, which was in an advanced stage in the 17th century. Moreover, the success of the Industrial Revolution in England necessitated the Indian economy to be totally ruined and be depended upon the British economy. And naturally, India was transferred from an exporter of cotton goods to the whole world into an importer of cotton goods. India, thus, became the main market for the flood of manufactured goods. According to Dr. Vera Austey, "the more strange because upto the eighteenth century the economic condition of India was relatively advanced, and Indian methods of production and of industrial and commercial organisation could stand comparison with those in vogue in any other part of

the world..... during the second half of the nineteenth century in particular, India's total production and trade advanced by leaps and bounds.”⁶²

This British policy in the field of economy forced the traditionally rich class, engaged in trade and industry, to lose their dominant position, which was replaced by the British traders and industrialists. Extreme poverty and backwardness, degradation and oppression became the main features of the socio-economic condition of India under the British Rule.

The views of Lord Curzon, of 1898, is worth mentioning here, that, “India is the pivot of our Empire If the Empire loses any other part of its Dominion we can survive, but if we lose India the sun of our Empire will have set.”⁶³ Naturally, Indian economy had to remain under the domain of British economy. This socio-economic condition of decay and stagnation is regarded as the contributory factor of the advent of socialism in India. Cottage industries of India were ruined by the competition of machine-made European goods. Modern industries were not encouraged by the British authorities for the sake of British industries. Millions of artisans had to fall back on land causing excessive pressure on land, which ultimately led to fragmentation of uneconomic holdings and reduced the mass of Indian peasantry to a state of chronic poverty. The Indigo disturbances in Bengal in 1860 and Dinabandhu Mitra's famous book 'Neel Darpan' exposed this inhuman condition of the tillers of the land and opened the eyes of the educated Indians about the poor conditions of the Indians in general. “The Decan riots in 1873 revealed that the peasantry was living under a crushing burden of debt and if timely relief was not given, it must burst out in open revolt.”⁶⁴

This condition of poor farmer was much worsened by the introduction of land lordism in India by the British. Periodic famines and floods and the resultant indebtedness accentuated the misery. Vast majority in India lived under conditions of semi starvation. This poverty of Indian people was even recognised by the British thinkers, like, Sir William Hunter, J.S. Cotton, H.M. Hyndman and even one Chief Commissioner of Assam, Sir Charles Elliot advocated in his writings this miserable condition of the Indian people.⁶⁵

Naturally, this socio-economic condition became the fertile land for the advent of socialism and communism in India. The few number of industrial workers, who were at that time in India, were also not in a better condition.

Long hours of work, low wages, unhygienic living condition, insecurity of employment were the chief evils. Indian capitalists were totally indifferent towards the workers which may be clear from what Nehru says, "They made the most of the boom period by piling up profits for themselves. The workers had no share in these huge profits which they had created but later when the boom period was followed by a slump, the workers were asked to share in the common misfortune by accepting lower wages."⁶⁶

In India, the organised labour, in the real sense of the term, found actually only during the 1st World war period, more particularly, at the end of 1st World War period, though, "between 1882 and 1890 twenty five strikes were recorded in the Bombay and Madras Presidencies."⁶⁷ The first organised well-spread labour movement was shown in 1918 at Bombay. From this time, the politically organised-working-class awakening in India was beginning. At the same time, the socialist and communist ideas were slowly reaching India during this time after the World War I. The Cawnpore Trial (1924), The Meerut Trial (1929) also influenced the Indian labourclass to be organised and politically conscious.⁶⁸

The general backwardness of the people was added to this situation of Indian people including the peasantry and the growing working class. Moreover, more than 90% of the population were wholly illiterate. The educated middle class was a victim of frustration since employment was a dream to them. In this situation, educated middle class youths increasingly turned to revolutionary ways of thought and action. Revolutionary activities of Soviet Russian, naturally, attracted them easily.

VII. Impact of Russian Revolution

Russian Revolution is the most important factor in developing new ideas to India and reshaping the Indian nationalist leaders with socialist viewpoints. Before the Socialist Revolution in Russia, the most Indian leaders had in their minds the picture of West European ideal of economic progress with industrialisation. But a country like Russia, industrially backward and far behind the west, was totally changed with the Socialist Revolution in 1917 by "... a powerful revolutionary movement of workers and peasants committed to socialism," under the leadership of Lenin. The capture of power by the

revolutionaries and Lenin's initiative to reconstruction of the economy and social order on a non-capitalist line, attracted all people throughout the world. It became the turning point in the history of human civilization. These developments in Russia, made tremendous impact in Indian. This revolution changed the pattern of nationalist thought in India and posed the fact that, "...an oppressive and tyrannical regime could be overthrown by the common, ordinary people, if they are awakened and organised."⁶⁹ This revolution also opened the possibility that a backward country like India, is not required to follow the west European path of Capitalist line for her development, rather the Russian path, if followed, would provide a unique possibility of rejecting the evils associated with the West European developmental process.

In the Indian socio-political atmosphere, the Congress was a total failure, even under the dynamic leadership of Gandhi in forcing the pace of social equality and liquidating the gross inequalities existing in the society. Gandhi, appeared with his anti-western ideas and anti-British image alongwith concepts and ideas based purely on Indian tradition, with the credit of spreading the nationalist movement to the common people. In other words, he changed the social basis of the nationalist movement, bringing the village-dwelling peasantry to the movement and changing the focus of the nationalist cause from the richer class to the Daridra Narayan, but could not satisfy the young educated class by his leadership. With these, his sudden withdrawal of the non-cooperation movement, the first broad-based mass movement, gradually dissatisfied a large section of the Congress to think otherwise and to turn more and more towards Marxism and socialism.⁷⁰ The Muslim league, by this time, could gather sufficient influence to get itself separated from the Congress. A section of the congress leaders, represented mainly by Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das, being dissatisfied with the sterile and unpractical policies of Gandhi, sought to form a new party, the Swaraj Party, with the aim, as C.R. Das said, "Swaraj for the 98 per cent."⁷¹ They, however, thought of remaining within the congress and to contest the elections. They also felt the necessity of workers' and peasants' organisations.

Thus, the nationalist leaders, in a good number were looking for an alternative and this was stimulated by the success of the Russian Revolution. The educated class, though a small minority, was attracted to the Russian revolution and its literature.

In the wake of Russian Revolution, there came a wave of class consciousness and the labourers for the first time came to realise the importance of organisations. By 1920, the stage was set for welding the working classes into one united organisation and the way was prepared for formation of trade unions, labour unions and associations. The news from Russia, filtered through the British Press stimulated the attitude of organisation of labour and the formation of trade unions in India.⁷² The Madras Trade Union was formed in 1919 and B.P. Wadia was elected its president. The Indian Sea-men's Union was formed in the same year at Bombay, the Great Indian Peninsula (GIP) Railwaymen's Union was formed in Bombay in 1919. The Ahmedabad Trade Union Congress was formed in 1920, The All India Trade Union Congress was formed in 1920 as a direct result of Russian Revolution.

The Indian revolutionaries, who were outside India, were organising themselves during the Bolshevik Revolution and the First World War periods and after the ascendancy of power by the Bolsheviks in Russia, were attracted towards Russia with the belief that they might receive Soviet backing in their struggle against British Imperialism. These exiled revolutionaries were centred at Berlin and formed the Indian Independence Committee in Berlin. This group included Raja Mahendra Pratap, Moulana Barkatullah, Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, Bhupendranath Dutta, Prativadi Acharya, Abdur Rubb Barq and Pendurang Khankhoji.⁷³

Some other individuals like, Kazi Nazrul Islam, the great rebellious poet, A.K. Fazlul Huq, Muzaffar Ahamed, S.A. Dange, M.N. Roy were directly influenced by the Soviet revolutions. M.N. Roy, remained as one of the most tragic personalities of the Indian political movement. M.N. Roy was a member of an underground terrorist organisation in Bengal and left India in 1915. He went to Moscow via U.S.A., Mexico and organised the Communist Party of India (*at Tashkand*) from abroad as a branch of Communist International. He had a desire to build up a Communist movement in India from abroad. He started as a Bolshevik revolutionary⁷⁴ and pleaded for conscious organisation of workers and peasants for class struggle. He had good faith in violent methods and advocated revolutionary mass movements, strikes for expressing discontent in a typically Marxist style. His great debate on colonial question with Lenin will remain famous in the history of socialism. After that, he gradually became

a radical humanist and rejected Marxism because of its anti-individualism and disregard for moral values.⁷⁵

It is due to the activities of M. N. Roy and those of Communist International that S.A. Dange, M. Ahmed, Singaravelu Chettiar and a host of others took the direct initiative in India to spread the Communist ideas through the C.P.I.

In fact, the Russian Revolution changed the entire pattern of socio-political thought in India. B.G. Tilak, B.C. Pal, L.P. Rai, C.R. Das were the few who were directly influenced by the Soviet Revolution. Tilak and Rai were supporters of the working classes and great critics of the British capitalist policies. They believed in the equal distribution of land and profits as Soviet Russia had done and realised the necessity of organising the working classes. Lala Lajpat Rai in his Presidential address to the Trade Union Congress in 1920, expressed, "My own experience of Europe and America leads me to think that socialist truth is any day better, more reliable, more human than the capitalistic and imperialistic truth."⁷⁶

Nobel Laureate, Rabindranath Tagore had also impact upon him of the Soviet Socialist Revolution and to quote Sankar Ghosh, "What impressed Tagore most in Russia was the absence of Luxury, where poor were not despised for their poverty."⁷⁷ In 1929, Tagore visited Soviet Russia and was satisfied and filled with high ideas about the efforts of the Socialist government for eradicating ignorance, illiteracy and poverty, maintaining equality among all. He said, "I am thankful, truly thankful to you all, who have helped me in visualising in a concrete form the dream which I have been carrying for a long time in my mind, the dream of emancipating the peoples mind which has been shackled for ages".⁷⁸

Thus, the Soviet Revolution left influence by winning the sympathy of many socialists and progressive minded intellectuals who regarded Russia as the first state run by the common people, even if, these admirers did not completely agree with the entire Marxist-Leninist doctrine. To explain this impact of Russian Revolution in India, Montegu and Chelmsford stated in April, 1918, "The Revolution in Russia, in its beginning, was regarded in India as a triumph over despotism; and notwithstanding the fact that it has since involved that unhappy country in anarchy and dismemberment, it has

given impetus to Indian political aspirations.”⁷⁹ Russian revolution, thus, brought forward a new orientation of the Indian national movement. The Indian nationalist leaders, as a whole, more or less, were impressed by the success of the Soviet Socialist Government. Some of the Indian rightist leaders, including Gandhi, though criticised the violent method adopted there, could not deny the influence of the Revolution on them and the masses of India, with new socio-economic and political outlook.

VIII. Background of the formation of the Congress Socialist Party

The analysis of the background of the formation of the Congress Socialist Party is necessary for two different reasons : first, the Congress Socialist Party (hereinafter CSP) is the mother organisation from which the socialist thought and movement in India emerged and took different paths and directions mainly after 1948. Secondly, the leadership study requires the study of the situations or context in which a leader emerges, acts and interacts. Congress Socialist Party is the organisation from which all the socialist leaders, including Jaya Prakash Narayan and Rammanohar Lohia, under our review here, emerged as socialist leaders, and hence, it is essential to have a clear idea, at least in short, about the emergence of the Congress Socialist Party as a political force, in which they emerged and developed their specific ideas on socialism.

In the early twentieth century, a tendency of radical views was growing in the India soil, particularly after the success of the Russian Revolution. Young intellectuals, both within the Congress and outside it, were eager to see and launch a radical programme for the struggle of Independence of India. In this situation the formation of the C.S.P. in 1934 within the Congress became a landmark in the growth of socialist movement in India, which had been gathering strength for a decade. Moreover, it gave a definite shape of the radical thinkings of, and within, the Indian National Congress. As mentioned earlier, in the early nineteenth century some Indian intellectuals were attracted to reformation of the Indian Society from a new outlook but could not gather any definite ideology and remained to be individualistic in nature, and it is only after the formation of the C.S.P. that a definite socialist ideology was found to develop a clear shape. At the same time, it is interesting to note that

the socialists in India drew inspiration not from a particular source like the Soviet Socialist Revolution or Western Socialist thought, rather they were inspired by Vivekananda and Indian culture, Fabian Socialist ideas and Marxism with its British variety, represented by the British Labour Party. Also, Gandhian influence is another important factor.⁸⁰ As a result the socialist tradition followed by the C.S.P. from its very inception, was not in a single line, rather ideologically the founding fathers of the C.S.P. "... were divided by three amorphous and overlapping tendencies : Marxism, Social Democracy of the British Labour Party type and a democratic socialism tempered by Gandhian concept of decentralization...."⁸¹

The formation of the C.S.P. was thus not a sudden matter of some youngmen with youthful vigour, but some external and internal factors contributed to this.⁸² No doubt, the Russian revolution and its success is the most important influential factor in this respect. However, other factors, such as the overall politico-economic situation of the world after the First World War and its implications in the Indian soil, British Policy towards the Indian national movement, the organisations and consciousness of the youths under the leadership of Nehru and Subhas Bose, emergence of some organisations in the workers and peasant fronts-including growing unrest and a sense of dissatisfaction among them, seriously influenced the formation of such a national party like C.S.P. for bringing radical changes in the Congress policies and leadership. Alongwith these, "three leadership 'failures associated with the second and third civil disobedience movements of 1930-1934,"⁸³ forced the scattered socialist groups and their leaders to be united within the Congress. These radical groups both within and outside the Congress, committed themselves to the twin goals of complete independence of India and a socialistic pattern of society.

Labour and Trade Union Organisations

The success of the Russian Revolution and the role of M.N. Roy created an atmosphere among the young intellectuals of India a sense of new outlook and the social and economic questions brought to the surface. The economic crises after the World War I had severe impact on India both on the working class and upperclass businessmen. It caused unimaginable suffering and distress to the Indian villages, and many peasants were completely ruined. The peasants

and masses who were politically inert so long, started to seek support from all corners including that of the political leaders. They became much more vocal. Indian youths were, naturally disillusioned with Gandhi and his mission which led them to be in a ferment.⁸⁴ Narendra Deva has explained the attitude of the peasantry in this way, “The traditional outlook of the peasantry began to change and instead of looking upto the landed aristocracy as their natural leaders they slowly began to look up to the new leadership of the middle class, as represented by the Congress for relief and support.”⁸⁵ The agricultural producers including middle and small peasants were most affected and led them in economic ruin. The landless labourer were even more desperate. Narendra Deva, however, explained this agrarian crisis as a part of the general capitalist crisis and according to him, this gave “powerful impetus to the peasant movement”.⁸⁶

After the war, labour movement was also emerging in India, mainly being influenced by the European labour movement, most particularly, by the role of the British Labour Party which expressed its sympathy with Indians. This is proved by a letter dated 22 January, 1919, of George Lansbury, the British Labour leader, written to Lala Lajpat Rai expressing “... his support for the constitutional agitation then going on in India”.⁸⁷ A delegate of the British Labour Party also attended the Congress Session of 1920 at Nagpur and the first session of the All India Trade Union Congress, held and formed in the same year.⁸⁸ The All India Trade Union Congress (hereinafter AITUC) was formed in 1920 by N.M. Joshi, Lala Lajpat Rai, Joseph Baptista and others, with the ultimate aim of “abolition of capitalism” and “establishment of socialism.”⁸⁹ In the field of trade union organisation in India, the names of B.P. Wadia, C.R. Das and Lajpat Rai are the most important to be mentioned. They took special interest in organising the workers and labourers. “The first attempt to form a trade union organisation was made by B.P. Wadia, who formed the Madras Labour Union among the Textile workers of ... Madras on April, 21, 1918,” with the aim of changing their working conditions and for better treatment by the European Officer.⁹⁰ After this, within a very short time, trade unions and labour organisations were formed in important industrial centres of the country, like — Bombay, Ahmedabad, Calcutta, Kanpur etc. However, the labour or working class struggles, during this period between the World War and till the formation of the C.S.P., were not organised on

class struggles. "In most cases spontaneously strikes took place without any organised leadership or planning."⁹¹ Political leaders were called for by them for guidance and leadership after launching the strike.

By this time, the Congress leadership also realised the importance of working class as a driving force in the nationalist movement. Motilal Nehru, as the Chairman of the Thirty Fourth Session of the Congress held at Amritsar in 1919 stressed the need for improving the conditions of workers and peasants and went upto the extent of demanding their voting rights. The Thirty Fifth Session of the Congress of 1920 also emphasised the need for organizing the workers and a resolution was passed in this respect. In the Thirty Seventh Session of the Congress held at Gaya in 1922, C.R. Das advocated for the organisation of trade unions and proposed the organisation of a committee to suggest the ways and means to organise them.⁹² In 1925, a section of the Congressmen, close to the labour class, formed the Labour Swaraj Party with complete independence of the country and socio-economic equality as its main aim. In 1929 the Congress Democratic Party was also formed.⁹³ By 1927, the All India Trade Union Congress united in its fold 57 trade unions with a total membership of 1,50,555.⁹⁴

Organised labour movements, thus started during this period. Indians trained in Marxism along with other Indians exiled in Europe and Asia undertook the strategy of organising the labourers and workers. M.N. Roy took a leading part in this respect, though later he differed with Lenin, and changed his line of thought and action. But this, no doubt, helped in the development of Marxian ideology in India.⁹⁵

Three trends of leftism, thus, were visible during this time; first the spread of socialist ideas inside and outside the Congress, second, development of trade union movements and third, growth of peasant movements.⁹⁶ Alongwith these, some scattered socialist groups were emerging in various parts of the country during 1930-1934.

British Policy

British Policy towards the Indian nationalist movement as a whole, was with several lines and tactics, aiming only at retaining their control over the country. With this view in mind, British Government undertook the tactics of 'reform and repression' 'Divide and Rule' to deal with the growing nationalist

movements. By 'reform' they wanted the moderate sections to cooperate with them while by 'repression' they wanted to suppress the militant and violent unrest or movement. By 'divide and rule' they wanted to weaken the nationalist movement by separating the Muslims from the main stream even by exploiting the religious sentiment. This was quite clear by the passing of the Rowlatt Act and the Government of India Act in 1919 and the Communal Award of 1933. All these could not satisfy the Indians, rather brought forward the scope of organising themselves and launching the Non Cooperation movement. This created an atmosphere of mass involvement in the anti-imperialist struggle. The British policies continued in the same direction and even much more repressive measures were taken which ultimately could not crush the nationalist spirit. The Kanpur Conspiracy case of 1924 and Meerut Conspiracy case of 1929 are the examples of such repressive measures. It is also important from another view point that the British Government was afraid of the popularity of Bolshevism in India and Government had a desire to prevent the Congressmen from taking initiative in labour movement.⁹⁷

Youth movements and Youth Organisations

Failure of the first non-cooperation movement created widespread dissatisfaction among the young nationalists about the Congress leadership, particularly about Gandhi and his non-violent politics. In the late twenties, some events like the Simmon Commission, labour organisations and movements, the Kanpur Conspiracy case, the Meerut Conspiracy case etc. immensely influenced the political atmosphere of the country. All these attracted the youths to be organised under new ideological force, even upto the extent of terrorism. In early 1934, attempts were made to revive the old Swaraj Party representing the Right wing. But this party could not attract the youths mainly due to their stand favouring election participation and council entry.⁹⁸ Narendra Deva was also aware about such attempts and said, "I have a genuine fear that being deprived of the healthy influence of the revolutionary movement, the autonomous Swarajist organisation will in course of time become a pacca constitutional and reformist body and will develop a mentality which will run counter to the revolutionary policy of the Congress."⁹⁹ However, youths were not attracted towards this reformist body, rather were drawn to the new socialist ideology. To quote Dev Dutt, "This was the seed time of

socialism in India. Young India showed considerable interest in socialist ideas as an alternative source of inspiration.”¹⁰⁰

Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose, the most vocal young Congress leaders, were engaged in a hectic campaign for popularisation of socialist ideas and to attract the youths in radical political activities. They talked about socialism and evils of imperialism resulting into exploitation.¹⁰¹ As a result, youth and student leagues had begun to sprang all over the country, both within and outside the Congress, particularly in Bengal, Punjab, Central Provinces, Orissa, United Provinces and to some extent in U.P., Bihar and Bombay. All India Youth Congress and the All India Socialist Youth Congress were formed and declared complete independence and socialism to be their aim.¹⁰² Some other provincial youth leagues were also emerging with the same object. Communists were also active in this front, which was proved by the proceedings of the first All India Socialist Youth Conference, held at Calcutta in 1928, where emphasis was given on proletarian culture, communist society and transfer of power into the hands of sincere communists.¹⁰³ The Punjab Nawjawan Sabha was formed in 1925, with the aim of propagation of socialism and anti-British activities. Bhagat Singh was its prominent leader. This gained much support from the Punjab youths. Another influential group was the Hindustan Republican Army, which in 1928 developed into Hindustan Republic Socialist Army, under the influence of Bhagat Singh. Independence, socialism and terrorism were its main objects. This group published secretly a Pamphlet “The Philosophy of Bomb” in 1929 and covered some other states retaining the name, Hindustan Republican Army. Anushilan Party and Jugantar Party, the terrorist organisations of Bengal shifted their path towards the proletarian revolution under the influence of Moscow.¹⁰⁴

Yusuf Meherally was another active leader in organising youths. He organised Bombay Provincial Youth league in 1928, and organised public boycott of Simon Commission, with his famous slogan 'goback simon'. This inspired the youths with great enthusiasm. Y. Meherally later became one of the founder members of the C.S.P.¹⁰⁵

Literature on Marxism and Socialism smuggled from abroad and also published in India influenced the youths and workers to be acquainted with the new creed. M.N. Roy was, in this respect, pioneer. He took the main initiative, on behalf of the Comintern, to spread the Marxian literature. At the

sametime, he himself published 'Vanguard' from various places of Europe with the same object of propagating Marxism. Another leaflet, "A Programme for the Indian National Congress," was also published explaining the necessity of Marxian revolutionary methods and emphasised the organisation of peasants and workers.

Within India too, such publications were visible. In 1922, S.A. Dange, started to publish a weekly journal from Bombay, namely, 'Socialist', which "... was the first regular publication in the country that devoted itself exclusively to the dissemination of Marxist ideas and associated itself openly with the socialist cause."¹⁰⁶ Dange, also published another pamphlet namely, 'Gandhi versus Lenin' in 1921, where the ideas of Lenin were much more preferred than those of Gandhi.¹⁰⁷ 'Navayug', a Bengali evening daily, published much more news about the workers and peasants. Behind this daily, Muzaffar Ahmed was the main inspiration, who was in its editorial board. Another Urdu monthly, 'Inquilab' was being published from Lahore with the same socialist and Marxist ideas by Gulam Hussan.¹⁰⁸

All these literatures played an important role in encouraging the youth intellectuals about the Marxian ideas with the aim of complete independence by means of uncompromising struggle against British imperialism.

These developments, inside the country, were the result of 'Leadership failure', as remarked Thomas. A. Rusch, which was of three kinds :

- (a) "... failure of the Gandhian and moderate nationalist leaders to achieve the goal of independence or at least to propose a sufficiently radical secular economic program..."
- (b) "... the inability of the left wing nationalists (led by Bose, Nehru & others) to organise an united leadership to challenge the Gandhian and moderates..."
- (c) "... the alienation of the Communist Party Leaders from the nationalist movement..."¹⁰⁹

Organisation of Socialist Groups

The failure on the part of the existing leadership, created an atmosphere of disillusionment among the youths and the nationalits including those of

Congress, resulting the formation of several groups based on socialist ideology with the twin object of attaining freedom and socialism. Narendra Deva felt that there were three or four provincial groups existed in India before the formation of the C.S.P.¹¹⁰

Singaravelu Chettier was a veteran Congressman and gradually he was attracted to Marxism. In 1922, he declared himself to be a Communist. Latter he formed a party 'The labour and Kisan Party of Hindustan' with an elaborate programme on the socialist viewpoint. He had a good collection of Marxian literature which indirectly helped in propagating Marxist-Socialist ideas in the country.¹¹¹

In 1929, Bihar Samyavadi Party was formed with the intention of working within the Congress. This party was latter named as the Bihar Socialist Party in 1931, the chief founder members of which were P.P. Varma, Abdul Bari, Ganga Prasad Sinha, Ramodar Das and Ambika Kant Sinha, who were all Congressmen and took part in the first non-cooperation movement.¹¹² Its main aim was to organise the agricultural and industrial labours and peasants and to propagate socialist ideas by means of organising public meetings and distributing pamphlets. Almost with same idea in mind, the Bombay Socialist Group was formed in 1933, by Yusuf Meherally, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Achyut Patwardhan and Purushottam Tricomdas, all of whom, latter formed the 'Nasik Group' of Socialists.¹¹³ In the same year the Benaras Socialist Group was formed with Sampurnanand, Tarapada Bhattacharya and Kamalapati Tripathi as its founder members.¹¹⁴ E.M.S. Namboodripad took the initiative in forming the Kerala Socialsit group while Faridul Haque Ansari formed the Delhi Socialist group. In 1933, the Punjab Socialist Party was formed under the Communist influence and in 1936 it got itself affiliated with the C.S.P. The trade union leaders like, Shivnath Banaerjee, Charuchandra Chatterjee, Hariharnath Shastri, D.V. Mukherjee re-named their old Party (i.e. All India Wroking Class Party) to be All India Socialist Party, which latter joined the C.S.P.¹¹⁵

During the period, 1931-1934, in about half a dozen provinces, socialist groups or parties came into existence, mostly within local Congress organisation, which no doubt, indicated the need for an alternative leadership. All these socialist groups declared their objectives which were more or less

same, including freedom and a new society based on equality both political and economic by abolishing the capitalists, landlords, Princes, Zamindari system and nationalization of key industries. All of the groups showed deep interest for the upliftment of the workers and peasants which meant salvation of the oppressed classes. These organisations, thus, brought into the forefront the strong desire to adopt more effective methods for national freedom and regeneration of the society, than so far adopted by the Congress leadership.

IX. Congress Leadership and the role of Nehru

All these developments show that there was a great dissatisfaction about the Congress and its leadership including its adopted path for achieving the goal, though a sense of mass involvement and awareness was created in almost all over the country. Congress Leadership was purely under the control of Gandhi. Nehru and others, who were prominent in Congress, could not come out of the Gandhian influence, though some of them had some radical ideas including good faith in Marxism and socialism. Nehru and Subhas Bose are the examples. Subhas Bose, being convinced about the inability of the Congress leadership in developing a strong effective method for freedom, went abroad to get support from abroad for launching a direct revolt against the British imperialism. Bose, however, was in favour of an alternative leadership and suggested that he would readily and wholeheartedly cooperate with the right wing Congress leadership or a united leadership of the Congress only if the struggle was resumed without any more delay.¹¹⁶

Nehru, another prominent leader of the then Congress, was probably, first to be attracted towards socialism. "He played a role", said S.Gopal, "... more vital than that of most other persons of his generation in India."¹¹⁷ His activities helped in pushing socialist ideas both within and outside the Congress, starting mainly from 1927. His visit to Europe in 1926-27 and his participation in the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities at Brussels and his visit to many countries including Russia impressed him so much towards socialism. His national outlook found an international outlook there. He also cooperated in forming the league Against Imperialism, a permanent organisation of the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities. He was selected to be a member of the Executive Committee of the League Against Imperialism.¹¹⁸ Another factor

impressed him greatly and forced him to work for the workers, was his visit to the rural areas of the districts of Partabgarh, Rai Bareli and Fyzabad in 1920-21, where he, for the first time, had a close view of the illiteracy, poverty, inhuman treatment of Zamindars prevailing in the Indian society. In his own words these “.... indelibly influenced on my mind”¹¹⁹ This outlook of Nehru, both socialistic and international, was politically very significant, as he wanted to use these “to radicalise Indian politics and to spread socialist consciousness among the people.”¹²⁰

In his own words, his experience of visiting the rural areas, “....lifted the veil and disclosed a fundamental aspect of the Indian problem to me to which nationalist had paid hardly any attention.”¹²¹ Nehru, thus became an ardent supporter of socialism but not a dogmatist and worked with such a feeling, as the leader of the Congress. Coming back from Europe, he, alongwith Subhas Bose and Srinivas Iyenger formed the Independence of India League, during October-November, 1928, with the basic aims of achieving complete independence and reconstruction of the Indian society on the basis of social and economic equality.¹²² However, he did not agree with the aggressiveness, intolerance and regimentation of the Communists. To quote him, “I am very far from being a communist. My roots are still perhaps partly in the nineteenth century and I have been too much influenced by the humanist liberal tradition....”¹²³ It is a fact that Nehru, during his student life at Harrow and Cambridge was attracted to Fabian ideas and Western humanism and liberalism. Gandhian influence upon him, is well known and well recognised which needs no more mention. Thus, Nehru's socialism was the result of synthesizing of various trends of thought including Marxism and Gandhism.¹²⁴ His admiration of Soviet Russia and its planned economy is clearly evident in his books - Soviet Russia, Glimpses of World History and in several other writings and speeches.¹²⁵

He felt the need for massive intellectual construction of Marxism and during 'thirties, he became clear about his acceptance of the fundamentals of socialism. His main concern was the end of exploitation and subjugation for which he developed his ideas on democratic socialism, political and economic equality and internationalism. Nehru's contribution to socialism in India is of manifold, however, attempts have been made to analyse under three main

heads — viz., the socialist vision, the socialist model and the socialist mobilisation.¹²⁶ However, though Nehru and his model of socialism is not our main concern of attention, it will be, not out of context to describe the way how Nehru contributed to form the C.S.P. and to influence the Congress decisions without being a part of the C.S.P.

X. Congress Resolutions on Socialist Line

A great dissatisfaction among the people about the Congress leadership wanting a radical change, was, perhaps understood by Nehru and Bose for which within the Congress leadership they “..... engaged themselves in a hectic campaign for the popularisation of socialist ideas in the country.... for a more active, radical political programme.”¹²⁷ In fact, the Congress leadership was totally under the control of Gandhi. As to quote C.P. Bhambri, “The Congress is a coalition of classes under the hegemony of the national bourgeoisie. The result... is that inspite of the socialist utterances of the Congress and its leader, the late Jawaharlal Nehru, Congress policies ... have served the interests of property owners”¹²⁸

It will, “therefore, not be an exaggeration to say”, said B.B. Sarkar, “that socialist success within the Congress owed considerably to the support lent by Nehru during this period. For, by itself, socialist pressure never reached the point where it could force the Right Wing leadership to incorporate their demands in the Congress programme. But with Nehru's active support their pressure yielded fruits.”¹²⁹ This is the reason for which without a study of Nehru, however may be short, the study of the history of origin of the socialism in India, particularly, the formation of the C.S.P. which was the core of socialist leadership in India, would remain incomplete.

In this situation of socialist wave all over the country, including inside the Congress, “... it could not ignore the change in the climate of opinion and was forced to reconsider its policies and programmes : perhaps, it was in response to these pressures that the Congress adopted complete independence as the objective of its struggle against British”.¹³⁰ This indicates a great change in the Congress outlook, since Congress had a limited outlook and demand as expressed in the first formal constitution of the Congress adopted in 1899, which vaguely wanted “To promote by constitutional means the interests and

the well being of the people of Indian empire.”¹³¹ But the above development both inside and outside the Congress made it clear that this method of passing resolutions was ineffective in obtaining even limited objectives. This led the leaders to change their objective even by changing their constitution. The Nagpur Session of the Congress in 1920, is an example where the political objectives were changed from “Self Government within the Empire by constitutional means” to “the attainment of swaraj by peaceful and legitimate means”, alongwith some other changes in its organisation which converted the party into a fighting force.¹³² The Madras and Lahore sessions of the Congress in 1927 and 1929 respectively were historic in the sense that it was for the first time complete independence or Purna Swaraj was declared as the goal of the Party. After the Madras Session, several provincial conferences of the Congress, e.g., Punjab, Delhi, U.P. reaffirmed the complete independence as a goal. At Lahore, Nehru from the Congress Presidential Chair declared himself to be “a socialist ... no believer in kings and Princes or in the order which produces modern kings of industries whose methods are so predatory as those of the old feudal aristocracy,” and urged for radical economic and social changes and said, “it may not be possible for a body constituted as is this National Congress, to adopt a full socialistic programme.”¹³³ On 24th and 25th May, 1929, AICC passed a resolution in its meeting at Bombay which declared the 'Economic Reorientation' of the country, and said;

“In the opinion of this committee, the great poverty and misery of the Indian people are due not only to foreign exploitation in India but also to the economic structure of society which the alien rulers support as that their exploitation may continue. In order, therefore, to remove this poverty and misery and ameliorate the condition of the Indian masses it is essential to make revolutionary changes in the present economic and social structure of society and to remove gross inequalities.”¹³⁴

The Karachi Session of the Congress in 1931, is another landmark, as the famous resolution on “the Fundamental Rights and Economic and Social Programme” was adopted. Here also Nehru played the main role. Nehru, infact, became the effective national spokesman for leftists in India, by “articulating the socialist ideology, propagating it and preparing drafts based on it for Congress became Nehru's chief preoccupation as a political leader.”¹³⁵ It was

Nehru who for the first time preached socialism from the Congress Presidential chair at Lahore, where he condemned vehemently capitalism and imperialism. Narendra Deva had good faith on Nehru and his activities for socialist mission. Narendra Deva said, "He (Nehru) tried to bring economic questions to the forefront. The resolution of fundamental rights passed at the Karachi Congress in 1931 was his contribution. His activities brought about a general radicalisation of political thought in the country."¹³⁶ In another place Narendra Deva said, "In the absence of our great leader, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, our task has become extremely difficult".¹³⁷ In fact, Nehru's role in formulating the Congress policies on socialist lines and influencing the youths and masses with the socialist outlook is of immense importance. He played the main role in forming the C.S.P., from behind.

Thus a situation, both within and outside the Congress was created, where mass involvement for the national struggle was almost found visible and this demanded an active leadership. In this situation Gandhi started his Second Civil Disobedience Movement with his famous Dandi Salt Satyagraha in March 1930.

But beyond his expectation, the so far eager and more or less organised masses in all fronts — youths, workers, peasants — enthusiastically took part under his leadership and very soon this movement began to take the form of a revolutionary and violent. The result was, no doubt, suspension of the movement by Gandhi, under the terms of Gandhi-Irwin Agreement of 5th March, 1931, with the condition of participating in the Round Table Conference. This was, naturally, vehemently criticised from all corners, even upto the extent of being branded as "arranged to suck the blood of the poor".¹³⁸ Some others saw in the suspension of the movement an outright confession or failure of Gandhian leadership. Nehru reacted upon this in this way, "...I told him that this way of springing surprises upon us frightened me; there was something unknown about him which, in spite of the closest association for fourteen years, I could not understand at all and which filled me with apprehension."¹³⁹

The situation, during the period 1920-1934, may be characterised following A. Rusch as "leadership failure" — failure of the Gandhian leadership, failure of the left wing leadership led by Nehru and others and also

failure on the part of the Communist Party of India. The policy of the Communist Party of India was formulated by the directives of the Comintern. The leadership of the CPI kept themselves aloof from the Civil Disobedience Movements and the nationalist movement as a whole, which alienated them from the main stream of the national struggle. They thought and attacked the Congress as bourgeoisie and reactionary. Naturally, they failed to take up the leadership according to the need of the situation and demand of the people. This failure on the part of the CPI had a great influence upon the founding fathers of the C.S.P. to form the party within the mainstream of the national movement. The civil disobedience movement created a great ferment among the people including the peasantry and stirred from there traditional ways of life.

Thus, the necessity of a radical party came to the forefront which was again gathered much more importance when the old defunct Swarajist Party, with its most unprogressive programmes, began to revive. In this situation great opportunity was availed in the Nasik Central jail, where most of the Communist, Socialist and terrorists were lodged in common cells, by discussion and exchange of views, created an atmosphere for planning the formation of an all India Socialist Party. Jayaprakash Narayan, M.R. Masani, Asoka Mehta, Achyut Patwardhan, N.G. Gore, S.M. Joshi, M.L. Dantwala were prominent among them. These leaders were released at the end of 1933. Before that, in the same year, a group of radical Congressmen met separately at the initiative of Purushottam Tricomdas with the aim of organising a Socialist Group within the Congress, at Poona. By discussion, a committee was formed with Purushottam Tricomdas, Yusuf Meherally and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay to draft a constitution which latter became known as Poona Draft'.¹⁴⁰ Within these arrangements, Jayaprakash Narayan (J.P.) after his release from the jail contacted the Bombay group of socialist and a meeting was held in Bombay with Bombay group and Nasik group of Socialists for chalking out a common programme to organise an All India Socialist Party. They were careful in avoiding controversy on ideological differences so that it would be acceptable to a large number of Congress men too.

Thus, an All India Congress Socialist party was formed in 1934 by the above intellectuals, within the National Congress and held its first conference at Patna in 17th May, 1934 (day before the AICC meeting) at Anjuman-e-

Ilama Hall, under the presidentship of Acharya Narendra Deva, the then Principal of Kashi Vidhyapith. However, “the first formal meeting of the CSP took place in Bombay, on 21 and 22nd October, 1934 under the presidentship of Sampurnanand”.¹⁴¹

These Socialist groups “collectively constituted the heart of leadership in the socialist leadership through most of its phases. These ... Socialist leaders were highly educated, young (average age of thirty in the 1930's), north Indian Congressmen, predominantly of urban, middle-class professions, many of whom gave up families or marriage in favour of professional politics.”¹⁴² However, there were basic differences of opinions among them since the party was composed of both Marxists and non-Marxists. To quote L.P. Sinha, “It was a queer assortment of all sort of people often poles apart in ideology and outlook. Fabian socialists, Marxists, Kautskyites, Stalinists, Leninists, Trotskyites, Rosa Luxemburgites and even Gandhites and even Vedantists constituted the conglomeration that the CSP was.”¹⁴³ However they agreed with some common aims such as :

- (a) “That the primary struggle in India was the national struggle for freedom,”
- (b) “That they must work inside the National Congress...”
- (c) “That they must give the Congress and the national movement a socialist direction, and
- (d) “That to achieve the objectives they must organise the workers and peasants in their class organisations and make them the social base of the anti-imperialist struggle.”¹⁴⁴

There was a controversy regarding the nature of the proposed party, whether it would work within the Congress or be a separate party. But unlike the Communists, most of these leaders regarded the Congress as the only broad mass organisation to lead the nationalist struggle. To quote Narendra Deva, “... it would be a suicidal policy for us to cut ourselves off from the national movements that the Congress undoubtedly represent.”¹⁴⁵ JP also expressed same view regarding Congress when he said that on no account they should isolate themselves from the Congress. The socialists did not find any contradiction between the nationalist struggle and the struggle for

socialism. Narendra Deva urged the coalition of socialist struggle with the national struggle led by the Congress and “... when the two struggles have synchronised with each other that the national struggle has reached its highest watermark.”¹⁴⁶

The CSP, from the very beginning, wanted to mobilise the Congress to accept their attitude of social and economic policies and to broaden the base of the national struggle. In other words, they wanted to convince the Congress leaders about the necessity of broadening the base of the movement by active participation of the peasants and workers. Secondly, they wanted to convince the masses that their hope of better living and better working conditions was intimately related with the political struggle for freedom. On this line of thinking a broad 15 point programme was adopted in the very first session of the All India Congress Socialist Party at Patna, 17th May 1934, which included transfer of power to the producing masses, socialization of key industries, elimination of landlordism and princes alongwith the organisation of cooperative for production, repudiation of public debt of India. In his presidential address, Narendra Deva also insisted on these principles.¹⁴⁷

This was the situation from which socialist leadership in India emerged. But this did not take any single line or definite route. Rather, it was, as Thomas A. Rusch shows, divided into three overlapping and amorphous tendencies. Our two leaders under discussion, belong to two different categories, though it is not wise to categories as such. However, following T.A. Rusch, J.P. represents the Marxian tendency while Lohia represents the tendency of democratic socialism tempered by the Gandhian concept of decentralization and the use of non-violent techniques.¹⁴⁸

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143. L.P. Sinha — **The Ideological Foundation of the Congress Socialist Party (1934-39)**. The Proceedings of a Seminar on Socialism in India 1919-39. N.M.M.L. *op. cit.* p. 474.
144. Bipan Chandra remarked in the **Foreword** of the book by Girja Shankar — **Socialist Trends in Indian National Movement (A Study of the Congress Socialist Party)** Twenty First Century Publishers-Meerut, 1987. p.vii.
145. Acharya Narendra Deva — *op. cit.* p.4.
146. *Ibid.*p.10.
147. 15 Point Programme adopted in the first Conference of the C.S.P.:
- “1. Transfer of all powers to the producing masses.
 2. Development of Economic Life of the Country to be planned and controlled by the state.
 3. Socialisation of key principal industries (i.e. steel, Cotton, Jute, Railways, Shipping, Plantation, Mines).
 4. State monopoly of foreign trade.
 5. Organisation of co-operative for production, distribution and credit in the unsocialised sector of the economic life.

6. Elimination of princes and landlords and all other classes of exploiters without compensation.
 7. Redistribution of land to the peasants.
 8. The state to encourage and control cooperative and collective farming.
 9. Liquidation of debt owed by peasants and workers.
 10. Recognition of the right to work or maintenance by the state.
 11. 'To everyone according to his need' is to be the basis ultimately of distribution of economic goods.
 12. Adult franchise which shall be on functional basis.
 13. The state shall neither support nor discriminate between religion nor recognise any distinction based upon caste or community.
 14. The State shall not discriminate between sexes.
 15. Repudiation of the so-called public Debt of India." Platform of the Party adopted at the First conference, Bombay, 1934. Quoted in L.P. Sinha — **The Ideological Foundation of the Congress Socialist Party.** *op. cit.* p.473.
148. Thomas A. Rusch. *op. cit.* p.189.
 Also Shashi Bairathi — **Communism and Nationalism in India** — Anamika Prakashan, Delhi-1987, p. 139.