CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The present dissertation is primarily concerned with the issue of ideological differences leading to subsequent political fragmentation within left and Marxist groups in an economically and politically transitional society; and confines itself in searching ideological origins of two Marxist-Leninist parties of India which came up at during the dying days of colonial rule in India. The present work actually endeavours to examine the beginning of national revolutionary movement in India on the basis of ‘petty-bourgeoisie romanticism’ and the subsequent transition of many of the activists to Marxist ideology. As has been accepted in the history of political movements, after 1934 no national revolutionary work was undertaken by any of the major revolutionary groups and upon their release from jails in 1938-39, some of them left political activities altogether and some accepted Marxian philosophy as their guide to future course of action. In the period after 1934, three political parties were formed exclusively by the national revolutionaries - turned - Marxists, all of which also claimed themselves as true followers of Marxism. These parties were the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP-1940), the Democratic Vanguards (1943), which became the Workers Party of India in 1960, and the Socialist Unity Centre of India (the SUCI-1946/1948). The present study concentrates on the process of origins of both the RSP and the SUCI. The reason behind selecting these two particular left parties for discussion in the present discourse is that most of the leading members of both the parties were from Anushilan Samiti and HSRA. The present writer humbly expects that the present study will add some new dimensions to the history of leftist political movements of late colonial Bengal which still remained unexplored to a large extent.

The general overview of the background leading to the formation of a number of leftist-Marxist political parties just prior to the Indian independence and a survey of literature as available on the theme of the present dissertation has been undertaken in chapter I.

We feel it necessary to have a proper perspective before entering into the discussion on the transition from national revolutionism to Marxism. Hence, we tried to make a survey of the national revolutionary movement in its historical context with special reference to Bengal for the period, 1904 – 1934 in chapter II. We could find in course of our study that a number of researchers on national revolutionism like David M Laushey, Satyendra Narayan Mazumdar or S Rai Chaudhuri etc., stated that not more than fifty percent of the Anushilan revolutionaries and part of the Jugantar revolutionaries embraced...
Marxism during the second half of the thirties of the twentieth century. Out of those converted revolutionaries’, not only the RSP or the SUCI, but a plethora of other parties with leftism or Marxism as their declared creed became active in Bengal during the last phase of India’s freedom movement. A large section of Anushilan and HSRA revolutionaries were associated in the process of formation of the RSP and, subsequently, a section from the RSP to the SUCI. The primary objective of the present work is to analyse the forces and factors leading to the formation of the Revolutionary Socialist Party and the Socialist Unity Centre of India. In doing so, the study undertaken in this chapter seeks to investigate the problems relating to the growth of a number of Marxist political parties in India on the basis of (a) the socio-economic formations of the then India, (b) the process of development of petty-bourgeois vis-à-vis proletarian class consciousness among the Indian national revolutionaries, (c) the diverse socio-economic backgrounds of the revolutionaries and (d) the different dimensions of the national revolutionary movement.

As we have seen in our discussion in chapter II that in spite of sharing almost similar philosophical view on the methods for fighting the British colonialists, there remained disunity among the national revolutionaries. Though there had been some attempts on unity, those efforts did not last long. But, this could be explained by saying that the very nature of work of the national revolutionaries forced them to move in small groups for minimizing the risk of being arrested or disclosing of plans to the police-administration. However, there were no changes of the scenario even after their acceptance of Marxism. The persistence of disunity and mutual animosity both in the revolutionary nationalist movement as well as in the leftist-Marxist parties suggests that intellectual and ideological commitment to a particular philosophy, either national revolutionism or communism, was an insufficient bond of cohesion. In actuality, different particular interpretations of the same ideology/philosophy shaped the forces of development rather than ideological commonality. As a consequence of it, the newly-born RSP suffered multiple break-ups in its formative phase. Our study also reveals the same for the SUCI leadership who had also to face this. At the ‘Platform of Action’ (POA) stage different groups were assembled together for forming a ‘genuine’ communist party in India. But, within one year of its existence, the POA became defunct and the groups assembled under the banner of the SUCI were segregated retaining their own group identities.

In the context of our present study, the ideological differences among the national revolutionaries around their concepts of nationalism vis-à-vis internationalism, their attitude towards armed rebellion vis-à-vis mass revolution etc. along with the influence of propagation of Marxist ideas, influence of the
individuals inducted to communist doctrine abroad and the growing tension in the urban-industrial areas on the basis of the class-based trade union & peasants’ movements etc. played an important role. Hence, this has been tried to be examined in chapter III. The study finds that the revolutionary nationalists were drawn towards Marxism by acquiring theoretical knowledge only, not by participating in any labour movement though such labour movements were in the formative stage then. At the beginning, particularly in the period before First World War, they were not connected to any such movements whatsoever because, they failed to understand the significance in such labour movements. Moreover, the secretive nature of their work also created barrier in undertaking open work either with the labourers or peasants. The revolutionary nationalists were basically from the Bengali middle class origin and, hence the middle-class values of theirs might have influenced their approaches towards mobilisation of workers and peasants’ to a significant extent. The success of Soviet revolution of 1917 created curiosity in them for acquiring knowledge about the Soviet Revolution and its socio-political as well as economic achievements. They started looking upon the Soviet system of state power as the world’s most important anti-colonialist force and a real base of support for the liberation movements of the colonial peoples. In India, primarily the revolutionary nationalists and revolutionary intellectuals were the first converts’ to Marxism and formed the Marxist groups that strengthened the communist movement in the country. These converted national revolutionaries took great interest in building labour and peasants’ movements. The role of the national revolutionaries in organising such movements has been discussed in chapter III of the present dissertation.

The national revolutionaries drawn towards Marxism were not free from the influence of Comintern’s policy decisions or from the influence of CPGB. The study, therefore, has also undertaken a detailed analysis of such phenomena as the influence of the foreign Communist Parties and Comintern on the national revolutionaries and their reactions thereto. This possible impact of the Comintern decisions in the process of conversion to Marxism has been examined critically in chapter IV. What we find here from our discussion that many of the Bengal national revolutionaries who were attracted towards Marxism were not satisfied either with the CPI or the Comintern. They were rather trying to develop party on Marxist Leninist line either separately or joining with some other like-minded groups except the CI affiliated CPI. As a culmination of this process, the Anushilan Marxists first tried to work sometime within the CSP maintaining their separate identity and, after almost two years of strained relationship, formed their party, the RSP. While the members of the SUCI, first started working as the members of the RSP but after sometime entered into a debate on the process of formation of the RSP as a Marxist party which led to their severing ties with the party. Then they formed the SUCI in 1946, with a Provisional
Central Executive Committee, declaring it as a platform of action in association with three other like-minded groups. Finally, subsequent to the split in the Provisional Central Executive Committee, they reconstituted the earlier PEC into a new Central Committee in 1948 through a convention and declared the SUCI as a separate Marxist party. However, the party was given a constitutional basis only through its First Party Congress held in March-April, 1988.

Another important area that has been dealt with in the present study is the attitude of Marxist parties/groups (especially the RSP and the SUCI) towards Comintern and, consequently, on Stalin’s leadership. The crucial question was whether to follow the guidelines of the Comintern unquestionably or to reject it outright? Particularly, the decisions of the Sixth and Seventh Comintern Congresses were of great debate. Except the then CPI leadership, all the leftist parties or left intellectuals vehemently opposed the recommendations of those Congresses so far as the colonial questions were concerned. The CPI’s accepting those recommendations for India, engaged in an anti-colonial movement, created a deep sense of indignation among the people with Marxist leanings. Subhash Chandra Bose, one of the most revolutionary and uncompromising leaders of the Indian freedom movement, depended so much on the CPI’s support in 1939 in his fight against the right-wing section of the Congress, failed to get the support of the CPI when it was needed most. This was the direct fallout of the Seventh Congress policy decisions. It made Subhash Chandra Bose very much doubtful about the intentions of the CPI and the Comintern as well and consequently, about Stalin. Time and again Lenin and Stalin stressed upon the necessity of forging unity in the democratic revolution stage with the progressive section of the middle-class intelligentsia. However, when the actual opportunity came, it was lost as the CPI dithered then. This angered the Anushilan Marxists immensely. They gave up any idea of forging any unity with the CPI and went ahead with the idea of forming a separate political party, the RSP. For all the alleged faults and failures of the CPI, the RSP held not only the Comintern responsible but also the leadership of Stalin. This position of the party has also been given due consideration in this chapter.

A scrutiny of the documents reveals that the SUCI did not accept the view point of the RSP on matters pertaining to Comintern. For them, while the Comintern can be held responsible for its incompetence, particularly after the 1935 Seventh Congress, its role was mainly correct prior to that period. But, Stalin was a ‘giant Communist leader’ who always acted as the living source of inspiration in the fight to emancipate the world proletariat from the bondage of capitalist slavery. Actually, for the SUCI, the relationship between the international authority or the international center and the national center should have been guided by the dialectical principles of ‘unity-struggle-unity’, which was unfortunately,
according to them, could not be practiced either by the Comintern or by the national sections during that time. Therefore, the political analysis of the RSP and the SUCI seems to differ substantially in this respect also.

We undertake the process of origin of the RSP for discussion in chapter V. The RSP was born in 1940 officially severing all ties with the CSP and selected a convening committee with Jogesh Chandra Chatterji as the convener. As has been observed, most of leading members of the RSP were arrested by May 1946 and no meeting of the party committee could be held by that time. Since all the CEC members were in jail by that time, therefore, the claim of the RSP of officially accepting different thesis and documents like Draft Constitution, On Russo-German War (claimed as adopted by the Central Committee-CC in 1941) and On National Struggle of August 1942 (claimed as adopted by the CC in 1942) etc. on different political issues during the period prior to the first convention held in 1946 appeared to be doubtful. However, few early pamphlets which are not available now, could have been helpful to bridge the gaps. We find that most of the founding leaders of the RSP left the party and joined either in Socialist Party or in Indian National Congress. Details of this disillusionment of old guards are discussed in this chapter V.

We have undertaken in chapter VI, the study of the process of the formation of the SUCI. The SUCI proclaimed as a theory that without fulfilling some preconditions to acquire the character of a real communist party, no party congress should be convened and no formal structure of the party be given. This signifies an important point of divergence between the SUC and the RSP. The concept of the process of party formation, therefore, as claimed by the SUCI, differed substantially between the SUCI and the RSP. Thus, in adherence to their theory, the SUCI convened its first party Congress in 1988 after 42 years of forming the POA in 1946.

Chapter VI devotes to study the formation and expansion, ideological position of the SUCI. It is found that the adoption of a different way of formation of a Marxist party, through intense ideological and cultural struggle and thereby building ideological and democratic centralism covering all the party leaders and workers, however, could not free the SUCI from internal disagreements as observed in this chapter. An important CC member of the party, Radheshyam Saha, was also expelled by the party just few months after the supposed ‘party founding convention’ was held. Similarly, Promod Singha Roy, the CC member and the first Bengal provincial secretary of the party along with few other important leading members were expelled within few months following the episode of Radheshyam Saha. The charges brought against Singha Roy were not of ordinary breach of party discipline or of difference in political
opinion, but of very grave nature. He was primarily accused of serious moral and ethical degradation. Some top ranking leaders of a party, which was supposedly organised after conducting an intense ideological and cultural battle by forming a ‘core group’ having real communist characters as a prerequisite of party formation as claimed by the SUCI, had to be expelled from the party. It naturally raised many questions. Thus, the efficacy of the process of formation of the SUCI, in accordance to their theory, may be under question. In this connection, it is important to note that a theoretical pamphlet on party organisation written by expelled CC member Singha Roy with an introduction by the then General Secretary published in June 1948 had even been advertised in the SUCI party mouthpiece Ganadabi in its issue of November 8 1959.

With regard to ideological differences between the RSP and the SUCI it has been observed that, though both the parties accept Marxism as their ideology, there are differences in their political line. We have discussed the origin of both these parties in two subsequent chapters. We find that there are differences in their approach regarding the process of formation of party, the analysis of national and international situation – particularly the role of Comintern, the evaluation of Stalin as a Marxist theoretician, the role of Soviet Union as a leader in the socialist camp and defining the stage of revolution in post-independent period of India. Though both the parties define the stage as ‘Socialist’, the RSP formulates that with reference to ‘Permanent’ or ‘Continuous’ revolution which basically is a proposition propounded by Trotsky, whereas SUCI formulates that on the basis of Lenin’s formulation of socialist revolution as stated in April theses. Evolution of the RSP goes through the phases of national revolutionism, then an association with non-communist socialist group like CSP and ultimately conversion to a Marxist-Leninist party through a declaration. The evolution of the SUCI, on the other hand, followed a different pattern. It was started with the constitution of the POA which was an action-oriented body of active people who from the very beginning involved themselves with political activities mainly by following Marxist theoretical line and selected a path of continuous ideological debate. However, the concept of forming a platform of action prior to the first official convention was not a unique practice conceptualized by SUC alone; other parties like the CSP, the RSP and the Democratic Vanguards also followed the same process of party formation during that period.

So, it has been observed that the ideological exercise was not sufficient to keep the revolutionaries turned Marxists to the fold of a single structural unit. The history of these two parties without any exception is laden with series of expulsions and resignations. It may be argued that individual loyalty to a particular leader or to a particular group seems to be a major factor behind this frequent
disintegration of the leftist parties in India. Even within the same organisation there was lack of uniformity in attitude. The very nature of organisations and their activities made it impossible to conduct any systematic discussion or exchange of opinion regarding the philosophy, aims and programmes of revolution. So, there had been enough scope to develop a regional or a subgroup identity when all the activities of the national revolutionaries were to conduct secretly. This is particularly true about the Anushilan Samiti where the bond between the Kolkata and the Dhaka group hanged on a very thin balance.

Further, the relationship of the party rank and file to their local organisational leader (often called ‘dada’) had an intense personal, almost religious bond of loyalty. It has been alleged about the SUCI founders that they basically belonged to the Charu Roy group of Dhaka. (See chapter VI) In Kolkata, they assembled in a South Kolkata Club, Culture Club, formed by another Charu Roy follower, Chitta Guha. The SUCI leadership rejected this allegation of group mentality as baseless; but, they did admit that the South Kolkata Culture Club indeed played a crucial role in the formation of the SUCI.

The RSP tried to check this kind of disintegrating tendencies by including a detailed screening process for party-membership in the party constitution. The leadership was so much concerned about the matter that even before the first convention (subsequently, held in 1946) they adopted one Draft Constitution, though its date of adoption is questionable, through which an attempt was made to keep the leaders and workers within the fold of the party discipline. But the menace of disunity and split could not be fully eliminated: first in 1946, almost thirty one members were expelled from the party with charges of being ‘Stalinist’ and, in protest, the then Secretary of the District Committee of ‘powerful’ 24 Parganas came out of the party along with his followers; secondly, in 1946, 148 leading and well-known personalities left the party to join the CSP; and lastly, the first general secretary of the party, Jogesh Ch. Chatterjee left the party to join the Indian National Congress in 1955.

The SUCI had to face similar internal strife at the ‘POA phase’ when the different groups who assembled together to form this platform had fallen apart after a year. Actually, as second party general secretary, Nihar Mukherjee confided that there would have been three SUC’s in India when all the three main groups were trying to use the name of the POA (i.e. SUC) as the name of their party. It is because of the efforts of Sudhin Pramanik, one of the members of POA, the group belonged to Shibdas Ghosh, could use the name, the SUCI and other two groups restrained themselves from using the same name. The group of Nepal Bhattacharjee took the name of Workers and Peasants’ League, Biren Bhattacharjee and his followers joined the CPI and Sudhin Pramanik retained his independent existence. Because of this
experience of formative years, the SUCI leadership, in order to check the possibility of recurrence of such disintegrating trends in the party, highlighted the concepts of uniformity in thinking, oneness in approach and ideological centralism etc. before giving the party a conventional structure.

However, the commonality of the RSP and the SUCI was found in respect to their views on the stage of revolution in post-colonial India. Both the parties advocated in favour of ‘socialist revolution’. As the present study is concerned with the origins of the RSP and the SUCI, no detailed discussion has been undertaken to study the political movements they initiated or in which they participated except some references in chapter III to their involvements in the labour and peasants’ movements in the initial phase of both the parties. But, it appears to indicate that though the RSP was formed basically out of Anushilan and HSRA activists who had an all India impact, in practice, the party failed to play any significant role during the last days of British Raj. However, this question does not come with respect to the SUCI as the initiative to form the party was taken up by some young workers of the RSP who had very little political significance at the provincial level. But, both the parties participated wholeheartedly in the movement against INA Trial and in support of the Naval Uprising of 1946. In post-independent India, however, both the parties failed to create much impact as was expected by their leadership.

By the end-forties of the twentieth century, the process of conversion from national revolutionism to either nationalist mainstream or Marxism had more or less been completed. A number of leftist-Marxist political parties including the RSP and the SUCI came into existence in the process. The study tries to study the differences of opinion between the RSP and the SUCI on the issue of conferring and acknowledging the leading role to the Comintern in guiding the national revolutionary movements in colonies. And also, what were the reactions of the RSP leadership towards the activities of the SUCI organisers, when the latter group of people was in the process of forming their ‘Platform of Action’ by severing organisational ties with the RSP? In our work, the process of origins of both the parties and the mutual differences between the RSP and the SUCI concerning their attitude towards the issues like the process of formation of a Marxist party etc. has also been discussed in chapters V & VI respectively.

Pratul Ganguly, one of the ‘big five’ of Anushilan, writing on November 14 1941, welcomed the change of leadership of Anushilan as it converted itself to the RSP. In his opinion, ‘Anushilan has ceased to exist’. But he expected a new surge of revolutionary movements in India on Marxist lines under the new leadership. But later he felt that his expectations were not fulfilled. Similarly, another founder of Anushilan Marxists, Naren Das lamented that once a strong force having all India organisations, the converted Anushilan cum the RSP party became a ‘weak’ force prior to Indian independence. During the
time of the independence and partition, the party remained merely as a ‘mute spectator’. Nirmal Roychowdhury writes that the split of the SUCI from the RSP was due to lack of toleration. The leaders were not ready to give any credence to the views of others who had different perceptions. Ideological discussions were not always entertained. They could do nothing to stop this split. With a ‘heavy heart’ the RSP leadership witnessed the splitting of the party.

One important aspect that we have observed during the course of the research is serious anomalies in mentioning either the date or the year in the party documents. A number of party pamphlets or documents have been found which either do not contain the time of adoption, else publication, as the case may be or mentioned such dates and years which are seemed to be logically impossible. This observation applies with respect to both the RSP and the SUCI. (See chapter V & VI) Moreover, the minutes or proceedings of important meetings are also not available on inquiry. Because of this, we often face the difficulties in understanding the historicity with proper perspective and context.

The RSP declared about its central committee formation in 1940 itself but no name of the members of that committee is found before its second all national party convention held in 1947 in Muzaffarpur where we find ten names as member of the central executive committee and thirty-three names as member of the central committee elected there. Having a complete list of central committee members, the contribution of every people and their respective ideological position could have been helpful to understand the formation process of the RSP with greater details.

This problem is also found with respect to the SUCI documents. For example, we have found that a party document of May 1948 stated that the central committee had been formed with eleven members without mentioning the names. Astonishingly, the party website and other recent documents now claim that there were only seven members in the central committee formed in 1948. Though we have found other names, immediately after the supposedly ‘founding convention’, mentioned in party documents as a member of the central committee, party prefers to stick to select seven only. However, why the party does not want to recognize ‘other names’ and prefer to avoid those four names in the current literature is not within the purview of the present study. Our findings of such anomalies in documentary evidence vis-à-vis party’s narration of its history of formation have been discussed in chapter V and chapter VI for the RSP and the SUC respectively.

The present study has avoided repetition of what has already been found in the existing literature, but to supplement already known facts and, therefore, the study restricts its scope to the examination of
the processes of formation of the two political parties, viz. the RSP and the SUCI. The brief overview of existing literature indicates that there has been very little or no work at all on the process of origins of these two parties, particularly on the process of conversion from revolutionary nationalism to Marxism. The present study has been able to consult some documents (some of which are annexed as appendices with this dissertation) concerning the ideological positions of the RSP and the SUCI, which are not previously attended properly. These documents of the RSP and the SUCI throw a better light on the process of transition towards Marxism as well as on the ideological currents which led to split and fragmentation of revolutionaries into multiple political parties and groups. The present work can modestly claim to be possibly the first work of its kind. Therefore, it is expected that the completion of the present work would certainly add some new dimensions to the existing storehouse of information.