

Socialist Alternatives: The Communists



Discipline course - 1

Semester - 2

Paper – Nationalism in India

Lesson - Socialist Alternatives: The Communists

Lesson Developer: Dr. Namita Kumari

College /Department: Hindu College, University of Delhi.

Socialist Alternatives: The Communists

Content:

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Origin of the communist party in India.**
- 3. The conspiracy cases: The Kanpur conspiracy case and the Meerut conspiracy case**
- 4. Spreading of Communist ideas and organization of working class movements**
- 5. The communists in India's National Movement**
- 6. Assessment**

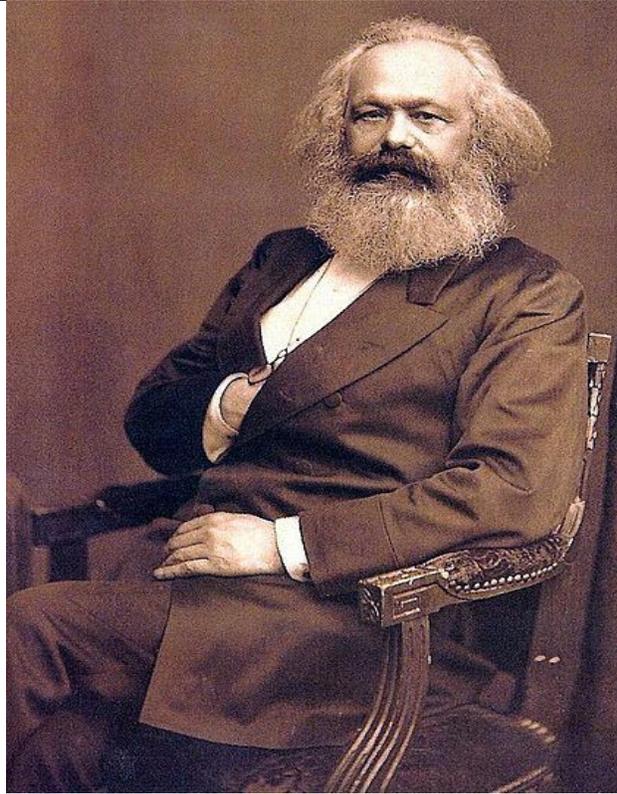
1. Introduction: What is communism and who are the communists?

The modern communism, the communist movements and parties are based on the ideology of Marxism. The Marxist ideology is a bunch of thoughts based on the writings of Marx and Engle's. Later many other philosophers and activists have contributed to the development of Marxist ideas. In Marxist philosophy, the fundamental division in society is class division. The class division of society is a result of the institution of private property. In the history of human civilization there had always been two classes; one which owns the means of production (haves) and one which owns the labour power (have-nots). The owners of the means of production exploit the other class. In modern times the owners of the means of production are called the Capitalists. In Marxist terminology the two classes in modern capitalist system are: bourgeois and proletariat. The capitalist appropriates the surplus value, which is created by the labour power. The proletariat is exploited by the capitalists, and the capitalist creates an elaborate set of social, political, moral, ethical and legal

Socialist Alternatives: The Communists

institutions and arrangements to continue their dominance in society. According to Marx, the modern capitalist system can only be brought down by a revolution. Marx believes that the capitalism carries its own seeds of destruction, since it provides a platform to all the workers to unite. Hence his slogan was all the workers of the world unite. After the revolution, the capitalism will be smashed and the society will usher into a new era of classless and stateless society. However this new era will not come immediately and there will be an intermediary phase, which will be a dictatorship of the proletariat. Sometimes this transition stage is also called socialist stage as in contrast the final stage is called communism. In Marxist philosophy there is a role for a Vanguard Party. The role of the party is to create class consciousness among the workers and bring them together. This party will also lead the revolution and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. This vanguard party of the working class is known as the communist party. Therefore communist party is a party which believes in the social and economic principles of communism and aspires to achieve that stage through various types of social and political activities (may be violent). After the Russian revolution of 1917, the Bolshevik party of Russia was copied world over. In March 1919, the Communist International, abbreviated as Comintern was established in Moscow. The purpose of this international communist organization was to fight "by all available means, including armed force, for the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie and for the creation of an international Soviet republic as a transition stage to the complete abolition of the State".

Socialist Alternatives: The Communists



Karl Heinrich Marx (5 May 1818 – 14 March 1883) was a German philosopher, economist, sociologist, historian, journalist, and revolutionary socialist. He is one of the most influential personalities of modern times. He is a champion of socialism and, he called his variant of socialism as scientific socialism. Along with his friend Friedrich Engels, Marx wrote the Communist Manifesto, which gives the problems of capitalism and an approach to class struggle. "Workers of the world unite!" written in the Communist Manifesto, remains one of the most important slogans of the communist movements all over the world. Many scholars have been influenced by Marx and the collective body of such works is called Marxist writings. The ideology based on the writings of Marx has led to revolution, movements and

struggles in every part of the world. Engels said after the death of Marx : "Just as Darwin discovered the law of development or organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of development of human history: the simple fact, hitherto concealed by an overgrowth of ideology, that mankind must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing, before it can pursue politics, science, art, religion, etc.; that therefore the production of the immediate material means, and consequently the degree of economic development attained by a given people or during a given epoch, form the foundation upon which the state institutions, the legal conceptions, art, and even the ideas on religion, of the people concerned have been evolved, and in the light of which they must, therefore, be explained, instead of vice versa, as had hitherto been the case". Some of his famous writings are: Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right (1843), On the Jewish Question(1843), Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of (1844), The Holy Family(1845), Theses on Feuerbach(1845), The German Ideology(1845), The Poverty of Philosophy (1847), Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848).

(Source of Picture : http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Karl_Marx_001.jpg)

Socialist Alternatives: The Communists

The Comintern said that a uniform nomenclature must be adopted by the communist parties all over the world. The nomenclature should be the communist party of any particular country (name of the country, e.g. Communist party of India).

2. Origin of the communist party in India

The communist ideas were adopted by the Russian Revolutionaries, who threw out the Czarists regime and laid the foundation of first communist regime of the world. The victory of Bolshevik party in Russia generated a heat of idealism across the world. It attracted many young people towards Marxism and socialism. Many Indian youths were also attracted towards Marxism. One of the foremost important figures from India in the communist movement was, Naren Battacharya, who later on became famous by the name of Manbendra Nath Roy. He became active in International communist movement and was instrumental in the establishment of Mexican Communist Party in 1919, in collaboration with M Borodin. M. N. Roy also participated in The Second Congress of the Communist International. This Communist International was held in Moscow in July –August 1920. However, M.N. Roy represented Mexican Communist Party in that International. The Indian delegation included Abani Mukherjee and M.P.T. Acharya. During the International Roy presented an alternative thesis on Colonial question which was different from Lenin's thesis. Lenin and Roy disagreed on both strategy and tactics to be adopted by the communists in India. Lenin believed that the bourgeois-revolutionary movements should be supported by the communists. However Roy saw that the bourgeois national movement was different from the movement of proletariat and the communists should not support the national movement. Roy had been in active contact with various Indian Communists after the International of 1920. There were important active communist leaders in different parts of British India: S.A.Dange in Bombay, Muzaffar Ahmed in Calcutta, Sigaravelu in Madras and Ghulam Hussain in Lahore. During this time some newspapers and journals also started talking about the achievements of the Russian Revolutionaries. In India the left intellectuals were now talking openly from Congress and other platforms. The British government was also becoming more conscious about their activities. In the meantime, M.N.Roy played an important role in the establishment of Central Asiatic Bureau in Tashkent. The main purpose of this bureau was to recruit an army of expatriate Indians and send them back to India to liberate it from British. Many people from Khilafat movement joined this bureau. Saukat Usmani was one of the prominent figures, who joined M.N. Roy in Tashkent. These people tried to enter India, via Afghanistan but were held by British Indian government and were

Socialist Alternatives: The Communists

tried in a set of five cases, which took place during 1922-1927. These cases are famously known as the Peshawar conspiracy cases.



M.N.Roy (21 March 1887- 26January 1954) was a communist activist, philosopher and radical humanist. His original name was Narendra Nath Bhattacharya. He was instrumental in the establishment of the Communist Party of Mexico. He was a revolutionary leader who was engaged in initiating communist movement in India. In the later part of his life he propounded the alternative philosophy of radical humanism which he elaborated in his theses into a manifesto called New Humanism.

(source :

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mn_roy2.jpg)

The Indian political scenario was also becoming conducive for the acceptance and growth of new ideas. When Mahatma Gandhi withdrew the non-cooperation movement after the Chauri Chaura incidence, the masses felt confused. And there was an intense debate about Gandhian techniques. Many young nationalists were attracted to alternative radical ideologies. The communists not only became stronger but also started talking about revolution in India. There were attempts to bring communists of India on one platform. One person named Satybhkta from Kanpur called all the communists to Kanpur in December 1925. Satyabhakta wanted to call the new party the Indian communist party. But according to the international trend the party was named Communist Party of India. Subsequently, the centre of the activities of the communist party was also shifted from Kanpur to Bombay. The new Communist party also called for complete independence from the British rule. The communist party espoused to establish a government in India on the lines of Soviet Russia.

Socialist Alternatives: The Communists

3. The conspiracy cases: The Kanpur conspiracy case and the Meerut conspiracy case

The conspiracy cases played an important role in spreading the communist ideology in India. The conspiracy cases were part of the British strategy to bulldoze the burgeoning communist movement. However, on the contrary the Meerut conspiracy case made the communist more popular. After the beginning of the Peshawar cases, the government was in search of communists in India. The Bombay communist leader Dange wrote a book 'Gandhi vs. Lenin'. This book was taken as evidence that the communists are trying to conspire against the British raj. The charge was that the conspirators were making a "Conspiracy to overthrow the king Emperor". In the Kanpur Bolshevik conspiracy case, M N Roy, Muzaffar Ahamed, S A Dange, Shaukat Usmani, Nalini Gupta, Singaravelu Chettiar, Ghulam Hussain were charged with cases. Roy was charged in absentia. Ghulam Hussain was pardoned. And the rest four were sentenced to four years of rigorous imprisonment. This case attracted general people towards communist ideas. Through newspaper reporting's the people were educated about communists and their plans. Hence this case played an important role in spreading the communist ideas in India.

The Meerut conspiracy case is the most famous conspiracy case of Indian freedom struggle. The British government was increasingly worried about the growing influence of the communists in India. They feared that the Comintern was trying to stoke a revolution in India by sending some British communists. Hence the government targeted labour leaders, trade unionists, open communists and British communists. In March 1929, thirty two people were arrested from various parts of India. These people were charged 'under section 121(A) of the Indian Penal Code, of conspiracy to deprive the King of the sovereignty of British India'. This conspiracy case went on till 1932 in the session court of Meerut. The accused were defended by famous lawyers' like- Jawahrlal Nehru, M.C.Chagla and M.A.Ansari. There were three British citizens among the accused- Philip Spratt, Benjamin Francis Bradley and Lester Hutchinson. The court pronounced sentences in January 1933. Twenty-seven accused were given transportation of various durations.

Socialist Alternatives: The Communists



Portrait of 25 of the Meerut prisoners taken outside the jail. Back row (left to right): K. N. Sehgal, S. S. Josh, H. L. Hutchinson, Shaikat Usmani, B. F. Bradley, A. Prasad, P. Spratt, G. Adhikari. Middle Row: R. R. Mitra, Gopen Chakravarti, Kishori Lal Ghosh, L. R. Kadam, D. R. Thengdi, Goura Shanker, S. Bannerjee, K. N. Joglekar, P. C. Joshi, Muzaffar Ahmad. Front Row: M. G. Desai, D. Goswami, R. S. Numbkar, S. S. Mirajkar, S. A. Dange, S. V. Ghatge, Gopal Basak.

(Portrait of 25 of the prisoners of the Meerut conspiracy case, Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Meerut_prisoners_outside_the_jail.jpg).

In a prima facie this led to the weakening of the organization of communist movement. But the trials made these people heroes and the accused used the courtroom to propagate their ideas. The newspapers and journals carried the speeches made in the courtroom and the nation was infused with communist ideas. The trial also demonstrated the growing radicalization of Indian youth against the British government. The resentment against the government was so much that the government had to declare the Public Safety Ordinance in 1929 to deal with the growing demonstrations. Writing about the impact of the Meerut Conspiracy Case, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, a former General Secretary of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) says: a Party with a centralized apparatus came into being only after the release of the Meerut prisoners, in 1933. The Meerut Conspiracy Case, though launched to suppress the communist movement, provided the opportunity for Communists to propagate their ideas. It came out with its own manifesto and was affiliated to the Communist International in 1934 (Surjeet). The impact of the Meerut Conspiracy case is

Socialist Alternatives: The Communists

believed to be widespread and some scholars even argue that this led to strengthening of the left movement in all others parts of India.

4. Spreading of Communist ideas and organization of working class movements:

Now the communist ideas were spreading across India rapidly. So many new workers and peasants bodies sprung up across India. Further the communists were also involved in a number of strikes and movements to champion the workers causes. Some of the important organisations that were set up are:

i) In 1925-26, Muzaffar Ahmed, Hemanta Kumar Sarkar, Shamsuddin Hussain, Nazrul Islam and Qutubuddin Ahmad from Bengal were involved in setting up of an organization named Labour Swaraj party of the Indian National Congress. In 1926 the name of the party was later changed to Peasants and Workers party of Bengal. Soon after the 1926 the communists infiltrated in to the party to carry out their activities.

ii) In Punjab the Ghadar veteran Santokh Singh organized a party of workers around the famous journal *Kirti*. This party was called the Kirti Kisan Party.

iii) A workers and Peasants party was founded in Bombay in 1927, by S.S.Mirajkar, K.N.Joglekar and S.V.Ghate with a Marathi journal *Kranti*. This party was called the Congress Labour Party. D.R. Thengdi was elected as President and S.S. Mirajkar as General Secretary.

These workers and Peasant parties (WPP) worked inside the Congress till 1929. The communist used these parties as a cover for their activities. The communist wanted to give the nationalist movement a radical and revolutionary orientation. The WPP helped to build a strong presence of left leaning leaders in the Congress party. Apart from these political activities the communists were also influencing the workers in different cities in India. Sumit Sarkar (Modern India) identifies a number of labour upsurges, where the Communists played an important role:

i) In Bengal there were strikes in Kharagpur (in 1927) and also a protracted struggle at the Lilloah Rail workshop in 1928 (led by Gopen Chakarabati and Dharani Goswami).

ii) Activists of the Workers and Peasants party (largely a communist dominated organization) were the major players in the Calcutta corporation scavengers strike in 1928.

Socialist Alternatives: The Communists

iii) In July 1928 there was a strike in the South Indian Railways. Although the strike was brief but the struggle was intense and the government reacted with heavy hand. Leaders of the strike, Sigaravelu and Mukundlal Sircar were given jail sentences.

iv) The General Strike which occurred in the Bombay Textile Mills was one of the most famous strikes. The strike lasted from April to October 1928. During the strikes communist led Girni Kamgar Union developed as an alternative to the moderate Textile Labour Union of N.M. Joshi. The Girni Kamgar Union was very popular and its membership (around 70,000 members) far exceeded the membership from its rival union.

v) The communists were also active in the G.I.P railway in Bombay. There was a communist led strike of workers and oil depot employers of the G.I.P Railways in 1930.

5. The communists in the India's National Movement:

The people who joined the communist party or were involved in various movements, were inspired by two ideologies; Marxism and nationalism. The communists wanted the free India from the imperial yoke. But at the same time they believed in the Marxist principles that said that all the workers of the world unite against the capitalist (and feudal elements). Added to this internal dilemma was the dictate of the Communist International advocating change in strategy from time to time. The congress party since its inception in 1885 had been the foremost and all-encompassing conglomeration of people in India, who were fighting against the colonial rule. The communist had a love-hate relationship with the congress. Hence their role in nationalist movement from 1925-1947 depended upon their attitude towards congress and their theorization and re-theorization of Indian situation.

Initially due to the suspicion of the British government, the communists were not able to work openly. Hence they worked through The Workers and Peasants Party (WPP). The communists working through the WPP were able to create a strong momentum within and outside the congress party in favour of communist ideas. However, since the communists of India thought themselves as a part of the international communist movement, so they were guided by the strategic decisions of the Comintern. In the Sixth party Congress in 1929, the Comintern revised its policy towards the national movement run by non-communist in colonial countries. They said that these national movements are bourgeois led national movement. And actually they are not against imperialism.

Socialist Alternatives: The Communists

The Communist International (1919 – 1943), also known as the Comintern, was an international communist organization initiated in Moscow during March 1919. The Comintern had seven World Congresses between 1919 and 1935. It also had thirteen "Enlarged Plenums" of its governing Executive Committee, which had much the same function as the somewhat larger and more grandiose Congresses. The Comintern was officially dissolved by Joseph Stalin during 1943. The International intended to fight "by all available means, including armed force, for the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie and for the creation of an international Soviet republic as a transition stage to the complete abolition of the State.

(Source : <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comintern>)

As a consequence, the Communist Party of India decided that the Congress party is a bourgeois party and therefore there should not be any connection with the Congress party. The communist party under the direction of the Comintern decided to become more militant against the imperialism of the British government. The CPI declared that its goal was to establish socialism in India through revolution. In 1934 the party was accepted as the Indian section of the Communist International. The party moved toward more radicalism. "The CPI, with its new policy orientation had rejected non-violent forms of political struggle and committed itself to the policy of armed struggle against British imperialism. The new policy made it clear that the organizational structure of the party would be centralized, independent and illegal. It also committed itself to follow the policy guidelines laid down by the international communist movement. The Communist Party put forward a number of demands including abolition of zamindari, nationalization of banks, tea gardens and shipping industries and a host of other radical programmes. In keeping with the new policy line, it not only dissociated itself from the Civil Disobedience Movement but also denounced the Gandhi-Irwin Pact as an act of the betrayal of the Indian people" (Pradhan, 242). The seventh party congress in Moscow, 1935, revised its policy in light of the threats of fascism. The Comintern went in favour of a united front with the bourgeois national movement against imperialism. The Indian Communists were to once again participate in the activities of the mainstream of the national movement led by the National Congress. "The theoretical and political basis for the change in communist politics in India was laid in early 1936 by a document popularly known as the Dun-Bradley Thesis. According to this thesis, the National Congress could play a great part and a foremost part in the work of realizing the anti-

Socialist Alternatives: The Communists

imperialist people's front" (Chandra, 298). The communist party accepted the central role of the Congress in the struggle against imperialism in India and they gave national movement ultimate importance. The united front with congress had brought the communists in to the mainstream. The communists became active in All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) and All India Kisan Sabha. The communists were now able to build up powerful peasant movements in Kerala, Andhra, Bengal and Punjab. Their reach among the peasant and workers in all parts of India increased. Even within the Congress party, the communists were able to influence policies and occupy important ranks. The growing communist influence in the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) and other organs of the Congress party was worrisome for the Congress leadership. Hence, the communists were expelled from the Congress and the CSP on the issue of double membership.

The declaration of the Second World War (WW II) in September 1939 by the British Indian government had suddenly changed the course of the Indian national movement. The war presented a dilemma to the Congress party, whether to support or not, the war efforts of the government? However, initially the congress decided to give conditional support to the government. The congress said that if the government sets a definite road map for India's independence, the Congress will support the war efforts. The communists took a totally different stand. Their stand was derived from the Russian interaction with Germany. Russian leader Stalin had signed a pact of mutual interest with Germany in 1939. Therefore for communists, Germany was in their side. So they declared that the British war efforts are imperialist war. The communists planned, wide scale anti-British activities in India, so that they can disrupt the British war efforts. "The CPI formulated a new policy statement known as 'Proletariat Path' through which it committed itself to open rebellion against the British rule in India by organizing a 'general strike' in the major industries along with 'a no rent, no tax campaign'. Not only that, it also wanted to make an open attack on all symbols of the British authority including police and army structure. In pursuance of this new policy, they organized a major strike in the textile mills of Bombay in March 1941" (Pradhan, 244). But within two years everything was about to change fully. In June 1941, Hitler attacked Russia. And on 12 July 1941 the Soviet Union and the Great Britain concluded an agreement on joint operation in the war against Hitler. This also brought a change in the CPI's thinking and the CPI decided to support the British war efforts against the Fascists. D.N.Gupta gives two reasons for the change in CPI's policy towards the war:

Socialist Alternatives: The Communists

(1) The CPI was a part of the Communist International, and once all the Communist parties' world over, including that of Great Britain, which influenced the CPI's line to a large extent, changed their position, the CPI had to naturally, sooner or later, change its own.

(2) In November-December 1941, when the CPI formally changed its line, its justification, too, was that the German attack on the Soviet Union had brought about a qualitative change in the world balance of forces and, therefore, in the nature of the war (Gupta, 193).

The British government was very happy with the communists and the ban on the communist party was lifted in July 1942. The communists were now engaged in many activities to support the British war efforts. In the meantime, the Congress party under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi launched the Quit India Movement in 1942. The communists directed its cadres to stay away from the Quit India Movement. Even the communists played as collaborators of British to quell the movement. They helped the police and Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in arresting the congress leaders and workers. Some other major changes had also occurred in the communist ideology and strategy during this time. The communists in India came up with an ideological document on the question of nationalities. The document was called Adhikari's thesis' - 'Pakistan and National unity'. This document almost supported the idea of Pakistan and also tried to cover many other such nationalities. They praised the role of Muslim League against the Congress party.

The collaboration with the British Indian government provided an opportunity to the communists to spread and strengthen themselves. The influence of the communist party grew manifold. Membership of the Party which was only 400 in 1942 rose to 15000 in 1943 and 53000 in 1946 and over 100,000 in 1948. The party also became more militant in its attitude. "It also tried to reach out to the *bhadralok* through the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA), which was successful in roping in such cultural figures as Balraj Sahni, Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, Kaifi Azmi, Salil Chaudhary and others. They further strengthened their stranglehold over AITUC and All India Kisan Sabha. Working through Kisan Sabha, the Communist Party got a good foothold in the countryside, particularly in the areas where the Quit India Movement was not that strong. Consequently, Kisan Sabha made significant gains in Punjab, Kerala, coastal areas of Andhra, Telangana and North Bengal" (Pradhan , 245).

The end of the WWII was followed by severe famine in Bengal. There was an economic crisis in the country. Bipan Chandra says that the colony reeled under the heavy yoke of

Socialist Alternatives: The Communists

the war effort and famine, inflation, scarcity, hoarding and black-marketing plagued the land. Under these circumstances, the communists were ready to launch organized struggles. The communists now intensified their struggles against the British government. The communists were now a powerful force in Indian politics. They organized various struggles in different parts of India on issues related to peasants and workers. Some of the important movements led by the Communist during this period are-Tebhanga Movement, Travancore people's struggle (especially the Punnapra-Vayalar episode) and peasant uprising in Telangana, the Warlis Revolt, the Punjab kisan morchas. "These movements had an anti-imperialist edge — as the direct oppressors they challenged were also the vested interests that constituted the social support of the Raj —but they did not come into direct conflict with the colonial regime" (Chandra, 479). We will describe the three important movements:

Tebhanga Movement

The Tebhanga movement was led by the Communist party of India through its front called Kisan Sabha in 1946 in Bengal. At that time in Bengal the sharecroppers had to give half of the produce to the landowners. The sharecroppers demanded to keep the two thirds of the produce. The name of the movement derives from this demand of two third, in Bengali *teenbhag*. "The small peasants also joined hand with the sharecroppers as the ambit of the demands increased. Gradually with the intensification of the movement the charter of demands even touched the revolutionary idea of 'land to tiller' concept" (Majumdar, 25). The movement grew very rapidly and at many times became violent. In many parts of rural Bengal the landowners fled from the villages. "The movement reflected the development of the political consciousness of the poor peasants and tribal sharecroppers and it may safely be opined that it marked a turning point in the history of agrarian movements in India" (Majumdar, 25). The severe repression by the police led to the suppression of the movement. Many people died in police actions.

Peasant uprising in Travancore (Punnapra-Vayalar uprising):

Memorial of Punnapra-Vayalar uprising martyrs (Located near Kalarcode, Alappuzha,Kerala)

Socialist Alternatives: The Communists



(Source : http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Punnapra_vayalar.jpg,)

The communists were very active in many parts of Kerala (Travancore). In the state of Travancore the communists had reached to peasants, toddy tappers and coir factory workers. The conditions of these people were not good. "The workers of Ambalappuzha-Cherthala Taluks which were the first industrialized place in Travancore, acquired a high degree of political consciousness. It was in this background that the first trade union in Kerala was formed in Alappuzha. Travancore Labour Association formed on 31 March 1922.

Socialist Alternatives: The Communists

The union of workers of Empire Coir Works was formed in order to achieve their demands relating to their work" (<http://www.cpimkerala.org/eng/struggles-72.php?n=1>). The Coir factory workers of Alappuzha, Cherthala, Muhamma and Aroor were regularly protesting against the working conditions and poor wages. In the meanwhile the Dewan of Travancore proposed a new model of government based on the American model of government. The assembly was to be elected by the people based on universal franchise, but the executive headed by the Dewan was to be appointed by the Maharaja. Essentially the rule of the Maharaja will continue. This model was opposed by both the congress and the communists. "It was in this period that combined meeting of Travancore Coir Factory Workers Union, Muhamma Coir Factory Workers Union and Cherthala Coir Factory Workers Union decided to strike work raising 27 demands. The demands included end of Dewan rule and establishment of responsible government" (<http://www.cpimkerala.org/eng/struggles-72.php?n=1>). The communists raised the battle with the slogan "chuck the American model into the Arabian Sea". On the orders of the Dewan the army of the Travancore state moved in to quell the uprising. On 26-27 October, 1946 the communist camps at Vayalar were surrounded by the army. In the ensuing battle over a thousand people were killed. This uprising played an important part in dropping the American model plan and the final integration of the Travancore state in the Indian Union.

Peasant uprising in Telangana

The Telangana rebellion was a peasant uprising in the Telangan region of the princely state of Hyderabad in 1946-1951. The communists played a leading role in the Telangana uprising. Land-grabbing, extortion and debt slavery was common in this part. The peasants rose against the landlords. The movement started in the Nalgonda district, but gradually it engulfed in around 4,000 villages of the Warangal and Bidar districts. The peasants organized themselves and freed themselves from the yoke of *jagirdars*. Some villages were controlled by the communists and in those villages the bonded labour was abolished, agricultural wages were raised, unjustly seized land was returned to their previous peasant holders and steps were taken to redistribute land. Later the uprising became a movement against the rule of Nizam.

6. Assessment:

The role of the communists in the Indian national movement has always been a matter of debate and discussion. The communists are credited with bringing the issues related to the workers and peasants in the forefront of the national debate. At many times the

Socialist Alternatives: The Communists

communists are accused that they always preferred the goals of communism over nationalism. They are charged that they always adhered to the dictates of the Communist International and changed their policies and strategies accordingly. One of the most important criticisms of the communists is about their strategy of opposing the Quit India movement. However defending the action of the communists during the quit India movement 1942, the veteran communist leader E.M.S. Namboodiripad writes:

“It is on record that Nehru and Azad spent long hours with Gandhi, trying to convince him that a national struggle of the magnitude envisaged by him at that stage would help German fascism and Japanese militarism; it would not mean India’s emancipation from British rule but the replacement of the latter by the German and Japanese fascist rule. When they could not convince Gandhi of course, Nehru and Azad agreed to go along with him. That however does not invalidate the argument advanced by them. The world along with our own country was spared the catastrophe apprehended by them only because the soviet and allied armed forces, supported by the revolutionary democratic movements, throughout the world were powerful enough to inflict a crushing defeat on the world fascism. The communist movement therefore has nothing to be ashamed of in having adhered to the last to the position originally adopted by such top leaders of national movement as Nehru and Azad” (Namboodiripad, 175).

The communists made important contributions to the national movement. “In the first place, through their work among the peasantry, working class, youth, student community and the under-privileged sections of the Indian society, they impacted the Indian national movement and, to some extent, were responsible for giving it a mass-based character. Undoubtedly, they did contribute to the radicalization of the Indian National Congress, making it take a left slant. Second, they succeeded in raising people's organisations, representing the interests of the different sections of Indian society, viz., All India Trade Union Congress, All India Kisan Sabha, Indian people's Theatre Association, All India Students Federation, Progressive Writers Association and All India State People's Conference. All these organisations had their own contributions in raising political consciousness among the people as well as in espousing the people's causes (Pradhan, 247).

The Flag of the CPI

Socialist Alternatives: The Communists



(Source : <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:CPI-banner.svg>,)



Socialist Alternatives: The Communists

6. Reference :

Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar (2004) *From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India*, Orient Longman, Hyderabad.

Chandra, Bipin (1989) *India's Struggle for Independence, 1857-1947*, Penguin Global, New Delhi.

CPI, Kerala, <http://www.cpimkerala.org/eng/struggles-72.php?n=1>.

Gupta, D.N (2008) *Communism and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1939-45*, SAGE Publications, New Delhi.

Majumdar, Asok (2011) *The Tebhaga Movement: Politics of Peasant Protest in Bengal 1946-1950*, Aakar Books, Delhi.

Nambudiripad, E.M.S (1980) "Two streams in India's left movement", in Panniker, K.D (ed.) *National and Left Movements in India*, Vikash Publishing House, New Delhi.

Pradhan, Ram Chandra (2012) *Raj to Swaraj - Textbook On Colonialism & Nationalism In India*, Macmillan India Limited, New Delhi.

Ranadive, B.T (1984) "The Role Played by Communists in the Freedom Struggle of India", *Social Scientist*, Vol. 12, No. 9 (Sep., 1984), pp. 3-32.

Sarkar, Sumit (1983) *Modern India: 1885-1947*, Macmillan India, Madras.

Surjeet, Harkishan Singh (1984) "75th Anniversary of the Formation of the Communist Party of India", *The Marxist*, New Delhi, Volume: 2, No. 1 Issue: January- March.