
UNIT 21 GANDHIAN SOCIAL REFORM : BHOODAN MOVEMENT

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21.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to make you familiar with the Bhoodan movement (as a Gandhian social reform). After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the concepts of Constructive Programme and Sarvodaya
- Understand the Bhoodan Movement and
- Know the limitations of the Bhoodan Movement

21.1 INTRODUCTION

Gandhi is an original thinker of India. Gandhi's thinking of spouse maturity in the process of the evolutions of his political career. His South African experience adds a moral dimension to his thinking. He opposed the racialism imposed by the white minority on a moral plane. He got the support of all classes and castes from the Indian community. Gandhian moral tone has a political meaning. He could create an imagined community in South Africa despite their caste and class differences. The South African experience helped Gandhi to have a better insight into the Indian reality. Furthermore, he found that a section of Indian people facing social discrimination on the plane of caste remained outside the Hindu fold. Gandhi's touch with rural India makes his thinking more complex but closer to the Indian reality.

After coming back to India, Gandhi was asked by the Congress Party to look into the problems of the peasants at Champaran. Peasants in Champaran District of Bihar were leading a movement against the white planters. They wanted some outside intervention to strengthen their cause. They went to the Congress session at Lucknow and requested the leadership to send somebody to have a on the sport enquiry. Gandhi was deputed by the Congress Party to accompany them to Champaran. Gandhi made an independent study of the economic conditions of the peasants, although he became a member of the Enquiry Committee constituted by the colonial administration for suggesting reliefs. Gandhi's penetrative mind could perceive the multilayered complex reality existing in the countryside. His trip to Champaran was highly educative.

At the time of the Champaran movement, a popular peasant movement was going on in his home state Gujarat. The peasant movement in Kheda was organised on the

issue of paying high tax to the state. It was led by the dominant caste of the locality. The Patidar Association consisting of the rich and middle peasants were the active members of the movement. As the movement was against the Government but not against the local elite. It succeeded to some extent. But Gandhi felt very much disturbed over the result—that he could not do anything for the rural poor and low caste people. From the two experiments, he learnt the lesson that without active participation of the poor and socially backward, no popular movement would yield a result. Gandhi devised an intelligent plan of social reconstruction programme based on the abolition of untouchability and khadi. This programme would result in the involvement of the upper caste rich which in turn would expose them to the multilayered social reality. The net result would be that the elite would learn from their experience regarding the poor. Once they became conscious of the plight of the poor, they would do something for them. Moreover, Gandhi was convinced of the fact that without active cooperation of the elite, no plan of social engineering would succeed. Creating an integrated imagined community on a moral plane would help in accelerating social change.

21.2 CONCEPT OF CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME

Gandhi experimented with his constructive programme at the time of the non-cooperation movement in 1921. Gandhi wanted that the Congress accept his programme and only then was he inclined to launch the mass movement. Involvement in the social reconstruction programme would help an ordinary Congress worker to keep in touch with ground reality.

The Congress Party accepted Gandhi's social reconstruction Programme as their programme. Non-cooperation movement was launched at the time when Indian Society was confronted with a lot of social turmoil. In reality, the non-cooperation movement combined multiple social and political movements within it. It was infact the first mass movement organised on an all India level. Gandhi emerged as the leader of mass politics in India, where people of all castes and all classes participated. Participation in the mass movement became an educative experience for a Congress worker.

Non-cooperation movement continued for a period of about one year which threw up many political leaders from different regions. Gandhi encouraged the Congress workers in the social-reconstruction programme when there was no mass politics. This kept the Congress workers with in the fold of social reconstruction programme. Participation in the great social experiment kept the Congress workers busy. Gandhi was called by some local Congress leaders at Bardoli to lead another peasant movement on the issue of rent. The no rent campaign continued under the personal supervision of Gandhi, although he did not actively lead the movement. Moreover, Bardoli was a part of raiyatwari region where there was no middleman between the state and tenants. It was easier on the part of the **raiya**ts (tenants) to lead the movement against the Government. The leadership of the movement remained in the hands of the Patidar Community, but Gandhi succeeded in motivating them to involve themselves in his social reconstruction programme. Upper caste people went to the Harijan Bastis and worked for the abolition of untouchability. In the beginning, they showed a lot of inhibitions in mixing with the Harijans, but slowly made it a part of their everyday lives.

Gandhi personally felt satisfied with the result of the Bardoli movement, although the movement perhaps succeeded only in an economic sense. It was followed by the Civil Disobedience movement which is the second mass movement on an all India plane. This movement drew rural masses to politics. The Civil Disobedience movement comprised a large number of no-tax movements. Most prominent of those were in UP and Andhra, where the leaders of the movement followed Gandhian lines by combining social and economic issues together.

Check Your Progress 1

- Note :** i): Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) What do you know of Gandhi's Social Reconstruction Programme?

21.3 CONCEPT OF SARVODAYA

The social base of the non-cooperation movement was reasonably different from that of the Civil Disobedience Movement. More and more backward castes went into the vortex of mass politics. The 1942 movement is a step ahead in the history of mass politics. Backward castes and rural masses remained active in the 1942 movement. With the radicalisation of mass politics, Gandhi's own ideas got radicalised. He started building his own vision about future India. He wanted to create a radical alternative to liberal democracy wherein the poor and the backwards would have a bigger say. All the mass movements working on Gandhian lines have a moral tone. Gandhian politics is an interplay of caste, class and community. In Gandhian mass politics, there are two interrelated phases: (i) Active politics in the Gandhian sense of masses taking to the street and involving themselves in the movement with an objective and (ii) Passive politics when political workers get involved in the social reconstruction programme. As a thinking personality, Gandhi remained dynamic taking the learning process quite seriously. In the process, he created his own world-view which is popularly known as *Sarvodaya*. Gandhi's articles on *Sarvodaya* remain scattered. Moreover, in his life time he never put them in a coherent manner. The intellectual heritage of Gandhi carries contradictory tendencies. One part is centred on power politics and party politics; the other part is the one interpreted by Vinoba Bhave, who was a close follower of Gandhi. In reality, both these parts functioned in a complementary manner. In the first decade after independence, above groups representing both the tendencies openly cooperated with each other. This was the decade of construction in the India's history. When the state under the Congress government built many industries and planned projects for the people. These who did not remain in power went to the villages with an objective to reconstruct rural India. Their is known as the 'Bhoodan Movement' which got a lot of moral and political support from the Indian State.

21.3.1 Meaning of Sarvodaya

Here one has to explain in some detail the concept of *Sarvodaya* which has economic and political dimensions. To make it operational, Vinoba Bhave expanded Gandhi's thought, some details of which you will read in the next unit. Gandhi evolved a concept of trusteeship in economics. Regarding the level of production, everybody has a right to produce unlimited wealth, but on the level of consumption, one has a restricted right. In other words, he is the owner of his wealth in a nominal sense but in reality, a trustee of it. While he is consuming, he must relate his needs to his poor neighbours. All have a right to food, clothing and shelter. Where the minimum demands of people were not satisfied, Gandhi advised them to rebell peacefully against the rich. No non-violent society can be built where the gap between the poor and rich is very wide. This is because a non-violent social order has very little space for exploitation of man over man. Gandhi's economic thought is based on distributive justice.

21.3.2 Role of Technology

Gandhi's economic thought has a technological dimension. The technological level of a society has a close relationship with the economic growth of a society which provides full employment. In the name of advancing technology, one cannot create unemployment. Technology must serve the needs of the people and not rule over them—something which breeds only alienation. To create a harmonious society, full employment is a necessary condition, because unemployment and alienation create

21.3.3 Concept of Rural Development

Gandhi's economic thought is related largely to rural development. According to him, village society was the soul of India. Industrialisation and urbanisation should not destroy the village economy. Moreover, Gandhi's emphasis was on self-sufficiency of the village society. Agricultural economy and allied agro-industries must take care of the needs of the village people. If they have a minimum surplus, they can provide to the urban society. But they should not depend on the urban society for satisfying their minimum needs.

21.3.4 Vinoba's Concept of Sarvodaya

Vinoba Bhave developed Gandhi's economic thought in a more practical sense. Vinoba Bhave was concerned about creating a Sarvodaya society in rural India. This could not be based on unequal distribution of land. Concentration of land in the hands of few creates a basis for rural violence. Rural rich must participate in voluntary distribution of land. Bhoodan means land gift. According to Bhoodan's philosophy, the rich must be persuaded to participate in the process of land gift. Vinoba Bhave went on foot from village to village and propagated the Movement. He advised each rich man in the village to think of him as a son. In other words "if he has one son, then take him (Bhave) as the second son. If he has two sons, then take him as the third son". Vinoba pleaded with each landed man to share a portion of one's land as Bhoodan.

Check Your Progress 2

Note : i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) Discuss Gandhi's concept of Satyagraha.

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21.4 BHOODAN MOVEMENT

The leadership of the Bhoodan Movement fell on Vinoba Bhave who was taken by people as a 'Saint'. He moved from village to village and propagated the gospels of Sarvodaya. The movement started in 1951 when Telengana peasant movement on the land question reached peak. It was a violent struggle launched by poor peasants against the local landlords. Vinoba looked into the problem and came out with a novel solution, viz., the landlords' voluntary gift of land would help in solving the problems of landlessness in India. This would pave the way for a non-violent radical solution born out of love and not out of hatred. In village Pochampali, in Telangana District one Ram Chandra Reddy created history by donating 100 acres of land to Vinoba in response to his appeal.

21.4.1 Concept of Gramdan

The initial objective of the movement was to secure voluntary donations of land and distribute it to the landless. However, the movement soon came out with a demand for 1/6th share of land from all land owners. In 1952, the movement had widened the concept of **Gramdan** (village-in-gift) and had started advocating commercial ownership of land. The first village to come under Gramdan was Mangroth in

Hamirpur District of U.P. It took more than three years to get another village in gift. The second and third **Gramdans** took place in Orissa and the movement started spreading with emphasis on securing villages in gift.

The process of Gramdan starts with an awakening of social consciousness among the villagers (**Gram Bhavana**). This is to be followed by an oath to accept the **gramdan** way of life. In result it will generate **Lok Shakti** (Peoples' Power).

A village should take three steps before it earns the title of a gramdan village. These are : (a) The villagers who opt for gramdan should agree to transfer the title deeds of all their land in favour of a legally constituted village assembly (**Gram Sabha**) ; (b) that the village assembly should be constituted before hand and (c) of a village fund meant for social welfare measures and economic development should be created. Once these conditions are fulfilled, the reconstruction of the gramdan village will start.

Though the notion of Gramdan emerged in 1952, the first systematic attempt to define it was made in 1957. If 80% of the land owners are prepared to give up their ownership of land, the village had to be considered as a **Gramdan**. Even if the landowners are ready to give up 51% of their total land, it is accepted as satisfying the laid down conditions. In 1965, the definition of Gramdan was further diluted to include the landowners who would give up only 1/20th of their land for distribution to the landless. The new arrangement was called **Sulabh Gramdan**. It was accepted at a time when the movement was in decline.

21.4.2 Role of Village Panchayat

The **Gramsabha** plays a crucial role in the **Gramdan** villages. This is a part of Gandhi's political planning for reconstructing the village society. That village Panchayats should be the nucleus of Indian democracy. **Decentralisation of economic and political power** is the Gandhian blueprint. The Village Panchayat or the Gram Sabha is in charge of donating land to the landless. The Gramsabha is the administrative unit for allocating land and labour of the village people for community development. Sarvodaya believes in gifting of everything that one has. A landless labourer can contribute labour to the village fund whereas the landlord can give land to it. Proper utilisation of scarce resources will help the cause of rural development. Even the Gramsabha has power to utilise the surplus labour in a productive manner. Weaving khadi is a part of the Sarvodaya village where village labour can engage themselves in a fruitful manner. Village industries are not confined to the weaving of khadi. Small scale industries are allowed to function at the village level. In other words, it is not only rational utilisation of labour but also making the village economy more self-sufficient. Their dependence on the urban economy will further decline. Prosperity of the village economy is the key to India's prosperity.

21.4.3 Contribution of JP

Jaya Prakash Narain's joining with the Bhoodan Movement gave a momentum to it. J.P. was a hero of the 1942 movement who had an all India image because he was the leader of the Socialist Party. He did not get involved in power politics after independence. He was regarded as a saintly politician in the eyes of the public. J.P.'s popularity gave an impetus to the Bhoodan movement in Bihar. When the first annual Sarvodaya conference was held in the state at Chandil in 1953, J.P. gave a call for creating a Sarvodaya society by establishing a non-exploitive and just egalitarian socio-economic order. It is reported that many students from Allahabad and Calcutta who attended the conference quit universities and colleges to join the movement. Most of the land gift came from Bihar, the target to collect two and a half million acres of land gift within a year got transcended.

21.4.4 Role of Private Property

The Bhoodan movement touched the most sensitive institution of private property and the need for its redistribution. Property in the form of land got questioned by the movement. That land is a gift of God and it should be utilised by all living beings became a common thinking in the Sarvodaya circle.

21.4.5 Role of Organisation

On the level of organisation, the Sarva Seva Sangh was the highest body in the Bhoodan movement. Those who were associated with various constructive work

organisations inspired and initiated by Gandhi formed themselves into an organisation which has come to be known as the Sarva Seva Sangh. The Sarva Seva Sangh was described by Vinoba as "an all Indian institution of experts for planning and executing programmes". The members at the village level formed the Bhoodan Yojna Committee which was incharge of collection of land and its distribution. This was controlled by the Sarva Seva Sangh. The Bhoodan movement was inspired by the anti-property ideology. It affected the interests of the landed elite in a locality. Gramdan villages became a threat to the landed elite. They started opposing the movement and some of them demanded back their land given as Bhoodan. They successfully sabotaged the programme.

21.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE MOVEMENT

Moreover, the movement was inspired by the Gandhian workers under the leadership of Vinoba Bhave and J.P. They did not strengthen the organisation. In early 1970s when there was conflict between Vinoba and J.P., the Sarva Seva Sangh split vertically. Moreover, that idealism could not sustain for a long period. Also, organisationally it remained an authoritarian structure. There was hardly any democratic discussion within the organisation on the issues affecting the organisation.

The Bhoodan movement could not inculcate democratic values at the village level. On the contrary, it reinforced the old values of Patron-Client relations. There were no popular movements from below on the land question. They appealed to the conscience of the landlords for donating land. This created situations when the landlords started demanding back their land.

In the end, however, it should be said that the Bhoodan movement was a novel experiment started on the Indian soil. It created a new awareness among people. It aimed at creating an egalitarian society. Gandhi's framework of social change brought the issue to the surface. It was realised by one and all that land distribution can not be tackled by the laws of the state alone.

Check Your Progress 3

Note : i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

1) How did the Bhoodan movement come about?

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2) Briefly discuss the concept of Gramdan.

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3) What was JP's contribution to the Bhoodan Movement?

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21.6 LET US SUM UP

Bhoodan movement was inspired by Gandhian philosophy. Its main propounders were Vinoba Bhave and Jaya Prakash Narayan (JP). Vinobha Bhave developed Gandhi's economic thought in a more practical sense. It meant that land should not be concentrated in few hands. The rural rich should volunteer to give some part of their land to the landless. This movement was started by Vinobha Bhave to dilute the anger of the peasants against the landlords which found expression in the Telengana movement. Due to the conflict between Vinobha Bhave and JP, the movement split in the early 1970s. This movement could not generate the democratic values in the villages. Instead, it foistered the old feudal values. However, the movement had created a sense of awareness among the people about the Gandhian framework of social change.

21.7 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

Ramashray Roy, (ed.) *Contemporary Crisis and Gandhi* (Delhi, 1986)

Parth N. Mukherjee, "Sarvodaya after Gandhi : Contradictions and Change" in Roy, R. op. cit.

T.K. Oommen, *Charisma, Stability and Change : An Analysis of Bhoodan-Gramdan Movement in India* (New Delhi, 1972).

21.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

See Section 21.2

Check Your Progress 2

See Section 21.3 and all the sub sections here

Check Your Progress 3

See Section 21.4 and all the sub sections here

UNIT 22 INTRODUCTION TO NATIONALISM AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION-I (SOCIALISM)

Structure

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- 22.1 Introduction
- 22.2 Types of Socialism
 - 22.2.1 Evolutionary Socialism
- 22.3 Philosophy of Socialism
 - 22.3.1 Utopian Socialists
 - 22.3.2 Influence of Utopian Socialism
 - 22.3.3 German Social Democracy
- 22.4 Objective Conditions for the Socialist Movement in India
 - 22.4.1 Growth of Socialist Ideas
 - 22.4.2 The Congress Socialist Party (CSP)
- 22.5 Jawaharlal Nehru and Socialism
 - 22.5.1 Nehru's Criticism of Marxism
 - 22.5.2 Nehru on Socialists
 - 22.5.3 Influence on Nehru's brand of Socialism
 - 22.5.4 On Land Reforms and Like Matters
- 22.6 Subhash Chandra Bose and Socialism
 - 22.6.1 Different Activities of Bose
 - 22.6.2 Bose's Philosophy
 - 22.6.3 Agenda set forth by Bose
- 22.7 Acharya Narendra Dev and Socialism
 - 22.7.1 Philosophy and Activities of the Acharya
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- 22.8 Jaya Prakash Narayan on Socialism
 - 22.8.1 Socialism and Socio-economic Construction
- 22.9 Ram Manohar Lohia and Socialism
- 22.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 22.11 Some Useful Books
- 22.12 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

22.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the different types of socialism
- comment on its basic philosophy
- discuss the objective conditions of socialist movement in India and
- examine the views of different Indian socialists.

22.1 INTRODUCTION

Socialism essentially deals with the principles which envisage the establishment of a society where all individuals enjoy equality in different walks of life—economic, political, social etc. Equality in the economic walk of life means the existence of an economic system where exploitation of one class or social group by another does not exist. It envisages the control of society or state or collectivisation, socialisation or nationalisation of means of production in agriculture and industry, equitable distribution of the various goods and services and the establishment of co-operative societies. Political equality means that everybody should have equal right to participate in the political processes i.e. to vote, to contest elections, to express their views without any fear of discrimination. Social equality means the absence of discrimination on the basis of birth, caste, creed, religion etc. It should be mentioned that there exist differences of opinion on the exact meaning and ways of bringing about socialism. It is in this context that Joed said: "Socialism, in short, is like a hat that has lost its shape because everybody wears it."

22.2 TYPES OF SOCIALISM

22.2.1 Evolutionary Socialism

There are basically two types of socialism — the Marxian or Revolutionary socialism and Evolutionary socialism.

Evolutionary socialism has got different brands — utopian socialism, democratic socialism, parliamentary socialism, revisionism, fabianism, social democracy, welfare socialism and euro-communism. Marxian socialism holds that socialism can be brought about only by a violent revolution. The new society created would be socialist; by abolishing private property, establishing dictatorship of the proletariat and by bringing about the monopoly of the Communist Party. Evolutionary socialism, as the very term suggests, believes in the evolutionary method of establishing socialism. It implies that there is no need of overthrowing the system (State) existing before. Instead, the social forces wishing to bring about socialism should do it by using the organs of the State i.e. legislature. They should help form the policies which are socialistic and should get them implemented. It is against the concepts of dictatorship of the proletariat and single party monopoly. Evolutionary socialism is, in fact, a synthesis of the Marxist and liberal views of democracy. Like Marxism it believes in the establishment of a society which is free from exploitation and inequality, and like liberal democracy, it favours multiparty system, periodic elections and free expression of views.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) What do you understand by evolutionary socialism?

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22.3 PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIALISM

Philosophy of socialism developed in the 19th century, although the ideas regarding socialism were propounded even before. For instance, the ideas of philosophers such as Rousseau, Morelly and Babeuf propounded before the French Revolution, formed important features of socialism, as it came about later. Mention can be made of ideas such as the abolition of private property and faith in equality.

22.3.1 Utopian Socialists

After the industrial revolution (1760-1830) the condition of the workers worsened in European countries. The workers suffered from the different crises of capitalism — their living conditions were miserable, there was massive unemployment, inflation etc. Many humanist and social reformers reacted to this. The trio of Saint-Simon (1760-1825), Charles Fourier (1772-1873) and Robert Owen (1771-1858) attacked the capitalist socio-economic order. They supported the establishment of a socialist society. They emphasised the need for equal distribution of wealth and gave support to the trade union movement. They were mainly utopian socialists. They believed that if the capitalists changed their attitudes, the conditions of the workers would be improved within the given capitalist system. They did not, however, analyse the capitalist mode of production. They also failed to give a scientific theory for removing the exploitation of the capitalist society.

22.3.2 Influence of Utopian Socialism

Utopian socialism, however, influenced the French and German socialists on the one hand and Marx and Engels on the other. Blanc (1813-1882), a reformer and a scholar gave the economic principle "from each according to his ability, and to each according to his work." He is regarded as the chief precursor of the welfare state. He influenced both the Social Democrats and the revisionists. Proudhon (1809-1865) attacked private property. He associated the economic system with political system. He pleaded for the overthrow of the capitalist system. Pre-Marxian socialism, except Proudhon, based itself upon the humanitarian hope that people will treat each other better if production increased. But they failed to analyse scientifically the functioning of the capitalist economic system and the exploitation inherent in it.

22.3.3 German Social Democracy

In the 1860s the phenomenon of German Social Democracy assumed considerable significance. Lassale (1825-1864) was one of the early German Social Democrats. He urged that the working class must have a separate party, which can represent their interests in the legislature. He was a supporter of the producers' co-operative. The socialists and the Marxists reached a compromise in Germany and proposed the famous Gotha Programme (1875). This programme was moderate and it supported the evolutionary method of bringing about socialism. Marxists and Karl Marx himself criticised this programme and drafted another programme on Marxist lines known as Erfurt Programme. This programme emphasised the importance of the interrelationship between history and revolutionary programme. In reaction to the Erfurt Programme emerged revisionism. The main advocate of revisionism was Bernstein (1850-1932). He said that the Marxists emphasise only the economic factor but the non-economic factors are equally important. The Marxian theory of value, according to him, is not applicable always. His theory provided substantive foundation to evolutionary socialism.

Bernstein's revisionism influenced British Parliamentary Socialism and Fabianism. To propagate these views the British Labour Party was founded in 1906. It developed the trade union movement. It said that socialism could be established by the participation of the labour parties in the government. The party believed that the state could introduce pro-working class policies and this would give birth to socialism. It sought to combine the economic principles of socialism with the principle of parliamentary democracy and welfare liberalism. Ramsay MacDonald, Harold Laski and Clement Attlee were the important leaders of the British Labour Party. The British parliamentary democracy believed in planning, reform, gradual change, progressive taxation and faith in the parliamentary methods as against the revolutionary methods of overthrowing capitalism. It did not believe in the theory of class struggle, dictatorship of the proletariat and in the capacity of the state to bring about change.

Euro-communism which developed mainly in France, Italy and Germany also believes in the principles of evolutionary socialism. On June 4, 1884, the Fabian Society was set up in England by some arm chair intellectuals. It aimed at establishing a socialist society in England through democratic, gradual and peaceful means. The society was named after a Roman General Fabius, who adopted a policy of "wait and hit hard at the right moment." C.D.H. Cole and H.J. Laski were among its main advocates. The Fabian Society maintained that socialism and democracy are supplementary and complementary to each other. Socialism can be brought about by the gradual way through democratic means.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end.

1) Comment on socialism's basic philosophy.

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22.4 OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS FOR THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT IN INDIA

The growth of socialist thought took place in India mainly in the twentieth century, unlike in the west where it had flourished in the nineteenth century. Socialism as a philosophy of social and economic reconstruction in India developed as a result of the impact of Western thought. The growth of socialist thought took place at a time when colonial exploitation had reached intolerable proportions. The land structure was marked by the presence of innumerable intermediaries, mainly landlords who were woven into a hierarchical structure. Below these intermediaries existed the hopeless tenants and poor peasants. The landlords exploited them by charging exorbitant rents, charging forced allowances, inflicting physical injuries on them and by evicting them from their land. The peasantry was heavily indebted to the money-lenders. The money-lenders, landlords and the British governments colluded with each to exploit the Indian peasantry. The working class did not form a very large section of the population in comparison to the peasantry. However, they too formed an exploited section of the society. The intelligentsia and the middle classes played a significant role in mobilising people against British India. They generated feelings of nationalism. The peasantry also revolted against landlords and colonialism generally even without the intelligentsia's leadership.

22.4.1 Growth of Socialist Ideas

The leaders of the Indian national movement were not only against the continuation of the British rule, they also wanted to reconstruct the social, political and economic structure of India after the attainment of Independence. The socialist ideas constituted a very important feature of this proposed reconstruction. Although the systematic development of socialist ideas took place in India from the 1920s, even before some leaders had strongly desired the socio-economic reconstruction of Indian society on radical lines. Thus, in 1893 Aurobindo contributed seven articles to *Indu Prakash* under the title "New Lamps for Old". In these articles he criticised the middle class orientation of the Indian National Congress and pleaded for the betterment of the conditions of the "proletariat". Tilak mentioned about the Russian Nihilists, in the articles he wrote in '*Kesari*'— a Marathi paper founded by him. Lala Lajpat Rai was probably the first Indian writer to talk about socialism and Bolshevism. He presided over the first Indian Trade Union Congress in 1920. But M.N. Roy's comment on Lala Lajpat Rai was that he was "a bourgeois politician with no sympathy for socialism." M.N. Roy criticised the bourgeois domination of the Congress during 1921-23. This was mainly because he was interested in the establishment of Communism in India.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 inspired the Socialist and Marxist thinking in India to a great extent. Although C.R. Das did not sympathise with the Russian revolution, he mentioned it in the Gaya Congress of 1917. He helped in building the trade union movement in India. Motilal Nehru visited Soviet Union in 1926. Jawaharlal Nehru, the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army (HSRA) were also impressed by the events in Soviet Union. Jawaharlal Nehru, Subash Chandra Bose, Acharya Narendra Dev, Jayaprakash Narayan, Rammanohar Lohia, Achyut Patwardhan, Yusuf Mehrally and Ashok Mehta were some of the important thinkers of the socialist stream in India. The socialists were influenced by the Russian revolution, but they had serious differences with the Communists on the application of Marxism in its original form in India. The Communist Party of India (CPI) which was formed in 1924 believed in the theory of class struggle and the establishment of a socialist society through revolution. The socialists wanted its establishment through state initiative.

22.4.2 The Congress Socialist Party (CSP)

The formation of the CSP was preceded by the repression of the working class

organisation by the government in the 1920s. The leaders of the working class were implicated in and tried under the Peshawar Conspiracy case (1922-23), Kanpur Conspiracy case (1924) and Meerut Conspiracy case (1929).

The socialist ideas assumed organisational form in May 1934. The socialists formed the Congress Socialist Party (CSP). The failure of the Civil Disobedience movement and accompanying depression unleashed a chain of events eventually that led to the formation of the CSP within the Congress. The Congress Socialist Party formed a group of socialists within the Congress. It aimed at achieving complete Independence of India from imperialism and the establishment of a socialist society. The blueprint adopted at one of its conferences strived for "All power to the toiling masses, nationalisation of key industries, abolition of feudalism and landlordism without compensation, distribution of land and co-operative and collective farming." The first all-India conference of the socialists was held on May 17, 1934 at Patna under the presidentship of Acharya Narendra Dev. Jayaprakash Narayan, Achyut Patwardhan, Yusuf Mehraly and Ashok Mehta assisted Acharya Narendra Dev in the formation of the CSP. Although Jawaharlal Nehru was a socialist, he did not join the CSP. The socialists played an important role in the 1942 Quit India Movement. In March 1948 at the Nasik convention the socialists decided to leave the Congress. They formed a separate party which came to be known as the Socialist Party of India. At the Patna convention in 1949, the socialist party announced its allegiance to the democratic methods and a constructive approach to the social and economic problems. The Socialist Party decided to merge with the Krishak Mazdoor Praja Party (KMPP) led by J.B. Kriplani after the 1952 general-elections. The merger took place in Bombay on September 26 and 27, 1952.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Discuss the various conditions for the rise of the socialist movement in India.

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22.5 JAWAHARLAL NEHRU AND SOCIALISM

Within the Congress the opinion was divided on the goal and purpose of the freedom movement and on alternative social and economic system after independence. There were differences between Nehru and Gandhi on these issues. Nehru wanted the country to accept socialism after independence. He declared himself a "socialist and republican" at the Lahore session of Congress in December 1929. This session was preceded by his visit to the Soviet Union in 1926-27. Nehru was impressed by the socialist revolution in Russia and by its economic planning. At this session Nehru said that the ideology of socialism was influencing the whole world, the only differences which existed were regarding the pace and method of achieving socialism and he added: "India will have to go that way too.....though she may evolve her own method and may adopt her own ideal to the genius of her own race." He explained his position in 'Whither India' that the immediate goals after independence would be the ending of the exploitation of her people, attainment of political independence free from imperialist domination and ending of all special privileges and vested interests. He favoured abolition of landlordism and giving land to the tillers without compensation to the landlords. He was the focal point of socialism ideas in the 1930s and of the youth who looked to him for guidance and inspiration.

22.5.1 Nehru's Criticism of Marxism

Although in principle, Nehru accepted Marxism, he was critical of the methods employed by them. He criticized the communists for developing contacts with only the workers who stayed in the cities and not with those in the villages. He also chided the Indian communists for not adapting their ideology to the peculiar conditions of India. He wanted to adapt the socialist ideology to the peculiarity of Indian society.

22.5.2 Nehru on Socialists

He was not satisfied with the way the CSP functioned. Thus, "The Congress socialist group immediately came in conflict with the right groups, but in such a way that it antagonized the large middle groups and did not succeed as it might have done in carrying their large anti-imperialist group with it." He was of the view that the socialists, like the communists had failed to adapt socialism to Indian conditions.

The socialist leaders criticised Nehru for his views on the CSP. They said that Nehru wanted to take full advantage of their ideological closeness to him in fighting the right wing Congress leadership.

22.5.3 Influence on Nehru's brand of Socialism

Nehru's socialism was influenced by both Marxism and Gandhism. The Gandhian influence diluted socialism. He did not leave Congress to join the CSP, despite his ideological closeness to them because he wanted to transform Congress on socialist lines. He wanted Congress to implement policies on socialistic lines. He wanted it to do so after the country's independence.

22.5.4 On Land Reforms and Like Matters

Land to the tiller without paying compensation to the landlords, nationalisation of industries and services formed very important tenets of Nehru's socialistic ideas. When he became the president of the Congress in 1936, seven right-wing leaders including Rajendra Prasad resigned because of his socialistic ideas. The resignations, however, were withdrawn later. The capitalists also criticised him. Nehru introduced his type of socialism after he became the Prime Minister. He strongly emphasized industrialisation — where the public sector should be in a commanding position along with the existence of the private sector. He also emphasized productivity. He felt that such measures would remove poverty. He introduced the concept of mixed economy in India. He initiated abolition of landlordism (agrarian reforms), Community Development Programme and various other educational and welfare schemes. He introduced planning in India. But his concept of "mixed economy" encouraged capitalism in India. He did not bring about substantive changes in property relations. He did not bother much as to whom the distribution pattern would affect. He rejected the ceiling on wealth as also the idea of nationalisation of banks. He said that production was more important than distribution.

22.6 SUBHASH CHANDRA BOSE AND SOCIALISM

He was a part of left-wing opposition to the Gandhian right-wing within the Indian National Congress. He was influenced by Lenin, Kamal Pasha, Mussolini, Aurobindo and Vivekananda.

22.6.1 Different Activities of Bose

His leftism had three phases. In the late 1920s, it was marked by his opposition to the Dominion States. In the thirties he wanted the end of imperialism and after independence, he wanted the socialist phase of movement to begin. He said, "I am an extremist, all or nothing." He began his public life as a non-cooperator in 1921. He was dissatisfied with Gandhian methods. In 1923, he joined the Swarajist Party of C.R. Das because he was not in agreement with Gandhi. From a Swarajist he became a member of the Independence League. He along with Srinivasa Iyenger formed the Congress Democratic Party at the Lahore Congress of 1929. He refused to sign a declaration of the then Viceroy Irwin. He became the president of the Congress in 1938 and 1939. As a president he wanted to give ultimatum to the government for complete independence, but he had to resign from presidentship under Gandhi's

pressure. He wanted to organise the leftist forces and so formed the Forward bloc in 1939. This was preceded by some developments. In the 1930s the peasantry and the working class were getting restive, under the leadership of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, Prof. Ranga and Indulal Yagnik. The peasant organisations demanded abolition of landlordism, reduction in land tax and debt. The Congress leadership could not take up these issues to the satisfaction of Subhash Chandra Bose. Bose wanted complete independence and establishment of socialism in India after freedom from British rule. He could, however, not succeed in building a strong left consolidation committee, unlike the one which was formed in Bombay in June 1940 comprising the Socialists, the Radical League of M.N. Roy and the Communists.

22.6.2 Bose's Philosophy

He favoured the establishment of a socialist society or reconstruction of the Indian society on a socialistic pattern. He started his political career as a spiritual leader but in course of time shifted to political realism. He was not in favour of combining politics with moral or ethical orientation. He was also opposed to Gandhi on this point. Bose was a pragmatic person. He said, "the secret of political beginning is to look more strong than you really are." He was a realist in so far as struggle against the British rule was concerned. But he recognised the necessity of self-abnegation and suffering on the part of Indians. He was not satisfied with mere political independence. He understood the "internal and social struggle" between the landlords and the peasants, the capitalists and the labourers and between the rich and poor. He said that the "haves" would join hands with the British Government. He said that "political struggle and social struggle will have to be conducted simultaneously." In his presidential speech at the Haripura Congress in 1938 he said, "I have no doubt in my mind that our chief national problems relating to the eradication of poverty, illiteracy and disease and to scientific production and distribution can be effectively tackled only along the socialist lines."

22.6.3 Agenda set forth by Bose

He pleaded for the eradication of poverty, abolition of landlordism, liquidation of the agricultural indebtedness, incorporating scientific techniques in agriculture, extension of co-operative movement, industrial, development under state ownership and state control, planning commission and socialisation on control and distribution of production in agriculture and industry. He was critical of Marxism. He criticised Marxism as he felt that it put more emphasis on economic rather than non-economic factors. He also criticised it for identifying nationalism as a bourgeoisie phenomenon. He emphasised that the state should take up the responsibility of introducing socialism in India. He was not in favour of achieving socialism through class struggle in India. This was because he felt that socialism through a violent revolution would fail in India. He said that it could be built in India, if some new party (not the Congress) captured the government. In fact, he formed the Forward Bloc for this purpose. While incorporating the programme dealing with reconstruction of the Indian society on socialistic lines, the Forward Bloc favoured strong centre and was silent on the principles of political freedom. Some people alleged that because of the provision for a strong centre and the absence of the principles of political freedom, the Forward Bloc contained some tenets of fascism.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) Compare and contrast Nehru's views of socialism with that of Subhash Bose.

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22.7 ACHARYA NARENDRA DEV AND SOCIALISM

Acharya Narendra Dev was one of the founders of the socialist movement in India. He was president of the inaugural meeting of the All-India Congress Socialist Conference held at Patna in 1934. He was the founder of the All-India Kisan Sabha. He believed in the extreme nationalism propagated by Aurobindo and Bal Gangadhar Tilak.

22.7.1 Philosophy and Activities of Acharya

He began his political career as a believer in their philosophy. He was influenced by Marxism. He believed in the principles of dialectics. He was opposed to the utopian socialism or social reformism. He believed that the establishment of scientific socialism would be the solution to India's problems. He said that Marx was a humanist. He was opposed to the states bureaucratic interference. He was an exponent of democratic socialism. He considered the working class as the vanguard and the peasants and the intelligentsia as the auxiliary of an anti-imperialist struggle. He pleaded for an alliance between the lower middle classes, the working class and the peasantry. He said that the working class must have control over the management in industries. He felt that the masses could be made class conscious if they were mobilized on economic issues. During the Indian National Movement, he said, India was passing through the bourgeoisie democratic revolution. He advised the socialists to join the movement and not to be dogmatic or sectarian. He felt that social and economic liberation which was achieved in Europe in the 18th century by the capitalists, would be achieved by the organisation of exploited classes in India.

22.7.2 Narendra Dev on Agrarian Reconstruction

Acharya Narendra Dev favoured agrarian reconstruction in India. He emphasised the need to make the people literate and ideologically conscious. He said that the problems of the peasantry should not be reduced to mere peasantism; they should be placed in the context of the entire economy. Acharya Narendra Dev pleaded for the abolition of landlordism and giving the land to the tiller, cancellation of debt, availability of cheap credit facilities to the people, and establishment of the village government known as the 'Co-operative Commonwealth'.

22.7.3 Acharya and the New Left Movement

He advocated some kind of a "New left movement" in the villages. He said that Marx was a humanist. He emphasised the humanist foundations of socialism. Acharya Narendra Dev combined ethics or spiritualism with Marxism. He had faith in the primacy of moral values. But he rejected the Gandhian concept of truth. Although he had come in close contact with Gandhi, he refused to give up the concept of class struggle.

22.8 JAYA PRAKASH NARAYAN ON SOCIALISM

Jaya Prakash Narayan (1902-1979) was the main force behind the formation of the Congress Socialist Party in 1934. He began his political career as a participant in the non-cooperation movement. He was influenced by Marxism as a student in the USA when he came in contact with the East European intellectuals. He was also influenced by M.N. Roy. But he did not support Russian Socialism. He favoured a popular front with the Communist in the thirties. But he denounced this in 1940, and became a critic of the Soviet Union. He opposed the Cabinet Mission Plan in 1946. As a member of the Congress Socialist Party, he thought in terms of a mass revolution. He said that if the British government did not accept the constitution prepared by the Constituent Assembly, there would be a mass revolution in India. After Gandhi's death there was transformation in Jaya Prakash Narayan's personality. He became sceptical of any structural and institutional change in India. He committed himself to the inner metamorphosis suggested by Gandhi. He resigned from the national executive of the Praja Socialist Party and ceased to be a member of any political party.

22.8.1 Socialism and Socio-economic Construction

Jaya Prakash Narayan regarded socialism as a complete theory of socio-economic

construction. He did not agree with the theory that men are biologically unequal. He said that the inequality in society exists due to the disproportionate control of the means of production. He advocated reduction in revenue, limitation of expenditure and the nationalisation of industries. In the Ramgarh session of the Congress in 1940 he advocated collective ownership and control of large-scale production, and nationalisation of the heavy industries, heavy transport, shipping and mining. He made Gandhism the base of his socialism. He said that grass-root level democracy should be introduced in India. The village should be made a self-governing and self-sufficient unit. He favoured the distribution of land to the tiller, co-operative farming, and cancellation of agriculture debt.

22.9 RAMMANOHAR LOHIA AND SOCIALISM

Rammanohar Lohia became the most prominent socialist leader in the post-independence period. He was active in bringing about the Asian Socialist Conference of 1953. He stood for combining the principles of socialism with those of Gandhism. He laid emphasis on adapting socialism to the specifics of the Indian society. In 1952, he pleaded for greater incorporation of Gandhian ideas in socialist thought. He advocated decentralisation of the economy based on the revival of the cottage industries. He preferred small machines to big machines in the economy of the country. He was opposed to any kind of co-operation with the Congress. He laid foundation of anti-Congressism in India. He was equally opposed to the communists. He supported the principle of "equidistance" vis-a-vis the Congress and the Communists. He broke from the Praja Socialist Party in 1955 on the issue of supporting the Congress. Lohia, in fact, gave a theory of mobilisation of the backward classes. He said that the socialists could capture power by mobilising the backward classes. He held caste to be one of the most powerful exploiting institutions in India. The backward classes, according to him, should form the government to introduce the policies based on the principles of socialism. He accepted the Marxian principle of dialectical materialism, but believed that consciousness played a more determining role than the economy. He believed that in history there was constant clash between the well-organised castes and the loosely organised classes. Caste represented conservative forces in the society, according to him.

Check Your Progress Exercise 5

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end.

- 1) Compare Acharya Narendra Dev and Jaya Prakash Narayan's views of socialism.

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- 2) Briefly comment on Rammanohar Lohia's contribution to socialism in India.

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22.10 LET US SUM UP

Among the Indian socialists, Acharya Narendra Dev was influenced by Marxism, Jaya Prakash Narayan by Marxism and Gandhian ideology, while Ram Manohar Lohia was more influenced by the Gandhian ideology.

The Socialists in India did not make a significant original theoretical contribution. However, significance of the socialist thinking in India lies in placing the principles of socialism in a different context. This was that of a transitional society marked by rigidity of the caste system and domination of the agrarian economy. While the German socialists accorded more significance to the working class, the Indian socialists gave priority to the villages, agriculture, caste and peasantry. Their emphasis on decentralisation shows the impact of Gandhian legacy on the socialist thought in India.

22.11 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

Barik, Radhakant, *Politics of the J P Movement*, New Delhi, Radiant Pub., 1977.

Bhambhri, C.P., *Politics in India*, (Chapters 1,2,3) New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1988.

Brass, Paul R., *Caste, Faction and Party in Indian Politics*, Vol. I, Chapter 5, Delhi, Chanakya Publications, 1983.

Bose, Subhash Chandra, *The Indian Struggle (1920-1934)*, Calcutta, Thacker Spink & Co., 1948.

Chandra, Bipan, et al., *India's Struggle For Independence*, New Delhi, Viking, 1988.

Chang, S.H.M., *Marxian Theory of the State*, Delhi, Low Price Publications, 1990.

Lohia, Rammanohar, *Aspects of Socialist Policy*, Bombay, Tulloch Road, 1952.

Mehta, Ashok, *Democratic Socialism and Studies in Asian Socialism*.

Narayan, J.P., *Towards Struggle*, (ed.) by Yusuf Mehrally, Bombay: Padma Publications, 1946.

22.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

See section 22.2 and subsection 22.2.1

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

See section 22.3

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

See section 22.4

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

See section 22.5 and 22.6

Check Your Progress Exercise 5

- 1) See section 22.7 and 22.8
- 2) See section 22.9

UNIT 23 JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

Structure

- 23.0 Objectives
- 23.1 Introduction
- 23.2 Basic Features of Nehru's Political Thought
- 23.3 Nehru's Legacy to the Indian Nationalist Movement
- 23.4 Nation-Building after 1947
- 23.5 Views on Socialism and Social Revolution
- 23.6 National Economy as the Basis of Nationalism
- 23.7 Nehru's Scientific Outlook
- 23.8 Independent Foreign Policy and National Freedom
- 23.9 International Outlook
- 23.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 23.11 Key Words
- 23.12 Some Useful Books
- 23.13 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

23.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to explain the main features of Nehru's views on nationalism and social revolution. His contribution to the thinking on socialism is also noted. All these are explained in the background of Modern Indian Political Thought.

23.1 INTRODUCTION

Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) was well-known as a political activist. But his contribution to Modern Indian Political Thought is as significant as his political activities. During the past phase of Indian nationalist movement, his status as its leader was only next to that of Mahatma Gandhi. When India became independent in 1947, he became its Prime Minister and until his death in 1964, he occupied that position. And for a long time, he was also the Foreign Minister. He was also an historian. He wrote an excellent autobiography while he dealt, among other matters, with the record of British rule in India, and the survey of the Indian nationalist movement. Before India became free, he spoke and wrote at length on various problems facing India and the world. Even after he had become the Prime Minister, he continued to speak on the problems facing free India and the nuclear world. He also corresponded with eminent writers and statesmen. From the written and verbal responses he made to them and from the explanations he made to defend and elaborate his ideas, his views on political thought in general and on nationalism and social revolution in particular emerged.

Nehru was influenced by Marxist thinking. He had a good grasp of Marxist Literature. Marxist philosophy gave a new orientation to his thinking. He acquired clarity in understanding on the Indian Society. He states "The Marxian philosophy appeals to me in a broad sense and helps me to understand the process of history." Nehru's socialist thinking had an other dimension. His visit to Russia helped him to understand the dynamics of the socialist economy. He could have a comparative view of the western capitalism as well as the soviet society. Lenin's contribution to Russian Revolution "produced a powerful effect" on him. The way Lenin applied Marxism in a backward society like Russia and brought a total transformation created high regard for Lenin in Nehru's mind. Henceforth, Nehru tried to look at India's problems from a different angle. Nehru states, "Our problems in India today are the same as those that faced Russia some years ago and they can be solved in the same manner in which Russians solved theirs. We should draw a lesson from the USSR in the way of industrialisation and education of our people."

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- Note:
- i) Use the space given below for your answer.
 - ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Briefly mention the influences on Nehru.

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23.2 BASIC FEATURES OF NEHRU'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

Nehru wanted the model of Democratic Socialism which suits Indian traditions and ethos. He was influenced by Fabian Socialism of Britain. Many of the active members were his friends. He was of the opinion, that Parliamentary politics is the means of achieving socialism. Multiple social groups and ideological groups will strengthen Indian democracy. Pluralism will become the ideological foundation of individual liberty and societal demands must have a beautiful reconciliation.

23.3 NEHRU'S LEGACY TO THE INDIAN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

During the last phase of the Indian national movement, Gandhi was its most prominent leader. Next to him was Jawaharlal Nehru. He made a distinctive and specific contribution to it and to Indian nationalism.

The first was the international outlook developed by Indians under Nehru's guidance. Almost all the important resolutions of the Congress working committee on world affairs were drafted by him.

Nehru made visits to the Brussels Conference on anti-imperialism. He conceived India's struggle for freedom as a part of the struggle of other dependent peoples against imperialism.

He attracted the socialists, the communists, the representatives of trade unions and the peasants to the nationalist movement by making repeated statements that the national struggle for freedom was not only for political freedom from foreign domination, but for social equality and freedom from poverty as well. In other words, he gave an economic content to it.

23.4 NATION-BUILDING AFTER 1947

The tasks before a leader, who was the head of the government, were different from that of a leader of the nationalist movement, which had the objective of achieving freedom for the country. Until freedom was achieved the single objective of achieving independence kept different political forces united and the most dominant political force eclipsed all others. In India these different political forces before 1947 were : the liberals, the Hindu militants, the communalist Muslims, the Gandhians, the Congress socialists, the communists and regional political forces based on linguistic forces.

Nehru was historically called upon to unite these forces or fight against the secessionists and promote Indian nationalism. After the creation of Pakistan, the Muslim separatists were not a major force. Gandhi's martyrdom at the hands of a Hindu fanatic weakened the Hindu fanatics after 1948. But it was the relentless ideological fight against them led by Nehru which made them politically and administratively weak. If India remained as a modern state and civil society and the fact that a larger number of Muslims were living in freedom and security in India than in Pakistan, it was because of Nehru's continuous preaching of secularism in India.

Nehru made it clear that religion has no function in public life, particularly in politics. Nehru's secular thinking shaped under the influence of liberal western education. As a liberal, he separated politics and religion. Religion has no function in politics, when religious forces get active in politics, they become communal. Nehru differentiated majority communalism from minority communalism. He thinks that majority communalism can grow into fascism. In making the Indian constitution secular and in providing equal rights to all religious groups Nehru's contribution is significant. The Indian state remains a secular and democratic state without any allegiance towards any religion.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) What were the basic features of Nehru's thought?

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- 2) Briefly discuss Nehru's legacy to the national movement.

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23.5 VIEWS ON SOCIALISM AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION

Nehru believed in planned economy for maximum utilisation of resources. He did not favour nationalisation of private capital. In his scheme of economic development, mixed economy should play a prominent role. Both public sector and private sector must help each other in removing poverty and the other basic problems of Indian Society.

The above was based on the socialist idea that the market economy and the unregulated capitalism, based on profit-making basis, alone, should not determine the character of economy. Nehru wanted the public sector to have commanding heights in the economy. That is why he wanted the public sector to play a vital part in regard to the development of heavy industries like steel and the exploration of oil resources in India.

Industrialisation must aim in creating an equalitarian society. In Nehru's scheme, big industries with advance technology have a major role. As Nehru states that "I am all for tractors and big machinery. I am convinced that rapid industrialisation of India is essential to reduce the pressure on land to combat poverty and raise standards of living, for defence and a variety of other purposes. But I am equally convinced that the most careful planning and adjustment are necessary if we are to reap the full benefits of industrialisation and avoid any of its dangers."

23.6 NATIONAL ECONOMY AS THE BASIS OF NATIONALISM

Nehru thought that the national economy should also be the strength of nationalism. No other Indian, liberal or Gandhian fully grasped this matter and gave attention to it. The communists wanted to disentangle India from the Western capitalist economy grouping. But they never realised the implication of India going too far in the direction of communist style of planning and depending too much on the Soviet Union. But Nehru took a series of steps and threw up scattered ideas in his speeches and writings on the development of a national economy of the country. He was not against international co-operation, but he wanted India to diversify her economy contacts and develop her own economy with self-reliance.

Nehru realised fully well that the formal political independence achieved by India in 1947 could be subverted by the foreign powers by their economic penetration and that India could be converted gradually to a semi-colony. This was the economic basis of Nehru's political thought in relation to Indian nationalism. The development of a national economy was possible only by taking the following steps:

- 1) National Planning for economic development and distribution of wealth to the people;
- 2) Development of Indian agriculture by "a green revolution" with the limited help from the West and
- 3) The development of heavy industries like Steel and the exploration of oil with Soviet Union's help.

23.7 NEHRU'S SCIENTIFIC OUTLOOK

This takes us to one important aspect of Nehru's thought connected with his scientific outlook. India could have self-reliance in the economic field only with her developing science and technology in a big way and her applying them on a large-scale in her economic activities. Among the Congress leaders, Nehru alone openly expressed his difference of opinion with Gandhi on this matter.

Nehru believed that the methods and approach of science have revolutionised human life more than anything else in the long course of history, and have opened doors and avenues of further and even more radical changes, leading up to the very portals of what has long been considered the unknown. Nehru said: "It is the scientific approach, the adventures and yet critical temper of science, the search for truth and new knowledge, the refusal to accept anything without testing and trial, the capacity to change previous conclusions in the face of new evidence, the reliance on observed facts and not on pre-conceived theory, the discipline of the mind, all that is necessary not merely for the application of science but for life itself and the solution of its many problems."

One of the reasons Nehru advanced for India's extensive use of science and technology was that it would bring economic power and independence to the country.

His intention to promote a scientific outlook in the country and the extensive use of science and technology for the promotion of economic development was also in the direction of settling in motion a social revolution. These steps, weakened the irrational traditions of India which was based on status and gradually replaced it by the bourgeois outlook which was based on contract.

Another advantage of the extensive use of science and technology was that it would make India an independent and self-reliant economic, political and military power. Nehru wrote to Gandhi in 1945: "I do not think it is possible for India to be really independent unless she is a technically advanced country. I am not thinking for the moment in terms of just scientific growth. In the present context of the world we cannot even advance culturally without a strong background of scientific research in every department. There is today a tremendous acquisitive tendency both in individuals and groups and nations, which lead to conflicts and wars."

According to Nehru, India should resist the foreign pressures by herself developing

her science and technology. Among many other factors, this was one of the reasons for India's refusal to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Primarily, India wanted to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. And she also did not want to give up the option to make any weapons for self-defence. This takes us to India's independent foreign policy.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) Briefly comment on Nehru's views on Socialism.

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2) What steps did Nehru envisage for the development of national economy?

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3) Briefly discuss Nehru's scientific outlook.

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23.8 INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY AND NATIONAL FREEDOM

In the initial statements explaining India's foreign policy Nehru claimed that it was an independent foreign policy. Nehru developed an independent thinking in the area of foreign policy. He could understand the dynamics of global politics. There are basically two power blocks in international politics: Western Imperialist Block and Soviet Socialist Block. India and other newly liberated countries should follow an independent line. They should not be member of any block. Nehru states that, "we should approach these problems, whether domestic or international problems in our own way. If by any chance we align ourselves definitely with one power group, we

may perhaps from one point of view do some good, but I have not the shadow of a doubt that from a larger point of view, not only India but of world peace, it will do harm." Nehru wanted that the non-aligned countries should function as a power block. They should share their wealth for their prosperity.

Nehru was by no means for an India which would be isolated from the rest of the world. His independent foreign policy was not negative. He realised that India is a part of the world in regard to science, culture, economy and politics. He made the following observation making his views clear on this matter: "Our entire society is based on this more or less. This basis must go and be transformed into one of co-operation, not isolated which is impossible. If this is admitted and is found feasible then attempts should be made to realize, if not in terms of an economy which is cut off from the rest of the world, but rather one which co-operates. From the economic or political point of view, an isolated India may well be a vacuum which increases the acquisitive tendencies of others and thus creates conflicts."

23.9 INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK

After India became independent, Nehru's international outlook shaped his views and action. He was against the cold war and the division of the powerful states into two blocs. He tried to reduce international tension and in some cases tried to mediate between the conflicting blocs.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) What were the assumptions of Nehru's foreign policy?

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23.10 LET US SUM UP

In the years immediately following World War II, the conflicts between capitalism and communism were so intense that when Nehru declared India's intention not to join any bloc, he was considered as being unrealistic and only idealistic. Now the disintegration of the blocs had made Nehru's outlook very relevant and realistic. There is also a clear indication of international co-operation between the two Super Powers now.

Inside the country also, Nehru's greatest success was that he promoted the spirit of conciliation and negotiation between different political groups and gradually built up political stability and consensus.

He did not succeed in setting in motion a revolution — with blood or without blood. He succeeded in modernizing the society and economy to a large extent. The Hindu Code Bill was a typical example of a legislation which helped the Hindu society to have a transition from a feudal society to a modern one. This was a step in the right direction. To sum up, Nehru created political and social stability in India and helped in the achievement and the extension of political freedom of the country.

In his era the promotion of a national consensus was possible. All kinds of concessions could be made and conciliation among different political groups were possible. They were not helpful to a democratic socialist revolution. But they helped the emergence of political stability in the country, which was helpful to a gradual social change and social revolution. And this stability also helped India's emergence as a major power in South Asia and a middle power in the international field.

23.11 KEY WORDS

Nationalism: That human group identity that is based on common linguistic-cultural traits in its most developed and modern form.

Social Revolution: A radical and complete transformation of society — its economy, polity, culture, values etc.

Scientific outlook: An outlook that rejects all irrational and superstitious beliefs rooted in traditional conceptions and accepts science as the sole truth.

Secularism: The conception that religion has no role in politics and political life.

Socialism: The political theory that believes in replacing the capitalist system with one that is non-exploitative and based on social ownership of the means of production.

23.12 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

Primary

Nehru, Jawaharlal

- 1) *Letters from a father to his daughter* (Allahabad, 1929).
- 2) *Glimpses of World History* (end Volume, Allahabad, 1934).
- 3) *An Autobiography*, London, 1962.
- 4) *The Discovery of India*, Calcutta, 1946.
- 5) *India's Foreign Policy*. Selected Speeches, 1961, p.70.
- 6) *Nehru on Socialism*,. Edited By V.B. Singh, Delhi, 1988.

Secondary

- 1) Norman D., Nehru: *The first sixty years*, London, 1965.
- 2) Gopal S., Jawaharlal Nehru : *A Biography, Three Volumes*. Oxford University Press: 1984.
- 3) A Gorey V. Uimyanina, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, Moscow, 1982.
- 4) Brecher, Michail, *Nehru: A Political Biography*, London, 1950.

23.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

See section 23.1

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) See section 23.2
- 2) See section 23.3

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) See section 23.5
- 2) See section 23.6
- 3) See section 23.7

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

See section 23.8

UNIT 24 SUBHASH CHANDRA BOSE

Structure

- 24.0 Objectives
- 24.1 Introduction
 - 24.1.1 Early Life
 - 24.1.2 His Activities
- 24.2 The Basic Concepts of Subhash's Political Philosophy
 - 24.2.1 Idea of History
- 24.3 Militant Nationalism and Patriotism
- 24.4 Bose's View on Nation Building
- 24.5 Swadeshi and Nationalism
- 24.6 The Concept of Freedom
- 24.7 Bose's Conception of Socialism
- 24.8 Social Change
- 24.9 The Technique of National and Social Revolution – Guerrilla Warfare
- 24.10 Bose and Fascism
- 24.11 Let Us Sum Up
- 24.12 Key Words
- 24.13 Some Useful Books
- 24.14 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

24.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you should be able to:

- understand the role of Bose in nation building;
- explain the relationship of Bose's active political life and his philosophy;
- understand his theory of socialism;
- differentiate his views on socialism from other schools of socialism and
- explain his views on nationalism.

24.1 INTRODUCTION

Subhash Chandra Bose was not a political philosopher in the traditional sense. He was deeply involved in national politics of colonial India and concentrated all his energy in overthrowing British rule from the country. The achievement of freedom was thus his prime goal and hence his political ideas mainly revolved around national freedom which would pave way for a bright future for India. There is spontaneity in his political thinking which cannot be separated from his hectic political life.

24.1.1 Early Life

He was born on January 23, 1887 at Cuttack. As a sensitive child he perceived the subtle discrimination, Indians had to suffer at the hands of the British. A resentment developed against the British, with whom he came in contact as a pupil in his school in Orissa. This turmoil tormented teenaged Subhash and made him run away from home in quest of a Guru who could give him solace. In the meantime he studied Swami Vivekananda's philosophy which influenced him deeply and led him to identify spiritualism with social service. He wanted national construction on modern lines. After his early schooling, he joined Ravenshaw Collegiate School. From there he went to join Presidency College, Calcutta, where Indian students were extremely angry against their History teacher E.F. Oaten's arrogant behaviour. Oaten was slapped and beaten up in the college premises. Subhash Bose was suspended and rusticated for this. Later, he graduated in Philosophy from Scottish Church College. He sat in the most prestigious competitive examination of I.C.S. in England and came out with flying colours. However, love for his country made him resign this prestigious and comfortable job on 22 April 1921 and thereafter he plunged in national/freedom struggle wholeheartedly.

24.1.2 His Activities

In 1921, he met Gandhi after reaching India and participated in the non-cooperation movement. In the meantime he came in contact with C.R. Das and became his disciple. He associated with Das's political endeavour and was also jailed along with him. He took over the editorship of a news daily 'Forward' started by C.R. Das's Swaraj Party. When Das was elected Mayor of Calcutta Corporation he nominated Bose as the chief executive. He was arrested for his political activities in 1924. In 1930 he was elected Mayor of Calcutta, the same year he was elected President of A.I.T.U.C. In the thirties, he was closely associated with left politics in Congress along with Jawaharlal Nehru, Congress Socialists, Communists and M.N. Roy. Because of the endeavour of the left group the Congress passed very far-reaching radical resolutions in Karachi in 1931, which declared the main Congress aim as socialisation of means of production besides guaranteeing fundamental rights. Subhash won the Congress presidential election at Haripura with the backing of leftists in 1938. Next year at Tripuri he again won the presidential election against Gandhi's candidate Pattabhi Sitaramayya. However his differences with Gandhi became very wide and ultimately he left the Congress. He founded a new party 'The Forward Bloc'. In 1939, the world war broke out. Subhash felt that the adversaries Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Japan of the main enemy of India, i.e. British imperialism, be utilized to the maximum advantage possible. He therefore jumped with full vigour in this last battle for freedom. He was arrested and put under house-detention. He, however, made a successful escape, by fooling the British authorities and reached Germany after visiting other places. Events moved fast, he reached Japan and from there to Burma and organised the Indian National Army (INA) to fight the British and to liberate India with the help of Japan. He gave famous slogans 'Jai Hind' and 'Dilli Chalo'. He died in a plane crash before realising his dreams. Some people however still think that he is alive.

During a rather hectic life, Subhash evolved his political ideology, about which you will read in the subsequent sections.

24.2 THE BASIC CONCEPTS OF BOSE'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

24.2.1 Idea of History

Subhash interpreted Indian history and asserted that it has to be recorded not in decades or in centuries but in the thousands. India has passed through various vicissitudes of fortune. Neither the individual nor the nation can have an uninterrupted career or progress and prosperity. The same is true for India which has always been characterised by a very high level of culture and civilisation. Bose summarises his readings of Indian history as follows:

- 1) A period of rise has been followed by a period of decline to be followed again by a upheaval.
- 2) The decline is the result chiefly of physical and intellectual fatigue.
- 3) Progress and fresh consolidation has been brought about by an influx of new ideas and sometimes an infusion of fresh blood.
- 4) Every new epoch has been heralded by people possessing greater intellectual power and superior military skill.
- 5) Throughout Indian history all foreign elements have always been gradually absorbed by Indian society. The British are the first and the only exception to this.
- 6) In spite of change in the central government, the people have all along been accustomed to a large measure of real liberty.

To regain lost glory Subhash wanted regeneration of energy in India.

24.3 MILITANT NATIONALISM AND PATRIOTISM

Subhash angered that a spirit of militant nationalism is essential to rejuvenate Indians to achieving freedom. Subhash believed in the non-violent path and mobilisation of the people for the cause of freedom; that is why he supported the non-cooperation

and civil disobedience movement but its withdrawal at a crucial moment on the pretext of violence and opportunist compromise was severely criticised by him. He wrote, "If our policy had been one of uncompromising militancy, the Bardoli surrender of 1922 never would have taken place — nor would the Delhi Pact of March, 1931 when the situation was opportune." He felt that, 'Freedom intoxicated' missionaries who are 'morally prepared' to undergo the maximum sacrifice and suffering. These are necessary to attain success in the mission.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Explain in brief the historical foundation of Subhash Bose's political philosophy.

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- 2) What are the various phases of Indian History according to Bose?

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24.4 BOSE'S VIEW ON NATION BUILDING

For Bose a nation is not there merely to satisfy narrow selfish ends. Addressing the students of the Central Provinces at Amravati and Berar, he said, "I have already said that we shall have to change some of our existing ideas of values with regard to good and evil." He advocated the need of a complete overhauling and recasting of the present stereotyped mode of existence, which in turn would lead to genuine national solidarity and would give India a position of glory. For him life, only when inspired above the ordinary by some greater and nobler ideals, has value or significance. Bose asserted that a nation need not exist, or alternately it has no right to exist or live if it has no ambition. However, he also warned that a nation should not strive for progress just to satisfy narrow selfish ends, but should march onwards so that it effectively contributes towards the evolution of the human society.

For nation building Bose asserted the need of 'Swadeshi'.

24.5 SWADESHI AND NATIONALISM

Nationalism is not only a political movement but ethical as well, according to Bose. Its ethical aspect is reflected in the adoption of Swadeshi which was a common cause to be practised religiously. Because when one buys an indigenous product, even though of the worst quality and on higher price he helps the nation. Swadeshi is better than the protection of the native industry. Thus Swadeshi combines sacrifice for the nation and ensures improvement in the indigenous industry.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Discuss Bose's views on Nationalism. What arguments did he give in support of Swadeshi?

- 2) What is the goal of National Freedom according to Bose?

24.6 THE CONCEPT OF FREEDOM

Overthrowing the foreign yoke nevertheless was the immediate task towards the ideal of achievement of freedom, which Bose made clear in his address to the students at Lahore in October 1929. He said that the ideal we have to hold up is an ideal which will galvanise our whole life. That ideal is freedom. But freedom is a word which has varied connotations. For Bose freedom is an all-round freedom, i.e. freedom for the individual as well as for the society; freedom for the rich as well as for the poor; freedom for men as well as women; freedom for all individuals and for all classes. This freedom implies not only emancipation from political bondage but also equal distribution of wealth, abolition of caste barriers and social inequalities and destruction of communalism and religious intolerance. Thus, for Bose, freedom has many facets as there are different aspects of it. He held socialism necessary for really achieving Freedom.

24.7 BOSE'S CONCEPTION OF SOCIALISM

Subhash Chandra Bose was a believer in socialism. He asserted that he wanted a 'Socialist Republic of India'. However, his concept of socialism was different from that of the others and he called it Indian socialism. Addressing *Bharatiya Naujawan Sabha* in 1931, he said, "If we undertake a comparative analysis of different social and political ideals that have inspired human endeavour and activity throughout the ages, we shall arrive at certain common principles that should form the basis of our collective life. These are justice, equality, freedom, discipline and love." In order to be just and impartial, he advocated treating all men as equal. He asserted that bondage of any kind, economic or political, robs men of their freedom and gives rise to inequalities of various kind. Therefore in order to ensure equality it is necessary to get rid of bondage of every kind. However, he also warned that freedom did not mean indiscipline or license or absence of law. It rather means the substitution of law and discipline, which is very necessary for the struggle for freedom the basis of life. Besides these fundamental principles, Bose asserted that love is the highest principle. Without a feeling of love for humanity neither one could be just to all, or treat men as equal, nor feel called upon to sacrifice, and without that the right sort of socialism could not emerge. Thus, for Bose the cardinal principles of socialism are justice, equality, freedom, discipline and love. He advised his countrymen and women not to ignore the history and traditions of the country while adopting the social and political institutions of the other countries. He asserted that there were all kinds of active nation building programmes and socio-political ideologies in the Western world, such

as Socialism, State Socialism, Guild Socialism, Syndicalism, Philosophical, Anarchism, Bolshevism, Fascism, Parliamentary Democracy, Aristocracy, Absolute Monarchy, Dictatorship etc. He accepted some wisdom in each of them. However, he warned that in a progressive world like ours it would not be proper to accept any one of them as the last word for an ideal or the final solution of all the social and political problems. Because he reasoned that the results of the transplantation of an entire idea or institution in one country from another may not necessarily be agreeable or fruitful. A national institution is the natural result of the history of the people concerned — their thoughts and ideals and the activities of their day to day life. This should be borne in mind. According to Bose social and political institutions cannot be built by ignoring history and the traditions of the people of the country, besides their present condition or prevailing atmosphere of life.

For the above reason, he could not agree with the communists in India also. He felt that the Bolshevik Socialism of Soviet Union did not suit India. There should be assimilation of only those socialistic principles which could suit on Indian requirements. He explained that the Bolshevik theory had been passing through an experimental stage and the communists were departing from Lenin and other Bolsheviks. This departure had been caused by the peculiar conditions and circumstances prevailing in Russia, which compelled a modification of the original theory. He also warned against the unsuitability of Marxian ideas and said that Marxian ideas were coming from the West like 'boisterous breakers' and some people in India we unnecessarily excited and stirred up with these. Most of them, Bose said, who believed that adoption of Marxism in its pure and complete form would make India a land of joy and plenty and pointed their fingers towards Russia, in fact were wrong because the Bolshevism adopted and practised in Russia was not the same as classical Marxian socialism.

The other reason for rejection of communism was the methodology and tactics communists generally employed to achieve their ends. These methods and tactics, he thought, did not suit India and that is why communism could not make much headway in this country.

Indian socialism would therefore be different, he asserted. He said that at that stage it was difficult to chalk out the details of a socialist state (of his dreams). He could only give an outline, the main features and principles of the socialist state. He said, "We want political freedom whereby it meant the Constitution of an independent Indian state, free from the control of British imperialism. It should be quite clear to everybody that independence means severance from the British empire, and on this point there should be no vagueness or mental reservation. Secondly we want complete economic emancipation. Bose elaborated his view of economic emancipation and held that every human being must have the right to work, and the right to a living wage. There shall be no drones in the society and no unearned income. There must be equal opportunities for all, and there should be a fair, just and equitable distribution of wealth. For this purpose, it may be necessary for the state to take over the control of the means of production and distribution of wealth.

Besides economic equality Bose also felt that the third essential feature of real socialism is complete social equality. Social equality means that there shall be no caste or depressed classes. Every man will have the same rights, the same status in society. Bose was not only a believer of eradication of caste hierarchy, but also a supporter of women's equality in social status or in law. Woman will be an equal partner of man was Bose's firm faith.

Nevertheless, the ideal of socialism could not be achieved without social change. Bose had a specific view about social change.

24.8 SOCIAL CHANGE

Bose was of the view that social reforms and the movement for national freedom in India were inextricably related. As President of the Hooghly District Students Conference in July 1929, he said that those who imagine they can make their country politically free leaving its social order untouched and those who think social change is possible without political freedom are wrong. He explains that the former were wrong because once the desire for freedom was aroused in the people, it could not be

postponed on the ground that society had not changed. Similarly, the latter were wrong because a society as 'tattered' as ours and where social repression and economic inequality were dominant, people could not be inspired for political independence.

Thus, a kind of social revolution had been envisaged by Bose. He asserted that there was no fundamental difference between evolution and revolution. Revolution is nothing but evolution taking place within a comparatively short span of time, whereas evolution is only another name for revolution spreading over a longer period of time.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) What is the meaning of socialism according to Bose?

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2) Why did Bose reject Bolshevism and other Western ideologies?

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24.9 THE TECHNIQUE OF NATIONAL AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION — GUERRILLA WARFARE

In a broadcast over Azad Hind Radio Subhash Bose chalked out his methodology of national struggle. He said that the campaign that was going on in India was non-violent guerrilla warfare. He asserted that the object of this guerrilla warfare would be twofold, one to destroy war production in India and the other to paralyse the British administration and all people of India should participate in the struggle. He chalked out a detail programme for the people. He suggested that payment of the taxes be stopped which directly or indirectly brought revenue to the government. The workers in all industries should either launch a stay in strike or try to hamper production by conducting a go-slow campaign inside the factories. They should also carry out sabotage to impede production. The students should organise secret guerrilla bands for carrying on sabotage in different parts of the country. They should also invent new ways of annoying the British authorities, for example, burning stamps etc. in post offices, destroying British monuments etc. The women, especially girl students should do underground work of all kinds, especially as secret messengers or provide shelter for the men who fight. The government officials who are prepared to help the campaign should not resign their posts but those in government offices and in war industries should give all available information to fighters outside and should try to hamper production by working inefficiently. The servants who are working in the houses of Britishers, should be organized for the purpose of giving trouble to the masters, for example, by demanding higher salaries, cooking and serving bad food and drinks etc. The Indians should give up all business with foreign banks, firms, insurance companies etc. For the general public he suggested the following activities:

- a) Boycott of British goods, industry, burning of British stalls and government stores;

- b) Total boycott of Britishers in India, and those Indians who are pro-British;
- c) Hold demonstrations in spite of official prohibition;
- d) Publishing of secret bulletins and setting up of a secret radio station;
- e) Marching to the houses of British government officials and demanding their departure from India;
- f) Organizing of processions for entering and occupying government offices, secretarial buildings, law courts etc. with a view to hampering administration.
- g) Arranging to punish police officers and prison officials who oppress and persecute people.
- h) Begin erecting barricades in the streets where there is a likelihood of attack from the police and military.
- i) Setting fire to government offices and factories which are working for war purposes.
- j) Interrupting postal, telegraph, telephone and communication as frequently as possible.
- k) Interrupting railways, bus and tram services, whenever there is a possibility of hampering the transport of soldiers or of war material.
- l) Destroying police stations, railway stations and jails in isolated places.

24.10 BOSE AND FASCISM

Bose has been called a believer in Fascism. This assumption arose from the fact that he wanted to associate India's freedom struggle with Second World War politics and sought the help of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. He also showed his admiration for Mussolini. Besides in a chapter 'A Glimpse of the Future' in his book 'The Indian Struggle' he wrote "In spite of the antithesis between communism and fascism, there are certain traits common to both. Both communism and fascism believe in the supremacy of the state over the individual. Both denounce parliamentary democracy. Both believe in Party rule. Both believe in the dictatorship of the party and in the ruthless suppression of all dissenting minorities. Both believe in a planned industrial reorganisation of the country. These common traits will form the basis of the new synthesis. The synthesis is called 'Samyavada.'" Bose asserted that it will be India's task to work out this synthesis. Besides the advocacy of this synthesis, in 1941 in Kabul, Bose had said that dissensions in the country would disappear only when an iron dictator rules in India for twenty years. He asserted that at least after the end of British rule in India there must be a dictatorship. And it is for India's good that she should be ruled by a dictator to begin with. None but a dictator can wipe out such dissensions. He believed India needed a Kamal Pasha to cure its many ailments.

Nevertheless, Bose had advocated dictatorship as a panacea for India's problems. However, he could not be branded as a fascist. He never sanctioned the extreme tenets of fascism which sanctioned imperialistic expansion and believed in racialism. He was a votary of the rights of the exploited masses. Thus, although he took armed help from the fascist powers of Europe and Asia, and organised national army for India's liberation, yet he did not preach the ideology of fascism. The Forward Bloc, the party he belonged to summarised its dominant guiding principles on January 1, 1941.

- 1) Complete national independence and uncompromising anti-imperialist struggle for attaining it.
- 2) A thoroughly modern socialist state.
- 3) Scientific large-scale production for the economic regeneration of the country.
- 4) Social ownership and control of both production and distribution.
- 5) Freedom for the individual in the matter of religious worship.
- 6) Equal rights for every individual.
- 7) Linguistic and cultural autonomy for all sections of the Indian community.
- 8) Application of the principle of equality and social justice in building up a New Order in Free India.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) What is the technique of national revolution according to Subhash Bose?

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2) Did Subhash advocate Fascism?

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24.11 LET US SUM UP

Bose's political philosophy has a close link with his political life. Bose stood for militant nationalism for achieving India's freedom. According to him freedom and equality are interrelated. So freedom could be achieved only with socialism. There are four bases of socialism, national freedom, economic equality, social equality and equality of sexes, according to him. Bose felt that India should have its own indigenous socialism, and she should not imitate others' way of life. For national freedom, Bose sought the help of the fascists. However, he himself did not believe in fascism. National freedom and national construction were the core of his political ideology.

24.12 KEY WORDS

Leftists: Those who support radical reforms.

Swadeshi: Using only national products.

Bolshevism: The philosophy of Karl Marx communists adopted after Russian Revolution in 1917.

Fascism: The political creed adopted by Mussolini in Italy and Hitler which believed in unchallenged supremacy of their respective nations all over the world.

24.13 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

Subhash Bose, *Indian Struggle*, Netaji Research Bureau, Calcutta, 1964.

Hiren Mukerjee, *Bow of Burning Gold: A Study of Subhash Chandra Bose*, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1977.

Hari Har Das, *Subhash Chandra Bose and the Indian Struggle*, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1983.

Subodh Markandeya, *Subhash Chandra Bose, Netaji's Passage to Immortality*, Arnold Publishers, Delhi.

24.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) See section 24.2 and subsection 24.2.1
- 2) Do

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) See section 24.4 and 24.5
- 2) Do

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) See section 24.7
- 2) Do

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

See sections 24.9 and 24.10

UNIT 25 POLITICAL THOUGHT OF JP AND NARENDRA DEV

Structure

- 25.0 Objectives
- 25.1 Introduction
- 25.2 Jaya Prakash and Narendra Dev
 - 25.2.1 Basic Philosophy of JP and Narendra Dev
- 25.3 JP and the formation of the Congress Socialist Party(CSP)
 - 25.3.1 JP and the application of Marxism in India
- 25.4 Socialist Programme and Narendra Dev
 - 25.4.1 Socialism and Democracy
 - 25.4.2 Opposition to the Third International
 - 25.4.3 Socialism not a borrowed ideology
 - 25.4.4 Student of Eastern and Western Thought
 - 25.4.5 Cultural Marxist
 - 25.4.6 Opposition to combining Religion and Politics
- 25.5 JP and the Acharya: Some more details
- 25.6 Socialists and the Second World War
 - 25.6.1 Socialist pressure on Gandhi and the Congress leadership
- 25.7 Socialists in the largely post-Independence period
 - 25.7.1 JP after Independence
 - 25.7.2 JP's Concept of Total Revolution
- 25.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 25.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 25.10 Some Useful Books

25.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the basic philosophy of Jayaprakash Narayan and Acharya Narendra Dev
- Comment on Narendra Dev's Socialist programme
- Discuss the socialists' activities in the post-Independence period.

25.1 INTRODUCTION

The socialists have played a very crucial role in the history of national movement in our country. In the 1930s and 40s, they were the people who surfaced at leadership as well as the grass-roots level. The logic of Indian politics under the leadership of Gandhi unleashed these forces. Mass politics was initiated by Gandhi when he gave a call for the non-cooperation movement. Small groups turned active in rural and urban politics in mobilising social classes. They were of the opinion that bringing popular classes into nationalist politics would bring about a radical orientation. The leadership could not remain in the hands of the middle classes who were engaged in politicking. This form of mass and class politics brought some concrete results towards the end of the 1920s when the national leadership was forced to give a call for Purna Swaraj at the famous Lahore session in 1929. In the following lines you will be reading more about the socialist movement in India.

25.2 JAYA PRAKASH AND NARENDRA DEV

A section of the middle class leaders turned radical and started talking the language of classes. Nehru and Acharya Narendra Dev rose to be the two prominent leaders of the nationalist politics and got recognition as radical progressive leaders. This stream snowballed into force in 1930s. JP, who had a Marxist orientation while he was studying in the USA, came back and joined this rank. He came in close contact with Nehru and Narendra Dev and worked with them in the Congress organisation at Allahabad. JP's radical consciousness helped him to be a close confidant of Nehru.

Interestingly, JP had good relations with Gandhi because his wife Prabhvati was working in Gandhi's Ashram while he was abroad. JP's personality turned out to be interesting and complex and he acquires a unique position in the history of national movement.

25.2.1 Basic Philosophy of JP and Narendra Dev

Both JP and Narendra Dev wanted to work within the national congress and create political platform for socialists and other left wingers. They realised that the congress was a platform which needed a new orientation. There was no point in creating another political party. According to them the Congress party offered enough space for accommodating different ideological groups. It was also the class character of the Indian national movement that helped in maintaining such a complex ideological framework. Acharya Narendra Dev said "for a subject, colonial state political independence is the first step on the road to socialism. In a middle class revolutionary movement, for socialism to stay away from the nationalist movement would be fatal. It is also essential, for the success of the national movement, to base itself on the support of the people together with middle class. The economic well-being of the common people must, however, find a central place in the programme of the movement. The Congress Socialist Party must not divorce the national movement from the revolutionary aspirations of workers, peasants and the middle class." This was the famous speech given by Acharya Narendra Dev at the CSP's first conference at Patna in 1934. Both JP and Narendra Dev recognised the importance of the congress party as the leader of the anti-imperialist struggle. Secondly, they recognised the importance of class politics in the congress. Thirdly, the fact that the ideology of socialism was going to play a significant role in the national movement. Fourthly, the CSP was going to function as a pressure group in the congress. It would be neither a political party nor an alternative to the congress. JP made it all this very clear in his speech which is given below.

"Our work within the congress is governed by the policy of developing into a true anti-imperialist body. It is not our purpose, as sometimes it has been misunderstood to be, to convert the whole Congress into a fullfledged socialist party. All we seek to do is to change the content and policy of that organisation so that it comes truly to represent the masses, having the object of emancipating them both from the foreign power and the native system of exploitation." Furthermore, JP understood the class context of congress leadership and the conservative orientation of the leadership who were scared of the slogan of socialism. As JP stated, "The congress at present is dominated by upper class interests and its leaders are uncompromisingly opposed to admitting into its objectives any programmed aimed at the economic emancipation of the masses."

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below your answer

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end.

1) What is the basic philosophy of JP and Narendra Dev?

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25.3 JP AND THE FORMATION OF THE CONGRESS SOCIALIST PARTY (CSP)

The Congress socialist party was formed in the Nasik Jail when JP, Lohia, Ashok

Mehta, Achyut Patwardhan and Minoo Masani decided to float an organisation. Left wing intellectuals because of their political conviction floated a forum. At the same time, mass politics in the civil disobedience movement got radicalised. Kisan Sabha and All India Trade Union Congress became two powerful class fronts. Combination of social forces with intellectuals created a powerful socialist movement in India. JP, as a Marxist intellectual wrote a book — 'Why Socialism', which helped the Left wing people all over India to clarify their doubts regarding the concept of socialism. This book was published on behalf of the congress socialist party. In this work, he developed four important theses:

- 1) The foundations of socialism
- 2) What the congress socialist stands for
- 3) Alternatives
- 4) Methods and techniques

At the age of only thirty two, he attained nation-wide stature through this revolutionary document.

25.3.1 JP and the application of Marxism in India

He demonstrated in his book that parting company with the comintern and the Indian communists was in no way a disenchantment with Marxism. As JP said, "Socialism has a single form and a single principle and that is Marxism." He tried to apply Marxism in Indian conditions. As he observed, "It is often said that India's conditions are peculiar. Of this it is meant that the basic principles of socialism have no validity in India, it would be difficult to imagine a greater fallacy. The laws by which wealth accumulates hold as true in India as elsewhere and the manner in which this accumulation can be stopped is the same here as elsewhere." He tried to explain the nature of Indian political economy in the Marxist way. The process of appropriation of social surplus is done by the owners of property in the same manner as in other capitalist countries. Unequal distribution of wealth is the root cause of class formation. Only the government can bring a radical restructuring in property relations. Indian socialists had a tremendous faith in the state structure. They did not want to destroy the state. By tapping state power, they would be able to bring radical changes in the society. JP in his book stated, "No party can build up socialism unless it has the machinery of the state in its hands, whether it has come to acquire it through the will of the electorate or by a coup d'etat is irrelevant. The coercive powers of a socialist state, if they exist at all are bound to be derived from popular support." Both JP and Narendra Dev had a similar opinion on the means of achieving socialism. Although Narendra Dev, from the beginning made it clear that democratic means were the only way of achieving socialism. There is no need of changing the state structure.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answers with that given at the end.

- 1) How did JP interpret Marxism?

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25.4 SOCIALIST PROGRAMME AND NARENDRA DEV

The Socialist Party brought out a socialist programme which clearly indicates their viewpoint. First, for nationalisation big capital was necessary, but not abolition of private property. Secondly, their main emphasis was on the abolition of the Zamindaries in rural India. Land reforms should be implemented which would bring land to the tiller. In other words, they pleaded for the growth of the peasant proprietor and small industrial capital.

Narendra Dev was much more clear in the concept of democratic socialism. Democracy cannot survive without socialism and vice versa. Human Freedom is the basis of acquiring a socialistic pattern of society.

25.4.1 Socialism and Democracy

He said socialism for which we stand is democratic because: (i) It is opposed to hierarchical conception of society; (ii) It is opposed to the control of social power, political or economic by a single person or a privileged class in any form of despotism, dictatorship, feudalism or capitalism; (iii) It is opposed to imperialism and foreign domination in all forms and recognises the entire right of democratic freedom; (iv) It favours democratisation of social relations and behaviours; (v) It establishes the control of the working people over social, economic and political powers; (vi) It provides for self govt. in all social, political and economic affairs; (vii) It evolves order on the basis of liberty, i.e. free participation of all concerns; (viii) It provides for democratic decentralisation of power and responsibility; (ix) It assures social equality and justice by attaching priority to the needs as claims for full physical, mental as moral development of all; (x) It provides social happiness, of which individual happiness is a constituent; (xi) It regards the people as a source of authority and recognises their right to revolt in case a single person or a minority group or class attempts to seize or retain control over government, institutions or social power and (xii) it favours a democratic organisation for peace and international relations.

25.4.2 Opposition to the Third International

Narendra Dev stoutly opposed the policy of the Third International which split and weakened the anti-imperialist forces and sought to discredit Indian nationalism and its leaders. He said that nationalism was a potent social force and it was not meant to create a head-on-clash between nations or class struggles.

25.4.3 Socialism not a borrowed ideology

Socialism was not a borrowed ideology for Narendra Dev. He never abused Gandhi's constructive programme. He only felt that it must be supplemented by a class organisation for the abolition of vested property rights. He was prepared to accept Satyagraha as an instrument of class conflict in India. But he felt that it would be unrealistic to believe that feudal landlords who levied unlawful exactions upon their tenants and capitalists who cared more for profits than for protection could become dependable trustees of national resources.

The failure of the civil disobedience movement could not be explained in terms of the moral inadequacy of the Satyagrahis. The freedom movement was only an expression of the educated middle class. If it had to gain strength, it must evoke new response from the people working in fields and factories. Political freedom must be translated in terms of long delayed relief of economic and social leaderships.

25.4.4 Student of Eastern and Western Thought

Narendra Dev was a keen student of both, eastern and western thought. His study of ancient Indian culture was deep and wide. He could easily claim to be a scholar of Buddhist Philosophy. While he had a great regard for the cultural heritage of India, he was also conscious that "many old ideas had become effete and obsolete by the afflux of time would have to be discarded." In his opinion, "the task before us is the presentation of careful and scientific analysis of our culture, the preservation of its vital elements and their synthesis with modern thought." In his thinking, he has kept enough space for understanding Indian religious traditions: viz., what is the source and essence of Bharatiya Dharma? It will be better to quote him: "People of different races and culture migrated to India from time immemorial and made it their home. They were absorbed in the Indian community and the religion of land, its customs and ideas. Different communities following different ways of life have lived together in amity and religious feuds and conflicts are rare in Indian history. The Indian spirit had tried through the ages to seek unity in diversity. It was the catholic spirit of Hindu religion that made this miracle possible. Hinduism is not a credal religion. It does not forcibly impose its way of life upon others. It does not believe that the only true way of life is the one which is professed by it..... Truth manifests itself in many ways and therefore, no individual religion has the monopoly of truth. Hinduism is perhaps the only religion which believes that followers of other religions can also attain salvation.

It does not attach much importance to external forms and penetrates the inner spirit of man. It is also because of this comprehensive charity that Hinduism does not believe in proselytisation. Hindu Saints have, therefore, initiated their Muslim or Christian followers into spiritual sadhana without demanding of them renunciation of their faith and practice. "Indian religious traditions have integrated the best elements from all religions Hindu Saints, Muslim Fakirs and Sufis, who preached oneness of the Supreme being and *bhakti* (devotion) as a means of reaching him, did not recognise caste, community as external forms of worship. They were a continuation of the Sharman culture which disregarded external norms and emphasised good deeds."

25.4.5 Cultural Marxist

Narendra Dev was basically a cultural Marxist. He was deeply influenced by the Indian cultural traditions, specifically Buddha. He was much influenced by the gospel of love as Ahimsa preached by Buddha. He spent more than a decade working on his book on Buddhist philosophy—'Buddha Dharma Darshana' a treatise of considerable historical value. Interestingly, he had a profound understanding of Indian religious traditions. But at the same time, he was not in favour of religion and politics being combined. For him, religious traditions are a millennia old phenomena which comprise the collective consciousness of people. Marxists must bring certain democratic elements of religions to make the human being an ethical being.

25.4.6 Opposition to combining Religion and Politics

He was dead opposed to mixing up religion with politics, as mentioned already. Once he contested a by-election where the congress party put up a religious man to defeat him. Narendra Dev felt very sad and castigated the political opportunism of the Congress which according to him had mixed religion with politics. Political opportunism was opposed by him always. After independence, he left both the congress and the socialist parties. Once the socialist party split, he remained till death with the PSP (Praja Socialist Party).

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Briefly discuss Acharya Narendra Dev's views on socialism.

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25.5 JP AND THE ACHARYA: SOME MORE DETAILS

Both JP and the Acharya wanted to give a nationalistic orientation to socialism. They did not agree that the socialist movement had anything to do with the international communist movement. They were basically against the Soviet State and Stalin's terror. They did not agree with Lenin's method of capturing state power; Narendra Dev in an article entitled 'Soviet Russia's Policy in Asia' observed that for a Bolshevik, the political principles of Bolshevism were of primary importance — all else irrelevant. Soviet Russia was an opponent of nationalism — if it extended its support to an independence movement, then it was only for the reason that thereby imperialism would suffer a setback and Bolshevism gain a new field to take root and

grow in. Socialists in general were very critical of the Soviet State and its foreign policy. They felt that the internationalism of Soviet Russia would affect the growth of the nationalist movement in India.

At the same time the congress socialist party worked as a forum for different ideological groups. In 1936, the communists were allowed to work within the organisation. Royists and Punjab socialists were made part of the organisation. Congress socialist party functioned as a platform for broadly left people. It worked well till 1939. With the declaration of the second world war, the platform collapsed. Communists went out of the Party. Communists and socialists turned into bitter critics of each other.

25.6 SOCIALISTS AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The Nationalistic perspective gave a chance to them to take a very correct stand on the second world war and on the 1942 movement. Furthermore, their characterisation of Fascism as a reactionary political trend proved historically true. Their uncompromising stand on Fascism gave them a crying place in Indian history. The day the world war started, the socialists held a meeting at Patna under the chairmanship of Narendra Dev, where JP said, "This is an imperialist war. We will oppose it. We are going to take advantage of this war to win independence for ourselves."

25.6.1 Socialist Pressure on Gandhi and the Congress leadership

Socialists pressurised Gandhi and the Congress leadership to start the movement against British imperialism. They succeeded in persuading Gandhi to accept the proposal of the socialists and gave the call for the Quit India Movement. Socialists remained at the helm of affairs. They organised the mass movements against the colonial state. In January 1943, JP gave a call in an open letter 'To all Fighters for freedom'. "There is no compromise between the slogans of 'Quit India' and of 'National Government'. The masses have now learnt from experience that the imposing edifice of the police and magistracy and law courts and prisons which goes by the name of British Raj is but a house of cards when hurt against either collective power. This lesson is not likely to be forgotten and it constitutes the starting point for next offensive." JP's call created a ripple among young socialists and many jumped into the nationalist fray. The Guerrilla squads were formed by the socialists to attack the state property with an aim to paralyse the machinery of the British Govt. Three systems were singled out for destruction:

- 1) Disruption of communication lines including telegraphs, telephone, mail and wireless lines, railways, roads, bridges and motor-vehicles of the enemy.
- 2) Disruption of industrial plants, factories, mills and airports and
- 3) Incendiary activity, which covered destruction of Govt. documents, buildings, petrol pumps, arms and ammunition by fire.

The 1942 movement was the most violent movement against British imperialism. State structure virtually collapsed under the attacks of the militants.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Discuss the activities of the Indian socialists on the eve of the Second World War.

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25.7 SOCIALISTS IN THE LARGELY POST-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

Socialists committed the biggest mistake by not participating in the 1946 elections which were the basis of formation of the constituent Assembly. Later JP lamented over the matter. He admitted that it was the biggest blunder they had committed. After independence, the congress high command gave a call that no other ideological group had any place in their organisation. That is why the socialists decided to leave the congress party in 1950 and to oppose it as well. They decided to strengthen the democratic system by creating a strong opposition. Socialist party contested the 1952 general elections and was virtually routed. 1952 became the historical moment in the history of Indian Socialist Politics. JP and Acharya Narendra Dev both got disillusioned with electoral politics. Narendra Dev remained as the leader of Praja Socialist Party till his death whereas JP joined the Bhoodan Movement under the leadership of Vinobha Bhave. JP remained next to Vinobha in the Bhoodan movement. JP played a very active role in making the Bhoodan movement a success.

25.7.1 JP after Independence

Active involvement in the movement helped him to draft an essay on "The Reconstruction of the Indian Polity." He gave an alternative to the present political system based on the party system. He put forth the theory of party-less democracy. In his scheme, village panchayats play crucial role allowing people to participate in the decision-making process. Decentralisation of political power helps people to achieve *Loka Shakti*. "The Programme of Sarvodaya is above Party affiliation. We are neither for nor against any particular party. We desire a polity without parties. The ideals of Sarvodaya are close to those of socialism and communism though we stress the independence and power of the common people — we stress the decentralisation of economic and political power so that it resides in collective organisations of the people."

JP's Stress was on the change of heart which would bring about real non-violent social order.

The 1974 student movement in Bihar and Gujarat gave him a chance to take the leadership of the movement. He propounded the concept of 'Total Revolution'.

In his Prison Diary, he made it clear that "Total Revolution is a combination of seven revolutions — social, political, cultural, ideological or intellectual, educational and spiritual." JP's total revolution is an extension of his theory of Sarvodaya society and party-less democracy. Here he had stressed the cultural and moral dimensions. Decentralised politics and economy would allow people to participate in the decision-making process. Self-government is the best Government where people manage themselves. Village Panchayats are a subsystem within the larger social system and can work because the collective consciousness of people would make it functioning.

25.7.2 JP's Concept of Total Revolution

JP's total revolution is basically an extension of his concept of Sarvodaya, where he was for village Swaraj. Indian society is basically a village society. Villages should be the nucleus of public administration. All the elders of the village must sit together and settle their problems. This is possible only if the village economy has an egalitarian character. Unequal distribution of wealth is not going to create democracy. For democracy at village level here, rural economy needs an egalitarian character. Rich landowners should voluntarily give up their land to the poor. Non-violent social order creates space for real radical democracy. Violence breeds hatred and conflict. The structural basis of violence should be abolished. That is why he was for the concept of party less democracy. That parties monopoly. Parties monopolise political power which creates tensions. Political violence negates the basis of any democratic political order. He was in agreement with the cause of the Naxalites. But the means that they adopt. he was opposing.

Check Your Progress 5

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Briefly discuss JP's concept of total revolution.

25.8 LET US SUM UP

Acharya Narendra Dev and JP both contributed to Indian socialist thought substantially. Although JP has changed ideas from socialism to Sarvodaya and later extended it to total revolution, Narendra Dev remained a Marxist till his death and tried to apply Marxism to Indian conditions in an imaginative manner.

25.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) See Section 25.2 and subsection 25.2.1

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) See subsection 25.3.1

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) See section 25.4

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

- 1) See section 25.6

Check Your Progress Exercise 5

- 1) See section 25.7.2

25.10 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

Barik, R.K. 1977, *Politics of the JP Movement*, Radiant Publishers, New Delhi

Pantham, Thomas and Deutsch K.L. 1988, *Modern Indian Political Thought*, Sage Publications.

UNIT 26 RAMMANOHAR LOHIA

Structure

- 26.0 Objectives
- 26.1 The Man and the Thinker: An Introduction
 - 26.1.1 Lohia's Life
 - 26.1.2 Lohia as a Thinker
- 26.2 Intellectual Context
- 26.3 Analysis of the Existing Order
 - 26.3.1 Lohia's Theory of History
 - 26.3.2 Capitalism and Communism
- 26.4 Goals for Future
- 26.5 Strategy for bringing about change
- 26.6 A Critical Assessment
- 26.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 26.8 Key Words
- 26.9 Further Reading
- 26.10 Answer to Check Your Progress Exercises

Please note that in this unit there are two types of exercises at the end of every section. 'Check Your Progress Exercises' asks questions which you can answer on the basis of that section. Their answers have been given at the end of the unit. 'Do it Yourself' suggests some questions or tasks related to the section which you may take up for further exploration on your own. Please also notice that some questions in the text are in **bold letters** (like this). You should stop there, think of an answer to the question, and then read further.

26.0 OBJECTIVES

The unit deals with another Indian socialist thinker: Rammanohar Lohia. The main objective is to familiarise you with his thought. Therefore, after going through this unit you should be able to:

- outline his theory of history
- state his analysis of capitalism and communism
- list his goals and ideals for the future
- describe how he wanted to bring about change

In addition, you should be able to:

- connect all the aspects of his thought
- define his contribution to Indian socialist thinking
- critically examine his ideas

26.1 THE MAN AND THE THINKER: AN INTRODUCTION

Rammanohar Lohia was a prominent leader and perhaps the most original thinker of the socialist movement in India. But he is less known than most other thinkers that you have studied in this course. Perhaps many of you are reading his name for the first time. Let us begin with a brief introduction to his life and works.

26.1.1 Lohia's Life

Rammanohar Lohia was born in 1910 in a middle class merchant family at Akbarpur in Uttar Pradesh. Rammanohar came into contact with the national movement early in his life through the influence of his father. When he was 19, he went to Germany for higher studies and obtained Ph.D. in economics from the University of Berlin. There he also came into contact with the German socialist intellectuals and political workers.

On his return to India in 1933, Dr. Lohia got fully involved in the national movement led by the Congress. Within Congress he belonged to a socialist group, to which a

reference was made in the previous unit or Narendra Dev. **Can you recall the name of that party ?**

This was the Congress Socialist Party. Lohia and other leaders like Narendra Dev, Jayaprakash Narayan, Achyut Patwardhan, Asok Mehta and Minoo Masani formed this party in 1934. It tried to radicalize the national movement by organizing workers and peasants. Lohia actively participated in the freedom struggle, played an important role in the underground Quit India Movement, and went to jail several times.

After independence, the Congress Socialist Party separated from the Congress. Socialist Party (Praja Socialist Party after 1952) now became a major opposition party in post-independence India. At this point Lohia emerged as its first rank leader. Lohia and his followers split from it to revive the Socialist Party in 1955. After 1964 it became Samyukta Socialist Party. Under Lohia's leadership his party adopted the policy of active opposition to the Congress government. It organized several protests and civil disobedience campaigns against various policies of the government. However the party had very little success in elections. Lohia himself succeeded in getting elected to the Lok Sabha only in 1963. Before the general elections of 1967, he tried to unite all the opposition parties against the Congress. This new strategy had some success. But Lohia did not live to build on it. He died in 1967.

26.1.2 Lohia as a Thinker

Lohia was a man of ideas. Although he wrote considerably, he never wrote any complete book. He once said that this was because he believed that truth can only be seen from an angle or aspect. The claim of completeness that a book usually makes is bound to distort the truth. Therefore his writings consisted of articles or sometimes a series of articles. Most of these were revised scripts of the lectures that he had delivered at various places. These essays were then compiled together in the form of books. The most important of such collections of Lohia's writings is *Marx, Gandhi and Socialism* (1963). Some of his other such books are *Wheel of History* (1955), *The Caste System* (1963) and *Interval During Politics* (1965). In these and other writings one finds in him a thinker with an unusually wide range. Apart from politics he took serious interest in issues related to culture, economy, religion and science and technology. He reflected not merely on the present but also on the distant past and future. In geographical terms his concern went much beyond India. Developments throughout the world attracted his attention. He took keen interest in the most trivial and concrete issues on the one hand, and the major and very abstract questions on the other.

Lohia's political thought was an ambitious attempt to answer such a large range of questions. What made this attempt ambitious was the fact that Lohia refused to accept any of the given ideologies in totality. He was influenced, for example, both by Marxism and Gandhism; but he also criticised both of these. His favourite method of arriving at any conclusion was to locate a conceptual opposition, a dichotomy, in the existing thought and then resolve it at a higher level. In this way he tried to synthesise or integrate several opposing ideas and influences. His thought does not, however, form a coherent system of thought in which all ideas are neatly related to one another. To take an example of a picture, Lohia's thought is more like a big, rough sketch than a small, finished painting. Since he did not work out the details, his system of thought had several gaps and guesswork.

You might ask: if Lohia's thought is like a rough sketch, then why should we study it? The answer is: because it is in some ways very original. This raises another question. **What does originality mean? Does it mean that whatever an original thinker says has never been said before?**

Certainly not. If that were the case there would be no original thinker. When we speak of originality in history of ideas, what we have in mind is the capacity to connect older ideas in a new manner. Take the example of Gandhi's technique of Satyagraha. The ideas of non-violence, truth and resistance against injustice were well known even before Gandhi. He combined these ideas for the first time and applied these to a new area of politics. This was his originality. It is in this sense that we speak of Lohia's originality. He could see new connections between older socialist ideas, question some of its assumptions on that basis and rearrange them in a new form of his own. Which were the socialist ideas that Lohia received? What were those assumptions of these ideas that he questioned? How did he rearrange and replace these ideas? Did he

succeed in this attempt? All these questions may have come to your mind. We shall take up these questions one by one in the following sections.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) List all the political parties which Lohia was a member of, in a chronological order.

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- 2) Mention two main characteristics of Lohia's thought.

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Do It Yourself

- 1) Compare Lohia's achievements as a political leader and a political thinker.

Which of these are more impressive? You may come back to this question after completing the entire unit.

26.2 INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT

Let us begin by asking you a question: **What was Lohia's intellectual Context?**

You must not have found this a difficult question to answer. Perhaps many of you took a hint from the very structure of this course. This unit on Lohia is a part of the block called 'Indian socialist thought'. This is Lohia's immediate intellectual context. If your answer to this question was that modern Indian political thought is Lohia's intellectual context, even then you were not wrong. This is the larger intellectual setting in which Lohia's ideas were situated. Like any other thinker, Lohia also received some central concerns and questions from his context. His thought was a response to these questions and concerns. Here we need not go into details of these elements of context. You are already familiar with these by now. We shall only remind you of one of its aspects which is necessary to understand Lohia.

Modern Indian political thought developed largely as a result of India's contact with Europe. Understanding and assessing the West has therefore been one of the central concerns of political thinkers in modern India. While all the nationalist thinkers were opposed to the colonial rule, most of them tended to see the West as an ideal towards which India must progress. This resulted into a tension that underlies the debate on the West in modern India. Indian socialist thought inherited this debate from the previous intellectual traditions. Socialism was originally a European theory in at least two Senses. It originated from Europe, and it was mainly about Europe. Later on it got transferred to many non-European societies including India. All the Indian socialist thinkers had to deal with this European element in their theory. Thus the question of the West in Indian political thought got translated into the Indian socialists thought as well. The general responses of the Indian socialists was to accept the original western theory, whether communism or democratic-socialism, in its given form. As a result most of them did not question the belief in the superiority of European civilization. The previous three units must have made you familiar with these themes.

Lohia's contribution to Indian socialist thought can be understood in this context. He was the first thinker in India to challenge the dependence of socialist theory on the West. His entire system of thought was an attempt to build a truly universal socialist theory which took into account the non-European world as well. Lohia's basic argument in this regard can be stated as follows. Socialism is a liberating and revolutionary ideology. However, due to various historical reasons it has till now centred around Europe. Orthodox marxism or communism illustrates this

dependence. Even those socialists who reject communism tend to mix some features of communism and capitalism, both of which are European products. That is why socialism has failed to perform a revolutionary role in the non-European world. There it becomes another tool for establishing European superiority. The way out of this situation is a new ideology or doctrine of socialism. Our task is to search for theoretical foundations of this new doctrine. It involves undertaking a fresh historical analysis, setting new goals and devising more appropriate strategies keeping the non-western experience in mind. This is the task that Lohia set for himself and tried to fulfil throughout his life.

Let us have a closer look at this three-fold task. Every political actor and thinker faces the following three questions:

- i) What is the existing situation? This involves a factual **analysis** of the present and, if necessary, the past and future tendencies.
- ii) What should a desirable order look like? This requires setting **goals** for the future.
- iii) How should we go from the present to the desirable? This depends on the first two answers and requires consideration of the method or **strategy** for bringing about the desired change.

These three tasks are not independent of one another. No analysis is merely factual. It is always influenced by considerations of good and bad. The goals are not simply ideals. They are limited by what is possible in a given situation. The method clearly depends on where we are and the kind of goals we set. The division presented above is only for the sake of simplicity in presentation of ideas. In the next three sections we shall discuss one by one how Lohia responded to the three questions mentioned above. You would remember that in all these respects, Lohia's task is to remove **Euro-centric** assumptions i.e. basic ideas centred around Europe, from the existing socialist theory and to build an alternative theory in its place.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: 1) Use the space given below for your answer.
2) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) What distinguishes Lohia from all other socialist thinkers in modern India? State only the main point.

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- 2) Fill in the blanks:

Lohia's main criticism of the received socialist theory was that it depended on The task, therefore, was to build a truly socialist theory which took experience into account. This involved searching for new of what exists, new for future and new for change from the present to the desired future.

Do It Yourself

- 1) How did other thinkers, particularly other socialist thinkers, that you have studied in this course react to the West? Can you write a note on responses to the West in Indian political thought?
- 2) The threefold classification of tasks of political theory stated above can be used widely. Try to use it in the case of every political thinker that you study. Also think of your own answers to these questions for better comprehension of the rest of the unit.

26.3 ANALYSIS OF THE EXISTING ORDER

Understanding a society is like drawing a map. A good map does not and should not record all the details. Similarly, analysing a society does not mean trying to describe all its innumerable events and their details. Like a map, a good analysis of society must select some significant facts and show their connections. This can be done in several ways. One of these is the method of historical analysis. According to this we

can recognise the significant facts and show their inter-connections only by observing the society over a period of time and by relating the present to the past. Since Lohia's analysis follows this method, let us have a closer look at it.

It is common for all of us to think that historical events have causes. But if someone asks you 'what is the moving force behind history as a whole?' you might find it an unusual question. The form of inquiry which raises and tries to answer such a question is called philosophy of history. Everyone who accepts historical method need not also accept philosophy of history. This form of inquiry was popular among the 19th century European thinkers like Hegel and Marx, and some historians in the first half of the 20th century like Toynbee and Spengler. The basic assumption of philosophy of history is that behind the disorderly appearance, events in history show the working of some fundamental ordering principle which should be discovered. For example, according to Marx's theory of history, history of mankind is the history of continuous progress in man's ability to produce and the corresponding changes in the way in which human beings organise their social life. He found the following sequence of fundamental social changes in history: primitive communism — slavery — feudalism — capitalism. His theory also indicates the next step in the progress of history: socialism.

26.3.1 Lohia's Theory of History

A critique of Marx's theory of history is the starting point of Lohia's own theory of history as stated in his book **Wheel of History**. His main criticism against Marx's theory was that it projects a reading of European history as the history of mankind. As an alternative to it, he developed his own version of philosophy of history. According to his theory there are two main principles which explain the movement of history. The first principle relates to the struggle among various societies for supremacy in terms of power and prosperity. According to Lohia, in this respect history moves like a cycle, i.e., no society can stay at the top for ever. Throughout history the centre of power and prosperity has shifted from one region of the world to another. The second principle is about the internal social organisation of any society. In every society there is a constant shift between two kinds of social divisions: one permits social mobility, the other does not. The one that allows people to move to higher or lower positions is 'class'. The other which freezed individuals in the social position they were born in is 'caste'. So every society oscillates between class and a caste. You would have noticed that for Lohia the meaning of both these words differs from their common usage.

The central idea of Lohia's theory of history is that both the principles described above are related to each other: the external and the internal changes take place together. A society which is at the centre of the world tends to have class division; a society which has lost the external struggle develops caste system. **Can you see what connects the two principles?**

It is not simply a matter of chance. The connecting link, according to Lohia, is the search for technological efficiency by every society. When a society succeeds in attaining increasing levels of efficiency, this success has both internal and external consequences. Externally, that society rises in power in relation to other societies. Internally, it can accommodate social struggle for mobility. However, such maximization takes place only in one or two dimensions, and at the cost of all other dimensions. Therefore after some time this process reaches a dead-end. Then the society starts declining. Internally it has to adopt the rigid division of castes because there are lesser goods for distribution. In its relationship with other societies, it is no longer the centre of power. The centre shifts to some other nation. That is how the wheel of history moves.

Will the wheel of history go on turning endlessly? Fortunately not, Lohia would say. There is also a third principle that operates in history. Unlike the first two, it works for human unity or what Lohia called 'approximation of mankind'. Throughout history several forces have brought humanity closer in various spheres of life: technologies of production, language ideas, religions, etc. This principle works both among different nations and within a nation. Till now such approximation has taken place as a result of external forces, independent of human will. However, according to Lohia, today we have reached the stage of 'wilful approximation of human race', a stage where human beings can come together through conscious efforts. This should

be the next step in human progress. Only such a step would enable us to stop the march of the wheel of history.

26.3.2 Capitalism and Communism

Lohia's theory of history contained general principles. But the point was how to apply it to the contemporary situation? This is what Lohia does in his analysis of the two faces of modern civilization: capitalism and communism. For the last three to four hundred years Europe (including America) has been at the centre of the world. The distinguishing features of the modern European civilization are: continuous application of revolutionary technology to the sphere of production, striving for rising standards of living and an attempt to have greater social equality. In his essay 'Economics after Marx', Lohia makes an attempt to understand the historical origins of this system by questioning the marxist theory regarding the origins of capitalism. His main criticism of the marxist theory was that it explains the rise of capitalism only by reference to developments specific to European societies. Lohia argues that actually right from its beginning capitalism has depended upon external resources. These external resources came from colonies. Marx was right in saying that capitalism is based on the exploitation of the worker by the capitalist. But he did not notice that both of them participate in a more fundamental exploitation of the colonies. In this sense capitalism and colonialism were born together. This was the main point of Lohia's theory of 'twin origin of capitalism and colonialism'.

From this Lohia concluded that non-European societies like India cannot develop capitalism. *Can you see the reason why?* The reasoning is very simple. If capitalism can arise only with the help of colonialism, and if countries like India cannot now have any colonies, it follows that India cannot also imitate the capitalist development of Europe. Lohia did not question the possibility of capitalism only in the non-European world.

He doubted the future of this system even in Europe and America. He reasoned that the shrinking of colonies after the second world war had posed a serious challenge to the survival of the capitalist system.

What is the alternative to capitalism? Is communism the answer? In Lohia's view communism only appears to be so; in reality it is no different from capitalism. Both of these are just two faces of the modern civilization. Both depend on heavy capitalization, centralized economic mechanism and large-scale technology. Communism merely changes the ownership pattern while retaining the technology. Therefore both capitalism and communism are equally irrelevant for non-Western countries like India.

Neither communism nor capitalism can escape the crisis of modern civilization. This crisis has arisen, according to Lohia, because its technology has now reached a dead-end. This civilization cannot create a revolutionary technology any more. As a result, it cannot spread any further in geographical terms. Gradually it will lose its pre-eminence in the world. The crisis of the modern civilization can also be seen in the moral and spiritual decline in these societies. The individual has been reduced to a cog in the machine. In the light of all this it naturally seemed to Lohia that the stage was now set for another turning of the wheel of history.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) State the three main principles of Lohia's theory of history,

.....

.....

.....

2) Which of the following statements correctly represent Lohia's theory?

- | | |
|--|------------|
| i) Class represents absence of mobility | True/False |
| ii) External power leads to internal Class division. | True/False |
| iii) Decline in technological efficiency leads to caste system | True/False |
| iv) Colonialism developed much after the rise of capitalism | True/False |

- 3) What, according to Lohia, are the common features of capitalism and communism?

Do It Yourself

- 1) Why did Lohia follow the historical method? Do you think it is necessary to understand history in order to know the present?
- 2) Read more about philosophy of history and the theories of other thinkers mentioned in the text. How did they influence Lohia? Is this form of inquiry popular even today?

26.4 GOALS FOR FUTURE

The socialists, as you know, aim at a world without injustice. They recognise that there are various kinds of injustices. But most of the socialists have insisted that one kind of injustice — economic inequality — is the basis for all others: Therefore their ideal of socialist revolution aims at eliminating economic inequality. As you can anticipate by now, Lohia differed with this conventional socialist view. For him it was a very narrow goal. He identified seven aspects which require independent revolutions, i.e., the achievement of any one of these does not automatically lead to all others. These 'seven revolutions' are:

- 1) Revolution against economic injustice
- 2) Revolution against caste system
- 3) Revolution against gender inequality
- 4) Nationalist revolution against imperialism
- 5) Revolution against colour discrimination
- 6) Revolution for individual rights against collectivity
- 7) Procedural revolution of non-violent civil disobedience.

We have already talked about the first revolution. This involves putting an end to poverty and economic inequality by eliminating the gap between the rich and the poor. The next two revolutions identify two more aspects of social inequality: caste and gender. We have already seen that for Lohia caste means any stagnant social hierarchy. In that sense caste is not unique to India. Indian caste system is only the worst form of this type. Caste system results into a vicious circle: caste means restricted opportunities for many, which tends to limit their abilities, and this in turn leads to further restricted opportunities for them, and so on. This process can destroy the intellectual life of a civilization. That is the reason why Lohia was very strongly opposed to the Indian Caste system and wanted its abolition. He was also one of these few Indian political thinkers who were very outspoken on the question of women and their unequal treatment. He said that gender inequality was the basis of all other injustices. Here the goal is not merely to secure economic and employment opportunities for women. It is basically a question of cultural and social values which are deep rooted in our civilization. These values legitimize the belief that women are naturally inferior and meant for household work. Even while defining the ideals for women, they are taught to be submissive and dependent. Lohia wanted a basic change in all such beliefs and attitudes regarding women. He was of the opinion that on both these questions—caste and gender inequalities — giving merely equal opportunities will not be enough. Those who have suffered injustice on these grounds have to be given preferential opportunities for some time to enable them to become equal.

The fourth revolution is well known to all of us: fight for national freedom against alien rule. You would think that this revolution has already been achieved in India and other countries of the third world. But Lohia points out that economic imperialism operates even today and needs to be fought against. The fifth revolution seeks to end the injustice based on the colour of the skin, and to establish equality between the white and the non-white races. This is also an aesthetic revolution because it challenges the bias in our contemporary standards of beauty against the dark skin. The goal of the sixth revolution is similar to those of the liberals like J.S.

26.5 STRATEGY FOR BRINGING ABOUT CHANGES

This brings us to the final aspect of Lohia's thought: how to go from the existing conditions to the desirable order stated above? One answer to this question could be: the realisation of these ideals is in the logic of history: these will be realized automatically in the course of time. Lohia strongly opposed such a view which he called 'automotive philosophy'. For this view implies that whatever exists is the ideal for that time; it ignores the negative aspects of the existing reality. Another related danger is the tendency to justify any political action by its expected remote consequences.

Violent and dictatorial actions are often justified as necessary for bringing about peace and democracy in the long run. The danger in this reasoning is that it can be used to justify anything, even if the expected consequences do not actually follow. Against this, Lohia proposes his doctrine of 'immediacy': every single act must be justified immediately, i.e., in terms of its immediate consequences. For instance, if the end is peace, every single act for it must result in greater peace. This principle would ensure that the stated ends are pursued consistently.

You might say that these are very general and negative statements. The real question is: what is the appropriate form of political action? Some of the existing ideologies answer this question by concentrating only on one form of action: communists on struggle; Gandhians on constructive work; democratic socialists on parliamentary activities. Lohia said that these forms are not opposed to one another. Socialists must learn to integrate all of these in their programme. His slogan 'Vote, Jail and spade' symbolised this synthesis. Struggle has always been the main strategy of the socialists. But the question is: what kind of struggle? On this point Lohia argued for the relevance of the Gandhian technique of Satyagraha. The most effective and moral weapon that the people have against injustice is non-violent civil disobedience, a peaceful refusal to obey. Here non-violence would mean that there should be no advocacy and organisation of violence; occasional acts of violence in an essentially non-violent movement are not ruled out. He could say so because for him non-violence was rational principle: violence is wrong because it always proves counter-productive and fails to lead to good consequences. Apart from struggle, Lohia argued for incorporating the other two forms of actions mentioned above in the socialist programme. Elections are important because they are the expression of people's will. It is through elections and its results that the party can teach the people and learn from them. Constructive work is the chief instrument for organising and educating the people which the socialists must not overlook.

Check Your Progress Exercise 5

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) State Lohia's principle of immediacy in your own words.

.....
.....

- 2) What do the following symbols stand for?

Vote

Jail

Space

Do It Yourself

- 1) Write an essay for or against the following propositions:

- i) Political violence is always counter-productive
ii) Civil disobedience against a democratic government is justified

Instead of an essay you could also think of a group discussion or a debate on these topics.

polity; Indian Communists on property.
Note down the similarities and differences that you observe.

Rammanohar Lohia

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26.6 A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

In the first section we had compared Lohia's thought with a rough but original sketch. That image already implied our assessment of Lohia's thought: it is interesting because it says something new; however, the new ideas are neither always carefully thought nor fully worked out. Now we are in a position to substantiate that assessment.

Let us take the positive aspect first. **Can you list some of the ideas of Lohia which you found new?**

There are many of them which might have come to your mind: the three principles of his cyclical theory of history; the theory of twin origins of capitalism and colonialism; the idea that capitalism and communism are essentially the same; the broadening of the conventional socialist goals; the idea of small-scale machine and low capitalization; the principle of immediacy; the combination of struggle with non-violence and of parliamentary and constructive with revolutionary aspects of political action. You can elaborate each of these and also add to this list.

Can you identify a common element in all these new ideas of Lohia?

All these new ideas are in one way or another based upon his basic insight that the existing socialist theory was centred around Europe, and that there was a need to rethink its fundamentals to overcome this weakness. To think of such theoretical programme was Lohia's main contribution to Indian socialist thinking. He did not merely think of this programme; he also tried to execute it. He did so in a non-dogmatic manner by bringing together ideas from various sources. In this he successfully underlined the need to integrate the competing ideologies of his time: above all, Marxism and Gandhism.

On the negative side, you would have noted several weaknesses in Lohia's thought. The first that might have come to your mind is something we have already noted: his thought is only like a rough sketch. Most of his ideas are not thought out in necessary details. **Can you think of some examples?**

You might have thought of the following: Lohia does not specify the various stages of his theory of history; he does not explain why capitalism and communism did not decline after the second world war; he does not carefully consider how decentralization was to be combined with planning; the application of small-scale machine to our times is not illustrated; the practicability of the idea of world government in today's international order is not shown; he fails to make clear the relevance of non-violence in international politics. Here again you can add some more inadequacies to this list.

Let us try to see the reason why his theory had so many weaknesses and inadequacies. This takes us to a more basic problem in his thought: the speculative mode of reasoning that he adopted. Due to this method, he tended to neglect the empirical basis of his ideas. Take the example of his theory of history. It does not explain why should there be just one centre of power in the world at one point of time? Have caste and class always changed into each other? The third principle seems the weakest: is it anything more than Lohia's wishful thinking? All these questions require historical facts which Lohia never cared to give. Moreover, he completely accepted the questionable assumption of substantive philosophy of history that there is a 'logic' or 'principle' behind the entire history. Such an assumption is no longer taken for granted by students of history. A closer look at his theories might also reveal something else. The theories and concepts which seem his impressive achievements are mostly simple inversions of the existing Eurocentric ideas: small machine instead of large, decentralisation in place of centralisation, and so on. Such a theory is very often like a mirror-image of what it opposes. If this is so, isn't Lohia's thought still a prisoner of the European mind?

We may sum up our assessment of Lohia by separating two theoretical activities: raising a question and providing an answer to it. It is possible that a person is good at one but not the other. This seems to be the case with Lohia. His most valuable contribution lies in the fresh questions that he raised against the existing socialist theory. But his own answers to these questions are rather weak. In that sense Lohia's theoretical project remains to be completed.

Do It Yourself

- 8) Do you agree with this assessment of Lohia? Think of arguments to support Lohia against our criticisms above?
- 9) Earlier we had asked you to think of your own answers to the three questions of political theory. Now compare them with Lohia's answers. Have you learnt something after reading this unit?

Rammanohar Lohia

26.7 LET US SUM UP

Lohia was perhaps the most original of the Indian socialist thinkers. His originality lies in his challenge to the Eurocentric assumptions of the existing socialist theory and his attempt to build an alternative. This new doctrine can be seen in his new historical analysis, new goals for the future, and new thinking on the question of strategy. In his view, history moves in a cycle which relates to both external and internal aspects of societies. This cycle has today put capitalism and communism—two faces of essentially the same civilization—on the top of the world. However, the extension of this civilization to the non-European world is neither possible nor desirable. These countries must evolve new economic and political institutions based on decentralisation. What the world needs today is a revolution in several dimensions. In order to bring it about, political action should effectively combine electoral parliamentary and constructive activity with struggle against injustice through non-violent civil disobedience. In all these respects, Lohia achieved more in terms of creating possibility of fresh theorisation than realising that possibility himself.

26.8 KEY WORDS

Aesthetic: concerning the sense of beauty

Dichotomy: division into two opposite parts

Doctrine: statement of principles; system of beliefs

Dogmatic: based on unthinking acceptance of a set of belief or principles

Hierarchy: organisation (of society) into higher and lower ranks

Oscillate: to keep moving between two objects.

26.9 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

Lohia's own writings are more readable and clear accounts of his ideas than any of the available commentaries. The best introduction is his *Marx, Gandhi and Societies* (Hyderabad, Navhind, 1963): in this you can read the essays, 'Statement of Principles' 'The Doctrinal Foundation of Socialism' and 'Preface' in that order. For his economic ideas 'Economics after Marx' in the same book, and for his theory of history his *Wheel of History* (Bombay: Sindhu Publication, 1985) may be consulted.

For different listing of Lohia's ideas on various aspects see: N. C. Mehrotra, *Lohia: A Study* (Delhi: Atma Ram, 1978); M. Arumugam, *Socialist Thought in India: The Contribution of Rammanohar Lohia* (New Delhi: Sterling 1978); Indumati Kelkar, *Lohia: Siddanta Aur Karma* (Hyderabad: Navhind, 1963); V.K. Arora, *Rammanohar Lohia and Socialism in India* (Now Delhi: Deep and Deep, 1984). For an understanding of his broader intellectual context see Thomas as Pantham and Kenneth Deutsch, eds., *Political Thought in Modern India* (New Delhi: Sage, 1986) and Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986).

26.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Congress, Congress Socialist Party, Socialist Party, Praja Socialist Party, Socialist Party, Samyukta Socialist Party.

- 2) The answer may mention any two of the following: wide range of interest, originality, non-acceptance of any ideology in totality, attempt an synthesis of conceptual dichotomies, lack of complete coherence.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) Other socialist thinkers accepted the Western doctrine as it was; Lohia challenged this dependence and tried to develop an alternate theory which included the non-European experience also.
- 2) Europe/West; Universal, non-European/non-Western; analysis; goal; strategy.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) (i) Shift in the centre of power from one region of the world to another (ii) Internal oscillation between class and caste (iii) Increasing approximation of mankind
- 2) (i) False (ii) True (iii) True (iv) False
- 3) Heavy capitalization, centralised economic mechanism, large-scale technology.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

- 1) Low capitalization; Decentralised economy; Small-scale technology; internal and external, social and spiritual equality; Decent standard of living.
- 2) Economic injustice, caste system, gender inequality, imperialism colour discrimination, violation of individual privacy by collectivity.

Check Your Progress Exercise 5

- 1) Every act must be justified by its immediate consequences.
- 2) Parliamentary electoral activities: struggle against injustice; constructive work.

UNIT 27 INTRODUCTION

Structure

- 27.0 Objectives
- 27.1 Introduction
- 27.2 Economic and Political Background
 - 27.2.1 Economic Background
 - 27.2.2 Political Background
- 27.3 Marxist Political Thought in India
 - 27.3.1 Pre-independence Period
 - 27.3.2 Post-independence Period
- 27.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 27.5 Key Words
- 27.6 Some Useful Books
- 27.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

27.0 OBJECTIVES

After you have read this unit you should be able to:

- explain the economic and political developments in the twentieth century colonial society of India which proved to be a fertile ground for the emergence of a rich variety of communist literature.
- understand the broad contours of Marxist political thinking in India
- analyse the diverse characterisation of the Indian state by the different all-India communist parties at present, and
- evaluate the contribution of Marxist political thought in India.

27.1 INTRODUCTION

Marxism came to India primarily as a consequence of the impact of the October Revolution in Russia in 1917. It had to traverse a difficult path because of the oppressive machinery of the imperialist government in India. Initially working for a long time as a secret illegal organisation, the Communist Party ultimately gained ground as a result of its consistent fight for national independence and socio-economic justice. Its unique place in the history of freedom movement in India lay in projecting a radically new, i.e. Marxist perspective for understanding the dynamics of social revolution. It had, no doubt, many shortcomings. Yet, but for the relentless battle of the marxists and the communists, the vital class demands of the workers and peasants would not find any place in the socio-economic programme of the Indian National Congress. The communists have thereby enriched the political thought in modern India. Hence in the following sections we have tried to assess the significance of a new intellectual heritage of which the communists are the torchbearers.

27.2 ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Though inspired by the Russian Revolution, communism in India did not develop as a result of exogenous factors only. On the contrary, internal economic and political situation since the outbreak of the First World War slowly but steadily created the ground congenial for the emergence of communist ideas on the Indian soil. Unfortunately, however, in their over-enthusiasm for internationalism the Indian communists could not always remain true to their own selves as the sons of the soil. This

often resulted in the confusion between national and international tasks. But in order to comprehend the root cause of this confusion we should first know about the politico-economic situation prevailing in the country at the time of the inception of communism in India.

27.2.1 Economic Background

Growth of national capitalism provided the economic background of the emergence of Marxist groups in India. However, it was not until the First World War that conditions were ripe for the growth of capitalism in India. Before 1914 the industrial sector was dominated by the cotton and jute industries. During the war there was, on the one hand, a sharp fall in the volume of raw jute exports and, on the other, a fall in the imports of cotton piece goods. As a result there was substantial growth in both the industries. Cotton textiles, which was dominated by the Indian capitalists, experienced a growth in investment from a pre-war figure of Rs. 395 crores to Rs. 726 crores in 1922. Jute industry, which was mainly controlled by the British manufacturers, also experienced similar growth. Not only that, the total number of registered companies also increased from a pre-war figure of 356 to 1039 in 1920-21. Besides, the European businessmen increasingly found it hard to maintain their grip on the Indian economy so much so that many Indian manufacturers entered into such fields as engineering, iron and steel, paper, cement etc. Thus by the Twenties new Indian industrial groups had begun to emerge.

The setting up of the Industrial Commission in 1916 or the policy of differential protection advocated by the Fiscal Commission in 1922 no doubt paved the way for Indian industrialisation. But, in fact, the colonial government had no general policy of industrialisation at that time. This is evident from the hardening of attitude of the imperialist government immediately after the contingency of the war was over. Hence the growth in demand of certain goods and a change in India's commercial relations with the external world were the real stimulants for India's industrial growth.

In the Twenties, however, the national bourgeoisie had to pass through a more difficult period. For during this period export duty on leather and skins were reduced, the demand for reserving the coastal traffic of India for Indian shipping was set at nought and the exchange rate was fixed at 1s 6d as against the desired 1s 4d. But as the imperialist economy got a severe blow again during the great depression of 1929-30, national capitalism entered a new period of expansion. By the beginning of the 1940s the national bourgeoisie in India substantially strengthened its economic base.

27.2.2 Political Background

Growth in Indian capitalism also manifested itself in greater political mobilisation both on the part of the national bourgeoisie and the working class. The Indian proletariat, born in the wake of the First World War, had to wage a relentless battle for sheer survival. Consequent on the post-war inflation and price rise and the passage of such anti-working class law as the Trades Disputes Act, the proletariat began a movement of strikes. Thus in the year 1919-20 over 6 lakhs workers were involved in strikes. The aggressive mood of the workers was, however, subdued to some extent during 1926-27 because of a sharp decline in employment. Hence most of the strikes during this period were defensive in character launched to fight wage cuts and retrenchment. Yet the working class was also getting more and more class conscious. The All-India Trade Union Congress was formed in 1920. Though the AITUC and its affiliated unions mainly fought economic battles, there was a distinct tendency for localised disputes to spread rapidly to other sections of industry. The working class also took active part in the non-cooperation movement as well as the Simon Commission boycott. This proved increasing political awareness among the nascent Indian proletariat.

The national bourgeoisie, too, got restive during this period. Refusal of the imperialist government to grant self-government after the war, the continuance of the anti-people Rowlatt Act, the Jallianwala Bagh atrocities, and the insufficiency of the Montague Chelmsford Reforms all these, accompanied by the imperialist stranglehold on the economy, inspired the national bourgeoisie to launch mass movements in support of its demands. It was during this period that the Indian National Congress, the chief

spokesman of the Indian capitalist class, for the first time changed its political character from a small liberal constitutional body to a mass political party. Led by an active petty bourgeoisie cadre and involving sections of the peasantry, the Congress, under the supreme leadership of Gandhi, began to consolidate the political and economic position of the Indian bourgeoisie by forcing a series of concessions from the colonial state through the periodic mobilisation of mass pressure. Despite the presence of left Congressites like Nehru and Bose, Gandhi was the linchpin of the national movement. Gandhi, with the help of his creed of non-violence, not only put pressure on the colonial government but also effectively checked the emergence of national-revolutionary movements for social revolution. Thus the Congress combined in itself the narrow class demands of the national bourgeoisie with the broad demands of the masses.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) What were the real stimulants for India's industrial growth in the 1920s?

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2) How did the Indian working class react to the changing political situation in the country after the First World War?

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3) What was the strategy followed by the Indian national bourgeoisie in the freedom struggle?

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27.3 MARXIST POLITICAL THOUGHT IN INDIA

Modern political thought in India mainly centred around the notions of liberal constitutionalism borrowed from the West, specially Britain. The pioneers of modern Indian political thought were the Western educated liberal intelligentsia whose world-view was developed by the teachings of such thinkers as Locke, Mill, Bentham and Spencer. While on the one hand, they developed a rational and secular political outlook based on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity, on the other hand, they sincerely believed in slow and orderly progress through peaceful constitutional methods. It is true that the growing contradiction between imperialism and the Indian nation forced the liberal activist-cum-thinkers to project pressure tactics like the boycott movement, non-cooperation and civil disobedience movements. But liberal political thought from Rammohan Roy to Gandhi never abandoned constitutionalism. Even the most radical thinkers like Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose and Jayaprakash Narayan highly adored the principles of class peace and class harmony. Concern for the reconciliation of the interests of the individual with those of the society made them cautious in accepting any form of collectivism. It is in this context that we should appreciate the contribution of the Marxist political thought in India. For it was the communist thinkers who for the first time brought before the agenda of the nationalist movement some vital socio-economic issues that remained outside the purview of the liberal political thinkers.

27.3.1 Pre-independence Period

In India Marxism first spread as a *political programme* rather than as a new world-view or cultural movement. Unlike the developed countries, Marxism did not develop first as an intellectual force and then as a programme of action. For the pioneers of Indian Marxism gave more attention to political activity than to intellectual activity. That is why we do not come across any single treatise from the pen of the Indian Marxists which may be regarded as an original contribution to Marxist theory. The reason lies in the fact that the Indian Marxists did not try to integrate Marxism with the Indian social reality. In other words, they could not creatively apply Marxism to the Indian conditions. Always keen on mechanically applying the 'Base-Superstructure' analysis, Indian Marxists never posed, like Mao or Gramsci, the question of relative autonomy of the superstructure, i.e. the impact of spiritual things and social consciousness on social existence. This was one of the reasons for their excessive dependence on the Comintern and other fraternal parties for theoretical guidance during the whole period of the national liberation movement. This also accounted for the failure of the Communist Party of India to effectively intervene in the freedom struggle.

The general features of Marxist political thought during this period may be summarised as follows:

- a) Indian Marxists tried to reconcile nationalism with internationalism. As communists they all subscribed to proletarian internationalism. As such they blindly followed the dictates of the Comintern. But they were also great nationalists. They most emphatically pointed out the contradiction between British imperialism and Indian nationalism. They also strongly emphasised that nothing short of complete independence could be the goal of the national movement. In fact, they had a distinct role in forcing the Indian National Congress to adopt the Independence Resolution.
- b) Class approach to politics was first introduced in India by the Marxist thinkers. M.N. Roy and others firmly believed that the general principles of historical materialism and the theory of class struggle could well be applied in explaining Indian social development as in the West.
- c) Indian communists had a definite understanding of the stage of social development in India. They argued that capitalism had substantially grown in India immediately after the First World War. But with the help of the 'decolonization' theory they further argued that the Indian capitalist class had aligned itself with imperialism and so had forsaken any moral right to lead the anti-imperialist national liberation movement. This theory was first formulated by M.N. Roy in 1921 in his book '*India in Transition*'. But its more prominent spokesman was Saumendranath Tagore who in 1928 put forward the thesis that to the degree the hindrance in the way of the capitalist development of India has been removed by British imperialism, the bourgeoisie is sliding more and more towards co-operation and one group after the other is capitulating to imperialism. According to this view Indian bourgeoisie was to be regarded as a counter-revolutionary force, in the same camp as imperialism (politically), because they too, like the imperialists, sought to industrialise the country. It may be pointed out that because of this crude lumping together of imperialism and the national bourgeoisie, the CPI, took an ultraleftist stand in the 1930s and 1940s and failed to grasp the depth of the contradiction between imperialism and the Indian bourgeoisie.
- d) Despite shortcomings, however, the Marxists quite correctly emphasised the need for forming a revolutionary alliance between the working class and the peasantry, particularly the poor and landless peasants. According to them, it was only this alliance which could provide the true democratic essence to the nationalist movement.

27.3.2 Post-independence Period

After India gained her independence in 1947 the whole situation changed radically. Britain or for that matter any imperialist power could no longer be identified as the principal enemy. Hence the question of the nature of the Indian state came to the

forefront. As a corollary to it also came the question of the stage of revolution. Unfortunately, even after forty years of independence the traditional communist parties have not been able to develop a dialectical and comprehensive Marxist analysis of the Indian state. The Marxist intellectuals are also not unanimous on this point. Without going into the debate we shall give in brief outlines the major arguments of different parties and intellectuals on this question.

- a) The Communist Party of India (CPI) has characterised the Indian state as a national bourgeoisie state. According to the CPI the class of national bourgeoisie does not include the monopolists who tend to compromise with feudalism and imperialism. Rather because of their participation in the anti-imperialist struggle, a large section of the national bourgeoisie has become progressive in their outlook and practice. As a mark of this progressive character the CPI points out the development of a large and strong public sector, the enactment of anti-monopoly MRTP Act, the nationalisation of banks, initiation of land reforms in the countryside and the consistent allegiance to the non-aligned foreign policy. It is because of these factors that the monopolists cannot exercise decisive influence over the policies of the Indian state. The party considers the national bourgeoisie as its ally in this revolution which, according to it, may be accomplished by peaceful means through the non-capitalist path of development.
- b) According to the CPI(M) the Indian state is 'an organ of the rule of the bourgeoisie and landlords, led by the big bourgeoisie, who are increasingly collaborating with foreign finance capital in pursuit of the capitalist path of development'. Being reactionary and compromising in character, the ruling class in India, the party believes, has failed to accomplish the tasks of democratic revolution. These tasks imply elimination of the feudal, semi-feudal and imperialist elements in India. In order to do this we need a Peoples' Democratic Revolution, the essence of which is an agrarian revolution directed against feudalism, imperialism and big bourgeoisie. The revolution is to be led by the working class with poor and landless peasants as its closest allies. However the rich peasants and national bourgeoisie can also be allies in the revolutionary front.
- c) The CPI(ML) describes India as a semi-feudal and semi-colonial state which is yet to attain independence. Hence it considers the destruction of feudalism, distribution of land to the landless and tenants, and achievement of real freedom of the country as the primary object of the present stage of revolution. Now is the stage of New Democratic Revolution, the essence of which is the agrarian revolution. This revolution should bring an end to the class rule of the feudal lords, imperialists and comprador bourgeoisie.
- d) Marxist scholars like K.N. Raj, Hamza Alavi, and Pranab Bardhan have liberated themselves from the clutches of economism and instrumentalism and have presented the thesis of the relative autonomy of the Indian state. According to them, certain developments in the post-war world have created conditions which enable the Indian state to enjoy relative autonomy. These developments are: (1) numerical dominance of the lower middle classes at the time of independence, (2) extensive involvements of the state in economic activities, (3) availability of credit from socialist countries, (4) inheritance of overdeveloped state from the imperialist power at the time of independence, (5) inability of the dominant classes and their parties to use the state as their instrument, (6) direct ownership and control of the state in the economic sphere, and (7) enormous prestige and sufficiently unified sense of ideological purpose of the state elite. As a result of these factors, the scholars argue, the state enjoys relative autonomy which enables it to shape the class alignments, provide material basis for the new classes and undertake the regulating role in the economy.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end.

- 1) Why did Marxist theory not develop in India?

2) How did the Indian Marxists reconcile nationalism with internationalism?

3) Briefly discuss the characterisation of the Indian state by different communist parties.

27.4 LET US SUM UP

We can sum up this unit by pointing out the broad trends in Marxist political thought in India. During the pre-independence day the Indian Marxists obviously put greatest emphasis on the fight against colonialism. That is why they felt the necessity of establishing solidarity with the international working class movement led by the Comintern. In this process they, however, over-jealously tried to follow the direction of the Comintern thereby disregarding the Indian political reality. Misunderstanding of the real contradiction between the Indian national bourgeoisie and imperialism often led them to take left-sectarian position during the civil disobedience movement and the Quit India movement. As a result they got alienated from the masses. In the post-independence days they, however, tried to correct their earlier mistakes and took part in the elections and the national democratic process. But here too because of disagreements among them on the most vital questions of the nature of the state and the stage of revolution the Indian communists present a divided house. Hence, they have neither been able to formulate a theory of the Indian state nor have they been able to make a significant dent into the corridors of Indian power politics. This observation does not, however, at all minimise the importance of adopting a class point of view in analysing the Indian political system. In this at least the contribution of the Indian communists is praiseworthy.

27.5 KEY WORDS

National bourgeoisie means that section of the indigenous industrialists and capitalists which is more or less independent of foreign economic control and which fights for greater financial autonomy from imperialist stranglehold.

Relative autonomy of the superstructure implies that the elements of the social superstructure like state, law, politics, art, literature, culture, ideology etc. are not solely or unilaterally determined by the base or the economic structure of the society: instead they also at times influence and condition the 'base'.

Decolonization theory argued that in the years after the First World War the colonial government in India had been pursuing a policy of industrialising the country. Hence there was greater co-operation between the two. Consequently the national bourgeoisie lost its revolutionary appeal.

Relative autonomy of the state means the partial autonomy enjoyed by the state at certain historical junctures when the alignment of class forces is such that no particular class can dominate the state and use it in its own interest.

27.6 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

K.N. Panikkar (ed.) : *National and Left Movements in India* (Vikas, 1980), New Delhi.

G.D. Overstreet and M. Windmiller : *Communism in India* (Bombay, 1960).

J.P. Haithcox : *Communism and Nationalism in India* (Princeton, 1971).

Bipan Chandra (ed.) : *Indian Left: Critical Appraisal* (Vikas, 1983), New Delhi.

Bipan Chandra : *Nationalism and Colonialism in India* (Orient Longman, 1981), New Delhi.

H. Srikanth : *On Relative Autonomy of the Indian State* (Hyderabad, 1985).

27.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Sub-section 27.2.1
- 2) See Sub-section 27.2.2
- 3) See Sub-section 27.2.2

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sub-section 27.3.1
- 2) See Sub-section 27.3.1(a)
- 3) See Sub-section 27.3.2

UNIT 28 COMMUNISTS AND THE INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT 1925-47

Structure

- 28.0 Objectives
- 28.1 Introduction
- 28.2 Origins of the Left Wing
 - 28.2.1 Four Ideological Currents
 - 28.2.2 First Marxist debate regarding India's political situation
 - 28.2.3 Roy and Lenin Debate
 - 28.2.4 Roy and Gandhi
- 28.3 M.N. Roy and the Indian Social Reality
 - 28.3.1 Assumptions of Roy's framework
- 28.4 Workers and Peasants Parties: 1926-30
 - 28.4.1 WPPs as Conceived by Roy
 - 28.4.2 Nationalists and the Question of Revolution
 - 28.4.3 Genesis of the Formation of the Communist Party of India (CPI)
 - 28.4.4 Attitude of the Radicals towards the Comintern and M.N. Roy
 - 28.4.5 Dual Task of the WPP
 - 28.4.6 Growing Communist Influence
 - 28.4.7 Comintern's Sectarian Attitude towards Left Current Globally
 - 28.4.8 Isolation of the Communists from the National Mainstream
- 28.5 United Front Phase
 - 28.5.1 Emergence of the Socialist Tendency within the Congress
 - 28.5.2 Question of Gandhi's Leadership
 - 28.5.3 Formation of the Congress Socialist Party
 - 28.5.4 Awakening among the Peasants, Workers and the Youth
 - 28.5.5 7th Congress of the Third International and the Limited Front Policy
 - 28.5.6 Disunity of the Left on the Eve of the Second World War
- 28.6 IIInd World War and the Left Response
- 28.7 Let Us Sum UP
- 28.8 Some Useful Books
- 28.9 Answers To Check Your Progress Exercises

28.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit you will study about the left and the Indian national movement. After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- describe the discuss the origins of the left wing in India
- comment on M.N. Roy's views on the Indian social reality
- discuss the rise and nature of workers and peasants parties
- discuss the United Front phase of the left movement, and
- comment on the left's status on the eve of the IIInd World War and immediately after.

28.1 INTRODUCTION

The role of the various left groups in the Indian national movement is a complex one. At different points of time these groups occupied different organisational positions within the Indian National Congress. Some times they were "inside" the Congress while on other occasions they tried to organise themselves outside it. The important left groups were the Communist Party of India (CPI), the group led by M.N. Roy and the Congress Socialist Party (CPS). Apart from these groups, the left wing movement included two well-known personalities, Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose.

At certain points of our discussion we shall be referring to their unity and differences. The main concern of the unit, however, is to trace the pattern of the relationship during the period 1925-47, between left wing as a whole and the national movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

28.2 ORIGINS OF THE LEFT WING

The individuals who ultimately came to constitute left wing in India came from various backgrounds. To begin with, they were nationalists who under the inspiration of the October Revolution were seeking new paths for achieving national independence.

28.2.1 Four Ideological Currents

The majority of them belonged to the following four ideological currents: 1) Indian national revolutionaries operating from abroad in the period of the First World War (mainly from Germany, USA, Turkey and Afghanistan). The outstanding names amongst them were of M.N. Roy and Abani Mukerji. 2) National revolutionaries from the Pan-Islamic Khilafat movement, who went abroad in the war period (1924-26) and those from the great Hijrat movement of the post-war period. Among them are Mohammad Ali Sepassi, Rahmat Ali Khan, Ferozuddin Mansoor Abdul Majid and Shaukat Usmani; 3) National revolutionaries of the Ghadar party organised among the Sikh and emigrant labour in the USA, Rattan Singh and Santokh Singh were two important names. For a long time they were directly in touch with the Communist International and 4) The most important trend was of the national revolutionaries in India itself. They came from the left wing of the National Congress, the terrorist organisations and parties, the Khilafat movement and the Akali movement. After Gandhi withdrew from the non-cooperation movement in 1922 they turned to the ideology of socialism and the class organisation of workers and peasants under impact of the Russian Revolution. Later on many of them became the founders of the early communist groups in different parts of the country, e.g. Dange in Bombay, Singaravelu in Madras, Muzaffer Ahmad in Calcutta and the Inqilab Group in Lahore.

In the earlier phase, these groups were sought to be co-ordinated by the communist centre organised abroad on the basis of the Communist Party of India formed at Tashkent on October 17, 1920 by M.N. Roy and others soon after the Second Congress of the Communist International. The Tashkent centre under the leadership of Roy did a lot of ideological and propaganda work as reflected in their documents and published material. It helped the ideological transformation of the radical nationalist groups to make them into truly communist groups.

28.2.2 First Marxist Debate Regarding India's Political Situation

The first Marxist debate regarding the political situation in India took place at the Second Congress of the Third International which opened in Petrograd on 19 July 1920 and then met in Moscow from 23 July to 7 August.

28.2.3 Roy and Lenin Debate

There were serious differences between Lenin and M.N. Roy as far as the political situation in India was concerned. But they also agreed on certain basic points: Nationalism is a bourgeois ideology; the proletarian movement must be kept independent and separate from the bourgeois movement. Roy and Lenin differed with each other as far as the mutual relationships of the two movements were concerned. Lenin argued that the two movements should co-operate and collaborate with each other while M.N. Roy opposed this idea and put forward the argument that the Communist International should assist exclusively the institution and the development of the Communist Party in India. Lenin was not sure whether the conditions for building a Communist Party in India were ripe or not. But Roy insisted that a Communist Party in India could be built in the very near future.

For Lenin and the Bolsheviks the world revolution was round the corner and he wanted

all the anti-imperialist movements to support the marching armies of the revolution. For the time being Roy agreed with Lenin and accepted the tactic of supporting the national liberation movements. This was the period of non-cooperation in India.

28.2.4 Roy and Gandhi

For a short while Roy was very much impressed by Gandhi and saw his non-violent path as the only path available to the Indian revolutionaries under conditions of colonialism. But Roy was disillusioned when Gandhi withdrew the mass movement. Now he returned to his original argument. He had always believed that only a violent uprising could overthrow the British rule in India. Moreover, this violent insurrection could be organised only by a well organised Communist party. Since Gandhi was opposed to violence he was also opposed to the revolution in India.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) How did the left wing emerge in India?

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28.3 M.N. ROY AND THE INDIAN SOCIAL REALITY

Roy was the first communist writer to present a Marxist analysis of Indian social reality. He reiterated the Marxian dictum that the history of all hitherto existing societies was the history of class struggles. The existence of classes was bound up with particular phases in the development of production relations in the society. The class struggle waged between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat to defend their respective class interests leads ultimately to revolution and violent seizure of state power by the proletariat to establish its dictatorship.

In applying this framework of class analysis to Indian society, M.N. Roy overlooked the single most important fact that India was a colonial society where all the social classes were subordinated to another society. Moreover, in Indian history social relations in the past had developed within the framework of the caste system and a significant section of the population were tribals. Here was a unique situation where caste and class relations overlapped to a considerable extent.

India was the colony of the most advanced capitalist country where democratic methods of rule had developed first in the world. The Indian colonial state was based on the rule of law and over a period some civil liberties were granted to the Indians as an attempt to secure their consent. India was not being ruled by mere force. In other words India and Indian colonial state was very very different from the Russian society. What Roy was actually doing was something simple. He was transferring the model of analysis used by the Bolsheviks to understand Russian society and organise their revolution.

28.3.1 Assumptions of Roy's Framework

There were a number of theoretical assumptions inherent in Roy's framework which were not applicable as far as India was concerned. Broadly speaking, Roy's framework was based on the following assumptions:

- 1) Nationalism was the ideology of the bourgeoisie. (In actuality India being a colonial society nationalism was the ideology of all the classes.)
- 2) From the very beginning the national movement would be led either by the working class and its party or by the bourgeoisie and its political party. (In actuality the national movement was led by the nationalist intelligentsia with different ideological learnings.)
- 3) Indian National Congress was the party of the Indian bourgeoisie more specifically the party of the capitalist class. Gandhi's leadership was the leadership of the capitalist class. (In actuality the I.N.C. was a party of the Indian people as a whole and its ideology and programme were constantly changing. Its ranks were open to all patriots — conservatives, liberals, communists.)
- 4) The British rule could be overthrown only through an armed insurrection and not through non-violent peaceful mass movements as was being claimed by Gandhi. A violent insurrection could be organised only by a disciplined and illegal party of the working class. Therefore, there was an ardent need to build a communist party in India and win over the Indians who were under the influence of the I.N.C.

After 1928 this framework was inherited the CPI and continued to influence it till 1947. 1947.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Briefly mention the main assumptions of M.N. Roy's framework for understanding Indian society and polity.

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28.4 WORKERS AND PEASANTS PARTIES: 1926-30

Between the period 1920-25, M.N. Roy was constantly in touch with the Indian communists and helped them to imbibe what he thought to be the basic principles of Marxism. In his communications he consistently underlined the need to form a communist party which he knew, could exist only underground. The colonial government was keeping a very strict vigil to stop the entry of Bolshevik literature and Bolshevik trained agitators in India. The government strongly put down all attempts to organise political activities informed by marxian schemes.

Thus the main issues in front of Marxists were: Now the communist party could not be formed legally. The government was determined not to allow the communist groups to function openly. How to evolve a plan of action under such conditions? How the Indian masses should be approached? It was then that the idea of forming a legal, open mass party — the Workers' and Peasants' Party (WPP) was mooted for the first time. An open broad based movement could be built only within the legal framework.

28.4.1 WPP as Conceived by Roy

For M.N. Roy WPP was to be a legal party — "a political party of the masses based on the principle of class interest and with a programme advocating mass action for carrying

forward the struggle for national liberation.” However, legal mass party was to contain an illegal communist nucleus and was to be under the control and direction of the communist party.

Roy believed that without the communist control this organisation would not ensure a leading role for the working class in the national movement. Around 1922, Roy proposed the formation of this two-in-one arrangement — Workers’ and Peasants’ Party. But he still called this legal mass party the “conscious vanguard of the working class” which was first supposed to carry out the national revolution by overthrowing the British rule and then establish the “dictatorship of the proletariat.”

28.4.2 Nationalists and the Question of Revolution

As pointed out above, many individuals inspired by the Russian revolution came to form the left wing of the Congress. They were young Congressmen who were attracted to workers and peasants movements and socialism though without committing themselves to any fixed scheme of Indian revolution and theoretical formulations of the Third International. The Third International and the leaders of the October Revolution were strongly opposed to imperialism. It was natural that this should attract the attention of all nationalists in the colonial countries. They were sympathetic to the revolution but this did not mean that they were willing to accept Bolshevik ideas and their language. For them Russia was a source of inspiration, not necessarily the source of relevant ideas and practices.

M.N. Roy, on the other hand, had already accepted Marxism and Russian experience as a model for emulation.

28.4.3 Genesis of the Formation of the Communist Party of India

Therefore he made the idea of violent revolution and the communist party as the touch stone for distinguishing true communists from pseudo-socialists. Those who questioned the programme of violent revolution and the formation of an underground Communist party could not call themselves as genuine communists. Meanwhile, Roy was attempting to form the CPI but it was not getting formed. Through its conspiracy cases the government had terrorised the nationalists. The formation of the WPP was being proposed by him to tide over this problem. This was the first time that a gap appeared between the given theory and Indian social-political reality.

As pointed out earlier, most of the radical groups had sprung up from within the INC. Their professed objective was to radicalise the Congress movement by extending its mass base to working class and poor peasants. For this purpose they were thinking of forming own organisations.

In Bombay, S.A. Dange, in his journal ‘Socialist’ (September 1922), suggested the formation of a party called the ‘Indian Socialist Labour Party of the INC “The idea was to introduce in the existing Congress” an element of strong opposition to vested interests’. The ultimate goal of the party was to be socialism (yet not defined in terms of a strict scheme) while the immediate objective was to disseminate widely a knowledge of socialist principles to organise the workers in trade unions and to work for legislative reforms.

A similar party within the INC was proposed by M. Singaravelu in Madras. Hemanta Kumar Sarkar, Qazi Nazrul Islam and Muzaffer Ahmad formed Peasants’ and Workers’ Party in Bengal. WPPs were also formed in Bombay (K.N. Jolekar, R.S. Nimbalkar), Punjab (Abdul Majidi & Sohan Singh Josh) and United Provinces (P.C. Joshi). These parties declared that “Gandhian methods”, including non-cooperation, passive resistance, constructive programme, and civil disobedience were equally good for workers’ and peasants’ struggles.

Meanwhile, in 1925, one Satyabhakta suddenly called a conference in Kanpur (December 27) to form a legal Communist Party of India. To a large number of communists this sudden move on the part of Satyabhakta came as a surprise as they were busy forming WPPs. But they decided to attend the conference and capture it from the hands of Satyabhakta. Therefore, technically speaking, the Communist Party

was formed in 1925 in Kanpur but the actual work of organisation was continued through the WPPs. In actuality, the CPI began to be formed only after 1928 when the WPPs were disbanded on the orders of the Third International.

28.4.4 Attitude of the Radicals towards the Comintern and M.N. Roy

During this phase Indian radical groups were not willing to listen to the dictates of the Third International and M.N. Roy. Neither were they willing to form the illegal CPI nor to affiliate themselves to the Comintern as demanded by M.N. Roy. They argued that the conditions in India were different and therefore the Third International tactics were not suitable for India: "We owe allegiance to none excepting our own scheme of work and we look for guidance to none but ourselves."

The WPP movement within the Congress was progressing very rapidly. By the end of the year 1928, an all-India WPP conference was called in Calcutta, in an attempt to form a legal centralised party. The communists were playing very important role in the WPPs but the leaderships of the WPPs did not consist entirely of communists. Of the 16 persons who were elected to the All-India WPP National Executive Committee no less than 10 were communists by conviction. Though no formal centralised organisation had emerged till 1928, the different WPPs in the provinces had more or less an agreement on basic issues. The communist leaders always kept close contact with each other.

These WPPs were born out of the general radicalisation of INC and were not a front for a hidden and secret CPI. They formed left wing of the Congress and used the Congress platform for their organisational and propaganda work. In a short span of time, they were able to establish channels of communication with the masses, especially the workers in the big cities. The journals of the party began to be published in various parts of the country. They were KRANTI (Bombay), GANAVANI (Bengal), MEHNAT KASH (Punjab), and KIRTI (Punjab). In May 1928, S.V. Ghate suggested that the WPP should control the C.P. completely reversing the perspective of the Comintern and Roy.

28.4.5 Dual Task of the WPPs

The WPPs at this time were performing a dual task: (a) By participating in the organisational framework of the Congress they were radicalising Congress ideology and programme orientating it towards the masses; (b) they were organising the workers into trade unions; hence, influencing the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC). Till 1927 this body had remained under the influence of trade unionists of liberal views who were opposed to the workers' participation in the national movement. The colonial government promoted this trend as indicative of the genuine trade unions and allowed them to have international linkages with the Geneva based ILO. By the end of the year 1927, WPP influence was felt at the annual session of the INC in Madras. The resolution declaring complete independence as the accredited goal of the Congress was moved in the subjects committee by K.N. Joglekar, supported by Nehru, and was passed by an overwhelming majority. It was passed in the open session unanimously with Nehru moving it and supported by Joglekar. Although there were only a handful of communists in the country they were able to influence wider sections of the nationalist movement because they were functioning in alliance with the radical nationalists like Nehru and Bose. In the eyes of the colonial government Nehru was as good a communist as Dange and R.S. Nimbalkar.

28.4.6 Growing Communist Influence

By the end of 1928 the Government felt that the "communist influence" in Bombay was on the increase. They began to evolve plans to break this rising curve of left wing influence. In Calcutta, in a show of strength, the communists mobilised 30,000 workers who took possession of the Congress Pandal. Till 1927 the left wing influence among the working class was marginal but by the end of 1928 the leftists were able to dominate a number of trade unions all over the country, particularly in Bombay.

In 1928 a call was given for the general strike in the textile mills of Bombay. This strike

lasted for six months. As a result of this strike the communists were able to form their own organisation, the Girni Kamgar Union (GKU) which was registered on 23rd May, 1928. Soon it became one of the most powerful trade unions in Bombay. At this stage two British trade unionists, Bradley and Hutchinson were working with the communists. At the beginning of the strike the membership of the GKU was merely 324. But immediately after the strike (by April 1928) it increased to 54000.

By the end of 1928 the communists had penetrated almost all the labour unions. Their influence was spreading to municipal workers, transport and rock workers, and the GIP Railway union. In Bengal, jute workers, seamen, fishermen, municipal workers, and scavengers, Railway workers (Lilluah) iron and steel workers were being organised by the communists or their sympathisers. In Madras Singaravelu and K. Iyengar organised the workers of Burmah Oil Co.

By 1927, the WPP influence began to be felt in the AITUC also. At its seventh session (1927) S.V. Ghate was elected one of the assistant secretaries. At its eighth session in Kanpur (Nov. 1927) the WPP managed to get a number of resolutions passed. D.G. Thengdi, a WPP leader, was elected as vice-president. By the end of 1928, the WPP leaders were strong enough to bid for the presidentship of the AITUC at its ninth session at Jharia. However, Muzaffar Ahmed and D.B. Kulkarni were elected as vice-presidents, Dange and Bhakhale as assistant secretaries, and Bradley and Saratt, executive committee members.

The AITUC now declared its aim to convert India into a socialist republic. In the organisation of anti-Simon demonstrations the WPP played an important role. It was for the first time that the youth and the working class had participated in the national movement in a big way. In 1929 Jawaharlal Nehru was elected president of the Congress as well as the president of the AITUC. This was symbolic of the emerging alliance between nationalism and socialism.

Nehru himself summed up his vision thus:

"I have mentioned the two urges that have moved me, and I take it that they move also in varying degrees many of my countrymen. These are: Nationalism and political freedom as represented by the Congress and social freedom as represented by Socialism. To combine these two outlooks and make them an organic whole is the problem of the Indian socialist."

It was precisely this nexus between nationalism and socialism which distinguished Nehru from the Gandhians on the one hand and the communists on the other. He was the first and only national leader in the movement who clearly defined the project of leading a unified struggle of all anti-imperialist classes while simultaneously orientating it towards socialism.

This alarmed not only the liberal leaders in the AITUC led by N.M. Joshi, but also the imperialist government. The government was growing increasingly apprehensive of the increasing influence of the united left. At its session in 1929 the liberal trade unionists split the AITUC into two equal halves. This weakened the working class movement.

As a sharp contrast to the WPP's success in this area, their record with the peasantry was very dismal. Apart from certain pockets in Bengal and Punjab, there was hardly any work done among the peasants. But despite this shortcoming the communists had discovered a form of organisation which could express the unity of nationalism and socialism. In the later period, especially during 1930-34, they were to counterpose these two ideologies, treating nationalism as a bourgeoisie ideology.

By the end of 1928, a shift began to emerge in the politics of the WPPs. Now they began to look upon the INC as exclusively the party of the Indian bourgeoisie and advocated an independent role for the WPPs. The idea of snapping ties between the Congress and the WPPs had begun to take root. Now even the left wing in the Congress represented by the Independence of Indian League was seen as an opposing trend.

The left began to be defined not as a combination of many diverse shades but in monolithic terms. Only those people were left who subscribed to the idea that there must be a working class communist party in India affiliated to the Third International and that only under the leadership of this party could there be a violent revolution against the British rule.

28.4.7 Comintern's Sectarian Attitude towards Left Currents Globally

To a considerable extent, this was the reflection of Comintern's growing sectarian trend towards the left currents throughout the world which became a full-fledged policy when its Sixth Congress was held in July 1928. Internationally, this Congress put forward the view that capitalism in western countries was heading towards a serious political crisis. Once again the revolution was round the corner. The CPs were asked to prepare for this coming event by adopting an uncompromising attitude towards the other left currents because they were not genuinely revolutionary.

As far as India was concerned the Third International was moving towards Roy's position of forming the CP and opposing the INC, especially its left wing led by Nehru and Bose. The Third International in its letter to the All India WPP, which was meeting in Calcutta in December 1928, asked the Indian communists to dissolve the WPPs as they were a serious hindrance in the formation of the illegal, centralised communist party. Initially the communists in India were not willing to dissolve these parties as they were proving to be a route to reach the masses. But slowly they came round to follow the advice of Moscow. Thus, the Indian communists refused to use their own experience and performed to the advice of the Comintern leadership.

28.4.8 Isolation of the Communists from the National Mainstream

This new political line very soon isolated the communists from the national movement. The government was waiting for this opportunity. In March 1929, the Government arrested 31 communist leaders and trade unionists in the famous Meerut Conspiracy Case. The Meerut arrests were followed by a period of confusion and mutual quarrelling. It was during this phase (1930-34) that Gandhi and Nehru were declared as reactionaries.

On December 27-29, 1929, a new Executive Committee was constituted and the following were declared its members: S.S. Mirajkar, S.A. Dange, R.S. Nimbalkar, K.N. Joglekar, S.V. Ghate, Muzaffar Ahmad, Abdul Halim, Shamsul Huda, Abdul Majid, and Sohan Singh Josh. In 1930 the communists further split the Bose led AITUC forming their separate Red TUC. Increasingly the communists in the trade union movement were replaced by Roy's followers once he was expelled from the Third International. Roy came to India in 1930 and within seven months, the period for which he could not be arrested was able to exercise considerable influence.

During this phase all the strikes which were led by the communists failed completely because there was no unity among the working class leadership. Till 1934 the communists were completely isolated both from the working class movement and the national movement. On January 16, 1933, sentences were pronounced in Meerut Conspiracy Case. In retrospect, the Meerut trial appears to have worked to the long-term advantage of the communist aims in India. It was precisely during this trial that their views became known to the wider public through newspapers.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) Why did the Indian communists form the WPPs during the period 1927-29?

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2) Why were the WPPs dissolved?

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28.5 THE UNITED FRONT PHASE (1934-40)

In July 1934, the communist party was declared illegal — a curb which was not lifted until 1942. Thus, the CPI and its many allied organisations were banned. In 1934-35 P.C. Joshi took over as the General Secretary of the party. Meanwhile the advice of the outside communist parties, internal isolation and government pressure forced the CPI to think about the United Front tactic in the trade union movement. The rise of the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) was to play an important role to help it evolve new politics during this phase.

28.5.1 Emergence of the Socialist Tendency within the Congress

During the Civil Disobedience movement, it was the youth of the country which was in the forefront of the struggle. The radicalisation of these youngmen was taking place precisely when Jawaharlal Nehru was disseminating socialist ideology in the Congress ranks. During the years 1933-35 there emerged a socialist tendency within the Congress. Like the communists, socialists were critical of Gandhi's emphasis on non-violence, khadi and village industries. Socialists aimed at the establishment of a socialist state through class struggle on the basis of the teachings of Marx and Lenin, and on the model of Soviet Russia, subject to modifications, if required by Indian conditions. All the left groupings were critical of Gandhi's leadership and perceived him as the main stumbling block in the path of revolution. Meanwhile, in May 1933, Subhas Chandra Bose and Vithalbhai Patel declared from Vienna that Gandhi had failed. They put forward the idea that Congress should be renovated and Mahatma should be removed from the leadership of the Congress.

28.5.2 Question of Gandhi's leadership

The question of Gandhi's leadership was the fundamental difference between Nehru and rest of the left groupings (Roy, Bose, Socialists and Communists). Unlike them, Nehru believed that the struggle for India's independence could be successful only under Gandhi's leadership. Instead of perceiving him as an obstacle he thought of him as pro-poor and pro-peasant. This made him a natural ally of the left. Nehru argued the future was to show that the anti-Gandhi politics of the left groups harmed the cause of socialist forces in India. As is clear from Nehru's *Autobiography*, he differed with Gandhi on many issues. But he firmly believed that till India achieved its independence, Gandhi could be the only possible leader of India's teeming millions, especially the peasantry. Nobody understood peasant India better than Gandhi.

28.5.3 Formation of the Congress Socialist Party

In 1933, in Nasik jail, a number of young socialists such as Jayaprakash Narayan, Achyut Patwardhan, M.R. Masani, N.G. Gore, Ashok Mehta, S.M. Joshi and M.L. Dantwala floated the idea of forming an all India socialist organisation within the Congress organisation. Their aim was to influence the policies of the Congress towards socialist ideology. The formation of this party was welcomed by Nehru and Bose.

The Socialists put forward the programme of abolition of zamindari, state ownership of land, nationalisation of industries and banks and fixation of minimum wages for the working masses. The first All-India Socialists Conference was held at Patna on 17th May, 1934, under the presidentship of Acharya Narendra Dev. The conference appealed to the Congress to adopt a programme so as to ensure economic freedom for the starving millions. Very soon CSP units were organised in various parts of the country and Jayaprakash Narayan emerged as its popular spokesman.

The right wing within the Congress was critical of the socialists programme and denounced their propaganda as "loose talk". The first annual session of the CSP (21-22 October, 1934) in Bombay was attended by 150 delegates from 13 provinces. Ram Manohar Lohia, P. Ramamurti and E.M.S. Namboodiripad were also Congress socialist leaders at that time.

The socialists were of the view that all left-wingers should unite together in the Congress in order to influence the decisions of the Congress. But they did not ask them to dissolve their separate organisations. The CSP leadership invited the communists and the Royists to join their ranks as individual members. This was their conception of a united front between the left groups. Once again, through the CSP the communists entered the Congress organisational structure. Many of them became the members of the AICC. Some of the socialists were included into the Working Committee by the Congress president, Nehru.

On two important issues, the socialists carried on a massive campaign inside the Congress. They were opposed to the Congress decision of participating in the elections of 1936. But after some time they agreed to the idea that Congress should participate in the elections. However, now they argued that the Congress should not form ministries as this will make them a part of the colonial government administration. Majority of the Congressmen disagreed with them and were for the formation of ministries. Consequently the Congress formed ministries in seven provinces. But the voting made it quite clear that socialists were a growing force.

The Communists and Royists also existed outside the Congress even when they were a part of the CSP and INC. Both of the groups tried to convert the socialists to their side. They began to compete with each other to increase their respective organisational strength. This created mutual quarrels between them. As a result of these dissensions, the United Front collapsed towards the end of 1940.

28.5.4 Awakening among the Peasants, Workers and the Youth

But the period of United Front was the period when phenomenal awakening occurred among the peasants, workers and the youth. Through the efforts of N.G. Ranga, Indulal Yagnik, Swami Sahajanand Saraswati and others, the All India Kisan Sabha was organised. The first All-India Kisan Congress met in Lucknow in 1936. The Kisan organisations demanded the abolition of landlordism, reduction in rent and land revenue. The AITUC which had split into three currents now once again became a united organisation.

Between 1936 and 1940 it led to a number of successful strikes. The membership of the Kisan Sabha in 1938 was 25781 which increased to 533427 in 1944. Bihar was one place where the Kisan Sabha movement was very militant. Its membership in 1938 was 80,000. The AITUC membership in 1943 was 269803.

28.5.5 Seventh Congress of the Third International and United Front Policy

It was the 7th Congress of the Third International held in July 1935, which had initiated the Policy of United Front on a world scale. R.P. Dutt and Dan Bradley worked out the implications of this new line for the Indian communists. From 1936 onwards all the left groups were within the Congress and they acted unitedly against the right wing in the Congress.

One important issue on which they all were together was the election of the Congress president in 1939. The election contest was between Pattabhi Sitaramayya and Subhas Chandra Bose. In fact, the left looked upon it as a part of their struggle to replace the Gandhian leadership. Bose accused the right wing leaders of not being genuinely interested in the struggle against imperialism. He accused that they were planning to compromise with the colonial government.

Nehru did not agree with this leftist policy of denouncing the old tried and tested leaders of the national movement. In his view no doubt these leaders were socially conservative but their anti-imperialist bonafides could not be doubted. For him the left had wrongly defined the digits of the debate. Therefore, the contest for president could not but weaken the left in the long run, he observed. This was Nehru's reason for remaining neutral on this issue.

The election took place on 29 January, 1939. Bose defeated Pattabhi Sitaramayya by 1580 votes against 1375. Apart from Bose's personality, the united efforts of all the left groups were responsible for this victory. It showed that along with their sympathisers the united left in the Congress was a considerable force.

Meanwhile, Gandhi issued a statement saying that the defeat of Sitaramayya was more than his Sitaramayya's "since he was" instrumental in inducing Dr. Sitaramayya not to withdraw his name as a candidate." Gandhi asked Bose to form the Working Committee of his own choice as the right wing leaders would not join his new team. Now the Congress was faced with a threat of split. At this stage the communists and socialists began to dissociate themselves from Bose. As a result Bose could not constitute the Working Committee of the Congress and ultimately resigned from the presidency.

After resigning, on 3 May 1939, Bose announced the formation of a new party called the Forward Bloc. It was to function with the Congress and work for rallying "all radical and anti-imperialist progressive elements in the country." M.N. Roy organised a separate party called the Radical Democratic Party. The CSP units in the south went over to the communist party and this further embittered the relationship between the socialists and the communists. In 1939, the left groups worked together in the form of a Left Consolidation Committee but it too broke up soon.

28.5.6 Disunity of the Left on the Eve of the Second World War

On the eve of the Second World War the left was split into a number of mutually quarrelling groups. The main reason for their disunity was that though professing socialism in abstract terms, these groups did not have any clear analysis of the Indian national movement and the leadership of Gandhi. There was also the absence of any shared strategy to advance the cause of independence and socialism together. They all had different motives and different perspectives to work within the Congress. Each group wanted to gain at the cost of the other.

The socialists were opposed to the communist idea of forming a separate party outside the INC. Nehru was clear that socialism would come only after the country was free. Till that time, he argued, the socialists should perform the following tasks:

To unite with the right wing and Gandhi to strengthen the cause of anti-imperialism and to ideologically strengthen the forces of left within the Congress by carrying on the socialist propaganda. The objective of the left should not be to convert the Congress to Socialism but to make it a truly People's Party. The other left groups were not willing to accept this line of argument.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) Why did the Indian communists adopt the policy of United Front?

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2) What were the differences between Nehru and other left wing groups?

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28.6 SECOND WORLD WAR AND THE LEFT RESPONSE

On 15th September 1939, the Congress Working Committee met to discuss the question of India's role in the War. It adopted a resolution which categorically declared that India could not associate herself with a war which claimed to be anti-fascist and for the defence of democracy when the same democratic freedom was denied to her. The resolution demanded that the British government must declare in unequivocal terms their war aims vis-a-vis India. The Indian communists did not distinguish between Hitler's fascism and western democracies. For them it was an imperialist war and they demanded of the Congress leaders that they immediately start the mass civil disobedience.

At the beginning of the war the communist policy was to continue the tactic of united front with the Congress. The communist leaders were hopeful that after the preliminary round when the Congress leaders could be arrested, the responsibility of conducting the struggle shall fall into their hands. Moreover, the mass movement was supposed to develop towards mass insurrection.

At Ramgarh session of the Congress in March 1940 the Congress adopted a resolution pledging support for the allies in return for national independence. The Congress leadership was being supported by the Congress Socialists, while the communists were getting impatient with the wait and watch policy of the INC.

Bose accused Gandhi of compromising with the British. "I wholly endorse" said Gandhi, "Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose's charge that I am eager to have a compromise with Britain if it can be had with honour." Soon the communists started emphasizing the policy of "exposure of Gandhism" and "sharpest opposition to Gandhian leadership." M.N. Roy's group was the only group at this stage which was giving full support to the British war efforts.

With the aim of pursuing the "proletarian path" of armed insurrection, the communists began to organise political general strikes in the major industries. Apart from denouncing Gandhi and Nehru, the communist party also attacked Bose and CSP leadership. The communist policy of single handedly leading the national movement was fully endorsed by the ideologues of the Third International.

By following this policy the communists once again separated themselves from the national movement. The government decided to attack the communists. Till February 1941 about 480 leading communist activists were arrested in various parts of the country and the party was completely paralysed. The government had succeeded in giving the communist party a serious blow. Large numbers of them were detained in the Deoli detention camp.

In June 1941, Hitler attacked the Soviet Union. All the communist parties in Western democracies began to support the war efforts of their respective governments. What should be the policy of the CPI in this changed situation? The interests of the Soviet Union and Britain coincided with each other. However, India was still a colonial country.

The communists who were outside and functioning under the leadership of P.C. Joshi were of the view that earlier policy of mass opposition to imperialism should be continued and further strengthened as the situation for India remained essentially the same. The other camp, the majority of whom were in jail, emphasized the point that the communist policy must address itself to the supreme aim of Russian victory even if it meant jettisoning the national aim of India's freedom.

With the new situation, they argued the "imperialist war" has changed its character and it has become a "People's War". Ultimately it was this later policy which became the policy of the CPI. Of course, there were individual communists who disagreed with this policy. Consequently, the communists now began to support the war efforts of the colonial government. To the extent possible, they prevented strikes in the factories in order to keep the production running.

As far as the Kisan front was concerned the new slogan was: "Grow more food". The policy of sharpening the anti-feudal contradiction was also suspended.

From 9 August, 1942, onwards the government began to arrest the Congress leaders and thus succeeded in aborting the Quit India Movement as planned by Gandhi. Meanwhile P.C. Joshi, the General Secretary of the communist party, met the Governor and other authorities and requested them to release the detained communist leaders. A large section of the communists were released from various jails.

It was in 1942 that CPI once again became a legal party openly working for its policies. Now the political field was open to the party as the main political party, i.e., the INC was declared an illegal body. During the years 1942-43, CPI gained strength in numerical terms while it lost its prestige in the eyes of national minded public. In 1943 the Party held its first Congress openly and legally. Around this time the membership of the party rose to 5000.

In 1945, after the war was over, the political opponents of the CPI denounced its People's War policy as anti-nationalist.

The communists resigned their membership of the INC. However, this was not the only issue on which the party was swimming against the national mainstream.

The other important issue was the party's support to the Pakistan movement. The party declared that the demand for Pakistan was not a communalist separatist demand but a justified demand for national self-determination. The party carried on a campaign to convince the Indian masses and the Congress leadership to recognise, the demand for Pakistan as a democratic demand. This further alienated them from nationalist public opinion in India.

It is well-known how after R.P. Dutt's advice in March 1946, the CPI started suddenly opposing the demand for Pakistan. In December 1945, the Central Committee of the CPI declared that the new strategy of the party was to work as the builder of a new United National Front in the form of a Congress-League-Communist joint front.

The mass upsurge which followed the arrests of the Congress leaders took a violent turn at many places. The Congress socialists played a very important role in the upsurge of 1942. However, like the Civil Disobedience, the movement of 1942 was also suppressed by the British authorities. But the movement expressed the determination and irresistible urge of the Indian people to be free. After the war was over the British rulers realised that it was no longer possible to keep India subservient.

Check Your Progress 5

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) Discuss the Indian left's response to the Second World War.

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28.7 LET US SUM UP

During the national movement the Indian left was split into a number of currents. These divergent groups failed to evolve a single unified strategy vis-a-vis the INC. One of the mistakes of these groups was that they perceived Mahatma Gandhi as their main opponent and not an ally. Nehru alone understood the real meaning of Gandhi's leadership but all the left groups were not willing to accept his analysis and political

positions. Many a times they were working at cross purposes and denouncing each other. The disunited left could not fully implement its policies and programmes of organising the workers and peasants. In the long run, the mutual differences and divisions in the left movement not only harmed the cause of socialism in India but also partially aborted the radical potential of the Indian national movement.

28.8 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

G. Adhikari, 1971 *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, Volume one, 1917-1922 People's Publishing House.

Satyabrata Rai Chowdhuri, *Leftist Movements In India: 1917-1947*, Minerva Publications Calcutta, 1976.

Bipan Chandra, 1983, *The Indian Left: Critical Appraisals*, Vikas Publications.

Overstreet and Windmiller, 1960 *Communism in India*, Prerential Press, Bombay.

L.P. Sinha, 1965 *The Left Wing in India, 1917-47*, New Publishers, Muzaffarpur.

E.M.S. Namboodiripad, 1976 *How I Became a Communist?* Chintha Publishers, Trivandrum.

28.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See section 28.2

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See sub-section 28.3.1

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) See section 28.4 and sub-section 28.4.1
- 2) See section 28.4 and sub-section 28.4.7

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) See section 28.5
- 2) See section 28.5 and sub-section 28.5.2

Check Your Progress 5

- 1) See section 28.6

UNIT 29 M.N. ROY — MARXISM AND RADICAL HUMANISM

Structure

- 29.0 Objectives
- 29.1 Introduction
- 29.2 Comintern and the Colonial Question
- 29.3 M.N. Roy and Indian Politics
 - 29.3.1 On 'India in Transition'
 - 29.3.2 On Organization
 - 29.3.3 Roy on the Second World War
 - 29.3.4 Problems in Methodology
- 29.4 Radical Humanism
 - 29.4.1 Critique of Marxism
 - 29.4.2 Humanist Model of Politics
 - 29.4.3 Partyless Democracy
- 29.5 Criticism
- 29.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 29.7 Some Useful Books
- 29.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

29.0 OBJECTIVES

Earlier in this block you have studied the role of Indian communists in the national movement. M.N. Roy was one of the first leaders who injected Marxism into the practical politics of India. This unit introduces you to the ideas of M.N. Roy who started as a marxist but gradually turned towards Radical Humanism. After studying this unit you should be able to understand the contribution of M.N. Roy towards the development of communism in India and to critically assess the Marxist analyses of Indian society.

29.1 INTRODUCTION

Most strands of Indian political thought in the early 20th century grew out of the historical conflict with colonialism. Narendranath Bhattacharya, later famous as M.N. Roy, was India's first communist theorist who attempted to apply Marxism to achieve liberation from foreign rule. He was born in the village of Arbelia in 1887. During the years that he was growing up, Bengal and the rest of the country was witnessing an anti-colonial struggle. In Bengal there was an agitation against the partition in 1911. These were the crucial years when the politics of representation and constitutional agitation were being questioned and militant nationalism was inspiring many young activists. Influenced by the climate of militant nationalism, Narendranath Roy was involved in bomb making and dacoity to secure funds for revolutionary activities. Narendranath and some other activists were convicted in the Howrah Sibpur conspiracy case in 1910. He spent about 9 months in solitary confinement in prison.

After this release, Narendranath Roy through his organizational ability rose to a position high enough to be sent as a representative to negotiate an arms deal with the Germans. The search for arms took him to the USA where in New York, he came into contact with a number of American radicals, socialists, anarchists and syndicalists. In Mexico after meeting M. Borodhin, a member of the Soviet Communist Party, he became committed to the idea of a social revolution which would ensure freedom to the people of India. He reassessed for the first time, his earlier life as "narrow visioned" and undertook a journey to Moscow to attend the second congress of the newly formed Comintern. In Moscow he offered critical comments on Lenin's Draft Thesis on the

National and Colonial Question. He also led a delegation of the Comintern to China. The mission was a failure. Meanwhile differences arose between the Comintern and M.N. Roy and he was expelled from the party.

Roy returned to India around 1930 and began his work as a critical marxist. After serving six years in jail, he joined the Indian national congress, in order to influence its programme. Unsuccessful in his attempts he founded the Radical Democratic Party on 21st December, 1943. When the party failed to make an impact he dissolved it and founded a new cultural-political movement called 'New Humanism'.

29.2 COMINTERN AND THE COLONIAL QUESTION

The national and colonial question was an enduring one for the Soviet Communist party and the Comintern. The latter were never able to deal with this question satisfactorily. The question was essentially of the strategy and tactics to be adopted by communists in their own country, while being directed by the Comintern. Now the strategy and tactic to be followed differed from country to country according to the prevailing objective conditions and the relations of forces. But the objective conditions were often perceived differently by the communist parties and the Comintern.

The problem was that the communist parties in various countries like India and China analysed their societies with the help of concepts already present in Marxist theory. The domain of facts in their own societies were however different and so were the questions raised. For instance in India the communists had to tackle questions outside the parameters of classical marxism owing to the existence of a backward capitalist economy. Classes corresponding to the capitalist mode of production were different in many ways and class conflict also assumed very different forms from those encountered in western capitalist societies. Colonialism and external capital domination had given rise to a distorted economy. But in the absence of a specific analysis of their own societies the communists depended on the Comintern for broad policy guidelines. The result was often unfortunate since the Comintern did not have adequate information. Gradually political movements in colonial societies questioned the Eurocentric philosophy of history upheld by the Comintern and attempted an independent course of action.

In Marxism there is a model of classic bourgeois revolutions in which the bourgeoisie leads a revolution to its successful conclusion. A second way model in which a bourgeoisie lacks hegemony over the revolutionary coalition is also present. The debate amongst the Indian communists revolved around the second way model — i.e. whether the bourgeoisie lacked hegemony or not.

In the second Congress at Moscow, Lenin developed a different theoretical framework for the colonial societies. He argued that first, the colonial bourgeoisie was historically capable of leading the revolution in India. A backward colonial capitalism, according to Lenin, did not imply that the bourgeoisie was as reactionary as in backward European states like Germany. So the Comintern must enter into a temporary alliance with bourgeoisie democracy in the colonial and backward countries, but should not merge with it. Secondly, he anticipated the crucial role of the peasantry in colonial societies in the anti-colonial struggle.

M.N. Roy's argument was different. He proposed that the Comintern and the communist parties should not support the national liberation struggles but should concentrate on building of communist parties and developing workers and peasants organizations. Contrary to Lenin's thesis he argued that a backward capitalism in India, produced a weak bourgeoisie, and a correspondingly stronger proletariat, which was more powerful. In this manner Roy exaggerated the role of the working class in the anti-colonial struggle. He eliminated the national bourgeoisie as a vital ally in the national movement and was skeptical of the revolutionary force of the peasantry. Eventually this implied that the working class in India was to achieve freedom from alien rule on its own. After an intense debate the supplementary thesis of M.N. Roy was adopted by the Congress.

Being an independent person by nature, Roy was unable to continue as an enthusiastic member of the Comintern, where the discipline had increased under the leadership of Stalin. As the prospects of a World revolution dimmed, the Comintern began to operate more as an organ of the CPSU. The rift between M.N. Roy and the Comintern widened during the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928. The Comintern abandoned its united front policy between all classes and the policy of collaboration with the national bourgeoisie, that was being followed and instead proclaimed a policy of class confrontation under the leadership of the proletariat.

The attack against Roy at the Sixth Congress was based upon his decolonization theory. The theory states that the policy of imperialism was no longer an obstacle to the development of industries in India. It signalled the changing character of imperialism — in which there was a transfer of partial benefits to the Indian bourgeoisie.

After this expulsion from the party, Roy returned to India where in the Kanpur Conspiracy case he was imprisoned from July 21st, 1931 to November 20th, 1936.

Check Your Progress I

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) How did M.N. Roy differ from the Comintern in so far as the colonial question was concerned?

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29.3 ROY AND INDIAN POLITICS

29.3.1 On 'India in Transition'

In 1922 M.N. Roy undertook a sociological study of Indian society in a book 'India in Transition'. He differed from other interpretations of the Indian Society: Of the Indian liberals and moderates who believed in the capacity of British statesmen and their reforms, and of the extremists and nationalists who confused religion and politics. Roy offered a marxist interpretation and became one of the first to initiate a marxist analysis of the nature of Indian politics — its class structure and the state.

The Indian people were subject not only to exploitation by foreign capital as the other interpretations said, but also Indian capital. The distorted and backward nature of Indian capitalism had given rise to a urban proletariat. In the post-world war era, co-operation was possible between the national bourgeoisie and the British imperialists because the latter had weakened. Therefore, in place of civil disobedience propagated by the Congress, Roy advised militant mass action.

In 1922, he sent a programme to the Indian National Congress on the eve of the Gaya Congress which included some of the following ideas:

- 1) Abolition of landlordism
- 2) Reduction of land rent
- 3) State aid for modernization of agriculture
- 4) Abolition of indirect taxes
- 5) Nationalization of public utilities
- 6) Development of modern industries
- 7) Eight hour day, fixation of minimum wages by legislation
- 8) Free and compulsory education
- 9) Separation of State and religion

29.3.2 On Organization

The communist party of India emerged as a national force only in 1935. Prior to this, most of its units existed as regional groups. In the 'Future of Indian Politics', Roy examined in detail the need for an organization which would be unspecified and general in character. The communist party of India formed in 1925 was not capable of mass mobilization. Moreover most of the socialists and communists were either languishing in prisons or were isolated from each other. The CPI was endowed with the power to influence the unspecified party. The open, legal mass party would facilitate collective action. The illegal communist nucleus would direct this legal and mass front. The idea was a dual organization — 'a people's party broad enough to attract oppressed classes and on the other hand, a communist party of the working class. Roy also asserted that the programme of the informal party would be the minimum programme of the CPI. This was the beginning of Workers and Peasants party i.e. WPP in various parts of the country. Every CPI member in his capacity or a member of the WPP, would be subject to the discipline of the latter. The WPPs as mass legal platform, allowed them access to cultural and political groups, like the trade unions and so on. The relationship between the CPI and WPP was retained during the entire united front period.

In its sixth congress the Comintern changed its line. In a letter to the All India Conference of Workers and Peasants Parties, Comintern urged the need for creating an independent class party of the proletariat.

29.3.3 Roy on the Second World War

After Roy was released on November 20th, 1936, he appealed to the people to rally in millions under the flag of the National Congress. Along with his followers, they participated actively in the struggle for freedom. In 1936 he addressed the Faizpur session of the Congress. But all attempts to radicalize the Congress proved futile.

In 1937 he launched a weekly journal 'Independent India' which was later renamed the 'Radical Humanist' in 1949. The first issue carried as the editorial a programmatic declaration defining the concept of national freedom, "Political Independence is not the end, it is the means to an end which is the radical transformation of the Indian society."

The second world war saw important changes in the ideological development of the CPI and their perception of the role of the working class. After the fascist attack on the Soviet Union, the anti-imperialist war was transformed into a people's war. Communist slogans changed. Throughout 1942, while congress launched the Quit India movement, the communist party exhorted its members to not only unite but also to keep the wheels of production running. Roy along with other communists, was in favour of supporting the Allies which included the British. According to him, the war was not between two states, but between two ideologies. The war he stressed was an anti-fascist war and it should not be confused with the anti-imperialist struggle. Throughout the war Roy condemned the Congress for its animosity against the British.

Meanwhile the British released the imprisoned communists to implement their 'people's policy'. As a legal party, membership of CPI increased considerably. However all these actions alienated the party and its workers from the Indian public.

29.3.4 Problems in Methodology

During the anti-colonial struggle M.N. Roy and other communist leaders tried to sincerely spell out the properties of a new model of revolution. In this attempt Roy was keen to preserve the central tenets of Marxist theory. He analysed Indian society with categories already present in Marxist theory. But Indian society was experiencing a different historical situation which had to be expressed in definite terms. He failed to comprehend fully the process of the structural transformation of the Indian working class in a colonial context. His analysis used concepts which had earlier been applied to the class structure of advanced capitalist societies. He neglected several characteristics of the Indian working class while formulating a model of revolution.

Two distinguishing features of the proletariat in classical Marxism are, disengagement

and development of class consciousness. But in India the working class was not a homogeneous class. It retained primordial loyalties of community, class and religion while being drawn into the factory system. Also given the nature of the colonial labour market, there was a large proportion of migrant and seasonal labour employed in the plantations and mines. These workers have been called semi-proletarians and semi-peasants because they retained their links with their land in the village. More significant is the fact that the industrial proletariat was numerically insignificant in the early 20th century. It was concentrated in the cities of Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Kanpur and Jamshedpur, but clearly lacked features of the proletariat in classical Marxism. This misinterpretation was the cause of Roy's failure in developing an astute model of revolution which could successfully integrate the demands for nationalism and socialism, a task fulfilled by Mao Tse-Tung in China.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) How was Roy's analysis of Indian society different?

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2) Briefly discuss Roy's views in 'Future of Indian' Politics .

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29.4 RADICAL HUMANISM

29.4.1 Critique of Marxism

After dissolving the Radical Democratic Party Roy re-examined his ideas and attempted a clarification of some concepts he had used. This examination led him to launch an attack on Marxism on several grounds.

Developments during and after the war convinced Roy that communism had degenerated into nationalism in the Soviet Union. Under Stalin the communist party had become authoritarian. It suppressed all forms of dissent. The actions of Soviet leaders in foreign affairs such as setting up of communist dictatorships in East Europe, opposition to the Marshall Plan and so on, led him to believe that they were aspiring to be a super power.

M. N. Roy also criticised the economic interpretation of history given by Marx. He argued that by viewing the individual as only a part of the collectivity, Marxism rejected the autonomy of the individual. According to Roy, the existence of social organization presupposes the prior existence of the individual.

He further contended that neither socialism nor communism but freedom should be the ideal of a civilized society. Describing Radical Humanism in this context he said, "We place man in the centre of scheme of things: others would sacrifice him on the altar of the collective ego."

He now viewed the Marxist model of revolution as an outdated one. Revolution through insurrection was impossible owing to the military power of modern states. He put forward the idea of a revolution by consent, guided by a philosophy with universal appeal.

In the last years of his life 1947-54, Roy became an exponent of Radical Humanism. Like Western philosophers, Turgot and Condorcet, he felt that the progress of science had liberated man's creative energies. He explained the need to coin a new word because the existing philosophies were inadequate to deal with the problems of Indian society. He argued that his political philosophy makes room for the individual and moral values; and he judged the merit of any social order by the freedom it gives to its individual members.

Also politics around him had become opportunistic and the way could be cleared only by introducing the human element in public affairs. He believed that the right to participate in politics had been reduced to mere voting in elections. This must be re-examined in order to establish complete democracy.

29.4.2 Humanist Model of Politics

Roy's theory of a new model of politics aims at the rejection of spiritualism, nationalism, communism and stands for the acceptance of materialism. According to M.N. Roy the latter is the only possible philosophy since it represents the knowledge of nature as it really exists.

The basic elements of New Humanism are three: rationality, morality and freedom. Roy argued that human beings are subject to their environment but the rational nature of man compels him to offer better explanations of the events of nature. As a rational creature man is involved in a struggle for material existence. This struggle takes two forms — at the savage plane it signifies the satisfaction of his mundane wants and at the higher plane, it signifies his struggle for freedom. Freedom is a process and not a complete idea. In the quest for freedom, argues Roy, man as a rational being is driven to bring nature under his control. And freedom "signifies the progressive disappearance of all restrictions on the unfolding of the potentialities of individuals as human beings. Freedom of the individual is one of the central themes of Roy's scientific politics. He challenges all ideologies which deny the sovereignty of man. As an alternative to the existing ideologies, Roy desired to set up a new social order based on the sovereignty of the individual.

29.4.3 Partyless Democracy

Given his experience of party politics, Roy attacked the goal of power as the only incentive for political action. He argued that "politics is as old as organized social life... It should therefore be realised that politics and parties are not invariably related to each other, nor have they always been together." Hence there was a possibility of political activity without the existence of political parties.

The party system is an inadequate medium to represent the people in the eyes of Roy. It denies the individuals any significant opportunity for effective political action. The right to vote does not ensure political participation. Moreover party rule signifies the rule of a minority of citizens who claim to represent the aspirations of the people. Representative government largely represents only the party which controls it and membership of even the largest size is but a small fraction of the people. Finally Roy claims that party system leads to dishonesty and corruption in public life since such a system works for the leaders and not for the people.

Roy formulated the notion of organized democracy and participant citizenship to overcome the grave defects of parliamentary democracy. Concomitant to this political framework is the need to introduce a new economic order. According to Roy, a decentralized order in which functions of the state are performed by free and voluntary associations of enlightened people will provide a partial solution to the problem. The state will become an advisory and administrative machinery to co-ordinate and supervise policies framed by the people. The people will participate in local committees which will make them conscious of their sovereign rights.

The economic activity of the new social order has three characteristics:

- a) Co-operative economy
- b) Centralized planning
- c) Science and Technology

Since Roy was critical of capitalism and its doctrine of laissez faire and of state socialism, he advanced the view of an economy based on widespread decentralization and a practice of co-operation. Economic activity should be conducted at the district, regional and national level by multipurpose co-operative societies. Similarly, planning should be initiated at the grassroots level. Science and technology should be used to reconcile the problem of economic development with the human urge for freedom.

From the above discussion we find that M.N. Roy started his career with a commitment to Marxism but became disillusioned with it over the years. What remained with him however was the conviction that revolutions are 'heralded by iconoclastic ideas conceived by gifted individuals, Primacy lies with the existence of revolutionary ideas'. A revolution must be preceded according to him by a philosophical revolution. Thesis 20 in the Principles of Radical Democracy states that a reorganization of society must be conducive to common progress and prosperity without encroaching upon the freedom of the individual. Thus, revolutions have no relations with violence or the struggle for power amongst individuals but are meant to change the outlook of the people by bringing about a philosophical regeneration.

Check Your Progress 3

- Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Discuss M.N. Roy's concept of Radical Humanism.

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29.5 CRITICISM

Even when it does not immediately result in political action the thinking of political philosophers is often found to lie behind great social and political changes. M.N. Roy will be remembered as one of the first leaders to nullify intellectual tradition in order to comprehend the dynamics of colonial rule. He attempted a marxist analysis of Indian society and set his life according to such principles. Yet he has been described as the tragic figure of Indian history. His political career was marked by several failures and in the history of the national movement his practical achievements were rather short-lived. Even if we estimate Roy's position in political thought by his writings rather than by the effects of his political work, we find much is lacking.

As pointed out above there were methodological defects in M.N. Roy's work during his association with Marxism. In his humanist phase he rejected almost all these beliefs. But at the same time he criticised liberal political institutions like the parliament, party system, elections etc. This new approach and philosophy maintained that a scientific outlook, education and co-operative living would bring about harmony amongst individuals.

Roy clearly studied the social and political problems facing our society but he had no solution in the form of a complete philosophy. The picture of society he drew was neither wholly coherent or consistent though there was a superficial sincerity in its claims. Therefore by no means can he be ranked in the category of great political thinkers like Gandhi or Nehru.

29.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you read about M.N. Roy, the person credited with introducing Marxian (class) analysis of Indian society and politics. You also studied about Roy's eventual disillusionment with Marxism and his presenting of an alternative system of thought — Radical Humanism. In the end you were told about his achievements and shortcoming. It is hoped that the unit would have provided you with sufficient insight into a highly original if romantic mind.

29.7 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

Samaren Roy, M.N. Roy — *The Twice Born Heretic*

V.B. Karnik, *Biography of M.N. Roy*

J.C. Johari, *The Great Radical Humanist*

J.B.H. Wadia, M.N. Roy

Pantham ed., *Indian Political Thought*

29.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

See section 23.2

Check Your Progress 2

See sub-section 29.3.1 and 29.3.2

Check Your Progress 3

See section 29.4

UNIT 30 CONTEMPORARY MARXIST THINKING (INDIAN)

Structure

- 30.0 Objectives
- 30.1 Introduction
- 30.2 Uniqueness of Indian Marxist Thinking
- 30.3 Indian Marxists and Historical Materialism
- 30.4 Indian Marxists on Colonial Rule
- 30.5 Indian Marxists and Character of Indian Independence
- 30.6 Indian Marxists on Indian State and the Ruling Class
 - 30.6.1 Split in the Indian Communist Movement
 - 30.6.2 Indian Marxists and Instrumental Approach to the State
- 30.7 Indian Marxists and Foreign Policy
- 30.8 Indian Marxists and the Congress
- 30.9 Indian Marxists and the Caste System
- 30.10 Indian Marxists and Nationality
- 30.11 Indian Marxists on the Strategy of Mobilisation
- 30.12 Let Us Sum Up
- 30.13 Some Useful Books
- 30.14 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

30.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to understand the following:

- the uniqueness of Indian Marxists' thinking
- the positions of Indian Marxists in relation to historical materialism, stages of Indian history, character of Indian independence, Indian State and the ruling class, foreign policy and the Congress, the caste system and nationality, and
- the position of Indian Marxists on strategy.

30.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit deals with Contemporary Indian Marxist thinking. It covers the main Communist parties i.e. the CPI, the CPI (M) and the CPI (ML). These parties follow Marxism and Leninism as their guidelines. The positions of these parties on the objectives listed above will give you a general understanding of Contemporary Marxist thinking in India.

30.2 UNIQUENESS OF INDIAN MARXIST THINKING

Marxist thinking in India is not as developed as in the West. In India, Marxism is the product of Western intellectual tradition. Logic of intellectual development in West had reached a particular stage of culmination. Renaissance, reformation and enlightenment led to a creative phase in Western intellectual history which is known as the Marxist phase. The foundation of this new thinking was laid by Marx and Engels. In India we do not have such a rich intellectual tradition. Our intellectual tradition allows very little space for original thinking. It is a difficult task on the part of a Marxist to be very original and creative. Despite this the Indian Marxist tradition is not so bad as compared to many other States in third world countries. It has a history of half a century. Marxist intellectuals in India basically remain within the Communist Parties. Some of them though, are found outside the fold of these parties.

30.3 MARXISTS AND HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

Communists in India have always been busy in trying to look for answers to problems in a Marxist framework. They have had very little time to do philosophical thinking. Their concern has been basically in the application of historical materialism to Indian situations. Most Indian Marxists have a dialogue with Marx's own writings on Indian society. In constructing Indian history, Marx has made two important points. First, Indian society before the British rule was a stagnant society. Village community and caste society created a social framework for making Indian economy a unchanging economy. Secondly, British rule was a blessing in disguise which helped in destroying this aspect of Indian society and created circumstances for regeneration. Marx's own statement is given below: "The historic pages of their rule in India report hardly anything beyond that destruction. The work of regeneration hardly transpires through a heap of ruins. Nevertheless it has begun."

The British rule cannot stop the changes introduced by it. Changes would bring national unity. Moreover, introduction of freedom of press and English education have brought about a radical change in Indian society. An educated class with new ideas would be playing an important role in the political transformation of a society.

Marxists have a historical scheme for understanding any history. There are certain stages in history like primitive communism, slavery, feudalism and capitalism. Historical development of each society experiences these stages. Some of the prominent communists themselves applied the historical scheme in a mechanical manner. S.A. Dange, in his book, *India: From Primitive Communism to Slavery* accepted the stage of slavery in Indian history. But most of the Indian communists reject this point and try to understand Indian history in a creative manner. All of them agree to a point that Indian history does not have a stage of slavery. Primitive tribal society gets transformed into a caste society without experiencing the stage of slavery. Indian feudalism integrated caste system into it. It has similarities with European feudalism because it does not have serfdom which is an integral part of European feudalism.

Check Your Progress I

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check the answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) On which point do Indian Marxists differ with S.A. Dange?

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30.4 INDIAN MARXISTS ON COLONIAL RULE

All Indian Marxists agree to a point that India experienced capitalism under colonial rule. British rule brought certain radical transformation in the Indian society. It destroyed certain social institutions like the village community which had become an obstacle to social progress. Colonial capitalism created problems for Indian progress. Colonial policy affected the artisan community. They were reduced to being paupers by the deindustrialisation policy of colonial rule. One has to recognise the positive aspects of British rule which created certain conditions in bringing modern industries. When railway was introduced in India, Marx was hopeful that India would experience a stage of industrialisation even though British rule did not intend to do so. Marx observed, "But when you have once introduced machinery into the locomotion of a country, which possesses iron and coal, you are unable to withhold it from its fabrication. You

cannot maintain a net of railways, all those industrial processes necessary to meet the immediate and current wants of railway locomotion, and out of which there must grow the application of machinery to those branches of industry not immediately connected with railways. The railway system will therefore, become in India, truly, the forerunner of modern industries.... Modern industry resulting from the railway system "will dissolve the hereditary divisions of labour, upon which rest the Indian castes, those decisive impediments to Indian progress and Indian power."

British rule could not stop the wheel of economic progress in India. India experienced the stage of capitalism. Large scale industrialisation took place between two world wars. This gave an economic strength to Indian capitalist class for supporting the demand for independence.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check the answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) What were the negative and positive inputs of the British rule as regards the Indian Society?

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30.5 INDIAN MARXISTS AND CHARACTER OF INDIAN INDEPENDENCE

Once India achieved independence what is the character of Indian independence became a debatable point among Marxists. Controversy over the issue brought differences within communists to the surface. There are basically three opinions on the issue of independence. A section of the communists declared Indian independence as fake. India was a colony under the British rule and after independence turned into a neo-colony of British and American imperialism. Second group is of the opinion that India has acquired true independence through the path of independent economic development and such a India is going to be completely independent of the imperialist world. Third group remains in between the first and second. They accept the independence of India but there is always a threat from imperialism which cannot be washed away.

30.6 INDIAN MARXISTS ON INDIAN STATE AND RULING CLASS

30.6.1 Split in the Indian Communist Movement

This led to difference of opinion among Indian communists on the question of Indian State and ruling class. The function of the Congress party in the post-independence history remains a debatable point. Political transformation after independence created a lot of debate among communists and eventually led to a split in the party. Each group remained as a political trend within the party. The Communist party functioned as a platform till 1964. Split in the international communist movement accentuated the differences further. Formal split in the Communist party took place in 1964. This did not stop there. Split within split occurred in the year of 1967. At present there are many splintered groups in India. But there are three major groups in communist politics whose differences of opinion on the issue of state, planning and ruling class need a serious discussion.

30.6.2 Indian Marxists and Instrumental Approach to the State

Indian communists have an instrumental approach to the question of the state. That state is an instrument of the ruling classes and it works in safeguarding and furthering their interests. Otherwise each Communist Party has a political theory of Indian state. Understanding of ruling class helps in characterising Indian state. There are three Communist Parties: CPI, CPI(M) and CPI(ML). We have to understand each party's viewpoint on the character of Indian State. The position of the CPI is as follows: "The State in India is the organ of the class rule of the national bourgeoisie as a whole, in which the big bourgeoisie holds powerful influence. This class rule has links with the landlords. These factors give rise to the reactionary pulls in the State Power."

This statement has two parts. First, the big bourgeoisie holds the state power which is the national bourgeoisie. At the same time they have not snapped their relations with the landlords in rural India. This helps in the rise of reactionary forces in Indian politics. They recognise the progressive character of the national bourgeoisie. The ruling Congress Party is the party of this class, that is why it can function as the instrument of social progress. Basically, the congress party can fight feudal interests in rural India.

The position of CPI(M) is as follows: "The present Indian state is the organ of the class rule of the bourgeoisie and the landlords led by big bourgeoisie who are increasingly collaborating with foreign finance capital in the pursuit of capitalist path of development. This class character essentially determines the rôle and function of State in the life of the country."

For CPI(M), the ruling class is composed of the capitalists and landlords. They both share power in Indian state. Moreover, Indian capitalists are collaborating with foreign capitalists. State is an instrument of capitalists and landlords. The Congress Party is a party of these classes. It has a very little capacity to play a progressive role in Indian politics. There is no question of social, economic and political progress unless this state is undermined and destroyed and replaced by a state of People's Democracy.

CPI(ML) is not a homogeneous political grouping. There are many groups working in the platform. Dominant viewpoint in the party is as follows. "India under Congress rule is only nominally independent, in fact it is nothing more than a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country. The Congress Party Administration represents the interests of the Indian feudal princes, big landlords, and bureaucrat-comprador capitalists." In other words, Indian ruling class has a comprador character. They are subordinated to the American and Russian imperialism. Capitalists are very friendly with the landlords. Indian state is an instrument of these classes which do not work in the interests of Indian people. It is a reactionary state. Indian state and the Congress Party cannot become instruments of social change.

Both CPI and CPI(M) give certain autonomy to the Indian state. Within the present class configuration, state can play a decisive role in the development of a society. Both recognize the importance of planning. That planning in Indian economy supplements the strength of Indian capitalist class. Indian capitalist class because of its belated growth does not have sufficient capital and technology for taking an independent path. State sector or public sector can provide them a helping hand in their development. Public Sector in Indian economy has gone for capital intensive industries. That helps the Indian capitalist class not to be so much dependent on foreign capital. It gives them certain manoeuvring capacity in the international economy.

Check Your Progress 3

- Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answers with those at the end of the unit.

- 1) Which classes constitute the ruling class according to the CPI (M)?

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30.7 INDIAN MARXISTS AND FOREIGN POLICY

In the arena of foreign policy, both CPI and CPI(M) support the non-alignment policy. India is not a member of any bloc, neither Western Soviet. India after independence takes an independent path in international politics. That helps them to protect national interest in a better manner. It is another matter that it receives economic aid from Soviet Union and America.

30.8 INDIAN MARXISTS AND THE CONGRESS

As the Congress Party under the leadership of Nehru took a forthright and independent stand on the role of planning and foreign policy, it created confusion in the minds of the communist parties. CPI believes that Congress under the leadership of Nehru represented the interests of the national bourgeoisie. The line continued till the Indira Gandhi period. The Congress Party pursued the policy of non-alignment. It gave priority to public sector in Indian economy. Here the perception of CPI(M) differs slightly from CPI. That non-aligned policy is the result of the character of Indian capitalist class which is a reasonably developed class in all the third world countries. They pursued the policy of planning to keep India autonomous of international capital. There is a possibility that Indian capitalist class goes deeper into economic crisis. It will depend more and more on foreign capital like World Bank and IMF.

CPI and CPI(M) agree that the Congress Party is a secular party but very often compromises with communal forces. Domination of single personalities like Nehru, Indira Gandhi in Congress politics makes the party more authoritarian. Congress Party under the leadership of Indira Gandhi has never faced any organisational election. That is why CPI(M) characterises the Congress Party as an authoritarian party, although CPI does not agree with this characterisation.

Both CPI and CPI(M) do not have any political theory of communalism and caste system. Most of the leaders during the national movement acquired certain understanding out of their experience. On both these issues, their understanding does not differ from liberal traditions. India is a multi-community society. Inter-communal harmony is a must for practicing class politics. With radicalisation of mass politics, communal politics will retreat.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with those given at the end of the unit.

1) Whose interests does the Congress represent according to the CPI?

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30.9 INDIAN MARXISTS AND THE CASTE SYSTEM

On the issue of caste system, their perception has a historical dimension. In the process of transformation from a tribal to a peasant society, India has integrated into caste systems. Castes are basically occupational groups based on the division of labour. Capitalism would transform the caste system. Class politics will be able to check caste politics. Caste politics is a part of the ruling class politics. As B.T. Ranadive gives his observation, "The continuity of religiosity, communalism and casteism was embedded in the compromise that permitted the continuation of antiquated land relations."

Progressively their understanding on the caste question is changing. Caste system has to be fought on the plane of ideological and political level. Caste legitimacy allows upper castes to oppress the lower castes. Ideological hegemony of caste system must be fought. Both CPI and CPI(M) support the reservation policy on the caste basis to destroy the iniquitous caste system.

Check Your Progress 5

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) What do the Marxists suggest for fighting casteism?

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30.10 INDIAN MARXISTS AND NATIONALITY

CPI, CPI(M) and CPI(ML) all support the freedom of nationalities. Indian nation is a collection of different nationalities. Each nationality is based on a linguistic line supported by cultural traditions. That is why all communists agree to a point that Indian state should be a federal state for helping in allowing the cultural groups to flower. Ethnicity is a question which has come to Indian politics in the 1980s. Tribal communities because of their ethnic background have been demanding a tribal state like Jharkhand in Central India. Communist Parties agree to a point that all ethnic groups must be allowed to function in an autonomous region, which is guaranteed by the Constitution. There is no such clear thinking on the question of ethnicity in communist circles

30.11 INDIAN MARXISTS ON THE STRATEGY OF MOBILISATION

On the plane of political mobilisation, CPI and CPI(M) have adopted a single strategy whereas the CPI(ML) has a confused opinion. Some groups in CPI(ML) do not like to adopt the parliamentary path while some others, specifically IPF (Indian People's Front) accept it. All the parties face a problem of reconciling between the parliamentary line and revolutionary mass line. CPI has taken to electoral politics without any hesitation whereas CPI(M) has tried to reconcile between electoral politics and mass politics, but progressively has become a victim of electoral politics. CPI(ML) has been confused over the issue. But CPI(ML) has been able to take low castes and lower classes together for political mobilisation. In the case of Bihar, exercising their franchise becomes a radical slogan because poor from low castes are usually not allowed to vote. In a complex caste ridden society, a strategy of class politics is not an easy task.

In the process of political struggle, a clearer strategy can emerge.

Check Your Progress 6

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) Point out the differences among the Indian Marxist on the strategy of mobilisation.

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30.12 LET US SUM UP

Indian Marxist thinking does not have its own intellectual tradition, unlike the Marxist thinking of Europe. There have been existing differences of opinion among Indian Marxists on the periodization of Indian history. But they agree to a point that there never existed a stage of slavery in Indian history. They also agree that India experienced capitalism under colonial rule. On the character of Indian independence, on the nature of Indian state and ruling class, their differences on these issues even resulted in the split in the communist movement in India. Caste system has been perceived by the Indian Marxists as a sort of division. While the CPI and the CPI(M) are not opposed to the parliamentary method of political mobilisation, the CPI(M) has been taking a confused stand on the strategy of mobilisation.

30.13 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

B.T. Ranadive. *The Independence Struggle and After*, New D lhi, 1988.
Mathew Kurian, ed., *India — State and Society*, New Delhi, 1975.

30.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See sub-section 30.4

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See sub-section 30.4.1

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) See section 30.6.2

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) See section 30.8

Check Your Progress 5

- 1) See section 30.9

Check Your Progress 6

- 1) See section 30.11

UNIT 31 NATIONALISM AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION — AN OVERVIEW

Structure

- 31.0 Objectives
- 31.1 Introduction
- 31.2 The Nationalists, Socialism and Social Revolution : An Overview
 - 31.2.1 Jawaharlal Nehru
 - 31.2.2 Subhas Chandra Bose
 - 31.2.3 The Socialists
- 31.3 The Marxists, Socialism and Social Revolution: An Overview
 - 31.3.1 The Communists
 - 31.3.2 M.N. Roy
- 31.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 31.5 Key Words
- 31.6 Some Useful Books
- 31.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

31.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we shall deal with the overall significance of the viewpoints of the socialists and the communists relating to social revolution, keeping in mind the important point that the representatives of these two trends were primarily guided by the idea of nationalist struggle aimed at overthrow of British colonial domination. After going through this unit, you will be able to understand:

- the points of difference between the representatives of the two trends
- the significant differences among the representatives belonging broadly to one trend (i.e., socialists or communists) and
- the implications of these contrasting viewpoints for the future of India's independence.

31.1 INTRODUCTION

In the earlier units you were introduced to the ideas of individual thinkers such as Nehru, Subhas Bose, Jayaprakash Narayan et al on the one hand and the perception of nationalist struggle as viewed by the Communist Party and M.N. Roy on the other. What is now required is to develop a broad perspective which would enable one to explain the differences represented by these two trends. This is a very important question, because all of them had two things in common: the opposition to British Colonial rule and the urge to transform the colonial order of India into a modern society based on the ideal of socialism. However, despite these apparent similarities, they differed in their evaluation of the alternatives to British Colonialism, since their understanding of socialism was not identical. Thus, although the urge to transform society was very real, the differences in regard to the perception of socialism led to the development of contrasting perspectives on this question. In this unit you will be introduced to this idea so as to understand its significance for the future of India's independence.

31.2 THE NATIONALISTS, SOCIALISM AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION: AN OVERVIEW

The trend represented by the socialists in the national movement was broadly represented in the ideas of Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, Jayaprakash

Narayan, Narendra Dev and their associates in the Congress Socialist Party. Despite differences among them, they were attracted towards the ethical ideal of socialism emphasising abolition of inequality, exploitation and injustice; they were simultaneously ardent nationalists and were opposed to the methods of conflict and violence by using which the socialist revolution had been accomplished in the USSR. In other words, they aimed at a socialist restructuring of India on the basis of Indian nationalism. At the same time, they also distanced themselves from the trend represented by Hindu revivalism. Broadly, they emphasised the secular basis of Indian nationalism and it was with in this framework that they projected their vision of socialism.

31.2.1 Jawaharlal Nehru

Nehru's understanding of the problem of social transformation of India was primarily guided by his secular and scientific outlook, which aimed at the modernisation of Indian society. In this venture Nehru had before him two major alternatives: One, the model of free market economy in the West, based on unrestricted capitalism; the other was the model of planned economy as pursued in the USSR. Nehru had reservations against both of these approaches. He could not accept the first one, since this would eventually lead to gross inequality and exploitation, in violation of the basic norms of humanism. As regards the marxian model of socialism which was being practised in Soviet Russia, Nehru was deeply impressed by its achievements and he quite openly proclaimed that socialism was the only option for India, if a society free from the clutches of exploitation, injustice and inequality was to be built. His socialist sympathy was most strongly evident in his Presidential address at the Lucknow Session of the AICC in 1936. He could at the same time never reconcile himself to the methods. Thus, he could not accept the idea of the cult of one centralised party, restrictions on rights and freedoms of individuals and above all, Soviet socialism's emphasis on class struggle and the forcible overthrow of an exploitative social order. Nehru's socialism was broadly based on limited public control of private enterprise, planned economy etc. on the one hand, and pluralism, freedom of the individual etc. on the other. In developing this perspective, he was deeply influenced by the Fabian idea of democratic socialism in a nationalist framework. While this nationalism was sharply different from the idea of Hindu revivalism with which Nehru never compromised, he emphasised that India's road to socialism would have its foundations based on traditional Indian ideals like co-operation, peaceful development, humanism and accommodation of all religious beliefs, i.e. secularism.

It becomes quite strongly evident that Nehru was projecting a vision which was bound to unleash tensions and difficulties, since it was an attempt to reconcile things which were contradictory. While Nehru's goal was to seek a society based on justice and free from exploitation, he attempted to do it in a framework of thought where rights and freedoms of individuals placed in unequal circumstances would not be restricted. This was a kind of humanism which was unworkable in practice, since the privileged and the underprivileged were advised to work in a spirit of cooperation. Effectively speaking, Nehru's nationalistic vision blurred his perspective of socialism and dissipated the possibility of any real social revolution, since his radical outlook contradicted his path of compromise.

31.2.2 Subhas Chandra Bose

Subhas Chandra Bose's idea of social transformation of India was guided primarily by a spirit of intense nationalism and the considerations of practical politics. While he quite strongly emphasised that political freedom was meaningless without social and economic emancipation of the masses and that in free India it was not the vested interests (i.e., the landlords, money-lenders and capitalists) but the interests of the peasants and workers which would be protected, the ideological framework which he envisaged for realising these goals contradicted his objectives. In fighting vested interests, since he stood for the abolition of landlordism, an uniform land-tenure system and sound planning, he distanced himself from the capitalist path of free-market economy and came certainly closer to the radical ideology of socialism. But his spiritual background, particularly the influence of Vivekananda, his militant nationalism and

above all, his primary consideration being practical politics, led Bose to reject the Marxist model of socialism with emphasis on class struggle and materialism. Thus, while he was certainly attracted towards socialism's crusade against injustice and exploitation and its advocacy of the cause of equality, he could not endorse the political strategy of Marxism for realisation of these objectives.

His ideological vision became particularly clouded because, guided primarily by militant nationalist sentiments he aimed at realising his goal by adopting a path which would give him quick, immediate and effective results. This inclination towards pragmatism being a major feature of Bose's political outlook, he looked towards fascism with its emphasis on centralised state control and militarism. He felt that the quickest road to social transformation was possible by combining the ideological goal of marxism, socialism with emphasis on equality and the fascist methods of discipline, militant nationalism and rigid state control. In this regard, the views of Bose sharply differed from those of Nehru, who was uncompromisingly opposed to fascism for its inhuman character.

Bose, however, could not convincingly explain as to how this odd mixture was really possible in practice, since fascism was basically a defence of the vested interests of capitalism, while marxian socialism was uncompromisingly opposed to capitalism. The result was that Subhas Chandra Bose's nationalist ideological vision did not enable him to develop any real and effective understanding of the problem of social revolution in India.

31.2.3 The Socialists

Socialism was a trend broadly represented by Narendra Dev, Jayaprakash Narayan and Rammanohar Lohia who distanced themselves from the Congress and claimed to be more radical in their views. However, like Nehru they, too, were not much inclined towards the Soviet model of socialism nor was the Leninist concept of a centralised party acceptable to them. Guided primarily by the spirit of nationalism and the idea of co-operation, they considered themselves radical in the sense that they aimed at the realisation of the ideal of socialism based on equality and social justice by emphasising the importance of democratic decentralisation regarding the village as the main unit of development and encouraging the growth of small scale cottage industries and handicrafts rather than heavy industrialisation. They believed that in India social transformation would be effective only along the traditional path, that is, by encouraging agricultural growth and it is in this respect that they distinguished themselves from the path of Nehru, who aimed at the modernisation of Indian society primarily by adopting the strategy of industrialisation and planned economy.

The socialists, broadly identified with the ideology of the Congress Socialist Party, however, stood for secularism, resistance against obscurantist practices like untouchability and were inclined towards the ethical and humanitarian goals of socialism. In this sense their ideological viewpoint also had common ground with the perspective of the Indian National Congress, predominantly represented by Nehru. But the socialists, too, could not provide any real and effective solution to the problem of social transformation, since their outlook emphasised primarily the values of co-operation and social harmony in a situation where people were placed unequally in the social structure. Neither the idea of co-operation nor the programme of rural development with emphasis on decentralisation could provide any real and lasting solution to the problem of social revolution in India.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Why was it not possible for Nehru to reconcile himself with either a free market economy or the Soviet model of socialism?

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- 2) Was there any contradiction in Nehru's understanding of the problem of social revolution?

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- 3) Why was Subhas Chandra Bose inclined towards a reconciliation of fascism and socialism?

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- 4) Could Subhas Chandra Bose provide an effective solution to the problem of social transformation of India?

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- 5) How did the socialists interpret the problem of social revolution in India?

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31.3 THE MARXISTS, SOCIALISM AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION: AN OVERVIEW

The freedom struggle witnessed another trend represented broadly by the marxists who distanced themselves from the socialist minded nationalists on a number of questions. Their idea of social revolution was broadly guided by the basic tenets of marxism and the experience of the Russian Revolution that had taken place in 1917. On the one hand, they were sceptical about the very ideology of nationalism and the solutions provided by people like Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, Narendra Dev and others, since in their opinion the nationalist framework of thought would perpetuate the basic problem of inequality, exploitation and injustice in India; on the other hand, they stood for a social order where the interests of the workers and poor peasants would be primarily safeguarded and real power would vest in their hands. This meant an alternative understanding of the problem of social revolution in the framework of a radical variant of socialism, i.e. Marxism. This trend was reflected collectively in the viewpoint of the communists associated broadly with the Communist Party of India, the Workers' and Peasants' Party and other radical groups which broadly swore in the name of marxism. Individually, the marxist position was best represented in the thought of M.N. Roy in his early years when he was associated with the communist movement. Later, however, there took place a major shift in his outlook when he provided a reinterpretation of marxism and distanced himself from the Communists.

31.3.1 The Communists

The alternative strategy of social revolution proposed by the communists was primarily a product of their critique of the nationalist brand of socialism. While they also were genuine patriots and stood for secularism, opposition to Hindu revivalism and obscurantist practices like untouchability, their basic argument was that the objectives of socialism, i.e. equality, justice and freedom from exploitation could not be realised without a radical restructuring of society. In their vision, this was impossible by adopting the nationalist solution which emphasised primarily the idea of

accomplishment of national freedom under the leadership of the middle-class oriented parties and groups as represented by Nehru, Subhas Bose and Congress Socialists. The Communists also could not agree with their perspective of social transformation which mainly justified the values of harmony and co-operation among the contending groups and classes in a society where discrimination between the privileged and underprivileged was extremely acute. In other words, their main objection against nationalism was that it was virtually a defence of the vested interests and real social transformation was impossible by adopting the framework of nationalism.

Motivated by this idea the communists, who professed their adherence to marxism, developed an alternative approach towards the understanding of the question of social revolution. They followed what is generally known as the *class approach* and therein lay their fundamental difference with the nationalist approach. They argued that if the ordinary man was to be the real beneficiary of social transformation, then it would have to be the alliance of the working class and peasantry which would be the guiding force of revolution. This, they argued, could not be done by adopting the methods of co-operation and preaching harmony of contending groups and classes in society; to achieve this objective, the communists thus preached the idea of violent, forcible overthrow of the propertied classes which included the nationalists, i.e. the middle classes also. In proclaiming this goal, they were largely inspired by the experience of the Russian Revolution.

This approach, however, despite its strongly radical thrust, proved unworkable for a number of reasons. One, despite the criticism of the nationalists, it could not be appreciated by the communists that nationalist sentiments and appeals were too strongly embedded in the minds of the masses, which could not be just brushed aside. Rather, this virulent attack on nationalism and the castigation of the nationalist leaders like Gandhi, Nehru and Subhas Bose as agents of capitalists quite often isolated the communists from the mainstream of the freedom struggle. Two, the model of the Russian Revolution was virtually unworkable in India, because the material conditions were fundamentally different. Three, the communists overestimated the potential and organisational strength of the working class was somewhat mechanical and to a large extent unreal, with the consequence that their vision of social revolution eventually remained unreal and unworkable.

31.3.2 M.N. Roy

M.N. Roy quite often regarded as one of the founders of communist movement in India, was one of the those early marxists who attempted a radical understanding of the issue of social transformation of Indian society as distinct from the framework of nationalism. In his early phase (extending up to the late 20s) Roy's understanding suggested that the social emancipation of the Indian masses was possible only by effecting a socialist revolution in the country under the leadership of the working class, since he believed that in India nationalism was a spent force and that the nationalist movement was virtually aimed at ultimate consolidation of the interests of the middle class which spearheaded it. This hostility towards and cynicism about nationalism made Roy an uncompromising critic of the leaders of the Indian National Congress like Gandhi and Nehru. Moreover, Roy's optimism about the prospects of a socialist revolution in India was largely guided by his understanding that industrialisation had proceeded quite rapidly in the country with the result that a strong working class had emerged with the potentiality to unleash a revolution. Subsequent research has proved that this understanding was totally at variance with reality, since the British were not at all interested in any real and effective industrialisation of India.

M.N. Roy, as we know, later returned to India following his dissociation with the Communist movement and this second phase, broadly known as the period of 'radical humanism', witnessed Roy's reinterpretation of marxism in a new perspective. During this period, while he maintained his earlier critique of nationalism and thereby continued to distance himself from the Congress Party, his views underwent a change in regard to the earlier understanding of marxism as just a political instrument for violent overthrow of the exploiter class. Roy now came round to the position that for a real social revolution in India what was primarily necessary was the assertion of a new kind of ethical consciousness with which the people would have to be imbued. The

emphasis now shifted in his thought from political confrontation to a kind of abstract humanism which, however, was of little practical use. As a transition took place in his writings from focusing on the masses to that on the individual and from political action to abstract humanism, his perspective of social revolution became blurred and virtually unworkable.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at that end of the unit.

1) Why were the communists critical of nationalism?

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2) What was the alternative proposed by the Communists for understanding the problem of social revolution?

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3) What were the difficulties of the Communist alternative?

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4) How did M.N. Roy look at the problem of social revolution in his early years?

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5) Could M.N. Roy, as a radical humanist, provide a satisfactory solution to the issue of social revolution?

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31.4 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit we have broadly tried to arrive at an overall evaluation of the contending viewpoints of the nationalists with a socialist outlook and the marxists on the question of social revolution. We have seen that despite their agreement on some major issues like opposition to and overthrow of British imperialism, Hindu revivalism and different types of obscurantism on the one hand and their inclination towards the values of Socialism and rejection of absolute free market economy on the other, they ultimately differed in regard to the issue of the complex interrelation between social revolution and nationalism. For the nationalists it was nationalism which was more important than social revolution and, consequently, the basic issue of social transformation ultimately got compromised. For the marxists however, it was social revolution which was more important and they felt that this was an issue which could not be effectively settled within the framework of nationalism. In this venture, while emphasising class struggle they quite often mechanically contraposed the two and there were occasions when they got themselves isolated from the mainstream of the freedom struggle.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) What were the points of agreement between the socialist minded nationalists and the marxists?

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- 2) What was the main difference between the socialist minded nationalists and the marxists?

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- 3) Why is it that the alternative approaches to social revolution as suggested by the nationalists as well as the marxists proved eventually unworkable?

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31.5 KEY WORDS

Class Struggle is a concept used in marxism implying the idea of conflict between the privileged and the underprivileged in society.

Colonialism means direct political control of underdeveloped regions by the developed countries.

Fascism is an ideology rooted in terror and violence for defending free market economy when it is faced with a crisis.

Free market economy is an economic system where absolute freedom is given to the traders to conduct market operations and reap profit; this is the other name of capitalism.

Hindu revivalism was a trend in the national movement in the country which glorified the Hindu tradition of religious values and beliefs in absolute terms.

Secularism means the idea of maintaining a distance between religious beliefs and socio-political questions; it also implies tolerance of all religious beliefs; equality of all religions.

Socialist Revolution means the act of capturing political power by the working class. The first socialist revolution took place in Russia in October, 1917.

31.6 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

Chandra, Bipan et al, 1972, *Freedom Struggle*, New Delhi.

Chandra, Bipan et al 1988, *India's Struggle For Independence: 1857-1947*, Penguins, New Delhi.

Desai, A.R. 1976, (Fifth edition), *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay.

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

Varma, V.P. 1980, (Second Edition), *Modern Indian Political Thought*, Educational Publishers, Agra.

31.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Sub-section 31.2.1
- 2) See Sub-section 31.2.3

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sub-section 31.3.1
- 2) See Sub-section 31.3.1
- 3) See Sub-section 31.3.1
- 4) See Sub-section 31.3.2
- 5) See Sub-section 31.3.2

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) See Section 31.4
- 2) See Section 31.4
- 3) See Section 31.4