

POLITICS OF SOCIALIST PARTIES IN POST-INDEPENDENT INDIA

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ABSTRACT:

The most fertile soil for the socialist movements in the world is based on social relations based on wide disparity between rich and poor, the exploitation of submerged strata of society by the dominant class and social and economic inequalities. The genesis of socialism can be traced from the early periods in one form or another but various parallel streams of socialism were in existence even during modern period but the most striking stream of socialism came in form of Marxist ideology and the Russian revolution proved the most historic incident which divided whole world on the basis of ideology of communism and socialism. The working class of the entire world was influenced very much by this revolution. It was considered as silver lining for the most suppressed section of the society. India was also not exception to it. India was passing through the great turmoil and was struggling against the British imperialism under the leadership of congress party. The Russian revolution inspired the Indian socialist leaders and they formed Communist Party of India under the leadership of M.N Roy but a section of leaders with socialist inclination in Congress Party considered the Marxist ideology as an alien for the Indian society and culture. They decided to follow the indigenous socialism rather following a foreign idea which was not suitable to the values of Indian culture. These socialist leaders had sharp differences with the leaders of Congress Party but they decided to remain within the party to avoid the distraction in freedom struggle of India. They formed Congress Socialist Party in 1934 within the Indian National Congress but couldn't remain within congress party after independence. They formed Socialist party and contested elections but couldn't get desirable results. This frustration of socialist leaders further escalated the differences among the socialist leaders.

KEYWORDS: Socialism, Marxism, CPI, Ideology, Constitutionalism, Legislative assembly.

The Russian revolution under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin was the most historic event in international politics. It gave new impetus to the politics of entire world and showed a new way of thought about life. It was a silver lining for the working class throughout the world because this revolution was based on the basic principles of Karl Marx which has shown the path of emancipation of the submerged strata of the society. This ideology of Karl Marx has worldwide repercussions and attracted the philosophers, leaders, thinkers and social activist all over the world. The political leaders formed political organisations on this line in almost all countries. India was also not exception to it and Communist

Party of India (CPI) was formed on 26th December 1925 under the leadership of M.N Roy and other like minded persons. Till the early 1930s the socialist movement in India was led by under the banner of Communist Party of India. A section of the leaders with socialist inclination emerged within the congress during 1930s who considered Marxism as alien ideology of socialism and they wanted to execute socialism in India through indigenous means. They had sharp ideological differences with congress leaders but couldn't form separate political organisation at that crucial juncture because it could weaken the freedom struggle that's they decided to form a socialist group within Indian National Congress and in this way Congress Socialist Party was formed in 1934 by leaders like Acharya Narendra Dev, Ram Manohar Lohia etc. It can be considered as the beginning of indigenous socialist politic in India. The leaders of Socialist Party had sharp differences with Congress Party on the issue freedom movement, the ways and means of struggle. The leaders of socialist party opined that merely independence from British rule will not be completed without the independence of poor from the poverty, illiteracy, starvation and miserable condition s. It will be only transfer of power from British capitalist class to Indian capitalist class. The parallel socialist movement were in existence during freedom struggle, one was under the aegis of communist leaders and second stream was of leaders of socialist party.

These two parallel lines of socialism have their contribution in freedom struggle by their own means but with one objective that is the well being of working class and submerged strata of society. The leaders of congress socialist party maintained distance with communists because they considered the Marxian ideology as an alien ideology which was not suitable to social, economic, political cultural ethos of Indian society. The idea of socialism of socialist party leaders was indigenous and according to the basic values of Indian culture. The main focus in this research paper will be on the socialist politics of leaders of Socialist party.'

Although the congress socialist party was formed in the later part of freedom struggle but had contribution not only in freedom struggle of India but also has played an active role in politics of post independent India. The leaders of congress socialist had sharp differences with leaders of congress party even during the freedom struggle. The leaders of both parties had differences on the issue of Second World War. The war was being fought between fascist and allied forces and Nehru had the opinion that India should support allied forces against the fascist but the leaders of congress socialist party had the opinion that both fascist and imperialist forces are

dangerous to India its independence and it is golden opportunity for Indian people to intensify their struggle to get independence. Ram Manohar Lohia, the leader of congress socialist party condemned Nehru's pro- allies' attitude for Second World War in congress socialist party conference at Lahore in 1938. The sharp difference between congress socialist party and congress leader was on constituent assembly during freedom struggle. The British Prime minister Attlee sent a cabinet delegation to discuss the modalities of formation of constituent assembly in 1946 and congress party had disagreement with the delegation at initial stage but agreed to work upon formation of constituent assembly after long deliberations but congress socialist party opposed this arrangement and idea because they had the view that such constituent assembly will not represent the real will of Indian society specifically the peasants, working class the downtrodden section and had a apprehension that such constituent assembly could never bring the freedom that they had been fighting for. They blamed the leaders of congress party that they have left the way of struggle and have come to compromise and constitutionalism. The leaders of congress socialist party also opposed the idea of partition of India into two parts by Mountbatten plan. They considered it as a hasty step and warned congress leaders not to accept this partition and later vehemently criticised the congress leaders for accepting partition.

The sharp differences between the leaders of congress party and congress socialist party during the freedom struggle couldn't hold them together for a long time. The leaders of congress socialist party didn't apart from congress because it could weaken and distract freedom struggle that's why they remained in congress party despite the sharp ideological and structural differences but after independence both the segments of congress party couldn't tolerate each other for long time within one party and the leaders of congress socialist party left no option but to form a new political party on different ideological lines. So a new political party named Congress Socialist Party was formed at Nasik in 1948. The period between formation of this party and first general elections was crucial to leaders of this party. They had to consolidate themselves not only as a political force but also had to compete with the rising popularity of the ideology of Marxism-Leninism. The communist party of India was also consolidating its position to consolidate the idea of Marxism and socialism in India. So the leaders of congress socialist party have a political fight on two fronts. The congress socialist party has to rejuvenate its strength by making it a mass political party and for that they brought revolutionary structural and functional changes in the party. They adopted the mass membership in place of selective membership. They tried penetrating the

idea of socialism in peasantry, working class and other economically and socially exploited sections of the society. They formed 'Hindi Mazdoor Sabha' and 'Hindi Kissan Panchayat' to politically organise these sections in favour congress socialist party. They organised mass strikes and huge peasants' demonstrations for the expansion of the party.

The first litmus test for this newly formed political party came during first general elections which were held in 1952. The congress socialist party had high hopes in these elections and they drafted a very attractive and pro-poor election manifesto. They decided to contest 296 Loksabha seats and 1796 seats for various state legislatures assemblies but the results of elections were very disheartening and shocking for socialists. They won only 12 Loksabha and 126 seats in various legislative assemblies. Although this party emerged as the second largest party but it shattered the hopes and expectations of the leaders. A special convention of party was convened to discuss and analyse the reasons of defeat and to rejuvenate its workers at Panchmari in 1952. Lohia the president of the convention called that both structural and operational parts are responsible for the defeat of the party and he advised to make an equi-distance with Marxism and Capitalism because both are not the viable alternate for the growth of Indian society. To give boost to the cadre of the party he suggested that all like minded parties and groups should come together to achieve the objective of socialism in India through Indian means. To concretise this idea 'United Socialist Group' was formed on 1st June 1952 under the leadership of Sucheta Kriplani in parliament. Later both the socialist groups decided to merge and form a new socialist party. The Praja Socialist Party was formed in September 1956 and it was beginning of new era in socialist politics in India. The leaders of new socialist party expressed that a new way socialism should be built to create trust among the masses specifically in working class and submerged society and to broaden the base of Praja Socialist Party. The differences emerged among the leaders of newly formed socialist party on the issue of cooperation with congress party. The communist party emerged as the main opposition party after the first general elections and both leaders of congress and socialist party under pressure due to growing popularity of communist party of India. So Nehru and other congress leaders were of the opinion that some sort of understanding should be reached with socialist party to curb the influence of communist party. Nehru called Jai Parkash Naryan to make some understanding on some common issues. Both the leaders met in February 1953 to reach at some understanding both governmental and non-governmental level but Ram Manohar Lohia another great leader of congress socialist party had disagreement on this understanding of Nehru and

Jai Parkash Naryan. He had the opinion that Praja Socialist Party should go for elections without any understanding with congress but he was in favour to reach at alliance with other like minded socialist groups. This difference of opinion created a bit bitterness between the leaders and Jai Parksh Naryan resigned national executive of Praja Socialist Party but later withdrew it on the request of Lohia.

Another development in socialist politics in post independent India was elections of the state assembly of Travancore in 1952. During these assembly elections the leaders of Praja socialist party contested elections with a strategy to avoid the socialist voters and they decided that they will contest election only in the constituencies where the party has strong hold and remaining seats will be left for congress party. The Praja Socialist Party contested only on 40 seats and won 19 seats and no political party was in position to form the government. congress party offered a outside support to Praja socialist party to form the government and the leaders accepted this offer of congress and formed the government. Ram Manohar Lohia was arrested in Allahabad while he was protesting against the irrigation policies of congress government and he advised Travancore chief minister to resign in protest of this arrest but chief minister of Praja socailst party refused to resign and Lohia resigned from the national executive of the party and it escalated the tension among the leaders of this party. This infighting didn't stop here Madhu Limaye another powerful leader of the party was suspended in March, 1955 and Lohia opposed this move of the party with Acharya Narender Dev and called this act as 'partisan of paralysed' socialism. He advised the leaders to revoke the suspension of Madhu Limaye and engage him in party activities to strengthen of the ideology of socialism but it was not easy to go back from this crisis and the meeting of national executive was conveyed on 3rd June 1955 but Lohia didn't attend the meeting and he got suspended from the party. Lohia and his supporters met at Hyderabad on 28th December 1955 and formed a new socialist party and Lohia was elected its first president. The second general elections were held in 1957 but at this time socialist party was divided into two which resulted in total failure of both socialist party in these elections and even Lohia himself lost the elections with other prominent leaders of socialist leaders. It was a big setback to socialist politics in India.

The big defeat in second general elections was big lesson to both the socialist party and again efforts were started for the unification of socialist group under one party to save socialist movement in India. Jai Parkash Naryan and Lohia started to communicate on the issue of merging of Praja Socialist

Party and Socialist Party and they met in July, 1957 to discuss the unification of socialist movement but Lohia put several conditions i.e. acceptance of constitution, programmes and policies of socialist party for merger however he was agreed to accept the flag and symbol of Praja Socialist Party but the leaders of other side were not ready to accept these conditions of Lohia and the talks of unification were ultimately failed with blames and counter blames. Lohia blamed that socialist movement has lost its real and radical character and blamed the leaders of Praja Socialist Party will give a space to communist party to flourish. Lohia had the view that either the socialist party or communist party will be the alternate of congress party in another five or ten years because he was hopeful that congress party will lose ground due to anti-peasants and anti-labour policies and socialist party will be the alternate and to infuse the enthusiasm in party workers he mobilised a new militant programme based on triple programme of caste, language and price policy.

The third general elections were also proved disaster for socialist politics in India. It shattered the all hopes of Lohia who had the belief that socialist party will be the alternate of congress party. Now he realised that this divisive socialist politics can never be alternate for congress party. So he finally decided to merge socialist party with praja socialist party at any cost. He declared that the leaders of praja socialist party can take over the united socialist party with a condition that they adopt the policies and election manifesto of socialist party. The first merger of both parties reached at Uttar Pardesh Vidhansabha where both the parties got merged and formed united socialist party to meet the threat of growing popularity of communist party and invasion of China. Lohia was so critic of congress party that he didn't hesitate to invite other political parties to come together to fight against congress party. He invited the leaders of Swatantra party to have common front to defeat congress party on common minimum programme even the Swatantra party had sharp differences with socialist party on some issues of socialism.

During fourth general elections Lohia gave the slogan "Remove Congress and Save the Country." Although socialist party did it best to go with united opposition in general elections against congress but it didn't appeal to the most of the opposition parties and they decided to go alone. Although congress got setback in few states legislative assemblies where they lost majority but only in Tamil Nadu D.M.K got full majority but rest of the states no political parties could get comfortable majority to form government then socialist party tired to form non-congress government in these with the help of other opposition parties but demise of Lohia on 12th October

1967 gave a final blow to socialist politics in India in general and socialist party in specific.

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