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## The spouting of communism In Indian Content

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### Abstract

*The Russian revolution in 1917 had greatly influenced the course of the national movement in India. The Russian revolution had brought the new trends in course of the freedom struggle in India. In fact, the first Communist government of the world had inspired some people of India to struggle against colonialism in a Russian revolutionary model.<sup>1</sup> The elements of Communism were already existed in the Indian society and politics. These were reflected in the activities of the Indian people during the whole 19th century. The Russian revolution brought a new current in the Indian freedom struggle for the Communist to put up an alternative type of struggle against the colonial government ignoring the agitation of Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.<sup>2</sup> In this regard it may be considered that Indian Communist movement was a part of the world Communist movement albeit the existence of the ideology of communism can be found in the soil of India .*

### Introduction

The Communist played an important role against the British colonialism in India. It was unfortunate but true that the pluralist trends of Indian national movement have been ignored. When the Cambridge theory showed the national movement as an elite-conflict, the role of the mass in the national movement was ignored. As a challenge to the Cambridge theory subaltern theory stressed on the role of the general masses in the Indian freedom movement. It ignored the role of the leader in the mass movement. The Indian national movement which had been viewed from a fragmented outlook by the postmodernist was not accepted by the historians. But the accepted paradigm was that the national movement and the movement of the class- struggle were co-related to each other. In this respect it was necessary to explore a section of mass's mobilization towards Communist ideology and the role of the Communist leaders in the course of this mobilization in the grass root level. This paper is tried to explore the above facts in my research work acknowledging the trends of the Communist movement in the national level as well as in the provincial level in both colonial and post colonial period.

As a student of history it was necessary both to assimilate and to distinguish the elements of class struggle from the elements of national movements. Congress during the period of the national movement ignored the matter of class struggle and on the other hand the Communist party emphasized strongly on the elements of the class-struggle. This kind of tendency of the Communist leaders isolated them from the main currents of the national movement in India.<sup>3</sup>As a result the mass base of the left- wing politics in India was feeble and weak as compared to the mass base of the Congress party and that was why the Communist did not stand out as an alternative force of Congress in the Indian politics during colonialrule.



The germ of socialist movement in India was hidden among the various elements in the freedom movement. The chief element responsible for the germination of Communism in India was the class struggle against the social unjust and the economic exploitation of the peasants and the labourers by the *zamindars* and *jotedars* and the imperial capitalist class. The renaissance in 19th century in Bengal as well in India, the wave of the anti-imperialist peasant's movement in various parts of India, the self-sacrifice of youths to the cause of the liberation of the nation, the creativity, originality and the progressive mentality of the Bengali intelligentsia in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century and other various ingredients helped a group of young people to bring the revolutionary tendency in the freedom movement of India.<sup>4</sup>

After the failure of the revolutionary terrorist movement, most of the members of the revolutionary terrorist group inclined to bring about the socialist movement in India having being inspired from revolution in 1917. The Indian followers of the revolutionary forces of Russia felt to introduce the same kind of struggle against the anti-imperialist forces accompanied by the feudal and capitalist forces in the Indian soil.<sup>5</sup> The revolutionaries of India at the initial stage emphasized on the procession, general strike and people agitation staying within the non-violence Satyagraha conducted by Mahatma Gandhi and his followers.

Naboodiripad also wrote that only the internal situation of India was responsible spreading the Communist ideology in India.<sup>6</sup> The economic crisis in 1929 brought poverty and inflation which enhanced agony and suffering of Indian people of different layers of society for the reason that the imperialist government wanted to get rid of the economic crisis of their fatherland imposing all expenditure of war on the shoulders of the Indian people. As a protest, the anger and agony of the India people reached into climax and they agitated before the colonial administration in extensive scale. The agitation was provided by the believer of a section of Indian national leaders who conceived that it was necessary to take help from the Soviet Union as well as from the world revolutionary group for organizing the Communist movement as an alternative movement of Congress's national movement against foreign rule.<sup>7</sup>

From this above point of view the British intellectuals and some sections of Indian intellectuals complained drastically that the Communist movement in India was provided and conducted by Moscow and it was nothing but a conspiracy against the British Raj. But historians like Sumit Sarkar wrote that the Indian Communism had sprung from the India national movements.<sup>8</sup> In the Amritsar Congress of the CPI in 1958, it was also mentioned in the preamble of the constitution of the party that the origin of the India Communist Party was the product of the revolutionary movement, one of the trends of the national movement of India.<sup>9</sup> The revolutionary terrorist found the new mode of struggle for craving the freedom of India inspiring from the October revolution in Russia.

The new method of movement was the struggle for bringing about the Communism in the Indian soil defeating the British imperialism and capitalism and Indian feudalism. It was also noted that the ploughingfield for cultivating the seeds of Communism was found long before the October Revolution in 1917. After capturing the political power in 1757 the English East India Company used India's



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men, money and the resources in the interest of the British imperialism. In this way the traditional structure of the Indian economy was broken down by the wave of the inclusion of the capitalist economy brought by the East India Company.

The breaking of the traditional economy and the society acted as one of the important components for the rise of the Communism in the Indian soil. The chief feature of the traditional economy was mostly feudal, self –sufficient village with existing caste system, insufficiency of the surplus production and the absence of the preconditions for the growth of the capitalism etc. East India Company sought out its commercial interest through this kind of production structure which gave no response at the rise of capitalism. So, it was the British government who helped Indian traditional society and economy to its destruction.

Moreover, the officers and the workers of the East India Company, Company itself and the various agencies outside the company exploited the disintegrating traditional economy by various kinds of unfair means. The traditional Indian economy was replaced by the colonial capital economy. The people who were involved in the pre- capitalist economy exerted their anger to protest the exploitation for their survival and existence and they agitated against the East India Company that assisted its peaceful demise for the interest of colonial capitalism. So, the series of the insurrection were taking place by the peasants in the various parts of India as well as in Bengal, such as Sannyasi revolt, Fakir Revolt, Chuar revolt, Wahabi and Farangi revolt, Paik revolt, Deccan insurrection, tribal revolts, etc. Among them the Chuar, the Malangi, the Layek, and the Jungle Mahal movement were seen in the district of Midnapore.

Of course, all these movements were the spontaneous protest of the rural people of India. It was noticed that these spontaneous protest movements occurred much before the publication of the materialistic explanation propagated by Karl Marx who taught the working class to be united and agitated against the exploitation and the oppression of the capitalist class.<sup>10</sup> India was colonized by the British East India Company and it was necessary for the British to complete the process of colonization by which India could be transformed as re-scale trade centre of the British Empire. The initiative was taken to build India into a colonial state in the true sense of the term with the help of the few Indians who were known as compradors class through the relationship of the patron client. It was known that the interest of the Indian compradors class and the interest of the British were the same – both wanted to make profit from their commercial activities. For the same kind of interest, the British and the few Indian took the path of co-operation to each other. The interrelationship of above stated classes increased the expression of Indology among Indians watching the mentality of the Britishers very closely.

The Indian society and culture were also being reshaped in a colonial model for extending the process of exploitation under the colonialism. For this purpose, various programmes were taken, such as introduction of capitalism in agriculture, eradication of social superstition, introduction of the western education through English language, development of transport and communication, introduction of western laws and customs, establishment of unitary government with its one constitution etc. It is to



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be remembered all these were the product of the ideology of westernization. Westernization and colonization were the two sides of one coin.

Nationalism in the later part was reaction of the Indian people for neglecting Indian culture and society by the British people in the influence of the ideology of westernization that the west was the supra super power in any aspect of life as compared with east. As a reaction of westernization, the Indians were trying to go back to the glorious days of the Vedic Period.<sup>11</sup> They wanted to supersede the western culture by the Vedic culture. As the Vedic philosophy contained the egalitarianism, so it was easy for the Communist leaders to spread the egalitarianism ideology of the Communism in Indian soil following the tradition of Vedic philosophy.

A clear and distinctive change was seen in the field of thoughts and intelligentsia of Bengal as well as in India through the introduction of the western education. The colonial rule created a new educated civil society by which the traditional rural village structure was on the threshold of tottering. As the British introduced the modern system of government, the newly emerged civil society was being got much importance by the colonial government than the *zamindars* and *jotedars* in the traditional society in India. The administrative work was conducted successfully with the help of the English educated newly emerged civil society and this society acted as the intermediates between the colonizer and the colonized.

The wave of the new political ideology of the elite intellectual class touched the working and the peasants' class which were being organized by the efforts of the Communist leaders for protesting the exploitation of the capitalistic colonial state. It was also remembered that some of the elite intellectuals drenched by the philosophy of Marx, were trying to mobilize the working class in favour of the Marxist ideology.<sup>12</sup> In this way the working community revealed themselves as a 'class' in the Marxian concept. In the colonial period a series of the modern industries were developed and with this development the working class also grew to a vast extent.

The rise of working class accelerated the extortion of the capitalist class and they were being united under the leadership of the Communist against the exploitation of the capitalist class. The class consciousness of the labourers was gradually increasing when they were brought into an organization to protest against authority for illegal activities and against the oppression of the colonial government. In the year 1862 there were about 1200 workers assembled for the demand of eight hours work a day as duty hours in the factory at Howrah Railway. SukumolSen wrote that the significant importance of this strike was that the Indian railway workers assembled themselves for the demand of the eight hours as duty work per day before the 24 Years of the historical event of May Day in 1886 in Chicago in America.<sup>13</sup> At this time the Indian working class was not grown. Instead of being a working class, the Indian labourers assembled in large numbers in this strike.

This ideological concept was fabricated by the activities of Garibaldi and Mazzini, the terrorist activities of the Nihilist intellectuals of the Russia and the Fabian movement of Ireland. But the movement failed to achieve the goal, the ideology of the revolutionary terrorism was replaced by Communism. The revolutionary terrorists were exiled in the Andaman or other places. In the



Andaman most of the revolutionaries were inclined towards Communism by studying Communist literature or by hearing the speeches of the Communist leaders in their imprisonment period.<sup>14</sup> After releasing from the jail they joined the Communist party and came forward to take leadership for spreading the Communist ideology in the Indian soil. The seeds of Communism germinated in Bengal as well as in India for all these above conducive and congenial climates.

Finally, it was worthy to mention that the philosophical thinking of Indian people and Indian spiritualism preached the hymns of equality. In the eyes of God all are equal and all would get the same punishment for committing same kind of sin. The Almighty never looked down upon the poor and downtrodden and favoured the rich and wealthy person in the society. This kind of egalitarian spiritualism created a suitable and adorable atmosphere for spreading the philosophy of Communism which dealt with same kind of egalitarianism among men in society. The ideology of Communism denounced the caste, creed, sex, race, religion and etc. and it believe in the equality and fraternity of human being.

So, in this context the 19th century renaissance helped to prepare field to reap Communism both in the pragmatic field and psychological field. The pragmatic field was the political agitation of the labour and peasant against the British colonial exploitation. The various kinds of agitation against oppression of the capitalism helped the Communist movement to sprout at the grass root level and the grass root level prepared the ground of national platform from which the Communist agitations were organized centrally against the extortion of masses in 20th century. In the psychological field, the writings of the great personalities from Rammohan Roy to Rabindranath Tagore helped to build the public psychology in favour of the Communist ideology.<sup>15</sup>

In this historical context the Communist turned up with their new zeal and vigour to establish the socialist equality as well as to liberate India. The effects of the Great November Revolution fell on the revolutionaries who were fighting for liberating India from the British rule from before the 1st world war provided the strength in the anti-colonial element. These revolutionaries also decided to organize the revolution in Russian model in the soil of India. In fact, the unique combination of the elements like Indian national movement, anti-imperial and anti-colonial movement, and anti-feudal movement were reflected in the activities of the Communist party and its various mass organizations. Their movement against imperial forces and the capitalist forces produced substitute reaction among the masses of India. The construction of the left-wing as a substitution of the Congress in the Indian political system in the colonial period was also considered as an ideological alternative to liberate India from foreign rule.<sup>16</sup>

## Conclusion

In this perspective the emergence of the Communist as a substitute political party of the Indian national Congress was seen within the structure of the bourgeois democratic system in the colonial period. The failure of the Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress for a fruitful anti-imperial movement taking the issues of the working class and the peasantry opened the space for the leftist as a



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substitution in the Indian national movement. It was true that the Congress had a phobia of losing the support of the pivotal power in its organization in the rural areas such as *zamindars* if they would fully support the economic issues of the *ryots* and the poor peasants and in a same way, they might lose the support of the bourgeois and the industrial class if they would support fully the economic issues of the working and labour class.<sup>17</sup>

In such dilemma the Congress wanted to create its mishmash organization from which the demands of the working class and the peasants were not raised. This activity of the Congress left a space through which the Communist began to move the process of mobilization of the worker class and the peasantry in the Indian politics. The urban elite educated bourgeois class who established the Communist party for the betterment of the proletariat class felt it necessary to introduce the alternative political philosophy in the Indian politics after disappointing to form a hotchpotch combination of all sections including caste, creed sex, race, bourgeois, proletariat, *zamindar*, *ryot* etc in Congress organization. The working class and the peasantry realized quickly that the economic issues of the poor class were not strongly protected in the anti- colonial movement organized by Congress under the leadership of Gandhi. The Communist rightly realized the vacuum space of the Congress and they tried quickly to fulfill the vacuum space by the best fresh air of Marxian ideology.

Their well-organized consciousness was fomenting against the oppression of the colonial rule under the leadership of the Communist. The Russian struggle provided the strength and courage to struggle against the colonial and imperial forces. As a result, those who established the Communist party of India in the abroad got inspired to launch the Communist agitation in the Indian soil watching the centripetal currents of the multiple components in favour of Communism. In this congenial climate of the awakening consciousness, the Communists' ideological currents were able to increase itspace.

In this context the Communist movement of the district of the Midnapore may be studied very carefully. The Communist movement which was going on around the world after the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, the district of Midnapore was not isolated from the trends world Communism. In this regard the Communist movement was the part of the world Communism, the Communist in Bengal was the part of the Communist movement in India and the Communist movement in Midnapore was the part of the Communist movement in Bengal. The study of the Communism at the grass root level enriched to the grasp the Communist movement in provincial as well as national level. This paper is tried to find out components of the Communist movement in the district of Midnapore in conformity with provincial Communist movement emphasizing the regional variety which created Midnapore as one of the strongest centers in provincial level. The Communist movement was struggling to find out space for putting its feet in the national movement isolating the Congress from its unquestionable mass base in Midnapore till 1940's.<sup>18</sup> Moreover the British government from the initial stage of Communist movement took all kinds of measures for checking the spread of the Communism in India. So, it was very difficult task for the Communist to find space in the anti-colonial movement.

It was noticed that the Communist party very slowly but steadily found space using the platform of



the Congress as a guise of a Congress man to avoid the eyes of the British police as well as to mobilize the public opinion in favour of the Communist ideology. After independence the Communist emerged as major political power utilizing the unpopular issues of the state in their favour through mass mobilization. It would be not wrong to say that the grass root level was the replica of the national level and the grass root level was functioning as the unit of the Communist movement in the national level. The exploration of the Communist movement in Midnapore bestowed to same degree to the provincial as well as the national level in the Communist movement. Here the regional history helps to understand the provincial level and bestowed the useful dimension.

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