
UNIT 14 COMMUNIST THOUGHT: M N ROY AND E M S NAMBOODIRIPAD

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14.1 INTRODUCTION

Communist thought in India has its origins in the writings of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and their followers. The Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 had a tremendous impact on the entire world. The social democratic parties, reflecting the thoughts of Marx and Engels, had already been established in the major countries in Europe. The Bolshevik revolution in Russia created the erstwhile Soviet Union and the communist parties came to be established in various parts of the world, especially in Asia, Africa and the Latin American countries for strengthening the on-going liberation struggles and providing a boost to the spread of communist thought.

The Indian Communist Party was established in 1924 and worked in close association with

communist movements guided and inspired by the Communist International also called the Comintern. M N Roy, with his characteristic Marxian views, influenced the world communist movement, though he was disillusioned by communism in later life. The Indian Communist Leader and Theoretician EMS Namboodiripad kept holding the red flag till the end of his life. Communist thought in India is an interesting account of the development of the Marxian thought and philosophy as it grew in the Indian conditions.

14.2 EVOLUTION OF COMMUNIST MOVEMENT IN INDIA

The communist movement in India drew on the basic tenets of Marxism by accepting the Marxist analysis of dialectical materialism and the materialist interpretation of history. As such, the socio-economic cultural evolution period has been interpreted by the Indian Communists in terms of the sociology of class struggle. Like all the Marxists, the Indian communists together with the other communists, believe in the destruction of capitalism and the eventual establishment of a socialist/communist society. The Indian Communists regard imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism, just the way Lenin did. In India, the communists believe and in fact, propagate that the working class in alliance with the other toiling masses is alone capable of bringing about the socialist revolution. They also believe in proletarian internationalism.

The communist movement in India, thus, has its intellectual and ideological roots in the philosophy of Marxism. The Indian Marxists not only accept Marxism, but also interpret the Indian socio-political developments in the Marxian style; at times, the interpretation seems imposed while at others, it becomes a victim of oversimplification. They accept the following Marxist formulations as gospels beyond any doubt:

- i) The state and society are distinct entities: the type of society dictates the type of state. Accordingly, the state is not independent of society; its relationship with society is that of a superstructure and a base.
- ii) The state is an instrument of the society: those who control the society also control the state; the state is the state of the dominant class.
- iii) The state, in a class society, is also a class institution and as such seeks to establish the values of society. The capitalist state is the state of the capitalists, by them and for them.
- iv) In a capitalist society, the working class will organise itself and will seek to overthrow the capitalist society; in the pre-capitalist society, the workers along with the capitalists could overthrow the feudal society.
- v) With the abolition of the capitalist class society, there would usher the classless socialist society, which with its political organ – the dictatorship of the proletariat – would establish socialism and pave way for a classless – stateless communist society.
- vi) In the struggle for liberation, the socialist forces all over the world would support the colonial-exploited people in their conflict against the capitalist-imperialist society.
- vii) At first, the struggle between the colonial people and the imperialist state first, and thereafter, the struggle between the socialist states and the capitalist states would end in the victory of socialism.

The Indian communist writers/scholars, have made significant contributions at the level of theoretical construction. They have tried to apply the concepts and propositions of historical materialism to the studies of Indian history and philosophy. Their analysis of the Indian situation of past and present has been instructive, though with loopholes here and exaggerations there.

14.3 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMUNIST PARTY

The Communist Party of India was founded in September, 1924 possibly at the initiative of Satya Bhakta of Uttar Pradesh. There were only 78 members belonging to the Indian Communist Party at the time of its foundation. Later the membership rose to 250. Muzaffar Ahmed (The Communist Party of India and its Foundation Abroad) holds that the Communist Party of India was founded abroad and was affiliated with the Communist International. He states that the Communist Party was formed towards the end of 1920 at the Tashkent Military School. David Druha thinks that the Communist Party was founded in 1921 at Tashkent. In December, 1929 a communist conference was held at Kanpur, and was chaired by M. Singaravelu Chettiar where a resolution was adopted calling for the formation of a Communist Party of India (CPI) with the headquarters in Bombay.

Some differences emerged within the Communist Party in relation to its link with the Communist International. Although the Communist Party of India was not legally a component of the Communist International, its ties with the international revolutionary movement were nevertheless being consolidated. There were closer links with the Communist Party of Great Britain. Its delegation of George Allison and Philip Spratt came to India in 1926-27.

The communists, much before the formation of the legal Communist Party of India, had associated themselves with the liberation struggle. The Kanpur Conspiracy Case in 1924, was decided against the communist leaders – S A Dange, Nalini Gupta, Muzaffar Ahmed and Shaukat Usmani – awarding them imprisonment. In the conspiracy case, in 1920, more than two dozens of communists leaders including S A Dange, S V Ghote, Joglekar, Nimbalkar, Mirojkar, Shaukat Usmani, Philip Spratt, Bradly, Muzaffar Ahmed were involved, and they were all sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

The Communist Party of India, by 1928-29 had set before itself the goal of creating a mass-scale revolutionary organisation and an anti-imperialist alliance. The sixth world Congress of the Communist International, in September 1928, had passed a resolution to strengthen the communist parties and the trade union organisations in the colonial countries and warned such bodies against the national-reformist bourgeois organisations, including the temporary agreements with them over agitations launched against imperialistic forces.

14.4 THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA BEFORE INDEPENDENCE

Years after its formation, the Communist Party of India sought to strengthen its position in the trade unions, organising them, guiding them and propagating Marxism and Leninism so as to prepare them for revolutionary struggle against the nationalist bourgeoisie and the imperialistic- capitalistic forces. In the sphere of trade union movement, the Communist

Party of India (CPI) did achieve definite success by making inroads in the workers' bodies. Therefore, in the 1930s, it was able to have its influence among the peasants and workers. As the labour movement gained ground, the activities of the workers, peasants, and political parties, including the CPI became more intensified.

In the 1930's, the CPI adopted a United Front from above by aligning itself with the nationalist movement, but it kept its separate identity among the workers and the peasants. The CPI, as it was a banned organisation, came closer to the Congress and numerous communists joined the Indian National Congress (INC) and formed socialist group within the congress, which came to be known as the Congress Socialist Party (CSP). They remained in the Congress until 1939 when they were expelled on the issue of double membership.

With the axis power Germany invading the Soviet Union in 1941 during World War II, and with the Soviet Union joining the Allied powers, the situation of the Indian Communists became precarious. The ban on the CPI by the Britishers in India was lifted and the CPI which was until then, considering the 1939 war bourgeois war, began not only suffering the war, but also declared it as the people's war against the fascists. The CPI did not support the 1942 Quit India Movement. Professor Verma (Modern Indian Political Thought) has stated that when the Congress leaders (following the 1942 Quit India Resolution) were in jail and the foreign government was following a ruthless policy of repression, suppression and terrorisation of all nationalist forces, the communists strengthened themselves and claimed to have 30,000 members while, in 1942, the party had only 2500 members. During the War, the communists cleverly established their control over the All India Trade Union Congress also.

The communists were divided over the question of independence of the country which was only a couple of months away, especially after the formation of the interim government headed by Jawaharlal Nehru. They were plagued by questions such as: Was the country really free? Was the transfer of power notional or real? Should the CPI support Nehru's Congress? In the debate within the CPI, P C Joshi thought that the transfer of power and independence were real and that the Nehru Government should be supported. On the other hand, B T Ranadive and Dr. Adhikari held the view that independence was not real and that real independence could be achieved only under the leadership of the CPI and that the CPI, instead of supporting the Nehru Congress Government, should fight against it. The opposite view also believed, in harmony with the Soviet theory, that India only appeared to be independent within the framework of a modified imperialistic system. That is why in the second party congress held in Kolkatta (1948), the CPI accepted Stalin's view of two camps: the capitalist and the communist, and therefore attacked imperialism, feudalism as well as the bourgeois Congress. B T Ranadive replaced P C Joshi as the General Secretary of the CPI.

14.5 THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA AFTER INDEPENDENCE

14.5.1 Towards Parliamentary Strategy

With relatively a more militant left, the CPI immediately after independence, adopted a United Front tactic from below: aligning itself with the workers and peasants against the Indian National Congress. Now the CPI strategy was on course of a revolution – with

strikes, sabotage and violence. For Ranadive, following the Soviet Line, the working class was an instrument of revolution. He discounted the peasant uprising in the Telangana Region, much to the annoyance of the Andhra Pradesh communists, even at the cost of losing office of the General Secretary of the CPI. Rajeshwar Rao became the General Secretary of the CPI in 1950.

With the shift of the Nehru Government towards the former Soviet Union, the CPI was officially advised to abandon 'adventurous' tactics and to adopt the policy of contesting Parliamentary Elections. Moderates like PC Joshi, S A Dange and Ajoy Ghosh welcomed the policy shift and the politburo of the Central Committee drew up a draft calling for the creation of a broad anti-feudal and anti-imperialistic front embracing the national bourgeoisie. The path of the parliamentary strategy was clear; Ajoy Ghosh became the General Secretary of the CPI in 1951.

The CPI moved, from 1950 onwards to a process of gradual change- from a class conflict approach to class alliance, from revolutionary strategy to parliamentary strategy. The 1957 Lok Sabha elections saw the victory of the Communist Party of India in Kerala and later on, forming the Government. The 5th Extraordinary Congress of the CPI held in Amritsar (April, 1958) maintained that though it was not possible to achieve success through peaceful and democratic means, yet the parliamentary road to socialism was not altogether infeasible.

14.5.2 Towards Divisions From Within

The dismissal of the Kerala Communist Government in 1959 made the CPI's relations with the Congress strained. The Chinese invasion of India in 1962 made polarisation rather evident in the CPI beyond any repair. The right faction, headed by S A Dange recognised the Indian claims to the territories occupied by the Chinese in 1962; the left faction of the CPI regarded the right's plea as a betrayal of the international proletarian unity. A centrist group led by EMS Namboodiripad and Ajoy Ghosh blamed both the Indian and the Chinese leaders for the border conflict. In 1962, the balancer, Ajoy Ghosh died; Dange became the Chairman of the CPI and EMS Namboodiripad, the General Secretary; it was however a short lived unity. As the split of the International Communist movement became clear with the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China taking opposing stands, the division of the CPI could no longer be delayed; the CPI came closer to the former USSR and the CPI (Marxist), to the People's Republic of China.

The Soviet Union recognised the CPI as India's legitimate Communist Party; the CPI attributed the split to the Chinese machination. The CPI (M), though neutral on the ideology issue, came to be dubbed as hostile to the Soviet position. But even the Chinese distanced themselves from the CPI (M).

The two communist parties remained divided on certain issues. The CPI, by adopting the national democratic front strategy thought of aligning itself with the Indian National Congress, which the CPI regarded as the vehicle of "bourgeois" nationalism. The CPI (M), by adopting the people's democratic government strategy thought of remaining away from the Congress which it regarded as an anathema. In the coming years, the CPI came to be associated with the congress and its laurels and failures came to be counted with those of the congress. The congress began losing ground, votes and legislative seats after 1977, exception being the brief

spell in 1980; so did the CPI. In the meantime, the CPI (M) became popular both with the urban and rural poor and was successful in forming governments in Kerala and West Bengal.

14.5.3 Towards Co-operation of the Communist Forces

Ideologically, the two communist parties remained apart; the CPI aligning with nationalist-bourgeois forces while the CPI (M) working its own strategy of people's democratic government. On the question of Sino-Soviet differences, the CPI supported the Soviet Union and the CPI (M), while disapproving the Soviet Position, did not however support China either. On the border issue between India and China, the CPI's position is that the Chinese should vacate the Indian territories while the CPI (M) favours a mutually agreed formula on the border issue.

With the CPI on the decline, especially after the disintegration of the Soviet Union as a single state, the two communist parties are drawing close to each other, and, now coming up with a United Front election manifesto. In fact, the two communist parties have not had much of differences on economic demands. Both condemn the monopoly-capitalistic strategy; both disapprove of the role of multi-national companies in India's economy; both seek to strengthen socialist measures; both demand social security legislation in favour of the workers and the peasants. Both, in general, are functioning, in spite of their revolutionary –Marxist basis, primarily as socialist-oriented democratic parties within the parliamentary democratic frame work.

14.6 M N ROY: FROM MARXISM TO RADICAL HUMANISM

Manvendra Nath Roy (1887-1954), whose original name was Narendra Nath Bhattacharya had the unique distinction of having worked with Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin. He began his political life as a militant nationalist, believing in the cult of the bomb and the pistol and the necessity of armed insurrection. The futility of this path made him a socialist and then a communist. He joined the Communist International, but was thrown out of it as he differed from its aim of being a movement all over the world.

Roy passed through three phases in his career. In the first phase, which lasted up to 1919, he was a national revolutionary, smuggling arms for the terrorists of Bengal. In the second phase, Roy was a Marxist engaged in active communist movement first in Mexico and then in Russia, China and India. In the last and final phase, Roy emerged as a radical humanist, completing his journey from Nationalism to Communism and from Communism to Radical Humanism. He was in his student life, a revolutionary as well as an intellectual. He had a zest for new ideas and a quest for freedom. This is how he drifted from Marxism towards Radicalism. Marxism and Radicalism constitute the characteristics of his philosophy.

14.6.1 Roy's Marxism

Roy's baptism as a Marxist began in Mexico in 1917 where, along with Boscadin, he accepted Marxism as a philosophy for excellence. He accepted all the major tenets of Marxism and sought to interpret the Indian situation along Marxist lines. This is evident from the following:

- i) Roy submitted his thesis on Colonial Revolution at the Second Congress of the Communist

International in 1920. To him, world capitalism was drawing its main strength of modern European capitalism and so long as the latter was not deprived of this source of super profit, it would not be easy for the European working class to overthrow the capitalist order. Thus, he concluded that the revolutionary movement in Europe was absolutely dependent on the course of revolution in India and other Asian Countries. In order to overthrow foreign capitalism, it was advisable to make use of the co-operation of the bourgeois nationalist elements, but only in the initial stages. The foremost task was to form a communist party to organise peasants and workers and lead them to revolution. If, from the outset, the leadership is in the hands of a communist vanguard, the revolutionary masses will be on the right road towards their goal and they will gradually achieve revolutionary experience.

- ii) Roy gave a Marxist interpretation to Indian history. Its main features were gradual decay of the rural economy, steady rise of capitalism, the conquest of India by the British bourgeois to capture new markets, to find new fields of exploitation and export of capital. The 1857 uprising was the last effort of the de-throned feudal potentates to regain their power; Indian National Congress was the organisation of intellectual bourgeois to carry out their political struggle and to facilitate economic development. Colonial exploitation prevented the normal economic development of India and the working class was too backward to fight for socialism.
- iii) Roy does not identify Marxism with communism; Marxism is a philosophy while communism is a political practice. Roy believed in socialisation of the process of production. When labour is performed collectively, its product must be collectively owned. Private property must cease to be an economic necessity before it can be abolished. Roy rejects the dictum that dictatorship of the proletariat is necessary to achieve communism. He believes that a revolution cannot be made to order. In an industrially backward country like India, the establishment of proletariat dictatorship cannot be envisaged. In India such a thing cannot happen; nor did he agree with the idea of 'withering away of the state'.
- iv) Roy foresaw two things in establishing socialism in India – an agrarian revolution and building up of modern industry under the control of a really democratic state. Roy did not consider socialism an immediate issue for India. Socialism was not a matter of desire for him. It was a matter of necessity. Socialism becomes a historical necessity when majority feels a necessity for it.

The introduction of the mechanical means of production on a large scale, the abolition of pre-capitalist restrictions on production, and the attainment of certain minimum economic level are the historic pre-conditions for establishing socialism. A socialist India could not be built overnight. The problem of transition to socialism in India had two parts viz., (1) achievement of free Indian democracy and (2) Transformation of the social order into a socialist democracy. Roy gave precedence to political freedom over economic freedom and socialism.

14.6.2 Humanist Critique of Marxism

According to Roy, Marx's theory of class struggle has subordinated individual consciousness. He was also critical of Marx giving too much prominence to the working class. To him, polarisation of capitalist society into the exploiting and the working class never takes place. The middle class does not disappear. It is the middle class which produces revolutionaries. Lenin recognised this fact, but failed to recognise the middle class as a class. Thus, Roy denounced the theory of class struggle. Society could never survive without some kind of a social cohesive force and as such, class struggle cannot be the only reality. Roy considered

the proletariat as the 'most backward stratum of the society'. He gave a place of pride to the middle class and the individual. He also denounced the theory of dictatorship of the proletariat as this would establish totalitarianism. Revolutions cannot bring about miracles. What was needed was a judicious synthesis of rationalism and romanticism. As a radical humanist, he thought that revolution was to be brought about not through class struggle or armed violence, but through proper education. Revolution would not bring about any sudden change. He also did not agree with Marxian economic interpretation of history as it had many flaws. For Roy, the biological urge of self-preservation preceded the economic motive of earning a livelihood. He criticised the Marxian dialectics, The evolution of democracy to socialism was a continuous process, and not a dialectical process.

Roy did not regard surplus value as a peculiar feature of capitalism. The creation of surplus value and the accumulation of capital were also necessary in a socialist society. The only difference between a socialist society, unlike a capitalist society, was that the surplus value was not appropriated by a particular class.

Roy made very serious observations about India's polity. He remarked that the Indian traditions of leadership lend themselves to authoritarianism. Leader is considered infallible. The presence of a charismatic leadership indicates the fascist tendency in the Indian politics. One may agree with Roy that India lacks a democratic tradition and the existence of a peculiar social structure and the tendency to hero worship makes for authoritarian tradition. His warning about the Fascist danger in the Indian politics has proved to be true.

Roy feels that no country's interests are ever served or promoted by war. He welcomed the U.N. as a positive step towards world peace. He also suggested the idea of a world government because a world composed of national states can never have peace. Roy's conception of peace was based on a humanist foundation. This can be attained through mutual trust, and cooperation. It presupposes a unity of outlook and a community of interest among people without national and class differences. Reason and persuasion are the foundations on which lasting peace can be built.

While discussing Roy's philosophy of New Humanism, his approach to the radical democratic state/in terms of a co-operative common-wealth has to be analysed. This problem involved the reconciliation of the concept of direct democracy with the ideal of cooperative state. Roy was optimistic about it. He said "Even in large political units and highly complex social organisation of the modern world, direct democracy will be possible in the form of a network of small cooperative common wealth". He envisaged its evolution through voluntary efforts. Its function would be subject to enlighten the public opinion and intelligent public actions. The idea is also based on the cooperative aspect of human nature. To achieve the democratic spirit and outlook, Roy emphasised on the education. Education for democracy consists in making the people conscious of their rights to exist as human beings in decency and dignity. It helps them to think and to exercise their rational judgement. This would also make democratic institutions vibrant, where universal suffrage is given. He did not agree with state managed education, as it creates 'a high degree of conformism and subservience to an established order'. Roy also visualises a polity in which economic democracy and political democracy support each other. He recognises planning with freedom.

14.6.3 Roy's Radical Humanism

In the later years of his life, Roy became an exponent of "New Humanism". He distinguished this from other humanist philosophy and termed it radical. Though Roy is influenced in his approach by the scientific materialism of Hobbes, Ethics of Spinoza and Secular politics as propounded by Locke, he reconciled all these to propound a rational idea of freedom with the concept of necessity. The central purpose of Roy's Radical Humanism is to co-ordinate the philosophy of nature with social philosophy and ethics in a monistic system. "It is for this reason that Roy claims it as humanist as well as materialist, naturalist as well as nationalist, creativist as well as determinist".

- i) Roy's idea revolves around Man. "It is the man who creates society, state and other institutions and values for his own welfare. Man has the power to change them for his greater welfare and convenience. His belief lies in "Man as the measure of everything". As a radical Humanist, his philosophical approach is individualistic. The individual should not be subordinated either to a nation or to a class. The individual should not lose his identity in the collective ego of such notions. Man's being and becoming, his emotions, will and ideas determine his life style. He has two basic traits, one, reason and the other, the urge for freedom. The reason in man echoes the harmony of the universe. He states that every human behaviour, in the last analysis, is rational, though it may appear as irrational. Man tries to find out the laws of nature in order to realise his freedom. This urge for freedom leads him to a search for knowledge. He considers freedom to be of supreme value. While rationality provides dynamism to a man, the urge for freedom gives him direction. The interaction of reason and freedom leads to the expression of cooperative spirit as manifested in social relationship. Thus, Roy's radical humanism culminates into cooperative individualism. Roy's conception of human nature becomes the basis of society and state. He attributes their origin to the act of man for promoting his freedom and material satisfaction.
- ii) Roy presents a communal pattern of social growth. Groups of human beings settled down in particular localities for the cultivation and the organisation of society. Each group marks out an area as its collective domain. The ownership is common because land is cultivated by the labour of the entire community. The fruits of collective labour belong to all collectively. But this does not last long. With the origin of private property, there arises the necessity of some authority to govern the new relations. This gives birth to the state. Roy defines state as 'The political organisation of society'. The rise of the state is neither the result of social contract, nor was it ever super-imposed on society. The evolution of the state is not only historical, but also natural. It was a spontaneous process promoted almost mechanically, by the common regulation of the necessity of co-operation for the security of all concerned, for the administration of public affairs. Roy is aware of the coercive character of the state. He blames it on more and more concentration of power in a few qualified administrators enjoying Cull authority to rule. He criticises it and wants to reshape the state on the basis of the principles of pluralism, decentralisation and democracy. For him, the state must exist and discharge its limited functions along with other equally important and autonomous social institutions. He reduces the functions of the state to the minimum. He pleaded for decentralisation where maximum possible autonomy should be granted to the local units,
- iii) Roy was a supporter of not only a democracy where every citizen will be informed and consulted about affairs of the state, but also of radical democracy as well. Such a democracy will neither suffer from the inadequacies of formal parliamentary democracy, nor will it allow the dangers of dictatorship of any class or elite. The basic feature of the radical democracy is that the people must have the ways and means to exercise sovereign power effectively. Power would

be so distributed that maximum power would be vested in local democracy and minimum at the apex.

- iv) Roy also contemplated an economic reorganisation of the society in which there would be no exploitation of man by man. It would be a planned society which would maximise individual freedom. This is possible when society is established on the basis of cooperation and decentralisation.
- v) Education would be important in Radical democracy. As a radical humanist, Roy came to believe that a revolution should be brought about not through class struggle or armed violence, but through education.
- vi) Roy emphasised the concept of moral man. To him politics cannot be divorced from ethics. Roy traces morality to rationality in man. Reason is the only sanction for morality, Without moral men, there can be no moral society. Moral values are those principles which a man should observe for his own welfare and for the proper working of society.
- vii) He advocates humanist politics. This will lead to purification and rationalisation of politics. Today, man is debased to the level of an unthinking beast power politics. To him, politics can be practiced without power. "Party politics has given rise to power politics". To him any party government can, at best, be for the people, but it is never of the people and by the people. In a country like India, he laments about the evils of party politics that exist, where ignorant conservative people are exploited in the elections. Thus, he favoured the abolition of the party system which will enable politics to operate without an incentive of power. In the absence of that corrupting agency, morality in political practice would be possible.
- viii) Roy's social order rises with the support of enlightening public opinion as well as intelligent action of the people. Roy stands for 'Revolution by Consent'. He concedes the right of the people to resist tyranny and oppression, but he rules out the use of violent methods. Today, the modern state is too powerful to be overthrown. Lastly, according to Roy, "One cannot be a revolutionary without possessing a scientific knowledge. The world stands in need of change. Science has given confidence to a growing number of human beings, that they possess the power to remake the world. Thus, education becomes the essence and condition of revolution and re-construction, Revolution by consent does not operate through the politics of power, but through the politics of freedom".

To conclude, Roy's learning is indeed impressive. He has written a six thousand page book, 'The Philosophical consequences of modern science'. His book, 'Reason, Romanticism and Revolution' is a significant contribution to political thought by an Indian writer. While India has embarked upon the path of parliamentary democracy, in its neighbourhood, many countries were swamped by some form of totalitarianism. He was an Ethical Revisionist in the history of socialist thought. He began his academic pursuits as a Marxist, but gradually almost completely restated all the prepositions of Marx. He gave a moral restatement of Marxism. Roy's application of the Marxist concepts and generalisations to the structure and processes of the Indian economy and society seem thought provoking and enlightening.

14.7 E M S NAMBOODIRIPAD: THE COMMUNIST THEORETICIAN

Ernakulam Manakkal Sankaran Namboodiripad (1909-1998) was one of the architects of

United Kerala, a renowned, brave and committed socialist, historian and Marxian theoretician who took an active part in the communist movement of India. He was born in Perinthalmanna Taluk of the present Malapuram District. His early years were associated with U T Bhattathiripad and many others. He became one of the office bearers of "Yogaskshema Sabha", an organisation of progressive youth. During his college days, he was associated with the Indian National Congress and the struggle for freedom. In 1934 he joined the Congress Socialist Party and was later elected as the Kerala State Congress Secretary. Namboodiripad was widely regarded as the most intellectually sophisticated politician who continued to be a major influence in the politics of Kerala and South India throughout the 1970s. The two principal C.P.M. leaders, Jyoti Basu and Namboodiripad are among the most highly regarded active political leaders in India. They dominated the party since the 1964 split from the CPI and their prominence has attracted a highly competent younger group of leaders. They belong to the C.P.M. party which is influenced by the former Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China.

E.M.S Namboodiripad belonged to the more militant wing of the Communist Party. He was deeply disturbed by the fiercely anti-Chinese foreign policy the congress had adopted after the Sino-Indian border war in 1962 and by the Congress role in overthrowing the C.P.I led government in Kerala in 1959.

E M S Namboodiripad supports the idea that the Maoist notion of a peasant based revolution was more relevant to the Indian situation than the worker based ideas of Marx and Lenin. He remained committed to the Socialist ideas and his compassion towards the downtrodden working class made him join the ranks of the communist, for which he had to also go in hiding for many years. India achieved its independence in 1947 and the state of Kerala was formed in 1956. In 1957, E M S Namboodiripad led the communists to victory in the first popular election in the state. Soon he introduced the revolutionary land reforms ordinance and the education bill, which actually caused the dismissal of his government. E M S Namboodiripad has been a strong supporter of decentralisation of power and resources and the Kerala literacy movement as well.

EMS Namboodiripad was described by the *Frontline* magazine as a "Thinker,, History Maker, the tallest communist leader India has seen, an anti - imperialist and freedom fighter, social reformer, writer, journalist, and theoretician." K R Narayanan, the then President of India described him as "a man of rare vision, acumen and determination. A scholar, historian and journalist, he was above all an educator of the people as well as their leaders. Interestingly, for the last several decades, he analysed the socio-political scene from the firm-rootedness of his intellectual position and enriched Indian political thought to his very last days". "It was certainly", the CPI General Secretary Bardhan said, "Namboodiripad's ideology that shaped Kerala the way it is to-day. The thoughts and writings of EMS have influenced a generation of communists. We all have read EMS we have listened to EMS. We have fought against EMS. We have rallied behind EMS. We have stood for EMS and stood against him. But we could never ignore EMS".

As a true Marxist-Leninist, EMS Namboodiripad emancipated the rural poor and the wage earner keeping in view the peculiar Indian conditions; land reforms were a great characteristic of EMS' communist ideology. He got the land reforms by way of legislation and by

strengthening the Kisan Movement which addressed itself to the problems concerning small landholders and agricultural labour.

For a person of his calibre, the growth of individual capital in India in general and Kerala in particular depended, as EMS Namboodiripad thought, on the growth of consciousness of the people in favour of material production. EMS Namboodiripad favoured industrialisation via the private sector. He said 'because the possibility of industrialisation through the public sector was not very bright in Kerala, so we brought the private sector from outside'.

Namboodiripad was a great communist theoretician who tried to relate the Marxian principles to the Indian realities. In the process, he made his own Marxist interpretation to the Indian situation. That he stood for the toiling masses, the rural labourers, and the exploited workers is a fact of history. But he, as a centrist of the Marxian ideology, favoured the socio-economic changes in the peculiar Indian conditions existing then. In agriculture, his method was cooperativisation; in industry, it was first the introduction of industrialisation and thereafter, its socialisation.

Namboodiripad, like a true Marxist, believed that Marxism was not a static ideology; under different circumstances, its interpretations can be different and for bringing about socio-economic changes, its strategy also differs in different conditions. That was why, to take an out of the context instance, EMS Namboodiripad believed that after the developments in the former Soviet Union following the 1989 years, there could be no restoration of Soviet Communism, and that communism would have to absorb significant postulates of other ideologies.

The conflicting trends among various segments of the Communist party in India were because of competing ideological influences from native and alien social structures. Analysing it beautifully, Namboodiripad said, "The conflict here was between an outdated decadent indigenous social system and a foreign social system that was being newly evolved. While, on the one side, one section is eager to build a new society, another section is eager to protect its own land and the ancient customs and traditions characteristic of it. It is only through introducing the essence of modern society that came to the country through the foreigners, and modernising our society can we protect our country from attack by foreigners."

Some of the leading members of the Communist party were in favour of having a common front with the Congress party. G. Adhikari was of the view that in order to build a strong national democratic movement and to prevent disruption in the Communist party, it was desirable to cooperate with the left-wing forces of the Congress party. The decision regarding this was also taken up by the Vijayawada Congress of the party. The conference took a decision to develop an approach of struggle and unity which will enable the organisation to unite the democratic forces "following the parties of democratic opposition. Namboodiripad was not in favour of this line in politics. Commenting on Namboodiripad's attitude, Adhikari said, "His (Namboodiripad's) bland subjective hatred for the leadership of the majority has led him to propound theories which serve as an alibi for the left-opportunist line."

Namboodiripad rejected the approach of People's Democracy of the Leftists. He said, "The origin and development of the inner-party differences which have led to the split of the party,

should be traced not to the evil intentions, misdeeds of certain individual leaders, but to certain objective factors."

A majority of the members of the CPI (M) were very much critical of the Congress government under Nehru for its decision to overthrow the Namboodiripad's government in Kerala. According to Lenin, "It would be a profound error to think that the revolutionary proletariat is capable of 'refusing' to support the Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks against counter-revolution by way of revenge, so to speak, for the support they have given in smashing the Bolsheviks, in shooting down soldiers at the front and in disarming the workers. First this would be applying philistine conceptions of morality to the proletariat. (since, for the good of the cause, the proletariat will always support not only the vacillating petty bourgeoisie but also the big bourgeoisie); secondly – and that is the important thing – it would be philistine attempt to obscure the political substance of the situation by 'moralising'.

There has been no consistent ideological approach among the leaders of both the Communist parties – CPI and CPI(M). Regarding the merger of both these parties, Namboodiripad's vacillating attitude created a lot of confusion. The old slogan of 'non-capitalist path of development' as applied to India was abandoned by the CPI in its Fourteenth Congress in Calcutta in 1989. It put emphasis on the anti-imperialist, anti-federal and anti-monopoly approach of the party towards the contemporary issues. One also observes distinct divergent approaches by the Left leaders in the CPI(M) on the international issues. For example, in the Thirteenth Congress of the CPI (M) in Trivandrum in 1989, Namboodiripad fully advocated the policies of the Mikhail Gorbachev administration whereas another important leader B.T.Ranadive was very critical of it.

After having these references about Namboodiripad, it would be advisable to have a brief analysis of some of his ideas and attitudes regarding Marxist-Leninist theory, Indian history, caste and politics in India, national integration and unity and the like. Namboodiripad was one of the leading theoreticians and Left leaders of the Communist movement in India. His association with the Left movement in the country over four decades was a blessing for the left and democratic movement. Let us have a brief over view of some of his ideas.

14.7.1 Marxist Leninist Theory

According to Namboodiripad, the First World War marked the beginning of the end of capitalist domination over the nation-state systems in different parts of the world. With the victory of the Communism in the October Revolution in Russia the history of humanity witnessed for the first time, the victory of the working class over the capitalist structures of a country. The ever-lasting spirit of the Russian revolution influenced not only the Eastern Europe but also a major part of the international system. It changed the very political map of the world from capitalism to socialism.

While discussing about the crisis of the capitalism and Marxist-Leninist theory, Namboodiripad said, "In these crises a great part not only of the existing products but also of the previously created production forces are periodically destroyed. In these crises there breaks out an epidemic that, in all earlier epochs, would have seemed an absurdity – the epidemic of over-production. Society suddenly finds itself put back into a momentary barbarism; it appears as if a famine, a universal war of devastation had cut off the supply of every means of

subsistence; industry and commerce seems to be destroyed; and why ? Because there is too much civilisation, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce . "Marx discussed about this crises in his classical work Capital. Not only both Marx and Engels discussed about the recurring cyclical crises steadily leading to its inevitable destruction but also pointed out that the active force which arises within womb of capitalism will surely destroy the capitalism itself. Marx said, "Not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons – the modern working class – the proletarians."

According to Namboodiripad, the formation of the socialist camp comprising several nations would ultimately lead to the virtual end of the colonial systems. While analysing the central features of the world political scene he cautioned us to be aware of the weaknesses and difficulties of the countries of the socialist world. He said that the socialist world is not an island in the ocean of humanity. It coexists with the capitalist world. "While it is possible for the Socialism to exert its influence on the capitalist world , it in its turn faces the dangers of the penetration of the influence of the capitalist world." The present day crises in the capitalist world is bound to have its impact on the Socialist world. Therefore, one has to be careful to see that economic planning proceeds on the well-tested principles of balanced and proportionate development.

He emphasised that the long-term perspectives of the Socialist development programmes should be based on the step by step nationalisation, collectivisation and social control of all the means and instruments of production, including land. He cautioned both State and the Party leadership not to neglect the supreme task of fighting the evil influences of alien class ideology which appears in various manifestations, including the iron grip of religion on the minds of the people. This analysis of Namboodiripad shows now to what extent his philosophy has become relevant in the contemporary society .

14.7.2 On Caste Conflicts

Namboodiripad said that the destruction of the 'age-old' village system and the development of the new capitalism by the British administration resulted in two apparently contradictory features in the Indian society and politics : the emergence of working class as a class and the disruption of the unity of the working class and the toiling people as evidenced in the increasing conflicts between 'backward' and 'forward castes'. These tensions were built into the national movement in which the leaders often highlighted the revival of the 'age-old' Indian civilisation and culture thereby emphasising division of society into a hierarchical system of castes. He talked about the two contradictory features of the Indian politics : the growing unity of the working class against the Bhootlingam Report and the Industrial Relations Bill in 1973, and the growing conflicts between the 'backward' and 'forward' communities. He advised us to have a proper understanding of the nature and depth of these two crises, and to resist oppression that acts as one of the contributing factors giving rise to tensions and conflicts among 'higher' and 'lower' castes. He referred to the non-Brahmin movements in different parts of the country. It is important to remember that the struggle waged by the millions of people belonging to the hitherto oppressed castes and communities has become now an integral part of the struggles for secular democracy. It would therefore, be rational to conclude that the demand for reservations made by the 'backward' communities would be a just demand.

14.7.3 National Unity

One of the important aims of the freedom struggle was to bring about unity among various castes, religious communities and linguistic groups under the banner of revolt against the British administration. The struggle also highlighted the removal of evil systems such as untouchability and inferior status to women. The Bhabnagar Session (1961) of the Congress emphasised on this aspect. It said, "Under the cover of the political and social activities the old evils of communalism, casteism, provincialism and linguism have again appeared in some measures. Communalism which has in the past done so much injury to the nation is again coming into evidence and taking advantage of the democratic apparatus to undermine this unity to encourage reactionary tendencies. Provincialism and linguism have also adversely affected the causes for which the Congress has been fighting for over decades. It is therefore of the utmost importance that every effort must be made to remove these evils or the adoption of this resolution was followed by the appointment of the National Integration Committee.

Namboodiripad said that "the revivalism of the majority gave a modern 'secular' garb of 'nationalism' to the essentially Hindu communalist approach. The revivalism of the minority was on the other hand taking an openly communal stand." He considered revivalism as a serious threat to the national unity.

The betrayal of the national bourgeoisie in the matter of national language and virtual abandonment of the democratic approach to the problems of languages and linguistic states has created growing political discontent among the people. Besides, the economic development programmes have not been able to remove disparities among the people. Increasing powers to the people's representatives, complete restoration of the fundamental rights of the people, removal of anti-people measures, regional autonomy for the tribal areas, equal rights for all citizens irrespective of religion, caste and sex, free compulsory education upto secondary levels, people's cultural programmes, and equitable resources distribution among all regions are some of the measures highlighted by him.

Namboodiripad was very much critical of the abominable treatment given to women in the society. He said that the society is to be modernised, if Hindu, Muslim, Christian and other women – even among the Hindus – are to be enabled to enjoy privileges of a modern monogamous family having equal rights with men, the struggle of women as women should be further carried forward. "That women as an integral part of the toiling classes – working classes, the peasantry – should therefore participate with men in all these movements is also undeniable." Emphasising the role of the organisations of women, he said that these organisations too should realise that their own struggle for equality can be led to successful conclusion only if the common organisations of the working people are strengthened and if they embrace in their ranks both men and women."

14.7.4 Strategy of Indian Revolution

The draft political resolution prepared by the National Council of the 'Right' Communist party for their Congress held at Cochin in October 1971 emphasised on "a Left and democratic government at the centre with the Congress at its head. They officially called it an alliance of 'Left democratic forces inside and outside the Congress'. Namboodiripad was very much

critical of this approach . The CPI(M) gave a call for ‘ a struggle against the whole camp of reaction represented by all parties of the ruling classes , including and dominated by the ruling Congress Party. He advocated for a well-coordinated political struggle against three main enemies of the people – imperialism or foreign monopoly , feudalism or all the antiquated socio-cultural, economic and political institutions within the country, and the rapidly growing monopoly capital with the foreign collaboration.'

He was emphatic about proletarian internationalism of the working classes towards the world socialist movement. He said that ‘Indian revolution is an integral part of the process of transition from capitalism to socialism that takes place on a world scale. But this does not mean that India is ripe for this transition. India has to go through another revolution as the main pre-condition for the transition from capitalism to socialism."

14.7.5 Indian History

Namboodiripad was of the opinion that although historians claim to be ‘impartial’, ‘objective’ and interested only in ‘discovering the truth’, their work invariably reflects the philosophy of the class they belong to. Some of the historians stand for particular religious communities , regional ,linguistic or cultural groups or communities. Their writings often reflect their approaches to the problems of the history and culture of India. Often the conflicting views of different historians, representing particular schools of history create social tensions and instabilities. He said , "Historians other than those guided by the theory of historical materialism are handicapped by the fact that they do not see the history of human society as one of man’s struggle against nature in the course of which he enters into mutual relations with other members of the society. Nor do they perceive that these mutual reactions become what are known as relations of conflicts between the exploiting and exploited classes." It is indeed necessary to look upon the history of all human societies as the history of class struggle. While referring to the study of the history of India, one should begin with the quest for understanding the nature of the pre British society, its weakness, and developments of these weaknesses, existing socio-economic structures, and political regimes.

The political philosophy of EMS Namboodiripad is indeed a valuable contribution to the growth of social sciences of the contemporary society.

14.8 SUMMARY

Communist thought in India has its roots in the Marxist – Leninist ideology. The communist movement in India, though following the Marxist tenets, steered ahead in the specific Indian conditions. The early communists, before the birth of the Communist Party of India (CPI) were anti-imperialist. That is why, they had to undergo imprisonment (Kanpur, Meerut Cases). The CPI, in its initial years, worked with some effectiveness in organising the workers and the peasants. It witnessed a split in the course of its evolution (the CPI and the CPI-M). It stood for the establishment of socialist society and sought an imperialist-free and exploitation-free socialist internationalism. The Indian Marxists had never been the orthodox followers of Marxism. M N Roy moved, theoretically, from Marxism to radical humanism; while EMS Namboodiripad sought, in practical terms, a modernised developed society in India, especially in Kerala.

14.9 EXERCISES

1. Mention, in brief, the growth of communist movement in India.
2. Distinguish between Socialism and Communism
3. How far was M N Roy influenced by Marxism? On what grounds did he differ from Marxism?
4. What were Roy's Ideas on Radical Humanism?
5. Mention the contribution of EMS Namboodiripad to the communist thought in India.
6. Trace the Indian Communist thought before and after independence.