

# THE DOCTRINE OF SOCIALISM IN INDIAN CONTEXT

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## Abstract

*Ram Manohar Lohia, defines "Socialism as the establishment of social ownership over existing means of production, their further development and mass production and some kind of planned economy. The preservations of national freedom, democracy and human rights, securing of peace and what are variously termed as the values of culture, or the spiritual qualities of life are believed to be the general aims of socialism."*<sup>3</sup>

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Socialism "undoubtedly presents a bewildering variety of forms and doctrines". It is also very difficult to give a precise and neat definition of socialism "which will embrace all socialists and exclude all non-socialists". Socialism must be seen as a system of political and economic management with comprehensive structure based on collective action. The concept of socialism becomes meaningless if it is extended to exclude any system of economic management in which state plays an important role. There are no such things as a pure laissez-faire economy today.

Socialism believes in the removal of disparities and aims at providing equal opportunities to all. Socialism is opposed to religious creed, dogmatism and believes in secularism.<sup>1</sup>

J.P. Narayan, "the first thing to remember about socialism is that it is a system of social reconstruction. It is not a code of personal conduct; it is not something, which you and I can practice. Socialism means reorganization of the whole economic and social life of the country. Basic principle of socialism is the socialization of the means of production and abolition of private ownership."<sup>2</sup>

Socialism has taken a long time to develop. Historically, as an economic and political doctrine, it originated as a protest against the evils of capitalism as well as exploitation of the labourers under the factory system. Socialism in the present day comprehensive and systematic forms has its definite origin principally in the works of Karl Marx, who is regarded as the father of "scientific socialism".

Quite before Marx, the Utopian Socialists, Robert Owen in England, and Charles Fourier and Henri de Saint. Simon in France had already sown the seeds of Socialism. Marx brought revolutionary insight to socialist thought and socialist movement.<sup>4</sup> Marxism's Unparalleled Success had a simple cause. Marx very seriously insisted on the unity of theory and practice and he staked the whole future of his doctrine philosophically as well as politically on the rising star of a new social class, Marxism provided a basis upon which the socialist movement could be built in an organized and coherent manner.<sup>5</sup>

In India socialism arose as an offshoot of the nationalist movement. The growth of Indian socialism during the two crowded decades which span the first and the second world wars can best be studied in the political and social context of the time. This growth was not however, in a straight line; it suffered from false starts and setbacks, it was affected by the hostility of the British authorities, recurrent economic crisis, the changing international scene, and the rather violent shifts in the attitude of the communist International towards the nationalist struggle in India. Though some of the great names like Dada Bhai Naoroji, Gokhale and Tilak were the contemporaries of the Great Karl Marks but hardly there was any trace of Socialism in their thinking. It was not their lack of imaginative power but the reason was that during that time socialism and politics were considered

to be and headache only for the educated people. But It does not mean that the pre-war Congress leaders and social thinkers were not aware of the fundamentals of socialism. It is true that they did not idealize the masses, but they had a deep concern for the well-being of the peasantry and the weaker sections of the, society. Swami Dayanand advocated 'equal opportunities to all', and "equality to all human beings". His concept of changing heirs and sons was more radical than any social or economic programme presented by the socialists. While the socialists tackled the problem of equality mainly from the economic point of view, Bankim Chandra thought that the solution to the problem of social equality was more urgent than any other form of equality.

In 1903 the first reference to Marx was made in the 'Amrita Bazar Patrika'. In March 1912, Har Dayal brought out an article "Karl Marx-A Modern Rishi".<sup>6</sup> Swami Vivekananda once declared that he was a socialist not because he thought it a system but "half of loaf is better than no bread".

It was the Russian Revolution of 1917, which made socialism a word to conjure with thirty six socialist ideas which became popular. It was this revolution, which put India, on the road to freedom and brought her into contact with the new idea of socialism.

Gandhi being influenced by Ruskin, Tolstoy and the Bible could not compromise with the violent philosophy of Bolshevism. Gandhi had respect for Eastern institutions, traditions and felt that India should evolve a time indigenous socialism. **Socialism for Gandhi was love and identification with the poor and service to the needy and the dispossessed.**<sup>7</sup>

They were highly inspired by Russia under Lenin, Jai Prakash Narayan, Narendra Dev, Ashok Mehta, S.M. Joshi, M.R. Masani and N.G. Gore began propagating socialist ideas more or less on Marxist lines. Some Indian socialists during the period 1920-1940 were influenced by Fabian Socialism and western parliamentarianism. They derived their immediate inspiration from Gandhi. No doubt they accepted doctrine of classless society from Marx but they believed in peaceful methods of change. They always emphasized that socialism has to be equal partner of democracy in the process of development.<sup>8</sup>

Nehru's visit to Europe in 1926-27 strengthened socialist thinking. His participation in the Brussels Congress in 1927 and the October Day celebration that year in Moscow attracted him towards Socialism.

Indian socialists had faith in constitutional and peaceful means to establish a socialist society. They opposed proletarian dictatorship. They advocated the policies such as establishment of core industries in the Public Sector, nationalization of banking and insurance, state control of foreign trade, minimum wages for landless labour and the industrial workers. Indian socialists Narendra Dev and Jai Prakash Narayan were ardent Marxists who believed in revolutionary socialism and advocated mass movement, but did not accept the complete philosophy of materialism. Acharya Narendra Dev believed in the influence of non-economic forces on the productive system. His theory of socialism was built on humanitarian foundations. Jai Prakash Narayan came to be influenced gradually by the philosophy of non-violence and Sarvodaya.<sup>9</sup>

Most of the Indian socialists came under the spell of Gandhi. The liberation struggle envisaged by them could be launched only by Gandhi. The socialists lacked the mass appeal as well as organization to sustain a bid to seize power. Ram Manohar Lohia was deeply connected with nationalism. Essentially a man of revolution, a crusader for the redemption of justice and truth, Lohia was fascinated by Marxist theory but later pleaded for a greater incorporation of Gandhian ideas in Indian socialism. Gandhi exercised the deepest influence over the value-pattern and thought process of Lohia and Jai Prakash Naryan both.<sup>10</sup>

Socialists had always confusion of choice of appropriate means for achieving their objectives. Party was pulled into different directions. Lohia set out to forge an anti-Congress, anti-Nehru front. Meanwhile Congress under the leadership of Nehru in 1955 adopted the goal of 'Socialist Pattern of society and carried various social reforms. However, these measures bred corruption, stifled competition and stagnated economy. Socialists continued to struggle against dynastic succession and corrupt practices of Congress Party.

Ultimately there ought to be a society in which there are equal opportunities and life chances for all individuals to maximize their potentials and attain positions in society. This would be made possible by equal access to the necessities of life. At the same time there must be state where everyone receives equal amounts of

rewards and an equal level of power in decision making, with the belief that all roles in society are necessary and therefore none should be rewarded more than others.

#### REFERENCES

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