

**JAWAHARLAL NEHRU AND THE AGRARIAN
QUESTION IN INDIA ✓**

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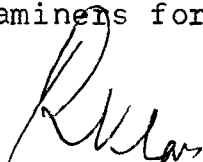
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PHILOSOPHY DEGREE has not been previously submitted
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We recommend this dissertation to be placed before
the examiners for evaluation.



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I

INTRODUCTION:

In a colonial society all major problems owe their origins to colonial rule. From the point of view of social transformation colonial liberation movement thus becomes the inevitable first condition before the question of classes within the colonial society is addressed to. The two questions have often been combined and as a result the anti-imperialist movement has in itself been the struggle for social change; given the nature of leadership and the ideology that guide the movement. However, where the anti-imperialist movement is of a multi-class nature and is led under bourgeois hegemony, the existence in it, of a revolutionary ideology of the working class and peasantry is possible only as one of the many competitive ideologies that characterise the movement. Even if this ideology comprises a fully backed programme for the working class and peasantry based on the objective assessment of socio-economic conditions in the society concerned, the question of social transformation would be postponed till the anti-imperialist struggle attains success.

The role of peasantry in this struggle is significant to the extent it is able to exert influence on the anti-imperialist leadership for its own mobilisation. More precisely,

in the anti-imperialist struggle which is led under bourgeois hegemony the peasantry, unable to throw up its own leadership to the apex level, is mobilised as an ally in the multi-class movement. The very inclusion of peasantry in the movement compels certain sections of leadership- despite their heterogeneous character, to address themselves to the agrarian and peasant problems and to visualise solutions for them. This outlook for agrarian reorganisation in the liberated society is significant from the point of view of agrarian policy in the post-colonial situation. Indeed, it is all the more interesting if the nationalist leaders who were major ideologists and leaders of peasantry during the anti-imperialist struggle are also involved in policy formulation after independence. The above description in fact applies to India.

Indian Nationalism was the product of the disgruntlement of every section of Indian society against British rule. India being a predominantly agrarian society the most widespread disgruntlements arose in the sphere of agriculture. The British policies in land and industry produced the worst crisis in the sphere of agriculture. Peasant movements widely scattered in time and space during the colonial rule

are suggestive of the negative impact of British policy on the Indian peasantry. However, because of its urban middle class origin and the diversities of interests which the nationalist leadership represented, the peasant problem did not claim the primary position in the national movement. Whenever disgruntlement came to the fore, nationalist leadership was drawn into it. This, nonetheless, provided the ground not only for mobilising the peasantry in the national movement but also the ground for soulsearching within a section of leadership towards the solution of agrarian problems in India after colonial liberation movement came to an end. The heterogeneity of nationalist leadership however, prevented agrarian question from throwing up a single, unified ideology. Instead, diverse and even conflicting ideologies came into being within the nationalist movement, the character of the ideology being dependent on the character and perspective of the social force which sought peasant support.

On the agrarian question there were thus two broad types of conflicts of interests during the colonial phase: the first was between the imperial interest and the national interests and the second, between classes within the Indian society itself. Both types of conflicts gave rise to

ideological confrontations, while the former was responsible for the confrontation between the colonial and the nationalist ideologies, the latter gave rise to distinct ideological demarcations within the nationalist ideology. These latter ideologies were of various kinds and ranged from mystical conservative, rightist varieties to radical ones. During the Gandhian phase in Indian Nationalism all these ideologies within the nationalist movement aimed at independence as the main objective and thus nationalist politics as a whole was geared towards this objective, taking the immediate issues into account in which peasant problems figured prominently. But in Gandhian politics of class harmony national independence being the prime objective all the sensitive class-based issues were postponed till the attainment of independence. Whereas the rightist ideologies found Gandhian approach as sufficient in itself, the radical ideology sensed an inadequacy in it, with regard to class based issues. Our main concern here is to deal with the latter ideologies which we have chosen to call radical nationalism.

As a trend in the national movement radical nationalism was pioneered by Jawaharlal Nehru and because of its appeal

was able to exercise influence on a large number of nationalists who agreed on the inadequacy of the Gandhian ideology and believed in the necessity of programmes pertaining to social change. Thus while in the anti-imperialist struggle it supported wholeheartedly the anti-imperialist endeavours of Gandhi, in matters of social transformation and the class based issues it paid attention not only to the question of immediate grievances of peasantry but extended tentative agrarian programmes of long-term importance. Without anticipating a parting from the main nationalist urges, this ideology accommodated a significant measure of radicalism borrowing from and emulating, the radical ideas and experiences of the contemporary world. Thus it operated within the general nationalist paradigm and simultaneously advocated socialism as the solution to the problems of Indian peasantry. The radical advocacies of this ideology are comparable only to those of communist ideology which grew outside the bounds of the nationalist ideology. Communist movement in India had a late emergence, its sphere of influence among the masses remained limited for a long time. Thus these limitations were prominent in the Communist influence on peasantry as well. Still it gradually built up pockets of influence after coming close to the national movement.

Communist movement was different from the national movement in one fundamental respect. Whereas the national movement aimed at national liberation as the sole objective, the communist movement often advocated along with national liberation, revolutionary social change. The reason for this specificity of communist position lay in the fact that it was guided by Marxist ideology and the belief in proletarian internationalism. Thus its activities in India were part of the larger movement at a global level. This also explains why the communist attitude to the national movement also changed at different points of time. The two movements converged and diverged depending upon the communist understanding of the Indian situation from time to time. It was during the phase of convergence that communism and radical nationalism found many a common ground in each other and as far as the agrarian question was concerned both advocated the same solution for immediate and long term problems of the peasantry. When controversies on the understanding of Indian situation resulted in ruptures, the two movements assumed different courses—the communists concentrated on grass-root base and the nationalists on national independence. The radical nationalists meanwhile tried to steer the Congress towards socialism.

As the national movement contained within it the historical urges of different classes and was the only movement able to do so, the anti-imperialist movement finally reached its end with the transfer of power from the imperialist government to the ~~indigenous~~ one under Congress leadership. Thus the dominant classes of national movement came to exercise their control over the newly created political and institutional system. Different ideologies of the nationalist movement assumed primacy in the new situation. There was new ground for the radical ideologies to militate against the conservative ones and the cleavages manifested themselves in politics. This applies to Nehru's radicalism as well.

After independence, Nehru's radicalism became a prisoner of the overall nationalist ideology and under the constraints of the office, lost its sharpness of the pre-independence phase. However, with regard to agrarian question Nehru tried to retain his commitment to radical programmes in the face of conservative oppositions. But being part of his general developmental strategy in which the institutional structure exercised a crucial role, his agrarian policies met with serious constraints in their implementation.

This exercise is on Nehru, focussing upon his perception and treatment of the agrarian question in India. It studies Nehru both as a radical nationalist leader as well as the first prime Minister of India. It is an attempt to cover his long career that progresses through the political course of national movement as well as post-independence politics. Because of the vastness of the area the topic limits itself to Nehru's ideology and politics, with regard to their relevance for the agrarian question.

Most of the works on Nehru are biographical. They are concerned with the many sided career of a leader who has played significant role in India's independence and in the shaping of policies for India after independence. Among the major contributions are Michael Brecher's biography of Nehru, S.Gopal's biography of Nehru and B.N.Pande's book on Nehru and some others. But topical contributions towards the study of Nehru in relation to the economic problems of India would be useful not only from the point of view of studying Nehru but also of the social importance of the problem in relation to which we are studying him. R.C.Dutt's book on Nehru's socialism is a contribution at a broad level in this direction. To study Nehru from a more specific point of view such as

this exercise attempts to do, will be among the first attempts of this kind.

Both primary sources, which include Nehru's own writings and speeches and the organisational and governmental sources as well as secondary sources comprising the books, articles and material as well have considered relevant for our purpose, have been used in our writing.

The first chapter deals with the various perceptions of the agrarian question in the colonial context. It situates Nehru's perception as radical nationalist, analysing at the same time, the nature of his ideology from the point of view of its form in an independent India.

The second chapter traces Nehru's ideological development till it gains definiteness and studies his perceptions and views on the agrarian question, in the light of his theoretical understanding of Indian economic problems. His outlook was characterised by an objective sense of history. He advocated such solution to agrarian question as he considered essential for India based on his understanding.

The third chapter deals with Nehru's agrarian politics before independence showing the mutual relationship between his ideology and politics. The latter was always influenced

by the former. Thus his attempt at influencing the Congress agrarian policy in a socialist direction by adopting the necessary agrarian resolutions in Congress forums and his socialist endeavour in other spheres of politics have been examined.

The fourth chapter examines Nehru's role in the shaping of Congress agrarian policy after independence, as the Prime Minister. It examines the constraints in which Nehru was operating while formulating policies. Locating his agrarian policy in his overall strategy of development through planning it examines the social and institutional hurdles which resulted in the failure of the implementation of his policies.

CHAPTER - IPERCEPTIONS OF AGRARIAN QUESTION IN INDIA

The circumstances which gave an initial stimulus to intellectual enquiry into the land problems in India were primarily socio-political. The enquiries into the land problem were initiated by those concerned directly with the formulation of land and revenue policies or the critique of these policies. Thus land problem as an area of research was the gift of the British rule before the Mutiny of 1857.¹ This earlier phase of British rule was, in the words of Ranade, characterised by 'the tendency to innovation and the levelling of oriental institutions to the requirements of the most radical theorists in Europe.'² This tendency of drastic nature was clearly seen in the British interference with the traditional land and revenue systems in India, which began after the securing of Diwani rights of Bengal in 1765 by the British administrators.

The policy decision for vast changes in agrarian institutions was preceded as well as followed by momentous controversy and discussion among British administrators themselves. This discussion on land policy was conducted with an appeal on the one hand to the principles of Western

1. P.C.Joshi, Land Reforms in India, New Delhi, p.7

2. Mahadev Govind Ranade, Essays on Indian Economics, Third edition, G.A.Natesan & Co., Madras, 1916, p.265

economic theory and on the other to the facts relating to the Indian society in general and the agrarian system in particular as they were perceived by the British administrators.³ The British after coming in control of Indian economy introduced new system of landownership and created private property law. Motivations guiding the introduction of these systems have been subject of comment and analysis. Furnival explains British dynamism in India as opposed to Dutch least interference in Java to the presence of British export economy and its absence in the Dutch case.⁴ Ramakrishna Mukerjee emphasizes the British need of new markets.⁵ Eric Stokes explains this to the need of bringing order and regulation to the decayed indigenous revenue systems.⁶ None of this denies the fact observed by Marx that the new systems like permanent settlement introduced private property in land. This caused a major upheaval in society. It faced the problems of emergence of elements of new society in the frame works of colonial exploitation, in other words land systems in India were introduced with the intention of private property leading to economic development. But colonial policies of creating a permanent class with fixity of revenue in the absence of fixity in land holding and rent led to

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3. Eric Stokes, the English Utilitarians and India, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1959.
 4. J.S.Furnivall, Colonial policy and practice(Cambridge, 1948) and Netherlands India(Cambridge, 1939)
 5. Ramakrishna Mukerjee, the Rise and Fall of East India Company,(Berlin, 1958)
 6. Eric Stokes,(ed) The Peasant and the Raj(Vikas, Delhi, 1978)

increasing rents, and mounting debts and evictions causing distress and agrarian revolt. It signified the revolt of Indian peasant against land systems, solicitious in intentions but exploitative in their effect on various strata of the peasantry.

From a methodological point of view, however, P.C.Joshi as a social scientist, notes that the contribution of the British rule to development of enquiry into the land problem was three fold.⁷

Firstly, questions relating to the character of the indigenous land and revenue systems and their compatibility with economic and social progress were posed for the first time.

Secondly, these questions marked the beginnings of an intellectual effort at the level of both theorising and empirical investigations. At the theoretical level, these questions could not be taken up without initiating a general debate on the basic conditions of economic and social progress on the one hand and the relevance of Western concepts and theories of progress to Indian conditions on the other.

Thirdly, these questions also created the need for precise and authentic data regarding the institutional framework of Indian society including its land and revenue

7. P.C.Joshi-op.cit., pp 7-8

systems. The creation of agencies for data collection and the use of modern methods and techniques in economic and social surveys were some developments during this period.

Land question became the focus of attention as a consequence of the needs of the East India Company to administer revenue system in a colonial setting. The colonial loot and plunder was the cause and consequence of this exercise. So, if one examines the method of survey minus the colonial setting it may have something positive. But for the masses affected by this exercise it meant pauperisation and spontaneous peasant revolts and general drama of 1857. This great event brought about a reversal of the assumption and premises of British Policy in India. In particular, the mutiny marked an end to the era of maintenance of status quo in the institutional structure, specially the property structure. Henceforth, the aim of British Policy was to explore prospects of growth and development within the given institutional framework.

Thus, there followed a period of caution as opposed to the limited dynamism of the initial phase in the political sphere. This led to similar trend in the intellectual sphere. In place of a relatively uninhibited enquiry into all important aspects of the Indian economic problem there

was now a pronounced tendency towards restricting the scope of enquiry to such selected aspects as did not lead towards a sharp critique of British policies. As a result, questions relating to the institutional structure evolved under British rule and its relation to economic backwardness were, by and large, excluded from the purview of all official enquiries and investigations while questions unrelated to the British created institutional structures were given exaggerated importance. The most important consequence of this shift in the focus of enquiry was that the study of agrarian structure was relegated to the background in all important enquiries into the problem of agricultural backwardness.⁹

The most significant example of this shift was the Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture. This Commission was appointed in 1928 to make recommendations for the improvement of agriculture and to promote the welfare and prosperity of the rural population. The scope of the Commission's enquiry was, however, circumscribed by its terms of reference which directed the Commission not to make recommendations regarding the existing system of landownership and tenancy or of assessment of land revenue and irrigation charges. Thus if the political requirements of the

9. P.C.Joshi, Land Reforms in India- page-9.

pre-Mutiny phase of the British rule brought into prominence the land problem and land policy as major problem areas for enquiry, the political situation after the Mutiny led to a decline in importance attached to these problem areas. If some light was thrown on the agrarian relationships, it is because of the close inter-relation of the agriculture - economy with the agrarian structure.

In the post-Mutiny period of British rule agrarian problems ceased to be the main focus of enquiry by the British rulers. With the decline of official interest on the agrarian structure, the thread of agrarian research was resumed by the representatives of the emerging Indian nationalism. The nationalists brought into prominence the land problem and land policy as major problem areas for study by making use of the information and insights scattered in official reports. It is imperative to take note of the intellectual contradiction between the 'nationalist' viewpoint on the one hand and the 'British Imperial' view point on the other on questions of India's poverty and backwardness. The response to the question of poverty which was posed vehemently by the nationalist opinion, took the form of what Myrdal has called, the 'colonial theory' of poverty and economic backwardness.¹⁰ This theory tried to explain

10. Gunnar Myrdal, The challenge of World poverty, Penguin, London, 1970, p.17

India's poverty and backwardness without reference to the economic and social framework created under British rule. Nehru's description of this attitude of British brings it out thus: " If India is poor, that is the fault of her social customs, her banias and money lenders and above all her enormous population".¹¹

Land problem and land policy were proposed as crucial problem areas for intellectual enquiry by Indian nationalists from an early period. More especially, the concern for the agrarian structure and its effects on economic progress was a very important part of the institutional approach upheld by the early nationalists. Among them Ranade considered institutionalism to be the key for the development of an Indian political economy'. He questioned the view that the truths of economic science ... are absolutely and demonstrably true and must be accepted as guides of conduct for all time and place whatever might be the stage of national advance.¹² Ranade's view suggests ~~that~~ the political necessity of providing an effective critique of the 'colonial theory' led him towards questioning the very methodology and premises which were implicit in that theory. It led him towards exploring a new methodology and new premises so as to contribute an alternative theory which tried to establish a causal nexus between the institutional structure created by the British and the phenomenon of Indian economic backwardness.

11. Dorothy Norman, Nehru: The First Sixty Years, vol-II, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1965, p.556.

From the premises and assumptions of the colonial theory Ranade makes a break in two important respects in explaining the backwardness of Indian agriculture. The colonial theorists underplayed if not ignored the question of institutional structure. The colonial theorists drew attention to only such elements of the institutional structure e.g. religion and caste which according to them influenced the economy. In fact, the role of a retrograde land system in buttressing retrograde social relations was always overlooked.

Unlike the colonial theorists Ranade tries to relate the backwardness of Indian agriculture to the economic basis of institutional structure viz. the retrograde system of land relations in India under which the state had become the super landlord leaving the landlords and tenants without any incentives or resources for agricultural development. Another significant intellectual advance made by Ranade distinguished him from colonial theorists (and even from Nationalist Agrarians of the later period). This was his emphasis on the link between agricultural regeneration and industrialisation. In his view lack of industrialisation thwarted agricultural regeneration by creating over pressure on land and thus by perpetuating the retrograde agrarian structure. Ranade, thus saw the two way relationship

between institutional structure and economic backwardness. It is not only the former which caused the latter but latter also in turn reinforced the former. At the operational level therefore it was necessary to work on two fronts rather than only one.¹³ Restructuring of the institutional framework had to be combined with creation of new economic opportunities. In the absence of the latter the institutional structure of the old type would reappear in a new garb.

Another nationalist critic of colonial theory was R.C.Dutt who attributed agricultural backwardness to British created 'institutional framework of agricultural production', including land tenure, credit system, revenue system, marketing structure etc.¹⁴ Dutt contributed insights into the inter-connections and interactions between different elements of the institutional framework. He also indicated the scope as well as the limits of a land policy in the evils of the institutional framework. In concrete terms he also showed that lack of industrialisation accentuated basic evils of the agrarian structure including preponderance of tenancy and small size holdings.

However, the analysis of the early nationalists, did not develop into a full-fledged exploration of an alternative institutional framework because, the early

13. P.K.Gopalakrishna, Development of Economic Ideas in India, 1880-1950, Peoples publishing House, Debbhi; 1959, pp.110-11.

14. Ibid-pp.162-163

nationalists could not perceive the working of colonial system and constraints arising therefrom for economic development.

Interest in land problem and land policy was thus a part of the emerging confrontation between the colonialist and nationalist standpoint. In the formative years of Indian nationalism this confrontation encompassed the interests of only a narrow section of Indian society which did not pose a major challenge to the dominant economic and political regime. The intellectual perspectives represented by the ideologues of this narrow section were also circumscribed by this basic class limitation. The understanding of the relationship between Great Britain and India and of the internal class structure as conditioned by that relationship- this was an intellectual task to which not only the early nationalists but also their successions addressed themselves under the stimulating influence of new currents and forces in the socio-political sphere. The spread of nationalist awakening to newer social classes and strata and especially to rural areas widened the social base of Indian nationalism. It heralded a new epoch challenging the upper class and urban dominance of India politics.¹⁵ It initiated a new phase of anti-imperialist mobilisation on a much wider basis including specially the Indian peasantry.

15. For an account of the Urban Class interest represented in the national movement during early phase. See Pattaabi Sitaramayya- The History of Indian National Congress, p.22-58.

The intellectual response to the new challenge resulted in sharp demarcation from the perspectives of earlier nationalists. Three clear approaches to the Indian economic problem crystallised as a result of the critical appraisal of the early nationalist approach. These can be identified as the Gandhian approach, the radical-nationalist approach and the Marxist approach.

In the background of the rural awakening which characterised the anti-imperialist mobilisation under Gandhi, there also emerged a sharper perception of some of the basic aspects of the Indian economic problem and specially of the rural problem. Even though Gandhi did not locate the basic contradictions of the Indian rural society in the sphere of its land relations he provided insights into certain aspects of the rural problem which eluded not only his predecessors but also his contemporaries as well as his successors. And here even though his prescriptions were not always sound and were sometimes backward looking, his prescriptions were eminently sound and of enduring significance. Among the many insights into the rural problem which Gandhi contributed the following are quite basic.¹⁶

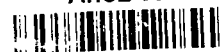
Firstly Gandhi's main focus was on the village as the backbone of Indian society and on the positive traditions of the traditional village economy- its emphasis on interdependence and cooperation and balance between small

16. P.C.Joshi, op.cit, pp.13

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industry, agriculture and social services which required to be preserved and reinforced.

Secondly, Gandhi gave insight into all rural urban cleavages in the context of foreign rule and critique of conceptions treating the rural economy as a hinterland of the urban areas.

Thirdly, Gandhi gave significant critique of the parasitical nature of Western industrialism from the point of view of overpopulated agrarian countries like India and the need for a new type of town-village interdependence.

Fourthly, Gandhi gave a synthetic view of rural economic backwardness and the need for many-sided economic technological, social, political and cultural innovations for rural uplift.

Fifthly, Gandhi emphasised the human factor and manpower mobilisation for development.

Gandhi thus initiated the three fold transition in Indian life- from a partial to total confrontation with imperialism, from urban to rural orientation of Indian politics and from main pre-occupation with the interests of the upper classes of the town and the village to encompassing the interests of the masses in the course of political mobilisation.¹⁷ This provided the basis for the emergence

17. P.C.Joshi, " Developmental perspectives in India: Some Reflections on Gandhi and Nehru", in B.R.Nanda and V.C.Joshi(eds), Essays in Modern Indian History, Vikas, Delhi, 1972.

of radical nationalist and the Marxist perspectives which presented new perceptions and insights into the Indian economic problem. Both these perspectives focus attention on the gaps and inadequacies of the early nationalist and Gandhian approaches.

A major consequence of this new ferment of ideas was a sharper perception of the relationship between Great Britain and India in politico-economic terms, that is to say, as a relationship between industrially developed metropolis and its agricultural hinterland. This represented a sharp break from the perspectives of early nationalists like Ranade and Dutt. It is important to note that the early nationalists did not regard the end of British rule as a necessary condition for independent economic development. In fact, Ranade was of the view that despite some of the harmful consequences of British rule, India's contact with British represented " the beam of light which alone illumines the surrounding."

A totally different view of the British rule emerges from the writings of the later nationalists like Jawaharlal Nehru whom we will study in this work. Let us take this important observation: " Nearly all our major problems of

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today have grown up during British rule and as a direct result of British policy; the princes; the minority problem; various vested interests, foreign and Indian; the lack of industry and the neglect of agriculture; the extreme backwardness in the social services and above all, the tragic poverty of the people".¹⁸

In this background the category of colonial economy was a tremendous theoretical advance which shed new light on the phenomenon of Indian economic backwardness. Indian backwardness was no more regarded as simple backwardness of a country which had lagged behind in the economic race. It was now seen as backwardness of a country which had been reduced into a colony and which was exploited as a source of raw materials and as a market for the manufacturers of the dominant country. The abolition of this backwardness was linked in the first stage with the abolition of the colonial system. Thus independent economic development and colonial status could not go together. With the new political imperatives the theory of Indian economic backwardness was reformulated as a theory of colonialism.

18. Jawaharlal Nehru, The Discovery of India, London 1946, p. 304

The problem of land was no more projected as a problem of feudal land relations and social customs inherited from the pre-British period. The complexity of land problem was perceived as arising from the fact that India's land relations after British impact were neither feudal nor capitalist but belonged to a third i.e. "colonial" category.

Colonialism exercised the most important influence in shaping the institutional framework of agriculture.¹⁹ By bringing about the deindustrialisation of the country it led to manpower over pressure on agriculture and consequently to enormous competition for land. Further; Indian agriculture was drawn into the vortex of the market and commercialisation without much technological change. This latter circumstance together with the first pushed into prominence a conglomerate of landlord moneylenders-traders serving as the agency of colonialism and appropriating the surplus from the direct producers, without this surplus contributing to capital accumulation either in industry or agriculture. The chronically depressed state of the agricultural economy was consequently regarded as inherent in the colonial economic system. Thus, in the new phase, the explanation of agricultural backwardness was also provided in terms of the theory of economic colonialism.

19. P.C.Joshi, op.cit p.15.

If the accentuation of anticolonial consciousness represented the first major feature of both the radical-nationalist and the Marxist viewpoints, the growing awareness of internal class cleavage was another. While the first led to the identification of colonialism as an economic category, the latter led to a perception of some of the glaring class contradictions within the rural economy. Early nationalists like Ranade and Dutt had focussed attention mainly on the conflict of interest between the British rulers on the one hand and all the classes of Indian society on the other. It should be noted that even some of the British administrators in the earlier period and Indian traditionalists in the later period were inclined to regard the social structure of Indian village as community ~~one~~ from class conflict and based on inner homogeneity and cohesion. The new political wave led to the questioning of this view of harmony of interest between all classes underlying the conceptions of early n-ationalists²⁰ as well as some of the British administrators. It brought to light the conflict of interest between different classes, specially the landlords, moneylenders and traders on the one hand and the peasants and landless masses on the other. Some of these social conflicts were also perceived as conflicts

20. Bipan Chandra gives details of the early nationalist views on questions of land revenue, peasant and landlord peasant and moneylender, capitalist farming, agriculture and industry; in Rise and growth of Economic Nationalism in India, PPH, New Delhi, pp.394-494.

between the town and the village. Colonialism was now credited with having sharpened these cleavages which existed in a latent form in the traditional social structure.

The questioning of the earlier assumption of the harmony of interest among classes and the growing acceptance of the assumption of conflict of interest logically led to the third important development in political sphere. It was the questioning of the imperialist and the conservative nationalist prescriptions for economic development.

The early nationalists had criticised British rule for its un-British approach towards problems of Indian development. The introduction of a capitalist framework in both industry and agriculture was regarded by them as necessary for India's economic progress. The introduction of a capitalist framework both in industry and agriculture was regarded by them as necessary for India's economic progress. The British had introduced some changes in this direction but opposed those other changes which would culminate in capitalist transformation. Thus the earlier nationalist and more specially Ranade considered economic development to be inseparable from the capitalist path of development.²¹ They belonged to a period of ascendant

21. Bipan Chandra .pp.487-88

capitalism in the West and during this period Western theorists enquiring into the wealth of Nations regarded capitalist institutions as indispensable for economic progress in all parts of the world. It is important to note that even Marx recognised its contribution to economic progress and seemed to believe that underdeveloped countries in Asia would have to traverse the same road for overcoming their economic backwardness.²²

When the early nationalists believed in the necessity of capitalism for economic progress, it was not because they were the apologists of capitalism but because they fully concurred with general values and beliefs prevalent in the historical period to which they belonged. Their ideas regarding the conditions of agricultural progress were a logical extension of their ideas regarding the conditions of economic progress in general. Their thinking on the land problem is therefore based on the incompatibility of peasant agriculture with the demands of agricultural progress.

*early nationalists
did not
concern*

The questioning of this basic assumption reflecting an anti-peasant and pro-upper class bias was the third major development at the political level since the twenties of

22. Marx, Capital, Vol-I, Preface

of the present century. Thinking an agrarian problem began to reflect a pro-peasant orientation from this period which provided stimulus to the search for a developmental perspective favourable to peasant interests. This is how the alternative to capitalism emerged as a major intellectual challenge from this period.

The political process brought to the fore-front four new and fundamental problem areas.²³

- (i) The evolution of the semi-feudal agrarian structure as a consequence of the transformation of the Indian economy into a colony of the British Empire.
- (ii) The emergence of the rural-urban cleavage as a major feature of the colonial economy
- (iii) The internal class structure of the Indian agrarian society as conditioned by the three modes of exploitation of the agricultural producer through landlordism, usury and price mechanism.
- (iv) The non-relevance of the Western model of agricultural transformation and industrialisation to India's predominantly agrarian economy and society dominated by small producers and the groping for an alternative model suited to Indian conditions.

23. P.C.Joshi, op.cit.p.17

The radical nationalist and the Marxist position came to converge in so far as both identified India as a colonial economy and the agrarian class structure as a semi-feudal class structure based on the triple modes of exploitation of the peasantry. But it is also important to identify the points of divergence between the two approaches. The radical nationalists did not always try to analyse the phenomena of colonialism or feudalism in India with reference to a scientific methodology or theory. It had the elements of liberal outlook, nationalist identification in universalist frame and influence of Marxism. Therefore it may be impressionistic as well as theoretical and empirical or, as P.C.Joshi says, 'Their perception, therefore was more intuitive than theoretical, more impressionistic than empirical'²⁴. In contrast the Marxists tried to present 'colonialism' and 'feudalism' as scientific-economic categories and to analyse the Indian situation in terms of Marx's class theory in general and Lenin's theory of imperialism in particular. While stronger in general laws, the Marxists worked out their national specifics in the course of struggle, with elements of errors in relating

24. Ibid. p-17

general laws and national specifics. The radical nationalists' perception therefore could seldom go beyond vague and general indictment of imperialism. It was far removed from a scientific critique based on an understanding of the 'laws of motion' of the colonial system. However, it can not be denied that radical nationalist and Marxist analysis indicted capitalism in their own ways and sought to fight it in their own ways. Another point of basic divergence was that the radical nationalists viewed the agrarian class structure in terms of a two-class model of landlords, money lenders and traders on the one hand and the peasants on the other. They used the general term peasantry and tended to overlook the class distinctions within the broad peasant category.²⁵ The Marxists in contrast, showed some awareness of the latent or emerging class stratification within the peasantry. They indicated how commercialisation coupled with 'certain pitiful attempts at carrying through agrarian reforms' facilitated the 'gradual conversion of semifeudal landlordism into capitalist landlordism and in certain cases the establishment of a narrow stratum of kulak peasants²⁶. They showed some perception of how the

25. Ibid p-17

26. Sixth Congress of the Communist International, Revolutionary movement in colonies and semi colonies, PPH, Bombay, 1928

upper layer of peasantry had potentialities of growing into a new exploiting class as employers of labour, money lenders and traders. The Marxists therefore anticipated the potentialities of conflict between the upper layers of the peasants on the one hand and the poor peasants and landless masses on the other. However one cannot ignore the fact that the Marxist analysis led them to regard upper sections of the peasantry as an ally in the anti-imperialist struggles. The nationalists of all hues were also interested in using the peasant energies against imperialists advising them haltingly against feudals. For example, peasant movements under the Congress leadership in Bihar, Gujarat and U.P, Nehru's involvement in the peasant struggle in Eastern U.P brings home the man's desire to alleviate the misery of the peasants in 1920s without yet having a fully backed theoretical framework.

Finally, the radical nationalists and Marxists both advocated drastic changes in land and revenue system in favour of the peasant. This was in contrast to the view of early nationalists like Ranade who seemed ^{to} rely on the dynamic landlord as the engine of development. But while both the radical-nationalists and Marxists supported peasant-oriented land-reforms, the former gave greater weight in

their analysis to the interests of the rich and middle peasants. The latter on the other hand gave greater attention in their analysis to the interests of the poor peasants and the landless classes.

There was another important difference between the radical nationalists and Marxists. Marxists in India who took a very narrow view of the Marxian concept of class concentrated only on questions relating to the 'economic basis' and ignored questions relating to the 'superstructure'. The radical nationalists who had no such theoretical constraints or doctrinaire bias gave adequate prominence to the problems created by caste, untouchability, religion, language and such other factors in rural society.

As far as forms of struggle and methods of mobilisation are concerned, it can be said that on the question of anti-feudal mobilisation the radical-nationalists by and large avoided the task of independent class mobilisation under the Indian National Congress. The Marxists ^m ~~the~~ principle emphasised the necessity of class mobilisation of the peasants in Kisan Sabhas; sections of the radical nationalists were wedded to the principle of non-violence in the course of peasant mobilisation. The Marxists had no such commitment

to this principle. The radical nationalists did not suffer from fetish of either violence or non-violence.

We have so far tried to see how the political forces of Indian Nationalism threw up the agrairan problem into prominence. The leaders of Indian nationalism not only contributed penetrating insights into the nature of this problem but the views and counter views among political leaders indifferent phases of the nationalist movement helped to focus attention on different facets of this problem. The need for new theoretical perspectives and for empirical investigations was also felt most strongly by political leaders who had to grapple with praetical problems of ideological struggle and political mobilisation against imperialist rule.

II

Radical nationalism as an ideology believes in the necessity of the twin objectives of nationalism and socialism. Nationalism as the only ideology of a colonial liberation movement addresses itself to the immediate necessity of the anti-imperialist struggle. But socialism which should be simultaneously espoused offers a content to the nationalism, by advancing an economic ideology of social change. If these are taken to be the ingredients of radical nationalism Nehru was the first and the most outstanding of all radical

nationalists inside the Congress and he became the intellectual leader of the socialists. For Nehru, socialism was not only essential but, for its success, was dependent on the attainment of national independence.

Nehru's activities were not confined to politics alone. He was among other things, a thinker, of high order. And even without his outstanding political work, resting on his literary works alone, he would, it seems, have earned the attention and interest of future generations. But his literary works can not be separated from his political biography. He had a powerful sense of history and he turned to the past in order to understand the present and foresee the future.²⁷ He approached history as a nationalist, without a priori, unhistorical categories, looking for its inner meaning and logic. Nehru also looked at India's past in this way. He came to acknowledge the inner laws of historical development and thus took an important step towards a realistic, one might almost say materialist understanding of the historical process. Thus recognition of objective laws led him to realise the direction of the historical process upwards in spiral, to understand it as an objective and progressive course of events preceeding from lower to higher.

27. Discovery of India; OUP, New Delhi, pp-22-24

He adhered to the conception that the real agent of history is the people, and that the activities of political leaders should be subordinated to the struggle to satisfy the hopes and aspirations of the popular masses. Nehru stressed " The people were the principal actors and behind them, pushing them on, were great historical urges... But for that historical setting and political and social urges, no leaders or agitators could have inspired them to action".²⁸

These views were definitely influenced by Marxism But he strove to know and assimilate as much as possible of the experience accumulated by mankind and to select the best of it. Thus in political struggle, he sometimes used isolated premises from various philosophical systems, and this often prevented him from seeing their irconcilability and their antagonism. And then he inevitably tended towards eclecticism, which he wanted at all costs to avoid.²⁹

The direction of his political and social searches, the trends of their development, were fruitful and are still important today. In seeking an answer to the problems of the anti-imperialist struggle and the future of former colonies, Nehru strove to keep in step with the times.

28. Nehru, An Autobiography, London, 1936.p.272.

Nehru imbibed the traditions of ancient Indian culture and the history of the national liberation movement, especially the philosophy and practice of Gandhism. He assimilated all that West European bourgeois liberalism had to offer, receiving his education in Britain, and turned his disappointment to socialist ideas, at first in their Fabian version. But having once turned to the ideals of equality and social justice, he was bound to perceive, by force of his critical mind, many of the premises of scientific socialism. He eagerly studied the theory and practice of scientific socialism and found much there that was applicable to India. Thus he was one of the first national liberation leaders unafraid of speaking of the importance of Marxism-Leninism. || 2.

Underlining the influence of Marxism on him he wrote:
 " The theory and philosophy of Marxism lightened up many a dark corner in my mind. History came to have a new meaning for me. The Marxist interpretation threw a flood of light on it, and it became an unfolding drama with some order and purpose, however unconscious, behind it. In spite of the appalling waste and misery of the past and the present the future was bright with hope, though many dangers intervened. It was the essential freedom from dogma and the scientific outlook of Marxism that appealed to me."³⁰

30. Ibid pp.262-63

Socialism attracted Nehru because of the revolutionary changes which it produced in Russia. This gave incentive for the unity of thought and action; Nehru saw the socialist transformation of society as the natural result of the world's historical development. He stressed that capitalism is no longer suited to the present age and that the world had outgrown it. At the same time he was one of the first leaders of the anti-colonialist movement to make quite clear that the movement towards socialism was a specific need for developing countries, an objectively predetermined road of progress for states liberated from imperialist rule, including India. The introduction of this aspect of internationalism was novel in India and if we leave aside communists, it was first introduced largely by Nehru.³¹

In his speeches regarding the social and economic policies of the ruling party of the Indian National Congress after independence, Nehru laid the main stress on the need for industrialisation and planning in order to ensure independent national development and an improvement in the economy and in the welfare of the people. He said, "Broadly our objective is to establish a welfare state with socialist pattern of society, with no great disparities of income and offering and equal opportunity to all".³²

31. L.P.Sinha, *The Left Wing in India*,^{Muzaffarpur, 1965} p.333

32. Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches, September 1957 -April 1963 Vol-4, Delhi, 1964, p.151.

Although Nehru recognised the objective need for the reorganisation of Indian society along socialist lines, his understanding of the actual process, of the forms and methods of reorganisation betrayed his own specific, mainly subjectivistic idealist notions that came about as the result of the complex interplay of class contradictions in modern India, as a result of the plurality of social structures and, most important of Nehru's underestimation of the special historic role of the working class as the bearer of the ideology of scientific socialism.³³

Very long
comprehensive
analysis

The alignment of class forces in the nation liberation movement against British rule, and in independent India afterwards, restricted Nehru's chances of realising his subjective ideal in practice.

Nehru's ideas, and especially his practical politics, were line-fably affected by the enormous number of unresolved democratic tasks which faced India and created the basis for the broad unification of national forces. He tended to absolutise the temporary alignment of classes, which was determined by the particular level of the democratic movement and correspondence to the aims of a particular stage, but which could not be retained if there was to be socialist

33. Ulyanovsky-op.cit, p.204

transformation. Thus he was unwilling to admit that the struggle for socialism required a radically different class orientation and that in passing from general democratic to socialist goals the content, make-up and correlation to components of the united front of the period of the anti-imperialist movement must change radically.

Thus while he recognised the existence of classes and struggle, he proceeded from the thesis that class contradictions could be resolved through compromises and reforms based on class cooperation. He considered that conviction was enough to prevent the growth of influence of propertied and exploiting classes in the country's economic and political life. One is bound to notice in this a certain amount of liberal bourgeois ideology, plus traces of Gandhi's utopian moralistic ideas. Thus towards fifties and sixties Nehru tried in vain to reconcile his recognition of class struggle with the Gandhian concept of class harmony, thus contradicting his own evaluations of previous years.

This position owed enormously to the requirement resulting from a political course largely determined by the conservative forces in the leadership of the multiclass and extremely heterogeneous ruling party- the Indian National Congress- forces that were consolidating their influence at that time, which subsequently led to the division of Congress.

It would be clear from the above discussion that Nehru's treatment of Agrarian and peasant question in India was dependent on his overall ideological formulations and also bore the impress of pragmatism of practical politics. Thus in practical politics, ideology and policies influenced each other. The chapters that follow, have been devoted to the study of these aspects of Nehru's ideology and policies with agrarian and peasant question as the focus.

CHAPTER - IINEHRU AND THE AGRARIAN QUESTION:

I

(Any study of Nehru, from the point of view of his economic ideology necessitates a focus on his socialism. Indeed it was an evolving ideology which reflected, from time to time, the needs and constraints of Indian nationalism. In this context, it would be useful to trace the development of his ideology from the early stage of its evolution.)

(Nehru's outlook, during the early years of his life was shaped in his aristocratic family atmosphere by the values of secularism and apolitical liberalism which characterised his father's outlook.) Right since his days of schooling in England, he had curiosity in political events, both in England and India and this often helped him in a soft way to have his own judgements on politics. (It is interesting to note that during his student days he had a dislike for moderate politics in India because of the actionless policies it produced, which was counter to the future of Indian nationalism. Although this feeling of emotional nationalism in Nehru was still ^{wanting} ~~willing~~, in terms of a definite ideological ^{outlook} ~~outlook~~ two traits are nevertheless clearly discernible in these

early days of his life¹ - his sympathy for the "underdog" which formed the basis for later day socialist outlook, and his love for action, as against mere talks).

When he returned to India after completing his higher education in Britain, he was on the whole a cultured, sensitive man with wide interests and highly receptive to ideas, from whichever sources they came. (He had a logical mind unaffected by religious mysticism and dogmas. In his two years stay in London he was influenced by the socialist ideas of Fabian variety). With his sympathy for the "underdog" he was interested in these ideas but in the field of politics it was nationalism that filled his mind. But to the urges and curiosities which Nehru had, moderate politics was no answer.

(The biggest single event which overcame Nehru's hesitations and doubts was the coming of Mahatma Gandhi. In Gandhi's satyagraha and non-cooperation he found, at last, a programme of mass action which appealed to him. It was at this time that he made his entry into politics under Gandhi's leadership.)

1. R.C.Dutt, Socialism of Jawaharlal Nehru, New Delhi-1981

(About this time, an event occurred in his personal life, almost without his volition, which brought new light to him and changed his outlook.

In May 1920, when he happened to be in Allahabad, he came in touch with the peasant masses. About two hundred peasants from the interior had marched fifty miles to the city to acquaint the towns people with their conditions. Jawaharlal heard of this and went out to meet them. Later, on their insistence, he accompanied them to their villages. The result was revelation of rural conditions of which the young Nehru had hitherto not been ^{aware, which he} described in his own language).

(Before his visit to the rural areas Jawaharlal described his own attitude in the following words in his autobiography²

" In 1920 I was totally ignorant of labour conditions in factories or fields, and my political outlook was entirely bourgeois. I knew, of course, that there was terrible poverty and misery, and I felt the first aim of a politically free India must be to tackle the problem of poverty. But political freedom, with the inevitable dominance of the

2. Nehru, Autobiography, London 1936, p.49

middle class, seemed to me the obvious first step".

This attitude of inevitable middle class dominance in free India did not probably change, but after his visit to the villages he acquired a new awareness of his own responsibilities in the matter. He thus writes:³

"They showed their affection to us and looked upon us with loving and hopeful eyes, as if we were bearers of good things, the guides who were to lead them to the promised land. Looking at them and their misery and overflowing gratitude, I was filled with shame, shame at my easy-going and comfortable life and our petty politics of the city which ignored this vast multitude of semi-naked sons and daughters of India, sorrow at the degradation and overwhelming poverty of India. A new picture of India seemed to rise before me, naked, starving, ~~crushed~~ and utterly miserable. And their faith in us, casual visitors from the distant city, embarrassed me and filled me with a new responsibility that frightened me".

This impact on an honest, sensitive soul could not be ephemeral. Though Jawaharlal had as yet worked out no political or economic solutions to the problem of poverty, though his mind) at this stage was filled mainly

3. *ibid*, p. 52.

by nationalism which would inevitably lead to bourgeois dominance, the new sense of responsibility to the poor which, he thus acquired so early in his career left an impression on him all his life. It formed the basis of what came to be known as his "socialistic outlook".

(In the meantime, the socialist revolution had already taken place in Russia. The developments in Russia had an impact on Nehru's and in a conversation with Tiber Mende he admitted that the Bolshevik revolution was to him "very exciting indeed". He further said,⁴ " Our sympathies were very much with Lenin and others, without knowing much about Marxism. I had not read anything about Marxism by then").

(Regarding the applicability of Russian experiment in India Nehru said that "if made me think of politics much more in terms of social change. It was not merely a nationalist upsurge, or one against autocracy like the Czar's rule, but a social change coming up in precise problems of democracy and autofitarianism did not trouble me, they did not come up before me. These developed in later years").⁵

In the early twenties Jawaharlal was fully involved in the Gandhian movement. He was first imprisoned for a period of about three months in December 1921. While he

4. R. C. Dutt, *op. cit.* p. 23.

5. *ibid.*, p. 23.

was still in gaol, however, Gandhi called off the non-co-operation movement, after the violence in Chauri Chaura and Jawaharlal was bewildered initially to reconcile himself to work for Congress under Gandhi. He was imprisoned again after a short respite.

The programme of non-cooperation which Gandhi had initiated had answered Jawaharlal's keen desire for action. The insistence on nonviolence, and even more so, the importance attached to the right means satisfied his sense of higher values. Indeed, all the best of the British values that he had imbibed as a student in Britain, the sense of honour, the liberal values of human dignity and democracy responded to Gandhiji's call.

(As he recorded in his Autobiography⁶: "what I admired was the moral and ethnical side of our movement of satyagraha. I did not give an absolute allegiance to the doctrine of non-violence or accept it for ever, but it attracted me more and more... The spiritualisation of politics, using the word not in its narrow religious sense- seemed to me a fine idea. A worthy aim should have worthy means leading upto it. That seemed not only a good ethical doctrine but sound practical politics, for means that are not good often

6. Autobiography, op.cit.p.73

defeat the end in view and raise new problems and difficulties").

It was not merely in regard to the doctrine of non-violence, however, that Jawaharlal differed from Gandhi even at this stage of his life. His predominant feeling in the early twenties was nationalism, though fresh reading was crystalising the socialist ideas in his head. Jawaharlal's nationalism had however, taken him a step further than Gandhi. He regarded British imperialism as an evil and wanted India to sever all connection with it. He stood for complete independence, and he expressed himself strongly on this issue, though he did not at this stage press for the acceptance of this view by the Congress. In his presidential address to the U.P conference in October 1923 he made his position clear.⁷

...⁶I am convinced that the proper and right goal for India is independence. Anything short of it, whether it is styled Dominion rule or partnership in the British commonwealth of Nations or by any other name is derogatory to the dignity of India. There can be no peace or friendship between India and England except on the basis of perfect equality, and this equality can not be gained so long as India remains

7. R.C.Dutt.op.cit.p24

an appendage of the British Empire". He added later " I am not desirous of changing the Congress creed at this stage. This would give rise to unnecessary debate and controversy and might narrow the Congress and exclude some people. Let us keep the Congress open for all"⁸.

The last part of the statement is worthy of note for it is this desire to keep the Congress open for all that prevented Jawaharlal at various stages in his career from adopting and pursuing the courses which his personal inclination and judgement indicated.

(The embers of socialistic ideas raised other doubts and other questions in his mind, but he left these doubts unresolved and questions unanswered. They were allowed to be submerged by his nationalist emotion and his desire to sacrifice himself, if need be, for the cause.) An interesting comment on Nehru, as he was in the early twenties, is furnished by a foreign correspondent who interviewed him in Lucknow District Jail in October 1922 on behalf of the Manchester Guardian: " The desire to make a sacrifice had evidently been and still, I think, was very strong in him... But though the man's intelligence, refinement and patriotism were very apparent I failed to get from him any idea of how he proposed to win "swaraj"

8. Ibid-pp-24-25

or what he proposed to do with it when he had won it." 9

(The predominance of the nationalist feeling in Jawaharlal at this stage undoubtedly delayed development of his socialist thoughts, of which he had acquired a Fabian background in England. It is true that his experience of rural poverty in his province as well as the happenings in Russia had rekindled his interest in socialism, but it was his latent boyhood nationalism which now found an outlet in the Gandhian programme that occupied his mind fully. He was content to make social change await achievement of independence, and was not willing to pursue a socialist programme emphasising class conflict, lest it affect the unity of the nation which he considered so necessary for the national struggle. 10)

(There was indeed a measure of validity in according nationalism overriding priority, in giving of preference over social change. The first necessary condition of any social change in the Indian context was the overthrow of British imperialism. Unfortunately, though a necessary condition, it was not also a sufficient condition for social

9. Report of the interview reprinted in the Bombay chronicle dated 26 December 1922 and quoted by S.Gopal in his Biography of Jawaharlal Nehru, Vol-I. (OUP) (p.69).

10. R.C.Dutt.op.cit, p-26

change. National independence achieved without consciousness of class interests could well result in foreign imperialist interests being replaced by national bourgeois capitalist interests. It is the awareness of this danger that underlies the socialist emphasis on the class interests of deprived sections of the population, which made Jawaharlal himself in subsequent years emphasise the socialist content of the struggle against imperialism. For the present, however, he was content to overlook the danger, and to view the national struggle and class struggle as different and distinct steps in the historical process, one to follow the other. This was the nature of his ideological development up to the middle of the twenties.)

(The turning point in Jawaharlal's mental development was the invitation to help in organising and participating as the representative of the Indian National Congress in the International Congress Against colonial oppression and Imperialism held at Brussels in February 1927. Nehru's participation in the Brussels Congress undoubtedly marked an important stage in the development of his thoughts. His mind was receptive, as indeed it continued to be till the end of his days, and the fact that he was for the first time brought in physical contact not merely with anti-

imperialists but also with those who spoke for the peasants, the workers and other hitherto deprived sections of the community, in fact with socialists of all hues, not merely Marxists and communists, who made a deep impression on him. This impact he carried into subsequent years, and developed further by wider reading, deeper thinking and broader experience. It would, however, be wrong to create the impression that Jawaharlal broke into Marxist terminology or suddenly displayed an unusual interest in Marxism at the Brussels Congress¹¹. On the other hand, he had doubts about the possibility of coordination of national interests with labour interests abroad, about the possible dictation by the communist International, and considerable hesitation about the concept of socialism being accepted by his party at home.¹² After Brussels Congress Nehru made a brief visit to Russia and was impressed by the Soviet system and the theory and philosophy that guided it and thus found many things in Russia which India could emulate.)

(Nehru describes his outlook after his return from Europe thus¹³ ..." the sense of inner conflict and frustration that had oppressed me so often previously was, for the

11. This position is established by Micheal Brecher, Nehru's official biographer in Michael Brecher, Nehru- A political Biography(pp-110 and 112)

12. R.C.Dutt, op.cit

13. Autobiography p.166

time being, absent. My outlook was wider, and nationalism by itself seemed to me definitely a narrow and insufficient creed. Political freedom, independence, were no doubt essential but they were steps only in the right direction; without social freedom and socialistic structure of society and the state, neither the country nor the individual could develop much". Jawaharlal, on returning to India plunged into Congress politics at the Madras session of the Indian National Congress. Hereafter he entered politics not only with enthusiasm but indeed with a changed outlook moving resolutions which demanded not only complete independence but gave economic content to it.¹⁴

(The outlook which Nehru brought to bear on the Madras Congress was not only new and unfamiliar to the Indian scene, but was in fact much in advance of contemporary opinion. He was thinking on socialist lines, and though he disclaimed to be a pioneer in this field in India, socialism was not a familiar concept in the Congress circles then. This along with personal popularity of Nehru ensured their easy passage, but the passage of these resolutions was not by itself of any significance. What was of much greater concern to the then leadership of the

14. R.C.Dutt, pp.op.cit 43-44

Congress was, these new ideas, if unchecked, would filter down in due course and upset the established ideas. Gandhi shared this concern and chided Nehru for "going too fast"¹⁵. It was at this point that both Nehru and Gandhi realised and made clear the differences that separated them,¹⁶ although the belief in Gandhi's indispensability for the national movement kept Nehru from any thought of formal parting.

(During 1928, 1929 and until Civil Disobedience commenced in 1930 Jawaharlal travelled a great deal all over the country presiding over provincial Conferences, students' Conferences and Youth Leagues.) He writes: "Every where I spoke on political independence and social freedom and made the former a step towards the attainment of the latter. I wanted to spread the ideology of socialism especially among Congress workers and the intellegentia, for these people, who were the backbone of the national movement, thought largely in terms of the narrowest nationalism"¹⁷.

These speeches of Nehru are of great interest. They present a study in contrast to his earlier speeches before his visit to Europe when he had been an outlet for his energy and his yearnings in the Gandhian movement. (The main features of the socialist thinking he had now adopted are worthy of note.¹⁸

15. Ibid- p.46

16. Ibid- pp.46-47

17. Autobiography op.cit.p.182

18. R.C.Dutt.op.cit.pp.48-53

First, he was strongly in favour of complete independence and was opposed to Dominion Status or to any other arrangement within the British Empire and he emphasised the relation between imperialism and capitalism. Secondly he recognised the existence in capitalist societies not only of conflict of class interests but also of class consciousness as determining factors in attitudes of different classes.

Thirdly, his statements and speeches during the period make it clear that while he did not at any stage accept the methods of communism, he accepted its aims and objectives and regarded the capitalist system, based on the private profit motive and ~~as~~ competition, as inequitable. He wanted the system to be replaced by a socialist system based on cooperation, and a freedom of each individual to develop according to his capacity.)

(Fourthly, he recognised nationalism as a sentiment which evoked strong emotional response in the country, while few people here have heard of socialism and consequently they fear it". He did not, however, accept the criticism that socialism with its emphasis on class conflict would raise discordant voices and thus retard the national movement. On the contrary he felt that national movement,

to be successful, needed sanction, and sanction would be forged only if the support of the peasants and the workers could be enlisted by placing before them programmes which they consider worth the struggle.)

(This desire to enlist the masses in a national struggle with social overtones, directly relevant to their social condition, led Jawaharlal to a concept of the struggle basically different from the struggle conducted by the Indian National Congress. Freedom to Jawaharlal had a social as much as political content. Without the former the latter had no meaning.

The view Nehru held at this stage of his life can also be judged from his activities and from the attitudes he adopted towards the concrete situations which arose from time to time. Following the Madras Congress he organised an independence for India league as a pressure group within the Congress. The object of the League was not only to campaign for independence, but as Acharya Narendra Dev, one of its sponsors, put it, "it has among its objects reconstruction of society on a new basis. The league is not satisfied with political independence only".¹⁹ However, the league did not make much progress.) Similarly, the

19. Nehru, A Bunch of Old Letters, pp.72-73

Madras Congress also approved of Jawaharlal's proposal to make the Congress an associate of the League against Imperialism. But giving his endorsement to Nehru report which was drafted ~~under~~ his father Motilal Nehru's chairmanship he alienated himself from the leagues later. In the wake of labour trouble in the industrial and mining areas during 1928 and 1929, he was drawn into Trade Union movement although his venture had no lasting effect on it. Nonetheless it illustrates his own desire to forge a link between the national and the labour movements, to the mutual advantage of both, in accordance with the views expressed at the Brussels Congress. When the Nehru report was rejected by the government Jawaharlal became busy preparing the country organisationally and psychologically for the coming struggle. (While continuing his socialist propaganda, he also got a resolution passed at his instance in the U.P Congress of action to the AICC meeting on 25 May 1929 at Bombay. Though the AICC considered it unnecessary at that stage to stand committed to a detailed programme of action they accepted its preamble²⁰ which emphasised on the need to make revolutionary changes in the economic and social structure of society).

20. R.C.Dutt.op.cit pp.58-59.

During the Meerut conspiracy he exerted himself a great deal, especially in trying to collect funds both from within the country and from abroad for the defence of the accused communities. A test of his anti-imperialism came when he was confronted with the signing of the Delhi manifesto for he had to sign it after much careful thinking and as a result his link with the league against imperialism was broken.

(The last scene in the long period of wait and preparation from the end of the non-cooperation movement was enacted at Lahore. Jawaharlal, who had campaigned for socialism for the last two years and had virtually been accepted as the leader of the youth in the country had been elected the president of the Congress. Thus for the first time socialist views were heard from the presidential forum of the Congress:

" I must confess that I am a socialist and republican and am no believer in kings and princes, or in the order which produces the modern kings of industry, who have greater powers over the lives and fortunes of men than even the kings of old, and whose methods are predatory as those of the old feudal aristocracy".²¹⁾

21. Ibid p.62

(Referring to the peasantry and labour, Jawaharlal repudiated the theory of trusteeship though it was held by no less a person than Gandhi. " Paternalism in industry or in land is but a form of charity with all its stings and its utter incapacity to root out the evil. The new theory of trusteeship which some advocate, is equally barren...The sole trusteeship that can be fair is the trusteeship of the nation and not of one individual or a group".²²

He ended up by urging the countrymen to "forge sanctions to enforce the nation's will". To him this was not merely national independence but a socialist transformation of society. Thus, the views Nehru expressed at this period of his life advocated social ownership and control over the means of production and distribution, peasant proprietorship in land, social equality and a government in the interest of the masses of the country).

(Although in practical politics Nehru's views would encounter differences and opposition, in his espousal of them he however preserved their logical purity. Thus he always developed and recorded his thought. The clearest statement of his views are contained in an essay he wrote in 1933 called "whether India"?²³ This essay

22. Ibid-p.62

23. Nehru, Recent Essays and writings; also selected works-vol-6

shows ^{his} perspective, not only on the question of national liberation but also the question of social freedom which was inextricably linked with it. "Again whose freedom are we particularly striving for, for nationalism covers many sins and includes many conflicting elements ? There is the feudal India of the princes, the India of big Zamindars, of small Zamindars, of the professional classes, of the agriculturists, of the bankers, of the lower middle class, of workers. There are the interests of the foreign capital and those of home capital, of foreign services and home services").

(Examining the limitations of the narrow nationalism of the middle class origin he says:)

"The nationalist answer is to prefer home interest to foreign interests but beyond that it does not go. It tries to avoid ~~disturbing~~ the class division or the social status quo. It imagines that the various interests will somehow be accommodated when the country is free. Being a middle class movement nationalism works chiefly in the interest of that class. (It is obvious that there are serious conflicts between various interests in a country and every law, every policy which is good for one interest

may be harmful for another. What is good for Indian Prince may be thoroughly bad for the people of his state what is profitable for the Zamindar may ruin many of his tenants, what is demanded by foreign capital may crush the industries of the country").

Thus it was important to recognise the essence of social freedom in relation to the specific classes.

"We can not escape having to answer the question, now or later, for the freedom of which class or classes in India are we especially striving for ? Do we place the masses, the peasantry and workers, first or some other small class at the head of our list"?

(While Nehru accepted the basic Marxist analysis of the historical process he did not give up the liberal value of freedom:

"Let us give the benefit of freedom to as many groups and classes as possible but, essentially who do we stand for, and when a conflict arises whose side must we take ? To say that we shall not answer that question now is itself an answer and taking of sides, for it means that we stand by the existing order, the status quo".

The achievement of freedom therefore lay in ~~diver~~sting the vested interests. Thus if an ind~~e~~genous government took the place of foreign government and kept all the vested interests intact this would, according to him, not even be the shadow of freedom).

(Typical of the Marxian analysis of the thirties, he not only regarded the recurring crisis and depression as a feature of capitalism, but the Great Depression of the thirties and the rise of Fascism as marking the evening of capitalism. The difference between the East and the West, he thought indicated the different stages of economic growth. As regards nationalism he felt it was "still the strangest force in Asia... But the powerful economic force working for change in the world today have influenced the nationalism to an ever increasing extent and everywhere it is appearing in socialist garb. Gradually the nationalist struggle for political freedom is becoming a social struggle for economic freedom".

Indeed, he ended the essay with ~~the~~^{an} optimistic answer to the question he posed in its title earlier: "Surely to the great human goal of social and economic equality and to the ending of all exploitation of nation by nation and class by class, to national freedom within

the framework of an international cooperative socialist world federation").

(Thus Nehru's ideology as we have examined from the above writing was shaped by many dimensions of his basic beliefs which were meticulously synthesised. Micheal Brecher his official biographer, has referred to his four beliefs as his " idees fixes"²⁴. They are according to him

- (i) Western liberalism consisting of individualism and democracy;
- (ii) Socialism—social and economic equality to be achieved through planning;
- (iii) Gandhism—the method of morally sanctioned non-violent change; and
- (iv) Nationalism.

However, Brecher gives the impression that these were four different strands of thought, not adequately synthesised. But at least until he assumed authority and thus became subject to the constraints of practical politics, not only in the domestic but ^{also} in the international context, the predominant value that he cherished was that of socialism.)

(Gandhism in its moral aspect certainly influenced Jawaharlal. He stated once that the insistence on worthy means to achieve worthy ends was not only a good moral

24. Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography*, London, 1959. p. 602

principle, but good strategy too. As regards non-violence, however, he never concealed the fact that he did not go ^{to} the whole length with Gandhi and he had no ideological inhibition to change this social structure by violence or coercive means.

Finally, above nationalism, Jawaharlal was undoubtedly a nationalist in the Indian context. He believed that nationalism was a narrow creed which was also associated in the world with Fascism and Imperialism, and that he was a nationalist with these issues in mind.

Apart from these, Nehru's belief in scientific socialism is of importance. He was attracted to it partly because of its explanations of the process of history and of modern conditions appealed to him, but mainly because it was scientific and therefore free from dogmas.

As years passed on, however, even before independence, while his basic views did not change, a certain mellowness entered his make up and his emphasis on different aspects of his thoughts changed).

(Taking the late twenties as the divide in Nehru's career from the point of view of ideological definiteness, his perceptions on economic issues can be examined. It is important to note that in Nehru's

politically active career, after this point we find his written contribution and his speeches and pronouncements offering the revealing dimensions of his perceptions on economic problems in which agrarian and peasant question claimed the most important position. The major works of Nehru, The Glimpses of World History, An Autobiography and The Discovery of India were all written after 1930 the first in 1933, the second in 1935 and the third in 1944. Many other writings and also his speeches which scatter over his long career are important in this regard. It would not be difficult to examine his views on agrarian and peasant questions based on these sources.

II

(Nehru's perceptions on all the questions relating to Indian society was based on his sense of history. Thus it was from this perspective that he viewed India's present. Both the elements of continuity and those of change are important to his understanding. He writes: " We have been changing continually throughout the ages and at no period were we the same as in the one preceding it. Today, radically and culturally, we are very different from what we were, and all around me, in India as elsewhere, I see change marching ahead with giant's stride. Yet I can not get over the fact that Indian and Chinese civilisations have shown an extraordinary staying power and adaptability and , in spite of many changes and crises, have succeeded for an enormous span of years, in preserving their basic identity".²⁵)

Thus referring to the specificity of the civilisation that was built up in India he says,

"The civilisation that was built up here was essentially based on stability and security, and from this point of view it was far more successful than any that arose in the West. The social structure, based on caste system

25. Discovery of India, p.144

and joint families, served this purpose and was successful in providing social security for the group and a kind of insurance for the individual who by reason of age, infirmity or any other incapacity was unable to provide for himself.²⁶⁾

(The caste system as an essential feature of Indian village life, as Nehru viewed, thrives even till the present day because of the unifying role it played in holding the Indian village life together. However the rigidity which it came to acquire later on was prompted by invasions and other troubles and the rigidity became counter productive to the earlier ethos of unity.²⁷ But Indian civilisation nonetheless remained accommodative through the ancient and medieval times and synthesised the elements that came from outside with those already within. The common cultural background which was thus created gave India an impress of unity inspite of its diversity. At the root of the political structure was the self governing village system, which endured at the base "while kings came and went".²⁸ The power of the State, however despotic in appearance, was curbed in a hundred ways by customary and constitutional restraints, and no ruler could easily interfere with the rights and privileges of the village community.)

26. Ibid, p.144

27. Ibid, p.145

28. Ibid, p.145

Thus while the elements of continuity throve for centuries they, for the first time met with challenge from British rule. As Nehru writes,

" The impact of Western culture on India was the impact of a dynamic society, of a 'modern' consciousness on a static society wedded to medieval habits of thought which, however sophisticated and advanced in its own way could not progress because of its inherent limitations. And, yet, curiously enough the agents of this historic process were not only wholly unconscious of their mission in India, but as a class, actually represented no such process. In England their class fought this historic process but the forces opposed to them were too strong and could not be held back. In India they had a free field and were successful in applying the brakes to that very change and progress which, in the larger context, they represented. They encouraged and consolidated the position of socially reactionary groups in India".²⁹

(Thus the classes which were agents of change in Britain became the hurdles in the way of similar change in India and whatever changes took place inspite of them, were the unexpected consequences of their policy. Introduction

29. Discovery of India; p.291

of railway, for example was a big step towards a change of medieval structure. Nehru writes, "Change came to India because of this impact of the West, but it came almost in spite of British in India. They succeeded in slowing down the pace of change to such an extent that even today the transition is far from complete".³⁰

The feudal landlords and their kinds who came from England to rule over India had the landlord's view of the world. To them India was a vast estate belonging to the East India Company and the landlord was the best and the natural representative of his estate and his tenants.

The earliest of India states to be under the British rule was Bengal and it was mainly based on its exploitation that Industrial revolution took shape in Britain. With the developments in industrial techniques in England a new class of industrial capitalists rose there, in whose interest the British policy was designed in a way that Indian goods which were initially imported to British were excluded from Britain by legislation. Thus started a process of breaking up the Indian industries to make the Indian market safe for British goods.)

30. Ibid, p.291.

"(A vacuum was created which could only be filled by British goods, and which led to rapidly increasing unemployment and poverty. The classic type of modern colonial economy was built up, India becoming an agricultural colony of industrial England, supplying raw material and providing markets for England's industrial goods".³¹)

(The liquidation of artisan class led to unemployment on a prodigious scale. Thus removed from industry millions of artisans and manufacturers turned to land. The pressure on land grew giving rise to fall in standard of living. This movement back to land of artisans and craftsmen led to an evergrowing disproportion between agriculture and industry. Agriculture became more and more the sole business of the people because of the lack of occupation and wealth producing activities. Nehru describes the consequence of this burden on agriculture thus:

"The crisis in industry spread rapidly to the land and became a permanent crisis in agriculture. Holdings became smaller and smaller, and fragmentation proceeded to an absurd and fantastic degree. The burden of agricultural debt grew and ownership of land often passed to money-lenders. The number of landless labourers increased by

31. Ibid.p.299.

by the million. India was under an industrial capitalist regime, but her economy was largely that of the precapitalist period, minus many of the wealth-producing elements of that precapitalist economy. She became a positive agent of modern industrial capitalism, suffering all its ills and with hardly any of its advantages".³²⁾

(Prior to the advent of British rule the basis of Indian economy was the village community with its transitional division of labour and without the British rule, it would have come under the influence of the world capitalism. But the change that took place under British rule was not a normal development and it disintegrated the whole economic and structural basis of Indian society.

"A system which had social sanctions and controls behind it was a part of the people's cultural heritage was suddenly and forcibly changed and another system, administered from outside the group was imposed. India did not come into a world market but became a colonial and agricultural appendage of the British structure."³³

The village community, thus was disintegrated, losing both its economic and administrative functions. The village communities had everything they wanted, within

32. Ibid, p.300

33. Ibid, p.303

themselves and resembled little republics enjoying their own freedom and independence. The distinction of village industries was a powerful ^oblow to these communities. The balance between industry and agriculture was upset, the traditional division of labour was broken up and numerous stray individuals could not be easily fitted into any group activity.

A more direct blow to the village community, according to Nehru came from the introduction of the landlord system, changing the whole conception of ownership of land.³⁴ This conception had been one of communal ownership, not so much of the land as of the produce of the land. Taking the step deliberately ^{for} reasons of their own, as it appeared, the British governors themselves representing the English landlord class, introduced something resembling the English system in India. At first they appointed revenue-landlords. Thus the village community was deprived of all control over the land and its produce; what had always been considered as the chief interest and concern ^{for} that community now became the private property of the newly created landowner. This led to the breakdown of the community, and the cooperative system of services and functions began to disappear gradually.)

34. Ibid, pp-303-304.

The introduction of this type of property in land was not only a great economic change, but it went deeper and struck at the whole Indian conception of a cooperative group social structure thereby giving rise to the class of land owners and the communal cleavage based on ownership.

A new class, the owner of land appeared; a class created by, and therefore to a large extent identified with the British government. The break-up of the old system created new problems and probably the beginnings of the new Hindu-Moslem problem can be traced to it.³⁵⁾

(Big landowners, were created by the British after their own English pattern, chiefly because it was far easier to deal with a few individuals than with a vast peasantry. The objective was to collect as much money in the shape of revenue, and as speedily, as possible. If an owner failed at the stipulated time he was immediately pushed out and

35. (The landlord system was first introduced in Bengal and Bihar under the system known as Permanent Settlement. It was later realised that this was not advantageous to the State as the land revenue had been fixed and could not be enhanced. Fresh settlements in other parts of India were therefore made for a period only and enhancements in revenue took place from time to time. The extreme rigour applied to the collection of revenues resulted, especially in Bengal, in the ruin of the old landed gentry, and new people from business classes took their place. Thus Bengal became a province of Hindu landlords, while their tenants though both Hindu and Moslem, were chiefly the latter. Nehru's ideas on communalism came to be based on this socio-economic understanding.)

another took his place. It was also considered necessary to create a class whose interests were identified with the British. For the fear of revolt filled the minds of British officials in India.

British rule thus consolidated itself by creating new classes and vested interests which were tied up with that rule and privileges which depended on its continuance. There were the land owners and the princes, and there were a large number of subordinate members of the ~~services~~ in various departments of government, from the patwari, the village headman, upwards. The two essential branches of government were the revenue system and the police. At the head of both of these in each district was the collector or district magistrate who was the ~~l~~inchpin of the administration. These momentous changes brought about by British policy in land, worsened the lot of Indian peasantry).

(Nehru's understanding of agrarian conditions in India embrace their various dimensions such as how the lot of Indian peasant grew steadily worse and how he was exploited by every one who came in contact with him, by tax gatherers, and landlord and bania and the planter and his agent, and by the biggest bania of all, the British

government, acting either through the East India Company or directly. At the basis of all this exploitation lay the policy deliberately pursued by the British in India. The destruction of cottage industries with no effort to replace them by other kinds of industry, the driving of the unemployed on land; landlordism; the plantation system, heavy taxation on land resulting in exorbitant rent cruelly collected; the forcing of the peasant to the money-lender from whose iron grip he never escaped; innumerable ejections from land for inability to pay rent or revenue in time and above all the perpetual terrorism of policeman and taxgatherer and landlord's agent and factory agent which almost destroyed all spirit and soul that the Indian peasant possessed, constituted thus the main features of Indian agrarian and peasant problem.)

(Nehru's understanding of Indian agrarian problem in this way as the product of British imperialism is comparable to the account given by Marx in his articles on India on the consequences of British rule and the destruction of its self-sufficient village economy which resulted in the miserable state of Indian peasantry.³⁶ Based on this understanding Nehru's principal object of attack was directed against British rule for it throve on the peculiar

36. Marx 'The British rule in India', 'The East Indian Company-history and results, New York daily tribune, 11 July 1953; and 'The Government of India' NYDT, 20 July, 1853, in Avinery, Marx on Colonialism.

foundation of capitalism and it is in this sense that Nehru's anti-imperialism was different from the nationalism of others including Gandhi.

"Many of us who denounce British Imperialism in India do not realise that it is a phenomenon peculiar to the British race or to India, or that it is the consequence of imperial development on capitalist lines. Capitalism necessarily leads to exploitation of one man by another, one group by another and one country by another. If therefore, we are opposed to this imperialism and exploitation, we must also be opposed to capitalism".³⁷⁾

"As a necessary result of this decision we must fight British dominion in India, not only on nationalist grounds, but also on social and international grounds.

∴ We may demand freedom for our country on many grounds, but ultimately it is the economic one that matters"³⁸

Thus for the improvement of the conditions of the peasantry and artisans was dependent on the change of social fabric created by the British rule. "The only alternative that is offered to us is some form of socialism".

37. Article in the New Leader, a journal edited by Fenner Brackway, and reprinted in the Hindu, 11 August 1928, selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru-vol.3-pp-370-71.

38. Ibid-p.371

(Nehru addressed himself to the land problem with his definite ideological perspective. The first step in the direction of solution to land problem was to be the abolition of landlordism.

" What shall be the shape of such a Swaraj ? How can the present injustice be removed ? So long as the land is owned by the Zamindars, till then the Kisans will be under their tyrannyⁿ. At present the landlords reap the maximum benefit without doing anything, and those who do not produce anything are a burden on the country. In an ideal country there would be no landlords." ³⁹

A number of countries, according to Nehru, who had big landlords in the past had done away with them and the land was given to the peasants. Nehru wanted this to take place in India.⁴⁰ Every farmer should own as much as he and his family are able to cultivate. He should pay a certain amount as tax to the main Panchayat of the country. The big panchayat will be the government of the country, but that state will be responsible to the people. The amount collected as tax would then be spent for the improvement of the country. If the landlord is done away with, the

39. Pamphlet published in Hindi, September 1928. Jawaharlal Nehru Miscellaneous papers, N.M.M.L, selected works, Vol-3, p.373.

40. Ibid-pp.373-374.

kisan's income would increase and they would be more independent. The national revenue would also increase, and this would enable the government to do more for the welfare of the kisans.)

(The prime duty of the new government should according to Nehru, be to improve the conditions of kisans and take measures for their welfare. With an indigenous government, canals could be dug, wells could be constructed, hospitals and dispensaries could be opened in the villages. Arrangements could be made for the proper education of their children⁴¹. But these benefits for the kisans could not be brought about without the immediate abolition of the landlords. However, Nehru was also aware of the power of the landlords with the support of British government behind them.

"So to remove them will not be easy. But we should help our ideals before us and strive our utmost for attaining it. Side by side we should also try to reduce our daily miseries as much as possible".⁴²)

(Referring to taluqdari and big Zamindari system in Oudh Nehru writes in his Autobiography; " It hardly seems

41. Ibid-p.374

42. Ibid-p.374

a matter for argument that this semi-feudal system is out of date and is a great hindrance to production and general progress. It conflicts even with a developing capitalism, and almost all over the world large landed estates have gradually vanished and given place to peasant proprietors".⁴³

The next question that arises from the point of view of abolition of big landlords is of compensation. Nehru believed that it was desirable to give compensation through "peaceful and democratic method" in order to "avoid conflict which is likely to be wasteful and more costly than the compensation itself".⁴⁴)

(But, for Nehru, anything in the nature of full compensation was utterly out of question, especially in so far as the big landlords were concerned, for, to give such compensation in the shape of bonds would be to mortgage the future of the land and to continue almost the same burden on ^{the} peasantry, though in another form.⁴⁵)

As regards the middle landlords, they should get proportionately more than the bigger ones.

Nehru's firmness of view with regard to the abolition of Zamindari is totally in contrast to that of Gandhi.

43. Autobiography, p.534

44. Selected works vol-7, p-110

45. Ibid.p.110

He says, " I had always imagined that the only possible question that could arise in India was one of compensation. But to my surprise I have discovered during the last year or so that Gandhi approves of the taluqdari system as such and wants it to continue".⁴⁶⁾

(Gandhi had said in July 1934 at Kanpur that better relations between landlords and tenants could be brought about by a change of hearts on both sides. If that was done both could live in peace and harmony. He was never in favour of abolition of taluqdari or Zamindari, and those who thought that it should be abolished according to him, did not know their minds. He was further reported to have said that he would be no party to dispossessing propertied classes of their private property without just cause. On the other hand his objective was to "reach your heart and convert you (he was addressing a deputation of big zamindars) so that you may hold all your private property in trust for your tenants and use it primarily for their welfare...But supposing there is an attempt unjustly to deprive you of your property you will find me fighting on your side".⁴⁷⁾

46. Autobiography- p.535

47. Ibid, p.535

(Nehru reacts sharply to this attitude of Gandhi in his autobiography. "Indian capitalist and landlord have ignored far more the interests of their workers and tenants than their Western prototypes. There has been practically no attempt on the part of Indian landlord to interest himself in any social service for the tenants' welfare...

" If the taluqdari system is good, why should it not be introduced all over India ? Large tracts of India have peasant proprietors. I wonder if Gandhi would be agreeable to the creation of large zamindars and taluquas in Gujarat ? I imagine not. But then why is one land system good for the U.P., Bihar or Bengal, and another for Gujarat and the Punjab ? Presumably there is not any vital difference between the people of the north and east and West and South of India, and their basic conception are the same. It comes to this, then, that whatever is, should continue, the status quo should be maintained. There should be no economic enquiry as to what is most desirable or beneficial for the people, no attempts to change present conditions; all that is necessary is to change people's hearts. That is the pure religious attitude to life and its problems..."⁴⁸)

48. Ibid.p.536

(Thus for Nehru abolition of zamindars was an economic and social necessity for it would not only remove a hindrance for production but liberate the tenants from the landlord's tutelage.

Having rejected landlordism Nehru turned towards the peasants and concentrated on the problem of land which was the basic problem in India.⁴⁹ He discusses the role of the peasants in antifeudal struggles and in the work of agricultural production, the significance of cooperatives, of the modern methods and technology for the increase of agricultural production.

Nehru regards the entire class of peasants to be anti-feudal because it was affected by the land system in the long run. Secondly, the fall in prices affected all the strata, occupancy or non-occupancy tenants.⁵⁰ The recognition of the anti-feudal role of peasantry brings Nehru near the Marxist view of peasant contribution in anti-feudal struggle).

49. P.G.Joshi, "Nehru and the land problem in India", Summary of lecture delivered by the author, at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library on 12 November, 1982. Patriot, November 15, 1982.

50. Nehru, "On Rent and Revenue Condition in U.P." 18 April 1931. Selected works, Vol-5.

(Engels had indicated his awareness of the heterogeneity of the peasant class.⁵¹ He divided the peasants into three categories which were subsequently elaborated upon by Lenin and Mao. Marx, Engels and Lenin had further emphasized that socialists should not emphasize on the small peasant economy. They should emphasize on cooperatives. If you emphasize on small peasant property, the danger then is of Bonapartism as brought out by Marx in his excellent work on Louis Bonaparte.⁵² However, in the transitory stage, Lenin emphasizes, small peasant should be the last to be touched and that too ~~persuasively~~ and not forcibly. Nehru is aware of the heterogeneity of the peasantry in India when he talks in terms of tenants with occupancy and non-occupancy rights and the role of the small peasant. In the transitional period he also regards the small peasant as important. We do not however, find much in Nehru's writings on the question of liquidation of small peasant property. This is not to say that he had Bonapartist vision. On the contrary, he was thinking in terms of laying down the fundamentals of socialist society. The evidence for saying this is his plea for collectives and cooperatives).

51. Frederick Engels, The peasant War in Germany, Progress Moscow, 1974.

52. Karl Marx, Eighteenth ~~Summary~~ ~~of~~ Louis Bonaparte, Edition.3, New York; International publication, 1969.

(Making a strong case for land-to-the tiller Nehru emphasized the collective aspect of peasant life. He wanted the peasants to discuss their problems in their associations e.g. problems connected with the Agrar tenancy Act and Oudh Rent Act which had denied occupancy rights to the farmers. The principal gains from such collective style of functioning would be two fold. Firstly, by taking up the question of rent and revenue the peasants could make their association an organ of struggle. Secondly these associations would become organs of political power after independence when it came.

Thus the important measure which should either follow or accompany the abolition of Zamindari was co-operative and collective farming. While taking care of the peasant's interest it would at the same time ensure another achievement which greatly concerned Nehru-productivity. Thus he says, " I think that nothing short of a large-scale collectivist or cooperative farming will deal effectively with the land question. The wretched small holdings will then disappear, production will greatly increase...⁵³ Agricultural modernisation was another

53. Discussion with India Conciliation Group, at its meeting on 4th February 1936, Selected works, Vol-7, p.110.

important step towards the increase in productivity. Nehru wanted Indian peasants to take advantage of modern methods, improved tools and machinery and other improvements in agriculture that came from the development of science and technology.)

(“Indian agriculture and Indian life will only benefit by the introduction of modern technical approaches to such problems of agriculture...”⁵⁴)

However, he never lost sight of the massive unemployment and underemployment that prevailed in rural India. He also knew that by scientific farming, it was possible that unemployment might even increase a little as far as direct employment on land was concerned.⁵⁵ Therefore he favoured the idea of removing some people from agriculture to industry.⁵⁶ It has been already noted that Nehru visualised the crisis in agriculture as interlinked with the crisis in industry out of which it had arisen in colonial India. The two therefore could not be disconnected and dealt with separately and as a result he emphasized that the disproportion between the two should be remedied.)

54. Government of India, Nehru on Community Development, Panchayat Raj and Cooperative, New Delhi, p.159

55. Nehru, India and the World, London, Allen and Unwin 1936, p.158

56. Norman Cousins, Talks with Nehru, New York: John Day and Co.1951

The problem of rural credit and the chronic indebtedness of the Indian peasant which had become a great factor for the ejection of the peasant and kept him at rockbottom existence required appropriate solution. Thus the problem of credit should be solved through state controlled agencies or the existing agencies should be directed to this need. He writes, " If banks, insurance etc., were not to be nationalised they should at least be under the control of the state, thus leading to a state regulation of capital and credit."⁵⁷

Finally, an important dimension of the land problem which concerned Nehru was the social and cultural backwardness of the man behind the plough, the small peasant burdened by the customs, habits and social institutions of a semi-feudal social structure.⁵⁸ Nehru was of the view that all the gains of the land reforms would be nullified if the peasant's social outlook and social framework surrounding him were not reformed and reconstituted. Even the opportunities given would not be perceived or gains from opportunities utilised would be dissipated through conspicuous consumption, if the tiller of the land was not reformed as part of the programme of agricultural development.

57. Discovery of India, p.405

58. In 1928, while accounting for the factors which were responsible for the misfortune of the peasants he blamed not only the British Government and the British-created landlords but also, to a certain extent the Kisans themselves as well, Selected Works; Vol-3, p-376.

Thus Nehru's outlook, on agrarian reorganisation encompassed both the larger issues of economic development as well as improvement of the conditions of peasantry.)

CHAPTER IIINEHRU AND CONGRESS AGRARIAN POLICYIdeology and Politics before Independence:

(The present chapter deals with: Nehru's attempt at steering the Congress agrarian policy in his ideological direction, for which he used his important position in the Congress; and his involvement in the peasant problems which influenced him greatly in this regard. In the previous chapter we have discussed in a summarised manner, Jawaharlal's ideological position till Lahore Congress(1929). This period in Nehru's career was important from the point of view of his economic ideology. To Jawaharlal, Lahore Congress, which endorsed the demand for independence, " Purna Swaraj", was a green signal for further struggle which was to follow.

The demand was popularised by the country wide pledge taken at numerous public meetings on 26 January 1930 to prepare the country for Civil Disobedience, including non-payment of taxes, and to implement the Congress directives "for the purpose of establishing "purna Swaraj".

"India had been ruined politically, economically, culturally

and spiritually," the Declaration stated, and went on to add " We hold it to be a crime against man and God to submit any longer to a rule that has caused this fourfold disaster to our country").

The country waited with excitement Mahatma Gandhi's lead to launch Civil Disobediance. Jawaharlal Nehru shared the excitement, while he continued his efforts to educate his countrymen on the nature of the struggle which, was not merely political, but had an economic content. (He was specially interested in the peasantry and made no secret of his view that the community of Zamindars was superflous.

" I can not understand the sense of Zamindars", he said, " the man who works should enjoy the fruits of his labour while the man who sits on the cushion should get nothing".¹

Pursuing this line of activity, Jawaharlal moved a resolution at the meeting of the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee on 26 February 1930 which declared that the economic programme for the nation should lay down that the principal industries of the country are owned and controlled by the state and the land is owned as far as possible, by the peasant who works on it".² He then proceeded to outline

an economic programme which contained items such as change of the land system " to remove all intermediaries between the cultivators and the state", reduction of land revenue, annulment of agricultural indebtedness, formation of producers and consumers cooperatives, state ownership of principal industries as also means of transportation and distribution, a minimum income for all workers and steeply graded income and inheritance taxes. It should be noted that as far back as October, 1928, Nehru had made concrete reference to questions which were likely to arise if and when the intermediary system was abolished. And, it was here that he had emphasised the necessity for chalking out an economic and social programme which would provide freedom for the masses and then to indicate the manner of creating sanctions to enforce that programme. (For the first time the problem of Zamindari abolition was brought to the fore front by Nehru in a powerful provincial unit.³) Thus the economic resolution which Nehru moved at the meeting of U.P. Provincial Congress Committee in February 1930 was a step forward in the direction. However, things would be different at the Congress ~~ion~~ session.

3. H.D. Malviya, Land Reforms in India ^{New Delhi, 1951,} p.20

The Congress was obviously not prepared to endorse all these items, as the Karachi session about a year later clearly indicated, but the resolution is of interest as reflecting in concrete terms the socialist programme which Jawaharlal had in mind at the time. It did not amount to a revolutionary transformation of society, but the programme did provide for a firm basis on which further progress could be made in the socialist direction.)

(The Congress met for its annual session at Karachi at the end of March 1931. It was a momentous session, not because, ~~of~~ it endorsed the Delhi pact, but because for the first time "it took a step, a very short step", as Jawaharlal put it in his autobiography, "in a socialist direction by advocating nationalisation of services and key industries"). Jawaharlal dutifully moved the resolution seeking approval of the Congress to the Delhi Pact. Having accepted the Pact, however, reluctantly, he could not shy away from it, or shirk the logical consequences. But his heart lay elsewhere.

(He had long talks with Gandhiji before the Congress session, and the latter had welcomed the idea of having a resolution on economic matters. A resolution had accordingly

been drafted which had the approval of Gandhiji, and at the Karachi session it was moved by Mahatma Gandhi himself.

It was indeed only a short step towards socialism. " In order to end the exploitation of the masses ", the preamble stated, "political freedom must include real economic freedom of the starving millions". The resolution thereafter listed a number of fundamental rights which any future constitution of India should provide. Those relevant to agriculture were items (vi) and (vii).

Item (vi) provided for "substantial reduction in agricultural rent and revenue paid by the peasantry, and in case of uneconomic holdings, exemption of rent for such period as may be necessary, relief being given to small Zamindars where necessary by reason of such reduction.

Item (vii) provided for " imposition of a progressive income tax on agricultural incomes above a fixed minimum."⁴⁾

However, the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee, at the instance of Jawaharlal Nehru, had passed economic resolution before. Indeed the one passed a year earlier had gone much farther than the Karachi resolution did by advocating the abolition of all intermediaries between the cultivators and the state, and the annulment of agricultural indebtedness. The significance of the latter,

4. The Indian Annual Register, 1931, Vol-I, pp 277-281

however, lay in the fact that for the first time a resolution of this type had been adopted by the highest forum of the Congress. But a still greater significance lies in the fact that it was a triumph, at least a partial one for Jawaharlal. (Jawaharlal had been widely criticised for subordinating his personal views to those of Gandhiji. It was natural that the views of Mahatma Gandhi, as long as he remained its unquestioned leader would to a large extent guide and shape the movement. No movement could flourish otherwise). It did not however follow that the views of a notable participant like Jawaharlal had no influence on the movement. (The Karachi resolution was the first concrete instance where the economic thinking of Jawaharlal was accepted, though only partially, by the movement.)

As the movement developed further it was influenced more and more by his economic thinking, though it was not often that such thinking was expressed in the form of concrete resolutions⁵. While Jawaharlal accepted at the instance of Gandhi various facets of the movement, with which he did not agree, he also influenced, to a considerable

Socialism of Jawaharlal Nehru, New Delhi, 1981,

5. R.C.Dutt, p.75

measure, the tone of the movement.

(With its endorsement by Karachi Congress the final seal of power was placed on the Delhi Pact, but it did not mean ~~the~~ the same to Jawaharlal as it did to Mahatma Gandhi and probably to great majority of the Congress leaders. To the Mahatma it was a settlement, but Jawaharlal could not conceive of a settlement until independence, which was the declared objective of the Congress, had been achieved.)

Soon a ~~casus belli~~ arose. (With the onset of great depression in 1931 and the consequent fall in agricultural prices, an agrarian crisis developed in U.P. The tenants found it increasingly difficult to pay their rent to the landlords, of whom there were about 160,000 in the province, who intervened between the cultivator and the state. The great majority of the landlords were themselves impoverished, for they held small bits of fragmented land, but as a class it was to their interest to extract as much rent as possible from the tenants. This they proceeded to do with the help of the police. In 1931 alone 64,076 tenants were evicted from 189,369 acres, of land and property of the tenants were sold after distraint in 13,337 cases.⁶)

6. Gopal -Vol-1, p.163.

(The agrarian situation in U.P was deteriorating even when Delhi Pact was signed early in March.) Gandhi had agreed not to resume Civil Disobediance while the Round Table Conference was in session, but this did not preclude the Congress from taking up the cause of the tenants, and even engaging in a struggle on their behalf, if it became necessary. (The Congress, in Nehru's argument, was an organisation of the tenants and workers, and they could not leave the peasant alone when they needed their help. The peasant's struggle, if any would be economic and political in nature. Gandhi accepted this position and made no serious attempt to restrain Jawaharlal, though he did not accept the class implication of the struggle. He advised the tenants to pay whatever was within their individual capacity and in modification of the resolution of the U.P PCC suggested that in no case should the rent offered by the tenants be less than 8 annas in the rupee for statutory and non-occupancy tenants and 12 annas in the rupee for occupancy tenants.)

(The government, on the other hand, were apprehensive of the class implication of the movement, the more so because Jawaharlal had been freely expressing his socialist

views and his opposition to landlordism as an institution.⁷

Jawaharlal continued to lead the movement till his arrest at the end of December 1931. Some of his pronouncements were indeed radical, for he talked of war with government and made no secret of his personal view that Zamindari as a system should go. " We should also try to have Swaraj in our country- not of the capitalists but of the poor and the peasants, " he declared at the Kisan Conference at Allahabad on 25 November 1921. If Swaraj means that the British should leave India", he added, " and the capitalists, the rajas and the maharajas should come in their place, the lot of the peasantry can not be improved. You should therefore take up the campaign for swaraj in your hands⁸. In action, however, he showed great moderation.) He was aware that Congress leadership preferred to highlight Bardoli, which was a straight fight between the peasants and the government, rather than the U.P.movement, which inevitably involved a struggle with the landlords.) They did not therefore emphasise the U.P case in the working committee when Gandhi's participation in the Round Table Conference was under discussion.

7. Gopal .p.165

8. Selected works, Vol-5, p-179

(Even in the course of the movement he strictly complied with the directives of the Congress High Command, then under the presidentship of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, and negotiated patiently with officials at the Central as well as Provincial level, only on two occasions did he deviate from Gandhi's views. The first was when he interpreted Gandhi's advice to the occupancy and non-occupancy tenants to pay 12 annas and 8 annas in the rupee respectively to mean that these were the maxima and that the actual payment should be according to the capacity of the individuals to pay. The second occasion was when the provincial government appointed a committee and invited Gobind Ballabh Pant to serve on it. Gandhi advised him to accept the invitation but the provincial Congress Committee under Jawaharlal did not permit him to do so.)

The negotiations continued pointlessly for months. Government made some concessions, but these were not considered adequate by the Congress. The movement inevitably slid to its logical conclusion of a non-tax campaign. On 15th November, when a final round of negotiations was entered into, the U.P, Congress Committee with the approval of the then Congress President, Sardar Patel,

advised the Kisans of Allahabad District to withhold payment of rent and revenue pending negotiations.

(Jawaharlal was now preparing himself for a struggle, and with his wanted forthrightness declared at the Kissan Conference at Allahabad on 25 November, " If we are to die, we shall die after a fight, I do not want a half way settlement or a half way fight". And yet he was reluctant to commence the fight in the absence of Gandhi and without his specific approval. He therefore, cabled to Gandhi. In reply Gandhi said , " You should unhesitatingly take necessary steps ^{to} meet every situation. Expect nothing here".⁹⁾

(There was nothing to prevent an open struggle now. Government on their part were also prepared for it, and on 26th December Jawaharlal was taken off the train on his way to Bombay to receive Mahatma Gandhi, arrested and sentenced a week later to two years' imprisonment. Thus began his sixth term in gaol.)

The U.P. agrairan movement provides another instance of the influence that Jawaharlal had on Congress in spite of his differences with Mahatma Gandhi and the majority of the Congress leadership. The latter were not unaware of the class implication of this movement. They had in fact,

attempted to soft-pedal the U.P. movement, and Gandhi himself was not in favour of a general condemnation of the Zamindars. They were obviously not in agreement with the various pronouncements of Jawaharlal. And yet proceeding constitutionally, Jawaharlal had his way. The cabled reply of Gandhi gave him a free hand. It was Jawaharlal's view that had prevailed over those of his older colleagues.

13
Jawaharlal's prison sentence was due to expire in mid-September 1933, but he was released a little earlier, on 30 August, on account of his mother's illness. But despite this personal problem his mind groped for a solution to the contradiction that was tormenting him. On the one hand, he was attached emotionally as ever. He was also convinced that there was no alternative leadership for the country. On the other hand there was growing intellectual estrangement from Gandhi's views and indeed from the manner in which he functioned. This contradiction could be solved, if at all, by a personal talk with Gandhi. And so he took the earliest opportunity to visit him at Poona.

The "Poona Talks", as they were called, gave rise to great expectations among his radical colleagues and followers. (Jawaharlal's growing dissatisfaction with the Gandhian views and methods were known to his colleagues, and some of his utterances immediately on his release from prison gave rise to the hope that he would break from Gandhi and lead a Socialist party. These hopes were, however, bound to be disappointed, as indeed they were. Jawaharlal's socialist convictions were firm enough, but he had worked out no clear path to socialism. He disapproved the Russian method,

14 and he had a firm faith in liberal democracy. He felt that nationalism was a narrow concept, but accepted it as an inevitable first step before any social change could be introduced.¹⁰ Apart from his emotional attachment to Gandhi, therefore, he was fully in accord with the national movement which Gandhi led. Jawaharlal believed in the existence of class conflict and he even accepted the need to divest the vested interests, though he wanted to do it as gently as possible.. In this he differed with Gandhi to whom the conflict of class interest, if any was reconcilable. He also differed from Gandhi in regard to the need to define and emphasise the social objectives in such broad terms as social justice or uplift of the poor. As Jawaharlal stated in his autobiography.

" Sometimes he(Gandhiji) calls himself a socialist, but he uses the word in a sense peculiar to himself which has little or nothing to do with the economic framework of society which usually goes by the name of socialism. Following his lead a number of prominent Congressmen have taken to the use of that word, meaning thereby a kind of muddled humanitarianism"¹¹⁾

10. R.C.Dutt ^{2nd ed} p.82

11. Autobiography-p.515

15 There were indeed great differences between Gandhi and Jawaharlal in outlook, the methods to be adopted and the concrete programmes they respectively envisaged. But since both were agreed about the first step, namely, national independence, though even here there was a great difference in outlook and methods to be adopted, and since Jawaharlal was convinced ^{of} the independence movement would be more effectively than Gandhi, he regarded a complete break from Gandhi as an act of adventurism.

(Gandhi, on the other hand, though he did not share the outlook and the concrete economic objectives of Jawaharlal had regard for the latter's sincerity of purpose. He also realised that whatever his personal views, the future lay with the younger generation, who increasingly came under the influence of Jawaharlal. He therefore never contemplated a break with him, as he did with some others like Netaji Subhas. On the contrary he backed Jawaharlal at crucial moments even to the exclusion of leaders of his own way of thinking, as he had done once for the presidentship of the Lahore Congress and he was to do again later.)

(With this mutual attitude there could be no break between Gandhi and Jawaharlal, however much the latter might be irritated from time to time at Gandhi's ways and decisions.)

Thus the talks between Gandhi and Jawaharlal at Poona did not result in a break. But the result of the talks was a disappointment to Jawaharlal's admirers. But personally for Jawaharlal this period marked the full bloom of his socialist ideas and it was about this time that his views were published in "Whither India".¹³ The interesting thing about his views here was that he accepted the basic Marxist analysis of the historical process, but did not give up the liberal value of freedom. For he favoured the idea of the benefit of "freedom to as many groups and classes as possible" while in the case of class conflict to oppose status quo.

The essay attracted wide interest and naturally enough considerable criticism too. To the rising socialist group in the Congress, Jayapraksh Narayan, Acharya Narendra Dev and others it marked Jawaharlal out as leader of socialist thoughts. The conservatives, on the other hand, and the faint-hearted shrunk back in "moral indignation" at the concept of class struggle and pointed to the "coercion" that the establishment of socialist order involved.

But Jawaharlal visualised the coercion in the non-violent method itself. In a rejoinder entitled "some criticism considered", he stated: "I have no doubt that coercion or pressure is necessary to bring about

13. A reference to his essays in "Whither India ?" have been made and his views have been discussed in the previous chapter.

political and social change in India. Indeed our non-violent mass movements of the past thirteen years have been powerful weapons to exercise this pressure".¹⁴

17 (A categorical statement of his faith appeared in a letter he wrote which appeared in the Manchester Guardian on 15 December 1933, " I am strongly attracted to communism", he said, " and I feel that the only reasonable and scientific explanation of history is the communist one. I do not approve of many things that have taken place in Russia, nor am I a communist in the accepted sense of the word. But taking everything together I have been greatly impressed by the Russian experiment".¹⁵)

(In advocating a socialist solution, however, he had been careful not to undermine the Congress, or to be taken in by catchy slogans). He recognised that the outlook of the congress was not as progressive as he would like it to be, and that there were groups within the organisation which were socially very backward. He was arrested by the government again for these seditious views and a little later Gandhi called off the civil disobedience movement.

Jawaharlal continued his journey through prison for the present ; watching events outside only to the extent prison permitted. With the Civil Disobedience movement

14. Recent Essays and writings- pp-34-35

15. Quoted in R.C.Dutt, ^{op. cit.} p86

called off there was a rush to form parliamentary party to enter legislatures and even Gandhiji blessed the move. Though no believer in legislative work in the circumstances then prevailing, Jawaharlal did not mind the decision as much as the attitude if betrayed.

(From prison he also read reports of the First All India Conference of Congress Socialists at Patna on 17th May under the presidentship of Acharya Narendra Dev.¹⁶ The conference resolved that the future constitution of India should provide for the transfer of all power to the producing masses, for the economic life of the country to be planned and controlled by the state, socialisation of the key and principal industries, state monopolies of foreign trade, elimination of princes and landlords, re-distribution of land to the peasants, promotion of cooperative and collective farming, liquidation of debts owed by peasants and workers, and adult franchise and functional basis. But the resolution instead of having any positive influence on the Congress in the progressive direction hardened their attitude. For the Congress resented the loose talk about confiscation of property and class war which according to it was not contemplated in Karachi resolution.) This w

view was stated by a working committee meeting on 17 and 18 June.

Jawaharlal watched the development in prison and during the eleventh day release which was given to him for his wife's illness took the opportunity to resent the Congress attitude to the Congress socialists¹⁷, by writing his feelings to Gandhi.

"... It seemed that the overmastering desire of the committee was somehow to assure vested interests even at the risk of talking nonsense".¹⁸

He was soothed by Gandhi who wrote him "... Greatest consideration has been paid to socialists some of whom I know so intimately. Do I not know their sacrifice ? But I have found them as a body in a hurry. Why should they not be ? Only if I can not march quite as quick, I must ask them to halt and take me along with them. That is literally my attitude..."¹⁹

However, Gandhi also wrote to Ballabbhai Patel at the same time that Jawaharlal's attitude was not "as frightening as it seems from the flaws"^{mes} and that he had a right to let off steams..."²⁰

17.R.C.Dutt p-90

18. Selected works -vol.6-p-281

19. Collected works of Mahatma Gandhi, vol-LVIII, p.318

20. Ibid p.318

This shows Jawaharlal's position in an interesting situation when he is upholding his freedom of expression although possibility of compromise are very much in existence. The annual session of the Congress held at Bombay in October made no concession to the socialist view, only the emphasis was made on the values of truth and non-violence by Rajendra Prasad, the president.²¹

After the annual session of the Congress in October 1934, the Congress fought and won a resounding victory at the elections for the central legislative Assembly. There was, however, little in the legislative activity of the Congress to interest Jawaharlal. About the same time he had to go to Europe for his wife Kamala's treatment.

The above discussion bears testimony to the fact that Jawaharlal's views and convictions were not weightless to the extent that they would be ignored by Congress or Gandhi, though their wholesale endorsement also seemed equally problematic, given the diverse thinkings within Congress.

(When Nehru gave primacy to the unity of Congress his ideology would be, in the process, softened to the degree of avoiding a rift if and when it occurred. But his exercise in socialism, as events showed later did alarm the rightists in the Congress

21. Indian Annual Register, 1934, vol.II, p.248

to a breaking point when a split in the organisation would have occurred, but for Gandhi's mediation Jawaharlal's introduction of economic programmes with the thrust of his understanding would therefore be a unique affair in the Congress sessions. But in his important capacities in the Congress he managed to get a great deal of it endorsed and adopted.)

During his absence in Europe Jawaharlal, primarily at the instance of Gandhi, had been elected president of the forthcoming Congress session to be held in Lucknow(1936). In the meantime, the government of India Act, 1935 had been passed. Jawaharlal was basically opposed to the Act which he thought was designed to strengthen the vested and reactionary elements in the country.

Indeed, for Jawaharlal the position was difficult. His appointment as president roused expectations among the younger and the more radical elements. On the other hand, the older and the more conservative elements, while accepting Gandhi's nomination of Jawaharlal, were determined to attack the latter's radicalism. It was in this constraint that Nehru had to face the economic questions and direct his effort for giving them place in Congress resolutions. The most crucial problem before Nehru was that of his obligation to the left, especially on the peasant question. (The collapse of the civil disobedience movement in the early

thirties had convinced the socialists inside Congress that class based peasants' and workers' associations were necessary to a militant nationalist struggle. Non-violent non-cooperation was discredited even as a political tactic largely because the middle classes proved vulnerable to government pressure.) Nehru told the Lucknow session of Congress in 1936 that the middle class, "being too much tied up with property and the goods of the world... is fearful of losing them and it is easier to bring pressure on it and exhaust its stamina... That has been very evident during our recent struggle, when our propertied classes were hit hard by the government's drastic policy of seizure and confiscation of money and properties, and were thus induced to bring pressure for the suspension of the struggle"²²

Apart from the question of political tactics, moreover, Nehru was opposed to the strategy of class conciliation in principle, because he did not believe it would win economic freedom for the masses. An examination of his "Wither India" shows, as we have seen, while he stopped short of a complete endorsement for the tactics of class war, Jawaharlal asserted that some measure of coercion would be necessary. It was not surprising that Nehru's political credo^{found} a strong echo in the platform of the Congress socialists.

22. Jawaharlal Nehru, Toward Freedom, Appendix B, p. 395.

(At its first all India conference at Patna, CSP (Congress Socialist Party) proclaimed two political goals: complete independence from Great Britain; and the establishment of a Socialist Party. At the second conference in Meerut, June 20, 1936, the CSP declared its endorsement for class-struggle tactics: " Marxism alone can guide the anti-imperialist forces to their ultimate destiny. Party members must, therefore, fully understand the technique of revolution, the theory and practice of class struggle the nature of the state and processes leading to the socialist society".²³)

During the same year, moreover, the CSP Executive Committee decided to admit communists to membership in an attempt to unify all socialist groups. Individual members of the communist party(CPI) thereafter joined the CSP, and in this way gained access to the entire Congress Organisation. The entry of communists into the Congress Party signalled a serious attempt by radical socialists to overturn Gandhian doctrines of non-violence and class conciliation as the organising principles of the nationalist movement. Without going in to the formation and activities of the CPI and the course through which it had progressed, till it was declared illegal and went underground in 1934, we can start with its position in 1935.

23. Cited in Saul Rose, *Socialism in Southern Asia*, (London, 1959) p.17.

When the CPI went underground in 1934, they found it easy to maintain contacts with Marxist intellectuals inside the CSP. Communists readily accepted the initiation advanced by the socialists to join the CSP on an individual basis. Yet by 1935, the communists were following a more sophisticated approach to nationalist revolution, as advanced by the seventh world congress of the Communist International in its call for the creation of an anti-imperialist people's Front. The new line recognised that CPI "did not possess sufficient forces independently to organise a powerful and mass-anti-imperialist movement"²⁴ On the contrary it endorsed the necessity of establishing a united anti-imperialist front with the Indian National Congress. Even so, the communists did not propose merely to join forces with the Nationalist Congress. Even so, the communists did not propose merely to join forces with the Nationalist-leadership. Rather their purpose was to isolate Gandhi and his conservative colleagues from the rank and file, in the hope of achieving for themselves the dominant position in the direction of the nationalist movement.

24. M.R. Masani, *The Communist Party of India, A short History*, London, 1952, p. 57.

*By
K.P.H.*
The communists' strategy rested on three types of initiatives: the establishment of separate "factions within CSP party units in order to build up a cohesive parallel organisation that could get communists elected to positions of power in the provincial and national executive organs of congress; the infiltration of mass organisations operating outside Congress in support of nationalist goals, but with a dual commitment to immediate social reform; and the use of strategic positions inside the Congress to bring pressure to bear on the national leadership for recognition of the principle of collective affiliation of mass organisations as the means of altering the balance of power in Annual Session. This would permit the communists to demand constitutional and policy changes, including elimination of the dogma of non-violence and the consecutive programme.

The linchpin of this strategy rested on the assumption that the CSP and Nehru- its most powerful patron- would side with the radicals against the conservative High Command in any open confrontation over the principle of collective affiliation. Communist infiltration of peasants' associations became the first step in the strategy to commit the nationalist movement to an active programme of revolutionary class struggle.)

(Until the 30s, in the states like U.P, Bihar, Bengal and also Madras the peasants had been organised in-to associations called Kisan Sabhas. But the most prominent expression of Kisan Sabha activities was in Andhra. In Andhra, the Kisan Sabha was led by N.G.Ranga who was an active member of the Congress and who mobilised peasants strength Kisan Morachas. In March 1933, the innovation of Kisan marches succeeded in bringing the peasant movement to all India attention. In less than two years, Ranga organised four large marches, the last two extending to all parts of Madras Presidency. In public speeches and processions, Kisan leaders emphasized on partial immediate demands like reduction in rent, occupancy rights for all tenants, a moratorium on agricultural debt, abolition of all feudal dues and an end to enhanced revenue assessments or assessments on uneconomic holdings). According to Ranga, the marches were deliberately planned to "stir up the whole Andhra countryside and demonstrate the strength of the Kisan movement, to convince the various Congress Committees that they could maintain their authority only by following our lead or welcoming our assistance"²⁵.

25. N.G.Ranga, Kisan Handbook, quoted in Francine Franel, India's political Economy, OUP-1983:- p 55.

(By 1936, the Kisan associations were strong enough to form a national organisation, the All India Kisan Sabha(AIKS), which held its first meeting simultaneously with the annual congress session at Lucknow in April.

At Lucknow a constitutional subcommittee, with Ranga as president, drafted an All-India Kisan Manifesto claiming to represent the small landowners, tenants, and landless labourers. "Minimum demands" advanced by the Manifesto included abolition of all Zamindari tenures without compensation, abolition of all debts, redistribution of cultivable wasteland vesting in government to subsistent farmers and landless labourers, and a graduated income tax in ryotwari areas, with exemption for all families earning less than a net income of Rs 500 annually. Other "immediate demands" included reduction of rent by fifty percent; cancellation of rent and revenue arrears. Occupancy rights for all tenants; a five year moratorium on agriculturual debts and attachments, cheap credit seeds, and fertilisers; marketing cooperatives to eliminate private traders; and the return of communal grazing land to village councils. The manifesto, moreover, concluded with a call for direct action to enforce these demands. It advised all tenants without occupancy rights to refuse payment of rent; it endorsed social boycott of money-lenders

and their shops; and it directed landless labourers to strike against the Zamindars in order to enforce their demand for a minimum wage²⁶.)

(Ranga introduced the manifesto along with an AIKS appeal for collective affiliation to Congress at a meeting of the working committee at Lucknow. Nehru as the president elect, responded as expected. He pressed hard for the adoption of Ranga's programme and the principle of collective affiliation. The conservative majority in the High Command reacted shrewdly. They avoided an outright veto of this suggestion. Instead, they allowed the issue to be considered before the AICC and again in the open session, correctly calculating on carrying a majority of the delegates. The proposal was rejected in each case.)

Nevertheless, the Manifesto had achieved considerable visibility and could not simply be discussed without making congress vulnerable to charges of collusion with the Zamindars. Gandhi, therefore did agree to appoint an agrarian subcommittee to the working committee to make recommendations for "improving the conditions of the Kisans". This committee was directed to consult with the provincial Congress committees and report its conclusions to the coming AICC meeting in August 1936. The resolution that

26. The text of Kisan Manifesto, is given in N.G.Ranga Kisan speaks, Calcutta edition, p-272.

established the subcommittee, however, endorsed the preservation of Zamindari system. It defined as one point of reference the "safeguarding of the interest of the peasants where there are intermediaries between state and themselves".²⁷

Jawaharlal was however, free to be categorical about his views in his presidential address. " I am convinced that the only key to the solution of the world's problems and India's problems lies in socialism, and when I use this word I do so not in a vague humanitarian way but in the scientific, economic sense". "Socialism is thus for me not merely an economic doctrine which I favour; it is a vital creed which I hold with all my head and heart. I work for Indian independence because the nationalist in me can not tolerate alien domination, I work for it even more because for me it is the inevitable step to social and economic change".²⁸

(The Lucknow Congress adopted an Agrarian Resolution declaring "that the most important and urgent problem of the country is the appalling poverty, unemployment and indebtedness of the peasantry, fundamentally due to the antiquated and repressive land revenue system and intensified in recent years by the great slump in the prices of agricultural produce". A final solution to this problem", the Resolution

²⁷. AICC resolutions on Economic policy and programme, 1924-1954, p.12

²⁸. Presidential Address, Lucknow Congress, India and the World, pp.64-107

added, "involves the removal of British Imperialism and exploitation, a thorough change of the land tenure and revenue systems and unemployed masses".²⁹

The Congress called upon Provincial Congress Committee to make detailed recommendations to the Provincial Congress Committees to make detailed recommendations to the working Committee in regard to such matters as freedom of organisation of agricultural labourers and peasants, just fair relief of agricultural indebtedness, emancipation of peasants from feudal and semifeudal bonds, substantial reduction for rent and revenue demands, and fostering industries for relieving rural unemployment.)

However, in two vital respects, Jawaharlal failed to have his way at the Lucknow Congress. First, as has been discussed in regard to collective affiliation of peasants and workers organisations and the second, in regard to office acceptance under the 1935 Government of India Act. This was mainly due to the Congress strategy under Gandhi who while bringing the masses into political movement, did not encourage them to discuss and develop political activity on their own, leave alone their own leadership.

(After Lucknow, left-wing political activity intensified, Numerous peasant conferences were organised to demonstrate

support for the Kisan Manifesto. Nehru himself spent much time touring the countryside and speaking about socialism. This was however, too much for the conservative group and on 29 June 1936 Babu Rajendra Prasad, Jairamdas Daulatram, Jamnalal Bajaj, Ballabhbai Patel, Acharya Kripalani and S.D.Dev submitted their resignations from the working committee in a joint letter.

" We feel the preaching and emphasizing of socialism particularly at this stage by the president and other socialist members of the working committee, while the Congress has not adopted it", they said, " as prejudicial to the best interests of the country, and to the success of the national struggle for freedom which we all hold to be the first and paramount concern of the country." 30)

(Gandhi's personal intervention ultimately convinced them to remain, and succeeded in averting a permanent split in the organisation. When the AICC met in Bombay in August 1936, the All India Kisan Sabha again submitted the Kisan Manifesto for the consideration of the working committee. The working committee once again refused to take action, asking for additional time to receive recommendations from the provincial Congress committee.)

30. A Bunch of Old Letters, p.182.

Jawaharlal, despite his friction with the right wingers, continued his election campaign, speaking on the twin objectives of nationalism and socialism. As far as his attitude to the Congress socialists was concerned at the time, he agreed with the latter much more than with Gandhi's views on socialism, which he regarded merely as humanitarianism. But he doubted the capacity of the Congress Socialism to identify themselves with the masses and talk their language.³¹

(Another aspect of Jawaharlal's activities during the period deserves mention. He was keen on organising a civil liberties union. However, , from the point of view of agrarian question there was nothing notable till the annual session of Congress at Faizpur, in December 1936.

At Faizpur a decision on the agrarian platform could no longer be postponed. Pattabhi Sitaarayya, the Congress historian, recalled that at Faizpur the atmosphere was "surcharged with socialist slogans emphasising the rights of the workers and peasant". One indication of left-wing strength at Faizpur was the surprisingly large vote—more than one-third in both the AICC and the open session for a communist sponsored amendment declaring that self

31. R.C.Dutt,^{op. cit.} p.106

government could be won only after an " uncompromising revolutionary struggle with imperialism". The AIKS achieved maximum impact, organising a 200 mile peasants' march, ⁱⁿ the villages of Maharashtra, which ended at an open session in Faizpur attended by some 40,000 peasants. The Sabha's demand for Zamindari abolition was reiterated by N.G.Ranga alongwith the demands for elimination of money lending interests in agricultural and also affirmed "the eagerness and readiness of socialists and comrades of Kisans and workers to welcome the class struggle coming to a head before the contending classes". But his thanks to Nehru, who as Congress President, he said, had "sincerely and singlemindedly helped) us to organise ourselves to develop our own class consciousness, and to fight our class enemies".³²⁾

(It is certain, therefore that Nehru, in his turn, was helped by Ranga's demonstration of peasant support. At Faizpur, Nehru finally succeeded in getting Gandhi's approval for adoption of a far-reaching programme of agrarian reform that became part of the Congress election manifesto of 1937.

32. Ranga, Kisan Speaks, p.7

The resolution on agrarian programme adopted at this session was as follows:³³

"The Congress at its last session, being fully conscious of the fact that the most important and urgent problem of the country is appalling poverty, unemployment and indebtedness of the peasantry called upon the provincial Congress Committee to make recommendations to enable the All India Agrarian Programme. Many Pradesh Congress Committees have not yet submitted their recommendations for such a programme. The congress regrets this delay but realises that the subject is a vast and intricate one, requiring close study and investigation. It trusts that such PCCs as have not reported so far will take early steps to send their recommendations.

" The Congress is convinced that the final solution of this problem involved the removal of British imperialistic exploitation and a radical change in the antiquated and repressive land tenure and revenue system. (It feels however, that the deepening crisis has made the burden on the peasantry an intolerable one and immediate relief is urgently called for pending the forming of an All India

33. Rakesh Gupta, Bihar Peasantry and the Kisan Sabha, PPH, New Delhi: 1982 pp.138-140

Agrarian Programme, therefore, the following steps are necessary:

- (1) Rent and revenue should be readjusted giving regard to present conditions and there should be substantial reduction in both.
- (2) Uneconomic holdings should be exempted from rent or land tax.
- (3) Agricultural incomes should be assessed to income tax like all other incomes on a progressive scale subject to a prescribed minimum.
- (4) Canal and irrigation rates should be substantially lowered.
- (5) All feudal dues and levies and forced labour should be abolished, and demands other than rent should be made illegal.
- (6) Fixity of tenure with heritable rights along with the right to build houses and plant trees should be provided for all tenants.
- (7) An effort should be made to introduce cooperative farming.
- (8) The crushing burden of rural debt should be removed. Special tribunals should be appointed to inquire into their debts which are unconscionable or beyond the capacity of peasants to pay,

should be liquidated. Meanwhile a moratorium should be declared and steps should be taken to provide cheap credit facilities.

- (9) Arrears of rent for previous years should generally be wiped out.
- (10) Common pasture lands should be provided and the rights of the people in tanks, wells, ponds, forests and the like recognised and no encroachment on these rights should be permitted.
- (11) Arrears of rent should be recovered in the same manner as civil debts and not by ejection.
- (12) There should be statutory provision for securing a living wage and suitable working conditions for agricultural labourers.
- (13) Peasant unions should be recognised.

This agrarian programme was to operate within the general aim of Congress politics at that juncture. For the real object according to Nehru was to build up a powerful joint front of all the anti-imperialist forces in country.)

(The most significant aspect of the Faizpur programme was that, it came to the very brink of recommending Zamindari abolition. Nehru left no doubt of his own interpretation and he declared in his presidential address: " The land system can not endure, and an obvious step to remove

the intermediaries between the cultivator and the state", after which "cooperative or collective forming must follow."³⁴ At the same time, however, when the conservative majority in the working committee finally took an open position against any change in the Congress Constitution to permit collective affiliation, Nehru, who did not force the issue to the point of a split with the old guard.

Subsequently, the tune of AIKS propaganda became more strident. Although the Kisan Sabha supported Congress in the 1937 elections, the leadership charged that Kisan workers were deliberately excluded from the ticket, and that "pacts and understandings" were being made with the reactionaries". The AIKS nevertheless managed to take advantage of the elections to intensify recruitment activities.

(The Congress went for election despite Nehru's wishes to the contrary. In conformity with his concern for High-command's decision he had to foresake his personal preference. The elections were faught in February 1937 and they resulted in an overwhelming success for Congress in the general constituencies, Congress obtained a clear majority in the six provinces of Madras, Bihar, U.P, Central provinces, Bombay and Orissa.)

34. Nehru, Towards Freedom, Appendix B, p-427

Not a single individual was more responsible for this signal success than Jawaharlal Nehru whose hectic election campaign and addressing of mammoth gatherings produced miracle in election results. (Although Congress took office only in August 1937, the October meeting of the AIKS passed a resolution attacking the ministeris for the "piecemeal, superficial and perfunctory manner" in which they were dealing with peasant grievances. They charged that Congress had failed to keep its campaign pledges for an immediate reduction of land revenue and rent, exemption on uneconomic holdings and moratorium on debt collections. Then, in early 1938, the AIKS lauched a vigorous agitation for the immediate implementation of the Faizpur programme, including Zamindari abolition. Peasant marches were organised in Punjab, Bihar, Maharastra, Bengal, Madras and the United Provinces. The movement had by this time adopted red flag as standard and was virtually controlled by communists.)

By the time of the annual session of the Congress at Haripura, in February 1938, hostility between the Congress and the AIKS was so strong that the Reception Committee prohibited any kisan rally within Congress meeting grounds. By 1938 in fact, the communists had succeeded not only in capturing the AIKS, but were well on their way to establishing control

of the CSP, for they had 1/3 of the seats in the CSP executive. ^{Bose}Subhas, a fiery CSP leader was elected president of Congress. And Gandhi and his supporters rushed to protect their control over the nationalist movement by pushing through " Revolution on Kisan Sabhas", which explicitly dissociated Congress from the activities of Congress in Kisan Sabha. However, the AIKS, while welcoming the success achieved by the Congress ministries also attacked them as the inadequacies which still remained in the implementation of the policies in land. The ministries had not made much progress toward implementation of the Faizpur programme. Although tenancy acts were passed in Bombay, Madras, the United Provinces, Central Provinces. Bihar and Bengal to confer occupancy rights on restricted class of tenants, and to restrain landlords from summary eviction or attachment of property for non-payment of rent, no substantial reductions or exemption in rent or revenue, or general moratorium on debts had been declared. On the whole basic inequities of the landlord-tenant relationship remained to a great measure, unchanged.

(In this atmosphere, the AIKS meeting in annual session in Bengal in March 1938, suddenly described its ultimate aim

as a Kisan Mazdoor Raj (peasants and workers state), in which "from each according to his capacity to each according to needs shall be the watchword"³⁵. In another resolution, the sabha specifically denounced the philosophy and techniques of conservative programme.³⁶)

(At the Tripuri session of Congress in March 1939, Gandhi was determined to force a showdown with the Socialists and he decided to convert the election of Congress president into an open test of his strength in the nationalist movement. Gandhi's candidate Sitaramayya lost to Bose who contested for a second term. Gandhi thereupon decided on one last confrontation by declaring that he regarded Sitaramayya's defeat as his own. Following Gandhi's lead, twelve of the fifteen members of the working committee (Bose, his brother Sarat, and Nehru excluded), announced their resignations. At the same time, the old guard introduced a resolution at the open session calling on all delegates to reiterate their confidence in Gandhi's leadership by "requesting" Bose to appoint a working committee having Gandhi's approval or else Gandhi would break all ties with the Congress. Ultimately faced with an unpleasant situation Bose resigned. This marked the

35. Ranga- Kisan Handbook, p.103

36. Ibid-p.71

starting point of the rupture between the left and right in the Congress which would ultimately lead to the exclusion of communists from the mainstream of national movement.³⁷⁾

However, subsequent developments in the organisational politics is not ~~own~~ scope of study. What is of interest is the beginning of planning when Bose was the president of Congress and the influence Jawaharlal had on the process of planning and the direction he gave to it.

Dissatisfied as Jawaharlal was with the work of the Congress ministries in the provinces, and frustrated as he felt with the infighting at the highest level in Congress, he took the opportunity to take a concrete step towards the implementation of his idea of building up a socialist society in the country. The example of the Soviet Union had inextricably linked the concept of planning with socialist construction of society.

(In October 1938, the Congress under the presidentship of Subhas Chandra Bose set up a National Planning Committee under the chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru. The later threw himself heart and soul into his work. At his instace a conference of ministers of industries was held, and this conference setup an All India National planning commission consisting of the representatives of the British Indian

37. Nehru's characteristic role during the whole period of confrontation was one of mediator who in the event of rupture chose to side with Congress and Gandhi in conformity with his convictions. But this development left him unhappy.

Provinces and the Indian states to give effect to the recommendation of the planning committee.

The National Planning Committee was constituted with socialists, economists, businessmen and industrialists as members, and first meeting of the Committee was held in December 1938. In course of its work the committee appointed twenty-nine subcommittees. Reports emerged from the subcommittees in the spring of 1940, and a comprehensive report was being forged out of them in May and June 1940 when political events overtook the work of planning on 22 October 1939 the working committee directed provincial Congress ministries to resign, and on 31 October 1940) Jawaharlal was arrested on his way back to Allahabad from Wardha). He was refused permission to continue planning work in ^oga. Thus ended the first planning effort in India, but the work was not without its significance. It threw up problems and gave considerable experience to future architects of national planning in independent India, and helped speed up the pace when the country was really in a position to adopt planning as part of the process of development.

Jawaharlal's approach to planning even at this early stage is of interest. He fully realised that national

independence was an indispensable preliminary to implement a plan, but he felt that "this does not mean that we must wait for independence before doing anything towards the development of planned economy". (He wanted "to draw up a full plan which would apply to a free India and at the same time indicate what should be done now, and under present conditions, in the various departments of national activity".³⁸)

From the point of view of Nehru's socialism his views indicated a posture on the defensive. In a letter to K.T.Shah on 13 May 1939 he wrote: " obviously constituted as we are, and constituted as the planning committee is, we can hardly begin tackling the question on a socialist basis...At the same time, we must aim at something different though that need not be , so far as the Committee is concerned, full blooded in socialism..." The reason advanced by Nehru was that in India, " a premature conflict on class line would lead to a break-up and probably to prolonged inability to build anything. The disruptive forces in the country seem to be growing and it almost seems we are going the way of China".³⁹

38. From a Note circulated to Members, National Planning Committee, 4, June 1939(selected works, vol.8,p.377)

39. Selected works, vol.9.pp.373-374.

On the agricultural front however, this cautioned did not inhibit the planning committee from making recommendations of drastic nature. The subcommittee on Land Policy, Agriculture and Insurance recommended that "cultivation of land should be organised in complete collectives wherever feasible, e.g. on cultivable wastelands and other lands acquired by state. Other forms of cooperative farming should be encouraged elsewhere... In such cooperatives, private ownership of land will continue, but the working of such land shall be in common; and distribution of the produce will be regulated in accordance with the duty-weighted contribution made by each member in respect of land, labour, tools, implements and cattle required for cultivation... The collective farm- as distinguished from the cooperative or state farm mentioned above- may be operated in such a manner that, after paying from the produce all expenses of cultivation, including wages of workers, the surplus if any, after paying the state dues, will be available for the benefit of the collective colony and the common services or amenities required by it, so as to raise the standard of living as well as to make provision by way of reserve against future contingencies"⁴⁰

40. Note of the Sub-committee on Land policy, Agriculture and insurance, quoted in R.C. Dutta^{op. cit.} p. 132.

The Sub-Committee also stated that "it has been decided that no intermediaries between the state and the cultivators should be recognised; and that all their rights and titles should be acquired by the state paying such compensation as may be considered necessary and desirable..." Finally, the subcommittee observed that "while these steps are being taken in the direction of collectiv^{is}ation, there will continue to be large parts of the country under the regime of peasant proprietors or individual cultivators. Individual enterprise will thus continue", but the sub-committee added, "... it must be subordinated to the needs of the community".⁴¹

(The Resolution of the National planning committee on the Report of the subcommittee also deserve to be quoted at some length:

- (1) " Agricultural land, minus, quarries, rivers and forest are forms of natural wealth, ownership of which must vest absolutely in the people of Indian collectively.
- (2) " The cooperative principle should be applied to the exploitation of land by developing collective and cooperative farms in order that agriculture may be conducted more scientifically and efficiently, waste avoided, and production

41. Ibid-p.132

increased and at the same time the habit of mutual cooperation for the benefit of the community developed in place of individual profit motive."

- (3) "No intermediaries of the types of Tahangdars, Zamindars etc. should be recognised in any of these forms of natural wealth after the transition period is over. The rights and titles possessed by these classes should be progressively brought out by granting such compensation as may be considered necessary and desirable. The practice of sub-infeudation and sub-letting of land should not be permitted."
- (4) "The subcommittee is required to consider and report on the forms of collective and cooperative farms, which may be suitable for India, and which they recommend. Such collective and cooperative farms which may be suitable for India, and which they recommend. Such collective and cooperative farming must be under state supervision and regulation"⁴²

As planning progressed, there was interesting reaction within Congress itself. Though there was considerable divergence of views among the planners a broad term towards state control was emerging. This alarmed the conservatives. Even Gandhi was not impressed with the

the work.) In a letter to Amrit Kaur on 29 June 1939 Gandhi conveyed his advice to stay away from the planning Committee, and added: "In my opinion, the whole of planning is a waste of effort. But he (Jawaharlal) can not be satisfied with anything that is not big".⁴³

(However, as political events followed their course, and newer problems cropped up they claimed the attention of Jawaharlal and thus any attempt at policy formulation on agrarian question would have to wait till independence. The years of war and partition⁴ⁱ claimed the attention of national leadership and thus the phase of policy formulation came after a long respite.)

43. Quoted by S.Gopal in his Biography of Jawaharlal Nehru-vol-I, p.247

CHAPTER IVNEHRU AND CONGRESS AGRARIAN POLICY AFTER INDEPENDENCE

(Independence, when it finally came on August 15, 1947 was accompanied by unexpected trauma characterised by communal tension, uncompromising demand of the Muslim leauge for a separate Islamic State, communal riots in Bengal and Bihar which culminated in the partition of the country. Immediately after a truncated India regained her freedom, unexpected communal violence took place in the Punjab now divided between India and Pakistan. Meanwhile Gandhi, because of his anti-communal posture earned the fierce hatred of Hindu fanatics and was assassinated on 30th January 1948.

(Although the socialists and Marxists had alienated themselves from the mainstream of national movement in the years preceding independence, they were later influenced by the unfortunate happenings till Gandhi's assassination. But it is impossible to measure with any ecactness the effect of these events on them. These events had only a temporary impact on the dedicated Marxists inside the CPI, for the Communist understanding of the political situation in India was guided by inter-national communist movement which resulted, between 1948

and 1951, in the agrarian struggle launched in the communist stronghold of Telengana accompanied by attempt at organising the peasantry in West Bengal, Madras and Bombay. The objective of the movement was to seize power on a wave of peasant uprisings throughout the country and the movement was suppressed by deploying army. But the movement did raise the urgency of land problem in India. By 1951, the communists, faced with the real threat of political annihilation if they persisted in armed revolt had to reconsider their earlier assessment of the revolutionary potential in the country. Thus their strategy changed over to one of peaceful opposition through the organisation of United Front alliance of left parties and this tactical consideration however did not rule out resort to violence methods in future if the situation became favourable.¹

(The Congress socialists, by contrast, underwent a more profound transformation of political outlook being deeply shaken by communal riots and Gandhi's death; and as opposed to their earlier advocacy of class struggle, resolved to work for a socialist society through peaceful means.²

1. Overstreet and Windmiller-p.303

2. Francine R. Frankel, India's political Economy, OUP, 1980-pp 65-66.

It is apparent from Nehru's own writings that he began to experience reservations about the wisdom of class struggle techniques in Indian conditions even earlier. Although he was the most influential advocate of socialism in-side the Congress, he had never formally joined the Congress Socialist Party. When in 1936, he was elected Congress president, the working committee appointed by him carefully reflected the conservative majority in the AICC. Even in 1939, when with the reelection of Subhas Bose as Congress President in the face of open opposition, the socialists appeared in a position ~~of~~ to capture the party, Nehru chose not to go beyond the verbal confrontation with Gandhi that followed.

Thus Nehru's motives must always remain a matter of some speculation. Brecher suggests that there were important psychological pressures affecting his behaviour. In particular Nehru was so emotionally dependent on Gandhi's esteem and affection that he preferred to give way even on issues of principle rather than risk an irriparable breach in their personal relations.³ Yet it is also apparent that Nehru was concerned about preserving the Congress

3. Brecher- p.140

Party as a unifying political force. He had moreover, reason to believe that his personal effectiveness was enhanced by remaining acceptable to the conservative elements inside the party.)

Even-though he had refrained from packing, the working committee refused to issue an ultimatum on the question of collective affiliation he did manage to win a free hand in drafting the 1936 election manifesto, which committed the party as a whole to a radical programme of agrarian reform. (His conciliatory attitude towards the business class also brought significant gains. When the Congress working committee constituted a National planning Committee in 1938, composed of Socialists, communists and leading industrialists, Nehru as chairman deliberately avoided discussions of basic social policy or principles of socialist organisation that could split the committee, and contended himself with a consensus on the need for central economic planning.) Like Gandhi in other Circumstances he reasoned that the committee's endorsement for the principle of planning, even without an explicit commitment to the socialist pattern of society, would inevitably lead India towards establishing some of the fundamentals of the socialist structure.

(Perhaps the greatest incentive to Nehru of a conciliatory approach, however, was the prospect of achieving social reform and economic progress with a minimum of disruptive violence.⁴ He observed, " if conflict was inevitable, it had to be faced. But if it could be avoided or minimised, that was an obvious gain".⁵

Even so, as late as 1945 Nehru was still not entirely persuaded of the practicability of a non-violent approach to social revolution. He confessed to nagging doubts: " ends and means: were they tied up inseparably, acting and reacting on each other, the wrong means distorting, sometimes destroying the end in view ? But the right means may well be beyond the capacity of infirm and selfish human nature. What then was ~~one~~⁶ to do ?"

(Nevertheless, Nehru continued to move towards conciliatory approach. The Congress election manifesto, which he approved in 1946, finally called outright for Zamindari abolition, but also promised payment of equitable compensation to Zamindars.

4. Frankel p.67

5. Discovery of India p.405

6. Ibid p.13

After Gandhi's death, however, Nehru became unshakable in his commitment to nonviolence as the only valid policy in approaching problems of social reform in India. Although he did not hesitate to depart from Gandhi's thinking on questions of economic policy he self-consciously kept faith with what he considered the relevant core of Gandhi's teaching in politics: "the most important principle (that) he laid down which is means are as important as ends and are in fact convertible".⁷⁾

(Paradoxically, however, in a striking departure from Gandhi's strategy- and his own earlier prudence- Nehru permitted a radical formulation of Congress party's ultimate goals. In November 1947, at the Jaipur meeting of the AICC, the Committee on objectives and economic programme set down the general principle that "land, with its mineral resources and other means of production, as well as distribution and exchange, must belong to and be regulated by the community in its own interests". There was provision for state enterprise and key industries, regulation and control over private enterprise, in view of the objectives of national policies.

7. R.K.Karanjia, The Mind of Mr. Nehru, p.25

(Within the rural sector, the committee recommended the elimination of all private money lenders and traders; and the formation^{of} village credit, marketing and processing societies based on compulsory membership of all cultivators.⁸⁾

(The effect of the Jaipur programme was heightened by publication in July 1949 of the report of the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee.⁹⁾ This was the first major product of socialist-Gandhian collaboration as an outstanding public issue after independence.⁹⁾ It was the most threatening document ever drafted by an official committee of the Congress party with respect to the property interests of the landed castes.

(The Committee set down four standards that should determine the government's agricultural policy. They were

- (1) The agrarian economy should provide an opportunity for the development of farmer's personality;
- (2) there should be no exploitation of one class by another;
- (3) there should be maximum efficiency of production;
- (4) the scheme of reform should be within the realm of practicability.)

8. AICC, Resolutions on Economic Policy & Programme, 1924-1954, p.18

9. The agrarian reforms committee was appointed with Nehru's approval by Congress president Rajender Prasad towards the end of 1947. It was headed by Gandhian Economist J.C.Kumarappa. Two members with substantial holdings, N.G.Ranga and O.P.Ramaswamy Reddiar, ex-president of Madras, issued a "Minute of Dissent" to the main report arguing against virtually all recommendation to restrict private ownership rights in land especially compulsory cooperative forming, which was recommended.

(The report, which conceded that a capitalist agrarian structure could achieve maximum efficiency in production, rejected such a pattern on political grounds because it would promote exploitation of one class by another. It assumed that full protection of private property rights in land would encourage larger owners to mechanise production and ultimately to displace smaller and less efficient producers: to deprive the agriculturists of their rights in land, turn them in to mere wage earners and subject society to capitalist control in such a vital matter as food.¹⁰)

(At the same time, collective farming which might improve productive efficiency and eliminate economic exploitation as well, was found unsuitable on grounds of subordinating the individual peasant to a large army of technicians and bureaucrats. On balance, therefore, the committee favoured an agrarian pattern of intermediate-size, village based cooperative associations as the best safeguard for the legitimate interest of both individual and community.)

10. Indian National Congress, AICC, Report of the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee, p.16

(With this central issue decided, the report went on to recommend two types of farming related to differences in the size of holdings. All holdings below "basic" size, that is uneconomic farms that could provide full employment and a reasonable standard of living to an average family of five—about forty to fifty percent of the total—were to be amalgamated in joint cooperative farms. The report candidly expressed the hope that all land in village would ultimately come under joint cooperative management, and that family farms would gradually disappear after an indefinite period of transition.

To this end the report noted the need to fix a minimum wage for agricultural labour, which would not only benefit the landless workers, but also drive "the small farms, i.e. the bulk of agricultural farms out of cultivation and the small holders into the cooperative farms.¹¹⁾

(Finally, the authors of the report observed that propaganda, liberal state aid and other forms of economic inducement might be sufficient to establish a new agrarian pattern; some measure of compulsion might well be needed.

11. Ibid, p.123.

By 1949, therefore, the propertied classes stood warned of the long-term threat to their economic interests in government initiatives for "social reform" in rural sector. The mass of illiterate tenant farmers and landless labourers were of course only dimly aware of the exact recommendation for changes in the land tenure system. Still they were also encouraged to hope for a major improvement in their condition as a result of the establishment of a popular government after independence.)

(In the early years of independence two contradictory tendencies were already well-advanced inside the congress party.¹² The national party executive endorsed socialist principles of state ownership, regulation and control over key sectors of economy with a view to improve productivity and curb economic concentration. On the other hand, the National Congress government pursued liberal economic policies and gave incentives for private investment justified by the aim of increasing production.

The phenomenon reflected serious attrition in the strength of the socialist Gandhian intellegentia at all levels of party organisation. Thus national leadership was unable to command effective support for the implementation of official Congress policies on economic and social reforms.

12. Frankel, p.71

Patel as the most powerful spokesman of the conservative wing was instrumental in producing this situation. As a result Nehru's socialist support inside the Congress was sharply attenuated.)

(Another hurdle on Nehru's way was the influence of the new membership in the provincial Congress bodies after the 1936 which included prosperous landholding castes,¹³ who were least bothered about the scruples of controlling local organisations. The phenomenon assumed wider proportion after 1947. Thus by 1949, conservative coalitions built by dominant landowning castes in alliance with urban businessmen had captured effective control over most district and pradesh congress committees.)

(During the formative period there were serious differences between Patel and Nehru, which gave rise to serious constraints on the latter's initiatives. Patel provided a rival focus of power inside the cabinet, one that encouraged ministries to exercise considerable autonomy on issues of national policy. Nehru complained that he could not impose any close coordination on the decision taken in different ministries. In particular, his concern that cabinet must develop a general economic policy to meet the acute crisis created by the dislocation of

13. Stanley Konchaneck: The Congress Party of India, pp 337-338.

partition found no echo in government actions. The government ignored the 1946 recommendation of interim government's Advisory planning Board to establish a national planning agency "responsible to the cabinet which should denote its attention continually to the whole field of development."¹⁴ Neither was there any response to the January 1948 recommendation of AICC's Economic programmes Committee that a Planning Commission should be immediately established. Seven months later (in response to Nehru's suggestion of setting up a "Board or council of Expert advisers whose function would be to watch every aspect of the economic situation and advise on it, Patel countered with the suggestion of setting up a committee of experts drawn from among industrialists, economists and representatives of the government departments to achieve their cooperation in the effective implementation of policies that had already been set down to reassure the business community. Indeed, the years between 1947 and 1950 saw a series of adhoc economic policies that were designed to create a favourable environment for private investment."¹⁵)

14. A.H.Hanson, the Process of Planning, p.45

15. Frankel, ^{op. cit.} pp. 76-77.

(Yet, by far, the most important initiatives aimed at protecting the interests of the propertied classes were those incorporated into legal and institutional framework of the new political order. During the period of Patel's life-time till death in 1950- the government took a series of key decisions on constitutional arrangements that set very narrow limits on the centre's powers for direct implementation of economic and social reforms.

In the constitutional set up, which provided for a parliamentary form of government, the constitutive powers of parliament were, limited in one vital respect. This was the requirement to carry out social and economic reforms through measures that were consistent with the fundamental rights of individuals guaranteed by ^{the} constitution. Indeed, the most egalitarian portions of the 1950 constitution were confined to the non-enforceable Directive Principles of State Policy. By contrast, the operative portions of the constitution imposed limitations on the power of Central Parliament and the legislatures of each of the states against passing any law which takes away ~~or~~ "abridge" the fundamental rights protected under the constitution. The fundamental rights as included in

15. Frankel. pp .76-77.

part-III, included not only the basic political right such as equality before law and the freedom of religion, speech, expression, assembly, association and movement, but also the freedom of property. Article 19, guaranteed the right to "acquire, hold and dispose of property" subject only to "reasonable restrictions" in the public interest. Article 31 stipulated that no property could be acquired for a public purpose unless the government paid compensation. The right of individual to challenge the compensation awards in the courts as inadequate or in violation of the right to equal protection of law was also guaranteed under the general provision of Article 32, confirming the right to appeal to the Supreme Court and/or lower courts for the enforcement of fundamental rights. The Drafting Committee, in fact, was more rigid in insisting on the absolute protection of economic rights than on the inviolability of political freedoms.)

Nehru pleaded that the constitution should clearly exempt the compensation clauses of the Zamindari Abolition Acts from Judicial Review under the Fundamental Rights provision. But the plea was rejected. By contrast, the framers endorsed the principle that it was necessary to qualify the civil rights guaranteed, by enabling both

the centre and the states to plan laws providing for Preventive Detention for reasons connected with the security of state, the maintenance of public order or the maintenance of supply and services essential to the community.

Similarly, Patel, as Home Minister, succeeded in imposing his arguments on Drafting Committee for constitutional provisions guaranteeing the privileged conditions of service to the officers of British trained Indian Civil Service(ICS). The successor of ICS the Indian Administrative Service(IAS) established by Patel, with its own terms and conditions of service also guaranteed under the constitution, retained the structure and style of its elitist forerunner perpetuating a national administrative system that in numbers and outlook was more suitable for carrying out the narrow colonial functions of law and order than the broad responsibilities for economic development of an independent government. Thus the legal and administrative framework appeared to favour the protection of the rights and privileges of diverse local elites.)

But the distribution of powers between the Union and the states also acted as a brake in preventing sweeping changes of the social order by action from above.

The strong powers vested in the Union were more useful as negative sanction in preventing open opposition by the states to basic principles of national policy than as positive force for the effective implementation of central programmes. Except in the unusual case that two thirds of the members of the Rajyasabha were agreed parliament could not legislate on any subject of the state list. The state government, among other important things, retained virtually extensive control over the governance of the vast rural sector, including such key subjects as land reforms, agricultural credit, land revenue assessments and taxation of agricultural income.)

Thus the structure of government was mainly for coordination between the centre and the states rather than central control over state policies, programmes and administration.¹⁷ (However drastic departures could occur during emergencies. Under ordinary circumstances, the federal legal and administrative framework imposed several limitations on the power of central government to carry out programmes of democratic social transformation. . These constraints assigned even greater salience to

17. Paul Appleby- Public administration in India;
Report of a Survey, Delhi-1953, p.16

to methods of social change that could build up organised popular pressure from below on state governments for the effective implementation of economic and social reforms.

There were in fact, a number of features in the new constitution that contained the potentialities for carrying out such a decentralised strategy of social change in response to popular pressure. Not least important was the provision for the adoption of universal adult suffrage for both Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. Right to equality before law and equal protection of the law carried revolutionary implications. The constitution paved the way for establishing new institutions of popular participation at the local level. It directed the states to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self government.)

(This framework of constitutional arrangements, with its short-term limitations and long-range opportunities for carrying out democratic social reform, was in place by the time that Nehru finally succeeded in winning the cabinet approval for a national programme of planned development.¹⁸ The Prime Minister, whose power was still

18. Frankel, p.84.

not predominant in either the government or the Congress party, followed his characteristic political style of getting agreement for broad principles of socialist transformation even while approving the conservative economic policies endorsed in the Draft Outline of the First Plan.

The endorsement of radical economic and social goals proved sufficient, this line to alarm the conservatives inside the Congress party. Nehru's ^{ar}arbiter role weakened the socialist contingent inside the Congress party.)

At the end of 1949, Nehru once again revived the idea of a planning commission, this time fortified by a recommendation from an American advisor. Once again, the idea met resistance from Patel. But the prevailing economic crisis strengthened Nehru's hand and on January 25, 1950, the working committee after acrimonious debate, finally agreed to a resolution calling for the creation of Planning Commission.¹⁹ But so, far from endorsing government control in industry and land-reform in agriculture, Sardar Patel prevailed once again in deleting a passage from the original draft that would have defined the purpose of planning as "the progressive elimination of social concentration of wealth and, means of production"²⁰ All that Nehru could

19. Ibid, pp 84-85

20. Kochanek p.139

manage by way of compensation was a statement linking the work of the planners to Directive Principles of state Policy contained in the Constitution.²¹⁾

However, the planning commission with Nehru as its chairman was from the beginning relegated to an advisory status. The completed Draft Outline confirmed the existence of a wide chasm between statements of principle and programmes of action). Although the Directive principles of state policy were accepted as the guide to economic and social pattern to be attained through plannings, it was at the same time, warned by planners that a hasty implementation of measures intended to bring about economic equality may, in the short run, affect savings and level of production adversely.²²

(All programmes included in the plan were justified by reference to a single yard-stick: the economic goal of increasing production. It was from this point of view that the highest priority was given to agriculture, rural development, irrigation and power which accounted for 43% of the total outlay. This was mainly keeping in view

²¹ Tarlok Singh- Towards an integrated society pp.153-154
22.

the shortage of food and raw materials²⁴. Again there was discrepancy between the prescriptive and the operational portion of the agricultural development programme.

There was emphasis on increasing production to change agriculture from "subsistence farming to economic farming and (bringing) about changes, as will introduce substantial efficiency in farming operation and enable the low income farmer to increase his return.²⁵ The ultimate objective was described as cooperative village management under which "all the land in the village is to be regarded as a single farm". In the interim, the smaller holders should be "encouraged and assisted to group themselves voluntarily into cooperative Farming societies.²⁶ Moreover all producers were expected to belong to a village production plans, assess requirements for finance from cooperative multipurpose societies to individual cultivators, and organise voluntary labour for community works).

(In practice, institutional reform was assigned secondary importance in the programme for increasing agricultural production.²⁷ The planners ruled out nationalisation of land for collective cultivation on the

24. Ibid, p.75

25. Ibid, p.94

26. Ibid, p.104

27. Frankel, p.87

grounds of a tradition of free peasant ownership. Next they rejected the proposal to place a ceiling on existing holdings in order to redistribute land to subsistence farmers, arguing that on the larger farms production will fall, and for a period at any rate, on other farms also and it may well be that the decline in production may have a serious effect on the well-being and stability of rural society as a whole. Apart from Zamindari abolition which was already in progress the only concrete proposals for land reform contained in the Draft outline centered around recommendations for legislation to protect tenants at will and to determine a ceiling on future acquisition of land by individuals.

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(The greatest incentive in agricultural programme was placed on the adoption of improved practices, particularly the introduction of irrigation and the application of chemical fertiliser. This strategy clearly favoured the large landowners.

While socialists and Gandhians saw the plan as a ~~clip~~ ^{down} from the objectives of Congress as preached till recently, the industrialists and sympathisers of private enterprise viewed the very establishment of a central planning agency with alarm. Thus as the arbiter between the

two extremes Nehru had always to strike a compromise. The famous confrontation between Nehru and Tandon was suggestive of this tussle between the left and right inside the Congress although Nehru's arbitration did not wholly satisfy the socialist and Gandhian contingent in the Congress which led to their withdrawal from Congress.²⁸

However, as the most indispensable leader for the Congress party Nehru still exercised an indisputable authority in policy making. His prime concern, from this point of view, lay in maintaining the unity of Congress. This conviction was strengthened after the 1952 general election in which the Congress party had massive victory.²⁹⁾

(On the whole, the results were sufficient to suggest that for the time being only the Congress party could provide a focus for social mobilisation on the basis of common national identity. All other groups, in Nehru's view, would divide the country further along caste, communal, sectional or class lines. More than ever, Nehru thought in terms of applying Gandhian principles to problems of social change.³⁰⁾

Thus he reasoned: " It is clear that so far as this country is concerned we can not attain this ideal of [class-

28. Frankel, pp, 88-91

29. Ibid, p.92

30. Ibid, p.92

less society) by conflict and violence. We have achieved many things by way of peace and there is no particular reason why we should not do so, because however, high our ideals and objectives may be, if we try to attain them by methods of violence, matters will be very greatly delayed".³¹

Like Gandhi before him, Nehru maintained the tactical separation between an accommodative party ideology and organisation aimed at reassuring the propertied classes and an economic strategy that incorporated proposal, for institutional change designed to speed up popular organisation and pressure from below on state governments for the implementation of social reforms.

(The final version of the First Five year Plan published in December 1952, reflected Nehru's new authority over national questions of economic and social policy, after Patel's death in 1951. It also contained the first indication of a new approach to economic development that incorporated a strategy for peaceful social change. The allocation to industry increased, compared to that in the

31. Jawaharlal Nehru, Planning and Development, "Speech to Lok Sabha", December 15, 1952, p.6.

Draft outline, with the main emphasis on basic and heavy industries and imposing a measure of limits on private enterprise.

The most striking innovation, however, occurred in the approach to agricultural development. The draft outline had offered little by way of practical programmes to dissolve the apparent contradiction between economic and social aims of planning with strong emphasis on a technocratic strategy. But the final version of the First plan paved the way for the reconciliation of growth and equity goals by reformulating the problem of agricultural development in terms of eliminating exploitative social and economic relations that inhibited more efficient use of existing labour intensive production practices to increase output.³²

The planners identified the basic cause of India's backwardness not in the absence of modern technology per se, but in the persistence of certain inhibiting socio-economic factors which prevent the most dynamic forces in the economy from asserting themselves.³³

(Applying this formulation to rural sector, it became feasible to argue that higher levels of output depended

32. Frankel, p.95

33. Ibid, p.95

less on the application of scientific methods to agriculture which few cultivators could afford- than on the transformation of institutional framework to provide small farmers and agricultural workers with adequate incentives to increase production through more efficient application of traditional labour intensive techniques.³⁴

However, there was substantial evidence of a chronic gap between productivity potential and actual output within the vast agricultural sector. Apparent since the turn of the century till 1946-47, the rate of increase in out-put of foodgrains, estimated at 12%, lagged far behind population growth over 40%.³⁵⁾

(Efforts to raise agricultural productivity within the existing agrarian framework, however, were almost certain to run into direct obstacles in the pattern of land distribution and land tenure.³⁶ The system of landownership based on individual proprietary rights, inherited from the British, imposed severe limitations on the efficient allocation of land, labour and capital.³⁷

34. Ibid, pp.95-96

35. George Blyn, Agricultural Trends in India 1891-1947, p.96

36. Frankel, p.97.

37. Ibid, p,97.

The final version of the First Five Year Plan ruled out the undiluted capitalist pattern of agrarian re-organisation. Instead, it adopted alternative proposals for land reform that made significant redistribution of land and some degree of change from individual to cooperative patterns of economic activity an integral part of the programme for agricultural development.

(The most striking departure occurred in the recommendation for ceilings. Reversing their earlier position in the Draft outline, the Planners announced that they were now "in favour of the principle that there should be an upper limit to the amount of land that an individual may hold."³⁹ The planners endorsed the recommendation of the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee to establish a ceiling at three times the family holding". Ceilings could apply both to the amount of land that could be resumed from the tenants-at-will for the purpose of personal cultivation. The plight of landless labourers was expected to be ameliorated but not removed by the redistribution of land.

As in the Draft outline, the planning commission recommended that small and middle farmers be assisted ~~to~~

39. Ibid, p.100

to group themselves voluntarily in to cooperative farming societies. This time however, the commission suggested a modest element of compulsion,⁴⁰ suggesting that the decision of majority of the farmers to enter upon cooperative management should be binding on the village as a whole. The recommendations for land reforms and cooperative village management, nevertheless, stopped far short of the generalised attack as private ownership rights in land that characterised the 1949 Report of Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee. The practice of accommodative politics was strengthened by the planning commission's projection of an extended time perspective for the organisation of cooperative forms of small and middle farmers). The planners gave only a vague mandate to the states to organise a "good number" during the First Plan, without suggesting any time-table for achieving the ultimate goal of cooperative village management.⁴¹

(The planners believed that the proposals for land reforms represented an important victory for the goal of socialist pattern and that they had achieved a consensus at the level of principle on the aim of a radical reconstruction of rural society. Recommendations for ceilings

40. Ibid, p.100

41. Ibid, p.101

on land, ownership and the formation of cooperative farms had been endorsed by the cabinet, the Lok Sabha, and the Congress Party as part of their overall approval for the plan.

The new approach to agricultural development also incorporated a set of proposals of organisational changes at the village level that carried the potentiality for mobilising effective public opinion as a sanction in enforcing plan policies of agrarian reform. The core of the approach was the recommendation of the community Development programme. Like its predecessor, the conservative programme, it was designed to stimulate popular pressures for social reform from below that would ultimately make institutional change inevitable, while avoiding the destabilising effects of a frontal attack on the prerogatives of the propertied class.⁴²

(The first fifty five community projects had been started in October 1952, under the supervision of the Planning Commission with American Technical and financial assistance. They were originally conceived solely as programme intensive agricultural development and were in fact allocated ^{to} areas having water from irrigation and assured rainfall.)

42. Ibid, p.102

(Nehru had been dissatisfied from the beginning with the narrow economic goals of the community projects. He particularly objected to the practice of picking out the best and most favourable spots for intensive development when the majority of the agriculturists were economically backward.⁴³ Nevertheless, two facets of the community projects impressed him as vitally important for the social goals of planning: One was the approach patterned after the constructive programme and the other was the community centred focus of the development projects which stressed the principle of cooperation and self help.⁴⁴)

(At the centre of community Development Programme was a plan to establish cooperative and Panchayat Raj institutions that aimed at reconstructing the whole village as the primary unit of economic and political action.

43. Ministry of Community development,
Jawaharlal Nehru On Community development
(Delhi 1957), p.13.

44. Frankel, p.102.

The proposal to place the village panchayat at the centre of planning and implementation of rural development projects represented a second aspect of the effort to create the community as a cohesive unit of political action.⁴⁵ In the redefinition of Rural Development strategy, planning commission subsequently assigned only secondary importance to the provision of modern scientific inputs in the programme for increasing production. Thus, the primary emphasis was placed on initiatives for institutional change that could mobilise local manpower and resources for development. In the final version of the plan, the principle of selective and intensive development was completely abandoned. Instead planners announced the intention to create a national extension organisation modelled after the community projects, which would bring the entire cultivated area under extensive development within a period of ten years. However, from the economic point of view, the short-term prospect for maximising agricultural productivity in Block was dimmed. The planners therefore thought in terms of long-term economic and social advantages even if it involved sacrifice in terms of production.⁴⁶

45. Ibid, p.103

46. Ibid, p.106

With this policy formulation Nehru in 1953 attempted to forge new ties between Congress Party and Praja Socialist Party (PSP), which had been formed following the 1951 elections. But excepting a few leaders, the PSP as a whole rejected the idea of formal cooperation or merger.⁴⁷ Ironically, the differences that kept Nehru and socialists apart where, to a large extent, rooted in a common legacy the thought and practice of Gandhi.

(The Sarvoda-yists were more utopian and emphasised the spiritual aspects of Gandhi's thought that social reforms cannot be effected through legislation from above. The PSP, particularly its militant wing, under the leader of Lohia advocated an approach of direct struggle. Nehru sympathised with both points of view, but he accepted neither completely.)

(He did not believe that propertied classes could be converted, to a new set of motives and behaviour simply by an appeal to traditional religious values. On the other hand, he was not prepared to weaken India's fragile political unity by an outright attack on the propertied elements through Sweeping constitutional changes or encouragement to civil disobedience as a ~~routine~~ response

47. Ibid, 107

To injustice. Most important, he believed in the possibility of achieving the multiple, economic, social and political aims of Indian development through pressures generated from within the democratic system. His working assumption was that given the historical innovation of political democracy in India, it was possible to do it in the Gandhian way.⁴⁸ Thus, the broad approach Nehru followed, subject to shifting economic and political conditions was an adaptation of Gandhi's two-pronged strategy of class conciliation and direct attack on social foundations of exploitation.)

(In agricultural sector, the entire development strategy was conceived as an organisational device for weakening the social pillars of economic and political dominance by the landed castes. The community development programme was assigned the task of creating in the mass of rural population an awareness and desire for the implementation of new principles of social justice based on equality and participation, which would find organised expression in cooperative and panchayat Raj institutions.

Nehru characterised his own approach as "mass approach" one that was aimed at changing the thinking masses and produce(ing) the correct mass reaction to any

48. Karanjia, p.79.

event and to make people at large social minded.⁴⁹
 A good part of his hope for a democratic and peaceful
 solution to social change rested on the assumption that
 33 peasantry could be made to understand their common interest
 and strength the transcending parochial divisions to
 cooperate for economic reform.⁵⁰ The keystone of Nehru's
 faith in the efficiency of the new institutions was his
 belief that they would gradually generate a popular
 leadership drawn predominantly from among the poorer
 sections of the peasantry with a capacity to organise
 the majority for a disciplined drive for social reform.⁵¹

(It was against these key premises that Nehru could
 claim that the advent of political democracy offered a
 realistic hope of achieving a non-violent social revolution
 It is also against the background of these assumptions
 that Nehru's preoccupation with avoiding premature polari-
 sation around sensitive issues of economic reform and
 his determination to maintain the Congress Party as a
 unifying force at the National level even at the cost of
 short-term concesssions to the propertied classes became
 most convincing.)

49. Ibid, p.62

50. Ibid, p.67

51. Ibid, p.72

34 (After 1955 the Planning Commission became an extension of the Prime Minister's authority in the area of economic policy.⁵² The demarcation originally envisaged between the advisory functions of the Planning Commission and the decision-making responsibilities of the central government grew blurred. Nehru's unique position in the government and the Congress party was central to this transformation. From 1955 to 1964, Nehru's pivotal position permitted a handful of men to determine national economic and social policy and methods of development. The common thread in Nehru's appointment to the Planning Commission was the political orientation of the members. The men who served on the commission were firmly committed, or at least sympathetic, to the blend of socialist goals and Gandhian methods that provided the intellectual framework for the approach to planned change.⁵³ All of them considered the process of development in broader terms than economic growth, to include priorities for transformation of the social order and the establishment of an egalitarian and socialistic pattern of modern society.

52. Frankel, p.113

53. Ibid, p.115

(In the Second Five Year Plan, as a result of Nehru's initiative the problem of formulating an economic development strategy was subsequently considered from a dual perspective.⁵⁴ It was agreed that over the period of ten or fifteen years, India should advance towards a socialist economy in which the public sector's share of investment and output in organised industries (especially basic and heavy industries in the capital goods sector) was significantly increased relative to that of private sector; and during this same period, the foundations of a self-reliant industrial economy should be erected and the problem of unemployment solved. Thus, both the government and the Congress Party endorsed these objectives.) In January 1955, Nehru personally moved the resolution at the Avadhi session of Congress, which finally committed the party as a whole to the principle that planning should take place with a view to the establishment of a socialist pattern of society where the principal means of production are under social ownership or control.⁵⁵

However, there was an inherent difficulty in this strategy. The large industrial programmes preempted the

54. Ibid, p.117

55. Ibid, p.117

lion's share of available resources for investment on costly modern technologies. There was no possibility of increasing agricultural output by providing tens of millions of small peasant households with capital-intensive production inputs such as mechanised irrigation, farm machinery or even chemical fertiliser. Instead agricultural productivity had to be increased by more efficient use of available land and resources within the rural sector. Thus, the ramifications of the large industrial programmes went beyond the immediate problem of raising agricultural output with the actual resources at hand.⁵⁶ Apart from its potential for increasing agricultural productivity with minimum new capital investment, Nehru's basic agrarian reorganisation programme promised to solve the problem of building up linkages between the modern industrial sector and vast rural hinterland, setting in motion the dynamic process of overall increase of income, consumption, employment and production at the core of self-sustaining economic growth.⁵⁷ The cooperatives had still other advantages. They provided organisational infrastructure that was particularly suitable for the mobilisation of agricultural surpluses through compulsory state trading and price control.⁵⁸

56. Ibid.p.118

57. Ibid.p.119

58. Ibid.p.120

(However the economic rationale for speedy organisation of the agrarian sector in the context of the large industrial programmes projected for the second plan were highly persuasive.⁵⁹ Such an approach as the planners and Nehru were aware appeared to be bringing major gains in the neighbouring China. The difference was that in India these changes had to be carried out without authoritarian methods, and in a peaceful democratic way. But neither Nehru nor the other members of the Planning Commission squarely faced the emerging contradiction between the requirements of the industrialisation strategy and these of peaceful social and political development. Still the effort at institutional changes at the village level, nonetheless were made, despite the uncertainties contained in the plan strategy on the lines envisaged,

(The decision in favour of rapid industrialisation sharply reduced the proportion of total outlay allocated to agriculture and irrigation, from 34.6 percent in the First Plan to 17.5 percent in the Second plan. In absolute terms, total expenditure on agriculture as a whole did rise by over 25 percent. But within this category, outlay on agricultural production programmes that is, *schemes* contributing directly to increased output, actually declined from 197 crores in the First Plan to Rs 170 crores in the second plan. Expenditure on

on irrigation fell slightly in absolute terms and showed a sharp relative decline in total plan outlay, from 16.3 percent to 7.9 percent. As a result, reliance on the mobilisation of local resources like voluntary contributions of labour and money to carry out labour intensive development projects in agriculture, was even more pronounced. Between the two plans, allocations to National extension and community development projects increased by more than two times.⁶⁰

(State trading was assigned a major role in stabilising domestic price level. A central role was assigned as in the plan frame, to the organisation of state partnered cooperatives in agricultural credit, marketing and processing. A number of National Funds were created to permit the states to subscribe to share capital of apex(state) banks, central(district) banks, and large-size primary credit societies, as well as to the share capital of non-credit institutions, especially marketing and processing societies).

(Nevertheless, having created what appeared to be national financial and administrative apparatus for the supervision of the cooperative sector, the planners were unable to avoid numerous concessions on the scope and pace

60. The Second Five Year Plan.

of agrarian reorganisation that seriously undermined the utility of cooperatives on instruments of government regulation over the agricultural economy.⁶¹ In response to objections raised by the state leadership, the planning Commission declined to press the Rural Credit Survey's proposals for formal state control over appointments to the boards of directors of cooperative banks, or official veto power over lending policies and appointments by cooperatives. A critical concession was also made to the state leadership on the question of a time table for cooperative reorganisation of agriculture. Similarly, with regard to land reforms concessions were made. Although the Second Plan reiterated proposals for tenancy reforms and ceilings on land ownership, the planners were unable to extract any firm commitment from the states on a time schedule for completing legislation. Moreover, while the Planning Commission believed that a substantial proportion of land should be cultivated under cooperatives within ten years they could not achieve any agreement with the state governments or targets for the formation of cooperative farms. This question had to be left open for determination during the first year of the plan.

61. Frankel, op.cit, p.135

(Thus the result was that the Second Plan was allowed to begin with a glaring discrepancy between estimated requirements for agricultural production during plan period, and the actual targets adopted. The low agricultural target would create serious inflationary pressures which would rise to serious proportion with the increasing population. The planning commission, afterwards, had to emphasise on the revised agricultural targets. The attempt at emulating China's agricultural reorganisation assumed importance and delegations from India were sent to explore the possibilities of adopting Chinese methods in Indian conditions. Based on their reports instructions were given to states for large scale programme for cooperative farm during the second plan. However, the states proved more reluctant in accepting any large scale implementation. By the summer of 1957, economic pressure for more rapid reorganisation of the rural sector increased and starting in the spring of 1957, the Planning Commission began to press the food ministry for rapid implementation of the Food grains. Enquiry Committee's recommendation⁶² to establish a Foodgrains Stabilisation Organisation(FSO), with branches in all important market towns, to undertake purchase and sale

62. The Food Grains Enquiry Committee was appointed by the Ministry of Food and Agriculture in 1957.

of wheat and rice at controlled prices. But the Union Food Minister, A.P.Jain citing administrative and organisational obstacles to its rapid implementation, delayed in carrying out the planning commission's recommendation to establish Food Stabilisation Organisation and instead complied with the least controversial recommendations of the Enquiry Committee's report. Towards the end of 1957 however, the Union Ministry began procurement operations in which it did not score any greater success. On the contrary, as the financial crisis⁶³ deepened, the conflict between the Planning commission and the states assumed more critical dimensions.)

(The way out of this critical situation lay only in the rapid pace of agrarian reorganisation. As early as 1957, Nehru told the Chief ministers that he saw no other solution to the problem of food shortages than compulsory government purchase of foodgrains at controlled prices.⁶⁴ Throughout 1958, there was increasing evidence that the government was preparing to *mount* a major effort for more rapid agrarian reorganisation.)

63. The account of factors contributing to this crisis and the measures devised to overcome it have been discussed in Frankel, *op. cit.* pp.147-151.

64. Fortnightly letter to Chief Ministers, 1948-63 letter dated August 1, 1957.

Throughout 1958, there was increasing evidence that the government was preparing to mount a major effort for more rapid agrarian reorganisation.⁶⁵ The planning commission which had reluctantly endorsed the Rural Credit Survey's recommendation for large size cooperatives on grounds of economic efficiency, reverted to its original preference for societies organised around village as the primary unit. In April 1958, the Planning Commission succeeded in persuading the states once again to accept a modest upward revision in the targets for formation of cooperatives.

(However, despite these attempts, by the summer of 1958, the planners' determination to save the core industrial projects of the second plan, and indeed, the entire economic development strategy- seemed to leave them little option than to try and force the pace of agrarian reform, especially implementation of ceilings on landownership and the organisation of cooperatives. The serious economic cost of slow progress towards agrarian reform in undermining the formation of the second plan was compounded by the first signs in the late 1950s of emerging political discontent. The results of the 1957 elections both at the centre and in the states

65. Frnkel^{op.cit.}, p.154

revealed weaknesses in the performance of the Congress Party relative to opposition that were interpreted by national leadership as disappointment over the slow pace of implementation of long-standing promises for improved living standard.

(The electoral result led to new heart searching in Nehru's government for creating uniformity between principles and practices of Congress Party. This found expression in the November 1958 resolutions of the National Development Council which, in fact, were part of a carefully publicised campaign initiated by Nehru to push the Congress Party toward a major new programme of agrarian reform in support of the requirements of the basic approach of the Second plan.⁶⁶ At the October 1958 meeting of the AICC, Nehru had already set the process in motion with the appointment of an agricultural productivity sub-committee, to prepare a draft resolution on an integrated programme of agricultural development for consideration at the forthcoming annual session of Congress, scheduled for January 1959 at Nagpur.

(The subcommittee's report, which was completed for presentation to the working committee at Nagpur on January 6, 1959, endorsed an agricultural strategy that was almost

66. Ibid, p.162

entirely confined to institutional change as the instrument of growth in rural sector. In a "Resolution on Agrarian Organisational Pattern",⁶⁷ approved and edited by Nehru, the working committee and the open session unanimously approved an agricultural programme that called for the immediate transformation of the agrarian structure. The resolution envisaged the completion of all land reforms, including ceilings^{on} landownership, within one year, by the end of 1959. It then went on to link land reforms to the formation of cooperative farms and recommended, in a departure from the Second Plan, that surplus land should vest in the village panchayat rather than individuals and be managed through cooperatives of landless labourers. The core of resolution was an elaboration and expansion of the decisions taken by the National Development Council in November. According to the resolution, "the organisation of the village should be based on village panchayats and village cooperatives", both of which were expected to become the "spearheads of all developmental activities in the village". The resolution ended with an endorsement of the introduction of state trading in foodgrains. However, this programme suddenly advanced a concrete

67. Ibid, pp,162-63

timetable for agrarian reorganisation that significantly shortened the transition period to cooperative village management.)

45- (The endorsement of the agrarian programme was alarming enough, not only for the critics outside party, but even within Congress and Nehru was illprepared for the wave of criticism. The programmes although not new for Congress party and the two five year plans were new only in terms of Nehru's determination; more so because of the time limit within which they were to be implemented. Thus propertied interests within the Congress were alarmed at the bleak prospect of accommodative politics. Under pressure Nehru was to modify his position at Nagpur,⁶⁸ and accordingly cooperative farms he said should be organised simultaneously with service cooperatives "wherever possible".⁶⁹ Organisational affairs to establish training centre for Congress workers, met with failure for none of these camps were held.)

The record of state-trading in foodgrains was hardly more encouraging than the performance on cooperative policy for the state governments demonstrated ^{no} compliance for the national policy except at a minimal level. In the wake of food shortages and rising prices the need for state trading however became more pronounced.)

68. Ibid, p, 168

69. This happened after 1959, when Nehru's prestige was also affected by the external factor of Chinese aggression of Tibet. Thus Chinese agrarian model was an object of attack by his critics. Nehru went on the defensive.

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(Thus towards the end of 1958, as the first position papers on the third plan appeared, the national leadership was becoming more deeply entrapped in the contradiction between economic and political development strategies. According to the planners, the most important factor in maintaining the delicate financial balance required for the success of the third plan was the order of increase achieved in agricultural production.⁷⁰

Nehru once again applied pressure against the Chief Ministers at the 1959 meeting of National Development Council for bringing about institutional change. The state leaders once again publicly deferred to Nehru and he appeared to believe that he had finally gained the active support of the state leadership. The appearance of a united party was reinforced during the week-long Ooty seminar organised by AICC in June 1959 to discuss strategy, resources, and economic and social objectives of the Third Plan. The seminar supported all major elements of the agricultural development strategy.

The recommendations of the National Development Council and the Ooty Seminar, coming on the heels of the Nagpur resolutions, intensified the growing sense of alarm.⁷¹

70. Frankel, ^{op. cit.} p.176

71. Ibid, pp.178-180

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 (The greatest apprehension was voiced by the Forum of Free Enterprise (FFE). Minoos Masani, the FFE's most articulate spokesman, warned that the ruling party had now embarked on assault to cripple the free enterprise system. Soon he was joined by other supporters of propertied interests- Rajagopalachari and N.G.Ranga. Coupled with public dissidence was the external pressure. The planning commission's increasingly radical rhetoric also raised apprehension among Western aid-givers, including the World Bank and Consortium powers. They expressed the view that India's public sector programme was overly ambitious and that private enterprise in collaboration with foreign capital should be assigned a larger role.

The United States, in particular, opposed the primary emphasis on heavy industry in the pattern of investment allocation, and urged a revised set of proportions to give first claim on resources to agriculture. The most influential statement of the American position appeared in April, 1959, with the publication of the Ford Foundation's Report on India's Food Crisis and steps to Meet it. The experts argued that unless an all out emergency programme was undertaken and adequate resources were made available. The Ford Foundation report implicitly criticised the entire approach of institutional change as the keystone of the

agricultural strategy. Instead, it echoed the food ministry's position in favour of a technocratic approach based on price incentives to individual farmers for higher private investment in modern inputs, especially fertilisers. Simultaneously, the report recommended the formula, abandoned in 1952 on the grounds of social equity, of an intensive and selective development strategy, involving the concentration of modern practices- improved seeds, chemical fertilisers and pesticides- in irrigated areas of the country.)

(The effect of these mutually reinforcing pressures on the planners as they worked to give final shape to the Draft outline once again strengthened the tendency towards political compromise on the pace of structural change.⁷² The planners made substantial revisions in favour of the partisans of agriculture in the distribution of investment outlay from 16% in working committee estimates first to 23% later. The increase in the ratio of agricultural investment to total plan outlay (from initial projection of 16 to 23), raised the absolute amount of expenditure by 70% over second plan levels. At the same time, output of foodgrains was expected to grow ^{from} 33 to 40% over the Third Plan period, about 6 to 8 percent annually; as opposed to the actual achievement of approximately 16% (3.3% per annum) during the Second Plan. The Planning Commission,

72. Ibid, pp.180-183

therefore was proposing to more than double the rate of growth in foodgrains production, while increasing total expenditure on agriculture by about 70%. This might have been compensated by much larger expenditures projected for fertiliser, except that the planners refused to alter their basic approach to the distribution of agricultural inputs. Specifically, the draft outline reiterated the principle of all-India coverage under the community Development Programme. Available resources were to be spread thinly and evenly throughout the country in an effort to reach all farmers. The Ford Foundation's recommendation for an intensive and selective development programme in irrigated areas was accepted as an experimental pilot scheme to be started sometime during the five-year period in one district in each state.)

As in the Second Plan, the Planning Commission emphasised that financial outlay would have to be supplemented in the rural sector by the use of idle manpower to the maximum extent possible. Institutional change, especially the organisation of village cooperatives and panchayats, was once again assigned the central role of rural resources mobilisation. Cooperatives were again assigned primary responsibility for arranging credit and supplies.)

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 (Nevertheless, the critical questions of a timetable for land reforms, the organisation of cooperatives, and the introduction of state trading in food grains went unanswered.⁷³ The planners did no more than note the record of ineffective implementation of land reforms, and reiterate the need for regulation of rents, security of tenure, ownership rights for tenants and a ceiling on ownership.)

The final version of the Third Plan revealed that the Planning Commission had been completely unsuccessful in convincing the state leaders to accept an accelerated pace of agrarian reorganisation.⁷⁴ On the contrary the Chief ministers prevailed in making their case for even greater concessions to the landed classes as the price of party unity. Thus contradictions between plan policies and programmes in the rural sector not only remained but grew worse.

(The planners failed to get the state leadership's regulation of land reforms as a positive programme of development and an integral part of the community based effort to increase agricultural production.⁷⁵ Some of the worst discrepancies occurred in the organisation of cooperatives. Although the Planning Commission emphasised that "all families in the village, especially those engaged in

73. Ibid, p.183

74. Third Five Year Plan, p.304

75. Frankel, p.184

57 cultivation must be involved in the agricultural effort through the village cooperative", the actual membership targets were substantially lower than the National Development Council's November 1958 projection and even less than the food and agriculture ministry's illustrative figure of 74 percent cited in the Draft Outline. But a greater burden was placed on the cooperatives for financing agricultural production. Similarly, the political compulsion of conciliating the larger farmers and traders was also apparent in the gap between the statement of Plan Policy and proposals for government action on state trading in foodgrains.)

(Thus, concessions to the propertied classes, designed to win their cooperation for moderate reforms were, in fact, so large as to prevent the possibility of carrying out institutional change on any meaningful scale. But in the absence of effective implementation of proposals for basic agrarian reform, there was little likelihood of mobilising the additional rural resources that were considered necessary to augment planned financial outlays. The outlook appeared even more bleak in the light of new estimates of population growth derived from 1961 census. The pressing need to find additional finances in order to mount a larger plan was satisfied at the symbolic level only.)

(The compromise in agrarian front resulted in paradoxical outcome of a development strategy that was inimical to the goal of increasing production. The larger farmers who appreciated the profitability of modern techniques were often hobbled by severe shortages of supply. Also they had to learn from the education in terms of improved practice. Meanwhile, Community Development found its village programmes more and more confined to the availability of central government funds. The efforts to mobilise local manpower and resources for construction of capital projects met with little success. While richer farmers generally could contribute cash to village projects, subsistence cultivators and landless labourers, of necessity were asked to donate labour and it was not possible to mobilise idle man-power for unpaid work.)

The ability of the Central Government to impose its own principles of socialistic economic policy on the states was eroding. Farmers in implementing institutional change had not only impaired the entire economic strategy, but produced social effects opposite of those intended. By the early 1960s, disparities in income, status and power between the larger land owners and the majority of subsistence cultivators and landless labourers perceptibly began to widen.)

The national leadership's inability to enlist the support of state leaders for effective implementation of land reforms resulted in defective legislation that actually aggravated existing inequalities in the distribution of protected land rights enjoyed by landowners and those without land.⁷⁷ Similarly, the failure to activate party workers in setting up new village institutions left a leadership gap at the local level that was quickly filled by members of the dominant landed castes.

The abolition by state legislation between 1950 and 1954 of intermediary rights and tenures did accomplish major changes in the pattern of landownership in the states like Assam, Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Saurashtra, and Hyderabad where Zamindari system had existed on a large scale. Proprietary rights over vast agricultural estates extending over several villages, even taluks, were transferred from a handful of absentee landlords to state governments. Even so, Zamindari abolition fell far short of an agrarian transformation.

The landreform laws bore obvious marks of political compromise. While they abolished the Zamindari system the provisions stopped well short of expropriating Zamindars. On the other hand, the Zamindars were permitted to keep land in their direct occupation for personal

cultivation, and in most cases no ceiling was placed on the size of "home farm" so retained.

The acts, moreover, conferred full ownership rights on the exintermediaries with respect to their home farms. By contrast, tenants in direct occupation of land on resumed estates were confirmed only in the legal rights they enjoyed on the date immediately preceding vesting, which left room for the cultivator's inferior status in relation to former Zamindars.

Further, "landlordism" was not ended. In Assam, Bihar and Orissa, many of the tenants who came into relationship with the state had not been cultivating the land directly. Rather, they leased out some or all of their holdings to sub-tenants and share croppers. Even in states such as West Bengal and Saurashtra, where all tenure holders were subsequently forbidden to let or sublet their holdings, the word "lease" was carefully defined to exclude share cropping agreements.

(The balance of social costs and benefits of Zamindari abolition were skewed even further to favour the exintermediaries by generous formulas for compensation in the loss of ownership or revenue rights on resumed estates.

The great absentee landlords were, in general, not ruined by Zamindari abolition. Many remained men of considerable wealth. Those with superior education and skills were able to rebuild their fortunes by taking up new activities in commercial agriculture, trading, or manufacturing or, by entering politics. Meanwhile, compensation payable to intermediaries proved a substantial burden on state budgets. A similar pattern emerged in the aftermath of ceiling legislation. The principle of imposing ceilings on land-holdings was first announced in 1953. Detailed recommendations for legislation were not made until 1956 and most states did not actually pass enabling legislation until 1960 or 1961.⁷⁹ The landowners, therefore had a period of seven or eight years to arrange partitions and transfers of holding to escape the impact of new laws.)

Worse still, legislation to provide security of tenure and reasonable rents to tenants included loopholes that not only deprived cultivators of promised benefits, but in some cases actually jeopardized the customary rights they already enjoyed.

Many landlords were, nevertheless, alarmed anticipating that land records might be revised in the future. The safest course therefore was to show as much as land possible under personal cultivation. Two glaring loopholes in the

⁷⁹. Planning Commission, Panel on Land reforms, Report of the committee on ceiling on Land Holdings (New Delhi 1961), pp.5-8.

tenancy acts were particularly useful for this purpose. First, "personal cultivation", was not defined to require manual labour. It was sufficient if the owner, or a member of his family, supervised cultivation carried on by farm servants. Second, most tenancy acts also provided that tenants could "voluntarily surrender" their holdings in favour of landlord, and that in such cases no ceiling restriction as the right of resumption would apply. Together, these two provisions virtually incited the landlords to evict tenants from their holdings under the guise of voluntary surrender in order to show the maximum area under personal cultivation.)

(The state governments, however, with few exceptions, made virtually no effort to stop such abuses. On the contrary they rarely appointed additional staff to supervise implementation. Land records continued to be prepared by village officers who had traditionally kept the revenue rolls. Being low salaried employees they found it convenient to collaborate with landowners in protecting the latter's interest. Superior officers were too few in number to exercise effective supervision.)

{As regards cooperative movement, the responsibility for establishing the cooperative that were expected to function as strong "people's institution" was left in the

hands of bureaucrats who staffed the state departments of cooperation with far reaching administrative apparatus. There was considerable power in the hands of administration. But the Department of cooperation, functioning in local environments of entrenched hierarchies, and generally unsympathetic to the egalitarian goals of national policy, preferred to operate in ways, more congenial to the interests of the existing power structure with few exceptions, cooperatives continued to follow, with impunity, conservative banking principles requiring land, jewelry, a personal surety by a landowner as security for all loans. Crops loans, a crucial ingredient in the government plan to organise production programmes around the participation of millions of small cultivators, rarely became available. Those with very small holdings, especially tenant cultivators, were, in fact, often excluded from membership, and in any case found little reason to want to join it. As a result, the president and other executive members of the managing committees of the cooperative societies were disproportionately drawn from among the big people of the villages who had their fingers in many other pies as well as cooperation, including trade, government contracts, local politics

and rice milling among others. The failures of the cooperatives to implement the crop loan system inevitably distorted the intended flow of credit from the majority of subsistence cultivators to the upper 20-30 percent of agriculturist families able to satisfy conventional banking criteria for credit worthness. As the only cultivators with access to sufficient resources either from savings or low-interest, loans to experiment with and risk adoption of improved methods of cultivation, the most substantial landowners early acquired the additional prestige of being identified by administrative staff as "progressive farmers in the villages and drew further advantages from their strategic position. They could strengthen their role as intermediaries in wider markets their virtual monopoly over the disposition of agricultural savings and surpluses. As the national leadership searched for new institutional devices to outflank the intermediaries and break their stronghold over village institutions, attention was drawn to proposals for devolution of administrative control over the Community Development Programme from development officers and officially appointed advisory groups to indirectly elected Block and district panchayat bodies. At the Block and district levels, indirectly elected

councils promised to raise the stakes of winning local contests so that eventually rival leaders would be forced to appeal for the support of backward and scheduled castes with promises of more effective implementation of government policy on economic reform. But under the system of indirect elections to Block and district panchayat institutions, local notables, mobilising their followers through the familiar (pattern of) vertical factional alignments cross-cutting classlines, won the village elections and then simply chose representatives from among their own ranks to pyramid their influence at higher levels of government.)

(Experience had already shown that attempts at social transformation through institutional change that stopped short of direct peasant organisation only compounded the problem of democratic reform. The dominant landed caste were successful in manipulating the majority of subsistence cultivators and landless workers fragmented by vertical factional structures to capture the village institutions. They increased their access to scarce development resources and strengthened their position as strategic intermediaries, linking local markets and power structures to state and national economic and political systems.)

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Nationalism as the theme has centrality in Nehru's ideology and politics before independence. Socialism makes his nationalism unique, in so far as it gives economic content to the anti-imperialist movement which comprised different classes and accommodated their needs and interests. Indian Nationalism had a middle class origin and the middle class monopoly was broken only after Gandhi mobilised the rural population in the anti-imperialist struggle. Nevertheless, lack of an economic programme encompassing the interests of the working class and peasantry till the late twenties was a major shortcoming of the Indian National Congress and this gradually produced a discontent in this vast national body and the need was felt for orienting the Congress in an economic ideological direction. The new task had as much to do with ideology as with politics and in no leader of Indian Nationalism it was better synchronised than Jawaharlal Nehru. His ideological understanding viewed anti-imperialism as the primary objective, for, given the colonial nature of Indian society social change was heavily dependent on national liberation and so social change was the ultimate objective.

v This ideological position took some time in its evolution. Notwithstanding Nehru's liberal outlook which had been from the early days of his life influenced by his family background and education in Britain, he was profoundly influenced by the progressive ideas in the Bursels Congress and by the Socialist experiment in Russia. Already moved by the peasant conditions in his home state U.P, when he came in contact with the progressive ideas in mid-twenties, Nehru became an ardent socialist in his conviction. Deeply influenced by Marxist ideas he not only developed a powerful sense of history but also came to believe in the basic ideals of socialist society, although he did not believe in the communist method of achieving this goal. In his perceptions of India and the mode of arriving at those perceptions was informed by scientific approach as opposed to communal, obscurantist or mystifying understanding. At the same time he gave evidence of a certain subjectivism in matters of solving problems of transnational polity of India.

Nehru's ideological position thus distinguished him not only from the early nationalists but even from most of his contemporaries within Congress including Gandhi. Similarly, being a cautious synthesiser of different ideas which would preserve the unity of Congress as the only powerful anti-imperialist organisation in India he was far-removed from being a communist. We have described this specificity of Jawaharlal Nehru's ideology as radical nationalism. Nehru's views on India's history and society

bear testimony to the scientific dimension of his outlook. Thus process of continuity and change are not ignored in his understanding of Indian history; and the scientific understanding of capitalist system of society and the phenomenon of colonialism helped him to view all the major problems of India in their light.

The impact of British imperialism on Indian economy and society was the most pronounced in agriculture. For, British, according to him, destroyed India's age long industry by forcing it to compete with the superior industry of Britain. Unable to compete with the products from Britain which had the advantage of superior techniques of industrial revolution era Indian industry met with destruction. Thus the population removed from industry in India turned to land and the pressure on land gave rise to permanent crisis in agriculture. Creation of private property in land also affected the Indian peasantry thereby creating intermediaries between the peasantry and the state. This was a classic example of colonial economy that India had become under colonial rule. The British, by destroying the Indian industry and introducing private property in land changed the traditional village society and its self sufficient economy. Thus while in Britain capitalism was a wealth producing system, its encroachment to colonies like India in its exploitative form produced tremendous misery and stagnation.

It was based on this understanding that Nehru viewed freedom from imperialism as the first objective. Once this objective was realised, the second question was of divesting the vested interests created under the British rule. From this point of view socialism was the accompanying objective; in fact it was to be the ideology of the 'swaraj' which the nationalists were striving for. In this understanding of India's economic problems agrarian question figures as the most important question in India. It had many dimension.

First question that confronted Nehru was that of abolition of intermediaries between the peasantry and the state and that is why he emphasised the abolition of landlordism so that land goes to the actual tiller. Thus restructuring of property relationship was essential for bringing about transfer of land from parasitic landlords to the actual tillers.

Second dimension of land problem which concerned Nehru was that of low productivity of land. While restructuring of the land rights in favour of the tiller will redistribute the fruits of production in favour of the tiller and land reform should also involve such re-designing of the land operation pattern as was dictated

by the necessity of modernising the production techniques. Thus he was led towards considering consolidation of holdings and cooperative farming as indispensable for agricultural modernisation as small holders cannot absorb modern technology because of the smallness of their holdings and the paucity of resources at their disposal.

Thirdly, the problem of tremendous population pressure on land and agriculture formed an important dimension of land reform in Nehru's view. ^{It} therefore encompassed the gradual transfer of population from agriculture to non-agricultural occupations, especially to industry—whether village-based cottage industries and small-scale industries or of modern industry wherever possible.

Fourthly, the cultural and educational backwardness of Indian peasant concerned Nehru. Thus social reform of peasant was an essential part of Nehru's conception of agrarian reorganisation. Spread of literacy education and skills and movements for social reform were to contribute to social change in the desired direction.

In this background land reforms are basic to Nehru's perspective of economic development with social justice. While this was Nehru's tentative approach towards agrarian problem in an independent India, he spared no attempt to put agrarian problem at the centre of deliberations before

independence. As a leader of peasantry in ^{the} United Provinces he had gained intimate knowledge of the peasant conditions there and this helped him greatly in understanding the problem at a broad national level. Thus while the land-to-the-tiller thrust which had all along been there in his espousal the amelioration of peasant grievances of more immediate nature claimed his attention for solving the partial demands of the peasantry as part of the anti-imperialist struggle. For while this would at least alleviate the burden on all sections of peasantry the very demand for partial solution would also according to him keep peasantry as an important ally in the national movement. It was Nehru who of all leaders in the Congress favoured the affiliation of peasant association to the Indian National Congress ~~so~~^{so} that the inclusion of peasantry in the Congress in an organised form, would significantly transform the character of this organisation in favour of peasantry. However, the most significant aspect of Nehru's endeavour was his attempt at incorporating resolutions which bore the impress of his ideology. From the U.P Provincial Congress Committee's economic resolution onwards the

consistency of Nehru's effort towards giving the agrarian problem priority also becomes manifest in the Congress resolutions in its annual sessions. This phase of politics before independence shows him as the hero of socialists inside the Congress who worked even at cross purposes with the rightists and even Gandhi.

At a programmatic level, therefore, the symbiosis of leftists of all hues found its culmination at Faizpur where the major triumph for Nehru lay in getting an elaborate agrarian programme endorsed by Congress by making use of the pressure exerted by the All India Kisan Sabha. This was also the period when at political level he found himself working closely with the Communist when the United Front strategy brought him and them together.

Personally not in favour of office acceptance of Congress in line with the Government of India Act(1935) in the beginning he pressed for the implementation of the agrarian programme of Congress in the States. When Congress finally went for office acceptance. Lack of satisfactory implementation of even the partial programmes kept him unhappy.

Thus he could get his wish fulfilled in the constitution and his involvement in the policy directions of the Planning Committee of which he was the secretary. Although

conscious of the powerful interests of industrialists in the Congress he made compromises on the industrial front, on the agrarian side his approach suffered the least distortion from any such pressure. Thus formation of sub-committees for agrarian reorganisation with the thrust on land reforms formed the core of his approach to planning on agrarian front. Although exercise in planning at this stage was a short-lived one, Nehru nevertheless revived his attempt at Planning after independence in his capacity as the Prime Minister.

In the years that preceded independence, war, communal problem and partition took the attention of leadership off the problems of planning. When independence arrived, the impact of these traumatic events culminating in Gandhi's assassination considerably influenced the leadership's approach to the question of development. National unity was the foremost question. Thus peaceful social change formed the main thrust of Nehru's development strategy although he retained his commitment to radical programmes. Here onwards Nehru's ideology was intended to accommodate the diversities of Indian reality. Thus, social change through democratic means formed the

core of his approach. While the echo of his socialist ideals remained, it was mixed with the Gandhian method of peaceful revolution. Based on this approach as it was, Nehru's prime concern for developmental questions lay in forging a balance between socialist and capitalist systems of development. And Nehru came to believe, social transformation through peaceful means was possible- a mellowing of his radicalism before independence when, he believed in a certain measure of coercion for diverting vested interests although he discarded coercion as the sole method.

However, agrarian policy after independence, from the programmatic point of view remained unaffected by the accommodative approach to development. Right from Jainpur programme which was accompanied by the Report of the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee(1949) one can visualise a clear trend in Nehru's effort to make agrarian transformation on his desired lines, a part of the Congress policy as a whole. But hurdles existed at different levels.

At the time of independence India was the most stratified society in the world and dominant social groups were influential in politics at all levels of social hierarchy. Dominant landed castes had made their inroad into

positions of power and privilege right from the local to national level. Thus Congress itself represented the interest of these landed groups and when the representatives of the industrialists allied with them, it was the most difficult to get endorsement for radical programmes in policy matters. The political institutions which took form under Congress leadership similarly reflected the conservative bias in favour of private property. The constitution while it guaranteed the right to property, relegated the questions of social equality to the Directive Principles of State Policy, Nehru's attempt at incorporating clauses relevant to land reform went unheeded by the conservative groups. Again, the over all federal set-up which assigned tremendous responsibilities to the states in the implementation of agrarian programmes itself created the unbridgeable cleavage between the centre and the states. In the existing bureaucratic set-up of states, by the time a policy initiated by the centre could reach local level it was bound to be influenced by the dominant interests at local level supported by bureaucracy. The process of implementation was to be a tortuous one.

Main thrust of Nehru's development strategy for India was in planning. Agrarian policy formed part of the overall planned development. The process of planning too had an uneasy beginning and not until Patel died that Nehru had his way in launching the plans with his own authority.

The agrarian policy therefore had all the above mentioned factors ~~behind~~ its formulation and the policy initiatives. While in the hands of the prime minister and his appointed bodies the implementation process depended heavily on the institutional structure in which only the legislative side could claim a measure^{of} success while the administrative structure was too sluggish in its approach to implementation.

Thus the goals of planning gave priority to increase agricultural production for which drastic agrarian reorganisation through land reforms, creation of basic institutions which because of the economic gains they made by government policy would become the organs of political power at the local level by supplanting the entrenched powers of the dominant landed groups_x. ^{would, it was hoped, produced desired result} But the first problem arose at the macro level where the government's approach to the problem of agrarian reorganisation could not be effective enough because of the simultaneous importance given to

rapid industrial development. The government, as a result became selective in its approach to technological development in agriculture and thus emerged pockets of development. Local landed interests on the other hand because of their superior ability to manipulate the facilities coming from above and to make use of the legal loopholes in the land reform legislations managed to retain their interest. These failures were reflected in the implementation of land reform, cooperative farming and land ceiling. Thus, social and institutional hurdles raised obstacles for Nehru's agrarian policies in terms of their objective results.

More than three decades and a half have passed since India's independence. And more than a decade and a half has elapsed after Nehru passed away from the Indian scene. What has followed till the present time is a mixed picture of achievements and short-falls. There is no doubt that the semi-feudal agrarian structure of the colonial era is no more, that the programmes of the ruling and non-ruling elites have succeeded in achieving partial emancipation of the peasantry from the burdens of the past and in releasing new productive forces contributing to India's considerable self-reliance in the matter of food and other agricultural products. The shift towards dynamism of the agricultural economy from a large phase of stagnation during the colonial ~~era~~ is an evidence of success achieved since independence.

At the same time, one is also struck by the sharpening contradiction between what is scientifically and technologically realisable in terms of the objectives enunciated by Nehru and what is socially and politically feasible because of the dominant property and power structure in today's India. It must be noted that Nehru was very much influenced by the Western and Soviet experiences on agricultural modernisation where large farms of private or of the cooperative collective variety were agents of agricultural transformation. In India a dualistic agrarian structure has emerged consisting of the large farm sector on the one hand and the peasant sector consisting of small peasants and landless labourers on the other. Developmental process has today made the larger producer the principal agent of agricultural transformation. The remunerative prices agitation is evidence of the ~~feeling~~ crampness which even a rich peasant feels in the present context of bourgeois development and bourgeois state. It may be stated here that the Nehru model of agrarian solutions of the land problem aimed at helping the small peasant has not yet worked itself out. Instead after the land ceilings act it is now claimed that there is no more surplus land to be distributed though land hunger has not

subsided. Thus, the task on agrarian front would entail the solution of the question of land to the tiller, the question of wages of agricultural workers (who cannot get land now) and preparation for uniting them for struggle for socialism- an ideal dear to Nehru.

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