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Socialistic Perspective on Domestic Issues in Freedom Struggle

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ABSTRACT:

Indian National Congress played a major role in India's independence. Some other political segments were also contributing in struggle for freedom by their own ways. Communists and socialists were two other major political players in freedom struggle. The communist party of India was formed in 1924 with the inspiration of Russian revolution of 1917. Leaders of communist party had the different approach to understand Indian society and political movement. They had different perception on the current social issues of Indian society. They had Marxian approach to understand Indian society. A segment within the Indian National Congress had also socialist inclination. People of this segment considered Marxism as an alien ideology which was not in accordance with the social, economic and cultural values of Indian society. They had the belief that an indigenous socialism has to develop to resolve the social, economic, political and cultural crisis of Indian society. They didn't form any separate political with the danger that it can distract the freedom movement at this crucial juncture. So they formed Congress Socialist Party within Congress party but they different perception and point of view on social issues from congress leaders. They put forth socialistic point of view on social issues of Indian society. They mainly focused on caste, status of women, education system and communal tension. They had different perception on these social issues from congress. There may be two approaches to understand the social issues; one is liberal and another one is socialistic view.

KEYWORDS: Imperialism, ideology, Socialism, Marxism, Liberty, Equality

Indian freedom movement is characterised by the presence of different streams of thoughts which struggled paralleled for the independence of India. Although leaders of different streams and ideologies adopted different means and ways to get independence but their prime objective was free India from the clutches of British imperialism. Some streams focused on the political independence but for others socio-economic and cultural issues were



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equally relevant to be addressed to get complete independence. The followers of this ideology had the opinion that the political independence was incomplete without the independence of the people from starvation, illiteracy, social and economic inequalities and cultural slavery. It will be only transfer of political powers from British rulers to Indian rulers, if the social, economic and cultural issues and challenges were not to be addressed, the people will again be left miserable even politically independent India. The leaders of such ideology had the opinion that the basic socio-economic issues of Indian society must be addressed and resolved with political independence and without which there will be no meaning of political freedom for peasants, working class and the most submerged strata of the society. The congress and the socialist ideology were two main streams which were simultaneously struggling against British imperialism. The main focus of congress leaders was to achieve political independence and they had the opinion that other socio-economic issues will be resolved in independent India by indigenous government. So they mainly concentrated their toiling efforts to achieve political independence from British rule. The second view about Indian freedom struggle was of the leaders with socialist inclination. The Communist Party of India was formed with the inspiration from the Russian revolution which concretises the Marxian philosophy into the reality which proved a silver lining for the working and exploited class of the entire world. The leaders of communist party followed the principles of Marxism and had the opinion that real independence for India was not political only but it really resides in the emancipation of downtrodden and working class otherwise it will merely be transfer of political power from British capitalist to Indian capitalist class without changing the basic character of socio-economic structure of the society and it will be false independence for deprived sections of Indian society. The third line of thinking in freedom struggle was of socialist leaders who had a distance with both congress and communists. They considered Marxism as an alien ideology not suitable to ethos of Indian values and had also difference of opinion with congress leaders on the issue of socialism and the means to achieve freedom for India. Although these leaders had more commonalities with communists rather with congress leaders on the issue of socio-economic and cultural issues of Indian society but had the difference on the means of socialism. They considered communism as foreign idea and can to be suited to resolve the crisis conditions of Indian working class and other deprived section of Indian society. They had the view that Indian society has certain unique features and issues and these can be resolved by Indian means only. They had sharp differences with the leaders of the congress party on the issue and means of achieving independence. Like communists, the leaders of socialist ideology in India had the view that real freedom lies in freedom from economic wants, cultural slavery, social and economic inequalities and exploitation of man by man. They had focussed on social, economic and cultural crisis of Indian society and political independence will be incomplete without economic and social inequality. They didn't apart themselves from the congress party because it could weaken the cause of freedom. So they decided to remain in congress party despite the basic differences on the issues and ways. They formed Congress Socialist Party



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within Congress Party. Ram Manohar Lohia, Acharya Narendra Dev and Jaiparkash Naryan were founder and eminent leaders of Congress Socialist Party. The socialist leaders and congress socialist party had vision on the basic and unique challenges of Indian society and they not only addressed these issues but try to make a deep understanding of these issues and related them with India's independence. They had crystal clear vision that India's independence is incomplete without addressing and resolving crisis of Indian society.

The most striking and unique feature of Indian society is caste system. Indian society is divided both vertically and horizontally, firstly it is divided on the bases of religion and then further religion is divided into caste and sub-castes. Caste is unique feature of Indian society and truly reflects the character of Indian society. It has multiple hierarchical social divisions with graded groups and it is most effective source of social, economic and political exploitation and tensions. The caste system is a rigid and closed social hierarchical division which hamper the process of social change. It is almost impossible to change social strata. The gloomiest feature of caste system is that the status of caste is being determined by the birth of the individual. The social status in caste system is based on ascribed status not by what individual achieve in the society. No individual can change his social position or strata in this stagnant social structure. The socialist leaders were of the opinion that such caste ridden society cannot progress politically, socially and economically. The modern institutions like democracy and socialism can't function in such traditional society. So the need of the hour is to wage a war against this social evil of caste without which there will be no meaning of independence. Although caste is the biggest hindrance in the progress of society but its reality can also not be negated. According to socialist leaders it is a centuries old social reality and can't be removed by just wishing it. A social awareness movement has to be launched to create awareness among the masses. The socialist leaders had the opinion that without the destruction of this social structure, the economic equality and political liberty is not possible and without economic equality and political liberty the independence has no meaning. Some of the leaders had opinion that economic equalities will shatter the caste system but it is not possible in actual sense. The economic equality is not possible among caste inequalities because the economic activities are also being determined by ascribed caste structure. According to Ram Manohar Lohia, the founder leaders of congress socialist party considered "caste inequality and caste inequality as twin demons, which have both to be killed."

The caste system was disastrous for newly adopted democratic institutions in India. The caste system is based on ascribed status which is just contrary to the democratic norms. The caste system has a discriminatory connotation in its ascribed nature but democracy is being meant to eradicate the discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, and language, place of birth, gender and religion. The socialist thinkers had an apprehension that the caste system will be the greatest hindrance in flourishing the democratic ethos. So the prime responsibility of the newly formed government should be to create an atmosphere where people can enjoy



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the democratic values and caste system should be discouraged in democratic society. Although it will be a meaningless thought that people will stop thinking about caste by any miracle because it is social reality of Indian society but efforts may be done that this social institution should not predominant in modern political institutions. The most effective instrument in this direction may be the spreading of awareness among the masses against political discrimination and social cruelty. The sole technique for spreading this awareness is education. Education is embodiment of enlightenment and rationality. So the focus of the government should be on mass education to eradicate of the evils of caste system in Indian society.

Ram Manohar Lohia, the founder member of Congress Socialist Party had some reservations on the way of providing the reservations to the depressed sections of Indian society. He had the opinion that how the people of depressed and submerged strata of the society can compete with people of high ascribed status. He was admirer of Aristotle quote that equality should among equals and inequality should prevail among unequal. Unequal opportunity should be extended to the women, dalits, sudras, depressed and muslims but such unequal must not be extended in specialise skill like surgery, until they are able to run the race equally. Although it was not quite possible to annihilate the caste system in few years because it was a generations old social institution but its heinous effects could be weakened by adopting strong measures. Socialist leaders had the opinion that it should be attacked on both social and political fronts. Government should provide special privileges to this section to raise their political and economic status but real battle should be fought on social front. The two major effective means to lessen the social inequality may be the inter-dinning and inter-caste marriages. The government should promote both these means by providing special incentives.

The major social crisis during and after freedom struggle, was vulnerable status of women in Indian society. The socialist leaders and thinkers put forth their point of view regarding the position of women. According to Ram Manohar Lohia the caste and women were two most segregated sections of society and had the opinion that exploitation of these two submerged section of society was responsible for the decline of spirit in India. Although some female leaders took active role in freedom struggle and did hold the prestigious positions in administration after independence but in general the status of women was very low in society. It was the most victimised and exploited section. It was not only during the freedom movement that position of women got vulnerable but it can be traced from the ancient times. From the beginning Indian society is characterised by male dominated society. Some political and social thinkers has the opinion that removal of poverty and economic prosperity will automatically change the position of women in better direction but the socialist leaders had disagreement with this view because they had the belief that segregation of women section is not related with political and economic change but it is related with the social mindset of the society. Although economic and political upliftment can bring some



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changes in life of few women but in general such changes will not bring any basic change in the status of women. According to Ram Manohar Lohia "All war on poverty is a shame, unless it is, at the same time, a conscious and sustained war on segregation of women." There should be a sustained attack on the patriarchal mindset to bring the desired change in the status of women. The genesis of patriarchal mindset can be traced from early periods, so it will take a long time and toiling efforts to bring change in such mindset. The spread of mass education can be the most effective measure to bring change in status of women. The massive social movements have to be launched to bring awareness among the masses to change their mindset.

The education system is the backbone for any nation and the character of any nation can be well judged by its education system. Positive and healthy education system inculcates enlightenment, rationality, values and virtues among its citizens. Great philosopher Plato coined that virtue is knowledge and knowledge is virtue. According to him merely transmission of information is not education and knowledge. The education system should be based on virtues and values which will change the mindset of the people. Most of the constitution makers and political leaders which played vital role in freedom struggle had western education and they didn't try to bring the structural and fundamental changes in Indian education system after independence. Indian education system had western legacy even after independence. The socialist leaders vehemently criticised the education system adopted in post independent India because they had the belief that this western education system is not conducive to social, economic, political and cultural values of Indian society. This education system was introduced by British to enslave not only the people but also Indian culture and heritage and continuation of this education system in post independent India will not serve any purpose. According to socialist leaders British education system was discriminatory and anti people in nature and it will further escalate the enslavement of Indian values and culture and it will produce brown British people in India with western legacy. This education system failed to change the mental attitude of Indians and it will hamper a fight against social prejudices and social hierarchies because this system was introduced to create social gradations and hierarchies to divide Indian society. The present system is neither useful to train the minds of the persons to fight against exploitation neither equip them to live a better life.

Socialist had the opinion that the education system should be fundamentally restructured to make it conducive to the ethos of Indian culture and the need of the hour was to reorient to Indian peasantry and working class. The main focus of education system should be to resolve indigenous social, economic and cultural crisis. The western education was introduced for the privileged section of society because it was very expensive and was beyond the reach of common people. The first and foremost change suggested by socialist leaders was that it should be free, so that all the sections of Indian society should have access to it and it will change the social mental status of whole India. It should come out from the



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clutches of privileged section and should reach to the last deprived person of Indian society and only then it will serve the real purpose of socio-economic and political equality. Such education system will inculcate the values of Indian society and it will create an egalitarian society which is the real purpose of education system for any nation.

The problem of communalism was most dangerous social crisis in pre and post independent India. The partition of India was a wound on the soul of India. People of both communities had been living in India with cordial and peaceful atmosphere from centuries till the advent of British. The British government followed the policy of divide and rule and created the atmosphere of estrangement for both the communities. British were intelligent enough to understand that they can rule and control India in better way by creating the atmosphere of animosity between the two major communities. Seeds of communal politics were sowed in 1905 by the partition of Bengal on communal lines. The communal electorate was adopted by notorious Government of India Act 1909. No communal violence at large scale was reported before the British rule in India. The final outcome of communal animosity was partition of India into two nations. Millions of people were being sacrificed during this process of formation of India and Pakistan and it created permanent hate legacy between the two communities and it became the biggest challenge before society and government. The socialist leaders focused on emotional incorporation of both communities under one nation. They also blamed congress leadership for this great havoc and even after independence many efforts were not made to ease tension between the two. Socialist leaders had wished that religion should not become the cause of strife between Hindus and Muslims. The socialist advised the government to focus on the upliftment of peasants, working class, submerged strata and other backward classes because both Hindus and Muslims are poor and if government will try to uplift their social, economic and political status without discrimination, the animosity between the two communities will be reduced automatically. The one major cause of any type of violence in society is illiteracy and unemployment. If the government will focus on the improvement of the conditions of these sections, it will definitely ease the communal tension.

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