
UNIT 18 THE IDEOLOGICAL SPECTRUM IN THE 1930s*

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18.1 INTRODUCTION

There are some core debates which permeate the study of nations and nationalism. These centre on the question of how to define the terms 'nation' and 'nationalism' and when nations first appeared. Are the nations timeless phenomena? Did man climb out of the primordial slime and immediately set about creating nations. Or did nations take different shapes at different points in history. The modernisation school see nations as entirely modern and constructed. Then the major question is how nations and nationalism developed. If nations are naturally occurring, then there is little reason to explain the birth of nations. On the other hand, if one sees nations as constructed, then it is important to be able to explain why and how nations developed. Nation, nationhood and nationalism are subject to a variety of morphologies. Nationalism is not a homogeneous ideology and means different things to different people. One way is to see it as a political-ideological spectrum. What is a political-ideological spectrum? A **political spectrum** is a way of modeling different political positions by placing them upon one or more geometric axes symbolizing independent political dimensions. Most long-standing spectra include a right wing and left wing, which originally referred to seating arrangements in the 18th century French parliament. According to the simplest left-right axis, communism and socialism are usually regarded internationally as being on the left, opposite fascism and conservatism on the right. Liberalism can mean different things in different contexts, sometimes on the left, sometimes on the right. However, others have frequently noted that a single left-right axis is insufficient in describing the existing variation in political beliefs, and often include other axes. The nature of spectrum depends on what is the focus of political concern: the community or the individual.

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18.2 THE GANDHIAN CORE

Ever since the emergence of Gandhi, even though elected as the Congress president only once in Belgaum Session (1924), Gandhi combined a strange mixture of western notion of equality, rights and citizenship with an equally strong millenarian appeal to become the unofficial, spiritual and mass icon of the Congress from early 1920s to the end of British rule. The Congress was under his shadow all these long turbulent years. Gandhi combined democratic-participative leadership style with autocratic-charismatic style with such an ease that there was no escape from him. He transformed the organisational structure of the Congress, which it follows almost to this date and also tried to shape it in his own ideological mould which he succeeded only partially because the Congress attracted people from different ideologies in the pre-independence era and became a kind of umbrella organisation. In the beginning of 1930, Gandhi reasserted his leadership after a gap in which Congress was internally divided into Swarajist and No-changers after the collapse of the Non-Cooperation. He launched his second major 'non-violent' offensive against the British rule.

18.2.1 Anti-Imperialist Non-Cooperation Campaign

The Satyagraha march, which triggered the wider Civil Disobedience Movement, was an important part of the Indian independence movement. It was a campaign of non-violent protest against the British salt tax in colonial India which began with the Salt March to Dandi on March 12, 1930. It was the most significant organised challenge to British authority since the Non-cooperation movement of 1920-22, and the *Purna Swaraj* declaration of independence by the Indian National Congress on December 31, 1929. Mahatma Gandhi led the Dandi march from his Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi, Gujarat to produce salt without paying the tax, with growing numbers of Indians joining him along the way. When Gandhi broke the salt laws in Dandi at the conclusion of the march on April 6, 1930, it sparked large scale acts of civil disobedience against the British Raj salt laws by millions of Indians. We will discuss it in some detail to show you the anti-imperialist mass character of the Congress.

18.2.2 The Preparation for the Dandi March

As with his other movements, Gandhi conceived of a brilliant plan to begin the Civil Disobedience with defiance of salt laws. The issue selected was such that it was a concern of every poor man and Gandhi was also aware that non-violent method ensured mass-participation which could not have been possible if the movement had been violent type. Choosing the salt tax as an injustice to the people of India was considered an ingenious choice because every peasant and every aristocrat understood the necessity of salt in everyday life. It was also a good choice because it did not alienate Congress moderates while simultaneously being an issue of enough importance to mobilize a mass following.

On February 5, newspapers reported that Gandhi would begin civil disobedience by defying the salt laws. The Salt Satyagraha would begin on March 12 and end in Dandi with Gandhi breaking the Salt Act on April 6. Gandhi chose April 6 to launch the mass breaking of the salt laws for a symbolic reason—it was the first day of 'National Week', begun in 1919 when Gandhi conceived of the national *hartal* (strike) against the Rowlatt Act. Gandhi prepared the worldwide media

for the march by issuing regular statements from Sabarmati, at his regular prayer meetings and through direct contact with the press. Gandhi prepared the worldwide media for the march by issuing regular statements from Sabarmati, at his regular prayer meetings and through direct contact with the press. For the march itself, Gandhi wanted the strictest discipline and adherence to Satyagraha and ahimsa. For that reason, he recruited the marchers not from Congress Party members, but from the residents of his own *ashram*, who were trained in Gandhi's strict standards of discipline. The 24-day march would pass through 4 districts and 48 villages. The route of the march, along with each evening's stopping place, was planned ahead of time based on recruitment potential, past contacts, and timing. Gandhi sent scouts to each village ahead of the march so he could plan his talks at each resting place, based on the needs of the local residents. On March 2, 1930 Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, offering to stop the march if Irwin met eleven demands, including reduction of land revenue assessments, cutting military spending, imposing a tariff on foreign cloth, and abolishing the salt tax. His strongest appeal to Irwin referred to the salt tax: 'I regard this tax to be the most iniquitous of all from the poor man's standpoint. As the Independence movement is essentially for the poorest in the land, the beginning will be made with this evil.'

18.2.3 The Dandi March

On March 12, 1930, Gandhi and approximately 78 male Satyagrahis set out, on foot, for the coastal village of Dandi some 240 miles from their starting point in Sabarmati, a journey which was to last 23 days. According to *The Statesman*, the official government newspaper which usually played down the size of crowds at Gandhi's functions, 100,000 people crowded the road that separated Sabarmati from Ahmedabad. The first day's march of 21 kilometres ended in the village of Aslali, where Gandhi spoke to a crowd of about 4,000. At Aslali, and the other villages that the march passed through, volunteers collected donations, registered new Satyagrahis, and received resignations from village officials who chose to end cooperation with British rule. As they entered each village, crowds greeted the marchers, beating drums and cymbals. Gandhi gave speeches attacking the salt tax as inhuman, and the Salt Satyagraha as a 'poor man's battle'. Each night they slept in the open, asking of the villagers nothing more than simple food and a place to rest and wash. Gandhi felt that this would bring the poor into the battle for independence, necessary for eventual victory. Thousands of Satyagrahis and leaders like Sarojini Naidu joined him. Every day, more and more people joined the march. At Surat, they were greeted by 30,000 people. When they reached the railhead at Dandi, more than 50,000 were gathered. Gandhi gave interviews and wrote articles along the way. Foreign journalists made him a household name in Europe and America. Near the end of the march, Gandhi declared, 'I want world sympathy in this battle of Right against Might.' On April 6th he picked up a lump of mud and salt (some say just a pinch, some say just a grain) and boiled it in seawater to make the commodity which no Indian could legally produce salt.

He implored his thousands of followers to begin to make salt wherever, along the seashore, 'was most convenient and comfortable' to them. A 'war' on the salt tax was to be continued during the National Week, that is, up to the thirteenth of April. There were also simultaneous boycotts of cloth and khaddar. Salt was sold, illegally, all over the seacoast of India.

18.2.4 The Aftermath of March and its Consequences

What Gandhi did at Dandi was only a ritual beginning. It was followed by the defiance of Salt laws all over country. In Tamil Nadu, C. Rajagopalachari, led volunteers in a salt march from Trichinopoly to Vedaranniyam on the Tanjore coast. In Malabar, K. Kelappan, the leader of famous Vaikom temple entry Satyagraha, walked from Calicut to Pyannur to break the salt laws. Similar mobilizations of people were happening all over coastal area. Gandhi's announcement that he would lead a raid of volunteers on the Dharsana salt works, compelled the Government to arrest him on 4 May. The arrest of Gandhi sparked off a massive wave of protests all over India.

On May 21, with Sarojini Naidu and Gandhi's son Manilal in front ranks, a band of 2,000 volunteers marched towards the police cordon that had sealed off the Dharsana salt works. The volunteers were brutally beaten by the police with many of them suffering fatal injuries in the incident. In many places, salt Satyagraha assumed mass dimension. At Wadala, a suburb of Bombay, the raid on salt works culminated on 1 June in mass action of a crowd of 15,000 who broke the police cordon to carry away salt. In Karnataka, about 10,000 people marched in a similar action at Sanikatta salt works defying police *lathis* and bullets. From Midnapore in Bengal to the extreme South Tamil Nadu, people violated salt laws on the entire eastern coast in large numbers.

But salt Satyagraha was only a beginning for varied forms of defiance of British authority that it brought in its wake during the Civil Disobedience. From boycott of foreign clothes to boycott of liquor and from non-payment of *Chowkidari* tax (*Chowkidars* or guards in villages were paid out of taxes levied on villages and who acted as a supplementary police force in rural areas) to defiance of forest laws, it marked a new stage in the anti-imperialist struggle of Indian people.

Gandhi signed a temporary 'truce' popularly known as the Gandhi-Irwin Pact on March 5, 1930. The political prisoners were to be released under the terms of this agreement, except those convicted for violent acts. The fines that had not been collected so far were to be remitted, the confiscated lands of peasants not yet sold to the third parties were to be returned and government servants who had resigned during the movement were to be treated leniently and the congress was to withdraw its Civil-Disobedience movement and would participate in the Round Table Conference. The Congress endorsed the pact subsequently in its Karachi Session in March, 1931.

18.2.5 Karachi Session, Internal Debate and the Congress Ministries

Karachi Session was also an ideological milestone for Gandhi's politics as it reiterated the goal of complete independence or *Purna Swaraj*. It also passed the outstanding resolution on Fundamental Rights and the National Economic Programme. Gandhi had expressed doubts about the parliamentary form of democracy but the resolution demonstrated the commitment of the Congress to the civil and political rights of people. The resolution guaranteed the basic civic rights of free speech, free press, and free assembly; equality before law irrespective of caste creed or gender; neutrality of the state in regard to religious matters; elections on the basis of universal adult franchise etc.

An internal debate on the question of strategy emerged within Congress after the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience. Gandhi stressed constructive work in the villages centring on the revival of village crafts. Another section led by M. A. Ansari, Asif Ali, Bhullabhai Desai advocated revival of constitutional method. The third alternative was suggested by the left-minded intellectuals and leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru who wanted to broaden the anti-imperialist struggle by taking up day-to-day class and economic demands of workers and peasants, organising them in trade unions and *kisan sabhas*.

In August 1935, the British Parliament passed the Government of India Act of 1935. The provinces were to be governed under a new system of provincial autonomy under which elected ministers controlled all provincial departments. After the elections to provincial legislatures in early 1937, there were sharp differences between the left and right within Congress over the question of assuming ministries in the provinces. Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Bose, the Congress Socialists and Communists opposed office acceptance in the provincial governments. However, finally Congress formed ministries in the provinces where it had gained majority. Apart from providing a space for civil liberties, removing psychological fear of bureaucracy, the Congress ministries also tried to provide temporary economic relief to peasants by taking up agrarian legislation.

18.3 THE LIBERALS AS NEGOTIATORS

The main trend of 1929 was the deepening crisis in which the British Government through its new Viceroy Lord Irwin offered a Round Table Conference but refused to offer more, while the Indian National Congress moved toward the movement of 1930. Among the Liberals, Sapru in particular tried to avert the crisis by mediating between Congress leaders and the Viceroy. He ultimately failed, due to forces beyond his control, but he made a reputation as a freelance negotiator. His other major crusade, next to the quest for a Dominion constitution, was for a settlement of the communal problem. In this also he would ultimately fail, but it remained true that in this sphere of negotiation the Liberal spirit of dedication to compromise was especially needed. Next to M. K. Gandhi, Sapru was probably the Indian leader most devoted to mediation in this cause. It is ironic that Sapru's pragmatic, individualistic approach to negotiation may have marked both the highest refinement and the worst vice in Indian Liberalism. In fact, the time had passed when the Liberals had much power as an organised group.

The year 1930 began with the launching of the second great movement by Gandhi and the Indian National Congress. Yet the Indian Liberals fixed their hopes on the first official Round Table Conference scheduled for the fall of the year. A number of Liberals attended the first Round Table Conference (November 1930 to January 1931). Sapru, ably seconded by V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, made it his task to rally the Indian Princes to the idea of an all-India federal union, recognising that Dominion status would be a frail thing unless it embraced both the British Indian provinces and the princely Indian States. Yet nothing was permanently settled, and the communal negotiations had become deadlocked. Sapru had difficulty getting other Liberals such as C. Y. Chintamani and C. H. Setalvad to join in a conciliatory approach to either the Princes or the Muslims. It is clear, however, that princely and Muslim demands were being pitched so high as to make ultimate agreement unlikely. When Sapru publicised his estrangement from most other Liberals at the conference by announcing his withdrawal from their

ranks, it served as a milepost in their continuing decline as an organisation, and it weakened not only the Liberal Party's position but, ultimately, Sapru's.

Both Sapru and the other Liberals were determined, in spite of their internecine troubles, to use the positive results of the conference to bring together the Government of India and the Congress radicals. Returning to India, Sapru and Sastri hurried to act as intermediaries between Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, on one hand and imprisoned Congressmen, but especially Gandhi, on the other. Irwin's move of releasing Congress leaders and the amenability of Gandhi to negotiation were no doubt the principal factors in the Irwin-Gandhi pact of March 1931 and in the uneasy truce which led to Congress participation in the second Round Table Conference. The Indian Liberals and their ally Sapru were themselves divided over the extent to which princely and Indian minority demands should be accepted. Despite Liberal negotiations with all factions, the result was failure. The position of the Indian Liberals as mediators reached a new low in 1933, leaving a disillusioned fragment of the old Liberal Party which talked fitfully of disbanding altogether. It remained only for Sapru and a fraction of the remaining Liberals to exert what limited efforts their individual prestige allowed them. The Liberal Party did not dissolve itself but struggled on, meeting in formal session almost every year up to 1945; thereafter its executive council met from time to time. As a party, however, the Liberals had lost all their influence. This was demonstrated by the elections of 1936 under the Reform Act of 1935, which gave Indians the opportunity at least of erecting cabinet-style governments in the Indian provinces. The Liberal Party contested the elections, but the Congress dominated the polls almost everywhere. Most of the Liberals then fumed on the sidelines until the Congress ministries resigned in 1939.

Looking back over the history of Indian Liberalism, it is possible to see that the causes of Liberal decline were already present in the rise and the basic character of this school of thought. The Indian Liberals had developed into intermediaries in two senses by 1900. First, they had purposely assumed the role of representatives of Indian interests and the Indian people at the bar of British political opinion. Then, gradually, they had been drawn by circumstances into a mediating position between the aggressive nationalism of the Indian radicals and the entrenched imperialism of the British power structure. The new role also marked an essential weakness of the Liberals as a group almost from the beginning of their history. Their strain of individualism not only weakened party discipline but was capable of breaking across party lines altogether. They lacked the backing of a large unified party with significant popular support, and thus, had poor credentials even as mediators and negotiators.

The failure of Liberal efforts to get a really advanced set of constitutional reforms for India, or to bring about a lasting truce between either the Congress and the British government or the Hindus and the Muslims, demonstrated this basic problem of the Liberals both as a group and as individuals. They lacked the sanctions which the backing of numbers alone could provide. They could reason and cajole all they might, whether collectively or individually, but they could nevertheless be ignored with impunity by the major parties to the disputes which they attempted to mediate. The Round Table Conferences demonstrated that they could not persuade any of the major combatants, government, Congress or Muslim League to take them seriously. The Indian Liberals can be credited with having had the courage to persevere in an unpopular position and the honest desire to avoid extremes that assume only one's own position to be the true one.

18.4 THE LEFT TURN AND RADICAL ALTERNATIVES TO THE CONGRESS

There were many left groups which provided different viewpoints from the official Congress position. The main among them were the Congress Socialist Party, the Forward Bloc and the Communist Party.

The **Congress Socialist Party (CSP)** was founded in 1934 as a socialist caucus within the Indian National Congress. Its members rejected what they saw as the anti-rational mysticism of Mohandas Gandhi as well as the sectarian attitude of the Communist Party of India towards the Congress Party. Influenced by Fabianism as well as Marxism, the CSP included advocates of armed struggle or sabotage (such as Jayprakash Narayan and Basawon Singh (Sinha)) as well as those who insisted upon ahimsa or nonviolent resistance (such as Acharya Narendra Deva). The CSP advocated decentralised socialism in which co-operatives, trade unions, independent farmers, and local authorities would hold a substantial share of the economic power. As secularists, they hoped to transcend communal divisions through class solidarity. Some, such as Narendra Deva or Basawon Singh, advocated a democratic socialism distinct from both Marxism and reformist social democracy. During the Popular Front period, the communists worked within CSP. Basawon Singh, along with Yogendra Shukla, was among the founder members of Congress Socialist Party from Bihar.

Jayprakash Narayan and Minoo Masani were released from jail in April 1934. Narayan convened a meeting in Patna on May 17, 1934, which founded the Bihar Congress Socialist Party. Narayan became general secretary of the party and Acharya Narendra Deva became president. The Patna meeting gave a call for a socialist conference which would be held in connection to the Congress Annual Conference. At this conference, held in Bombay, on 22-23 October 1934, they formed a new All India party, the Congress Socialist Party. Narayan became general secretary of the party, and Masani joint secretary. The conference venue was decorated by Congress flags and a portrait of Karl Marx. In the new party the greeting 'comrade' was used. Masani mobilised the party in Bombay, whereas Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya and Puroshottam Trikamdas organised the party in other parts of Maharashtra. Ganga Sharan Singh (Sinha) was among the prominent leaders of the Indian National Congress Party as among the founders of the Congress Socialist Party. The constitution of the CSP defined that the members of CSP were the members of the Provisional Congress Socialist Parties and that they were all required to be members of the Indian National Congress. Members of communal organisations or political organisations whose goals were incompatible with the ones of CSP, were barred from CSP membership. The Bombay conference raised the slogan of mobilising the masses for a Constituent Assembly.

In 1936 the Communists joined CSP, as part of the Popular Front strategy of the Comintern. In some states, like Kerala and Orissa, communists came to dominate CSP. In fact communists dominated the entire Congress in Kerala through its hold of CSP at one point. In 1936, the CSP began fraternal relations with the Lanka Sama Samaja Party of Ceylon. In 1937 the CSP sent Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya on a speaking tour of the island. The CSP had adopted Marxism in 1936, and in their third conference in Faizpur they had formulated a thesis

that directed the party to work to transform the Indian National Congress into an anti-imperialist front.

During the summer of 1938 a meeting took place between the Marxist sector of the Anushilan movement and the CSP. Present in the meeting were Jayprakash Narayan (leader of CSP), Jogesh Chandra Chatterji, Tribid Kumar Chaudhuri and Keshav Prasad Sharma. The Anushilan Marxists then held talks with Acharya Narendra Deva, a former Anushilan militant. The Anushilan Marxists decided to join CSP, but keeping a separate identity within the party. The non-Marxists (who constituted about a half of the membership of the Samiti), although not ideologically attracted to the CSP, felt loyalty towards its Marxist sector. Moreover, around 25% of the membership of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association joined the CSP. This group was led by Jogesh Chandra Chatterji. The Anushilan Marxists were however soon to be disappointed by developments inside the CSP. The party, at the time Anushilan marxists had joined it, was not a homogeneous entity. There was the Marxist trend led by J.P. Narayan and Narendra Deva, the Fabian socialist trend led by Minoo Masani and Asoka Mehta and a Gandhian socialist trend led by Ram Manohar Lohia and Achyut Patwardan. To the Anushilan Marxists differences emerged between the ideological stands of the party and its politics in practice. These differences surfaced at the 1939 annual session of the Indian National Congress at Tripuri. At Tripuri, in the eyes of the Anushilan Marxists, the CSP had failed to consistently defend Subhas Chandra Bose. Jogesh Chandra Chatterji renounced his CSP membership in protest against the action by the party leadership.

Soon after the Tripuri session, Bose resigned as Congress president and formed the **Forward Bloc**. The Forward Bloc was intended to function as a unifying force for all left-wing elements. It held its first conference on June 22–23, 1939, and at the same time a Left Consolidation Committee consisting of the Forward Bloc, CPI, CSP, the Kisan Sabha, League of Radical Congressmen, Labour Party and the Anushilan Marxists. At this moment, in October 1939, J.P. Narayan tried to extend an olive branch to the Anushilan Marxists. He proposed the formation of a 'War Council' consisting of himself, Pratul Ganguly, Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee and Acharya Narendra Deva. But few days later, at a session of the All India Congress Committee, J.P. Narayan and the other CSP leaders pledged not to start any other movements parallel to those initiated by Gandhi. The Left Consolidation Committee soon fell into pieces, as the CPI, the CSP and the Royists deserted it. The Anushlian Marxists left the CSP soon thereafter, forming the Revolutionary Socialist Party.

The **Forward Bloc of the Indian National Congress** was formed on 3 May 1939 by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, who had resigned from the presidency of the Indian National Congress on April 29 after being outmaneuvered by Gandhi. The formation of the Forward Bloc was announced to the public at a rally in Calcutta. Initially the aim of the Forward Bloc was to rally all the leftwing sections within the Congress and develop an alternative leadership inside the Congress. A Forward Bloc Conference was held in Bombay in the end of June. At that conference the constitution and programme of the Forward Bloc were approved. In July 1939, Subhas Chandra Bose announced the Committee of the Forward Bloc. It had Subhas Chandra Bose as president, S.S. Cavesheer from Punjab as its vice-president, Lal Shankarlal from Delhi, as its general secretary and Pandit B Tripathi and Khurshed Nariman from Bombay as secretaries. Other prominent

members were Annapurniah from Andhra Pradesh, Senapati Bapat, Hari Vishnu Kammath from Bombay, Pasumpon U Muthuramalingam Thevar from Tamil Nadu and Sheel Bhadra Yajee from Bihar. Satya Ranjan Bakshi, was appointed as the secretary of the Bengal Provincial Forward Bloc. In August the same year Bose began publishing a newspaper titled *Forward Bloc*. He travelled around the country, rallying support for his new political project.

The **Communist Party of India**, founded in 1920s, had tried to work through the Workers and Peasant Parties (as a kind of mass-front for the Communists). All open communist activities were carried out through Workers and Peasants Parties. The Colonial theses of the 6th Comintern congress called upon the Indian communists to combat the ‘national-reformist leaders’ and to ‘unmask the national reformism of the Indian National Congress and oppose all phrases of the Swarajists, Gandhists, etc. about passive resistance’. The Congress also denounced the WPP. The Tenth Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, July 3, 1929 – July 19, 1929, directed the Indian communists to break with WPP. When the communists deserted it, the WPP fell apart. Then most of the Communist leaders were arrested and charged under the famous Meerut Conspiracy Case in 1929. The party was reorganised in 1933, after the communist leaders from the Meerut trials were released. A central committee of the party was set up. In 1934 the party was accepted as the Indian section of the Communist International. When Indian left-wing elements formed the Congress Socialist Party in 1934, the CPI branded it as Social Fascist.

In connection with the change of policy of the Comintern toward Popular Front politics, the Indian communists changed their relation to the Indian National Congress. The communists joined the Congress Socialist Party, which worked as the left wing of Congress. Through joining CSP the CPI accepted the CSP demand for Constituent Assembly, which it had denounced two years before. The CPI however analysed that the demand for Constituent Assembly would not be a substitute for soviets. In July 1937, the first Kerala unit of CPI was founded at a clandestine meeting in Calicut. Five persons were present at the meeting, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, Krishna Pillai, N.C. Sekhar, K. Damodaran and S.V. Ghate. The first four were members of the CSP in Kerala. The latter, Ghate, was a CPI Central Committee member, who had arrived from Madras. Contacts between the CSP in Kerala and the CPI had begun in 1935, when P. Sundarayya (CC member of CPI, based in Madras at the time) met with EMS and Krishna Pillai. Sundarayya and Ghate visited Kerala at several times and met with the CSP leaders there. The contacts were facilitated through the national meetings of the Congress, CSP and All India Kisan Sabha.

In 1936-1937, the cooperation between socialists and communists reached its peak. At the 2nd congress of the CSP, held in Meerut in January 1936, a thesis was adopted which declared that there was a need to build ‘a united Indian Socialist Party based on Marxism-Leninism’. At the 3rd CSP congress, held in Faizpur, several communists were included into the CSP National Executive Committee. In Kerala communists won control over CSP, and for a brief period controlled Congress there. Two communists, E.M.S. Namboodiripad and Z.A. Ahmed, became All India joint secretaries of CSP. The CPI also had two other members inside the CSP executive. On the occasion of the 1940 Ramgarh Congress Conference, CPI released a declaration called *Proletarian Path*, which sought to utilise the weakened state of the British Empire in the time of war and

gave a call for general strike, no-tax, no-rent policies and mobilising for an armed revolution uprising. The National Executive of the CSP assembled at Ramgarh took a decision that all communists were expelled from CSP.

18.5 THE REVOLUTIONARIES ON THE FRINGES AS THE COMMANDOS OF NATIONALISM

Dissatisfied with slow nature of mass mobilization, sections of educated youth turned towards revolutionary methods and armed overthrow of the British regime. There were basically two strands of revolutionaries, one working in the northern India, especially in Punjab and UP, and the other one in Bengal. The striking feature of revolutionaries in late 1920s and early 1930s were the direct and indirect influence of working class movement and the Socialist and Marxist ideas on them. In September, 1928, revolutionaries in northern India forged links among themselves and founded the famous Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (Army). Gradually the leadership was also moving away from politics of individual assassination and 'heroic actions' but the death of Lala Lajpat Rai, as a result of a brutal lathi-charge, once again forced them to attempt 'revenge' by killing Saunders, the police official involved in the lathi-charge. Then Bhagat Singh and Batukeswar Dutt threw a bomb, not to kill or harm any individual but to oppose the passage of the Public Safety Bill and Trade Disputes Bill in the Central Legislative Assembly. These measures would have curtailed the civil liberties of the citizens and workers. Later Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were tried and sentenced to death in March, 1931. They won the sympathy and admiration of people and became the icons of sacrifice and national self-determination. A similar mass sympathy was evoked by the death of Jatin Das, another revolutionary who died in Lahore Jail after fasting for 64 days. People flocked in thousands at every station when his body was carried from Lahore to Calcutta. At Calcutta, a two mile long procession of about 6 lakh people carried his body to cremation ground.

In Bengal too there was some reorganisation and ideological tilting of the revolutionaries. Some even participated in the Congress mass activities. After the death of C. R. Das, the Congress leadership got divided into Subash Chandra Bose and J. M. Sengupta factions. The revolutionaries of Yugantar helped the former and those of Anushilan the latter. Surya Sen had participated in the Gandhian Non-Cooperation, and was the secretary of the Chittagong District Congress Committee in 1929. He later became a teacher in a national school in Chittagong, attracted a large band of dedicated revolutionaries, and tried to overcome factionalism of the existing groups. Surya Sen and his group decided to organise an armed insurrection to demonstrate the possibility of such a course of action. Their action plan was to raid and loot the two main armouries of Chittagong and dislocate the railway communications so that local British troops did not receive timely outside military help. The action took place on 18 April, 1930. Subsequently they left Chittagong and a clash with British troops took place on Jalalabad hills with casualties on both sides. However, Surya Sen and his group managed to escape and carried on a guerilla fights from the villages till 1933. Surya Sen was captured on 16 February 1933 and hanged on 12 January 1934 and many of his co-fighters were sentenced to long-term of imprisonment.

18.6 SUMMARY

We have seen that Indian nationalism was not a homogeneous movement and represented a complex phenomenon. This Complexity of national movement shows that though the Gandhian core remained on the centre stage and launched a massive anti-imperialist struggle in the form of Civil Disobedience in the beginning of 1930s, it was still flexible enough to accommodate within its organisational structure and ideology a wide range of political perspectives ranging from liberals like Tej Bahadur Sapru to people belonging to radical left. As a result of this, the social base of the movement also got widened. A variety of political and ideological currents co-existed and worked together, while contending to establish their respective domains of influence. This diversity and spirit of debate was not its weakness but its strength.

18.7 EXERCISES

- 1) What were the various trends within nationalist movement? Discuss the reasons for the failure of the Liberals.
- 2) Discuss the ideas of and relationship between Socialists and Communists.
- 3) Write a note on the Dandi March and its impact on nationalist movement.