

CHAPTER - V

1948 : The Year of Foundation of 'The Socialist Party of India, And The Peasant's and Worker's Party -

Though the Socialists worked within the broad-based Congress organisation, their relations with the Congress had not been very cordial and happy. Most of the older Congress leadership had not been sympathetic towards them and looked down upon them with suspicion. Leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose though sympathetic to the Socialist cause, never really involved themselves with the activities of the Congress Socialists. Socialists on the other hand, worked sincerely within the Congress, but they were never satisfied with the programmes of Congress which it adopted from time to time. They usually fell far short of their ideals. As freedom of the nation drew closer, the Socialists in the Congress slowly drifted away from the main body of the Congress leadership.

The Socialists opposed the Congress policy of accepting office in 1937. 'The Socialists stayed outside and were driven to political wilderness by the holders of power.'¹

'The Congress Socialists envisaged the establishment of Socialism in free India by a victory through the polls. On the eve of independence when a Constituent Assembly was set-up in India, the question arose whether the Congress Socialists would seek to orient that Assembly to a Socialist goal. But the 'Cabinet Mission Plan' on the basis of which

the 'Constituent Assembly' was set-up had been rejected by the 'Congress Socialists', who believed that Britain did not intend to part with power and was merely seeking to lead nationalist India up the garden path. The Congress Socialists boycotted the Constituent Assembly. But by July 1947 the Congress Socialists reconsidered their position and their attitude to the Constituent Assembly. Jayaprakash wrote to Nehru stating that considering the changed circumstances the Congress Socialists would join the Assembly - if invited. Jayaprakash also suggested the names of the Congress Socialists leaders who may be invited. Nehru wrote back saying that the Congress would welcome the persons suggested in Jayaprakash's letter and "we shall try to get them in." Eventually, however, nothing materialised and by May, 1948, the non-cooperationalist wing of the Congress Socialist Party gained ascendancy within the party so that the party not only refused to send delegates to the Constituent Assembly, but passed a resolution calling for the dissolution of the Assembly and its reconstruction on the basis of adult suffrage.²

After the release of the Congress Socialist leaders from prison in 1945-46, a Conference was held at Kanpur in 1947. At the Conference the Congress Socialist Party decided to drop the appellation "Congress" from its name,³ but the Socialist Party still continued to function within the Congress till the year 1948.

Gandhiji was an important factor who kept together the two fractions - the older Congress leadership and the

Congress Socialists.⁴ But in 1948, Gandhi had been assassinated. 'The rightist group within the Congress led by Sardar Patel caused a resolution to be passed which outlawed the formation of political parties within the Congress. Accordingly the Socialists had to choose between disbanding their organisation within the Congress, or of leaving the Congress altogether and setting up an independent political party. The Socialists chose the latter alternative at the Nasik Congress held in March 1948.⁵ They severed their connection with the Congress and formed an independent Socialist Party outside the Congress - the Socialist Party of India.

At the Nasik Conference, Jayaprakash said - "Congress now has lost its revolutionary capacity. Therefore, the Socialist should form an alternate party for the realization of democratic Socialism."⁶

As the Socialists aimed to create alternative to the Congress, they had to change their policy regarding the membership in 1949, at the Conference held at Patna. 'The principle of limited membership was abandoned. And it was made open to any citizen who believes in party's - objectives, principles and programme. It was also decided to give collective membership to the Worker's and Peasant's unions and co-operative societies.⁷

FOUNDATION OF THE PEASANT'S AND WORKERS PARTY :

The year 1948, saw the formation of another party having Marxist ideology viz., - The Peasants and Workers Party. As the Socialists in the Congress were dissatisfied with the programme that the Congress adopted; so also some

of the non-Brahmin leaders from Maharashtra who joined the Congress in 1930's were dissatisfied with the policy of the Congress. Some of them like Keshavrao Jedhe were the leaders of the Satyashodhak Movement who wanted a revolutionary change in a society.

'In 1946, organisational elections of the Maharashtra Congress were held, in which Jedhe group came in majority and Keshavrao Jedhe became the President of the Maharashtra Congress. Under the leadership of Jedhe, this group made various demands for the welfare of the downtrodden people to the government. But Congress Ministry in Maharashtra did not pay any attention. To discuss the matter, forty members of the legislative assembly gathered at the residence of Bhausaheb Raut, a prominent non-Brahmin leader, in 1946. At this meeting, it was decided to send a delegation of Babasaheb Shinde, Bhausaheb Raut and Tulshidas Jadhav to meet the Chief Minister Kher to put before him the demands of the people.'⁸

'On 26th July of 1946 members of the Legislative Assembly met at the residence of Baburao Sanas and decided to start a publication of a newspaper to give information regarding peasant's grievances. At the meeting Shankarrao More, Keshavrao Jedhe, Nana Patil, P.K. Atre, P.K. Sawant, Chhannusing, Tulshidas Jadhav, Bhapkar, Datta Deshmukh were present. On 11th September, 1946, again a meeting was held at Pune, in which Keshavrao Jedhe, Shankarrao More, Y.B. Chavan, Bhausaheb Raut, P.K. Sawant, Datta Deshmukh, R.M. Nalawade, R.N. Shinde, S.T. More, Tulshidas Jadhav,

Vyakatrao Pawar were present. In the meeting, it was decided to form 'Peasants and Workers Union' within the Congress. The resolution that was passed in the meeting was - 'The Union is formed, to function within the Congress for the realization of political, economic and social programme of the Congress for the benefit of the peasants and workers.'⁹

After independence, if the capitalist took the control of the government machinery, the miserable conditions of the 'Bahujan Samaj' will remain the same this was the fear of these leftist leaders. They wanted to organise the people and to awaken them. 'Shankarrao More and Bhausahab Raut took the lead and again a meeting was held to discuss the matter on 11th January, 1947, at the residence of Bhausahab Raut. 75 persons were present. Most of the members demanded to form a Peasants and Workers Party within the Congress. But Y.B. Chavan and Sonusing Patil opposed the idea, on the ground that the action would be dangerous to the Congress unity.'¹⁰

But on 2nd and 3rd August of 1947, Shankarrao More, Keshavrao Jedhe and Bhausahab Raut held a meeting again at Alandi near Pune and decided to form the Peasants and Workers Party a autonomous party-within the Congress. Thus, a new party came into existence. On 12th September, 1947, a constitution was adopted for the new party. The leaders of the party visited different parts of Maharashtra and informed people regarding the policies and programmes of the party.'¹¹

Congress, in 1948 passed a resolution, which outlawed the formation of political parties within the Congress. And

the leaders of the Peasants and Workers Party faced the same problem, as the Socialists in the Congress. 'To discuss the problem Shankarrao More, the President of the Party held a meeting at the residence of Bhausahab Raut at Bombay on 26th April, 1948. And at the meeting a decision was taken to form an independent political party viz., Peasants and Workers Party.¹²

In 1950 at the Second Convention at Dabhadi, a political thesis was adopted, known as 'Dabhadi Thesis.'¹³

According to this thesis the P.W.P. not only accepted the Marxian ideology but also decided to take guidance of the Communist International.¹⁴ The party accepted a fifteen point programme - in which, a right to work, control on the profit and private enterprise, right to recall, were some of the points. In Dabhadi thesis there is a discussion on workers movement, but the thesis gives stress 'on peasants' problems and aimed to organise a peasants and agriculture labours unions.¹⁵

Thus, when India achieved its freedom, drafting of the constitution for free India was under process, and the first general election was due, the Marxian Socialists in India and the Maharashtra were trying to create a formidable socialist force, with the ultimate objective to destroy feudalism and capitalism and to construct a new society based on the principles of Socialism.

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