

ACHARYA NARENDRA DEVA

A Biographical Sketch

The second half of the 19th century produced many a great leader in India who fought for her freedom. Narendra Deva was one among them. His ancestors were Khatri of Kochhar sub-caste. They had migrated to the United Provinces (present Uttar Pradesh) from Sialkot (now in Pakistan).

Narendra Deva's grandfather, Kunja Mull, had set up a utensils shop at Faizabad. He was prosperous and was able to send his son, Baldeva Prasad, for higher studies. The latter studied at Bareilly College and passed the Entrance examination of Calcutta University in the second division in 1874. Four years later he set up his legal practice at Sitapur. He was not only a lawyer, but also a writer of textbooks for children in English, Hindi and Persian. After the death of his father in 1891, he shifted to Faizabad to manage family affairs.

Narendra Deva—originally named Avinashi Lai — was born at Sitapur on 31 October 1889. He was the second son of Baldeva Prasad and Jawahar Devi. He had three brothers and two sisters.

Owing to his father, early influences on young Narendra Deva were of his own Hindu religion and culture. As a boy, he could recite Sandhya, Rudri and the Gita. He was instructed by a Maharashtrian Brahman in the Vedas. He also became familiar with 1 uisidas's Ramacharitmanasa, the Mahabharata in Hindi, Sur Sogar, Laghu-Siddhanta-Kaunntdi and Amarkosh.

Early in life, Narendra Deva came in touch with Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, a man of spotless personal character, a silver-tongued orator and the founder of Banaras Hindu University, whom Narendra Deva's father had met at Allahabad on the occasion of the Congress session in December 1888. Baldeva Prasad's

acquaintance with Malaviya was to shape Narendra Deva's future. It is said that during one of Malaviya's visits to Faizabad, Baldeva Prasad asked Narendra Deva to recite a chapter from the Gita for Malaviya. Narendra Deva's impeccable pronunciation impressed him. Malaviya discerned talent in Narendra Deva and invited him to join the Macdonnell University Hindu Boarding House (popularly known as the Hindu Hostel) of Allahabad University. This Narendra Deva did when he joined Allahabad University for his F.A.

Another person who made a deep impact upon Narendra Deva was Madhav Prasad Mishra, an erudite scholar in Hindi, Sanskrit and Bengali. It was he who gave him the name Narendra Deva. He had translated Sakham Ganesh Deshpande's *Devesh Katha* from Bengali into Hindi. The book published in 1904 was banned by the British Government in 1910. Sakham was a Maharashtrian patriot settled in Calcutta. He was the maternal uncle of the eminent journalist, Baburao Vishnu Paraskar, who was for a long time editor of the *Aaj*, the famous nationalist Hindi newspaper published from Banaras.

Narendra Deva was also influenced by the personality of Swami Rama Tirtha who had visited Faizabad in 1906 and had delivered two lectures on Vedanta and Brahmacharya. The Swami gave Narendra Deva a book of his bhajans. It remained his constant companion for years.

In 1902, at the age of 12, Narendra Deva was admitted to Government High School, Faizabad. W.A. Hardy was its Headmaster. While still at school he was married about the year 1904. No information is available about his wife and her family. Narendra Deva has not written anything about her. She gave birth to a son and a daughter, but both died early. She also did not live long. He was remarried to Premo Devi Tandon of Agra in 1919. Two sons, Ashok and Harsh, and three daughters, Saroj, Vidya and Sushma were born to her.

After passing the Entrance examination of Allahabad University, Narendra Deva joined Muir Central College, Allahabad, in 1906. There he came under the spell of Dr. Ganga Nath Jha, a great Sanskrit scholar, and Bal Gangadhar Tilak. The former drew him towards Indian philosophy and culture and the latter towards extremist nationalism.

Narendra Deva was a good student and was fond of books. While at Allahabad, he read Prince Peter Kropotkin's *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* and *Mutual Aid*, A.K. Coomaraswamy's *Essays in National Education*, stories of the Russian author Ivan Turgenev, Bluntschli's *Theory of the State*, Mazzini's writings in six volumes, including his famous book *Duties of Man*. He also read a lot of nihilist literature from Russia.

Narendra Deva was a regular reader of the *Bande Mataram* and the *Arya*. Later in 1920, he translated Aurobindo Ghose's articles on Indian nationalism that had appeared in the *Bande Mataram* and published them under the title *Jatiyata*. He also read Tilak's *Gita Rahasya*.

Narendra Deva showed great interest in the development

of Hindi and wrote for Hindi newspapers. He also contributed articles to Vigyana. He joined the Nagari Pravardhini Sabha started by Purushottam Das Tandon and others. Later it developed into the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan.

Narendra Deva passed his B.A. examination in 1911. He should have graduated a year earlier, but could not as he had an attack of smallpox.

As was usual with bright young men of the time, Narendra Deva also aspired to study in England and take the I.C.S. examination. His mother disapproved of this, and he bowed to her wish. The loss to the Indian Civil Service was a gain to the country. He was to serve the poor and the oppressed of India and not the imperial government.

After graduation, he joined Queen's College (now **Sampurnanand** Sanskrit Vishvavidyalaya), Banaras, for his Master's degree in Sanskrit, with Epigraphy and Paleography. He studied Pali, the language of the earlier Buddhist texts. According to Pandit Gopinath Kaviraj, Narendra Deva's class-fellow, John Marshal I, the then Director of the Archaeological Survey of India, and Primer, who headed the Archaeological Survey in Patna, used to send their findings to Dr. Arthur Venis, the Principal of Queen's College. Along with his three students, Gopinath Kaviraj, Narendra Deva and H.R. Divekar, he would spend several hours deciphering them. At Queen's College, Narendra Deva met SachindraNath Sanyal, a highly respected revolutionary and author of *Bandi Jeevan*, and through him several other revolutionaries. He passed his M.A. in 1913. Dr. Venis offered him the post of lecturer in Sanskrit at Government College, Ajmer, but he did not accept it. Archaeology was his first choice. After he failed to get admission in that department, he decided to study Law at Allahabad wherefrom he passed out in 1915. The same year he started legal practice at Faizabad.

Narendra Deva possessed a studious and reflective mind. Though he chose the legal profession for earning his living, ancient Indian history and culture remained his first and last love. He pursued his academic interests even during the upsand downs of his political career — both in and out of jail.

II

As mentioned earlier, Narendra Deva's father took an interest in the Indian National Congress. It sowed the seed of nationalism in Narendra Deva's mind. He accompanied his father to the Lucknow session of the Congress in 1899, presided over by Romesh Chandra Dutt, an Indian I.C.S. officer and author of great fame. Among his many writings,

Economic History of India in two volumes is the most outstanding. It describes British exploitation of India in all its nakedness. Narendra Deva saw Tilak at the Banaras Congress in 1905, presided over by Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Tilak's political opponent. Both were sterling patriots, but differed fundamentally in their approach to the questions of the day. Gokhale excelled in the legislature and Tilak carried the masses with him. The young men of the day were under Tilak's influence; Narendra Deva was no exception.

In 1906, Narendra Deva travel led from Allahabad, where he was a student, to Calcutta to attend the Congress session. Dadabhai Naoroji, the Grand Old Man of India, and author of Poverty and Un-British Rule in India, a pioneering study of British exploitation in India, presided over it. In Calcutta, Narendra Deva put up at Ripon College (now Vidyasagar College). He attended a meeting addressed by Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal at Burra Bazar, a part of Calcutta inhabited by the Hindi-speaking people.

After the Congress session, Tilak visited Allahabad and stayed at Daraganj. On 14 January 1907, he spoke on 'Our Present Political Situation' in the compound of Govind Prasad's bungalow. The meeting was well-attended and largely comprised young men. Tilak was not much popular with the Congress establishment, but he enjoyed a large measure of support among the masses and the students. His visit did not much enthuse Allahabad Congressmen, but the young men of the town—Narendra Deva was one of them—under the leadership of Sundarlal, a student leader of the University, gave a rousing reception to him. Later, Sundarlal came to be known as Pandit Sundarlal. He turned to Gandhiji for inspiration after Tilak's death.

Narendra Deva was being slowly drawn into the extremist politics of Lal-Bal-Pal. As a result, he took a vow of swadeshi. The split between Moderates and Extremists at Surat in 1907 made the Congress a Moderates' preserve, representing the upper middle class elements. Thereafter, the number of delegates to its sessions declined.

After completing his studies in England, Jawaharlal Nehru had returned to India in 1912. While his father, Motilal Nehru, was a Moderate in politics, the son admired the Extremists. When Jawaharlal attended the Congress session at Bankipore (Patna) in 1912, it made a poor impression on his youthful mind. Commenting on the class character of the Congress, he writes in his autobiography:

I visited, as a delegate, the Bankipore Congress during Christmas 1912. It was very much an English-knowing upper class affair where morning coats and well-pressed trousers were greatly in evidence. Essentially it was a social gathering with no political excitement or tension.¹

Young men like Narendra Deva could have hardly disagreed with Jawaharlal. They wanted something more radical than what the moderate politics offered. Narendra Deva had stopped attending the Congress sessions after the Surat split. After a lapse of many years he

attended its Lucknow session in 1916 when the Extremists rejoined the Congress.

After six years' imprisonment in Mandalay, Tilak came out of jail in 1914. He re-entered the Congress in 1916. The same year two Home Rule Leagues were formed. One owed allegiance to Annie Besant and the other followed Tilak's lead. Both the Leagues had similar objectives and had cordial relations with each other.

To popularise the programme of Besant's Home Rule League, Jawaharlal Nehru, the Secretary of its U.P. Branch, visited Faizabad, where he met Narendra Deva. After the meeting, the Faizabad branch of Besant's Home Rule League was established with Narendra Deva as its Secretary.

The A.I.C.C. assembled at Banaras in the last week of May 1920. Narendra Deva met Tilak there and agreed with him that the Indians should enter the legislatures to be formed under the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. Between the A.I.C.C. meeting at Banaras and the special session of the Congress, held under the presidentship of Lala Lajpat Rai at Calcutta in September 1920, the Indian political scenario had undergone a sea change. Tilak had passed away in Bombay on 31 July. The country had chosen the path of non-cooperation under Gandhiji's leadership. Narendra Deva attended the Calcutta session and also the one at Nagpur in December 1920, where the non-cooperation resolution, earlier passed at Calcutta, was endorsed. He voted for the resolution.

Younger leaders of the Congress were dissatisfied with the Dominion Status demand — the Congress goal till 1928. This was despite the fact that the Congress had passed the Independence Resolution, at the instance of Jawaharlal Nehru, at its Madras session in 1927 under Dr. M.A. Ansari's presidentship. Gandhiji disapproved of the resolution and described it as 'hastily conceived and thoughtlessly passed'.

A group within the Congress comprising Jawaharlal Nehru, S. Srinivasa Iyengar, Subhas Chandra Bose, Dr. Zakir Husain and others was unhappy with the traditional Congress line. They formed the Independence for India League to press the Congress to adopt Independence as its goal.

The League established its branches in various provinces. The U.P. branch was formally established on 15 December 1928 at Kashi Vidyapith with Jawaharlal Nehru as President, Narendra Deva as Secretary, and Sri Prakasa, Krishna Chandra Sharma and Shivaprasad Gupta as Organisers. Narendra Deva did not seem hopeful about the League's future. He shared his apprehension with Jawaharlal Nehru in a letter:

As regards the League I may freely confess to you that my present feeling is that it does not seem to have a bright future before it. We lack in our midst a body of earnest men of deep convictions who have a living faith in some economic programme. We may all generally believe in the necessity of reconstructing our society on a new basis but so long as we have no clear conceptions of the social & economic theories on the basis of which the society is to be remodelled & so

long as we do not know exactly what can be achieved under the present circumstances of the country we cannot hope to obtain any results. The ideas of most of us are vague & indefinite & most of us do not know how to proceed about the business. The result is that our convictions do not grow deep & therefore we lack earnestness in our work.²

In spite of the shortcomings pointed out by Narendra Deva, the League was effective. Its opposition to Dominion Status made some dent in the Congress policy. The Congress at Calcutta in December 1928, passed a resolution that if within a year the British Government did not grant Dominion Status, it would pass a resolution demanding Complete Independence at its next session. This it did at Lahore in 1929. It also passed a resolution for launching a struggle to achieve it.

In pursuance of the Lahore resolution the country observed 'Independence Day' on 26 January 1930. The 'Independence Pledge' severely indicted British rule. It held it responsible for all the ills — economic, political, cultural and spiritual — India suffered from. It reaffirmed the nation's resolve to free itself from foreign rule: "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."³

India was in revolt. Acharyaji played a leading role in organising the people for the coming struggle. He moved from place to place explaining the meaning of 'Complete Independence' and propagating the use of spinning-wheel as a symbol of swadeshi. After touring parts of the U.P., along with Purushottam Das Tandon and Shivaprasad Gupta, he reached Basti on 24 June 1930. The same day they were arrested and sentenced to three months' rigorous imprisonment. It was in Basti jail that he contracted the fell disease of asthma which seriously curtailed his public activities and ultimately took his life.

On 5 March 1931, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed. The salt satyagraha came to an end. In the new political climate the Congress decided to participate in the Second Session of the Indian Round Table Conference held in London in September 1931. Gandhiji was the sole representative of the Congress. The conference failed to find a solution to the Indian problem and he returned 'empty-handed'. While he was away in London, no-rent campaigns had begun in the U.P. and a few other places. After his return they gained momentum. Acharyaji also joined the campaign in the U.P. He was arrested on 16 October 1932 and sent to Banaras District Jail from where he was released in June 1933.

Acharyaji was appointed member of the Congress Working Committee in April 1936. He was also elected the President of the U.P.P.C.C. the same year, a position he continued to hold till January 1938.

In 1939, Subhas Chandra Bose decided to seek re-election for the presidentship of the Congress. This created a fierce controversy in the Congress, the like of which it had not witnessed since the Surat split of 1907. As a compromise, Subhas offered to withdraw from the contest if Acharya Narendra Deva was accepted as President. Gandhiji had also suggested his name.⁴ After Maulana Abul Kalani Azad, the Congress

Working Committee nominee, withdrew from the contest at the last moment without consulting his colleagues, Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayyatook his place. But he was defeated.

The C.S.P. had supported Bose in the election, but it remained neutral on the Pant resolution. Some interpreted it as 'surrender' to the High Command. Many C.S.P. leaders, particularly from Bengal, resigned from the party. Acharya Narendra Deva was very sore about it. However, he defended the decision of the party on the grounds that the C.S.P. was not interested in mere power politics; it did not want to capture power and position in the Congress organisation through political alliances; after having opposed the Pant resolution in the Subjects Committee, there was hardly any point in opposing it in the open session, especially when the left-wingers, under the leadership of Sarat Chandra Bose and others, were not acting on any definite political principles of work.⁵ The C.S.P. did not want to disrupt the unity of the Congress because it represented 'Indian unity and democracy'. Not only that, it was the only 'solid anchor' of India's 'hopes and aspirations'. It also appears that the Acharya was not convinced about Bose's tactics. In his pamphlet, *The Indian Struggle: Next Phase*, published in 1940, he writes:

It is difficult to say how much of his anti-compromise talk is serious. It may, of course, just be a good stick to beat the Congress High Command with. Shree Subhas Chandra Bose has not always stood out against compromise like this. During his presidentship he was for negotiations with the British Government over the issue of the war. Today, he asserts that the Constituent Assembly can only be convened after the conquest of power.⁶

The Congress Socialists were egging on the Congress to launch a mass struggle against the British Government. In October 1940, Gandhiji decided to launch the individual satyagraha. Though not in good health, Acharyaji participated in the satyagraha and was imprisoned in Gorakhpur and Agra jails.

In September 1941, Acharyaji came out of jail almost a skeleton — he had lost 18 pounds in weight. Gandhiji invited him to stay with him at Sevagram. He was hesitant. However, when he went to Wardha for the A.I.C.C. meeting in January 1942, Gandhiji persuaded him to stay at Sevagram. He took great care of Acharyaji; they came closer. It was the time when Gandhiji was thinking of launching another struggle against the British. He had so much confidence in Acharyaji's integrity and political sagacity that he showed him his draft resolution on Cripps proposals before sending it for the consideration of the Congress Working Committee which was to meet at Allahabad from 27 April to 1 May 1942. Acharyaji also reposed great faith in Gandhiji's leadership. Jawaharlal Nehru was vacillating about launching a new movement. He thought it would help the fascists, but the Socialists were on Gandhiji's side and were strongly in favour of starting a new movement. At the Congress Working Committee meeting both Acharyaji and Achyut Patwardhan supported Gandhiji's resolution and were critical of Jawaharlal Nehru's stand.

Soon after, the A.I.C.C. met at Bombay on 7-8 August 1942 to consider

the Quit India resolution. Gandhiji made a marathon speech. He spoke for two hours, first in Hindi and then in English for the benefit of non-Hindi speaking delegates. He gave the slogan of 'Do or Die' to the nation and served a notice on the British to quit India. The resolution was passed by an overwhelming majority. However, twelve Communist members of the A.I.C.C. and Dr. P. Subbarayan, the father of Mohan Kumaramangalam, voted against it. Acharyaji was one of the speakers at the historic session. Opposing the Communists, he said that it was a pity that at the time of the final struggle, there were still people who were not prepared to make the sacrifices required of them.⁷ The session concluded in the small hours of 9 August. Gandhiji and the members of the Congress Working Committee were arrested⁸ the same day and kept in detention — Gandhiji and his entourage in the Aga Khan Palace at Poona and the members of the Congress Working Committee in the Ahmadnagar Fort.

During his detention in the Ahmadnagar Fort, Acharyaji devoted himself to literary work. He completed Hindi translation of Poussin's French version of the *Abhidharmakosha*, an important work on Sarvastivada, which he had begun in Banaras District Jail in 1932-33. He summarised many other works on Buddhist philosophy. He also helped Jawaharlal Nehru in his book *The Discovery of India*. When the Government decided to release the Ahmadnagar Fort detenus, they were repatriated to their provinces. Acharyaji and Jawaharlal Nehru were released from Almora, a hill station in the U.P., on 15 June 1945.

III

From the beginning of his public life, Acharya Narendra Deva had taken a keen interest in the problems of the Kisans. At first, he worked among them in Faizabad district. In 1930, he visited various districts of the U.P. to study their deplorable conditions. Next year, the U.P.P.C.C. appointed a committee to study the agrarian situation in the province. Acharyaji was its member. In this capacity, he made a special study of the problems of the Kisans, particularly of Basti and Gorakhpur districts, and submitted, along with Sampurnanand, a report to the U.P.P.C.C.

Acharyaji's father had some Zamindari interests, but Acharyaji did not look upon the Zamindari system kindly. He was opposed to landlordism and feudalism and was firmly of the view that the Zamindari system was at the root of the poverty of the Kisans. Therefore, he believed that without abolishing the Zamindari system, the economic condition of the Kisans could not be improved. To end the Zamindari system, he wanted to infuse class consciousness among the Kisans and prepare them for class struggle to create a socialist society.

After 1934, Acharyaji made strenuous efforts for mass affiliation of workers and peasants to the Congress so as to change its character, and to enlist them for fighting against British imperialism. Peasant organisations were already in existence in Bengal, Bihar, the U.P. and the Andhra region of the then Madras Presidency. The leaders of various peasant organisations felt the need of an all-India organisation to protect the interests of the Kisans. Accordingly, representatives of these organisations met at Meerut on 15 January 1936, where the Congress Socialist Party was also holding its conference, to found an All India Kisan organisation.

The conference formed an organising committee with N.G. Ranga and Jayaprakash Narayan as joint conveners to convene an All India Kisan Congress.

On 11 April 1936, the representatives of the Kisan organisation again met at Lucknow. Thus was founded the All India Kisan Sabha. Initially, it was called the All India Kisan Congress. Some called it All India Kisan Sangh. Later, the name was changed to All India Kisan Sabha.⁹ In founding the Sabha C.S.P. leaders played a major role. They wanted it to work closely with the Congress. Acharyaji emphasised the point in his address to the Bareilly Provincial Political Conference held on 22 November 1936. He said: "The peasants and workers should have independent organisations of their own but they should be linked to the Congress."¹⁰

Owing to his long association with peasant struggles and his innate sympathy with the peasants, he was elected to preside over the Gaya session of the All India Kisan Sabha held on 4 April 1939. In his presidential address, he emphasised the need for the organisation of the Kisans and offered a forceful and logical plea for it in the following words:

The question is often asked where is the need for the Kisan organisation when the Congress membership predominantly consists of peasants and the Congress has in its agrarian programme of Faizpur and the Economic Rights Resolution of Karachi incorporated many of the demands of the peasants in its programme. The single answer is that the Congress being a multi-class organisation, the peasant is not able fully to assert himself in the national organisation. His attitude towards other classes is not very free but is constrained and he finds himself lost in a mixed gathering. In order therefore to enable him to give up his hesitancy and to assume a more independent attitude it is necessary to give him preliminary training in an organisation of his own class.

Besides, the Congress being a national organisation is not in a position to accept the basic demands of the peasants or for the matter of that any other demands unless pressed hard by circumstances. The dire poverty of the Indian masses has, from very early days, engaged the attention of the leaders of Indian public opinion but they treated it as apolitical grievance to be attributed mainly to the heavy drain on India and not something which was inherent in the economic structure of the country and which could be removed only by revolutionary changes in that structure. The Kisan organisation is therefore necessary to exert revolutionary pressure on the Congress to adopt more and more the demands of the peasants. Such pressure has been applied in the past with good results and today the Congress is pledged to fight for the interest of the peasants. And how can the Congress act otherwise when it claims to represent the nation and when, as we know, the huge exploited mass of the peasants does constitute the nation. The Congress therefore, if it wants to serve the national interest, must seek to abolish the basis of all colonial and feudalistic exploitation."

Acharyaji wanted to improve the economic and social life of the peasant, but he was not oblivious of the dangers of what he called

'peasantism'. He felt that the peasant "looks at all questions from the narrow and sectional viewpoint of the peasant class... believes in rural democracy, which means a democracy of peasant proprietors.... Such an outlook is unscientific and betrays a mentality which may give exaggerated importance to the small peasant.... It may also lead to acute antagonism between town and country." ¹²

Acharyaji was a Marxist, but he did not believe that only the workers could be the vanguard of revolution. In a country like India, he believed, that the peasants could also play a revolutionary role. Mao Tse-tung also held similar views.

Economic and social amelioration of the peasants was near to Acharyaji's heart. To achieve this he formulated an agrarian programme whose main features were:

46 To educate the peasants in the 'spirit of socialism' and to bring them into line with socialist reconstruction through cooperative societies;

47 cooperative production, exchange and consumption, on the basis of a free peasantry;

48 abolition of all middlemen and intermediaries between the tiller and the state;

49 to get rid of the corrupt police force; and

50 to provide inexpensive civil and criminal justice. ¹³

IV

As a result of the 1932 movement, many socialist-minded young men found themselves in Nasik Central Jail. Among them were: Jayaprakash Narayan, Minoo Masani, Achyut Patwardhan, Asoka Mehta, Charles Mascarenhas and M.L. Dantwala. While in jail they decided to form a party within the Indian National Congress wedded to Marxism. After his release, Jayaprakash Narayan made contacts with various political workers with socialist leanings and a conference was held at Patna on 17 May 1934 under the chairmanship of Acharya Narendra Deva.

Earlier, in July 1931, Jayaprakash Narayan, Phulan Prasad Verma and Baba Ramodar Das (later known as Rahul Sankrityayan), Abdul Bari, GangaSharan Sinha and Ambika Kant Sinha had established the Bihar Socialist Party. Its objectives were achievement of complete independence, in the sense of separation from the British Empire, and the establishment of a socialist society. A similar group had been formed in the Bombay Presidency in 1933 by Minoo Masani, Shirubhau Limaye and others. Such groups were in existence at Banaras and Delhi. There was also the Punjab Socialist Party whose leaders were Prof. Brij Narain, Jeevan Lai Kapur, later a Judge of the Supreme Court, and Lala Feroz Chand.

The Patna Conference of May 1934 led to the formation of the Congress Socialist Party. Explaining the attitude of the C.S.P. towards the Congress and why they did not form a separate party, Acharyaji said:

In our endeavour to influence the nationalist movement in the direction of socialism, we are at once met with the criticism, that it is difficult to reconcile nationalism with socialism and that if we want to establish socialism in our country, why not form ourselves into an independent group outside the Congress and act independently of its policy and be at the same time liberated from the reactionary influences

of a lower middle class organisation.

The answer is that we do not wish to isolate ourselves from the great national movement against British imperialism which today the Congress symbolizes. We admit that the Congress today has defects and shortcomings, yet it can easily be the greatest revolutionary force in the country. We should not forget that the present stage of the Indian struggle is that of the bourgeois democratic revolution and therefore it would be a suicidal policy for us to cut ourselves off from the national movement that the Congress undoubtedly represents.¹⁴

Acharyaji stressed the need of involving the masses in the party. He said:

We should try to broaden the social basis of our movement by bringing into our fold workers and peasants. I hope we will not rest satisfied with initiating the educated classes into the mysteries of socialist thought. I do not belittle the importance of the formation of socialist study circles and the creation of a body of socialist literature in Indian languages. That is good work and most essential too. But we must not forget that the real task before us is the political education of the masses, the carrying on of day-to-day agitation amongst them on economic issues and their organisation into a politically conscious class. It is only by working amongst the masses that we can emancipate ourselves from reactionary influences and shall be able to develop proletarian outlook. The great mistake that we members of the intellectual classes are apt to commit is to relegate the people to the background. The truth is that we are always willing to teach masses but never to learn from them. This attitude of mind is wrong. We should try to understand them and to act as faithful interpreters of their desires and needs.¹⁵

Acharyaji believed that neglect by the Congress of the industrial labour had resulted in its 'indifference' and 'antipathy' towards the Congress-led movements. Presiding over the Gujarat Socialist Conference at Ahmedabad on 23 June 1935, he laid emphasis on mobilising workers and peasants. To quote him:

We may be forgiven for pointing out that under present conditions it is impossible to win independence without mobilising the workers and peasants for the political struggle. Unfortunately the Congress has hitherto not paid adequate attention to the question of reaching the masses with a correct approach. We do not accuse the Congress of any wilful neglect in the matter. On the contrary it is the only political body which has tried to establish contacts with the broad masses in the country. Yet its method of approach has not been correct and therefore its efforts have not been as fruitful as they would have been otherwise. A new orientation of policy is much needed in the Congress at the present juncture and it must be preceded by a recognition of the fact that there are definite classes to whom an economic appeal has to be made before they can be mobilized for

political action and that they have to be organized on a class basis before they can be effectually used for an anti-imperialist struggle. In view of the fact that foreign imperialism has with the object of entrenching its position, formed a bloc with forces of native reaction, viz., the Indian princes, landlords and capitalists, it is all the more necessary for us to rally all the radical elements in the country and to build a united front of the petty bourgeoisie, the workers and the peasants in order to oppose this newly constituted bloc of imperialism and its native allies.¹⁶

Here we may reflect on as to why there was a need for a socialist party with a Marxist orientation when there was already the Communist Party wedded to Marxism. The conference at Kanpur in December 1925 to launch the C.P.I, was originally convened by Satyabhakta (real name Chakkhan Lai Gupta), one of the earliest converts to communism in India. The main difference between him and the other Communists who had assembled at Kanpur was that he wanted the party to be called the 'Indian Communist Party' and not the 'Communist Party of India'; secondly, he was opposed to its affiliation to the Communist International; thirdly, he wanted to formulate the party programme according to Indian conditions.

At the Kanpur Conference, Satyabhakta remained busy with the organising work of the conference and did not take part in its discussions. He was soon to find that the conference was taken over by delegates from Bombay who had connections with the Communist International through M.N. Roy.¹⁷ The party's affiliation to the Communist International was both its strength and weakness.

In 1929, the C.P.I.'s front-rank leaders were arrested in connection with the Meerut Conspiracy Case. The arrests deprived the nascent party of the benefit of their collective leadership. In the absence of its top leaders, the affairs of the party were conducted by B.T. Ranadive and S.V. Deshpande. They followed the Communist International line enunciated at its Sixth Congress in 1928. The perception of the Sixth Congress about the role of the bourgeoisie in the national liberation movements in colonial countries was that its one section was anti-national and pro-imperialist, while the other sections "support the national movement and represent a special vacillating compromising tendency which may be designated as national reformism" or "bourgeois-democratic tendency". It felt that underestimation of national reformism which had influence on petty bourgeois masses, the peasantry and sections of the working class could "lead to the isolation of the Communists from the working masses and so on". To avoid this eventuality, it stated that "it is necessary to reject the formation of any kind of bloc between the Communist Party and the national-reformist opposition".¹⁸

In pursuance of this policy, the C.P.I, opposed the struggle launched by the Congress in 1930 and after. It developed an unlovely relationship with the Congress. It realised its tactical mistake but rather late.¹⁹ A section of it even used derogatory expressions against Gandhiji and other leaders of the Congress.

It is doubtful if by following this policy of opposing the national struggle launched under the leadership of the Congress, the C.P.I, added any recruits to its ranks, but it certainly scared away many nationalists with marked leftist leanings and even confirmed Marxists such as Acharya Narendra Deva, Jayaprakash Narayan and many others. If the C.P.I, had not taken this ultra-left position, it was sure to swell its ranks. Acharyaji observes:

When the Socialists working in the Congress came together to form a party, certain opprobrium was attached to the Communist Party for its isolation from the national movement. Not only it kept aloof from the national struggles carried on by the Congress but even sought to prevent workers from joining them. Under the circumstances we were constrained to coin a new name: Congress Socialist Party. The word 'Congress' symbolizes the struggle for democratic *regime*. But the overwhelming reason for affixing it to the Socialist Party was to disabuse the public mind of the damaging belief that the Socialists considered the Congress a capitalists' organisation.²⁰

From its inception in 1934 the C.S.P., under the influence of Jayaprakash, tried to be friendly with the C.P.I, to wage common struggles of workers and peasants. But its efforts failed owing to the C.P.I.'s affiliation to the Communist International and the fraction work its members did in the C.S.P. Thus the day-to-day working between Communists and Socialists in the C.S.P. became difficult owing to mutual suspicion and distrust. The C.S.P. leaders like M.R. Masani, Achyut Patwardhan, Dr. Rammanohar Lohia and Asoka Mehta realised within months of the C.S.P. Conference at Meerut in January 1936 the danger its Communist members posed to the unity and homogeneity of the party. But Jayaprakash was hopeful of containing the Communists. Therefore, in protest, all the four resigned from the National Executive of the party. Then came to light in 1937 a secret Communist circular. It was later published by M.R. Masani under the title *Communist Plot against the C.S.P.* Jayaprakash, however, continued to pursue the idea of a united socialist party, but the events following the outbreak of the Second World War on 3 September 1939 buried the idea for ever. Acharyaji was unhappy with the Communist attitude towards the C.S.P. and the national movement. He gave vent to his feelings in his letter of 11 December 1939 to Yusuf Meherally:

I have seen the communist thesis on war, but I have not seen the circular you refer to. S.M. Joshi also refers to such a circular in his letter. It is a nasty document. These people are most undependable. They play a double game. On the one hand, they plan an attack upon us and, on the other, try to woo J.P. J.P. has now become very stern and I do not think he will yield to their blandishments. [P.C.] Joshi is seeing J.P. tomorrow at Patna. J.P. is going to have a frank talk with him this time. There should be a complete break with them now. It is simply impossible to work with such indecent and unscrupulous people any more.²¹

On 22 June 1941, Hitler declared war on the Soviet Union. This suddenly changed the C.P.I.'s policy towards the war— it was no longer an

imperialist war for them. Now they described it as a people's war. This again created a relationship of attrition between the C.P.I., and the other nationalists and leftists. Acharyaji was critical of the change in the Communist attitude. In 1942, he examined the issue in his pamphlet, *The War: Imperialist or People 'si* He cited the Communist Party documents to show the process of change in its policy towards the war. He wrote:

But at last the mandate came from abroad to support the war and they [Indian Communists] had to bow to it in spite of themselves. It became necessary for them now to sing a new song in support of their changed attitude. They began to say now that the war had become a people's war and as such deserved their support.²²

Acharyaji believed that the changeover in the C.P.I.'s policy towards the war was because it was "tied to the chariot wheel of the Third International through the British Communist Party, which is ruled by the Russian Communists who are guided in their formulation of their policies solely by the requirements of Russia's foreign policy".²³

As a result of the people's war policy of the C.P.I., the British Government in India legalised it in 1942. Now it could function openly. It vigorously helped the Government in its war effort. A situation developed in which the C.P.I., was branded as an ally of the British Government rather than a supporter of the Indian national movement. Later on, even Aruna Asaf Ali described them as traitors.²⁴ The C.S.P. and the C.P.I., fundamentally differed in their appreciation of the war. They attacked each other publicly. This made their relations acrimonious. Finally, the C.S.P. expelled the Communists from the party.

The Fifth C.S.P. Conference was held in February-March 1947 at Kanpur, chaired by Dr. Rammanohar Lohia. Acharya Narendra Deva was the Chairman of its Reception Committee. In his address, the Acharya broadly surveyed the post-World War national and international scene. He discussed the relationship between democracy and socialism, distortions in socialism in Russia and the problems of left unity. He was critical of communism and the C.P.I. He firmly believed that Marx stood for freedom and democracy. He said:

Those who hold that Marx's teachings run counter to democracy are mistaken. Marx was one of the great humanists of his times. He cherished the right of freedom of expression as the most sacred of human possessions. His passionate advocacy of the freedom of the individual is well-known. His communism presupposed complete democracy. It was for this reason that he cherished the belief that in democratic England and America socialism could be achieved without recourse to violence.²⁵

About the C.P.I., he said:

The conduct of the Communist Party, its intrigues and double-dealings, its rank opportunism and its total disregard of moral considerations in its dealings with others, have brought a bad name for socialism. Whenever a Communist Party has formed a

common front with other political parties it has done so for its own advantage and whenever it has sought affiliation to another organisation it has done so with the intention of capturing or wrecking it.²⁶

At this session, the C.S.P. made two important decisions. First, it dropped the suffix 'Congress' from its name; secondly, it opened its membership to non-Congressmen.

After India became free on 15 August 1947, the Congress formed governments at the Centre and in the States. This changed its complexion — from a national platform it became a political party. Against this backdrop, the A.I.C.C. met at Delhi from 15 to 17 November 1947 and appointed a new committee to revise the Congress Constitution. It included Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Purushottam Das Tandon, Acharya Narendra Deva, R.R. Diwakar, S.K. Patil, and Acharya Jugal Kishore as Convener. It invited suggestions from various Congress committees and Congressmen on various points. The suggestions thus received were considered and placed before the Congress Working Committee at its meeting held at Delhi from 24 to 26 January 1948. Gandhiji was also present at the meeting. He was doubtful if the suggestions would meet the requirements of the situation. It was decided that the Constitution Committee should discuss the issue directly with him. It, thus, requested him to put down his proposals in writing so that it could have a clear picture of what he had in mind. Gandhiji handed over his proposals on 30 January 1948, a few hours before he was assassinated. These proposals have come to be known as his 'Last Will and Testament'. His proposals were too radical to be acceptable to the Constitution Committee and the Congress Working Committee. He wanted the Congress to disband itself and become a Lok Sevak Sangh. The A.I.C.C. met in February 1948 and accepted the recommendations of the Constitution Committee. Acharya Narendra Deva must have gauged the committee's view about the place of the other parties and groups in the Congress.

The report of the committee was placed before the A.I.C.C. in April 1948 at Bombay and was passed with a few amendments. But before that Acharyaji and other C.S.P. leaders had decided to quit the Congress at the Sixth Socialist Party Conference held at Nasik from 19 to 21 March 1948. The report was finally adopted at the Jaipur Congress in December 1948 with some interpretative and explanatory amendments.

In view of the amendments in the Congress Constitution the apprehension of Acharya Narendra Deva was not wrong. The new Congress Constitution envisaged that those who wanted to become effective members of the Congress were to declare: "I am not a member of any other political party, communal or other, which has a separate membership, constitution and programme." It provided that "members of other political parties with a separate membership, constitution and policy cannot stand for Congress elections".²⁷

The development was not sudden. The attitude of the Congress establishment was becoming, to put it mildly, unfriendly towards the Socialists for quite some time. When Jayaprakash Narayan visited Hyderabad in May 1947, Shankarrao Deo, the General Secretary of the Congress, instructed

Swami Ramananda Tiratha, a prominent Congress leader of the State, not to assist in the collection of funds for the Socialist Party or accord welcome to its leaders.²⁸

In spite of the hostility on the part of the Congress leaders against the Socialists, Acharya Narendra Deva and Dr. Rammanohar Lohia were reluctant to quit the Congress. But, later on, even they became convinced that it was no longer possible to remain in it. Acharyaji told the Nasik Conference:

I have been, so far, advocating that we should not quit the Congress. Today I am telling you that we must get out of the Congress.

Quitting the Congress is not a pleasant affair.... It is not that we are in a hurry to quit the Congress. The Congress is compelling us to get out of it. Once the Congress President asked us to drop the prefix 'Congress' from our Party name. He also pleaded that our Party doors be thrown open to non-Congressmen. He suggested that this would enable us to continue in the Congress. We did all that at Kanpur. Today they have adopted a constitution which has left us no other alternative.... Democratic functioning has become impossible within the Congress. It has become impossible to continue in that organisation.²⁹

Acharyaji was a firm believer in political morality and ethical conduct in politics. Therefore, he and 11 other M.L.A.s. decided to resign from the U.P. Legislative Assembly on the ground that as they were elected on the Congress tickets, they had no moral right to retain their seats in the Assembly after they had left the Congress. And they resigned on 30 March 1948. On that day, Acharyaji made a memorable speech in the Assembly. The speech was a model of courtesy and politeness of which he was a living example. In his speech, he assured the House that the decision to resign from the Assembly was not taken in haste. In fact, it was taken after a good deal of thought. He believed that for a successful democracy the opposition should not be for opposition's sake, criticism should be constructive and not destructive. He also stated that India lacked democratic tradition and that was why communalism was rampant. Thus, under such circumstances upsurge of authoritarianism was easy. He warned that mere opposition to communalism would not establish democracy in India. During the speech Acharyaji became a bit emotional. He said:

Separation is always painful and sad. Our separation from the Congress has been no less painful to us. But in the lives of institutions and individuals there are moments when they have to give up their dearest possessions for the sake of those ideals and objectives which they cherish. We are leaving today our ancestral house with a sad and a heavy heart, but we are not relinquishing our claim to our inheritance. It is not material goods to which we advance our claim. This treasure consists of ideals and noble objectives.... We have no false pride in us; we know our limitations and we are conscious of our shortcomings. All that we want to say is that we shall

try to prove ourselves worthy of the heritage.... We shall always try to avoid personal attacks and will not enter into any such controversy. We shall take a hand in maintaining a high standard of healthy public life undivorced from ethical principles and in these matters we shall always be guided by Mahatmaji's teachings.³⁰

Thus ended his more than three-decade old relationship with the Congress in the making of which he had played no small part and of which he was a distinguished leader.

In March 1949, the Seventh Socialist Party Conference was held at Patna. Acharya Narendra Deva chaired the conference. In his presidential address, he supported the policy of the Hind Mazdoor Sabha, criticised the policies of the I.N.T.U.C. and commented on the industrial policy of the Government. He was also critical of communalism, provincialism and the C.P.I.

Acharyaji could not attend the Eighth Conference of the party held at Madras from 8 to 12 July 1950. However, he was unhappy with the party's resolution on South Korea which was supportive of Nehru's policy.

In 1952, the Socialist Party jumped into the General Elections with high hopes. Many of its leaders such as Jayaprakash Narayan and Dr. Rammanohar Lohia did not contest the elections. The party failed to realise its hopes as it lost in most places. Out of the 264 candidates it had fielded for the Lok Sabha only 12 won, securing 10 per cent of votes. This caused frustration among its leaders and workers.

A special convention of the Socialist Party was convened at Pachmarhi from 23 to 27 May 1952, to analyse the causes of its electoral defeat and formulate its future policy. Dr. Rammanohar Lohia chaired the convention. His address to the convention is regarded as an original thesis on Asian socialism.

After the convention, Jayaprakash Narayan, Asoka Mehta, Ganga Sharan Sinha and Dwarka Prasad Mishra (he had recently joined the Social 1st Party) met Acharya J.B. Kripalani, the Chairman of the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party, in Delhi. They exchanged views on the political situation in the country after the General Elections and agreed that "to galvanise the politics of the country, it is necessary that parties which believe in the sovereign independence of the country and are anxious to guard its frontiers, are striving for basic social transformation and are wedded to personal freedom, should come increasingly closer together".³¹ Asoka Mehta and Jayaprakash Narayan conducted the negotiations with Acharya Kripalani. On 1 June 1952, it was decided that the Socialist Party and the K.M.P.P. M.P.s. would work together in Parliament and outside. This was the first step towards the merger of the two parties.

Acharya Narendra Deva was away in China as a member of an official goodwill mission. On his return he came to know of the merger proposal between the K.M.P.P. and the Socialist Party. He was unhappy at the development and was particularly pained that his colleagues had started the merger talks in his absence.

The National Executive of the Socialist Party met at Banaras from

20 to 23 August 1952, to consider the merger issue. Some members were critical of the proposal. Acharya Narendra Deva presided over the meeting with a heavy heart but bowed to the majority decision. During the discussion when someone asked why the party could not merge with the Congress, Asoka Mehta said: "After six months on terms of equality."³² Acharya Narendra Deva is reported to have drawn Jayaprakash Narayan's attention to this, but he took it lightly.

Acharya J.B. Kripalani on behalf of the K.M.P.P. and Acharya Narendra Deva with Dr. Rammanohar Lohia and Asoka Mehta on behalf of the Socialist Party, resumed the talks at Lucknow on 24-25 August 1952. The two parties resolved to merge together. Leading representatives of the Socialist Party and the K.M.P.P. met at Bombay from 25 to 27 September to complete the merger. Acharya Kripalani presided over the meeting. Thus came into being the Praja Socialist Party. Acharya Kripalani became its Chairman and Asoka Mehta its General Secretary.

Hardly had the P.S.P. taken off when in February 1953 Jawaharlal Nehru met Jayaprakash Narayan and suggested cooperation between the Congress and the P.S.P. While Jayaprakash seemed sympathetic to the proposal, Acharya Narendra Deva was not enthusiastic. Dr. Lohia was totally opposed to it. Some prominent Congress leaders also did not like the move. The talks began but they were jinxed. Under pressure from some Congress leaders, Govind Ballabh Pant was reported to be one of them, Nehru was unwilling to accept the P.S.P.'s 14-point programme forwarded by Jayaprakash Narayan. The talks finally broke down. According to Jayaprakash:

On the 16th March I met the Prime Minister again for further discussion. At this occasion he felt that while we were justified from our point of view in putting forth a minimum programme for the next few years, it was not going to be useful to tie each other down to any specific commitments. I felt, on the other hand, that without a common basis of work, the experiment in cooperation, particularly at governmental levels, was bound to result in mutual conflicts, ineffectiveness and failure."

In view of the difference in approach, the proposal for cooperation at all levels that the Prime Minister had made was dropped.

The Socialist Party-K.M.P.P. merger was looked upon as consolidation of two major opposition parties. After the first P.S.P. Conference at Allahabad in December 1953, it was hoped that the new party would work on the basis of its new programme and Policy Statement and its leaders would work in a spirit of cooperation. But future developments in the party belied the hope.

The events in Travancore-Cochin precipitated a crisis in the party. After the end of the President's rule when the State went to the polls in February 1954, no party got an absolute majority. The Congress declined to form government. To prevent the Communists from coming to power, the Congress was willing to support a P.S.P. government if it did not have

any alliance with the Communist Party. The P.S.P. National Executive unanimously permitted its Travancore-Cochin unit to form government. Pattam Thanu Pillai became Chief Minister. The Government worked smoothly till August 1954, when the Travancore Tamil Nadu National Congress-led agitators were fired upon by the police at Marthandam and Pudukkada in South Travancore killing four persons and injuring a few.³⁴ At the time of firing Dr. Lohia was in Naini jail in U.P. for leading an agitation against increase in canal water rates. Hearing of the firing he wired to Pattam Thanu Pillai asking him to tender his resignation. But he did not. In protest, Dr. Lohia resigned from the general secretaryship of the party.

Earlier, when in 1950 the police had fired upon students in Gwalior, Asoka Mehta, the General Secretary of the Socialist Party, had demanded the resignation of the Government and a judicial inquiry into the firing. Again, when there was a firing in Indore on 21 July 1954, about three weeks before the firing in Travancore-Cochin, the P.S.P. had demanded the resignation of the Ministry.³⁵

The firing issue divided the party. While Dr. Lohia, Madhu Limaye and others pressed for a simultaneous resignation of the Ministry and appointment of an inquiry commission, the others believed that a judicial inquiry was necessary before the National Executive could consider the question of directing the Ministry to resign. The P.S.P. leadership found procedural faults with Dr. Lohia's suggestion recommending resignation of the Ministry, but it did not say a word about the basic issue he had raised. Both Dr. Lohia and the National Executive stuck to their positions. He argued that firing in a democracy was justified only in case of an armed insurrection against the State or wilful destruction of its property. The National Convention of the P.S.P. met at Nagpur in November 1954 to discuss the party's attitude to the police firing in Travancore-Cochin. The convention met in a surcharged atmosphere. Surendranath Dwivedy, one of the delegates to the convention and a staunch opponent of the Lohia line, thus describes the atmosphere at Nagpur: "The atmosphere at the Nagpur Conference was tense... . The scene that I recall was the one like the Tripuri Congress Session in 1939."³⁶

The convention failed to heal the fracture the party had suffered. Its provincial leaders supported the National Executive, while the younger and idealist elements were behind Dr. Lohia. However, he lost by 303 votes to 217. Dr. Lohia suffered a defeat but was not routed. He scored a moral victory.

The schism in the party pained Acharya Narendra Deva, and he took no part in the debate at Nagpur. But when Acharya J.B. Kripalani resigned as Chairman of the party, Acharya Narendra Deva was requested to shoulder the responsibility and he agreed. He assured the delegates that he would adhere to the Policy Statement adopted at Allahabad and maintain discipline in the party. The change of chairman did not mend matters. The gulf between the two groups in the party continued to widen. Acharya Narendra Deva's temperament, his feeble health and infighting in the party made his task difficult.

In the meanwhile, the Bombay P.S.P. suspended Madhu Limaye and nine others from the party. It added fuel to the fire. Dr. Lohia refused to lie low. He suggested to the P.S.P. units all over the country to invite Limaye for speaking engagements. The U.P. committee invited him to address a

party conference at Ghazipur in June 1955. The National Executive considered it an act of indiscipline and dissolved it. Another committee was appointed in its place. Dr. Lohia continued with his campaign and described the opponents of his line as supporters of 'paralysed socialism' and his own followers as 'militant socialists'. The relations between the two factions became bitter. Finally, the P.S.P., supported by Jayaprakash, no longer a member of the party, suspended Dr. Lohia at its National Executive meeting held at Jaipur from 15 to 22 July 1955. Thereafter, the situation reached a point of no return and the party split. Dr. Lohia and his supporters formed a new party called the Socialist Party at a conference held at Hyderabad from 28 December 1955 to 1 January 1956.

The P.S.P. held its National Conference at Gaya in the last week of December 1955. Acharya Narendra Deva's illness prevented him from attending the conference. In his absence, Triloki Singh, the General Secretary of the party, read his address.

In his address, Acharyaji said: "We are meeting today under the shadow of a domestic calamity. There has been a split in the Party and our ranks have been thinned to a certain extent in consequence."³⁷ He did not go deep into the causes of the split but laid "the blame... at the door of others".³⁸ He justified the disciplinary action against Dr. Lohia, Madhu Limaye and others. It could not be otherwise. The wound inflicted by the split in the party was too deep for him to bear. Each group tried to score over the other. The split was the beginning of the end of the socialist movement in India. Later, everybody regretted it, but it was too late in the day. Acharyaji was a Marxist but he appreciated Gandhiji's teachings. He devoted four paragraphs of his Gaya address to Gandhiji's impact on the Indian masses. He said:

In India it was Gandhiji who was the first to realise the importance of the masses for any national struggle... Gandhiji identified himself completely with the masses, and when India became free, he advocated the establishment of a classless and casteless society, in which there would be no exploitation and where the people would be the supreme authority.

Gandhiji knew the Indian masses as none else did... the masses intuitively felt that he belonged to them. He had gradually become the symbol of the Indian people so much so that unless he gave a call there could be no nation-wide struggle. On many an occasion his intuition proved correct, and those who at first regarded him as a visionary came to hold the view that he was intensely practical....

Some of his ideas were quite novel and it was difficult for many of us, whose habits of thought were different, to accept them. But we would have lived in vain, if we had not come under the influence of his dynamic personality and ideas. His acceptance of the ideal of a classless and casteless society made our task easy. He was wedded to no theory and he has himself said he has not given us any system of philosophy. But his mind was fertile and creative and until his last days he continued to give us new ideas.³⁹

Discussing war, the Acharya said: "War is no remedy and as such has

to be outlawed." He further said: "We believe that in this atomic age violence has to be ruled out both in the national sphere and international field. War is no solution of any problem." He also emphasised the need for "struggles against injustice" for which he recommended "Parliamentary work, struggle and constructive work".⁴⁰ It was the same thing which Lohia had described in his inimitable style — 'the spade, the vote and the prison'.

In his address, Acharyaji also offered a critical appreciation of the Russian Revolution. He acknowledged its importance in world history and said that it ushered in a 'new civilization'. But he also pointed out its shortcomings. His view was that the leaders of the revolution failed to "keep before them the great ends of life for which the revolution had taken place".⁴¹ The Gaya Conference also discussed the party's Policy Statement drafted by Mukut Behari Lai under Acharyaji's guidance. Acharyaji had corrected the draft before it was finalised. The amendments moved at the conference to the Policy Statement were placed before Acharyaji for his consideration. He accepted some of them. He also incorporated, at the suggestion of Mukut Behari Lai, a section on education in its ninth chapter. The Policy Statement embodies Acharyaji's thoughts, though the language and style are not his.

The elections to the U.P. Legislative Assembly in 1936-37 were held when Acharyaji was the President of the U.P.P.C.C. The Congress won 134 out of 228 seats. Many writers have asserted that Acharyaji was offered the premiership of the province. Among such writers are Asoka Mehta,⁴² one of the founders of the C.S.P., Brahmanand,⁴³ the compiler of Acharyaji's writings, and Jagdish Chandra Dikshit.⁴⁴ The first two have provided no evidence in support of their assertion, while the third has confused the issue. According to Dikshit, at the convention of legislators held at Delhi on 19-20 March 1937 to consider the office-acceptance issue, it was decided that the presidents of provincial Congress committees would be premiers in their respective provinces. Since Acharyaji was the President of the U.P.P.C.C., he was to be the Premier of the U.P. Later on, he himself says that on 5 March 1937 (it was 7 March), Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant was elected the leader of the U.P. Congress Legislature Party. As he had been elected the leader of the Legislature Party on 7 March, there was no sense in passing a resolution saying that the presidents of provincial Congress committees would be elected the premiers of their provinces. And when the Congress decided to accept office, the leaders of its Legislature parties automatically became the premiers of their provinces. Moreover, the convention had passed no such resolution.

Acharyaji was elected to the U.P. Legislative Assembly in 1937 and again in 1946. He spoke in the Assembly on several issues. His first speech was on Purushottam Das Tandon's election as the Speaker of the Assembly on 31 July 1937 and his last on 31 March 1948 when he resigned from the Assembly. Though his first speech was formal, he reflected on how the Speaker should conduct the proceedings in the House. He said:

By its unanimous vote, this House has appointed you as its spokesman and has constituted you as the custodian and guardian of the rights and privileges of this House... . I would request you to strike a new line and evolve a new tradition and to give us a new lead which will be followed by people who may be similarly

circumstanced like us. But I would like to make it perfectly clear that I do not want you to use your influence and your position in building up the political fortunes of your party. Fullest freedom must be given to every political group and every individual in this House to express his views.⁴⁵

Communalism which had plagued Indian politics and finally led to the partition of the country also drew Acharyaji's attention. He favoured not only the protection of the minorities but also wanted the majority community to so behave with them that they felt they were justly treated. He expected the majority not only to be just but also generous to them. Having said this, he made it clear that he did not want to do anything which would tie the hands of the future generations of the Muslims. To quote him:

We recognise the rights of the minorities and think it our duty to safeguard their interests. But to lay down the law today for those coming in future is a bad policy and is unnecessary and only shows their uneasiness about the matter. Can you tie the hands of the future. Muslims? I want my friends to note that there is a ferment in the world of Islam today. The Islamic countries are building their house on the basis of race and nationalism. The whole world of Islam has been powerfully influenced by the ideas of the West, and the old medieval institutions are being replaced everywhere by modern institutions. My friends opposite, I am sure intensely dislike such a state of affairs, but is there any guarantee that the Indian Muslims will never come to believe in the necessity of altering their mode of life? The future generations of Indian Mussalmans may very well come in line with the advanced thought of the world of Islam and demand a uniform code of law for the whole country. Will they prevent the future representatives of the various religious communities whether they be Hindus or Muslims, from voicing the feelings of the people and putting them into effect? But if the Mussalmans would wish otherwise and prefer formal law their wishes would certainly be respected.⁴⁶

While speaking on the Constituent Assembly resolution, Acharyaji made two important observations, first, the Congress stood for complete independence in the sense of 'severance from all British connection', and secondly, socialism alone could guarantee fullest democracy. He believed that democracy under capitalist system was 'sham democracy'. He had no use for democracy unless it ensured economic emancipation of the masses. He firmly believed that the Constituent Assembly would not come as a boon from the British Government. Only a revolution would lead to the convening of a Constituent Assembly. He enunciated his concept in the following words:

We do not want that this Constituent Assembly should be summoned by [the] British Parliament. We refuse to have anything to do with the British Parliament in the framing of our economic and political

structure. So, Sir, take it from me that the Constituent Assembly is a thing which can only be created in a semi-revolutionary situation. We should have an Assembly which will be able to see that the will of the people is carried out, and it is possible only when we become independent of the British Government. We have to mobilise the masses and organise them so that we may be able to bring about a revolution, non-violent of course. That revolution will lead to the convocation of an Assembly. The Constituent Assembly means an Assembly which has the power to frame or amend its constitution. We want to generate that power so that the demand of the people may become irresistible and may not be spurned by others. We do not make any demand upon the British Government. We simply give notice to the British Government that the Constituent Assembly is going to be our slogan in the future and that it represents the ideals and aspirations of the Indian people.⁴⁷

This remained the C.S.P.'s policy regarding the Constituent Assembly. In 1946, the Socialists did not join the Constituent Assembly because it was constituted by the British Government.

During his years in the U.P. Legislative Assembly, he also spoke on subjects such as education, problems of the peasantry and the general budget.

Before we close the assessment of his work in the legislature, his views on the language in which members could speak in the Assembly be stated. Speaking in the Assembly on 28 September 1937, he said that those who desired to speak in Hindustani should be permitted to do so.⁴⁸ In fact, he himself spoke in elegant and chaste Hindustani in the Assembly, barring two occasions.

Acharyaji and 11 others who had resigned from the Assembly contested the by-elections caused by their resignations. The elections were held in June-July 1948. Except Gajadhar Prasad from Azamgarh, rest of them were defeated.

The Congress was determined, from the beginning of the election campaign, somehow to defeat the Socialists. Much against his will, the Congress had put up Baba Raghaydas, a prominent Congressman of Gorakhpur, to oppose Acharyaji.⁴⁹ The Baba's earlier name was Raghavendra Sheshappa Pachapurkar. He was born at Poona in a Chitapavan Brahman family. After schooling, he left home in 1913 in search of a Guru. He found one in Paramahansa Anant Prabhu living at Baharaj on the banks of the Sarayu river. For the next seven years he practised yoga and studied religious philosophy. In 1920, he joined the non-cooperation movement with Gorakhpur as his headquarters. Later, he became the President of the Gorakhpur District Congress Committee.

The Baba was pitted against Acharyaji, it was generally believed, not because of his standing in the political life of the U.P., but because of his reputation as a religious man. He was associated with many religious institutions. He himself had established Paramahansa Ashram, Sanskrit Pathashala, Brahmacharya Ashram and Veda Vidyalayas. Considering the composition of the constituency of which Ayodhya, the birthplace of Rama, formed a part, no other candidate

could be more suitable than the Baba to oppose the Acharya who was depicted as an 'atheist' and 'anti-religion'. It was alleged that leaflets entitled 'Rama-Ravana Samvad' were distributed among the voters and there were also posters to the effect that to defeat 'Ravana-roopee' Narendra Deva the people should vote for 'Rama-roopee' Raghavdas.

The leader of the campaign against Acharyaji was none other than Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, the Chief Minister of the U.P. He was Acharyaji's contemporary in Allahabad. Others who campaigned against him were Lai Bahadur Shastri, Mohanlal Gautam, Purushottam Das Tandon, A.G. Kher, Algu Rai Shastri and Sucheta Kripalani. Sampurnanand, C.B.Gupta and Kamalapati Tripathi kept away from the campaign.

Pandit Pant conducted the election campaign in a manner which militated against the established democratic and parliamentary norms. Addressing a public meeting at Lucknow, he said:

Every vote cast against the Congress will weaken the hands of Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel, who are fighting against tremendous odds to stabilise the newly-won independence. It would demonstrate at the bar of world opinion that the Indian people have no confidence in the leaders who won them independence after many years of slavery. This will also have far-reaching effect on the issues like Hyderabad, Kashmir and the U.N.O. Commission and will weaken India's position in international affairs.

If the Congress is defeated at the polls it will strengthen the hands of the Nizam inasmuch as the ruler can say with impunity that India is not behind Pandit Nehru in his demands for the democratisation of the Hyderabad State and its accession to the Indian Union. The defeat of the Congress will also hearten the raiders in Kashmir who will think of prolonging the battle pinning their hopes for a change in Government of India to gain their objective. The U.N.O. Commission on Kashmir is shortly visiting India and every vote against the Congress will adversely affect the prestige of the Indian Government.⁵⁰

Even Gandhiji was not left alone. Pandit Pant invoked his 'soul' to win the election battle. He said that Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel were Gandhiji's true successors and it would be betraying him if the people voted against the Congress. Baba Raghavdas, he claimed, was one of the greatest disciples of Mahatma Gandhi and the people should vote for him.⁵¹

Speaking at Bahraich, Pandit Pant gave credit for achieving freedom only to the Congress. He is reported to have said that there would be an era of anarchy, loot, arson and rape if the Congress was weakened.⁵²

Speaking to Mahants at Ayodhya, Pandit Pant appealed to their religious sentiments, their love for Hindi and assured them that the abolition of Zamindari would not affect them. He tried to show that while the Congress was the protector of Hindi and India's 'ancient culture', the Socialists were champions of Hindustani based on Nagari and Persian scripts. He said that it was for the people to decide how far a language based on the Persian script could protect their culture.⁵³ The substance of

Pandit Pant's speeches was that only Congress leaders in power cared for the welfare of the country and those opposed to the Congress were its enemies.

A.G. Kher at an election meeting at Saharanpur said that "to weaken the Congress was to weaken the country and an invitation to slavery".⁵⁴

Lai Bahadur Shastri was second to none in imputing motives to the Socialists. Addressing a meeting at Gorakhpur, he said that it was lust for leadership and power alone that actuated the Socialists to resign from the Assembly and contest elections.⁵⁵

Mohanlal Gautam surpassed everyone else. He accused Munshi Ahmed Din, a prominent Socialist leader, of stating that Kashmir should go to Pakistan. He did not stop at that. He further alleged that Jayaprakash Narayan also agreed with Munshi Ahmed Din. The Munshi firmly rebutted the allegations.⁵⁶

Purushottam Das Tandon also talked of "one culture and one language".⁵⁷

Acharyaji kept his cool at the time, but years later he gave his reaction to the issues raised by the Congress during the Faizabad by-election:

Was it not said against me in the 1948 by-election that I was an atheist and that on this ground the elector should not vote for me? Was it not highly improper to do so, especially when it was claimed that ours was a secular state? I derive malicious pleasure from the fact that the gentleman⁵⁸ who said this has the misfortune to adorn in his old age the durbar of a non-believer, of one who is neither pious in the religious sense of the word nor God-fearing. Was it not said that both Sanskrit language and Indian culture stood in grave peril if I was returned by the electorate? Was it not said, again, that I had betrayed the Congress by leaving it at a critical juncture in its life's history? Was this the speech of a democrat or of a demagogue of the worst type? Was not Gandhiji's spirit invoked and Ramchandra's help solicited to secure my defeat? Did not a prominent Congress worker make women voters take oath in a temple to vote against me? Did not a prominent Congress leader take the cards from many of my women voters and send them away by falsely telling them that they would be placed in the ballot box?⁵⁹

Later, writing about Acharya Narendra Deva, M. Chalapathi Rau, the Editor of the *National Herald*, also referred to the "mud-slinging against him [Acharya Narendra Deva] by Congress underlings in the Faizabad by-election".⁶⁰

The Congress propaganda against Acharyaji by appealing to voters' religious sentiments, imputing motives to Socialist leaders, of which they were hardly guilty, and the use of government machinery adversely affected the election prospects of the Socialists. But, equally important reason for their defeat was that they were weak, compared to the Congress, both organisationally and financially.

Acharyaji lost the election by a margin of 1,312 votes — Baba

Raghavdas got 5,392 votes and Acharyaji polled 4,080.

The Socialist Party participated in the first General Elections held in the winter of 1951-52. Owing to Acharyaji's character, his scholarship, his services to the nation, his role in the freedom struggle and the socialist movement, his commitment to the cause of the poor and the downtrodden, Jawaharlal Nehru was not in favour of opposing him if he stood for election.

He wrote to Morarji Desai:

I know that there is a difficulty in allowing candidates pertaining to an opposition party to go unopposed. Nevertheless, my own advice in the U.P. was that if Narendra Deva stood for election, he should not be opposed. He has such a high status in the U.P. as a scholar and a straightforward man that any opposition to him in this context hurts the prestige of the Congress. That argument applies, I think, to Kamaladevi also.⁶¹

But the Congress bosses did not respond positively to Nehru's suggestion. The Congress put up Madan Gopal against Acharyaji. Acharyaji lost the election by a margin of 438 votes.⁶² - COM r M Ai, f b C.- A < v

In April 1952, Acharyaji was elected to the Rajya Sabha. He secured 18 first preference votes, the highest secured by anyone in that election. He was re-elected in April 1954 for a six-year term. In the Rajya Sabha, he spoke on the creation of Andhra Pradesh, against the Prevention Detention Legislation, and on the motion of thanks to the President.

VI

In pursuance of the non-cooperation programme, national colleges and universities were opened with a view to imparting education to the non-cooperating students and also to inculcate patriotism among them. Shivaprasad Gupta, a class-fellow of Narendra Deva and an ardent believer in national education through the mother-tongue and free from government control, started Kashi Vidyapith at Banaras. Narendra Deva was one of its trustees.

Jawaharlal Nehru visited Akbarpur in Faizabad district in January 1921 in connection with the Kisan movement. During the visit he met Narendra Deva and suggested to him that he join Kashi Vidyapith as a teacher. He readily agreed.

Narendra Deva was a first-rate scholar and teacher, but he bore his learning lightly. He had a great sense of humour and was friendly and considerate to his students. A few years later he succeeded Dr. BhagavanDas as Acharya

(Principal) of Kashi Vidyapith. He did not have a schoolmaster's approach towards his pupils. He was easily accessible to them at all times. B.V. Keskar, his student and later his colleague at Kashi Vidyapith, states: "We used to meet often. Often we used to go at any time to his house and discuss a point which suddenly struck us or something about which we were in doubt. This kind of exchange of ideas and indirect teaching was going on throughout the day."⁶³

Sri Prakasa, Acharyaji's colleague at Kashi Vidyapith, said in an interview:

My lecturer in Mediaeval European History at Cambridge was Mr. Guillard Lapsley. I know only two persons — Mr. Lapsley and Acharya Narendra Devaji — who, while speaking of any age, of any country, could actually bring before their audiences the great figures they were dealing with and make their listeners feel that they were going in a procession before their eyes. Mr. Lapsley was great at that and so was Acharya Narendra Deva. There must be others also, but I do not know.⁶⁴

Education and politics were Narendra Deva's two major passions in life. He satisfied the one by joining Kashi Vidyapith and the other through it. He was not only a teacher but also a nationalist. While at Kashi Vidyapith, he carried on his political activities by training his students for national work. To quote him: "Side by side we did political work. We had gone to propagate in the villages of Banaras when the Ali Brothers were sentenced at Karachi. Carrying our beddings under our arms, daily we were touring on foot."⁶⁵

Narendra Deva continued teaching at the Vidyapith earnestly. When Gandhiji went to Kashi Vidyapith in 1929 to deliver the convocation address, he discovered his hidden qualities. Sri Prakasa has recorded Gandhiji's assessment of Acharyaji "...on returning home from the Convocation, Mahatma Gandhi said to me how is it that you have kept hidden such a jewel of a man and have never spoken to me about him."⁶⁶ No wonder Gandhiji invited him to deliver the eighth convocation address at Gujarat Vidyapith in January 1930.

Many of Acharyaji's students later became soldiers in India's fight for freedom. They included: Chandra Shekhar Azad, a veteran revolutionary, Lai Bahadur Shastri, India's Prime Minister after Jawaharlal Nehru, T.N. Singh, Kamalapati Tripathi, and B.V. Keskar, Ministers in the Government of India, Raja Ram Shastri, a Member of Parliament and the Vice-Chancellor of Kashi Vidyapith, another Raja Ram Shastri, a prominent labour leader at Kanpur, to mention a few.

Besides teaching at Kashi Vidyapith and participating in the national struggle Acharyaji promoted some journals also. From the Vidyapith he started *Vidyapith Patrika* in 1929. Later, he also published *Samaj* from there and *Sangharsh* from Lucknow in 1937.

After his release from jail in 1945, Acharyaji wanted to expand and strengthen the C.S.P., but his indifferent health prevented him from doing so. He was not able to carry on his work in the field of education also. The atmosphere in the universities at the time was not healthy. Student indiscipline was rampant. He naturally felt concerned

about it. Acharyaji had devoted the best part of his life to education and character-building of his students. His desire to give a right direction to centres of higher learning, pressure from friends and authorities, finally made him accept the vice-chancellorship of Lucknow University in October 1947. Students and teachers held him in high esteem and his appointment was acclaimed by all.

At the very outset, Acharyaji had to face a grave situation in the university — the students were on strike in protest against fee-hike and there was violence on the campus. Acharyaji believed that discipline was essential for maintaining high academic standards. He issued an appeal to the student community to withdraw the strike and "to employ its energies and talent in constructive activities" and "cultivate a sane and healthy outlook on life".⁶⁷ The appeal did not go in vain. The strike was called off.

Acharyaji not only preached high ideals but also lived by them. His simple life and high character were exemplary. He announced a voluntary cut of one-third in his salary for students' welfare. This was the first act of the kind on the part of a vice-chancellor.

Acharyaji was no arm-chair Vice-Chancellor. He continued his academic and political pursuits without sacrificing the interests of the university. He took Pali classes though it was not expected of him. His interest in Buddhism was of long-standing. He continued his work on *BuddhaDharma Darshan*. He enriched the literary and cultural life of **the university by inviting** eminent scholars such as Dr. Gardner Murphy, Norman Cousins, Maurice Dobb, C.V. Raman, Shanti Swaroop Bhatnagar, Kshitimohan Sen, O.C. Ganguly, P.C. Bagchi, Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, Radhakumud Mukerji, and Humayun Kabir, to mention a few, for lectures. He also convened the Sixteenth All India Oriental Conference at Lucknow from 3 to 5 October 1951, under the general presidency of K.A. Nilakantha Sastri, an eminent historian from the South.

While he was the Vice-Chancellor of Lucknow University, he helped found Nava Sanskrit! Sangh, an organisation of progressive writers and artists, at Banaras in 1948.

Acharyaji's services to Lucknow University were well summarised by its Executive Council in its resolution of November 1951:

His term of office was characterised by an all round improvement in the social and academic life of the University. New Departments of teaching were created, considerable addition was made to the teaching and residential accommodation, and there was great increase in the number of teachers and students. His solicitude for the welfare of the student community evoked unsustained obedience and loyalty, and there was marked improvement in the general discipline of students. Inspired by the highest ideals of service and sacrifice, Acharya Narendra Deva worked with singular zeal and devotion and his departure is a great loss to the University.⁶⁸

Thus ended his four-year term as Vice-Chancellor of Lucknow University.

About this time Banaras Hindu University was in a crisis. Beside

other problems, unstable financial position and student indiscipline deepened the crisis. The then Vice-Chancellor of the university, Pandit Govind Malaviya, had become the centre of controversy and was unpopular both among teachers and students. Acharyaji was requested to take charge of the university to normalise its functioning. He accepted the challenge.

He was no stranger either to Banaras or to Banaras Hindu University. The university had conferred an honorary degree of Doctor of Letters on him in 1949. He was also connected with it in several ways. His appointment was a matter of joy to all concerned. On 5 December 1951, the day he arrived in Banaras, the university was closed at 1 P.M. so that the staff and the students could give him a warm welcome. According to the authors of the *History of the Banaras Hindu University*: "Never before in the history of the University was given such a tremendous reception to a Vice-Chancellor...he was taken in a long procession which reached the University late in the evening."⁶⁹

Unfortunately, Acharyaji was in poor health during his vice-chancellorship which ended on 31 May 1953. His working days were not many. Either he was on tour in connection with the 1952 General Elections or on medical leave. Even then, he was able to change the atmosphere of the university from one of despair to that of hope. As in Lucknow University, here also he made a voluntary reduction of Rs.800 in his salary of Rs.2,000 and put it in the Students' Benefit Fund. His high moral principles and integrity are reflected in the fact that he refused to draw his salary for the period when he was on election tour. It is another matter that the Executive Council of the university did not accede to his request.

Acharyaji had love for his students, but he could not tolerate any indiscipline and hooliganism on their part. He was generous to a fault, but he was equally stern when it came to principles. To inculcate discipline among students, to maintain academic excellence and to live up to the ideals Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya cherished when he established the university, he had to, perhaps, much against his will, take stern action against a few students. He was, to a great extent, able to normalise university functioning.

In spite of his busy schedule and ill-health, he agreed to serve as a member on the Press Commission appointed in October 1952 under the chairmanship of Justice G.S. Rajadhyaksha. He was, however, not able to participate in the discussions and the draft report was sent to him while he was in Europe recouping his health.

The scholar Acharyaji was much interested in enriching the academic life of the university. He devoted much of his time and energy to the development of its library.

He was a fine speaker. Whenever he delivered lectures, students flocked to hear him, not only from the university but also from the other institutions in the city.

Besides enriching university life in more ways than one and inculcating the spirit of discipline among the students, he imparted to it a moral dimension. He stabilised its financial position and improved the living and working conditions of the staff. It was during his tenure as Vice-Chancellor that the scales of pay of the teachers of the Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya were revised and the Ayurvedic College was upgraded.

Acharyaji's personality, his affection and sympathy for students, his spirit of sacrifice, his scholarship and his just and impartial attitude had brought a visible change in both Lucknow and Banaras Hindu Universities. He was more than correct in performing his functions as Vice-Chancellor. He made a clear distinction between his duties as Vice-Chancellor and his role as a leader of the Socialist Party. For example, he never invited any leader of his party to speak in the university. He also did not encourage, as Vice-Chancellor, Socialist students nor did he give them any patronage. Once a poor student approached him for financial assistance. He readily granted it. The student was a bit surprised. He told him that he was a Communist. Acharyaji told the student that he had helped a needy student, his political views did not matter.

VII

Acharyaji was unhappy at inner conflicts and subsequent split in the P.S.P. Asthma, from which he had suffered most of his life, became more acute. His failing health could hardly lessen his determination to salvage whatever was left of the rocked P.S.P. He was particularly concerned over the growing 'indiscipline' in the U.P.P.S.P. and was determined to curb it without reckoning the cost.⁷⁰ Strenuous work to put the party again on its feet made his asthma worse.

With a view to taking rest and recuperating his health, he left for Perundurai in Coimbatore District of Tamil Nadu on 3 January 1956. His wife and Dr. Rama Dhar Mishra, the former Head of the Mathematics Department of Lucknow University and his close friend, were with him. It was here that Acharyaji completed his magnum opus —*BauddhaDharma Darshan*.

Even at Perundurai the future of the party remained Acharyaji's constant worry. The split in the party still haunted him. He had also not reconciled himself to the action against Dr. Lohia. According to Dr. Rama Dhar Mishra:

The greatest shock he got in his life was the Party's decision to take disciplinary action against Dr. Rammanohar Lohia at its meeting in Jaipur. I asked him why he agreed to the proposal and his reply was that, in democracy, one has to accept the majority decision, however unpalatable that may be. That was an abiding principle of his life, to go by the majority verdict.⁷¹

He further adds:

The only person whom he loved more was Dr. Lohia. After his death, Sri Prakasaji came to Lucknow to meet the family of Acharyaji and offer his condolences. He also made it a point to call on Dr. Lohia and convey to him how unhappy the Acharya was at the disciplinary action against him, decided upon during his chairmanship of the party.⁷²

The National Executive of the Praja Socialist Party was to meet at Coimbatore from 11 to 13 February 1956. As Acharyaji was not

well, he could not attend the meeting on 11 and 12 February. The next day it met at the Perundurai Inspection Bungalow where Acharyaji was staying. The National Executive discussed the problem of States'reorganisation and adopted a resolution supporting the formation of States on linguistic basis. But it emphasised the supremacy of national interest. As far as Bombay was concerned, Acharyaji was personally for its inclusion in Maharashtra, but violence during the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti agitation made him sad. When a P.T.I, correspondent gave him details of violence in Bombay, he felt distressed. The resolution also expressed concern at police firings in Orissa and at Bombay. Acharyaji spoke for 50 minutes with the help of an inhaler. Thereafter, his health started declining. Sri Prakasa, the Madras Governor, was informed and he rushed to Perundurai. Acharyaji discussed family and party affairs with him. On the doctors' advice he was taken to Erode where he passed away on 19 February 1956 after a massive attack of asthma. His body was carried to Coimbatore on the 20th morning from where it was flown to Lucknow. The cremation took place in the evening on the banks of the Gomati.

Acharya Narendra Deva consistently stood for moral and ethical values in public life. He was keen to improve the intellectual calibre of political workers and also to inculcate in them adherence to principles. So much so, even when he was nearing his end he wished to organise a week-long camp for discussing the history of the Indian national movement, the historical outline of Indian socialist movement, the aims and objects and programmes of the Congress and the Communist parties. He himself wanted to speak on the evolution of moral values.

Acharyaji made invaluable contribution to the freedom movement, the peasant movement, education, student and youth movements, Buddhist studies and cultural regeneration of India. He has been hailed as the father of Indian democratic socialism. But above all, he was a great humanist, a man of sterling character and intense moral values and full of compassion. He was known as *ajatashatru*.

Acharya Narendra Deva shunned limelight and eschewed ambition. He has described himself with great objectivity and candidness in the following words:

I do not have any of the qualities of a leader, nor do I have any ambitions. This is a great weakness. I am so constituted that neither can I become a leader nor a blind follower. This does not mean that I do not want to be under discipline. I am not an individualist. I have been worshipping the leaders from a distance, but very seldom went near them. This hesitation is part of my nature.⁷³

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- 4 D.G. Tendulkar. *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, Volume Five, 1938-1940. New Delhi. 1962. p. 30. and Jawaharlal Nehru. *The Unity of India*, London. 1941. p. 127.
- 5 *National Herald*. 5 April 1939.
- 6 *Indian Struggle*: *Weeklies*. Bombay. 1940. p. 14.

- 7 *The Indian Annual Register*. July-December 1942, Vol.11, p. 247.
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- 9 M.A. Rasul, *A History of the All India Kisan Sabha*, Calcutta, 1974, pp. 3-4. 10 *The Pioneer*, 24 November 1936.

- 11 Fourth All-India Kisan Conference, Gaya, pp. 9-10.
- 12 *Ibid*, pp. 17-18.
- 13 *The Peasant Problem* by Acharya Narendra Deva, pp.21 -22.

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- 15 *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

- 16 The First Gujarat Congress Socialist Conference: Presidential Address of Narendra Deva. Ahmedabad, 23 June 1935, p. 4.
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- 19 See author's article 'The Formation of the Congress Socialist Party' in

Fifty

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20 *Congress Socialist*. 9 April 1938.

21 *Acliarya Narendra Deva Commemoration Volume*. New Delhi. 1978. p. 216.

22 *The War: Imperialist or People's*, Bombay, 1942, p. 18.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

24 Dhan. *Anma Asaf Ali: A Life Sketch*, Lahore, 1947, p. 89.

25 *Janata*, 9 March 1947.

26 *Ibid.*

27 M.V. Ramana Rao. *Development of the Congress Constitution*. New Delhi. 1958, p. 91.

28 Anant Bhalerao. *Hyderabadcha Swatantraya Sangram Ani Marathwada*. Aurangabad, 1987. pp. 303. 310.

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31 *The Merger: How and Why?*. Bombay, 1952, p. 32.

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p. 305. Later. Asoka Mehta expounded his thesis of 'The Political Compulsions of a Backward Economy'pleading 'cooperation'with the Congress. This divided the party ideologically and contributed to the split in the party in 1955.

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34 *The Hindu*, 12 August 1954.

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- 37 *Report of the Second National Conference of the Praja Socialist Party, Gaya (Bihar), 26-30 December 1955*, p. 111.
- 38 *Ibid.*, p. 111.
- 39 *Ibid.*, pp. 114-15.
- 40 *Ibid.*, p. 115-16.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 114.
- 42 *Acharya Narendra Deva: A Commemoration Volume*. Edited by B.V. Keskar and V.K.N. Menon, New Delhi, 1971, p. 84.
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- 44 Jagdish Chandra Dikshit. *Acharya Narendra Deva*, Lucknow, 1989, pp. 35-37.
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- 52 *National Herald*, 28 June 1948.
- 53 *National Herald*, 21 June 1948.
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1. *Ibid.*, p. 192.
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