

The Ideological Vision of the Left in the Struggle for Democracy in India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan in recent Times

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The paper tries to examine how, following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent crisis in international communism, the Left forces in India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan are trying to ideologically confront the challenges posed by the highly volatile and complex situation in these countries, marked by two major threats to democracy : authoritarianism and fundamentalism. While basically the Left in these countries is trying to put forward an alternative perspective of democracy by linking it with the vision of socialism, there are vital differences in their perceptions. In India the Left, broadly represented by the two Communist Parties, namely, the CPI and CPI(M), and the CPI (Marxist-Leninist) or CPI(ML), is operating in conditions of a *stable democracy*. Bangladesh and Nepal may broadly be characterized as *transitional democracies*, although with one major difference. In Bangladesh historically the struggle for democracy against *military authoritarianism* initially strengthened the Left forces and today it is extremely fragmented in its confrontation with the Awami League/BNP regimes. In Nepal, the Left's fight for democracy was mainly against *monarchical authoritarianism* and in 1991 Nepal witnessed the rare phenomenon of coming together of all the leading communist groups and the formation of the CPN (Unified Marxist-Leninist) or CPN(UML). An altogether different perspective of the struggle, represented by the CPN (Maoist), in recent years has added a new dimension to it. In Pakistan, the transition to democracy is yet to take place and the fragmented Left, primarily represented by the CMKP (Communist Mazdoor Kisan Party) and the LPP (Labour Party of Pakistan) is primarily engaged in a struggle for transition from military to civilian rule. Scholarly literature on the subject is not much available, possibly for the reason that the marginalisation of the Left all over the world after 1991 has led to serious erosion of scholarly interest in the politics of the Left in South Asia. While it is certainly true that the Left in this region is not perhaps much visible (except Nepal and India), it is also to be recognized that the Left alone in these countries of South Asia has a distinct ideological vision concerning the establishment of democracy in a radical perspective, notwithstanding the fact that the Left remains ideologically sharply divided.

India

Among the countries of South Asia India is certainly the only country where democracy has come to stay, despite many weaknesses and problems relating to proper democratic governance. The ideological position of the Left, primarily represented by the two Communist Parties, namely, CPI and CPI(M), while operating within the structure of parliamentary democracy ever since India became a republic in 1950, however, has undergone a distinct change in recent times ever since the BJP, representing the forces of

the Hindu Right, has emerged as the major alternative to the Indian National Congress since the 90s. In such a situation the struggle of the Indian people for an alternative future has become extremely complex. Except the Left parties and groups, there is no real force in India at the moment which can claim to be genuinely concerned with the real question of the struggle of the Indian people. But the Left, too, in developing a future perspective of such struggles, is confronted with a series of problems. First : it is a divided Left and it is a division on two levels. On one level, there is a division between the mainstream Left represented by the CPI and the CPI(M) and other parties of the Left like the RSP (Revolutionary Socialist Party), which is strongly critical of Stalinism and is broadly inspired by the ideas of the Fourth International, apart from numerous small groups and organisations, who carry out their struggle in the form of strikes, agitations, protest movements against the wrong policies of the Government and also by providing criticisms of the Government in Parliament. But there are also communist groups, quite strong in the rural countryside in one or two states of India which are banned and who mainly believe in fighting rural landlordism through armed struggle. Popularly they are known as People's War Group which does not participate in elections and believe in violent seizure of political power. While this group is strongly guided by the Maoist ideology, there is the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), commonly known as CPI(M-L), which, too, was originally founded on Maoism, but which today believes in combining parliamentary and extraparliamentary tactics of struggle and is quite strong among landless labourers in the rural countryside in some of the Indian states. On another level, there is serious division within the mainstream Indian Left regarding the formation of a front which would be an alternative to the BJP. Theoretically, all of them speak about the necessity of forming a Third Front, which would be an alternative to any Front that would be led by the Congress or the BJP, but they are quite divided on the future shape of such a front. While the CPI and CPI(M) consider that to drive the BJP out of power, there has to be at least some kind of adjustment with the Congress, keeping in mind the fact that the Congress is no alternative to the BJP but considering the fact that the BJP is the bigger and immediate enemy at the moment. Other Left parties, including the CPI(M-L), consider both the Congress and the BJP as equally reactionary and are more inclined to the idea of an alliance of all Left forces without, however, being opposed to the idea of forming a non-Congress, non-BJP front of Left and democratic forces but excluding the Congress.

The second problem of the Left is that it is a minority force. Being a minority and yet taking up the responsibility of providing leadership to the building up of a secular front of Left and democratic forces is now a major challenge to the Left. Except in three states, namely, Kerala, West Bengal and Tripura, the Left is virtually non-existent elsewhere. Besides, although the Left is organizationally strong in the organized sector of the working class, its position is strongly contested by the non-Left forces also, representing the Congress, BJP and others. The Left is particularly weak in the agrarian sector and has not yet been able to emerge as a major force which can mobilize the peasantry in the struggle for land reform and agrarian struggle. Major land reform programmes have been implemented only in two states controlled by the Left, namely, Kerala and West Bengal, but these have been possible mainly through administrative and governmental measures and not through mass mobilization of the poor peasants along class lines.

The third problem of the Left is that its immediate aim being the isolation of the BJP and its removal from political power, it has to build up the broadest possible united front of all secular and democratic forces in the country most of which have no proper ideological position or political perspective. Many of them have emerged as a powerful local force by cleverly utilizing casteism and regionalism as instruments for capturing power and, moreover, on the question of economic and social policies, their position has nothing to do with any real criticism of the capitalist path. At best, they want to moderate a little the present aggressive market capitalism which is being justified in the name of economic reforms and modernization. This has created a situation where the Left has the political compulsion to join this front but with which it has sharp ideological differences.

The fourth problem of the Left is that in this process of building up such a front where it is a minority and where the non-Left forces constitute the overwhelming majority, the political and organizational independence of the Left appears to be seriously threatened, as the Left has the fear of being swallowed up by the non-Left forces in this politics of compromise. It is this consideration which also explains the differences within the Indian Left on the question of giving priority to two models of such a front : while the CPI and CPI(M) primarily put forward the idea of building up the widest possible front of secular and democratic forces, where the class basis of the front is not the immediate issue, the CPI(M-L) and many other Left groups and smaller parties wish to attach priority to building up a front of the forces of the Left on class lines.

The issues discussed so far primarily relate to tactical and organizational questions concerning the Left in India in the present critical situation. But more important are certain crucial theoretical questions involving the role of the Left in developing a proper ideological perspective of the struggle of the Indian people for a democratic future. These can be categorized as follows. First, it has now been generally accepted by the Left in India that its struggles have to be conducted within the framework of bourgeois democracy, that is, parliamentary path, the premise being that India is destined ultimately for a peaceful road to socialism and the path of armed struggle is ruled out.

Second : it is now established beyond doubt that with the steady erosion of the Congress it is now no longer possible for any single political party to come to power and rule the country. Coalition politics is thus the future of the country and if the BJP can be thrown out, then there is the distinct possibility of a non-BJP coalition to come to power, where the Left can become an important constituent. But the Left, especially the two Communist Parties, is now confronted with a major ideological question on this issue, namely, should a Communist Party join a bourgeois coalition Government and share state power ? This question, in fact, came up in April, 1999 when there emerged a distinct possibility of the CPI(M) Chief Minister of West Bengal, Jyoti Basu, the oldest and most respected politician in the country at the moment, suddenly becoming the Prime Minister of India, as there emerged a political vacuum, following the defeat of the second BJP-led Government on the floor of Parliament. But the CPI(M) leadership did not allow it, since this would have contradicted their Party Programme which permitted the Party to support a bourgeois coalition Government from outside but absolutely forbade the Party to join a bourgeois Government. The CPI earlier, however, had joined the short-lived non-BJP United Front Government in 1996-1998 but could achieve very little. But only recently after a long debate within the CPI(M) it has in a special Plenum, held in 2000,

amended its Programme and in future there is the strong possibility of the two Communist Parties to join a non-BJP Government in alliance with other secular and democratic forces, following the fall of the present BJP-led coalition.

Third : the Left is being increasingly forced to come to terms with completely new realities which classical Marxism did not have the occasion to address. One is the question of religion and the other is the emergence of new identities other than that of class. While traditionally the Left has taken a rather negative and critical view of religion, in the context of the rise of the BJP the Left now has to take a positive view of religion in the sense that it has to argue and convince the masses very persuasively that there is nothing wrong about religion and that the essence of all religions is humanism and tolerance; but what the BJP preaches in the name of Hindu fundamentalism has nothing to do with religion proper and it is nothing but a dangerous political ideology masked in distorted religious phrases. Again, while Marxism has traditionally always emphasized the question of class, in India today the category of class can explain the problem of inequality only up to a certain level. The cleavages in Indian society are so complex and diverse that the space occupied by the most exploited and poorest sections of the society is governed by not just economic factors but also by considerations of culture and community. This feeling of deprivation has given rise to what is now generally known as new autonomous social movements related to the assertion of identities of these sections of the Indian society and this is a completely new experience for the Left in India. To intervene in these newly created spaces of struggle is increasingly becoming a central task of the Left in India.

Fourth: In the age of electoral game of numbers and coalition politics, since it is quite probable that in India in future the Left parties may capture state power in alliance with a number of non-BJP parties, attainment of this goal is now the immediate objective of the Left. But the crucial question remaining unaddressed till now is : since it will be a multi-class coalition and the Left will be in a minority, where the interests of various sections of the bourgeoisie will be predominant, how will the contradictions between the class perspective of the Left and that of the non-Left be resolved, as this will come to surface very soon? This, in fact, was the experience of the CPI when it was a partner in the short-lived United Front Government in 1996-1998.

Bangladesh

The history of the political Left in Bangladesh, represented by a number of socialist and communist parties, ranging from pro-Soviet to pro-Maoist, has been extremely complex. With the coming to power of the BNP, headed by Khaleda Zia, which is generally considered by the Left in Bangladesh to be more reactionary than its predecessor Awami League, it is becoming increasingly clear that only the broadest alliance of the Left parties can enable the Left to provide a radical alternative to the policies of both the Awami League and the BNP. But while opposing the BNP regime, should the Awami League and the BNP be considered as equally reactionary? In other words, should there be any tactical alliance with the Awami League, while opposing the BNP ? Will this mean an ideological compromise? While these are some of the questions faced by the Left in Bangladesh today, it has to be kept in mind that the Left in Bangladesh is constantly plagued by three other questions. First : the prevention of

restoration of military rule by any means; second : while aligning with a bourgeois party (i.e. the Awami League), the fear of losing its identity and thereby its autonomous space in politics. This, in fact, has been a major charge against the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) by other Left parties, the allegation being that the latter allowed itself to be absorbed by the BAKSAL, initiated by Sheikh Mujib, which largely explains its subsequent erosion and fragmentation¹. Third : while all the Left parties are committed to the cause of revolutionary socialism, they are heavily fragmented in numerous groups and parties, resulting in sharp divisions. These differences are explained largely by the ideological baggages of the past, i.e., pro-Soviet, pro-Mao, pro-Trotsky, pro-Albanian etc.²

An additional problem, while writing on the Left in Bangladesh, is the lack of availability of materials on the Left, with the exception of the CPB, which is trying to reorganize itself anew. Considering the fact that the CPB is one of the oldest, organized and most wellknown party of the Left, despite its major erosion over the years, I will briefly examine its ideological perspective in the light of recent developments.³ In May, 2003 the BCP held its Eighth Congress where the strategy of building up a real progressive democratic alternative by uniting communist and left political forces was formulated. The political resolution adopted in the Congress stated that to save the nation from the twin oppression of BNP and the Awami League rule the only way out was to build up a secular-democratic-progressive alternative as their immediate goal, and to fight religious fundamentalism and imperialism. Earlier, on 24 February, 2003 Manzurul Ahsan Khan, President, CPB, while speaking at the Seventh Congress of the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist), identified the following as the three main dangers threatening Bangladesh : (a) US hegemony and their collaborators, namely, the reactionary and religious communal forces who opposed the independence struggle of Bangladesh in 1971. (b) The danger of autocracy and disruption of democratic process initiated after the victorious and united mass movement in 1990. (c) Poverty and extreme pauperization due to the policy of ruthless exploitation and plunder pursued by the ruling class.

To achieve these goals, the CPB along with number of other Left parties recently formed an 11 party alliance comprising the Gano Forum, the CPB, the Workers Party, both the factions of BSD (Khaleq and Mahbub), the Sramik Krishak Samajbadi Dal, Shamyobadi Dal, the Ganotantrik Majdoor Party, the Ganotantri Party, the Communists Unity Center and the Gano Azadi League. But there are serious differences cropping up from time to time within the Alliance, primarily centering around a tactical alliance with the Awami League in order to defeat the BNP. Thus, Sramik Krishak Samajbadi Dal, Ganotantrik Majdoor Party and BSD (Mahbub) are against forging any sort of direct and indirect alliance with the Awami League. Although the 11-party alliance termed both the ruling BNP and main opposition, namely the Awami League, as

¹ See the article "Anatomy of the Communist Party of Bangladesh" of the Trotskyite Democratic Workers' Party dated 11 August, 2001. www.marxist.com/Asia/bangladesh_CP_anatomy102.html

² For a composite profile of the fragmentary Left in Bangladesh and their ideological divisions (till 28 October, 2003) see www.broadleft.org/bd.htm

³ The information on CPB are available in www.solidnet.org/cgi-bin/agent?parties

“evil,” for a number of partners, including the CPB, the Awami League, the “lesser evil,” is considered to be a partner in a broader alliance and the CPB, Gano Forum, Workers' Party and Ganotantree Party are in favour of launching simultaneous movement with the Awami League.

This has a striking similarity in many respects with the predicament of the Left in India vis a vis the Congress and the BJP. Just as for the Indian Left the removal of the BJP-led NDA is the immediate agenda, since it is characterized as representing the forces of the Right, and on this score the two Communist Parties, namely, the CPI and the CPI(M), consider the Congress as the "lesser evil", while harbouring no illusions about the anti-people character of both the BJP and the Congress, the CPI(M-L), together with other smaller Left groups, has sharp differences with the CPI and the CPI(M) on the question of aligning with the Congress as a more reliable ally for defeating the BJP.

Nepal

In the recent history of the Left in South Asia, Nepal has emerged as a country characterized by certain unique and unprecedented developments⁴. First, in the transition from a partyless, monarchist autocracy, known as the panchayat system, which continued to characterize Nepal's politics for decades, to a parliamentary democracy in the 90s, as many as seven ideologically divided communist parties and groups played a truly glorious role in mobilizing the people's struggle for democratic aspirations by successfully overcoming their ideological differences and organizing the Jana Andolan (People's Movement) under the banner of the United Front in 1990. Second, after the establishment of the multi-party system in 1990, the CPN (M-L) and CPN (M), two major Communist groups, buried their differences and formed the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) (CPN - UML) in January, 1991. Interestingly, in March, 1998 a radical faction split from the party and formed CPN (ML) but again reunited with the CPN (UML) in March, 2002. Third, following the establishment of parliamentary democracy in Nepal, the CPN(UML) not only participated in the elections but also emerged as the country's main opposition party as against the Nepali Congress and eventually came to political power on two occasions through elections, namely, in 1994 when Man Mohan Adhikari became the country's first communist Prime Minister as the head of a minority government and again in 1997 when the CPN(UML) became a partner in a coalition government and the office of the Deputy Prime Minister went to the party.

The present ideological vision of the CPN(UML), it should be kept in mind, has to be understood with reference to certain aspects of the complex realities of post-1990 Nepal. One : unlike the CPI's or CPI(M)'s perception of the Congress in India or the CPB's notion of the Awami League in Bangladesh, in Nepal the CPN(UML) considers the Nepali Congress as representing the Right and, therefore, is totally opposed to it. Programmatically speaking, the CPN(UML), therefore, has come out with its own, very

⁴ For a comprehensive account of the history of communist movement in Nepal see Pablo Sanchez, "Lessons from the History of the Nepalese Communist Movement" in www.marxist.com/Asia/nepal_communist_mov.html. The website of CPN (UML), namely, www.cpnuml.org is also quite useful for information concerning the history, activities and documents of the Party.

distinct political and ideological agenda. These are : while ideologically the Party declares Marxism-Leninism to be its guiding principle and establishment of socialism and communism to be its ultimate goal, its immediate aim is to usher in a multi-party people's democratic revolution which has been defined in the Programme of the party in the following words and which is projected as an alternative to comprador and bureaucratic capitalism which, allegedly, is ruling the country by drawing support from imperialism : "We, on our part, and keeping in mind our national context, have added several significant points in the content of this revolution, the field of politics, economy and the foreign relations. We have incorporated in this some far-reaching and decisively important political content such as supremacy of the constitution, multi-party competition, pluralistic open society, rule of law, formation of the government by the party in the majority and the opposition of the party in the minority, human rights, democratic fundamental rights and the constitutional guarantee and safeguard of peace. It is because of these characteristics that we have defined this as people's multi-party democracy. This revolution is a people's democratic revolution led by the people themselves under the leadership of the proletarian working class. It will establish the people's democratic state power. This is not a system with bourgeois dictatorship. Rather, it is a democratic system with the people's democratic dictatorship. Moreover, this is not a system of one party dictatorship. Rather, it is a system of people's multi-party democracy. In this system all the transactions and business of the state will be conducted according to the existing constitutional law of the country."⁵

Two : the CPN(UML) is the only Left party in South Asia which has the possibility of attaining political power in near future through victory in parliamentary elections and, consequently, the considerations of good governance are very much on its agenda. Consequently, despite the ideological overtone of the Party Programme, it has to come to terms with problems arising out of compulsions of governance, and this is reflected in its policy declarations, as expressed in the Election Manifestoes of the Party and its other policy announcements. Analysis of how this tension between ideology and policy, programme and considerations of governance is affecting the ideological stance of the party has been the subject of recent research.⁶

Three : A major focus of the CPN(UML) is on safeguarding consolidation of the process of democratization of the country which began after 1990. Thus, the Party has very strongly criticized the royal proclamation of October 4, 2002 as unconstitutional, whereby Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba was ousted, the Council of Ministers was dismissed, the executive authority was taken over by King Gyanendra and Lokendra Bahadur Chand was nominated Prime Minister with a nine-member cabinet together with postponement of mid-term elections. scheduled for November, 2002, the plea being that an explosive situation had arisen in Nepal, following the outbreak of political violence, allegedly generated by the Maoists. This has been evident in the party's repeated statements on this issue as well as in the initiative taken by the

⁵ For the full text of the Programme of CPN(UML) see www.cpunml.org

⁶ See, for instance, Krishna Hachhethu, *Party Building in Nepal. Organization, Leadership and People. A Comparative Study of the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist)* (Kathmandu : Mandala Book Point, 2002), especially pp. 209-237.

party in organizing all party demonstrations and submission of memorandum to the King for immediate restoration of the democratic process.⁷

Four : The CPN (UML)'s perception of democratization entails its critique of Maoist violence as well as the Government's handling of the insurgency problem. Although large scale Maoist violence all over the country began since February, 1996 under the auspices of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), its ideological roots go back to the strong undercurrent of left extremism within the communist movement in Nepal, marked by the idea of armed struggle with focus on agrarian revolution, which drew its inspiration from Mao as well as the Naxalite movement in India in the 70s. In fact, the very formation of the CPN(UML) was the result of integration of a number of communist groups which, through a long historical process, came to recognize the futility of exclusive acceptance of the strategy of armed struggle.⁸ Even then, however, those who continued to adhere to the old line, began to now rally around the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), since 1996, under the leadership of Prachanda⁹. As regards the relation between the CPN(UML) and the CPN(Maoist), it has become increasingly quite tense. While the CPN(UML) has sharply criticized the Government's military and bureaucratic handling of the insurgency problem and repeatedly stressed the necessity of peaceful solution of the problem through negotiation and dialogue, it has also been critical of the intransigence of the CPN(Maoist) and its insincerity in promoting a peaceful solution of the problem. The CPN(UML) has its main focus on how to end the nation-wide violence by engaging the CPN(Maoist) and the Government in a meaningful dialogue through cease fire. The CPN(UML)'s position vis a vis the CPN(Maoist) has especially hardened after a number of CPN(UML) activities have been gunned down by the CPI(Maoist) cadres in a series of clashes.¹⁰ There is, however, another dimension to the Maoist insurgency problem in Nepal. Taking the cue from Mikesell's research on Nepal, it may be argued that, following the CPN(UML)'s adoption of the parliamentary path, as ideology has to be overshadowed by considerations of governance in many respects, the real problem of poverty, inequality and radical land reform affecting the countryside, to a large extent remains unattended, leading to frustration, anger and revolt, especially

⁷ See, for instance, "The Facts behind the Present Political Situation", "Report presented by the General Secretary at the 31st Meeting of the Central Committee dated October 6, 2002", "Decisions taken by the Joint Meeting of Six Major Political Parties", "A Brief Note on Peaceful Movement, May 12, 2003", under www.cpunuml.org

⁸ For a detailed study of the Maoist violence in Nepal see S.D. Muni, *Maoist Insurgency in Nepal : The Challenge and the Response* (Observer Research Foundation : Rupa, 2003). For a comprehensive understanding of how the process of integration of the various communist groups in Nepal took place, see Hachhethu, *Party Building in Nepal*, pp.48-53.

⁹ For an understanding of the position of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), see *Occasional Information Bulletin of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)* under www.rwor.org/s/nepal.htm; Statement by Comrade Prachanda, Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) dated 27 August, 2003 in *Revolutionary Worker*, 14 September, 2003 in www.rwor.org

¹⁰ See, for instance, the CPN(UML)'s following statements, "The Proposal for the Resolution of the National Problem" dated 10 January, 2004 and "Let Them ask, what was the crime of our comrades" dated 28 April, 2003 under www.cpunuml.org

among the youth. This in a way has provided a major support base to the Maoists as well as has proved attractive to many militant cadres of the CPN(UML) too. Thus, the repression of the Maoists would simply escalate alienation of the rural poor and increasing isolation of the Government, leading to loss of credibility of the Government's talk of any negotiation, peaceful solution or dialogue with the extremists.¹¹ For the CPN(UML) to work out a strategy of democratization, therefore, the CPN(Maoist) in a way is a political as well as an ideological challenge in the conditions prevailing in Nepal and more particularly because the Nepalese people have been accustomed to violence and repression for long periods till the advent of parliamentary democracy in the 90s.

Pakistan

The situation concerning the Left in Pakistan is particularly difficult and complex, since it has had to operate virtually in clandestine conditions in its confrontation with military rule at regular intervals. Consequently, the literature on the subject is extremely sketchy and virtually non-existent. Although the Left in Pakistan has a long history, primarily centring around the Communist Party of Pakistan in the years following independence, the Sino-Soviet split in the 60s and the post-1991 developments after the collapse of the Soviet Union broke up the party and severely fragmented the Left in the country. The principal ideological divisions within the Left in Pakistan today, however, primarily may be viewed as a conflict between those who adhere to Maoism/Stalinism on the one hand and those who are anti-Stalinists and swear by Trotskyism. While the first position is represented by the Communist Mazdoor Kisan Party (CMKP), the exponent of the second viewpoint is the Labour Party of Pakistan (LPP). Both the parties have come out with their respective versions of the history of the Left in Pakistan but with sharp differences on interpretation. Thus, in reply to an article "The Left in Pakistan : A Brief History", published by Farooq Sulheria in 1999 on behalf of the LPP, where the CMKP and its past was criticized and its alleged failure to emerge as the spokesman of the toiling masses, because of its Stalinist and Maoist moorings, was highlighted¹², the CMKP came out with a long essay, given by Taimur Rahman, Secretary of the Punjab unit, in September, 2001, where the allegations were refuted, the LPP was accused of reformist illusions about the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), and the CMKP, formed in 1995, following the union of Mazdoor Kisan Party (formed as the Maoist wing in 1970 after the break up of the CPP, in the wake of the split in international communist movement) and the CPP, was projected as the main spokesman of the Left in Pakistan today, since it claims to be the true inheritor of the once powerful CPP.¹³

¹¹ Stephen L. Mikesell, *Class, State, and Struggle in Nepal. Writings 1989-1995* (New Delhi : Manohar, 1999), pp.111-112.

¹² Farooq Sulheria, "The Left in Pakistan : A Brief History" in *Links*, No.13, September-December, 1999 in www.dsp.org.au/links/back/issue13/Sulheria2.htm

¹³ See Taimur Rahman, "On the History of the Communist Movement in Pakistan" (I-II) in www.archives.econ.utah.edu/archives/marxism/2001/msg07024.htm and www.archives.econ.utah.edu/archives/marxism/2001/msg07023.htm

Leaving aside history, if one takes a look at the programmatic understanding of the tasks of these two Left parties in Pakistan, then the problem that one encounters is that of accessibility of documents. However, on the basis of whatever materials are available¹⁴, it is clear that both the parties swear by Marxism. The CMKP proclaims that the party's idea of a revolution rests on four foundations, namely, Thought (Sooch), Solidarity (Itihad), Organization (Tanzim) and Workers & Peasants System (Mazdoor Kissan Nizam), and each again having four components. Thought : a) Capitalism creates Inequality, b) Revolution not Reform, c) Workers are Vanguard, d) Inevitable Victory. Solidarity : a) National Question, b) Religious Question, c) Worker Peasant Alliance, d) Internationalism. Organization : a) Vanguard, b) Organized and Disciplined, c) Highest and Connected, d) Democratic Centralism. Workers and Peasants System : a) Workers' and Peasants' Power, b) Elimination of Feudalism, c) Democratic Freedoms, d) Planned Economy. While calling for an alliance of all democratic classes, the CMKP has identified the following as enemies and friends. Enemies : Civil Military Bureaucracy, Big Capitalists, Feudal Lords. Friends : workers and poor peasants. As regards the middle class, middle peasants, national capitalists and rich peasants, the party aims at neutralizing them. Particularly significant is the CMKP's understanding of the religious question. Especially significant is its slogan to fight religious fundamentalism and national chauvinism, namely, unity of workers of all religions to fight the rich, together with the proclamation that the idea of nation and nationalism is irrelevant for the workers and their struggle.

As regards the LPP, it was formed quite recently and the First Congress of the party was held only in 2001 where its main slogan was that of left unity of all parties and groups in Pakistan in order to fight the military regime. Interestingly, although ideologically it is quite close to Trotskyism, it appears that for the sake of Left unity it is not an affiliate of the Fourth International¹⁵. In early 2002 the LPP called for a socialist electoral alliance and warned against religious fundamentalism. In a significant development, in demonstrations organized against the Government in mid- 2002 the LPP and the CMKP, together with other Left groups and parties, joined hands¹⁶.

From this survey it is evident that while the Left in these countries of South Asia is engaged in a difficult and complicated struggle for democracy, except in the case of Nepal there is very little rethinking or innovativeness in the ideological make up of these parties in the sense that their perceptions are somewhat strongly coloured by certain stereotyped slogans without caring much for the complex ground realities of these societies. The situation has been made particularly difficult by divisions and fragmentations within the Left.

¹⁴ Some documents of the CMKP are available under www.mkp.20m.com However, of late it appears that the website is facing problems. Materials on LPP are extremely scattered and difficult to obtain.

¹⁵ For report on the First Congress of the LPP see www.greenleft.org.au/back/2000/403/403p18.htm

¹⁶ For these reports see www.greenleft.org.au/back/2002/486/486p20c.htm and www.socialistviewpoint.org/sum_02/sum_02_6.html