



India's freedom struggle was not monolithic. Alongside mainstream nationalist politics, parallel currents such as **Left-wing politics** and the **Depressed Class Movement** developed, which addressed the issues of **class, labour, caste, and social justice**. These movements played a crucial role in broadening the scope of nationalism to include the **social and economic emancipation** of the underprivileged.

I. Left-Wing Politics in India

Left-wing politics in colonial India emerged as a response to **imperialism, capitalism, and social inequality**. Inspired by the **Russian Revolution (1917)** and Marxist ideas, Leftists emphasized **class struggle, workers' rights, and agrarian revolution**.

KEY FEATURES OF LEFT-WING POLITICS:

- Emphasis on **anti-imperialism and socialism**.
 - Advocacy of **proletarian revolution** and **state control over resources**.
 - Focus on **mobilizing peasants and industrial workers**.
 - Rejection of gradual reform; support for **radical transformation**.
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1. EARLY SOCIALIST AND COMMUNIST INFLUENCE

- **M.N. Roy** was among the first Indians to engage with international communism; co-founded the **Communist Party of India (CPI) in 1925** in Tashkent.
- The **CPI** was declared illegal under British rule but worked through front organizations



like:

- **Workers' and Peasants' Parties**
- **All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC)**

2. LABOUR AND PEASANT MOVEMENTS

- **Trade unions** became powerful instruments of working-class mobilization in the 1920s–30s.
- Peasant movements in **Telangana, Bengal, Bihar**, and **Punjab** addressed exploitation by landlords and colonial authorities.
- Leftists played significant roles in **Kisan Sabhas**, most notably the **All India Kisan Sabha (1936)** led by **Swami Sahajanand Saraswati**.

3. CONGRESS SOCIALIST PARTY (CSP)

- Formed in 1934 by **Jayaprakash Narayan, Acharya Narendra Deva, Ram Manohar Lohia**, and others as a socialist group within the Indian National Congress.
- The CSP sought to combine **nationalist goals** with **socialist ideals**, including land reforms and workers' rights.
- It remained loyal to Congress but critical of its bourgeois leadership.

4. ROLE DURING WORLD WAR II

- Left groups were divided:
 - The **CPI supported the British war effort** after Nazi Germany invaded the USSR.
 - **Socialists and radicals** opposed imperialist wars and intensified underground resistance.



SIGNIFICANCE OF LEFT-WING POLITICS:

- Brought the **class question** into nationalist discourse.
 - Highlighted the **economic dimensions of freedom**—poverty, inequality, and exploitation.
 - Influenced post-independence debates on land reforms, labour laws, and planning.
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II. The Depressed Class Movement

The **Depressed Classes**, later known as **Dalits**, faced severe social discrimination under **Brahmanical caste hierarchies**. Their quest was not only for political freedom but for **social equality and dignity**.

KEY OBJECTIVES:

- **Abolition of untouchability** and caste-based discrimination.
 - **Access to education, public spaces, temples**, and equal civil rights.
 - **Political representation and safeguards** in legislatures and services.
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1. EARLY REFORMERS AND VOICES

- **Jyotirao Phule** (1827–1890): Founded the **Satyashodhak Samaj** in 1873 to fight caste oppression and educate lower castes.
- **Gopal Baba Walangkar** and **Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur** worked for Dalit upliftment through education and reservation in jobs.



2. DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR AND THE DALIT MOVEMENT

- **Dr. Ambedkar** emerged as the **foremost leader of the Depressed Classes** in the 20th century.
- Founded organizations like:
 - **Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha (1924)**
 - **Depressed Classes Federation (1930)**
 - **Scheduled Castes Federation (1942)**
- Advocated for **legal safeguards, political reservations**, and **conversion from Hinduism** to escape caste tyranny.

3. TEMPLE ENTRY AND CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENTS

- **Mahad Satyagraha (1927)**: Right to access public water tanks.
- **Kalaram Temple Satyagraha (1930)**: Right to enter temples.
- Fought against **Manu Smriti**, symbolic of caste orthodoxy.

4. POONA PACT (1932)

- Ambedkar initially demanded **separate electorates** for Dalits (supported by the British Communal Award).
- Opposed by Gandhi, who went on a fast unto death in Yerawada Jail.
- **Poona Pact** led to a compromise: **reserved seats for Depressed Classes within the general electorate**.



5. ROLE IN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

- Ambedkar criticized Congress for being **upper-caste dominated** and for neglecting Dalit issues.
 - Despite differing with Gandhi, he engaged in constitutional debates and was later made **Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution**.
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Conclusion

Left-wing politics and the **Depressed Class movement** introduced vital dimensions to India's freedom struggle. They redefined **nationalism not just as anti-colonialism**, but as a **struggle against internal hierarchies and injustices**. These movements gave voice to the **working class, peasants, and Dalits**, and ensured that **post-independence India** would be committed not only to political freedom but also to **social and economic justice**. Their legacy lives on in India's continuing efforts to create a more **equitable and inclusive society**.