

## SEVENTH LECTURE

# THE PARTY OF REVOLUTION

### BASIC PRINCIPLES

The Communist Party of India is the political party of the Indian working class, its vanguard, its highest form of class organisation, a voluntary organisation of workers, peasants and toiling people in general, devoted to the cause of socialism and communism, with the immediate task of completion of anti-imperialist, antifeudal, democratic revolution. It is part of the great international communist movement.

For achieving its historic goal, firm and unswerving adherence to the universal truths and revolutionary principles of Marxism-Leninism is necessary. The party must be capable of developing the art of correctly and creatively applying them to our conditions. It has to be monolithic, steeled and of a single will. Its characteristic feature is steadfast adherence to and development of the revolutionary theory of Marxism-Leninism.

The doors of other political parties are open to anyone to join by accepting their programme and paying the prescribed subscription. Our party is the supreme command of the revolutionary army; it is and has to be selective in enrolment of new members. The Party Constitution lays down that. It insists that a member must not only accept the Programme of the party and pay dues, but also work in one of the party organisations and carry out party decisions.

New members are admitted to the party on individual application and through a party branch on the recommendation of two members.

### *Admission to Party*

Party members who recommend an applicant must furnish the party branch or committee concerned truthful information about the applicant from personal knowledge and with due sense of responsibility.

If a leading member from any other political party applies for membership, then, "in addition to the sanction of the local party committee or district or state committee, it is necessary to have the sanction of the next higher committee of the party before he or she is admitted to membership of the party."

Further, "The party branch or committee admitting candidate members shall arrange for their elementary education on the Programme, Constitution and current policies of the party and observe their development through providing for their functioning as members of a branch or a unit."

And finally, "By the end of the period of candidature, the party branch or committee concerned shall discuss whether the candidate member is qualified to be admitted to full membership. The branch or the committee concerned may admit candidates to full membership or prolong the period of candidature for another term, not exceeding six months. If a candidate member is found unfit, the branch or committee may cancel his or her candidate membership. A report of recruitment of candidates and of recommendations for admission to full membership shall be regularly forwarded by the branch or committee concerned to the next higher party committee."

A member of other political parties can be a passive sympathiser, perusing their publications and voting for the party candidate during elections. But the member of our party has to practise the policies professed, day to day, and actively implement the decisions of the party. It is essential that he works in one of the party organisations and under party discipline. If he fails, what happens? Such of those elements who are not active are annually weeded out so that the active may grow and the party of the new type

is built. The Party Constitution lays down the rules for renewal of membership cards.

"There shall be an annual renewal of party membership cards. Renewal shall be made on the basis of a check up by the party organisation to which the member belongs under the direction and supervision of the state council. No party card shall be renewed in the case of any member who for a continuous period of more than six months and without proper reason has failed to take part in party life and activity or to pay membership dues."

### *Revolutionary Discipline*

The Party Constitution speaks of duties of party members and the first duty enjoined on the member is: "to regularly participate in the activity of the party organisation to which they belong, to faithfully carry out the policy, decisions and the directives of the party and to pay regularly the levy as fixed by the party."

A member of other political parties remains an individual in an amorphous organisation and is called upon to elect a member to a higher committee. But in our party, a member is a member of a branch or unit which is a living organism, a collective, where collective discussion takes place, decisions are arrived at collectively and the individual subordinates himself to the collective which acts as one man. Such collective functioning is unthinkable in any other political party except ours, for the Communist Party alone has a common revolutionary outlook. Collectivism is an integral part of the outlook of all communists.

No other political party can command the voluntary discipline of the membership as our party can. It is this that makes the Communist Party the fighting force that it is, that can seize power and establish a new order. This revolutionary discipline of the highest order becomes possible because of the political content of its work, its programme and tactics conforming to the reality, the slogans firing the worker masses and impelling the revolutionary

movement. Every member gets the weapon to wield and understands the imperative need to march like a soldier of an army.

Our party is different from all other parties in this that we are not afraid to speak out our weaknesses openly, something the other parties cannot afford to do. The other parties have to hide many things from the masses, along with their mistakes. All political parties claim to represent the interest of the masses, though they actually serve the interest of particular classes with conflicting interest with the general interest of the masses. Our party alone represents the interests of the masses because the interest of the working class is identified with the general interest of entire society. Loyal and sincere to our cause, our party wants to expose its own mistakes, trace its roots and eliminate them in order to become stronger and go forward.

#### *Party of New Type*

In short, our party is based upon certain principles of organisation which make it unique and effective. Our party is what Lenin called the party of a new type. This is essentially because our party is a party of revolution, a party that leads the workers and their allies to smash the old order and build a new one free from all exploitation of man by man.

It is essential to get clear on the point that the Communist Party is the vanguard, the revolutionary leadership of the working class. The working class has many organisations—trade unions, cooperatives, cultural associations and so on. But such organisations merely help the worker to struggle to live better in the old society. They also help the worker to train himself through various kinds of struggle. But the worker has to do much more. He has to lead all the toiling people to throw off the chains of exploitation, injustice and misery. He has to lead the toilers to establish a new society, the society of socialism and communism. In order to accomplish this task, he needs an ideological-political leader. He needs a tightly organised

and well-disciplined leading force. And this force is the Communist Party.

Not all workers can become members of the Communist Party. This would then destroy its vanguard character. Only the best of the workers, most loyal to their class, steeled in class battle, politically conscious and ready to sacrifice for the cause should be admitted.

It should be added that the party is the vanguard of the working class but its members are drawn from other sections of the toiling people, including the intelligentsia. These other sections have to remould themselves and accept the ideology and outlook of the working class. It is this class which is connected with the most modern form of production, organised by its work, free from property ties and directly confronting the capitalists, the last class of exploiters, and which alone can act as the leader of all toilers.

The party engages itself in leading the activities and struggles of the workers and toilers in different spheres. It is part of the flesh and blood of the workers and is invincible only when it is in the closest contact with the masses. At the same time, the party never loses sight of its central task—the ideological and political training and elevation of the workers and other toilers. The economic, ideological and political work of the party has always to be properly integrated and directed towards leading the masses to the revolutionary seizure of power.

A communist can be legitimately proud of his cause and endeavour, develop and shape himself to the same greatness by identifying himself with the cause and the masses. He must always raise his ideological-political level, first and foremost, by actively joining and leading the struggle of the masses.

According to Lenin, a communist has to master the sum of human knowledge; Marx, Engels, Lenin proved in their own lives that sum of human knowledge could be mastered and the theory of knowledge enriched. Is it not too tall an objective to be set for a communist? No, not at all. The nature and quality of a revolutionary and a communist

with the world outlook of Marxism-Leninism can only be self-exacting; it cannot be self-satisfied smugness and self-complacency.

In order to fulfil the duties of a communist, one has to improve himself every day by participating in mass activities, self-study and self-culture.

This is the principle of living for a communist, a member of this great and mighty army.

### *Democratic Centralism*

One of the basic principles of party organisation is the principle of democratic centralism. What is democratic centralism and why should it be observed by every party member as a principle?

Here it will be useful to clarify for ourselves as to what is meant by principle. A principle is a natural law which is inviolable; a person who violates the natural law will come to grief. It is not a policy, a practical question where there may be more than one way to it. In matter of policy one can compromise, and not be rigid because it is only choosing one or the other way. But in principles, one has to be firm. Rigidity in principle and flexibility in policy is the correct approach.

The principle of democratic centralism is an inviolable law of party organisation.

The strength of the proletariat lies in its organisation; the party is not a mere collection or conglomeration of its membership. It is a unified organic body. It is a combination of the centralised leadership and the broad membership. It is an integration of the leadership and the ranks. This integration has to be according to a definite principle, the principle of inner-party democratic centralism.

Democratic centralism means centralism on the basis of democracy and democracy under centralised leadership. It is both democratic and centralised. It reflects the relationship between the leadership and membership, between the higher and lower organisations, between individual members and the party as a whole.

Article XIV of our Party Constitution speaks of the principle of democratic centralism.

The structure of the party is based on and its internal life is guided by the principle of democratic centralism. Democratic centralism means central leadership based on full inner-party democracy and inner-party democracy under the guidance of the centralised leadership.

Centralism based on democracy means that the leading bodies of the party are elected by the membership on a democratic basis and enjoy their confidence. It means that the directives and resolutions of the party are centralised from the rank-and-file upward on a democratic basis and are then persistently maintained and carried out by the leadership in conjunction with the rank-and-file. The authority of a leading body is given by the membership. Therefore, it is capable of exercising the power of centralised leadership on behalf of the membership in managing all party affairs and of commanding the obedience of its lower organisations and of the membership. Law and order within the party is built on the principle of submission of an individual to the organisation, submission of minorities to the majority, submission of lower organisations to higher organisations. This means that the party's centralism is based on, instead of separated from, democracy.

Democracy under centralised leadership means that every party meeting proceeds under leadership, the adoption of every resolution is preceded by thorough preparation and careful deliberation, every election has a carefully prepared panel of nominees, the party as a whole has a unified Party Constitution, unified discipline which every member should observe and a unified leading body which must be obeyed by the entire membership. This means that inner-party democracy is not ultra-democracy, not anarchy.

In other words it is an expression of the mass line within the party.

Any deviation from this principle leads to bureaucratism and anarchy as well as to suppression of the democratic rights of the membership and lower party organisations in the name of inner-party centralism.

Party rules and resolutions are not only for party members but also for leaders. If leaders think it is not for them, it is antidemocratic and autocratic and has nothing in common with party's centralism.

Both ultra-democracy and absolutism, anarchy and bureaucratic discipline are alien to the party and opposed to democratic centralism.

### *Criticism and Self-Criticism*

Criticism and self-criticism are an outstanding feature which distinguishes us from other political parties. It shows the seriousness and sincerity of the party and of all its members.

Criticism and self-criticism helps broaden inner-party democracy. And only through a genuine broadening of inner-party democracy can voluntary party discipline and unity be strengthened, inner-party centralism be established and consolidated and the leading bodies exercise correct leadership.

What is criticism and self-criticism?

It is a weapon that must be used constantly to overcome shortcomings, defects and errors in the work of the party. Criticism and self-criticism are neither picking holes nor finding faults. Alien habits, methods, tendencies are bound to raise their heads inside the party because of the environment. We live and work in a society opposed to our principles and our enemy always tries his best to push his ideas into our party and to influence its members. We have to fight back through criticism and self-criticism.

In criticism and self-criticism, one must hit at the defect and not the person. It is done to help a comrade and not to damn him. It is meant to learn from mistakes, to

defeat anticommunist ideology and constantly improve the party and all its members.

It is not enough to point at a flaw. One must apply his mind to the cause of the error and going at the roots, suggest ways and means of eradicating it. This is real criticism and self-criticism. Before criticising, one must clear one's mind of all personal prejudices and never indulge in wanton personal attacks.

A positive sense of responsibility among our party members and cadres in regard to party policy and party work must be developed, enabling them to think for themselves, raise problems boldly and properly and express their views. Members must be encouraged to give suggestions and make criticism. Criticism from below is most important.

Those in charge of the leading bodies of the party must be the first to practise thorough-going self-criticism on the defects and errors in the work carried out under their leadership. They must set an example for others in this. Further, they must be fully prepared to accept criticism from others. On the other hand, if they resent criticism and seek to revenge the critics, inner-party democracy will be smothered. In such cases, conferences and meetings become lifeless and undemocratic gatherings filled with dullness and repetitive speeches, routine listening to reports and hand raising.

Conducting a meeting and making it successful are an art where criticism and self-criticism are encouraged and cultivated fruitfully. It must be permeated with a spirit of democracy, criticism and self-criticism. Otherwise these meetings become a serious burden on the party membership.

The Constitution of our party provides for reports by leading bodies for the members and lower party organisations. In any such report, not only the current situation and achievements, but also the defects, weaknesses and mistakes in the work should be discussed and opinion and comment of lower organisations on it sought.

Such a high degree of democratic practice naturally leads

to simultaneous high degree of centralism. They are tied up with each other and are not in opposition to one another as some think erroneously.

### *Party Discipline*

Broadening inner-party democracy does not mean not carrying out party decisions. Party decisions must be carried out unconditionally along with the broadening of inner-party democracy. There is nobody, however high in the party, who can refuse to carry out the decision of the party and abide by the principles of democratic centralism.

Submission of the membership to the party organisation, lower party organisation to the higher organisation, the minority to the majority—these principles, as laid down in the Party Constitution, are unconditional. Some comrades make the carrying out of these principles contingent on such matters as their own acceptance of the correctness of the resolutions or instructions or the ability, position, period of party membership, cultural level of the leading comrade, the group to which he belongs, personal affront, etc. None of these conditions are permissible.

Under no circumstances should blind obedience be encouraged by the party. We should encourage intelligent and sincere action. This means that a serious study of both the circumstances and the decisions is necessary. When a decision is found to be at variance with the local situation or found to contain mistakes, members should have the courage to bring it to the attention of the higher body with a request for amendment or withdrawal, instead of enforcing them blindly and obstinately. This is no insubordination; this is carrying out the decision *sincerely*. Only those members are outstanding who are capable not only of independent deliberation but also of helping to correct the errors and defects of a higher body. They should be specially encouraged. But if the higher body insists, then the lower body must carry out the decision, at the same time reserving its opinion.

The party advocates and encourages initiative on the

part of every member in tackling problems and doing his work independently under the general direction of the party. The discipline of the Communist Party is based on voluntary submission. It should not be made mechanical so as to become "disciplining" the members' activity and initiative. There must be a combination of the members' discipline and initiative.

The Party Constitution provides that party organisation at any level ensure the publication and dissemination and popularisation of the decisions and policy of the higher organisation and central bodies. Local party organisations should not exceed their powers by making public their views contrary to, in place of and ahead of the central bodies on national and regional issues.

Just as democratic centralism, discipline is also a principle, a basic one at that, of party organisation. Differences will exist even after decisions are made; more so in a living organisation like the Communist Party. Iron discipline in carrying out the decisions of the party is the *sine qua non* for a revolutionary party.

It is the duty of all members and party organisations to safeguard and strengthen the unity of the party on a nationwide scope and broad mass character. This can be achieved only by enforcing strictest discipline in the party. Party unity is the supreme principle. Firm and appropriate struggle must be conducted against breach of discipline and those who break discipline should be disciplined. All members are equally bound by party discipline irrespective of their status in the party organisation and public life.

The positive aim of disciplining a member is also to educate other members and the broad masses, as well as the member concerned. It is to serve as a warning to avoid similar pitfalls in the future. It is in a spirit of curing the sickness and saving the patient. Otherwise it leads to achieving discipline by disciplinary measures alone; it leads to the neglect of ideological and political education to help correct erring comrades theoretically and politically.

The Communist Party is the vanguard of the working class; but the vanguard cannot include the entire class in itself. It must forge ties with the broad masses.

In the words of Lenin: "If the minority is unable to lead the masses, to link up closely with them, then it is not a party and is of no value whatever, no matter whether it calls itself a party....."

How do we achieve such a leading role of the broad masses and closely link up with them? Again, to quote Lenin: "We must act in such a way that *all* the other contingents recognise and are obliged to admit that we are marching in the vanguard."

Further: "To serve the mass and express its properly sensed interests, the advanced detachment, the organisation, must conduct all its activities in the mass, drawing from it all—without exception—the best forces, checking at each step, thoroughly and objectively whether the ties with the mass are maintained, whether they are alive. In such and *only* in such a way does the advanced detachment educate and enlighten the mass expressing its interests, teaching its organisation, guiding all the activity of the mass along the path of conscious class policy."

The Communist Party has to win the leading role in mass organisations like trade unions, kisan sabha, youth organisation, etc. by their energy and ideological influence. Communists have to use the Parliament and learn to create a new, unusual, nonopportunist, noncareerist parliamentarism. The party maintains its links with the broad masses through the mass organisation.

#### *Organisational Basis*

In the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the primary party organisations have always been established, in the main, on the basis of industry, the greatest attention being devoted to factory organisations which are closest of all to the working class.

The territorial basis of setting up of primary party organisations justifies itself in cases in which it enables the party to get wider contact with the masses and to approach such sections of the population as handicraftsmen, peasants, small traders, professional workers, housewives, etc.

Our Party Constitution provides for the organisation of the primary party committee, i.e. the branch on the basis of industry, as well as territory such as village, panchayat, municipal ward, street, mohalla, industry, individual factory occupation and institution. It also provides "where necessary a member besides being a member of a branch in his own place of work or residence, may also be attached as an associate member to the unit of his place of residence or work as the case may be, without the right to vote."

Although the industrial basis is more in line with the class nature of the party, flexible organisational forms have been evolved to build wider contact with the masses on a territorial basis by the institution of associate membership.

#### *The Art of Political Leadership*

When we talk of the leading role of the party and its ideological influence, it is not a one-way traffic of teaching the masses. The party has to learn from the masses in order to teach the masses.

How does the Communist Party learn from the masses?

The party must analyse every mass movement and mass action closely and draw the necessary lessons from it. The vanguard will lose its links with the masses if it goes too far ahead; it will cease to be vanguard if it marches with or behind the masses. To be ahead of the masses, yet not lose its links and lead them, the party should feel the pulse of the masses, study their moods and give the correct lead.

Lenin said that politics is not only a science but an art.

For political leadership it is important *not only to know but also to be able to put this knowledge into practice*. How then can the party acquire such ability, such skill?

One of the Leninist principles of the art of political

leadership is that propaganda and agitation alone are not enough to draw the masses into an active struggle. For this, *their own political experience is essential.*

“The millions of people will never heed the advice of parties if this advice does not coincide with what the experience of their own lives teaches them.”

An important part of the art of political leadership is, furthermore, the ability of the party to unite its efforts with the efforts of all those with whom it is possible to achieve unity of action, including those with whom there are differences on fundamental questions.

The art of political leadership includes the ability correctly to choose suitable forms of struggle for a given situation, and the ability to be ready to change these forms, most swiftly and unexpectedly.

The supreme art of political leadership consists precisely in the ability to find, even during the periods when the revolution abates, directions and form of struggle that will provide the basis for future victories and will bring these victories closer.

The science and art of political leadership are seen also in the ability to single out the main issue on the solution of which special efforts should be concentrated.

“One must be able at each particular moment to find the particular link in the chain which one must grasp with all one’s might in order to hold the whole chain and to prepare firmly for the transition to the next link.” (Lenin)

To sum up, the Marxist-Leninist analysis of reality and the close ties with the masses enables the party, proceeding from the particular situation in the country to single out the main problem whose solution brings closer the achievement of the final aim of the working class.

The consciousness of the masses cannot be raised by a negative slogan. “A ‘negative’ slogan unconnected with a definite positive solution will not ‘sharpen’ but dull consciousness for such a slogan is a hollow phrase, mere shouting, meaningless declamation.” (Lenin)

A definite positive solution can be given only if the party studies the question, the concrete conditions and the law of development, minutely and thoroughly. Superficial understanding of any phenomenon can only lead to mere negative sloganmongering.

### *Why Build A Mass Party?*

The slogan of mass party has come from the Sixth (Amritsar) Party Congress of our party. It has been reiterated in the 7th and 8th congresses. The call for doubling the party membership by May 1969 has gone forth from the 8th Congress of the Party.

Doubts arise in the minds of some comrades as to whether such a large influx of new members in the name of building a mass party will not lead to flabbiness and disorientation from Marxism-Leninism. Peaceful conditions and parliamentarism are likely to attract all sorts of opportunist elements to enrol themselves if the doors are kept so wide open in the name of a mass party, hence, better to restrict membership, argue some comrades.

The answer to these doubts is very simple: The flabbiness or opportunism are not because of the number of members. Even with numerically smaller membership, the party can be flabby, reformist, etc. With greater numerical strength the party can be less flabby and opportunist. The quality of membership depends on the party education, activation of the members, etc. It is a special organisational task to raise the level of members, no matter what their number. And building a mass party does not mean getting anybody and everybody into the party.

But what is the actual position of the party with regard to membership? In the Organisational Report adopted by the 8th Congress of the CPI, it is stated as follows: “Vast areas in the Hindi belt still remain outside our organisation. Even in areas where we have our district organisations, there are big pockets without any membership. In many states, because of the prevalent economism, we have done little to carry our politics to the workers in our trade



unions and as a result, membership is very restricted in the working class." Our membership lags horribly behind the party's influence. Thousands of militants exist in every state who are kept out for no good reason.

This is true of youth, students and women also. Urgency to enrol them into the party has been underlined by the Organisational Report of the Patna Congress.

Position today is that the party lacks new blood. Under these circumstances, resistance to enrolment cannot be justified by the fear of flabbiness.

Conditions were never more propitious and favourable for the party as they are today. Every section of the people has entered into the arena of struggle. Interest in the study of Marxism-Leninism is growing by leaps and bounds. Party's mass following is increasing every day. Membership of the party is not at all commensurate with this mass upsurge. Continuing upsurge itself calls for a mass communist party.

The party faces complex tasks; power in the centre looms before the democratic alternative to the Congress; uniting the left and democratic forces has come to be most urgent task of the party. Leading the mass struggles in defence of the living standards of the people and defence of parliamentary democracy on a national scale is the key task of the party. With an organisationally weak and small party, the tasks cannot be coped with. Only a mass communist party can answer the needs of the situation and face the tasks.

Some comrades quote the numerical strength of the CPSU on the eve of the February Revolution, which compares very badly even with our present membership—just one-sixth of ours—and justify their opposition to the slogan of a mass party.

The communist movement is international in its very essence by its objective position as a movement having a common ideology and common aims and fighting a common enemy. But in utilising the experience of other communist parties, it is important to be able to apprehend it creatively

and *not mechanically*. What these comrades do is to draw a mechanical parallel.

The CPSU had to go through a period of reactionary offensive and learn the art of retreat; emerging from the dark period, they were face to face with the world war; that background is different from ours. Further, the membership multiplied many times from February 1917 to November 1917, namely second revolution or the socialist revolution. And the CPSU has remained a mass party ever since.

Comrade Lenin creatively applied the principles of party organisation to the situation then prevailing. But the conditions have so altered today that we have to apply the principles of party organisation to suit the needs of our times and conditions. We are for building a *mass communist party*, building a party with a large membership which is also communist in outlook and action. It is sectarianism to hold that in our conditions this cannot be done.

If international parallel is necessary, then the best thing one can do is to compare our party's general influence and membership with those of other parties in the world today, such as the French party, Italian party, etc. Our ratio is 100:1, while all others incomparably less. We are a drop in the ocean of India.

There is yet another argument advanced by some comrades against a mass party. The danger of reactionary takeover is as real as we have the opportunity to take power in the centre because of the continued instability and all-round crisis. With a reactionary takeover, the first target of reaction will be the Communist Party. Is not a mass communist party with broad committees most unsuited to switch over to illegal conditions?

This is a fatalistic attitude. It disarms the party and people from waging the struggle for legality and democratic rights. Starting preparations for illegality is to invite it. A mass party is the answer to such a reactionary offensive and not a small, conspiratorial party. Recent struggles in West Bengal, after the dismissal of the UF

ministry amply prove this proposition. A mass CP is the best way to cement the left and democratic front and bring it to victory and defeat right reaction.

The resistance to enrolment of members for making ours a mass party comes because of a utopian concept of members. Having an ideal member in mind, every applicant is found incapable of measuring up to that standard. This is an unreal stand; millions upon millions are responding to the call of the party, participating in the mass movements and actively implementing party decisions and instructions. They have to be boldly recruited into the party.

As the Organisational Report of the 8th Congress of the Communist Party of India says:

“A planned drive to expand party organisation into new sections and areas should be launched in all states keeping in view the local conditions and possibilities. After every mass campaign and mass struggle, there must be a campaign of party education and enrolment. This must be done with the proper class outlook so that the class composition of the party is constantly improved and party entrenched among workers, agricultural labourers and poor peasants. Special efforts to recruit members from women and students are also an urgent necessity.”

The Communist Party of India has registered significant successes since the 7th Party Congress. But the advance registered falls short of the need of the situation. The lag can be overcome by implementing the tasks formulated in the Organisational Report.