

The **Communist Party of India (CPI)** is the oldest communist party in India. The CPI was founded in modern-day Kanpur on 26 December 1925.[6][7][8] Currently it has 2 members in Lok Sabha and 2 members in Rajya Sabha. In addition, it has 22 MLAs across 4 states and 1 MLC in Bihar. It has the current ECI status of a state party in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Manipur.[9] CPI was the main opposition party in India during 1950's to 1960's.

The Communist Party of India was formed on 26 December 1925 at the first Party Conference in Kanpur, which was then known as *Cawnpore*. Its founders included M. N. Roy, his wife Evelyn Trent, Abani Mukherji, and M. P. T. Acharya.[10] S.V. Ghate was the first General Secretary of CPI. There were many communist groups formed by Indians with the help of foreigners in different parts of the world, Tashkent group of Contacts were made with Anushilan and Jugantar the groups in Bengal, and small communist groups were formed in Bombay (led by S.A. Dange), Madras (led by Singaravelu), United Provinces (led by Shaikat Usmani), Punjab, Sindh (led by Ghulam Hussain) and Bengal (led by Muzaffar Ahmed).

## indian communist party

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During the 1920s and the early 1930s the party was badly organised, and in practice there were several communist groups working with limited national co-ordination. The government had banned all communist activity, which made the task of building a united party very difficult. Between 1921 and 1924 there were three conspiracy trials against the communist movement; First Peshawar Conspiracy Case, Meerut Conspiracy Case and the Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case. In the first three cases, Russian-trained muhajir communists were put on trial. However, the Cawnpore (now spelt Kanpur) trial had more political impact. On 17 March 1924, Shripad Amrit Dange, M.N. Roy, Muzaffar Ahmed, Nalini Gupta, Shaikat Usmani, Singaravelu Chettiar, Ghulam Hussain and R.C. Sharma were charged, in Cawnpore Bolshevik Conspiracy case. The specific charge was that they as communists were seeking "to deprive the King Emperor of his sovereignty of British India, by complete separation of India from Britain by a violent revolution." Pages of newspapers daily splashed sensational communist plans and people for the first time learned, on such a large scale, about communism and its doctrines and the aims of the Communist International in India.[11]

Singaravelu Chettiar was released on account of illness. M.N. Roy was in Germany and R.C. Sharma in French Pondichéry, and therefore could not be arrested. Ghulam Hussain confessed that he had received money from the Russians in Kabul and was pardoned. Muzaffar Ahmed, Nalini Gupta, Shaikat Usmani and Dange were sentenced for various terms of imprisonment. This case was responsible for actively introducing communism to a larger Indian audience.[11] Dange was released from prison in 1927. Rahul Dev Pal was a prominent communist leader

On 26 December 1925 a communist conference was organised in Kanpur.[12]

Government authorities estimated that 500 persons took part in the conference. The conference was convened by a man called Satya Bhakta. At the conference Satyabhakta argued for a 'National communism' and against subordination under Comintern. Being outvoted by the other delegates, Satyabhakta left the conference venue in protest. The conference adopted the name 'Communist Party of India'. Groups such as Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan (LKPH) dissolved into the CPI.[13] The émigré CPI, which probably had little organic character anyway, was effectively substituted by the organisation now operating inside India.

Soon after the 1926 conference of the Workers and Peasants Party of Bengal, the underground CPI directed its members to join the provincial Workers and Peasants Parties. All open communist activities were carried out through Workers and Peasants Parties.[14]

On 20 March 1929, arrests against WPP, CPI and other labour leaders were made in several parts of India, in what became known as the Meerut Conspiracy Case. The communist leadership was now put behind bars. The trial proceedings were to last for four years.[18][19]

As of 1934, the main centres of activity of CPI were Bombay, Calcutta and Punjab. The party had also begun extending its activities to Madras. A group of Andhra and Tamil students, amongst them P. Sundarayya, were recruited to the CPI by Amir Hyder Khan.[20]

The party was reorganised in 1933, after the communist leaders from the Meerut trials were released. A central committee of the party was set up. In 1934 the party was accepted as the Indian section of the Communist International.[21]

In connection with the change of policy of the Comintern toward Popular Front politics, the Indian communists changed their relation to the Indian National Congress. The communists joined the Congress Socialist Party, which worked as the left-wing of Congress. Through joining CSP, the CPI accepted the CSP demand for a Constituent Assembly, which it had denounced two years before. The CPI however analysed that the demand for a Constituent Assembly would not be a substitute for soviets.[23]

On the occasion of the 1940 Ramgarh Congress Conference CPI released a declaration called *Proletarian Path*, which sought to use the weakened state of the British Empire in the time of war and gave a call for general strike, no-tax, no-rent policies and mobilising for an armed revolutionary uprising. The National Executive of the CSP assembled at Ramgarh took a decision that all communists were expelled from CSP.[29]

In July 1942, the CPI was legalised, as a result of Britain and the Soviet Union becoming allies against Nazi Germany.[30] Communists strengthened their control over the All India Trade Union Congress. At the same time, communists were politically cornered for their opposition to the Quit India Movement.

CPI contested the Provincial Legislative Assembly elections of 1946 on its own. It had candidates in 108 out of 1585 seats, winning in eight seats. In total the CPI vote counted 666 723, which should be seen with the backdrop that 86% of the adult population of India lacked voting rights. The party had contested three seats in Bengal, and won all of them. One CPI candidate, Somnath Lahiri,

was elected to the Constituent Assembly.[31]

During the period around and directly following Independence in 1947, the internal situation in the party was chaotic. The party shifted rapidly between left-wing and right-wing positions. In February 1948, at the 2nd Party Congress in Calcutta, B. T. Ranadive (BTR) was elected General Secretary of the party.[33] The conference adopted the 'Programme of Democratic Revolution'. This programme included the first mention of struggle against caste injustice in a CPI document.[34]

In several areas the party led armed struggles against a series of local monarchs that were reluctant to give up their power. Such insurgencies took place in Tripura, Telangana and Kerala.[*citation needed*] The most important rebellion took place in Telangana, against the Nizam of Hyderabad. The Communists built up a people's army and militia and controlled an area with a population of three million. The rebellion was brutally crushed and the party abandoned the policy of armed struggle. BTR was deposed and denounced as a 'left adventurist'.

In Manipur, the party became a force to reckon with through the agrarian struggles led by Jananeta Irawat Singh. Singh had joined CPI in 1946.[35] At the 1951 congress of the party, 'People's Democracy' was substituted by 'National Democracy' as the main slogan of the party.[36]

Communist Party was founded in Bihar in 1939. Post independence, communist party achieved success in Bihar (Bihar and Jharkhand). Communist party conducted movements for land reform, trade union movement was at its peak in Bihar in the sixties, seventies and eighties. Achievement of communists in Bihar placed the communist party in the forefront of left movement in India.[*citation needed*] Bihar produced some of the legendary leaders like Kishan leaders Sahajanand Saraswati and Karyanand Sharma, intellectual giants like Jagannath Sarkar, Yogendra Sharma and Indradeep Sinha, mass leaders like Chandrasekhar Singh and Sunil Mukherjee, Trade Union leaders like Kedar Das and others.[*citation needed*] In the Mithila region of Bihar Bhogendra Jha led the fight against the Mahants and Zamindars. He later went on the win Parliamentary elections and was MP for seven terms.[*citation needed*]

In early 1950s young communist leadership was uniting textile workers, bank employees and unorganised sector workers to ensure mass support in north India. National leaders like S A Dange, Chandra Rajeswara Rao and P K Vasudevan Nair were encouraging them and supporting the idea despite their differences on the execution. Firebrand Communist leaders like Homi F. Daji, Guru Radha Kishan, H L Parwana, Sarjoo Pandey, Darshan Singh Canadian and Avtaar Singh Malhotra were emerging between the masses and the working class in particular.[*citation needed*] This was the first leadership of communists that was very close to the masses and people consider them champions of the cause of the workers and the poor.

In the 1952 Travancore-Cochin Legislative Assembly election, Communist Party was banned, so it couldn't take part in the election process.[37] In the general elections in 1957, the CPI emerged as the largest opposition party. In 1957, the CPI won the state elections in Kerala. This was the first time that an opposition party won control over an Indian state. E. M. S. Namboodiripad became Chief Minister. At the 1957 international meeting of Communist parties in Moscow,

the Chinese Communist Party directed criticism at the CPI for having formed a ministry in Kerala.[38]

In the 1980s, CPI opposed the Khalistan movement at Punjab. In 1986, CPI's leader in Punjab and MLA in the Punjabi legislature Darshan Singh Canadian was assassinated by Sikh extremists. Altogether about 200 communist leaders out of which most were Sikhs were killed by Sikh extremists in Punjab.[*citation needed*]

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