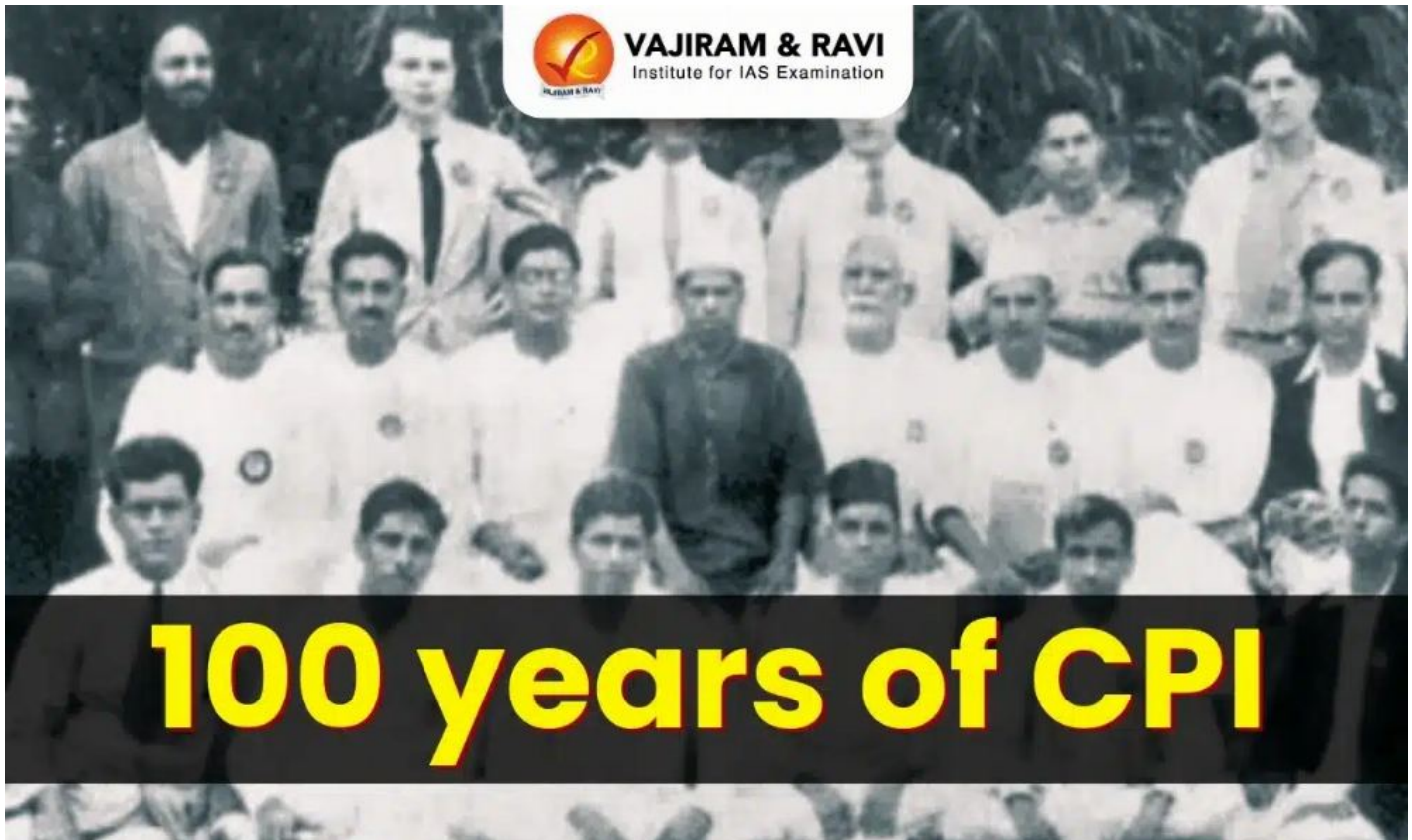


100 Years of CPI: Origins, Ideology, Freedom Struggle and Constitutional Legacy

December 26, 2025 • vajiramandravi.com



100 years of CPI Latest News

- The **Communist Party of India** (CPI) has completed 100 years, tracing its origins to the **Kanpur conference** of December 26, 1925.
- The milestone has renewed attention on how communism took root in India, its ideological influences, organisational evolution, and role in the freedom struggle.

Global Antecedents of Indian Communism

- The roots of communism lie in European political upheavals after the **French Revolution** (1789) and **Napoleonic Wars** (1796-1815), which polarised society between defenders of monarchy and advocates of republican change.
- The Industrial Revolution intensified inequalities, creating fertile ground for socialist ideas.
- Karl Marx, writing in 19th-century Europe, argued for a transition from capitalism to socialism.

- While Marx expected socialist revolutions in advanced capitalist societies, the first successful socialist revolution occurred in Russia in 1917, a relatively backward, Tsarist empire.
- The Russian Revolution combined anti-feudal, anti-capitalist, and anti-imperialist elements, making it especially **attractive to colonised countries like India**.

Three Political Strands Behind CPI's Formation

- Indian communism emerged from three distinct but converging strands:

The MN Roy-Comintern Strand

- MN Roy, a revolutionary who lived in the US, Mexico, Berlin, and later the USSR, played a pivotal role.
- He attended the 1920 Comintern (Communist International) meeting as India's representative.
- The Comintern assessed how communism could adapt to colonial conditions, influencing Indian communists.
- There were other groups of diasporic Indian revolutionaries active in Berlin, led by Virendranath Chattopadhyay, and Kabul, led by **Raja Mahendra Pratap**.

Independent Left Groups in India

- Separate Left formations emerged in Lahore (Ghulam Hussain), Bombay (S A Dange), Calcutta (Muzaffar Ahmad), and Madras (Singaravelu Chettiar).
- These groups operated independently but shared anti-imperialist and socialist goals.

Worker-Peasant Organisations

- Trade unions and peasant bodies such as the All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), formed in 1920, provided a mass base.
- These organisations linked socialism with labour and agrarian struggles.

Origin Story: Tashkent vs Kanpur Debate

- **1920, Tashkent**
 - Four Indian revolutionaries (including MN Roy and Abani Mukherji) set up a Communist Party under Comintern influence.
 - Aim: liberate India from British rule and establish socialism.
 - However, it lacked support from Indian-based Left groups and the diaspora.
- **1925, Kanpur Conference**
 - Indian communist groups organised a national conference in Kanpur, resolving to form the Communist Party of India.
 - Objectives included:
 - Ending British rule
 - Establishing a workers' and peasants' republic
 - Socialising the means of production and distribution
- **Key ideological divide**

- The CPI(M) later traced its origins to Tashkent (1920), emphasising internationalism.
- The CPI identified Kanpur (1925) as the foundation, highlighting the Indian component of communism.

Social Reform and Anti-Oppression Stance

- Early Communists opposed not only colonial exploitation but also caste oppression and patriarchy.
- At Kanpur, conference chair M Singaravelu condemned untouchability.
- The CPI became the first organisation to bar members of communal bodies, underscoring its secular and inclusive ethos.

Role in the Freedom Struggle (1925–1947)

- 1925–28: Communists were active in organising workers' and peasants' movements.
- 1929: Leaders were arrested in the Meerut Conspiracy Case, accused of organising railway strikes; many were jailed or deported.
- 1930s: Communists worked with the Congress Socialist Party in a United Front against imperialism.
- 1939: The United Front collapsed due to ideological and political differences.
- Post-1945: Communists led major peasant struggles, especially in Bengal and Telangana.

Shaping the Constitution and Mass Mobilisation

- Communist influence was evident in Constituent Assembly debates on land reforms, workers' rights, and protections for backward classes.
- Movements like the Telangana Rebellion showcased commitment to agrarian justice.
- The CPI mobilised society through organisations such as the All India Trade Union Congress, All India Kisan Sabha, All India Students' Federation, and the Progressive Writers' Association, embedding ideals of liberty, equality, fraternity, and justice in post-Independence discourse.

Post-Independence Trajectory

- After 1947, Indian communists followed divergent paths:
 - Some adopted armed, insurrectionary strategies.
 - Others chose the parliamentary democratic route, seeking power through elections.
- These differences eventually led to splits within the communist movement, most notably in 1964 (CPI-CPI(M) split).

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