

# The Left in India: Emerging, enduring or evolving?

**LSE** [blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2012/06/22/the-left-in-india-emerging-enduring-or-evolving/](https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2012/06/22/the-left-in-india-emerging-enduring-or-evolving/)

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*JNU's Professor Jayati Ghosh contextualises the growing political relevance of Left movements in India and other parts of the 'emerging' world.*

How relevant are the politics of the Left in present-day India? Extremely, says Dr Jayati Ghosh, professor of economics at New Delhi's [Jawaharlal Nehru University](#) who recently delivered a [Ralph Miliband](#) lecture at LSE. According to Dr Ghosh, the Left is still emerging in India, which she describes as one of the last "great hinterlands" for global capital. She believes the Left's relevance is increasing, despite setbacks such as the end in 2011 of 34 years of communist rule in West Bengal. As evidence, Ghosh points to the Left's ability to influence political rhetoric in states such as West Bengal and Kerala, which increasingly focuses on the viability of small cultivation, the need to deter multinationals and other traditionally Left issues.



Ghosh made these observations as part of a lecture on "[The Emerging Left in the 'Emerging' World](#)". In her talk, Ghosh pointed to the growing perception that grand socialist visions of the future are no longer possible. She argued that the Left is currently seen as a moderating and civilising – rather than transforming or revolutionary – force. Proliferating public protests around the world, in her analysis, are forms of resistance that unfold within the economic system without seeking to transform it.

That said, Ghosh believes that there is [more dynamism in the global Left](#) than the above reading suggests. She finds that various emerging Left movements across the 'emerging' world now transcend the traditional socialist paradigm with its emphasis on centralised government control over an undifferentiated mass of workers. Instead, the evolving global Left is willing to engage with formal democratic processes such as elections, referendums and judicial systems. Left groups are also increasingly ambivalent about private property, willing to reject centralised control and shifting away from class-based definitions to broader constructions of identity based on race, community and social attributes. Moreover, the emerging Left emphasises the rights of marginalised groups – including women, minorities and tribal communities – and ecological issues.

Speaking at LSE, Ghosh acknowledged that her definition of the emerging Left, particularly its engagement with democratic processes, does not apply to India's Naxalites, who would dismiss this stance as "non-pure" or "revisionist". However, Ghosh identified an emerging Indian Left that reflects the global trends outlined above—one

comprising major Left parties, social movements and loose coalitions that come together around specific social or developmental issues.

Ghosh concluded her talk with the argument that people remain invested in their ability to change their future and recognise the necessity of collective organisation to do so. As such, she believes the endurance, evolution and emergence of the Left in India, and other parts of the world, is a fecund and dynamic process.

Click [here](#) for a podcast of Dr Ghosh's lecture.

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