

**LEADERSHIP IN THE CONGRESS PARTY  
1966—1984**

Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the award of the Degree of  
**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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1986

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By

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT  
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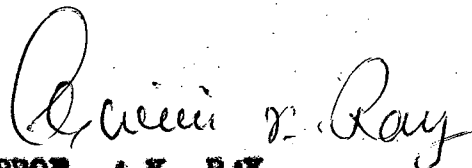
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**DECLARATION**

Certified that the dissertation entitled "Leadership in the Congress Party 1966-84", submitted for the Degree of Master of Philosophy, has not been previously submitted for any other diploma or degree in this or any other University.

  
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DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF MY GRANDFATHER  
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## PREFACE

The problem of political leadership remains one area of scanty academic attention till to date. Those who did study it did so rather compartmentally such as either the Prime Minister or the Union Cabinet exclusive. Studies with an interated approach that is taking into account the party structure, its role, the place of the president in it and the role of the party in the formation of the government and in the provess of governance are not many.

My present exercise is a modest endeavour with and integrated view with in a time frame. Indian political system is variously described as a one party dominant system or in the words of Brechen a one plus party system. What ever be the verbal description of the system the truth is that the Congress Party, is the dominant one and other political parties are rather weak vis-a-vis the congress. Though we don't take to the fallacious view that the future of the country depends on the fate of the congress yet we maintain that the changes within the congress party have a strong bearing on our political system as a whole and this is due largely to the wide spread nature of the party. Apart from this the congress also has a dubious distinction of a hundred years history though the Indian National Congress founded in 1885 is no more extant but extinct. Yet the faction successful at the hustings claimed

to be the real congress and this has been conceded to by the system. Consequently we have the congress (R) and today the congress(I). But what is happening within this so called real congress? What structural changes is it undergoing ever the years? What kind of leadership is it giving to the country? What is the socio-political nature of the dramatis personal of this party? This is what we have studied in the following pages. Yet this is again a scope for further study of the problem. But it is hoped that this study throws some light on certain vital areas such as the problem of leadership and the methods or lack of it, of developing second live leadership.

I can't adequately express my deep sense of gratitude to my supervisor for the kind cooperation and encouragement he extended to me in the course of this study.

## CONTENTS

### PREFACE

Chapter one	:	Nature of political leadership in India. Introduction
P 1		
Chapter two	:	The rise and growth of the office of the Prime Minister
P 24		
Chapter three	:	Cabinet formation -I Social and political background of ministers
P 46		
Chapter four	:	Cabinet formation - II Longevity of tenure
P 67		
Chapter five	:	Political leader in the Congress Party Kamraj Plan to Mrs. Gandhi's succession
P 83		
Chapter six	:	Struggle for power within the Congress Party, 67-84
P 106		
Chapter seven	:	The crisis of leadership within the Congress Party
Conclusion		
P 127		
Bibliography	:	
P 143		

## NATURE OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN INDIA

A major paradox of contemporary societies is that many new nations are growing on the foundations of older civilisation. Several cultural worlds co-exist within the facade of their national unity. During anti-colonial agitation the divergent interests in these countries had coalesced, for the limited purpose of the attainment of national independence. During the constructive phase of the politics of nation-building these interests are making their presence and pressure felt. A section of the elite upholds tradition not for nostalgia alone but for its vote getting and opinion swaying potential. Another section of the leadership has a vested interest in modernising the traditions. The politics of modernisation has thus to contend with the politics of nativism and revivalism.<sup>1</sup> The ethnocentric predicaments of at least a section of the modernizers further prevents the setting of national objectives. The political culture of these societies is beset with conflicting images and contradictory goals. The ethos and idioms of their micro and macro politics are remarkably different, yet the two are not without a connecting link. As a result of the conflict and accommodation among these sections of the elite, new forms of leaderships are emerging.<sup>1A</sup> and the politics of developing areas is acquiring a complex scenario of political leadership. How is the leadership in the Third World countries coping up with the peculiar problems

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1. S.C. Dube in Leadership in India (ed)p.vii, Vidyarthi, Asian Publishing House, Delhi, 1967.

1A. Ibid viii.



arising in these countries? What is the nature of leadership? Is it broadbased or a personalised affair? What is the role of Charisma? Is Charisma of any use beyond a certain point? These are some of the pertinent problems or issues concerned with leadership in India too, a third world country.

That is the broad but brief backdrop for studying the nature of political leadership in India. All those features mentioned before, characterise the nature and the problems of political leadership in our country too. Political leadership, has a decisive role to play in any country. But a new democracy as cumbersome as India is rather demanding about the qualities of political leadership. An able and efficient political leadership does not necessarily require a charismatic leader, a rare phenomenon at any rate.<sup>2</sup> But in India the situation is quite complex. The achievements of the political systems in the West reach great heights during the rule of a great and dynamic political leader, but the system does not deteriorate in the absence of one. The situation is different in India where the nation is gradually evolving its political system and developing its economy, where much depends on the leader-led relationship. In India, with a federal structure which is yet to emerge as a firm and stable reality and with multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-regional and caste complexities, the tasks and therefore qualities redmired of

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2. Seshadri - Politics then and now: Essays in historical perspective. Pragatel, Delhi 1976 p.99

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the political leadership are great even if only to withstand the onslaught of converging decisive forces threatening the fragile fabric of national unity and identity. A pluralistic society assures proper functioning of a democratic social and political system but a desparate and conglamorative co-existence of groups, ever trying to assert their separatist identity. Cant but undermine the national consensus and integration unless the political leadership ensures that the common bonds of loyalty remain intact.<sup>3</sup>

That is again brief but broad recouning of the complexities of our system in the light of which our concern is to make a broad and general survey of the nature of leadership in India and see if it has the characteristics required to lead as complex a society as India and to keep all its diversities in the broad frame of national unity and the integrity. Such a study will enable us to understand what we are going to discuss in subsequent chapters. Why are the principles of federalism and democratic decentralization groping in darkness and are unable to grapple adequately with some of the hard realities of the social structure as it is today?<sup>4</sup> Why is the principle of agitation more fascinating for us than that of nation building? Why is it that our leadership after its creditable performance in establishing national solidarity is unable to make an impressive impact on solving the problems of nation building.<sup>5</sup>

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3. Ibid. p.99

4. Vidyarthi - op.cit. p.ix

5. Ibid p.ix

A study of the nature of leadership obtaining in our country in general, will hopefully help us to understand the possible answers though not the exact answers to the questions posited above. India is by and large a leader led country. The masses generally look for some one to lead them from their glumbe~~ring~~ stupor into fierce action. This has been the nature of our freedom struggle. And given the fact of diversities at very many levels the need for a strong leadership to instil a sense of confidence and securedness <sup>is</sup> much felt here. Not that the absence of one endangers the system. But the presence of one assures confidence. Do we have a leadership like this? What is the nature of leadership in our country? Why did it become so unavoidably charismatic? We deal with this in the next few pages. We also make a passing reference to the Indian Psyche towards leadership.

It is a historical fact that leadership in our country has generally been charismatic. This is the essential nature of leadership in India. The people are by and large uneducated. The society is under developed religious sentiments and superstitious have been deeply ingrained in the minds of the people. And they are normally on the look out for a man to lead them. Leadership is normally widespread where the instinct to resist is present. Where that instinct is dorment, if not absent, waiting to be instigated by one man or a small group of men. It is natural that an auro of chrisma surrounds those rare spicies. This is the nature of the ethos of India. Any one who can catch the imagination of the common man is looked

up on with awe and wonder. This has been the nature all along our history. We don't generally have the individual initiative to resist. During the ancient period when succession was governed by sword, by treachery, murder and mayhem not a head had been raised when kings were killed in military parades by their power hungry generals. When the new general declared himself the king, the subjects simply shouted 'jai to the general; None ever questioned the propriety of such a process nor the legitimacy of such a rule. This is the psyche of the Indian as far as his attitude towards leadership is concerned. If his obscure views, his religious sentiments and superstitious are not touched, then he will have no problems. The immediate and important cause of the 1857 sepoy mutiny was the suspicion that bullets were coated with cow fat for smooth revolving in the gun. That affected the religious sentiments of the Hindu soldiers. Not that the British were ruling us.

The people who led the mutiny can't be said to be political leaders in any sense. They were by and large fighting to retain their principalities they have inherited by virtue being the progeny of rulers. Though it has been described as the first war of independence by Savarkar, the historian, it was not a national affair but mainly confined to certain pockets of north India. The concept of national political leadership was still not in vogue in India. There was no organisation of national nature to bring people from different nooks and

- 6 -

corners of the country on a single platform. Language was the still a major handicap. The consciousness of nationality was not yet well developed. It was the British who created this sentiments in Indians very unconsciously by the introduction of the English education basically to create clerks to man their administration. Indians were slowly coming in touch with the institutions of the West and their ideals. Political institutions like parliamentary democracy, popular representation, the spirit of liberty and all that.

Those Indians who had the good fortune to go to England for education came back with ~~our~~<sup>an</sup> unbiddled enthusiasm to tell the natives what they have seen and studied there.<sup>6</sup> All these developments amazed the Indian who was not in touch with the occidental world earlier. Added to this was the introduction of press in India and the publication of papers and pamphlets which made an attempt to create that elusive angel the "consciousness of the kind" among Indians and slowly the seeds of nationalism were about to be sown a little later which finally gave rise to a firce brand of nationalism up to this stage political leadership was vague and fragmented.

Now slowly regional organizations were emerging in popular centres such as Bombay, Madras and Calcutta and Indians started discussing things in the sense of a modern debate on intellectual lines. Yet political leadership, as it is known in modern

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6. Nehru-Autobiography 1936. P.413

sense, was a vague reality as there was no one single platform for these men of letters to come together and discuss problems. The need was felt but the necessary initiative was not forthcoming. At last it was a Briton who realized the need for a platform to ventilate the native opinions regarding the British government. While conceiving such an idea A.O. Hume the founder of congress did not think even in a midest dream that this very platform would later be used to drive the British out. This association was a political initially concerned basically with reforms of a social nature.

Yet it was the foundation for political leadership as it turned out to be later on. Men from different parts gathered and exchanged views on a variety of problems and it was an annual exercise of a social variety. Yet it was here that the need for a concerted pressure on the British was conceived by these leaders whose purpose was limited, whose ways were polite and sophisticated and whose medium was english. The institution<sup>ynctions</sup> mentioned that only English speak men could attend.<sup>7</sup> Thus any study of the nature of political leadership in India has, necessity, to start with the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 which actually promoted and spread the patriotic spirit of nationalism among the natives and which also led to

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7. The manifesto issued by the sponsors of the INC in 1885 said: A conference of Indian National Union will be held at Poona in 1885. It will be composed of delegates-leading politicians acquainted with English language from all parts of Bengal, Bombay and Maharashtra presidency.

the emergence of leaders in a fashion. So let us start it from 1885 that great year.

#### LEADERSHIP DURING THE ANTI-COLONIAL AGITATION

That the anti-colonial agitation consists of three phases is a fact of history. But the first phase is known as the moderate period starting with the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 upto 1905 was hardly anti-colonial as the leaders during this period have only fought for reforms of socio-economic nature. The idea of independence was far from their mind. Yet their patriotic zeal was not a subject to question. They were leaders in their own right. Educated, sophisticated gentlemen of leisure, thinking of the problems of the country in debates, discussions, resolutions and what are called pray, petition and propaganda. Not being men of mass movements or agitational politics chrisma had little use for them. They were from the elite oriented urban middle class background wishing change to come about through a process of slow evolution. They were essentially in favour of the British rule. But having been educated in England they the British ideals of liberalism and representative institutions. Sensing that British were not following the same in India they were only protesting against the 'unBritish rule in India.<sup>8</sup>

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8. Dadabai Nauroji, the grand old man of India wrote a book the UnBritish rule in India in which he propounded the drain theory during those days.

They were pressing for more participation in the process of governance and introduction of reforms on a large scale to change India of poverty into one of prosperity. Leadership during this period is not imprisoned in the person of any individual. Political activity those days was not characterised by any boss based organization. Leadership was by and large collective. They were not inspired by the greed for dominance nor for power.

No doubt, political leadership, in the sense it is known today starts in India with the formation of the congress party. And so far we have discussed the bent of mind of the political leaders during those initial days of the origin of the concept in our consciousness. In other words national political leadership, in the sense of creating a patriotic consciousness among people can be said to have begun only after the formation of the Indian National Congress. The seeds of nationalism were sown by these peaceful liberal minded men by starting the press and through other constitutional means. It may be regarded at once as the strength and the weakness of the Indian ego. It is because of this that the Indian does not value independence and integration of the nation as much as those who shed blood for winning it.<sup>9</sup>

The leadership during this period came from people who could play the game according to the British rules, promoting

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9. K. Seshadri op-cit p.105.



and interpreting them from the British political and legal classics. As we have already said they came from metropolitan areas from families which were traditionally scholarly or 'advanced'. Their scholarship was not confined to the English classics alone but to the classics including Sanskrit. They were more concerned with removing the social disabilities that were inhibiting the growth of the Indians. Ranging from Raja Ram Mohan Roy to Jayakar and Sapru, they believed in gradual transition to self rule, greater social upliftment, rule of law and intellectual elitism. In politics constitutionalism rather than 'confrontationism' was their motto.<sup>10</sup> And above all they were leaders by their individual achievements and inherent worth. Naturally therefore blue books became their passionate study, Erskine May's parliamentary practices and such like books their constant companions a new govt. report a matter of excitement.<sup>11</sup> Liberal leaders returning from England made mysterious statements about the doings of the great ones in white hall.

But with all their scholarship in classical languages and culture, they were far from revivalist or traditionalistic or anti-modern. In this respect they differed from the other types of revolutionary leaders that began to emerge almost side by side and also from the post-independence leadership

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10. Ibid p.105

11. Nehru -Autobiography p.413.

which with all its sights set towards modernization exploited the traditional forces for their rise.<sup>12</sup> It is they who may be said to have paved the way for India taking over smoothly to a constitutional political system of the West minister model. It is in their tradition that India had adopted the democratic institutions of the British system. The question is whether these 'leaders' who came from the middle and upper classes whose idiom was totally unintelligible to the people who followed them are to be considered as political leaders in the strict sense of the word? As Edward ships put it the intellectuals alone constituted the leadership and the led.

Now we come to the second phase of political leadership during this anti British period-the extremist phase. We shall see the nature of political leadership during this phase in the following pages. This period saw the birth of nationalism, indigenous concepts and the invoking of symbols. If the moderates tried to create a national consciousness through means of intellectual propoganda such as the press, the leaders in the second phase tried indigenous devices which the people could easily understand. This was the era of agitationalism and leadership was more mass based. Tilak and other extremist leaders including the revolutionary terrorists" like Aurovindo Ghosh, spoke of the idiom of the masses of the majority community,

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12. Seshadri op-cit p.106

explaining the significance of political action in Hindu philosophical terms, as a sacred dharna obtained by God to fight the alien ruler. Lord Krishna's message and exhortation to the ~~dissipated~~ <sup>disspirited</sup> Arjuna to take to arms and fight and overcome the foe was eternalized and re-interpreted in the context of the Indian political situation to kindle the militancy that was believed to have lain dormant in the Indian (Hindu) and to wake him up from the stupor.<sup>13</sup> Using such mass belief systems and political myths, the extremist leadership communicated their messages more successfully than the liberal leadership had done. For this task, as Tilak has *very* early realized, it was necessary to use popular Indian symbols and reinterpret the holy books. The Ganapati festival, the book Geeta Rahasya', the paper Maharata and the slogan 'Swaraj is my birth right and I shall have it' were the concrete symbols intended as the media of communication between the leadership and the led and to rally the popular masses for militant action.

In other words the nature of political leadership during this period is characterised by a down to earth attitude. Political leadership was no more confined to the intellectuals of ivory tower,, attempting to find solutions to problems by debates. Mass contact was established. The leadership had

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13. Ibid p.106

- 13 -

drawn closer to the common man and installed in him the ideals for which it was fighting. Anybody and every body who could mobilize people were the leaders. This is the dawn of initial leadership or call it the indigenous leadership. It was inspired by a passionate zeal for independence. Charisma was slowly coming into the picture through the process of identification. But the sincerity of the purpose can't be questioned.

With the emergence of Gandhi on the field there started an era of fullfledged mass based political agitation on non-violent grounds. Gandhi claimed that Gokhale was his political gum. But the methods he followed should be considered more as a continuation of the traditions of Tilak than of his gum. The fierce anti-imperialist mass action that was getting generalized under the leadership of Gandhi was possible only by using the indigenous symbols and Gandhi did use them to a great advantage. But in the long run the symbols were irrelevant but the substantive result should endure. Hence he used the universal categories like non-violence, Satyagraha, courage, discipline, punctuality, clearity, consistency in public life and private morals as being ultimately more important than these symbols which were only a means to communicate with the masses.

With the arrival of Gandhiji on the political scenario an era of charisma has fully set in which was becoming the bone of our political system in free India. However that be, if we study the nature of leadership during the Gandhian era it appears

clear that Gandhi took politics in his broad charismatic sweep to the market place, college, court, the village pial, the Harijan basti, rousing the consciousness of the people to action.<sup>14</sup> It was here, says Prof. Seshadri, that the leftist leadership missed to comprehend the revolutionary role of Gandhi. It is true that he spritualised politics.<sup>15</sup> But he made it a mass based activity too urging every citizen to take part in the struggle for freedom and succeeding in it a very great extent. Gandhi was the unquestioned leader of the nation without holding any formal position in any organized. His leadership continued to guide the nation till independence was achieved. And it is in this period that the tradition of long duration leadership had its origins without the know ledge of the leaders themselves. However, the leadership was very democratic and alternative points of view were well appreciated even if unacceptable.

Here for a while we have to turn our attention to the question of organization or called are called political parties. Political party is of course a post independence phenomenon. Before that there was mass agitation for independence and the organization leading the struggle was congress. The congress was considered to be a mass movement than a political party even when it fought elections at the provincial level in 1937 and formed government in seven states. Leadership in this

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14. Ibid. 107

15. Ibid. 107

organization was quite organised right from the village level which in modern terminology is called the grass root level. From village to block to taluk to district than state and at the apex the all India level it was spread. There were various levels in the loose hierarchy and there was free flow of information. Men who imbibed the ideals, that the organization stood for, and who spread the message of the movement were considered leaders. Leadership was not a matter or rhetoric. It meant fierce action. There was no escape from this. Gandhiji who was so fond of villages, said that the heart beat of India lies in villages, did not overlook the significance of rousing consciousness in villages. Since the Gandhian era was characterised by leaders of clean character and firm commitment it had its reflection at various levels. It is almost a cliché to say that politics was spiritualised. Then there was spiritualism in politics. Now there is spirit in it. Spirit in the sense of brewery. There was not much gap between public pronouncements and the performance. The balance sheet was not that disappoointing. They were still people who made self less sacrifice for the sake of the country. No doubt it was not a golden age in terms of leadership. The pursuit of power had its origins in this era because of the impending independence<sup>16</sup> and the assumption of office. Yet there was sincerity.

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16. Ibid. 110

During this period Gandhi was undoubtedly the leader on the top, he did not monopolise it. He groomed Nehru to take up the administration. There was a list of other leaders. At the state level, leadership was not neglected. For instance in Andhra Pradesh there was Prakasam Pontuler who was leading the movement and whom the telugus revere as much as they do Gandhi. So was the case with other states as well. The nature of the leadership was highly broad based. Leadership was healthy decentralised to the extent possible. And the organization remained a mass based one unlike the case in later years when it became boss based party. Most of those who entered politics during this period did so as an avocation, not as a profession. Being men of means, they were already well known in their respective fields and were leaders the moment they entered politics. During the fag end of this period the party building phenomenon in the Congress began when Gandhiji entered he tried to put in flesh and blood to the organization right from the grass root level. Wherever he went people in their hundreds of thousands throughed the roads to have a darshan of the great leader. However an another side of the party there developed a clamour for power among certain sections. Position in the organization was considered very helpful to reach higher *echelons* of power. This was apart from the genuine desire to fight for the nations freedom. Pursuit of power becomes an important preoccupation of those aspiring for leadership. Even while the personal charisma of the top leaders

- 17 -

endured, the power that the organizational machinery can give began to be felt in the congress movement especially in the context of the assumption of office. Neither any extraordinary intellectual calibre nor any ideological fervour but the capacity to manipulate the party machine came to achieve an almost decisive significance. It was in this backdrop the country entered into freedom from alien political rule.

In the post Gandhian era the party machinery has been widely used to great advantage by various people. Yet they had to operate under the shadow of a gigantic personality. Nehru for whom the people have enormous affection. In spite of his polishedness and because of his familiarity with Gandhiji he also came to feel the pulse of the people despite his elite background. He was the only leader. Everyone prophesied doom to India after his death. Though he had a democratic bent of mind he never thought till the fag end of his life that he should promote somebody to be his successor. It was true that in the light of his charisma all other leaders had paled into oblivion. There were Patels. But they passed away soon leaving an open field to Nehru where none questioned him. He for some time became the Congress president besides being the Prime Minister. So the party machinery was rendered weak to be an alternative area of leadership. During his seventeen year post independent leadership to the country he came to monopolise it. It came to be known coterminous with the house held. It



had its effects in later years. And today what we are reaping the fruit, the tree of which has been sown by Nehru consciously or otherwise.

The nature of the leadership after Nehru has again undergone a great change. There is a psychological metamorphosis in the leadership as well as the led. No more does the old leader-led relations exist in the contemporary situation. No more people in their thousands throng, to deafeningly shout 'jai' to their leader in a bit of mass measurementism.<sup>17</sup> Only those who are successful in whipping up parochial sentiments or communal passions can count their followers in their thousands. Otherwise crowds can be hired. In all these cases the intellectualism of the liberals, the sincerity of the extremists or the national appeal of the Gandhians are almost irrelevant.<sup>18</sup>

India is considered to be the best governed among the new states of Asia and Africa, a creditable achievement especially if we take into consideration her size, population the linguistic caste communities with little sense of affinity with one another. It is an achievement of the Indian intellectuals, journalists, lawyers and educators, of the Indian liberal, not just the moderates who came together in the early twenties in the National Liberal Federation of India, but the large body

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17. Ibid. lll

18. Ibid. lll

of the congress leaders who stood in the centre of Indian politics until they were displaced by Gandhiji, of the intellectual leadership during the Gandhian era of political struggle as well as during the post independent era working with in the govt, and outside of it in opposition, in the services and in various other walks of national life.<sup>19</sup>

But as days rolled on the intellectual leadership that dominated the pre-independence and immediate post independent era became alienated from the centre of politics. There has been a silent murmur from the intellectual side with the entry of various elements into the political arena of the country.

The nature of present leadership, in a very general sense is schizophrenic characteristic of the common Indians who while being deeply religious and god bearing, would also without any qualms of conscience indulge in unmoral and unsocial practices, contrary to his unworldly public declarations, every opportunity to accumulate wealth and material well being. It is a sharp contrast between pronouncements and private morals on the part of leadership today. Many leaders who whipping the passion of language send children to public schools where medium of instruction is English. Leaders of national parties whip up regional passions, perhaps for their own survival or else how would we explain the agitation launched by Janatha leaders in Maharashtra against the Janatha goes in Karnataka. Whether whole of India is one what does it

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19. Edward Shils - "Influence and withdrawal: Intellectuals and Indian Political development" in Marawick (ed) Political decision makers Free Press 1901 pp.30-31.

matter if a piece of land is this side or that side of the boundary between states.

Today there does not appear to be a single rallying point for the whole nation. Emotive, Purodial and sectarian issues have thrown up a type of leadership,<sup>20</sup> with the potential of only vote gethering and notheing but beyond. A new generation of politicians is coming in. With them the lumpemism they otherwise stand for. That's todays nature of political leadership in India.

20. Seshadri op-cit. 111

THE RISE AND GROWTH OF THE OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

The Indian Prime Minister occupies a position of great power and authority in the country's political system. The office of the Prime Minister is the focal point of national politics and policy making, and the position is one of immense influence and patronage. The hall mark of political leadership consists of in the adroit use of influence and the intelligent and adept use of prerogatives. A Prime Minister is largely responsible for effecting the structures, processes and outcome of the nation's political, economic and social values and plays various roles intimately connected with importance areas of the Government. Besides being the head of the Government and the chief executive of the national administration, he is the leader of his party and the people as well as the chief spokesman of the nation. In the performance of his role, he has to draw upon and combine all these sources of authority. The degree to which one or another of these sources is emphasized or the manner in which they are combined in particular instances affect the conditions and imperatives of the political system. In interaction with his personality and character, they shape the style of his leadership affect the institution. Failure in any of his major tasks may erode one or more of his bases of authority, the wealthy of one or more of the latter may result in his inability to perform the totality of his role.<sup>1</sup> This in brief is the essence of the office of

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1. L.N. Sharma - The Indian Prime Minister: *Office and Power*  
 Delhi, Macmillan 1976 P.1

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- 2 -

the Prime Minister. How did the institution rise and grow? How did it evolve into a position where the occupant is the king pin of the policy? This is what we are concerned with in this chapter as we go.

History The Prime Minister is a typical British political office. It is in other words or characteristic of the Westminster model of government where in there is a parliament the majority party leader of which is the Prime Minister who by virtue of being the Prime Minister constitutes a cabinet or more broadly a council of ministers around him to conduct the governance of the country. As our system of government is transplanted from Britain we have inherited many of the British political institutions such as the Prime Minister, the parliament, the cabinet and so on and so forth. However institutions in themselves don't account for much. A lot depends on the individual manning the institutions and the same can conveniently be said of the Indian Prime Minister too. It is an office which has gradually evolved into its present shape of a gigantic stature, though we have transplanted it almost ready made. To day if the Prime Minister is the most powerful man in our polity it is because of the people who were occupied the position earlier and have left an indelible mark on our image of the office. It was under Nehru's tenure that the institutions prominence was firmly established inspite of the clash of opinion between the President

Prasad and Nehru over the powers, functions and role of the Prime Minister. And subsequent successors have only strengthened what they have already inherited and today we can see for ourselves what the Prime Minister is about. The king pin of the system with the entire system revolving around this political leader.

Now we shall see how it has happened- that is the process or the evolution of the office to its present shape. It has to be seen in the context of the institutionalization of the erstwhile personalized power of the chief executive in the modern world. The concentration of powers in the hands of a single executive has become common to all forms of government. Changes in time and perspective here inspired the transformation of highly exceptional executive action into routine practice.<sup>2</sup> Since Woodrow Wilson became the US President a number of strong presidents have expanded the role of the executive branch of the government and have increasingly decided great issues without more than a perfunctory reference to the legislative and judiciary. In the British system also the Prime Minister's predominance, attacked by Churchill during the second world war, has persisted even after him and has become a normal feature of the system.

The elevation of the executive is attributable to many factors. The extension of the mass franchise, the growth

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2. Ibid. p.2

of nation-wide mass parties and the development of the mass media have changed the nature of a general election. It has assumed the gladiatorial contest between the party leaders, one of whom happens to be the Prime Minister at that time. The rapid industrialization, growth of trade, science and technology as well as atomic and space research contributed to the growth of the powers of the national leadership. This is a global tendency which makes its impact on federal states. For instance the changing scenario of the international situation which is heading towards much better mutual dependence either due to military aspects or due to economic reasons has greatly enhanced the powers of the central governments all over the world. The US is no exception to this trend. It is quite a natural consequence. Another factor in this respect is the growing emphasis on the concept of welfare state to keep the menace of communism at bay. In order to attend to the minimum needs of the people governments the world over are introducing different welfare plans and programmes which emanate at the national level and that way have more control over units which means an increase the power and since governments are generally characterised by one man on the top it is natural that this man's office attains more prominence in the political life of the nation.

This is more so in the new nations which were led to independence and freedom from the bondage of foreign yoke and rule. The leader who led such struggles became the executive

chiefs of their respective countries remaining in office for a long time.<sup>3</sup> Prominent examples are Nehru, Nasser, Nkruma, Sukarno etc. The nation visualizes in them not only an executive leadership but also a sort of symbolic leadership with good dose of nostalgia, sentiment and other such habits of the heart. Further in a developing country like India the concept of social equality and measures to build an egalitarian society, the expanding public sector and the control over the private sector have provided opportunities for an extension of the executive leadership's powers.<sup>4</sup> In UK, though the public sector is small and static, the public and parliament are quite vigilant over their control and functioning. So the executive has got to be wary of the public opinion. By comparison the parliament's control over appointments to various commissions and corporations and industrial and commercial undertakings in the public sector in India is considered much.

More over by a strange historical accident the Prime Minister has long been considered a charismatic leader, a legacy inherited from Nehru down to the present day. The subsequent leaders also tended to be charismatic and they succeeded too like Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv. Once charisma comes into play, people are swayed over and the leader is firmly enconced in office. This malady has not affected other political offices in our polity such as the

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3. Jean Blondel

4. L.N. Sharma op.cit p.3.



president, the governor and the chief minister though in a few stray cases some Chief Ministers tend to appear Charismatic as is the case with NTR in Andhra Pradesh, MGR in Tamil Nadu and Hegde in Karnatak. Beyond that there are no charismatic leaders occupying political offices. In our polity it has become the exclusive monopoly of the Prime Minister and this is one reason which explains the growth of the office of the Prime Minister and the enormous increase in the powers. This is not to suggest that he is a despot with a disturbed brain. There are units too.

Weak opposition is another factor which contributed to the clout of the Prime Minister. Every one knows that it is the Prime Minister's personal charisma which is helping the party win the elections in which case there are no leaders in the opposition camp to match the Prime Minister in charisma. Since the opposition is generally weak it is weak in parliament too and the Prime Minister can easily silence them. On the other hand if the opposition is strong they will attack the government which means a virtual attack of the Prime Minister and thus his political stature may have been dwarfed if the opposition is strong. And the ordinary M.P.'s, as they owe their election to the name of the Prime Minister view him as a great leader or political hero.

And the press also is wary in its criticism of the Prime Minister. The people view the leader in awe and wonder in which case if the press writes against him people may not like the stuff. The press all over the world is an industry

not a profession. Once it is an Industry its ethics are guided by profit and loss more than the sense of public service. They want their paper to be widely circulated and so write not necessarily the truths but what is convenient. In Delhi the two largely circulated papers are The Times of India and 'The Hindustan Times' are virtual megaphones of the government and the leader. They consider the Prime Minister a sacred cow and when no criticism should be directed to him at the personal level. One wonders where official level ends and the personal level beginning and why should one criticise the Prime Minister personally at all.

There is thus an acknowledged issue that sustained by a majority in parliament dependent upon the Prime Minister for various things, supported by a cabinet selected by him, able to call upon the resources of a well trained bureaucracy, informed and assisted by the party hierarchy the Prime Minister occupies a position to-day unrivalled in some ways by the president of the United States.<sup>5</sup> The US President is strong to the extent that he is both the head of the state and the government but his wings are clipped by the congress especially the senate with which he can't always have his way. The senate's cutting the budgetary allocations on defence is a pointed in this discussion. The Russian Prime Minister plays second fiddle to the party secretary or the

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5. Ibid. p.3.

central committee unless he combines both party and government under a single leadership pattern. It is suggested that no such corresponding checks are available on the powers of the Indian Prime Minister, so long as he commands the confidence of the legislature. The growing power of the Prime Minister has come under constant comments in recent times. There is a view that the Prime Minister has assumed powers neither intended by the framers of the constitution nor permitted by the West minister model. All these propositions need a close examination.

CONSTITUTIONAL POSITION: Article 74 and 75 of the constitution, noted below describe the situation:

74(i) There shall be a Council of Ministers<sup>6</sup> with Prime Minister at the head to aid and advise the president in the exercise of his functions.

75(a) The Prime Minister<sup>7</sup> shall be appointed by the president and other ministers shall be appointed by the president on the advice of the Prime Minister.

It is quite likely that when the constituent Assembly opted for the parliamentary form of government, it was taken literally and its character as a 'Prime Ministerial Government' was neither fully understood nor debated as appears to be the

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6. The word cabinet never occurs in the original document of the Constitution.

7. The Prime Minister before being appointed so, is elected by a majority of the members of the Lok Sabha and their leader. The only exception was Mrs. Gandhi who, when became Prime Minister in 1964, was a member of the Rajya Sabha.

case if we observe the above men fined two clauses from two articles 74 (1) and 75(2). The powers of the British Prime Minister had by then not been institutionalized; and the war time powers of the office were treated as emergency and not normal powers. Even after some months of governmental experience in India, Nehru and Patel were representing two different conceptions of the office of the Prime Minister. The many epithets used to describe the office of the Prime Minister like Prime Minister pates, 'keystone of the cabinet arch' and inter stellas Innar minorts (a moon among lesser stars) contributed to the confusion. From the point of view of political power the phrase 'Primus inter pares is now unsatisfactory and ambiguous' as expressed by some British scholars.

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(1) The word Cabinet never occurs in the original document of the constitution. It is however mentioned in a constitutional amendment made after the Janta came to power.

2. The Prime Minister before being appointed so, is elected by a majority of the members of the Lok Sabha as their leader. The only exception was Mrs. Gandhi who in 1966 was a Rajya Sabha member when she became the Prime Minister.

The concept of first among equals is a theoretical concept. How can there be "first" among equals? If he is equal, he is not first, if he is first, it means he is not equal. The very fact that somebody is Prime Minister means that he is superior to others.<sup>8</sup> The Prime Minister in fact represents not only the Cabinet arch but other arches of the constitutional structure as well. For the sake of phrasedogy he could be called the 'radiant Sun rather than a moon.'<sup>9</sup> A more important purpose, however, can be served by analysing his institutional support to the office and how those institutional basis of support have contributed to the growth of the Prime Minister's office would be fruitful rather than described his position in phrases and the best way to do is to examine how the office of the Prime Minister functioned, how the personnel work and to what extent the powers were exercised in these years of our study. It will be an interesting exercise.

However in passing we can say that what is to be understood is that the west minister model is not always helpful in understanding the role of the Prime Minister in India. The national need and aspirations, the peculiar historical, geographical and economic conditions as well as the social and class structure influence the countries constitutions. Naturally there are among countries differences both institutional and human. To seek a broad comparison with Britain will not enable us to understand the office better because of various factors.

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8. Quoted in Sharma op.cit. p.9 as said by a Cabinet minister.

9. Ibid p.9.

But one remarkable difference is this that the position of the British Prime Minister may be strong because Britain has a unitary form of government where the national government is all powerful and it is quite understandable. But that is not the case with India. Here we have a federal social structure with a theoretically federal government where there are units with their own spheres of powers drawn from the constitution. In this context it becomes quite difficult to understand the powerful position of the Prime Minister. Theoretically speaking the Prime Minister in India should have been checked by the states and their powers.

It can of course explained that because the same party continued in power both at the centre and in the states and to the latter silently obeyed the dictates of the centre. This historical habit of the centre is causing a lot of friction between the centre and the non congress ruled states. They assert their rights at one time or the other. But the centre not being used to such situations gets irritated and the result is friction. But to me it some how appears that the constitution was written keeping in mind the fact that Nehru was already the Prime Minister of the interim government and will continue to be so in independent India or else the forefather would not have made the president's position so weak. Or may be they did not understand the implications of that seemingly simple clause that the president shall act on the advise of the council of Ministers headed by the Prime Minister. Any way now over to the institutional support to Prime Minister.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT: The Prime Minister functions with the help of certain organisations or better called institutions like the Cabinet secretariat and the Prime Minister's secretariat. He is also aided by committees and sub-committees of the Cabinet. But of them a little later. We shall now study those two prominent institutions mentioned above in the course of governance:

The Department of Cabinet Affairs of the Cabinet Secretariat serves the Cabinet committees and provides secretaries. It briefs the Prime Minister and help him in his role of policy coordinator. Headed by a senior civil servant, it is in a position to manage areas of overlap and impending conflict. The department of statistics of the Cabinet Secretariat besides its own allotted tasks has some coordinating and advisory functions as well.

A Cabinet Secretariat was first set up in 1946. H.M. Patel who was Cabinet Secretary as well as Principal Private Secretary to Nehru, and later on a Cabinet minister during the Janata period, writes that the duty of the Cabinet Secretary is to present items in the Cabinet after consultation with all connected ministers, to see that Cabinet orders don't cause conflict between different sections of the government as also to keep watch on the implementation of Cabinet decisions.<sup>10</sup> It is one of the important duties of this functionary to keep the Prime Minister informed of the manner and efficacy with which the decisions of the Cabinet are implemented and to seek

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10. H.M.Patel - Cabinet government p.203.

his intervention where he thinks that things are not moving in the requisite speed. The cabinet secretary attends every meeting of the Cabinet. So he gets a fairly comprehensive view of every matter of importance under consideration of the government or about which the government has taken a decision. If his office is well organized and effectively run he can play a really significant role in giving advice to the Prime Minister and his colleagues on the one hand and to the Secretariat on the other. The Prime Minister may count upon his advice in all manner of procedural and organizational matters as well as in the vital matter of appointment of various persons to various responsible offices. For along time he functioned as Secretary to the planning Commission as it was thought that he could advise it both in regard to the activities as well as the thinking of the government in its various departments or ministries. A special office and a Joint Secretary were added to the Cabinet Secretariat in 1967 to look after the implementation of decisions. The Cabinet Secretariat was reorganized by a presidential notification which came with effect in 1970. According to this about 60 of the hundred sections of the Home Ministry were transferred to it. Some of its major wings like the intelligence Bureau, the Central Bureau of Investigation the Establishment Division and the Personnel Department came under the Cabinet Secretariat. Now there is a ministry for the Personnel department. Yet the Cabinet Secretariat may not be said to have played the role of an effective and energetic needler

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11. Ibid . 212.



opines Patel, which it was required to play. Its reorganization has helped concentration of powers at the hands of the Prime Minister who has the additional advantage of a more powerful and specialized body called the Prime Minister's Secretariat.<sup>12</sup> It is true that the Prime Minister's Secretariat is overshadowing the former by virtue of its better proximity to the Prime Minister. None the less the Cabinet Secretariat remains the highest bureaucratic body with its branches in every state capital and the Cabinet Secretary is the highest point in the career of a civil servant. He is like a head master to the school of civil servants. Over the years due to the politicization of the bureaucracy appointment of the chief of this institution has become somewhat controversial with seniors being superceded by junior officers by virtue of their proximity to the Prime Minister. But it is a channel of communication between the states and the centre as it has spread to all state capitals. The more important institution, however, is the Prime Minister's Secretariat about which we shall now turn our attention.

The Prime Minister's Secretariat came into being in 1947 immediately after independence. Initially, that is Nehru's time it was not an important decision making authority but over worked in any case. It was only during Shastri's tenure that this institution gained a lot of prominence in power.

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13. L.N. Sharma op-cit p.100

He relied on it especially since he was ill in mind 1964 to ease his work burden. Around 64-65 it emerged as a regular department under a full-fledged Secretary. Its influence in top level policy making increased. Shastri increased its strength to 201 and in only one year, it remained not first an information pipeline' to the Prime Minister or a channel for the reverse flow of decisions but acquired a formidable influence in decision making. In recent years it has gained further in prestige and influence. Mrs. Gandhi reorganized the Secretariat in 1969 to step up the staff work and provide for effective liason with the central ministries and state governments in dealing with national problems. It is a store house of grave secrets and in recent years all government decisions had to pass through it especially when P.C. Alexander was the Prime Minister's principal Secretary. The Prime Ministerial Secretaries play a great role in decision making. A point in case is how L.K. Jha<sup>13</sup> convinced Shastri to go to Taskent. Shastri was initially reluctant to go to Taskent and even Swaran Singh could not prevail up on him. L.K. Jha told 'Shastriji, with the withdrawal of our troops to the **ceasefire line**, the line becomes an international boundary and neither side can claim to the other side except by mutual negotiations. Would not that be something worth having', 'then accept it. We will go to Tashkent', was Shastri's reply. The

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13. Times of India. Delhi 29 June 1986

Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) the brain child of Mrs. Gandhi was expanded and activated to keep the Prime Minister well informed of men and matters.<sup>14</sup> Its role has been significant in recent years even in politics and within the central government and between the centre and the states. The existence of this little group of officials in the personal service of the Prime Minister brings a large degree of coordination among civil servants, ministers and the Prime Minister inter se.<sup>15</sup> The Prime Minister's Secretariat has come to act as a bridge between the top civil servants and ministers. But on the other hand it has helped bureaucracy as well as the Prime Minister in concentrating more and more powers at the top level. L.K. Jha, Yashpal Kapoor and P.N. Haksar who were special advisers to the Prime Minister at one time or the other enjoyed enormous power and influence no less than a Cabinet Minister. L.K. Jha, as has been already explained, played a crucial role in the signing of the Kutch Agreement by Shastri in 1965. P.N. Haksar was sent to Decca to have urgent talks with Mujibur Rehaman over some questions of national importance. He also played an active role in negotiating with the Foreign Minister of Pak, Aziz Ahmed, an important agreement in Delhi Conference of 1973.<sup>16</sup> A rather controversial instance of the role the Prime Minister has come to play through

14. Nayar. K. - India after Nehru p.94 Vikas Delhi <sup>1975</sup> ~~politics.~~

15. L.N. Sharma op.cit p.101

16. J.C. Johani<sup>e</sup> - Indian government and politics, Vishal, Delhi 1974 p.

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the Secretariat was a circular dated 28 October 1974 to ministers asking them to send to the Prime Minister the final copies of the statements they were to make in parliament and notes on supplementary questions on them. The role of the Prime Minister's Secretariat has come under constant comments in parliament and press. It is so more recently with the busting of a much publicized so called espionage ring of the Kumar Narain's name.

It was during P.C. Alexander's tenure as the principal Secretary to the Prime Minister that is Mrs. Gandhi that the power and the influence of this office had reached its zenith. Every file of importance was to pass through. This man a staunch loyalist of Mrs. Gandhi. All appointments are to be confirmed by him. It was because of this enormous increase in prestige that many a spy cast covetous eye on this office. Ministers had to increasingly depend on this office to know the mind of the Prime Minister and to that extent it has curbed the possibility of independent action by ministers in vital areas thus giving a full hold to the Prime Minister over the entire gamut of governance. That's how the office of the Prime Minister has gradually evolved to be the most powerful with various institutional supports such as the Cabinet Secretariat to a lesser extent but the Prime Minister's Secretariat to a very great extent and other organizations like the Research and Analysis wing. There are other institutions such as the Cabinet Committees about which a passing reference

would fall in place. Cabinet Committees are decision-making bodies. The Prime Minister is the chairman of all the important Committees and directs decision making there. They have been functioning in India from the very beginning but their relative importance had been changing for example the Defence Committee used to function like the Cabinet during Nehru's time. The foreign affairs Committee was also important. The Emergency Committee set up during the chinese aggression used to work as the British 'war cabinet'. This had the effect of reducing the importance of the Cabinet as the forum of all policy deliberations. Now there is the all powerful political Affairs Committee the membership of which is strong as apart from the Prime Minister, the Home Minister, Finance, Defence, External Affairs minister were part of it. Membership depends on the political clout of the minister concerned. For instance P.V. Narasimha Rao who is the minister for Human Resources Development is a member of the political affairs Committee. The erstwhile name of that ministry was 'Education' and its minister was not even of the Cabinet rank, during Mrs. Gandhi's tenure which only proves the importance given to education in our policy decision making.

Another committee which existed outside Cabinet but very important was the policy planning committee in the External Affairs Ministry which is again revived by Mrs. Gandhi and the Chief or chairman of this Committee is appointed by the Prime Minister. He is given the Cabinet minister rank and he is

answerable to the Prime Minister directly. This Committee used to play an important role in the formation of foreign policy which again shows the exclusive hold the Prime Minister has on this vital area. All these factors have made the Prime Minister the most powerful functionary on this soil.

Of all these the most important factor is the Prime Minister's prerogative over the formation of his Cabinet that made the office so omnipotent. It is not that there are no constraints on the formation of the Cabinet. But over the years Prime Ministers have successfully got themselves of the clutches of party organisation constraints by their hold over the party and its president when it used to have one. Most of the party presidents since independence owe their election to the Prime Minister. The enormous power has a causal relationship in the sense that since the Prime Minister dominated the party president he has become so powerful a creature. However he dominated the party chief by virtue of being the Prime Minister with all the constitutionally accorded powers and all that goes with it. The enormous prestige, power and patronage enjoyed by the Prime Minister placed him in an unmistakable position of dominance over the party president.<sup>17</sup> Though we shall deal with the constraints of Cabinet formation else where in a separate chapter. We should keep here in mind that the constraints are changing over the years and some are

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17. Kochanek - Congress Party of India: The dynamics of one party democracy princeton 1968 p. 97

not as forceful as they used to be earlier such as the party organization. Other constraints are there. They are inevitable. Such as the geographical, Socio-economic considerations and so forth. None the less the prime minister is today relatively much more free than he was earlier which explains the growth of the office of the Prime Minister to astounding proportions. We have dealt with whatever factors and constraints that characterize the Prime Minister's freedom in forming his Cabinet and how successive Prime Ministers have successfully overcome this handicap in our other chapter 'Cabinet formation - factors and constraints'. Especially after the second split in the Congress party, to which the Prime Minister of our study belongs, she became very free. It was just a matter of distribution of political patronage for all the loyal supporters who stood by her in her hour of political harassment during the Janatha regime. She has taken the Prime Minister to such heights where no one would dare to question lest he should fall into political oblivion.

Our loose federal set up also contributes to this enormous growth of the office of the Prime Minister. A federal constitution implies the existence of dual governments, division of powers and arrangements for their administration. But the federal and state governments create their own agencies for the administration of their laws and the subjects allotted to them in the constitution. But it is not wholly so in India

says Ashok Chada.<sup>18</sup> The reasons according to him are historical. Considerations of continuity and economy are secondary he adds. India was administered by a highly centralized form of government in during the British colonial rule and to day what we have is but our inherited legacy of the vestiges of the British Raj. There the governor general had over riding powers and here the Prime Minister replaced him. Our constitution has been described by Ivery Jennings as 'Quasi-federal' or it has come to be accepted that ours is federal in theory and unitary in practice. In unitary form of government the central government has over riding powers and since the head of the executive at the centre in India is the Prime Minister his office became powerful as a natural corollary. In no other federal constitution the states are left to the mercy of the Union. But in India they very much are. They have to defend for a host of things on the centre such as financial, legislative and administrative.

Our the years the longevity of successive Prime Ministers save a few stray case such as Shastri and the Nanata, has also contributed enormously for the growth of this office. They leave their influence marked on the office and it is difficult for the successors to resist the temptation to be the king pin of the political system. Nehru was in office for seventeen years and during that time the office was looked up on with a sacrosanct spirit because of his personal chrisma and leadership.

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18. Ashok Chada - Federation in India p.102.



In the case of Indira Gandhi it is all the more so far during her life time the party organization split twice and on both the occasions she caused it. After every split her wing of the divided party romped home with triumph at the hustings where as the other way was cooling the heels in electoral tragedy. During her fourteen years of Prime Ministerial life she made the office as something indisputable. Some people say that Nehru's Cabinet at the height of his power and his power and vigour was like a darbar.<sup>19</sup> The office has grown at the cost of the growth of Cabinet. He overshadowed it with his towering stature. There was no real discussion, the Prime Minister referred to the agenda, pronounced his point of view and it was done.

During Shastri's time it was different. He was a good listener and under him there was a more relaxed atmosphere and great freedom than in Nehru's Cabinet. He carried deliberations on a wide range. The new decision making organ in his time was what Brechen calls, The Grand Council of the Republic<sup>22</sup>. It

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19. P. Spear said that the Indian Cabinet and parliament under Nehru are the modern counter part of the Diwan-i-Am and Diwan-i-khas of the mughal emperor, India: A modern History pp.437-8.
20. What he thinks fit they should know and he orders their approval. Every thing seems to depend on his judgement' quoted in V.K; Kulkarni: Problems of Indian Democracy p.158.
21. Brecher M - Succession in India OUP London 1966 p.106
22. Brecher M - Ibid p.21

was an informal body consisting of members of the CWC, chief Ministers, most of the Cabinet men and a few special invitees. The role of such a committee in crisis - management or consensus building on difficult problems like language was marked. It was a collective substitute for Nehru's charisma.<sup>23</sup> In general Mrs. Gandhi also claimed that at no Cabinet meeting, did she cut short any discussion. After the great electoral and military victory in 1971 which gave her strength and confidence it is said that her Cabinet meetings were as mere formality. 'Generally the Cabinet confirms the decisions already reached at the Cabinet level, especially at the political Affairs Committee level'. None of the Prime Ministers, however, can be said to have muffled discussion or to impose their views,<sup>24</sup> argues L.N. Sharma, ignoring that there was hardly any discussion in the Cabinet regarding the imposition of emergency in 1975 'secrecy was the key point. No one new but Mrs. Gandhi, her son, Dhawan, Bansilal, Om Mehta, Krishana Chand and S.S. Ray knew of the imminent operation'. Even the Home Minister Reddy was 'informed' of the decision on the day.

The Prime Minister as chairman of the Cabinet can influence Cabinet decisions which are normally made by consensus more often than voting. However it is said that 'whoever presides over the meetings of the consensus can substitute his preference for that of his colleague'. This is no exaggeration.

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23. L.N. Sharma - op cit p.94

24. Kuldeep Nayar - The Judgement Vika, Delhi 1977 p. 167

In conclusion what we can say about the growth of this office is that apart from long duration of our respective Prime Minister, their own personal charisma has contributed much to this phenomenal growth. We had non-charismatic leaders like Shastri and Desai only for a short while and they could not leave behind much impact. It would be interesting to imagine how it would be if we had relatively one term Prime Minister with not much charismatic background. The definite consequence would have been that the president's position would not have been reduced to the level of a rubber as it is today. We have already observed that Prime Minister grew at the cost of the growth of cabinet. Cabinet has all along been reduced in stature in view of the Prime Minister's own stature and in later years because of the vulnerability of individual Prime Ministers towards temptations like forming 'kitchen cabinets' or caucus or clique or whatever.

Today the position of the president of India, vis-a-vis the Prime Minister, leaves much to be desired. Since people become presidents only with blessing of the Prime Minister they remain beholden to the Prime Minister all along their tenure. That people become presidents due to the Prime Minister's blessings is proved beyond doubt when V.V. Giri defeated Sanjiva Reddy the officially nominated party candidate. It is well known that V.V. Giri was supported by Mrs. Gandhi by what is called 'conscience vote'. In later years Mrs. Gandhi used to pick up one man from her Cabinet whose political

servility is beyond question and put him in Rastrapati Bhawan. A political insurance to be used in times of need such as political accidents like slender majority and so forth. The size and growth of the power and privilege of the Prime Minister had its touch on other constitutional bodies like the parliament, the president and the Council of ministers.

Another important aspect in this respect is the Secretary to the Prime Minister. Because of the Prime Minister's power his secretary also became powerful. L.K. Jha was called the 'super secretary' putting his finger in every pie. His successor P.N. Haksar had improved on what Jha had already done and organized the system in such a way that every thing would revolve around the Prime Minister's secretariat. Not even a deputy secretary is appointed without its concurrence. He set up a mini government.<sup>25</sup> Each officer of the Secretariat dealt exclusively with almost everything in one field, whether economic, foreign or scientific. All ministers took their orders from them. What is more it became politicised with every appointment assuming political overtones. And what the situation was during P.C. Alexander's presence is quite obvious and we have spoken of his political clout some where earlier. That is how the office of the Prime Minister has, over the years evolved itself into its amazing stature today.

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25. K. Nayar - op cit p.23

CHAPTER - IIIANALYSIS OF CABINET FORMATION - 66-84 - I  
( SOCIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND )

We all know that the Union Cabinet is the centre of the Political leadership at the national executive level. It is the highest executive body that presides over the fate of the millions of the people of our country. It is equally well known that it is the Prime Minister who forms the Cabinet. Our constitution explicitly says that ministers shall be appointed by the president on the advice of the Prime Minister. Who are the people that the Prime Minister picks up to put them in the cabinet? What is their Socio-Political background? As the Cabinet is the centre of executive political leadership, its members ought to be leaders. But sort of leaders are they? Are they leaders in the making with even an *iota* of national stature? Does their background enable them to grow into popular leaders in a broader sense? What criteria govern the Prime Minister in forming the Cabinet? Are all the criteria conducive for the growth of leadership among the ministers? And what criteria govern the Prime Minister in reshuffling the Cabinet? What is the average tenure of ministers holding strategic portfolios?

Analysing all these problems forms an important as text of our study. As has been mentioned earlier there has been no development of second line leadership over the years. Second line leadership has to evolve with in the highest-executive body of the national leadership. But infortunately this aspect is conspicuous by its absence over the years. What lead to this

situation? That is what we are going to deal with in this chapter.

Under development of second line leadership in the Cabinet can be studied from two angles. One is the Socio-Political base of the dramatic personal that constitute the Cabinet. For a minister to grow into a leader of national stature, he should have a strong Socio-Political background. His social background helps him to understand the broader problems of the society from a social point of view. Social factors such as his stature in society, his profession, religion, region - these are more or less objective factors. And Political base refers to his standing in the opinion of voters. Do people think he is an able man? What is the nature of his vote bank? His performance in elections? All these factors throw light on the Socio-Political base of a leader. If he is a leader of good standing in his own state politics that goes a long way to grow him into one of national stature. For instance to day Rama Krishna Hedge is said to be a great leader. His own standing in his home state is very high. He is said to be "the Mr Clean" of the opposition parties. He has the status of a national leader. Are the ministers of the Union Cabinet have atleast some standing in their states and in the opinion of the nation at large? An enquiry and analysis of their base of support will help us understand the problem. It is one aspect of the diagnosis of this political disease of our country, namely absence of alternative leadership. This is the part one of our study.

- 3 -

We shall study the importance of men for the party vis-a-vis the weakness of these men in the eyes of the public. It has been observed by political analysts that men with weak political bases are kept in key positions in the government for reasons extraneous to efficiency and experience in administration. This trend in the formation of the Union Cabinet has assumed alarming proportions especially during the emergency and after the triumphant return of the congress with a new name - the Congress Indira - to power in 1980. Even earlier it was there but in a mild manner. The important men in Mrs. Gandhi's cabinet after the 1969 split were those who stood by her side in that struggle for supermacy and upper hand for the Prime Minister in the party. Even among them, those who had the misfortune of thinking for a while over so vital an issue that almost posed a threat of split had to pay a political price after the party was split. Political bases of individual leaders have become irrelevant in the context of one leader oriented elections. It is the party that matters in the present day elections and not the persons. A Narasimha Rao could win from Maharashtra on the Congress-I ticket and a Stephen from Karnataka from the same flank. If still defeated there is always the Rajya Sabha and that two from Gujarat from where the defeated political leaders like Mukherjees and Siv Shankars can be accommodated. Let us study this in a broader perspective.

THE INITIAL PERIOD

Mrs. Gandhi like Shastri retained the bulk of her predecessors team while forming her cabinet in 1966. The senior ministers were generally taken in and given the same portfolios they held in Shastri's government. None the less while preserving an appearance of continuity by making only marginal changes to Shastri's cabinet she managed to institute certain other changes that were quite significant. She dropped Ashok Sen (as Cabinet Minister) in Shastri's government and appointed Sachin Chaudhary in his place possibly at the instance of Atulya Ghosh who supported her in the drama of succession. J. Ram who are earlier 'Kamarajed' in 1963, was brought back to the Cabinet, Manubai Shah was promoted to Cabinet rank and Ashok Mehta, G.S. Pathak, Fakruddin were brought into the new cabinet. Modest though the changes were, the effect was to add new blood in sufficient quantity to make observers recall that Shastri had retained Nehru's team virtually unchanged"<sup>1</sup> in 1964, observes Kochanek. As a result, concluded Brecher, though, Mrs. Gandhi's action might not have been "drastic" enough for ever one bet a new cook had come to the summit of the government of India.<sup>2</sup> But it was not a totally independent action and she was still not free. Kamran reportedly prevailed on her to include certain names like J. Ram and Nanda. A few months later she wanted to

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1. Kochanek -Op cit p.99

2. Brecher - Nehru mantle p.225



reorganise the Cabinet but was subjected to party pressures and she had to be satisfied with minor changes of portfolios and that too in consultation with and with the approval of Kamraj the party president.

So far, that is as far as the first Cabinet is concerned, men with strong political background were included in the Cabinet with the sole exclusion of Morarji Desai. Party stalwarts who were there in the Nehru cabinet were given more or less the same portfolios - save J. Ram who was given Labour which was not the one he deserved. He was minister for Railways for five years and then for communications for another five years in the Nehru cabinet. There were people with a freedom struggle background of national name such as Nanda, J. Ram, Chavan, Swaran Singh, Chagla, Sanjiv Reddy among the old guard of the party. So, the first cabinet represented a reasonably balanced picture of leaders with strong political back ground in their own states. Chavan was a Chief Minister, who was called to the Centre by Nehru to head the Defence ministry after the Chinese attack, J. Ram was a prominent figure in the centre being a member of the constituent assembly and also of Nehru's interim government in 1946. Same was the case with G.L. Nanda who had a great freedom fight record and was a prominent figure in the then Bombay state.

Here is a list<sup>3</sup> of the Cabinet of Mrs. Gandhi in 1966 formed after Shastri's death.

Cabinet Minister

Department

Nanda

Home

3. Kohli - Union Council of Ministers.

J. Ram	Labour
Swaran Singh	External Affairs
S.K. Patil	Railways
Y.B. Chavan	Defence
N.S. Reddy	Tourism
Subrahmaniam	Agriculture
S. Choudhary	Finance
M.C. Chagla	Education
S.N. Sinha	Parliamentary Affairs
D. Sanjivaiah	Industries
Ashok Mehta	Planning
G.S. Pathak	Law
F.A. Ahmed	Irrigation

Of these only three were from the Rajya Sabha and the rest are from Lok Sabha. Shastri's team was taken in with a few minor changes though these few minor changes were seen to have given a new look to the leadership at the executive level. These new faces such as Ashok Mehta, J. Ram, S. Chowdhary, Pathak, Ahmed were all prospective leaders with in the party structure and many of them had a strong political background in their individual states in their speares of activity such as Trade Unions, cooperative moments, administrative experience apart from freedom fighting.

If we observe the cabinet formed after the fourth general elections in 1967 it appears evident that Mrs. Gandhi was

relatively free than she was in 1966 in forming her cabinet. And it also heralds the process of removing prominent party leaders from key positions in the government and encouraging newer elements. A look at the list ministers reveals that Nanda the old man did not find a place in the cabinet. It was reported that the move to drop Nanda was instigated by a young group of influential ministers such as Chavan, Subrahmaniam and Ashok Mehta.<sup>4</sup> Moreover he was a contender for the post of Prime Minister. In his place Chawan, relatively less important than Nanda, was brought to the Home Ministry. When Nanda demands the Dy Prime Ministership as a reward for relinquishing the Home Mrs. Gandhi backed out. And it was also during this period that people personally close were pampered with power such as Dinesh Singh, G.S. Pathak, Ashok Sen etc. However the 1967 Cabinet had consisted of Desai, a rightist, with Dy. Prime Ministership and finance portfolio. The change in the quality was gradual at this stage. It was to assume greater momentum in decline after the struggle for power in the party was intensified. People were not yet ignored. The party machinery was still strong so much so that Desai in a spirit of bargained consensus appointed himself even deciding what portfolio he should have<sup>5</sup>. There was continuity as well as gradual decline. Here is a list<sup>6</sup> of the Cabinet ministers appointed after the 67 elections.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Portfolio</u>
Desai (Dy. Prime Minister )	Finance

5. L.R. Sharma op cit p.75

6. Taken from Kohli opcit

- 8 -

M.C. Ghagla	External Affairs
Y.B. Chavan	Home
Dinesh Singh	Commerce
J.L. Hathi	Labour
J. Ram	Agriculture
Ashok Mehta	Planning, Petroleum
G. Menon	Law
Poonacha	Railways
R.S. Singh	Parliamentary Affairs
V.K.R.V. Rao	Transport
K.K. Shah	Information
S.N. Sinha	-
Swaran Singh	Defence
F.A. Ahmed	Industrial Development
M.C. Reddy	Steel, Mines
Trigun Sen	Education
Karan Singh	Tourism

Those who were close to the Prime Minister irrespective of their political background were promoted to place of power. For instance Channa Reddy the man from A.P. whose political base was dubious and who are later notorious for the Telangana movement was encouced in an economic ministry. Ashok Mehta in another economically vital ministry that was Petroleum, Chemicals and Company Affairs. Company Affairs was and remains an important portfolio as an area of election funding of a high

- 9 -

potential. Whoever holds it gains significance over night. Another lesser known but loyal man put in a key position was F.A. Ahmed who little later had to become a centre of a storm that split the party. A man from Assam where his standing was not very flathring though he was a minister in Assam for some time. He however served as a symbolic representative of the North East as well as the Muslim community. Another lesser known men were Trigun Sen and Dr. Karan Singh. Especially the later became a cabinet minister in the first jump itself. He however had a strong base in his home state J& K by virtue of being a scion of the Maharaja of Kashmir.

On the whole this Cabinet reflected Mrs. Gandhi's own discretion than the party's dominance in Cabinet formation. The reason for this is that many of the stalwarts lost the election including Kamraj himself. Twenty three ministers were defeated thus giving the Prime Minister a relatively free hand in pcking the men of her choice. Yet consultation within the party in the context of the cabinet formation was still not out of fashion. She paid a courtesy call on Kamaraj and showed him the list to which he said ' do as you wish'.<sup>7</sup> However it was noted that she consulted the Deputy Prime Minister also but did not show the list to him.<sup>7A</sup> Over the years Mrs. Gandhi became increasingly free in cabinet formation. She followed the party traditions in 1966 and 1967. She continued to face

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7. L.N. Sharma op cit. 76

7A. Brecher - Succession in India p.235.

- 10 -

the will of the senior party leaders and it was difficult to be totally unfettered as yet. As late as February 1969 she wanted to reorganize the cabinet but could not. No doubt the Prime Minister's position substantially changed after the congress split in 1969. The cabinet reshuffle of 1970, ostensibly for the purpose of giving a 'more cohesive look' to her cabinet after the purge of the organizational men from it, proved that she could promote some and demote others at her sweet will without the consent of the people concerned. And it is interesting to note that about this time, certain individuals assumed importance for beyond their years with party. The most prominent among them was Dinesh Singh who soon shot up from the position of a minister of state to that of a full cabinet rank with the coveted commerce portfolio. The reasons for his rise were neither his political base in UP nor his role in the freedom struggle. As late as till 1944 he was a student. What was important was his proximity to the Prime Minister and his role as the Political fixer in the language of Rajiv Gandhi a power broker - and the main hat chet man for her. His rise to power has been so spectacular and sudden that he became the target of a slanderous attack, which did not reflect too well on the Prime Minister either. He was no leftist. In fact when the question of the abolition of privy purses came up on the party for implementation as a directive from the All India Congress Committee, he organized, with his followers an opposition within the party against such a move. Dinesh Singh continued to

- 11 -

be important and wielded power for some more time till the entry of P.N. Haksar into the Prime Minister's Secretariat. Others who had started as the main pillars of the strength like Y.B. Chavan, Mehta and Subrahmaniam were gradually pushed back partly due to her reluctance to take any one into confidence save Dinesh Singh and partly because the latter himself started sowing seeds of suspicion about these people in her mind so as to gain her total confidence. This reflects too well on our contention that people with weak political background and weak social commitment were kept in key places and this process can be said to have started for all purposes and intends with Dinesh Singh who however did not remain long in lime light.

An other man who was rather demoted was Chavan who was in 1970 reshuffled from Home to finance much against his wishes. He was told that he would have to quit if not willing to take charge of finance. Earlier senior ministers used to be very sensitive,<sup>8</sup> about a change in their portfolio but that sensitivity was gradually vanishing. Chavans demotion was said to be because of his support to the party candidate Reddy for the presidential election. Soon after the Bangalore session Desai was relieved of his finance portfolio. She now had an opportunity to strike at her main rival in the drama of succession, who had been foisted as the Dy. Prime Minister against her willingness. However, it was only Desai who showed the sensitivity, the lack

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8. L.N. Sharma op cit p.83

of which we referred above. He duly resigned from the Cabinet saying that " I could have continued only at the cost of my self respect and as a silent spectator of methods that may endanger the basic principles of democracy".<sup>9</sup> Thus every shuffle and reshuffle was aimed at eliminating any body who showed any symptoms of a potential leader. No leader of any worth was kept in one ministry for more than three years and we shall see shortly in a table how significant leaders were put in insignificant ministries, how weak leaders were put in sensitive portfolios for reasons of political expediency which had in the long run under mined the development of alternative leadership at the national level.

The 1971 elections proved that the function which has Nehru blood in it only succeeds in elections. The organizational congress had been utterly trounced and the congress (R) had a triumphant return to power with populist slogans like 'garibi hatao' and the triumph of Indian troops over the Pakistanis which resulted in the creation of Bangladesh for which Mrs. Gandhi was described as the Durga which must have delighted her greatly. Coming back to the cabinet of 1971 which had the longest innings of six years because of emergency and the suspension of the constitution as a result. Now she was greatly free in constituting her cabinet as she was the leader of the government as well as the party and there was no organization to check her freedom. All that she had to see

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9. Pundit - op cit p.55.



to was the consolidation of various factions within the party like the young Turks" who were with her during the split and the left oriented group. Since was a new party new people got in to the cabinet. Seven cabinet ministers were dropped and five<sup>10</sup> new ones were included. A list of the ministers is enclosed which shows changes. The merit of these people, apart from a progressive outlook, is their proximity to the Prime Minister. Consequently Raj Bahadur was accommodated not for his political strength but for his personal loyalty to the leader.

UNION CABINET 1971 <sup>11</sup>

<u>Name</u>	<u>Ministry</u>
F.A. Ahmed	Agriculture
Chavan	Finance
J. Ram	Defence
Swaran Singh	External Affairs
M.H. Chaudhary	Industries
K.K. Shah	Health
Dixit	Works & Housing
Gokhale	Law
K. Hannumanthaiah	Railways
Mohana Kumara Mangalam	Steel & Mines
Raj Bahadur	Parliamentary Affairs
S.S. Ray	Education
Karan Singh	Tourism
C. Subrahmaniam	Planning

10. The new faces were Mangalam, H.R. Gokhale, S.S. Ray, M.H. Chowdhary, Raj Bahadur and Subrahmaniam.

11. Taken from Kohli -opcit.

- 14 -

In this cabinet regional and religious representation was taken care of with two Muslims and one Sikh representing their respective minority communities in the Union Cabinet. As Caste does not play a big role at the Union Cabinet level we don't take that into consideration except that J. Ram represented the Scheduled castes.

Many of them had a freedom fight background and held charge of administration at the state level except Karan Singh who plunged into the nation fray straightaway. The leftists who have assumed significance in the party were represented by Mangalam. And C. Subrahmaniam was a prominent figure in Tamil Nadu politics and administration so much so that Nehru once tipped him for the post of congress president to which Kamraj objected saying that he could not part company with his able and efficient finance minister.<sup>12</sup> When Kamraj was the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu Subrahmaniam was his finance minister. Gokhale was a prominent lawyer of Baroda and a man of good standing in Gujarat politics. One interesting aspect of this cabinet, however, was the relegation of Fakruddin Ali Ahmed from the powerful and prestigious ministry of industrial development in the 1967 cabinet to that of agriculture which Brecher described as the political grave-yard of all India politicians in the cabinet. It is quite cronical that though India is by and large an agrarian country with 70% of the people

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12. Kochanek - op cit p.66

- 15 -

deriving their bread and butter from agricultural occupations, at the political level it is considered a very insignificant portfolio.

Dixit and Raj Bahadur were personally close to Mrs. Gandhi and the former was the party's treasurer from the 1971 elections. But he was politically not a heavy weight and he owes his inclusion largely to Mrs. Gandhi and his proximity to her. The earlier confidant of Mrs. Gandhi like Dinesh Singh have disappeared in this cabinet, never to reappear with in our period of study. Men with strong political background and those who gave representation to weaker strata and minority community of the society were not ignored as we have already stated. Siddharth Sankar Ray was another politically strong based man from Bengal with an aura of heritage as the grand son of C.R. Das whom the nation remembers as "Deshbandhu". Another important aspect was that they all contested from their home states and that way they were said to be politically strong though they ultimately had to depend on Mrs. Gandhi's name which is another aspect altogether.

There was a major reshuffle in the cabinet in 1974 which saw some important changes giving origin to certain trends which were later on firmly established gradually. J. Ram was shifted from the strategic defence when the going was good for him with the birth of Bangladesh to the relatively unimportant agriculture ministry. And Dixit was promoted to Home.

Brahmananda Reddy was brought in to the Cabinet. So was Namla Pati Tripathi. Chavan was moved to the External Affairs ministry who was not disturbed was H.R. Gokhale who continued in the Law minister till the cabinet was dissolved in 1977. Fakruddin Ali Ahmed left the cabinet to become the controversial president of India. These changes were very radical but those adversely affected did not protest for they knew that the congress party was riding on a crest of popularity with the explosion of atom bomb in 1974 and such acts of courage. An exit from the cabinet could well prove to be their political funeral as it was amply proved in the case of organizational congress being throughly defeated.

The background of the new comers like Reddy and Tripathi was more or less the same politically and socially. Both had a weak political background with the label of ex chief ministers of Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh respectively, belonging to the upper strata of the society in the social hierarchy. A year later Reddy was to climb one step further to become the Home Minister when Dixit was sent to Karnataka as governor on a political punishment posting and came in Bansi Lal the Chief Minister of Haryana taking the Defence portfolio from Swaran Singh. This reshuffle completed the process of cutting people to a size they don't deserve and raising othersto level they don't deserve either. And this culmination only continued in the 1980 cabinet of Mrs. Gandhi which reflected the idea of "grow no more" in to a stature which would imaginarily cause

her discomfiture. Also in 1975 V.C. Shukla became the minister for information and broadcasting a portfolio of great significance in the 'thought control', to use Orwellian jargon, though the control over the mass media.

With the Emergency came a strange phenomenon in to the congress politics and thus in to the country's politics at the highest level and it was Sanjay Gandhi according to whose wishes and whims reshuffles were carried out in the cabinet to accommodate his men apart from the state level changes in the leadership initiated by him. He was reportedly behind the inclusion of Bansi Lal in to the cabinet and the removal of Dixit. These changes have shocked senior ministers into silence. Seniors or juniors - every one was expendable was the motto during this period.

After the 1978 split in the party the phenomenon of weak leaders gaining prominence at the national executive level has been firmly established so much so that in the 1980 cabinet of Mrs. Gandhi almost every leader with an important portfolio had no base in their states. Glaring examples were Narasimha Rao, Mukherjee, Siv Shankar, Venktraman, Buta Singh, Rao Birendra Singh.

UNION CABINET 1980<sup>13</sup>

<u>Name</u>	<u>Department</u>
P.V. Narasimha Rao	Foreign Affairs

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13. Taken from Kohli opcit

Zail Singh	Home
C.M. Stephen	Communications
Tripathi	Railways
Venkatraman	Finance
Ghani Khan	Energy
Mukherjee	Commerce
Kedar Pandey	Irrigation
Veerandra Patil	Petroleum
V. Sathe	Information and Broadcasting
P.C. Sethi	Works
Siv Shankar	Law
Shankaranand	Health
A.P. Sharma	Shipping
V.C. Shukla	Civil Supplies
J.B. Patnaik	Tourism
B.N. Singh	Parliamentary Affairs
Rao Birendra Singh	Agriculture
S.B. Chavan	Education
N.D. Tiwari	Planning

These leaders represented the various regions and religious of the country. Apart from that, they are socially from the upper strata of the society. For instance Venkatraman, P.V. Kukherjee, Sathe, Tripathi, were all belonging to the Brahmin community. There was representation for weaker sections via Siv Shankar and Sikhas were represented by Zail Singh and Muslims by Ghani Khan Choudhary.

- 19 -

If we see their political background there we see some ex-Chief Ministers such as Zail Singh, P.V. P.C. Sethi, Veerandra Patil, Tripathi whose political bases have by and large disappeared. Veerandra Patil, when contested as the United opposition parties joint candidate against Mrs. Gandhi in his home state Karnataka, he was defeated. Zail Singh had created a mess in the Punjab after whose tenure the opposition Akalis came to power. P.V. Narsimha Rao was a discredited Chief Minister who had to resign in the wake of an agitation.

Thus the major personalities in the cabinet were from a weak political base in their respective areas. Some were even new. Siv Shankar was a new entrant to politics after resigning as the A.P. High Court judge.

In Tamil Nadu the congress was in doldrums where the AIADMK was firmly entrenched in the state politics. So Venkatraman too had no strong political base except that he was a minister in Tamil Nadu when Congress was in power and a Trade Union leader. But he was a prominent minister at the centre first of Finance and then of Defence.

About Pranab Mukherjee what we have already stated. He never won a single direct election. He was his elevation to his proximity to Sanjay Gandhi whose influence on the cabinet formation can't be ignored in 1980.

### FACTORS AND CONSTRAINTS

There are no theoretical constraints working on the Prime Minister in the formation of the cabinet except that ministers are to be members of parliament. The constitution even made a provision saying that non-member ministers should become members within six months after assuming charge as ministers. This provision has been widely put to use over the years - not for inducting intelligentsia into the cabinet via Rajya Sabha or Lok Sabha by election. But to accommodate party elements.

However the Prime Minister of India, however powerful he/she be otherwise, is limited by compulsions of geography, religion, caste to some extent besides political and personal pressures and pulls to which we can add two more constraints during Mrs. Gandhi's tenure. They are family constraints and whimsical constraints that appeared to have had a sway over her in cabinet formation. For instance superstitious in numbers that a certain number is auspicious and that may number of ministers have to be sworn in irrespective of the fact that some are not even members of the parliament. It happened in the case of Pranab Mukherjee who was sworn in, after being defeated in the elections, because there was last minute vacancy in the list of ministers and thus he entered.

However at the conceptual level the Prime Minister as head of the government and party has to strike a balance between different groups within the party. Some times the Prime Minister is compelled to take in certain people as Mrs. Gandhi did Desai



in 1967. Other times he is resistant. There are yet others who by their own political standing are members of the cabinet the removal of who is far beyond the capacity of the Prime Minister in terms of practicablity. For instance Vallabhai Patel.

During the initial days of Mrs. Gandhi the party used to be a constraint. Cabinet formation was often preceded by Consultation with the senior party leaders and accommodating their wishes and Mrs. Gandhi did in 1966 and 1967. Suchin Choudhary was inducted at the instance of Atulya Ghosh and J. Ram at that of Kamaraj. However, after the 1969 split the Prime Minister was much more free in forming the cabinet within the natural constraints of region, religion and community. There was no powerful political force controlling her choice of action. After the 1980 elections her prerogative has become the only explanation for cabinet formation and some peoples proximity to her as an explanation for their inclusion. Most of changes during Mrs. Gandhi's tenure were due to sheer political considerations.

ANALYSIS OF UNION CABINET -(66-84)-II

## LENGTH OF TENURE IN IMPORTANT MINISTRIES

In analysing the formation of Union Cabinet in the context of leadership problems it becomes very vital to study the longesity of tenure of ministers in important portfolios or to put it otherwise the length of tenure of important ministries. The length of tenure in important ministries goes a long way to bring out qualities of leadership in the men manning those ministries and also enable them to gain adequate understanding of the complexities of administration involved in governing a vast country of India's size with its marked diversities at very many levels. It is common knowledge that people become important as ministers if the portfolios they administer are important. The most glaring example is the case of Arun Nehru who in the beginning was given a relatively less significant portfolio viz minister of state for Power. No body used to bother about him then. In a reshuffle later on he was made the minister of state for internal security with in the Home Ministry and he even over showed the Home minister himself who is a cabinet rank man. So normally if some one is to be groomed to be a potential successor he should given charge of a vital department be kept there for a reasonable period of time. If the tenure of men heading important ministries is shorter than the objective conditions necessary for the development of second line leadership don't prevail consequent upon which none could be deemed second in command even informally if not in the manner of protocol.

Protocol does not necessarily reflect the actual significance of the man concerned. For instance P.V. Narasimha Rao ranks immediately after the Prime Minister in the cabinet and even presides over its meetings in the absence of the Prime Minister. Yet he is not viewed as number two in the cabinet. He is heading a relatively unimportant ministry in the purview of which there are umpteen number of items that it would be difficult even for him to know what exact is his ministry concerned with.

In this part of the chapter on the Union Cabinet analysis we made a study of the lengths of tenure in important ministries and try to see the logic, if any (or lack of it) governing the Cabinet reshuffles which have become so frequent a phenomenon of later so much so that one finds it difficult to predict when the next reshuffle will take place. Our period of study for this analysis is Mrs. Gandhi's tenure which begins in 1966 and ends in 1984 save a brief interlude between 77 and 79. It is roughly a period of fifteen years during which there were many shuffles and reshuffles which we shall now. And we divide the entire cabinet into three categories. One is strategic portfolios such as Home, Defence, Foreign Affairs, Information and Broadcasting

The other categories are Economic portfolios and miscellaneous portfolios. Under the former we include Finance, Industries, Petroleum & Chemical, Foreign Trade and Commerce, Transport. Under the miscellaneous section come culture, education, health, tourism, housing, parliamentary affairs, communications, Labour and Justice and so forth.

Thus the men who head vital portfolio become vital too in terms of power and proximity to the Prime Minister. However there are certain exceptions. During Nehru's time Azad who headed the education ministry. The Home minister K.N. Katju who succeeded Patel shortly after his death was a political light weight. These were more of exceptions than of rules. To start with, a factual analysis of the 1966-84 it would be fruitful to have an idea about the issue during the period of Nehru's primiership. It has been said by many political observers and theorists that the length of duration of ministers in Nehru's cabinet used to be long. Though there were shuffles and reshuffles the men in key portfolios were not disturbed. For instance C.D. Deshmukh a bureaucrat was Finance minister under Nehru from 1950 to 1956. G.B. Pant was Home Minister from 1955 till his death in 1961. Morarji Desai was finance minister from 1958 till 1963 when he resigned under the Kamaraj plan to take up party work. Railway portfolio was held by J. Ram for five years at a stretch from 1957 to 62. During Mrs. Gandhi's tenure there were as many as eleven ministers manning the Railways. The average tenure in most ministries, during Mrs. Gandhi's rule is just two and half years as we have shown it tabularly in the following pages.

Now let us see the length of tenure tabularly. Home 1966-84 total years 15 (excluding Janata).

1966	Nanda
1967-70	Chavan

1971-72	Indira Gandhi
1973-74	U.S. Dixit
1975-77	K.B. Reddy
1980-82	Zail Singh
1982	Venkatraman
1984	P.V. Narasimha Rao
	(Average tenure is ████████ 2 years)

DEFENCE

1966	Chavan
1967-69	Swaran Singh
1970-74	J. Ram
1975	Swaran Singh
1975-77	Bansi Lal
1980-82	Mrs. Gandhi
1982-84	Venkatraman
	(Average tenure is 2.5 years)

FINANCE

1966	S. Choudhary
1967-69	Desai
1969-71	Mrs. Gandhi
1971-74	Chavan
1975-77	Subrahmaniam
1980-82	Venktraman
1982-84	P.K. Mukherjee
	(Average tenure is ████████ 2.5 years)

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

66	Swaran Singh
67	M.C. Chagla
67-68	Mrs. Gandhi

1969-70	Dinesh Singh
1970-74	Swaran Singh
1975-77	Chavan
1980-84	P.V. Narasimha Rao

(Average tenure is ~~2.5~~ 2.5 years per minister)

AGRICULTURE

1966	Subhramaniam
1967-69	J. Ram
1970-74	Fakruddin
1974-77	J. Ram
1980	Rao Birendra Singh
1981	
1984	Rao Birendra Singh

(Average tenure : 2.5 years)

COMMERCE

1966	Manubhai Shah
1967-68	Dinesh Singh
	B.R. Bhagat
	Chattopadhyay

P.K. Mukherjee (Average tenure: 3 years)

INDUSTRY

From 1966	D. Sanjivaiah
	Fakruddin
	Dinesh Singh
	M.H. Choudhary
	T.A. Pai
	N.D. Tiwari

(Average tenure: 2.75 years)

PETROLEUMS & CHEMICALS

Ashok Mehta

Trigun Sen

D.K. Barua

P.C. Sethi

Verendra Patil

Siv Shankar

Vasant Sathe

INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING

K.K. Shah

V. Sathe

Raj Bhadur,

K.V. Seskar,

I.K. Gujral

Mrs. Satpati

Sher Singh

Jagbir Singh

Mrs. Ram Dulari Sinha

V.N. Gadgil

STEEL AND MINES

Chenna Reddy

Poonacha

Trigun Sen

B.R. Bhagat

Mohan Kumar Mangalam

P.K. Mukherjee

N.D. Tiwari. (Average tenure 2.5 years)

- 7 -

RAILWAYS

S.K. Patil

Poonacha

R.S. Singh

Nanda

Hanumanthiah

T.A. Pai

L.N. Misra

Kamla Pati Tripathi

Kedar Pandey

P.C. Sethi

Ghani Khan Chaudhary

Thus the preceding tabular study of the tenure of occupancy in key ministries is sorrowfully short. There was reshuffle every year and often they are guided by an irrational pragmatism if it may be said so. These reshuffles lacked reason or rhyme. If we take the period from 69 to 1977 as one part and 1980 to 84 as another part, the reasons for this division being two splits, one is nominal defeat and of course an excruciating eighteen months of emergency the first part, till 1974 was slight better in the sense that men with strong political bases were kept in key portfolios though for a much shorter period. Important men like Chavan, J.Ram, Swaran Singh, Fakruddin and Karan Singh who were there all along the period from 66 to 77 held key portfolios for some time or the other save Karan Singh who



headed Tourism and Civil Aviation a hardly significant portfolio except that it gave representation to Kashmir in the cabinet. Shufflings and reshufflings, so frequent they were, which undermined the growth of alternatives were more often than not were carried out due to political vendata rather than due to administrative inability. For instance Chavan was shifted from the strategic home portfolio to finance in 1969 shortly after the Bangalore session of the AICC because he supported the organizational candidate Sanjiv Reddy against Mrs. Gandhi's candidate Jagjivan Ram. It was reported that Mrs. Gandhi said 'Those who humiliated me will have to face the consequences'. And short came the reshuffle much to Chavan's changing. He was given a dichotomous option of do or die. Shuffle to finance or exit from the cabinet was the alternative before him. Earlier senior ministers used to be very sensitive about a change in their portfolio, so much so that when TTK was asked by Nehru to join the cabinet the former insisted on the finance portfolio. Since it was already filled by Desai by then, a special portfolio of economic and defence production was created for TTK. Two years afterwards TTK took over finance of course coming back to Chavan, he held four ministries from the period 66 to 77 with an average tenure of 2.5 years per portfolio. We have seen the average tenure of ministers in important ministries with the ministry as an invariable. Now we shall see the tenures of ministers with ministers as invariables. Chavan's longest tenure was four years when he was the finance minister from

- 9 -

1970 to 1974. He was external affairs minister for three years and that was the dawn of his political debacle. External Affairs as a ministry is a key position though, the minister manning it has little to do with it. It is supervised by the Prime Minister as the chief spokesman of the country's foreign policy. The minister's major job is rather symbolic. He represents the mind of the Prime Minister in international conferences and his own leadership has little use. Even his initiative and over enthusiasm sometimes costs him the job itself as it is said to have happened in the case of B.R. Bhagat, a very recent example. Though we don't know for sure the exact reasons for his exit he is reported to have said that the American pressure was the reason. This is reported in the press.

Sensitive portfolios in general were held by people of smaller stature. They were kept there for political reasons. The economic portfolios for instances are very important because it is through them that the party coffers are filled to meet the election expenditure which has over the years risen to an astronomic figure per candidate. It is common knowledge that the party foots the bill. Loyalty to the Prime Minister was the sole criterion for appointment to these ministries. Not that the criterion was slackened in the case of other ministries. But here proximity matters much. There is a causal relationship between business and politics every where. Business controls politics through funding and politics in turn controls business through the system of state control and licences. People with a personality of some standing or the other fact not held these

portfolios for a long time now. After TTK and Morarji Desai there was Chavan for some time. Later on the Mukherjees and Venkatramans held them for reasons of political expediency. Even so people are not allowed to remain longer. For instance Venkatraman's popularity has gone up with the IMF loan sanction. Soon after he was shifted to Defence. It is very difficult to say whether it was a promotion or a demotion but the rationale behind it, if any is highly incomprehensible.

How this has led to the crisis in our problem. For any body to become an able administrator of a given portfolio and to become a leader in his own right he ought to have vital knowledge of vital departments. In a very short span of time it is difficult to understand the nature of issues the ministry is concerned with and the kind of solutions needed to sort out problems. Before he acquires even a smattering knowledge he is shunted to some other ministry. It results partly in killing the initiative and partly in instilling a sense of uncertainty in the minister concerned. He may at best be a jack of all trades but master of none and this is very certain. But a country as complex as ours and also a government as cumbersome as ours demands longevity of tenure for efficient administration of the ministry and for a good standing in the government for the minister concerned. But that is hardly possible a game of irrational pragmatism called shuffles and reshuffles which take reason <sup>of</sup> rhyme.

We shall now see the men who continued in Nehru's as well as Mrs. Gandhi's cabinets, see the portfolios held and the duration in each one.

NAME	PORTFOLIO IN NEHRU'S (52-64)	DURATION YEARS	IN MRS GANDHI'S (66-77)	DURATION YEARS
J. Ram	Communication	4.5	Labour	2
	Railways	5	Agriculture	7
	Transport	1	Defence	4
Y. B. Chavan (average tenure 3 years)	Defence	2	Defence	1
	-		Home	4
	-		Finance	4
	-		Ext. Aff.	4
Nanda	Planning	7	Home	1
	Labour	5	Railways	1
	Home	1	-	
Morarji Desai	Commerce	3	Finance	2
	Finance	5		
Swaran Singh (Average tenure 3.5 years)	Works	4.5	Ext. Aff.	5
	Steel	5	Defence	4.5
	Railways	1	Steel	1
	Food	1		

From this table it becomes evident that Nehru gave a longer duration for ministers in their individual portfolios. A man like J. Ram who was a potential leader was dumped in agriculture

a graveyard in the cabinet for seven years during Mrs. Gandhi's regime. He was given charge of defence and when he was riding high with the victory of Indian forces over the Pakistan and created Bangladesh he was reshuffled to agriculture. He was never given charge of Home.

Instead relatively low statured people were put in the such as Brahmananda Reddy and Uma Shankar Dixit. This naturally leads to a kind of constipation in the development of alternative leadership. J. Ram was a man with an administrative ability and efficiency but was put in agriculture for seven years. When he was riding high in defence he was shifted to agriculture. And because Chavan did not support Mrs. Gandhi's candidate for the presidential election at the time of party nomination he was a year later shifted to finance from home. The delay was to avoid an impression that the shuffle was borne of political vendatta. But it was clear enough to see the 'rationale' behind it. Again when F.A. Ahmed was assuming prominence in the party after being in the centre of the storm in 1969 he was shifted to the political grave yeard which we already referred to earlier.

Thus the only logical that political analysts could discern from these changes was a conscious attempt to see that none grows to a stature of respectability which may over shadow the Prime Minister herself. The moment some one was progressing he was shifted. V. Sathe made a name as information minister. But he was shifted to energy and a non entity was entrusted with information portfolio.

Now we shall see other ministers who continued in Mrs. Gandhi's cabinet with in our period of study:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Portfolio</u>
Karan Singh	Tourism Health
F.A. Ahmed	Education Industry Agriculture
Dinesh Singh	Commerce Ext. Affairs Industries
Dixit	Works Home Shipping
Brahmanand Reddy	Communication Home
P.V. Narasimha Rao	Ext. Affairs Home
P.K. Mukherjee	Commerce Finance
Zail Singh	Home
Venkatraman	Finance Defence

- 14 -

Siv Shankar	Law
	Petroleum
	Energy
V. Sathe	Information
	Chemicals

On analysis what we find is that the average tenure is too short for any man to grow into a stature of respect in terms of governmental performance and administrative efficiency. Those people whose average tenure is longer are kept in insignificant portfolios such as Karam Singh in Tourism and J. Ram in food and agriculture. The trend after 1980 leaves much to be desired. Cabinet shuffles and reshuffles are governed by a logic which was best known to Mrs. Gandhi herself. Her actions have turned out to be monstrously incomprehensible even to keen observers of the country's politics. No one could predict what move she made. The rule was to keep things close to the chest.

The trend of assigning important portfolios to politically weak based persons has been firmly established. For instance Pranab Mukherjee who could not win a single election directly has been elevated to the post of number two with the coveted finance ministry. He had to be accommodated in the Rajya Sabha from Gujarat. Another recent example, the present Prime Minister has followed, is the case of Shiv Shankar who was defeated in the general elections but is accommodated in the Rajya Sabha from Gujarat and is given an important portfolio - External Affairs. So is the case with Narasimha Rao who lost the election in his own state.

While studying the Union Cabinet during Mrs. Gandhi's regime we have kept in mind three aspects. One is the Socio-political background of the dramatic personal - that is whether their social commitment and political strength allow them to grow into leaders of prominence. The other is the longesity of duration of important ministries. That is whether vital ministries had any continuity and stability in the leadership that led them. If important ministries have shorter duration of tenure the focus, the philosophy and the underlying ideology may change. Everyday minister has his own way of functioning which will influence the ministry and consequently the efficiency of administration may come into question. And the third aspect is the portfolios held by individual ministers and whether these provide them sufficient impetus to rise to a certain level of leadership. If a prominent member of the cabinet is assigned a portfolio like culture or agriculture there is hardly scope for them to grow in gaining expertise and efficiency in governance. This tabulation is also attempted and wherever possible we compared it with Nehru's time to make the decline appear obvious. For instance if a minister incharge of Defence is shifted to agriculture that is a demotion in terms of power.

So this just mentioned third categorisation enables us to see if important men are kept in key portfolios and if so far how long they were allowed to stay on. Our observation reveals that the largest tenure of a minister in one portfolio is seven years. Jagjivan Ram head the food and agriculture department for seven years with intermissions followed by Karan



Singh who held charge of Tourism for six years and Health and family welfare for another four years.

Jean Blondel in his classic work 'Executive government' remarked that during Nehru's tenure the continuity factor was very much present between ministers and ministries, but after his daughter had taken up the mantle of governance tenure of ministers has been shorter. With the average tenure of ministries to 2.5 years and the ministers too not more than 3 years in many cases. These developments led to situation where in none was capable of entering into her shoe. None had the administrative experience for any longer in any one portfolio nor the political potential in terms of support from the party. Political background as we have noted already has become more or less irrelevant in this era of charismatic politics. When the decline in the quality of cabinet and the crisis in leadership.

CHAPTER - VPOLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN CONGRESS

( KAMRAJ PLAN TO MRS. GANDHI'S

The Indian National Congress, said to be a movement to achieve independence to the country from the yoke of foreign rule had undergone metamorphical changes after the independence. It became a political party soon after, contesting elections and winning them with a remarkable ease. The Indian National Congress has been an extra-ordinarily successful party in recruiting new members, winning elections and avoiding fragmentation.<sup>1</sup> However that may be, the leadership in the party became rather weak with all the stalwards joining Nehru who took up the reins of administration in free India as its Prime Minister. That occurred a large *lacuna* in terms of leadership at the national level in the party men had been taken into the government. The party, as a result of the 'exodus', was rendered very weak.

Added to this was what Kochanek calls was the dawn of a period of convergence<sup>2</sup> polity over party affairs. The relationship of one section of the party to another has been a constant problem. At any given level of the party- the district, state or national organizations - there are at least three different 'sections': (a) organizational units - the mandal taluk, district, State and national committees, (b) legislative and ministerial units the village panchayats, samithis, Zilla parishads, legislatures or parliament. Some individuals may be active in both the sections<sup>3</sup>. Individual congressmen more typically are active

1. M. Weiner - Party building in new nation - preface.

2. Kochanek - Congress party p.54

3. M. Weiner - op cit p.42

- 2 -

and identified with only one section and that was the government wing. Problems in the relations of congressmen in one section to those in another arose at various levels but more prominently at the national level.

It is in this backdrop we have to study the leadership within the party in the context of the Kamaraj Plan which was claimed to be a device to infuse vigour and vitality to the party organization. Before the plan came into effect the organizational leadership was in a very poor shape. In the period from 1946 to 1963 the role of the congress president evolved from that of the powerful symbol of national leadership to that of party chairman.<sup>4</sup> This transformation was far from tranquil. In the early years especially, the uniqueness of the problem, the lack of clear cut precedents, ideological splits and leadership conflicts all combined to create severe stresses. Unity was restored to the congress only when Nehru centralized the leadership of the party and the leadership of the government in his own hands. Nehru's position became so dominant that people began to ask 'who after Nehru'. Over work and a desire to give less basis to the feeling that he was indispensable brought Nehru to a decision to give up the office of congress president in 1954.<sup>5</sup> But Weiner writes that when he stepped down in 1954 as party president he selected his own candidate and thereafter no one became the president without the approval of the Prime Minister.<sup>6</sup> Even Kochanek says the same

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4. Kochanek - op cit p.73

5. Ibid. p.73

6. Weiner - op cit p.43

thing. The superemacy of the Prime Minister was never more evident than during the decade comprising the period of centralization and convergence. During this period each candidate for party president had to receive Prime Minister's personal endorsement and once in office the chief executive of the party lacked the stature to challenge the Prime Minister's authority. The congress president became the chairman of the party responsible for its day to day operations and exercising even the responsibility under the supervision of the Prime Minister and senior congress leaders in the cabinet.<sup>7</sup>

The statement made by the Congress president Mr. Reddy in the early sixties is an excellent summary of the decline of leadership in the party:

I am fully aware that the presidentship of the Indian National Congress does not now carry the same weight as it did before, during the days of the freedom struggle. During those halcyon days the congress was a dynamic organization, in opposition to the rule of one the mightiest empires that the world had ever seen. It was, therefore, manned and led by the best brains in the country and the finest patriot that the country could throw up usually became the president. But after the achievement of independence there has been a division of all available talent in the country between the organizational wing of the party and its governmental wing. There should be no friction in these wings and both should function in a spirit of cooperation endeavour in order to 8  
conduce to the best advantage of the nation.

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7. Kochanek - op cit p.74

8. N. Sanjiv Reddy - Presidential address, INC delivered in Bangalore in 1960 at the Sixty-fifth Session.

That statment best explains the nature of leadership in the party. The very circumstances under which people like debar, Mrs. Gandhi, Sanjiv Reddy and Sanjivaiah became president of the party prevented them from challenging the Prime Minister. By this time the congress president was commonly described as functioning like no more than "a glorified office boy of the congress central government headed by the Prime Minister".<sup>9</sup> And Sanjiv Reddy bitterly complained to a friend that as congress president he was treated as "Mrs. Gandhi's chaprasi".<sup>10</sup> It was under these circumstances that Kamaraj plan had to be understood partly.

To term the rut that had set in the party affairs Kamaraj the erstwhile chief minister of Tamil Nadu came up with a startling plan to revitalize the party and its leadership - the device is popularly known as the Kamaraj plan according to which all those leaders who were above gears old should give up their governmental assignments and join the party machinery to strengthen the organisation. The process was accelerated by the introduction of this plan the election of Kamaraj as Congress president.<sup>11</sup> Even Nehru, sensitive to the changes that there is a steep decline in the quality of the party leadership and the organisation ceased to play a vital role in the national political affairs, he undertook to revitalize the party. The device he decided up on was the Kamaraj plan. However Nehru realized the the need only towards the end of his life when stalwarts returned

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9. Moreas - India Today p.98

10. Brecher - Nehru's Mantle p.131

11. Kochanek - Congress party p.75

to their earlier roles in the structure.<sup>12</sup>

Kamaraj plan as we have already said was a proposal that called for senior congress in the government to step down from office in order to devote full time to party organizational work. After independence this was perhaps the first major attempt to revitalize the party that got itself busy with government at the cost of the organizational strengths. Kochenek suggests that the genesis and appeal of the plan must be viewed in the light of two significant earlier developments. The Chinese attack in 1962 and the fluctuating electoral fortunes of the congress. The first showed signs of weakness in the government policy and the second the weakness of the party leadership. Both the events had come as a rude shocks to the party as well as the polity.

Especially the Chinese attack had profound impact on the congress party. The defeat in 1962 under lined the failure of Nehru's China policy and weakened his position as Prime Minister and slackened his boa constrictor kind hold on the party. Added to this, the rising prices, increased taxes, drastical financial measures and the continuation emergency declaration all aroused opposition; and as if stringent policies were not enough to jeopardise the popularity of the congress government, a revival of factionalism within the party itself brought about still greater resentment. In this milieu the party suffered electoral defeat in three important by elections which was a major psychological blow when Kriplani, Lohia and Masani some the government's

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12. Kothari - Politics in India.

- 6 -

bitterest critics got elected to the parliament defeating the congress candidates. The opposition, the press and the congress itself tended to perceive these developments as a protest against government policy. And there were demands from the organization that the leadership convene a session of the party to discuss these issues.

All these disheartening developments have rendered a sort of urgency on the part of the senior leaders in the party to discuss Kamaraj's plan to strengthen and restalize the party. Although Kamaraj was publicly the author of the proposal which was named after him, Brecher argued that the idea infact originated with Biju Patnaik, a young and dynamic leader from Orissa. It was the latter who persuaded the former to make the formal proposal. Kamaraj was very receptive to the idea. He was himself thinking on similar lines of himself resigning to the chief Ministership of Madras and devote full time to party affairs in the wake of the growing influence of DMK, a Tamil oriented pasochial party. Kamaraj and Patnaik discussed the plan with Nehru who was at first reluctant but later on he was converted. Charecteristically he then offered to be the first to resign.<sup>13</sup> When the working committee met to discuss the defeat from China and in elections, Kamaraj was ready to submit his bold simple proposal "that leading congressmen who are in government should voluntarily relinquish their ministerial posts and offer themselves for full time organizational work". The great significance of the plan lies

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13. Kochanek - op cit p.78

- 7 -

not so much in revitalizing the party as to pave the way for succession to Nehru. Whether Kamaraj ever intended this to be the real effect of his plan is not known. He did not appear to have said anything like that even much later. As a result of this plan a list of twelve names was released which consisted of six top ranking central ministers and six chief ministers. The central ministers were Desai, Shastri, J.Ram, S.K. Patil, Gopal Reddy and Shrimali. The chief ministers were Kamaraj himself, Patnaik, Gulam Mohmed, Jha, C.B. Gupta and Mandolor.

This step has overnight added a new dimension to the prestige of the party leadership for the first time since independence and now all eyes were cast on the post of the party president as this assumed great weight all of a sudden. The swift implement of the plan had put Nehru in poor light vis-a-vis his critics who attributed winning to him and described it a "design to get rid of people". Later on it turned out to be one of elimination of some in the struggle for succession after Nehru. However to many people inside and outside the party, Kamaraj plan indicated that the Gandhian spirit of sacrifice and servile was still alive in the congress. J.P. Narayan while appreciating the plan warned that what the plan accomplished would depend on the role of the Prime Minister, for "it is he who has largely been responsible for undermining the party leadership". Under Nehru, Narayan added, the feeling had grown that "the Congress president had been reduced to the position of a head clerk and none counted unless he held high office".



However Nehru was accused of having carried a "bloodless purge" within the Cabinet and the plan came in for criticism from within when S.K. Patil said " I am not ridiculing the plan, but " if some one uses it for his own purpose or uses it for getting rid of a minister whom he does not like, then I will say Kamaraj never intended that".<sup>14</sup> Morarji Desai who did not say anything at that time later confessed in Brecher that in retrospect after the battle for succession, it seemed to have been motivated not only to get rid of him, but also pave the way for Mrs. Gandhi to the Prime Ministership", just as his father Motilal passed on the congress presidency to him in 1929".<sup>15</sup>

Whatever the motives in implementing the Kamaraj plan and despite the plan's failure to accomplish its stated objectives, there is no doubt that the plan had a profound effect on the congress during the months which preceded Nehru's death. It added new vigour to the congress presidency, gave new prestige to the working committee and was ultimately to play vital role in the succession.<sup>16</sup>

When election to the congress president was round the corner there was a sudden fascination with organizational affairs. And Shastri and Desai were two important contenders. However there was no bitter and protracted contest as the issue was settled in a dramatic fashion with a remarkable ease and expertise when Atulay Ghosh silently suggested the name of Kamaraj "unknown to himself" Nehru replied in the affirmative and the proposal was accepted unanimously.

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15. Brecher op. cit p.14

BIRTH OF THE SYNDICATE

Behind this deceptive simple resolution lay a scheme worked out by several major congress figures from non Hindi states at a conference, before the working committee where Kamaraj's name was accepted. This conference has since been called the Tirupati conclave and those who attended it to be known as the "Syndicate" which was to play a vital role in matters of succession on two occasions later. The purpose of the conclave was to retain the control of congress presidency and to prevent it from falling to Desai. The participants were Kamaraj, Sanjiv Reddy, S.Nijilingappa Atulya Ghosh and S.K. Patil, not present but a prior to it. As for what transpired there, Sanjiv Reddy has given an account. At Tirupati, according to him, it was decided that Shastri should be chosen as the next president of the congress. If he should refuse, a contingency plan called for Kamaraj to be elected. Thus when Shastri's bear of an open conflict with Desai lead him to decline the office, the name of Kamaraj was immediately proposed and accepted. This quick and swift execution evidently caught Desai of guard. Desai saw little reason in considering the matter so early but the consensus was clear. Although no one clearly realized it at that time, the first battle for succession was over. And Morarji Desai lost it. And not only did the syndicate engineer the election of Kamaraj as congress president, it also managed to secure the election of its own candidates to the working committee as to have a clear majority for

- 10 -

itself. The Syndicate has successfully blocked the election of C.B. Gupta, a Desai supporter to the working committee. This happened during the Bhubaneswar session of the congress. The solidarity displayed by the Syndicate during this session continued to operated through out the period of the first succession in 1964 after Nehru's death.<sup>17</sup>

Now the congress organizational leadership has firmly established itself and any one competing for succession had to, of necessity, seek the support of the Syndicate without which his chances will be extremely bleak. For the first time since independence a Prime Ministerial candidate had to depend on the party leadership for support, unlike during the period of convergence and concentrate of power in the hands of the Prime Minister during which each candidate for the *president's* post had to seek the personal endorsement of the Prime Minister and, after election, had to work under his overall control which means one has to *bask* in the reflected glory of the Prime Minister.

The implementation of the Kamaraj plan and the subsequent election of Kamaraj as Congress president took on a hero significance in early 1964 when Nehru suffered a stroke. By removing from office four of the most likely candidates for succession, the Kamaraj plan had already up set the seniority pattern in the cabinet which might have been used to claim legitimacy for a succession. In addition the plan, as we have already seen, had

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17. Kochanek - op cit p.55

- 11 -

enhanced the prestige and authority of the congress presidency which was in the hands of the Syndicate, after a period of decline in the quality and stature of the leadership of the party, by bringing to the national scene in the person of Kamaraj himself a powerful figure equipped to deal with events.<sup>18</sup>

This stroke suffered by Nehru had set off the struggle for succession which took the form of grooming a succession at the eleventh hour, ironically enough. It was an irony because the process of grooming a successor occurs over a period of time and not suddenly one fine or foul morning. Probably Nehru was also not to blame for this. Being a man in favour of conciliation and averse to conflict, it could be argued, he did not want to create any schism in the party by grooming a successor. There were many contenders for the post - such as Desai, Shastri, Nanda and etc. Had, Patel, the Indian Bismarck, been alive succession would not have been a problem in the first place. Naturally he would have unquestionably, been the contender for that much coveted post. All these machinations would not have been necessary. Since Patel's death there was no deputy Prime Minister to look after Nehru's work and such an appointment would have serious and far reaching repercussions in the struggle for power. As a result the right, left and the centre of the congress tried desperately to influence the Prime Minister's decision. And from the beginning it was evident that Shastri was the natural selection for this post.

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18. Kochanek - op cit p.86

- 12 -

though it was vigorously opposed by left wing Krishna Menon and right wing Desai's supporters who saw in the possible recall of Shastri, who resigned from the cabinet under the Kamaraj plan, as a clear indication that the Kamaraj plan had been used to squeeze Desai out of the cabinet and prevent him from becoming the Prime Minister. The primary support for Shastri came from the same coalition of leaders called the Syndicate who had seen to Kamaraj's election. The major figure behind the scene was Kamaraj himself. It was, however, decided to recall<sup>19</sup> Shastri to the cabinet as a minister without portfolio instead of as Deputy Prime Minister as suggested earlier to avoid factionalism in the party at this stage. The drama had already begun even before the curtains were raised. To many it appeared that Nehru's recall of Shastri was a clear indication of his sympathies in regard to his successor. To Kamaraj, it seemed that Shastri would be able to ensure stability during the transition period that would follow Nehru's disability or death. Even when the vague definition of Shastri's role as minister without portfolio. Prevented ~~it~~ too open an assumption that the succession problem was over and it met the objections of senior cabinet members who refused to be subordinated by the minister without portfolio, the very fact that Shastri had been recalled obviously placed him in a strategic position in the contest for succession and conferred on him the blessings of Nehru as an acceptable succession.

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19. Kamaraj had the longest session of consultation, with Nehru permitted since his illness in which transpired the name of Shastri to be recalled to the cabinet.

### THE FIRST SUCCESSION

The necessity of finding an answer to the long debated question of 'After Nehru who?' , had to be faced sooner than most people had anticipated. On May 27, 1964, only a few months after his stroke and shortly after the recall to Shastri, Nehru suffered a final and fatal stroke. The moment of succession had arrived. Intensified maneuvering by the right, left and centre was renewed at most immediately. Within hours of the tragedy, G.L. Nanda, the senior most member of the cabinet was designated to act as an interim Prime Minister till the party could meet and elect a successor. It was argued that his tactic<sup>20</sup> was engineered by Kamaraj who persuaded Radhakrishnan another man from Madras. The country's president to appoint an interim Prime Minister till the final selection could be made. Surprisingly the constitution is conspicuous by its silence as to the procedure for appointing a Prime Minister during sudden instances of death or disability. It is not mentioned whether an interim Prime Minister was necessary. But a convention had come into vogue since, which has of late been broken in a fever to break all conventions.

Now every thing depended on the party's leadership - that is the president and the Syndicate of which he was a part and parcel - to select a leader and there backing was since qua non for any body who wished to join the fray for succession. Shastri, however, had a clear majority in the congress parliamentary party,

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20. Brecher - Succession p.194.

- 14 -

because of his backing by the Syndicate. Desai had from the beginning been at a disadvantage though he still entertained the idea of his success in the succession drama. His supporters thought they could discourage Shastri by threatening an open conflict.<sup>21</sup> As a precedent they pointed to his refusal a few months before to stand for the congress presidency - a refusal which they attributed to his distaste for conflict. He was, much more than Nehru, a man too much found of compromise and concensus and not conflict and confrontation. The strategy of the left wing of the party was to attempt to postpone the selection of a successor indefinitely, for, like the ~~RIGHTS~~, they believed that Shastri would prefer any alternative to our open conflict.<sup>22</sup> The left wing had Mrs. Gandhi in mind and they hoped that eventually support could be rallied in favour of Mrs. Gandhi. However both were mistaken as the stakes were higher and the circumstances had changed. Although professing a unanimous election, Shastri's backers insisted that, if necessary, the challenge of open contest would be met. Behind the scene hectic operations were going on to mobilize support for Shastri.

Meanwhile, with the support of president Radhakrishnan, Kamaraj was working for a unanious election. Kamaraj had thrown his own support to Shastri, whom he had persuaded to fight if necessary. Kamaraj the undisputed leader of the party was all out to stall Desai's chances. He would even accept Nanda, it was reported, the interim Prime Minister in case of deadlock. By

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21. Kochanek - op cit p.88

22. Ibid p.88

- 15 -

May 30 first three days after Nehru's death, Kamaraj appeared to have lined up 60 to 65 percent of the parliamentary party to vote for Shastri, but he had not yet convinced Desai of the futility of a contest. The dominant theme of Kamaraj's talk all the time was that 'what ever we must do be done with unity and dignity.'<sup>23</sup> This indeed was his motto through the six days of this *titillating* drama of succession characterised by a breaking suspense in spite of all the indications that Shastri was to be the man to stral the show. The spectacle had been reported in detail in the press though out the country and abroad because of the stature of Nehru in world politics and his seeming indespensability to India. By two three days after the death of Nehru Kamaraj met about 200 M.P.'s, individually and in groups. In a period of four hours he talked to 100 M.P.s. This led to remark that the poll must be perfunctory and in a sense it was Kamaraj knows no Hindi and does not feel at home with English. So that exchange must have been brief, suggests Brecher. Some consicatured it thus 'Shastri. Yes or no', the president says or even more *bricly* 'I like Shastri, whom do you like?'<sup>24</sup>

The working decided to hold the election immediately, thus dashing the hopes of the left wing for postponement. The right wing was so despondent that one of Desai's followers was noted saying "We have lost the fight."<sup>25</sup> The Desai supporters had hoped

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23. Ibid. p.89

24. Brecher - Succession p.64

25. Kochener - op cit p.90



that the election would be thrown open without outside interference. and so they started mobilizing individual members of the party parliamentary wing. Although that, the pressures for unanimity were so great that all challenges were weakened.

Before the formal meeting of the wing to elect its leader it was clear that Kamaraj had accomplished his objective the unanimous election of Shastri was ensured and after a halt an hour talk with Kamaraj, Desai announced that he would second Shastri's nomination at the meeting. It had taken less than a week to find an answer to the prolonged question of "After Nehru Who". And thus Shastri became the successor of Nehru. He emerged, even before the election as the "strong man of India" in news paper editorials<sup>26</sup> and wherever he went the crowds cheered him dashing the suspicion for once that charisma was necessary to the Prime Minister.

#### A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE ELECTION

What contributed to Shastri's victory? There were a host of factors that came to his help and of them all the most important was of course the backing of the party leadership. Some of the themes coming out of it are as follows:

- (1) The Kamaraj Plan's implementation which resulted in the "great purge" of the cabinet was to the detriment of Desai and J.Ram. Nanda though in the Cabinet was a light weight. If Desai remained in the cabinet instead of Nanda, he would have been number two and a strong contender.

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26. Ibid. p.96

(2) The assumption of party presidency by Kamaraj was the most important factor. If placed the presidency and the Syndicate in a position to influence indeed shape the succession, certainly to manage it in an orderly fashion. This is evident from the beginning. The unconceded eagerness of the Syndicate to recall Shastri to the cabinet. Indeed every week of his presence in the cabinet enhanced his prospects of victory while the competing candidates, the 'have nots' observed with controlled anger from after.<sup>27</sup>

(3) The support base of the two main rivals was again very important. Where as Shastri had an backing of the organization, Morarji sought support in the parliamentary wing to the exclusion of the party. The chief minister were with the organization and they could influence the M.Ps of their respective states in support of Shastri where as Desai got his support only from Gujarat. Even Maharashtra did not extend him support for the 1956 incident when he as the chief minister of Bombay took majority of his cabinet from Gujarat region, neglecting the Bombay region.

(4) The inclusion of J.Ram and the seeming disinterest of Nanda strengthened Shastri's chances. J.Ram first backed Desai, through his support and Mrs. Gandhi finally proclaiming him self a candidate. Even Indira Gandhi's role was some what obscure by the personal tragedy the utterly passive nature of her involvement in the process except indicating her support for the continuation of the interim arrangements i.e. Nanda as the Prime Minister.

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27. Ibid. 107

It was suggested as part of her own strategy to succeed her further a few months later.

(5) Another factor that played a major role was regionalism. U.P. the most populous state in India is very decisive in terms of leadership by virtue of having the maximum seats in parliament. C.B. Guptas own faction revolted against support Morarji than a local son Shastri.

All these factors clubbed with the role of the party syndicate made Shastri the Prime Minister. We have already studied his nature in our chapters the evolution of the Prime Minister's office and the Analysis on cabinet formation. Though people expected the old quarrel between party leaders and polity leaders to once again arise which characterised the early independence period resulting in the resignation of Kriplani and later Tandon as party presidents, that in fact did not arise. To a very large extent this harmony can be attributed to Shastri's consensus leadership.<sup>27</sup> For one thing Kamaraj found his power declining while Shastri was confident that he continued to be the choice of the party and people and that Kamaraj had "neither the pretension nor ambition to occupy the centre of the stage"<sup>28</sup> However Shastri's triumph was short lived, very tragically. At Tashkent within hours of signing a declaration with Pakistan Shastri succumbed to a heart attack. For the second time in less than two years India face the problem of second succession. That too much

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27. Ibid. 105

28. Brecher - Nehru Mantle p.132

before the nation could recover from the dramatic shock of Nehru's death.

### THE SECOND SUCCESSION

The congress leadership was utterly unprepared to meet this eventuality unlike the case in the first instance barely two years ago. And finding a successor to Shastri proved much more difficult than answering 'who after Nehru'. Several factors contributed to this quandary. In the first place the party leadership was not very strong. Shastri's emergence as a leader in his own right and the south Indian language riots had tarnished Kamaraj's image some what. The shocking unexpectedness of Shastri death had caught the congress unawares. The Syndicate having lost its position acted in decisively. As a result of this there was no candidate able to command the wide spread support that Shastri enjoyed. The pressures for unanimity were not so great as in 1964. In fact, especially in view of Desai's lingering bitterness, there was a feeling than an open contest would be a healthy thing.<sup>29</sup> In the mean time using as a model the procedures followed after Nehru's death, senior cabinet member G.L. Nanda was again appointed interim Prime Minister who since came to be known as the "stop gap Prime Minister" much to his embarrassment.

That the party leadership had to once again jump in to the fray to rescue the situation is beyond doubt though the solidarity

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29. Kochanek -op cit p.95

that characterised Shastri's succession was conspicuous by absence. An moreover there was utter confusion. This time Kamaraj was made a candidate perhaps without his knowledge. All names were rejected except Kamaraj, Mrs. Gandhi was not yet on the list. Atulaya Ghosh said to Kamaraj 'You have to accept' He did not reject the idea' added Ghosh. He merely said, as was his way, " Parkalam" a Tamil word which means "let us see"<sup>30</sup> The working committee meanwhile had assigned a committee consisting of Kamaraj, Desai, J. Ram and Nanda the task of selecting a new leader through the process of gaining unanimity. However no concensus was forthcoming. The "Politics of unanimity" had given way to the "politics of overt conflict". The committee appointed to gain unanimity not met.<sup>31</sup> Slowly but surely strong pressure had begun to build up behind Mrs. Gandhi. All but ~~three~~ chief ministers had indicated their support for her election. Kamaraj in a grand alliance with the State leaders had build up such massive support for the election of Mrs. Gandhi that even the Syndicate had no choice but to go along.<sup>32</sup> None the less Desai insisted on necessity of an open contest.

In the ensuing contest between Desai and Mrs. Gandhi, the Congress parliamentary party by an over whelming majority of 355 to 169 elected Mrs. Gandhi the third Prime Minister of India. As in the case of Shastri's election, the dominant

30. Brecher - Succession p.197

31. Kochanek - Op cit p.96

32. Brecher - Op cit 209-11

coalition consisted of the four southern states plus the non-Hindi states of West Bengal, Maharashtra rallying about a candidate from U.P. Morarji's support had come largely from his home state Gujarat, augmented by minority factions and dissident groups in other states. That Mrs. Gandhi owed her election to the Congress president and a coalition of Chief Minister was an indication of the success of party leadership in this case too. But the leadership viewed her appointment as an interim measure to continue till the 1967 to capitalize on the Nehru name.<sup>33</sup> Once again the politics of charisma had come into force this time to stay. This had also heralded an endless even of gerentocracy in India.

It is a reflection of the congress party's irrelevant weak and a matter of myopia on the party's leadership to introduce the element of charisma into the party. It is very interesting though not very relevant to imagine what would have been the situation within the party and the rapport between the party and the Prime Minister. A hypothetical indulgence of course. That harmony which characterised the relations between Kamaraj and Shastri continued, as we have observed, for a few months between Kamaraj and Indira Gandhi as well. However harmonies are notoriously short lived and the same happened in the congress too. A rift was slowly but surely dawning on the horizon with a feeling persisting on the part

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33. Kochanek - op cit 98.

of the party bosses that the party leadership was being constantly undermined by Mrs. Gandhi in the course of changes in her government. Yet she did not want to create an impression of rift at least apparently. She still consulted Kamaraj on the possibility of various permutations and combinations though at the end she always stuck to her own choice. None the less leaders were respected.

The period from 1964 to 66 was one of halcyon days for the political leadership of the congress party. The credit goes to Kamaraj for making the party strong enough to the extent of having an organizational hold over major issues of the government. This was the last great leadership of the party. The president though hailing from a remote Ramnathpuram, on the Southern tip of India, had grown in to a national personality. Since independence political leadership of the party was powerful at the organizational level only during Kamaraj's presidency. He was an able leader whose historic proposal to reorganise the party that is to put flesh and blood into the structure of the party has been duly implemented by Nehru himself. It was also the golden era for the leadership so much so that Nehru offered to resign in the spirit of Kamaraj plan. Never afterwards the leadership of the party carried so much clout within the party. Kamaraj had the uncanny knack and political acumen to see to it that the party leadership had no more to play a second fiddle to the governmental wing. Yet he was aware of the limitations and constraints that were natural. An unquestioned leader of the party those who has come to be known as the "king maker" he never interfered in the government

He refused to prevail upon Mrs. Gandhi to prevent Chavan's appointment as the new Home Minister.

He however could recommend certain names to be included in the cabinet and saw to it that it was done. It was said that J. Ram who resigned from the cabinet under the Kamaraj Plan was brought back to the cabinet at the instance of Kamaraj himself. From this high point of 'King makers' the political leadership within the congress party had gone a long way and swoop down to so low the level of shouting 'India is Indira and Indira is India'. Undoubtedly he was the last great leader of the party and its only one with nostalgia that people cherish the memory with this period of the history of the congress party. However with the unexpected and shocking reversal of electoral fortunes which resulted in the defeat of stalwarts like Kamaraj himself the congress party had been plunged into an era of struggle for supremacy, that is power, within the party which led to the 1969 and again in 1978. We shall study this struggle dominated recesses and one leader dominated periods in the next chapter.



CHAPTER - VISTRUGGLE FOR POWER IN CONGRESS 67-84

Where as the period from the introduction of the Kamaraj plan up to the fourth general election in India was characterised by a trend of 'divergence' the following period was for sometime characterised by a bitter struggle for personal dominance within the party and later on reflected that history repeats itself. The Nehru era that is from 1951-63 which Kochanek classifies as a period of concentration and convergence reappeared during his daughter's regime. We can add two more categories to Kochanek's characterisation of the congress after independence. They are the period of bitter struggle for power which spread over 67 to 71 and from 1972 till 1976 a period of one man show up which of course continue till todate with which we are not directly concerned here except having a bearing in mind. There is nothing very sacrosanct about the dates we suggested above except that they represent the end or on set of certain major trends within the Congress power structure. We shall give our own reasons, for the dates suggested, in the due course of this chapter. After a brief interlude between 1971 and 78 during which there was again struggle in the party resulting in a second split in 1978 the party once again it came under a spell of centralization. One can say with surity that 'history repeats itself' at least in the case of congress.

As we have noted in the previous chapter Mrs. Gandhi's election as Prime Minister was viewed by many as an interim arrangement designed to fill the gap until the 1967 elections. It was felt that Mrs. Gandhi would enhance the electoral appeal

of the party, which was not in a good shape after the Chinese attack and the government's position in the Tashkent agreement which raised many doubts in the minds of the people, by enabling it to continue capitalize on the Nehru name. Yet almost from the beginning of her term as Prime Minister it was evident that Mrs. Gandhi was not going to be the puppet some senior Congress leaders had expected.<sup>1</sup> In the very process of cabinet formation she attempted to remove the old guard leaders of the party from the strategic posts they were hitherto holding such as G.L. Nanda the Home Minister. When he demanded the post of Deputy Prime Minister as a reward for relinquishing the powerful Home portfolio, she backed out. She was trying to assert her prominence in government by bringing into cabinet who were not much to the liking of the party leadership. Because of these changes, Brecher concluded, that a new look had come to the summit of the government of India.<sup>2</sup> This new look was to the execution of the concurrence by party leadership. This new look somewhat upset Kamaraj to whom there appeared to be emerging around Mrs. Gandhi an entirely too influential young cliqual.<sup>3</sup>

That was the dawn of a process which had sown the seeds of struggle by the party over the administration and vice versa which later on took violent forms such as the 1969 split the essence of which was but a clash of the personalities of the party president and the Prime Minister. It was reminiscent of the Nehru Tandon

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1. Kochanek - Congress p.98
  2. Brecher - Nehru Mantle p.225
  3. Kochanek op cit p.99

- 3 -

conflict though here it did not assume all those proportions. This independent attitude of the Prime Minister was resented by many party leaders. The party leadership adopted a tolerant posture which was stated by Kamaraj when we maintained that it was the Prime Minister's business to<sup>4</sup> form her ministers and allocating portfolios which meant that he was not to interfere in the feud that involved Nanda. Nanda had to resign later on. In the early period of Mrs. Gandhi's term Kamaraj worked harmoniously with the Prime Minister even he did not agree with her on issues.<sup>5</sup> It was a harmony coming more from Kamaraj than from Mrs. Gandhi. However they have cooperated closely at first in policy areas as well like settling the Punjab problem and developing a policy towards the Nagas. The inevitable differences did not prevent harmony. However, harmonies are notoriously short lived and a major rift developed when the rupee was devalued without consulting the party machinery on the pretext that prior discussion was imprudent in the case of certain delicate issues. But the genesis of this tension lies in Mrs. Gandhi's attempt to move boldly and vigorously. It also derived from the fact that her style differed so remarkably from the slow consensus-building approach of Shastri. Her predilection for independent action also clashed with the party's concept of collective leadership. Such a lack of prior consultation could only lead to a reduction of the influence of the party organs like the working committee. And Mrs. Gandhi

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4. Kochanek - op cit 99

5. Ibid 99

for her part did try to undermine the party machinery on many an occasion.

Mrs. Gandhi consciously sought to use the power, prestige and authority of the Prime Ministership to consolidate her leadership of the party and government. The rapid approaching elections, the deteriorating economic and political condition at home and the deliberate attempt by the senior congress leaders to maintain a check on her, however, functioned to contain her aspiration. And because of her inexperience she was not able to consolidate her leadership sufficiently to prevent a challenge to the continued control of the Prime Ministership. This was the case during the early period of her Prime Ministership. This could well be the reason for the short lived harmony between the government and the party. But she was always on the look for an opportunity to assert herself in the organization. She was already making changes in the government without consulting the party.

Soon after the fourth general elections there began once again an intense power struggle within the congress party between Mrs. Gandhi and a young band of radicals who had returned to the Lok Sabha on the one side the defeated leader of the party who knew that their survival depended on somehow retaining positions of influence in the party on the other hand. It is now common knowledge that the Congress party suffered its first major electoral set back and was in a bad shape in many states which gave rise to the era of coalition politics.

for a while. Many of the senior congress stalwarts such as Kamaraj himself lost the parliamentary election in their respective states. All their earlier hopes that the succession of Mrs. Gandhi would enable them to capitalise on the name of Nehru in the elections. We have observed how many considered Indira Gandhi as a temporary arrangement that was till the elections. Now having lost the election themselves they could no more decide any thing as they wish and Indira Gandhi somehow managed to win support from others in the parliament. There was no impending threat to the government. But she developed contempt for the old guard of the party. The syndicate had too strong a hold on the party to allow Mrs. Gandhi have her way. She resented this strangle hold of that section on the party.

It was not that the syndicate was ideologically opposed to Mrs. Gandhi's policies. As a matter of fact it was because of Kamaraj a syndicate man that she could become Prime Minister in 1966. Both Kamaraj and Atulya Ghosh welcomed the moves like ending the Privy Purges and privileges of princes and nationalization of banks much Mrs. Gandhi used them as effective instruments in her power struggle with the party bosses.

A new rapport was developed between Morarji Desai and the syndicate. The latter wanted some one in the government on their side. He was however not a friend of the syndicate. He was rigid, conservative, inflexible and far from the so called

radical views. He never compromised on what he considered right and moral. This was an *anathema* to the syndicate. But they shrewdly decided to enlist his support as Deputy Prime Minister and finance minister to checkmate Mrs. Gandhi's radical postures, which they assumed, and perhaps rightly so, only to demigrate them in the public eye. Desai's presence in the cabinet was useful to them. He often obstructed radical policies which felt were only for dramatic impact. Morarji was able to prevent almost every radical measure suggested by Mrs. Gandhi such as bank nationalization. He came out with his own idea of social control of *binancial* institutions to achieve socio-economic ends. Mrs. Gandhi remarked that he was obstructomistic which was controlled by the old guard.

The period from 1967 to 1969 was one of intense power struggle in the congress was proved by the faction ridden politics of the party. New groups were coming up like the 'Red shirts' headed by Chandra Sekhar who got elected as Secretary to the parliamentary party and thus made their presence felt. Above all there was the syndiczte with a tight control over the party which Mrs. Gandhi detested. Every faction wanted to have an upper hand on the others. With a view to *break* the strangle hold of the syndicate Mrs. Gandhi came up with a proposal to remove Kamaraj from the presidency. It was argued that a man who got defeated at the polls should not hold that prestigious post. There

- 7 -

was, however, no name acceptable to all. Mrs. Gandhi realized that she could not put a man of her choice. She compromised on the issue and Nijalingappa was unanimously elected the leader of the party. But the way this drama was enacted by Mrs. Gandhi irked Kamaraj as well as Nijalingappa himself who read in newspapers about his being persuaded to become party chief when he was yet to decide over the matter. Soon he ceased to be a friend of her. In the meanwhile Kamaraj regained a part of his lost prestige and again emerged at the national level as a powerful congress leader. He won the Nivelli by election by a theumping majority. He tried his best to revitalize the dejected spirit of congress men in Tamil Nadu and he did it.

In the meanwhile certain people, under the Indira Gandhi dispensation, were allowed to grow larger than life size. People such as Dinesh Singh who from being a minister of state grow upto be a cabinet minister. And there was the Prime Minister's principal secretary P.N. Haksar whose presence in the power structure became a rallying point for the left oriented pro-Russian elements. This so called leftist beaming Mrs. Gandhi's apparent sympathy with the radicals, and Desai's concept of social control on banks remaining on paper - all these developments have in a way helped Mrs. Gandhi to give her fight with the party bosses an ideological auro.

Already the party president to be was annoyed the way Mrs. Gandhi's camp tried to take credit for something which could not possibly be described as a victory for them. All this made not only the syndicate but Nijalingappa also hostile to Mrs. Gandhi even before he had taken over the party post. And the

- 8 -

Prime Minister's side had its misgivings which were proved right not much after. In 1968 at the AICC session Nijalingappa's address was not very flattering to the government. He spoke of the lack of clarity about our objectives and called for reforms in administrative and economic fields. He had a dig at the government's industrial policy and neglect of the agriculture. The tone of his address was taken as the brief shot in the power struggle that was to develop later between Mrs. Gandhi as the head of the radicals in the party and the party leadership which was opposed to any radicalization of Indian politics.

More than differences in the outlook in policy matters it was the personal power of certain individuals in the party that was at stake. However with the politics of radicalism the government leaders came to project themselves as progressive and the opposite as reactionary. There were over developments which aggravated this scramble for dominance. This was also the time when India was moving closer to the Soviet Union. India's dependence for her military hardware on that country was well known. The two had become major trading partners and often had identical stances on international political issues. The Soviet had taken increasing interest in the emergence of Mrs. Gandhi with new leader of this country and hoped to continue the same kind of cordial relations which existed between the two during Nehru's time. They had no doubt that so long as Mrs. Gandhi relied on radical economic



- 9 -

policies inside the country and maintained non-alignment in her international relations, she would be of help to the Russians in their polemics with China which had been continuing a long dialogue with the Americans for ultimate recognition and normalization of relations. Some of the party bosses like Desai and Nijalingappa were being far from happy with those developments. They are known for a rightist ideological stand and wanted to put a stop to the radicalisation of politics internally and India's further drift toward the Soviet Union externally. They feared otherwise an inevitable march towards totalitarianism.

Thus the Hyderabad session of the party in 1968 assumed ideological colours to what was essentially a conflict for power. There Mrs. Gandhi was reduced to a minority in the working committee which is the highest executive organ of the party. The Prime Minister's nominees were dropped in preference to the 'Syndicate candidates. The party boss again had a complete control over the working committee. Within the cabinet also it was reflected in the growth of two different centres of power, one around Mrs. Gandhi and the other around Morarji Desai.

Then came the presidential election which actually precipitated the growing schism in the party that ultimately led to the split in 1969. The official congress candidate Sanjiv Reddy was defeated and an independent V.V. Giri won the election with the help of Mrs. Gandhi's support and other friendly parties in parliament. The defeat of the official

- 10 -

candidate rendered the party leadership dramatic and it was an open secret that Mrs. Gandhi invoked a concept called the conscience vote. This again is a reflection of the rift. The Prime Minister was only waiting for an opportune time to teach the old men a lesson and it was done with amazing expertise. Some of the rigid men were all out to teach her another lesson. It was a matter of political survival for both the factions. A show cause notice was served on Mrs. Gandhi why she should not be punished for anti party activities (in the wake of the presidential election). Prior to the election Mrs. Gandhi tried her level best to block the nomination of Reddy by proposing Jagjivan Ram as another alternative. At the Bangalore session of the party Reddy was finally nominated as he won the voting of nomination by five to three. An infuriated Indira Gandhi said that those who tried to humiliate her will have to face the consequences. She maintained that as Prime Minister, her concurrence to a candidate for the high office of the President was absolutely necessary, because the two had to function in class. If they enjoyed no rapport, the functioning of the government would be greatly hindered. But soon after came the consequences in the form of Desai being relieved of his finance portfolio and Chavan being transferred from the strategic home to Finance, Portfolio. As we have seen, with the announcement of the presidential election result and the consequent defeat of Reddy the party was bent on cutting the woman to her size and issued that fatal show cause notice. In no time after the exit of Desai came to Bank Nationalization

announcement. Had not the government nationalized 14 commercial banks within an hour of Desai's exit from the cabinet, the Prime Minister could not have regained initiative on ideological question which the attitude of various leaders had tried to cloud by emphasizing the element of personal vendetta involved in the whole episode. Thus Mrs. Gandhi had succeeded in shifting the lime light to ideological differences from the intense power struggle that was raging in the organization.

In this climate of uncertainty a new technique of popularity was devised by Mrs. Gandhi whose workers mobilized houses of taxi drivers, slum dwellers, class four employees, auto-rickshaw drivers staged demonstration shouting slogans for Mrs. Gandhi as their chosen leader, the *saviour* of the poor. As it was a new thing the newspapers in their characteristic haste and superficial analysis of events poured pions of praise on her as a radical leader. But they became too frequent and doubts started arising about their spontaneity. It turned out to be an engineered exercise to strengthen her image and stand vis-a-vis the party bosses who were already on the defensive. As Mrs. Gandhi's image had gone up due to a careful manipulation of the mass media and other device or propoganda the party leaders were in a poor light and they wanted to assert their position in the party and its dominance over the polity.

With a boosted image Mrs. Gandhi had decided to defy the show cause and demanded the removal of words like anti party activities in the notice. All negotiations for a compromise

failed. Both the factions came to a head on collision and Mrs. Gandhi refused to bow before the bosses of the party. She was expelled. She formed her own congress party with her loyalists. Her Russian leaning came to her rescue in the form of CPI support for her government in the parliament. Other parties like DMK supported her. There was no threat to the government. In the split she lost nothing but her chains.

What is important for our tribe, the political analysis is not the individual fortunes or adversities arising out of the split. That is a concern of the politicians and not the students of political science. We are concerned with its impact on the system as a whole. Congress being the only dominant party in the country a split in the party will have a great impact on the system as a whole naturally enough. From the beginning it was a question of paper relations between the government and the party. The leaders have failed to realize that party and government are not two rival centres of power but two sides of the same coin. Our party system is different from the British in that the Indian Prime Minister is also not the head of the party. Later on it became so. That is another matter. Here the practice has normally been to have a full time head for the party affairs though for a brief period during Nehru time both were merged in one person - Nehru himself. But his daughter neither had his stature nor his charisma during her initial period. But she expected the same treatment that her father got from the party. Interestingly enough the same attitude prevails to day.

This is the danger of people from one house becoming rulers. Having been witness to the honour of their predecessors they expect the same though they may be lacking the stature required for such recognition. This gives rise to tensions and in the structure of the party.

This split had, however, not caused the kind of situation that political scientists of the Iqbal Narain ilk. He anticipated that it may give a new lease of life to the coalitional modus which may have to be experimented with at the national level. He further suggests that coalition politics in India may mean polarization and realignment of forces broadly between the syndicate congress on the one hand and regional parties, the CPI and the ruling congress on the other. Whatever in 1971 after the mid-term elections were over was entirely different. With a few populist slogans like 'Garibi hatao', the abolition of privy purses and special privileges to civil servants Mrs. Gandhi fought the election almost single handed with other political parties. The mass media was always at the disposal of the government. And the new faction roped home with a thumping victory giving a crushing blow to the organizational congress which was badly routed in the elections.

This puts an end, for a while to the struggle for power in the congress as it was a one man show up and the actors were there at the pleasure of the leader. Elections proved it. The people were behind Mrs. Gandhi. This he raided an endless era of personalised politics and the party as well as the polity, were organised around the Prime Minister. She was not fletered

- 14 -

by any forces now, though she had to reconcile with some of the groups within her own party. That was only to render a sort of solidarity to the party. Her own position was established beyond question. The organizational congress was almost non-existent and now the focus shifts to the one headed by Indira Gandhi's faction. In her party democracy was totally absent. A culture of adhocism had crept in to the party organization with elections having been abandoned. The congress president's symbolic posture was also neglected. The president was no more treated to an elephant ride at the annual session of the party. And a totally new atmosphere had come to prevail on the party. This was also the time when the going was extremely good for Mrs. Gandhi. India defeated Pakistan in 1971. Food problem was overcome to a considerable extent. She was described as the modern reincarnation of 'Durga' a dardwil goddess in Hindu mythology symbolising power and victory.

Then came a bolt from the blue for Mrs. Gandhi. The bolt was Allahabad High Court and the bolt was a judgement unseating her from parliament for a period of six years. For the first time the Prime Minister came under moral cloud for electoral malpractice not of the party as such but the person itself. It was a unique case. It was the finest hour for the Indian judiciary which proved that all are equal before its doorsteps. The man in the news was Justice Jug Mohan Sinha, a judge of the Allahabad High Court who gave the historic judgement

- 15 -

disposing an election petition by her rival candidate Raj Narain. The timing of the judgement had a significance of its own. It came when Jayaprakash Narain was starting a nation wide movement against the corrupt practice at high places. J.P.'s action may be said to be one of the consequences of the suffocation of politics caused by the reemergence of one party dominance after 1971 and also the recentralization of all powers in the hands of the national political leadership. And there was an anti-Indira Gandhi atmosphere in political circles. But it did not assert itself for fear of retaliation. With the pronouncement of the judgement JP accelerated his movement demanding the resignation of the Prime Minister at once. By and large there was a general opinion that she should step down in deference to the judgement and prove her in no cause in the (supreme court. The party organization, however, was not powerful to direct her what to do. It was created by her. It was an instrument in her hands.

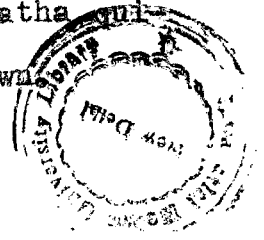
However the judgement gave rise to an opinion that she would step down in which case a leader had to be elected and this again plunged the party - This time for a few days into a struggle for power among the senior members of the cabinet. But no one could decide the matter except Mrs. Gandhi herself, as we have seen, there was no proper party machinery of the 67-69 variety. Since all power was recentralised after 1971 she was hailed the supreme leader and none in the cabinet had the stature to stake claims except with her blessing which was not to come so easily. And emergency was imposed in 1975 on the pretext that

"a deep and wide spread conspiracy, started brewing when she began to introduce certain progressive measure of benefit to the common man and woman of India, in the name of democracy it has been sought to negate the very functioning of democracy, democratic institutions were being paralysed, even the armed forces were incited to mutiny and the police to rebel, the institution of the Prime Minister was being demigrated, the country's stability was being imperilled and this was also affecting the production" - thus spake Indira Gandhi to the nation in defence of emergency. It was an excruciating eighteen months period of torture and totalitarianism. Quite obviously the congress lost the 1977 general election after which there came another instance of power struggle within the congress party. The excesses of emergency were coming into the light one after the other with a ocean of literature by prospective journalists and it was increasingly becoming difficult for Mrs. Gandhi to stand all this. Added to this there was a growing resentment within the party organs about what happened during emergency. Those loyalists whom Mrs. Gandhi pampered and patronised after the 1969 split to have an edge over Mrs. Gandhi and there was an increasing isolation of her faction. One of the consequences of emergency was Sanjay Gandhi. There was no direct struggle for power though, he had a contempt for the old guard figures of new party of 1969. He came to dominate the affairs of the party with the cooperative connivance of his mother, bringing many changes in the party structure.



The Second split

He also came under a cloud after the emergency and the old men who felt humiliated by him during the emergency wanted to teach him a lesson. It was reported that she went to Barua weeping that no action be taken against her son. Meanwhile Barua stepped down Brahmananda Reddy became the party president. Mrs. Gandhi was in a cold storage during these days. There was no hold of hers on the party. It was understandably difficult for one to put up with such a situation especially when one had enjoyed enormous powers just a little before. It was the case with Mrs. Gandhi. She wanted to ascertain hold in the party. The congress had as many as 153 seats in the Lok Sabha - with a status of the recognised opposition party. She wanted this wing to be in her hold. She had no way out but to split the party once again. Now she did it coolly. There was no fierce struggle that characterised the 1969 split. There was no colour of ideology. There were not even eminent men in the party unlike the case in 1969. She first resigned from the working committee and held a convention consisting purely her loyal men like Kamala Pati, Zail Singh and others. Thus came the birth of what is today called the Congress (Indira) on 1 January 1978. In two southern states her party came into power in A.P. and Karnataka and did well in Maharashtra. Now she was only too anxiously awaiting the fall of Janatha. During the second split the major personalities who stood on her side in 1969 disappeared. There was no Chavan. Jagjivan Ram was already in the Natha group. He left the congress in 1977 and forming a party of his own.



Mrs. Gandhi and her son Sanjay Gandhi now have a party which was treated as a house hold affair - not a national political party. All the doubtful elements have deserted them. Meanwhile the Janatha government collapsed because of a non-confidence motion introduced by Chavan the Congress (Reddy) leader in parliament. In a dramatic move Mrs. Gandhi extended her party support to Charan Singh her ardirial to form a government when the day had come to test the party strength she backed out forcing an early election and in 1980 she came to power with a clear majority routing all opposition parties including the rival congress faction. Now Mrs. Gandhi was in power once again. This time the struggle for power was not there as the party was reduced to a family affair and it was run as per the wishes of the mother and son. No one could legitimately claim any status of leadership even remotely nearer to Mrs. Gandhi in the new party. It was all her discretion. And the issue of succession was also not relevant as her son was waiting in the wings to fly people were contended to have a few crumbs in the form of official patronage. The party as such was not a concrete entity except that it belonged to her. In India unlike else where people are influenced by parties as much as they influence parties. The classic example is the congress. Now there is not even a Devraj Urs. He left the party long before. He indeed tried to bring a merger between the two factions. But invain.

As we have already observed no body in the party was allowed to grow to a respectable stature. When Sanjay Gandhi died in a

a plane crash in 1980 there was wide speculation as to who would take the place. Now again it had a sort of struggling of our. There was Menaka Gandhi a contender for Sanjay's place. No one else was contesting of course. It was Mrs. Gandhi's choice which would ultimately prevail. But this particular situation may not be said so much at a struggle within the party than within the family unless we make family and party co-terminous. We have said that the party was reduced to a family affair. But it was not the family as such. That the party has become something of a family affair is beyond doubt if we see the way Rajiv Gandhi whom the press described as 'Mr Clean' was persuaded to join politics following his brother's untimely demise and this against the claims of the deceased wife's claims to be his heir. The whole drama has an auro of the feudal system where succession is a matter of heritage. Here one thing we have to keep in mind is the mentality of the Indian voter over the years. There came a tradition a time tested tradition - that only that faction of the congress which has the Nehru blood in it will survive the electoral politics. If another man was groomed we don't know what would have happened. In a situation like Mrs. Gandhi's death the party would have plunged into chaos and confusion with all rival factions staking claims for leadership. This is a mere hypothetical situation. Or it may be argued that if some one else was to be groomed he would have got a big media build up and established an image of his own as Shastri did. But then the long organization thattime was very solid and thre were others whowere at least equal in stature to Shastri if not more. People

like Kamaraj, Desai and so forth. With the arrival of Rajiv Gandhi the struggle for power did not stop. There was a scramble among congress men to court his friendship and different factions had sought a due share of power. Factions like the Sanjay Gandhi supporters. However he brought in a few unknown men into politics and for a while there was some tension between the Indira loyalists and his own friends. The latter were known to politics and had a sort of contempt for the quality of politics prevailing in the party which was why they sought, quietly behind the scene, to change the situation. This was the typical characteristic of the party towards the end of Mrs. Gandhi's life a characteristic which continued even afterwards and took a critical turn. With this we are not concerned here. However it must be said that the struggle for power in the congress (I) to day is between the Indira loyalists and the new comers whose only standing is their friendship with the party leadership.

And in the meantime after the Janatha fall various elements whose political bases are dubious and whose record of personal integrity was not very faltering have joined the party to gain a status of respectability. Even anti social elements whose names appeared in the police record came under the umbrella of the party to seek protection from the teeth of law. This trend is particular evident in the state Assemblies especially in Uttar Pradesh. So if we see the composition of the party in recent years it appears evident that it has undergone a radical change. Groupism and factionalism are carrying the day.

Traditionally being a party of diverse elements it has to come to face all the inner rivalries among the factions. Though these factions struggle for power is at the peripheral level as the ultimate disphisation depended on Mrs. Gandhi, the party's stability has come under strain.

Finally the struggle for power is an off shoot of the congress party's dependence on defections a political phenomenon which has assumed appathing proportions. Congress party encouraged and engineered defections subject to its convenience. All these power hungry elements have to be satisfied. Hence the fierce behind the scene struggle for power. If ~~only~~ there was some intention for joining the partys mass exodus would not have been there. People with strong political bases are so few. Both weak and sought patronage in terms of power. Hence factionalism.

CONCLUSIONCRISIS OF LEADERSHIP IN CONGRESS

We have seen how the entire political system has been made by successive prime Ministers and their over ambitions. Secretaries to revolve around the institution of Prime Minister to the detriment of growth of leadership in the party. Over the years this decline in the development of deternative leadership assumed a standing proportions where in the system has come to stand on the leadership of one individual.

In this concluding chapter we shall attempt to analyse the causes that led to this crisis of leadership which has great implications for the polity and the country as a whole. We have maintained throughout that the congress party power structure has been pyramidical since independence except for a brief span. That was when Kamaraj was ruling the roost leadership was by and large collective and decisions on major aspects were arrived through a process of discussion negotiation, persuasion, conciliation and compromise. In other words it was a short period of concensus oriented leadership where one individual as such was not the final man of word- he be the party president or the Prime Minister. Over the years this acena-rio has undergone changes with bitter struggle between the party leaders and the Prime Minister(S) for a position of dominance. We have examined this aspect in the chapter - struggle for power with in the congress party which characterised certain periods between 67 and 84. As we have observed some where the problem was one of party control over the governmental wing and vice versa. Both the wings of the congress party over the years

- 2 -

seem to have maintained a view that they are two separate centres of power with both the sections sticking to their guns. This attitude has caused many a crisis to the congress party all these years. Though our political system has been transplanted from Britain the party practices of that country have not been adopted except for brief periods. In Britain the leader of the party in parliament is also the ultimate Reader outside parliament. The classic case of a clash between Atlee the Prime Minister and the famous political scientist Laski the party chief in which Atlee refused to yield to Laski and how the former has won is well known. The situation was similar in India during Nehru's time. Afterwards the practice ceased for sometime. The party-government rapport runs into rough weather when the party plays a major role in selecting a successor who later on tries to assert himself or herself as the case be. On the other hand if the party's role is minimal in the process of succession then it becomes subservient to the governmental wing. The situation is a very complex one and is paradoxical either way. It all depends on the individual temperament of the leaders concerned. However if the succession is clear from the beginning there is a possibility of smoothness between the party and parliamentary wings. Except when Patel was alive the concept of second in *control* has since ceased to exist in the central government.

The Prime Minister, when strong, sought to have a strong hold on the party as well lest it should curts the former's

- 3 -

powers. The party, when strong, sought to have a control over the Prime Minister lest the latter should undermine the former. The spirit of adjustment and accommodation was lacking on the part of both these two parts. This tendency created crisis situation during the initial period of Nehru's rule and also during ghat of his daughter Mrs. Gandhi. During Shastri's time leadership was characterised by concensus and he too had no problems with the collective leadership concept of Kamaraj the then president of the party, though Shastri was slowly but surely emerging as a national leader when he suddenly died. Another factor that contributed to the harmony between the polity and the party was a decline of Kamaraj's influence due to the language riots in South India. And moreover Shastri was content that there was threat to his position: he was acceptable both to the party and people and Kamaraj did not have the pretention of occupying the centre of the stage, as Kochanek has put it so succinct by what would have been the situation 'if Shastri were alive for more time was a matter of hypothesis. None the less it would be interesting for political analysts to imagine a picture of the situation based on what happened already and draw some conclusions for the sake of camparison.

The crisis of leadership can be identified in many areas. Congress until 1969 was characterised by the presence of too many potential leaders. People like Shastri, Desai, J. Ram, Kamaraj, Nijalingappa, Atulya Ghosh, Chavan etc. After 1971 the party



- 4 -

was characterised by a heavy dearth of leadership. During Nehru's time no successor was groomed with in the party to get in to his shoes after his end. None the less he did not prevent people from growing into higher stature. It was true that so long as he was there no body could grow to his stature. Yet there were prominent men. At least in the government though again he controlled the party and every candidate for the presidency had to seek his approval to get elected. So much so that Sanjiv Reddy once told Brecher, as we have already seen, that "he was treated as Indira Gandhi's chaprasi". Nehru, however, was saying off and on that the party was no less important than the government. But seems to be for public consumption and not for personal observance as he conscisly or otherwise undermined the organization having government himself busy with government and international affairs. When he realized that the party had been weakened enough to the point where the Prime Minister need not worry about it he sought to put in his hand picked men as congress presidents. This negligence of the party had its serious consequences and it was only Kamaraj who retrived and revived the state of affairs by his plan.

The period after 1971 was characterised by recentralisation of power. There were many people in the party but not many leaders. Those prominent men in the government like Chavan and J.Ram were aware of their own limitations and they reconciled with the new reality of a buriman free type leader under who it was not possible for the growth of smaller saplings. Chavan

once said that he never had the intention to become the Prime Minister. They were made such political inveterate creatures by Mrs. Gandhi. She did not allow people to grow. They had to bask under the shadow of her reflected story and glitter. Even her cabinet meetings were but a mere formality and she had a very low opinion about the people around her as was revealed in the recent publication of her personal letters to a trusted friend. Under her dispensation total loyalty, unquenching adherence and staunch support to her were the sine qua non to get into places of power. Under such an atmosphere it was hardly possible for any body to grow let alone be groomed. Way back in 1969 itself the president of the party Nijalingappa was saying in a letter to the Prime Minister charging her that " You seem to have made personal loyalty to you the test of loyalty to the congress and the country" Prophetic words indeed and perhaps no democratically elected leader in the world was so fond of loyalty in so short of span of assumption of office. As we have said elsewhere she had grown in that atmosphere.

#### LACK OF ISSUES

The congress was always in search of issues during election campaigns. It has the disadvantage of being the only majority party fighting elections with disarrayed regionalised political parties. It is always in search of major issues yet in vain. Except flaying the opposition as a divided house and involthing the oft repeated threat of foreign danger hanging like a damocle

sword on the head of India it had no ideology mattered issues. Its only asset is the legacy of the freedom struggle and a claim over Gandhiji. For every election some myth or the other had to be created. And its myths are to be believed the teller ought to have a stature and credibility in the eyes of the masses. For this there has to be a strong leader on who depends the electoral fortunes of the party. Two times elections were won solely due to personal charisma. In 1971 Indira Gandhi won and the organizational party suffered a death blow which culminated in its disappearance in lack stock and barrel today. The same happened in the 1980 elections also. Only that faction represented by Mrs. Gandhi received the mass support and the other faction was ignominiously routed in the elections despite their pronounced anti emergency stance of course after it was lifted. This excessive depends on charisma to win elections had contributed to a gradual erosion of the idea of leadership in a broader sense. It was the short sightedness of the congress leaders who decided upon Mrs. Gandhi as successor to Shastri with a view to capitalise on the name of Nehru which has over the years become the bone of our system. If somebody is a leader in his or her own right it is understandable. But if somebody is leader by virtue of being a child of another leader that is perhaps not a democratic concept of leadership. So far there has not been only biological interpretation of leadership in modern democracy. The theories of Carlyle and Nietzsche have been repudiated the over world. Heroes and supermen are not concepts of democratic societies. Some people may become like that by their talent and sincerity as

indeed leaders in third world countries sometimes are. For instance Nehru in India, Naser in Egypt and Nkrumah in Ghana.

But no one is being a hero or a superman. The difference between being and becoming is very relevant, here. That quite apart, charisma as a voting device has very limited use. Moreover since charisma is a rare quality and there came a situation where in only charismatic leaders are successful at the hestings that leader assumes a stature of indispensability and the party becomes a boss based party. Even Nehru did not like the idea of being indispensable. During Mrs. Gandhi's political career, that is after 1966, re-election was fought without her. And only her faction won except in 1977. In 1977 it was a different situation. Thus charisma has crept into the congress culture and elections have time and again turned out to be leader based ones and not issue based ones. This is one of the vital factors that contributed to this grave crisis of leadership in the party. And this personality cult has received a great philip through the mass media especially the electronic media which is under state control. An image has been conciously projected on only one individual tothe detriment of others. Mass media has its own magic effect on the people. Especially since this is the age of information dissimination.

#### DECLINE OF THE PARTY PRESIDENT

Though it is too unrealistic to expect party presidents to be of the same stature as the governmental leader of the party, yet a decline of the office, the institution contributes to the crisis of leadership in the party. We have seen how

- 8 -

party has been subordinated by the governmental wing. But after 1971 the institution of the congress president has fallen in to a pitiable position. The power, prestige and the patronage of the Prime Minister had developed over the years to a point that congress men look to the Prime Minister and not the party president for leadership. After 1978, however, this problem ceased to exist as the *Samen* is both the Prime Minister as well as president of the party - congress. After 1971 the principle of party elections has been abandoned which is yet to be revived till todate. Since those who elected the president were themselves not elected, his election was reduced to a virtual mockery. Even those symbolic gestures which characterised the AICC annual sessions have ceased after 1969. Earlier the party president was treated to an elephant rider a procession through town, garlanding and other special gesture. This practice has since been abandoned. Non-availability of elephants, however, could not be the reason for abandoning it. It is a reflection of the decline in the institution. Whatever authority remained, in later years, in the office of the congress president depended largely on the stature of the person chosen to fill it and not by virtue of being the head of the party. This was because, the process of selection so heavily dependent on the wishes of the Prime Minister, left even the "strongest" congress president at least psychologically in a position of vassal to lord. This decline had reached its logical culmination when D.K. Barua the congress president during emergency remarked "India is Indira and Indira

is India". This serfdom was only a little better than the French King Luis XIV who said " I am the State". We have not strictly followed the British pattern of the party leader in parliament is also the leader outside. The party president's position has thus become uneviable for any aspiring politician. He neither had no respect among the rank and file nor any weithtage with the Prime Minister. His survival depended on blatant sychophancy and hence a leader and at the same time no leader at all.

#### DECLINE IN THE OFFICE OF CHIEF MINISTER

Another aspect of the crisis of leadership is the decline in the office of chief Minister over the years. And this has its own relation to the under development of second line leadership. If we see the organization of the congress downwards, the party is organised on the lines of the administrative units. In them the state unit or the pradesh Congress committee is very important. Right from Nehru's period the Pradesh Congress committees are organised in competition to the governmental wing of the party. A total revivsal of the trend at the centre. Yet during Nehru's time Chief Minister's office was not devegraded unlike the case in later years. They had a vital say in the affairs of the party. There were stalwart Chief Ministers like B.C. Roy in Bengal, Kamaraj in Tamil Nadu, Sanjiv Reddy in Andhra Pradesh, Chavan in Maharastra (Y.B.Chavan) and so forth. In matters of succession they played a very vital role in mobilising the M.Ps from their respective states. On two occasions of succession

- 10 -

viz after Nehru's death and shortly after that when Shastri died. On all these occasions the Chief Ministers played a vital role in the process of selecting a leader. Compared to that the situation today is a study in contrast. Why did this office decline? What were the reasons beneath the surface that led to a situation of dependency on the party high command if congress and the central government if non congress? We shall see these issues.

The decline started when the normal process of appointing a Chief Minister of a state is what the Prime Minister of the nation is like. His election process follows the same lines as that of the Prime Minister. The one who is elected by a majority members of the party in the Lower House becomes the Chief Minister. And there used to be some kind of longesity to Chief Ministers as is the case with the Prime Minister itself in a congress government. Since winning Assembly elections depends on the efficiency of the Chief Minister also. Apart from the name and picture of the Prime Minister strong candidates with a strong mass base and a good commitment to the party ideology used to become Chief Minister. The election principle was very much there in case of a contest. And contest is a characteristic of a healthy democratic system though concensus is not a sign of illness.

However after mid seventies there came about a metamorphical change in this process in the congress ruled states where in inefficient leaders from the centre are exported to states and defamed ones are imported to the centre. Far from the traditional

longevity of Chief Ministers their tenure has of late been lamentably shorter in the case of the congress. The changing nature of politics has contributed to groupism, factionalism and regionalism within respective states. The kind of people who have gained the congress party in recent years are not very crazy about commitment and discipline. The congress party is extremely faction ridden at the state level and every faction wants to catch the prized position of Chief Minister. And Delhi keeps its ears open to the complaints of these factions to the point of denegrating Chief Minister concerned. There is always a process of shuffling and reshuffling Chief Ministers under way. Each region wants the post to itself. Each group or faction wants it to itself. Since the strength of the congress party lies in these multiple factions which are always at war with one another various factions have to be satisfied. And consequently tenure in actuality falls far less than the constitutionally set 5 years. In Maharashtra for instance within five years there were five Chief Ministers. After the 1980 Assembly elections in Maharashtra AICC general secretary A.R. Antulay who was made the Chief Minister. The MLAs had no choice. They were told by central observers who their leader was. He would be coming from Delhi. After Antulay was removed by a High Court verdict another man known for his "buttoony" was made the Chief Minister. And so the game went on. Men of calibre, ability strong mass base are not made chief ministers any more. One becomes a Chief Minister for his ability to politicising and his proximity to the powers that be rather than because MLAs "elect"



him.

Another classic example is Andhra Pradesh a state known as a traditional congress bastion so much so that when the congress was losing with "massive minority" in the 1977 general elections Andhra Pradesh returned all but one of the congress candidates. After the Assembly elections in 1982 there were four Chief Ministers within five years. When Channa Reddy became something of a notoriety for corruption Anjaiah was appointed as Chief Minister. Anjaiah's capability and political acumen to rule a state are lamentably inadequate, so much so that this cabinet strength far out numbered the total council of ministers at the centre making himself a laughing stock. Another blow he suffered was the humiliation he was handed down by an outside M.P. Rajiv Gandhi. It is a sad pointer, a grim indicator of the deep decline in the position of Chief Minister. Another obscure fellow succeeded him who too did not stay long. This process continued till a point beyond which the endurance of the people ran short. Consequently it lost the state to NTR who when contesting the elections was just nine months old politically. NTR too had his bitter experience with the central government which is too well known. The constitutional stature of the office has come under a cloud when he was dismissed despite having a majority in the Assembly. That is a grim pointer to the sad development of the office of the Chief Minister being thrown to the mercy of the Centre government. The constitutional ambiguity is partly responsible, theoretically speaking. But in practice Chief Minister is but politicising.

Any Congress ruled state to have one Chief Minister for a full five year term has become a very rare thing under the Indira Gandhi dispensation. Political convenience weighed with her more than political competence. Gone were the days of B.C. Roy when they could advise even Nehru. The Prime Minister's power and prestige has over the years increased enormously. But the Chief Minister's position is declining conversely over the years so much so that if a Chief Minister has to appoint a minister he has to come to Delhi for consultations. Their freedom in the cabinet formation is very elusive. Men of independent thinking and initiative are not appointed Chief Ministers. The congress culture of Autocracy has its toll on this institution. After the 1980 elections people were just exported as Chief Ministers \* Jagannath Pahadia to Rajasthan, J.B. Patnaik to Orissa, A.R. Antulay to Maharashtra, Anjaiah and Vijay Bhaskar Reddy to Andhra Pradesh. None of them had a five year term save Patnaik of Orissa. In Andhra Pradesh for instance when the Assembly elections were round the corner one Mr. Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy, who was out of touch with the State Politics, was appointed chief Minister. He was defeated in the elections of course. From 1978 to 1982 there were four Chief Ministers in Andhra Pradesh of them were the choice of the High Command. And two of them were not even members of the Assembly. This method of appointing Chief Ministers by the High command still continues. Where a choice was given the MLAs to elect a leader they are flabbergasted by this "strange" process of their electioning some one to which they are not used

to, for a long time. The element of election, in a real sense has been abandoned in lock stock and barrel. And in many cases, the leaders imposed by the High command have not covered themselves with glory. Pahadia in Rajasthan was replaced. Antulay was replaced. Anjaiah was replaced. In the case of V.B. Reddy the trouble of sending another leader was spared as the party lost the polls. In UP V.P. Singh was replaced by Sripat Misra who in turn was replaced by Tiwari. The story goes on and on.

The situation before 1980 was no better. In A.P. for instance PV Narasimha Rao was made the Chief Minister who in the wake of the separatist Telangana agitation had to resign after which he was in political hibernation till he was rediscovered in 1980 in the central cabinet. So was the case with Brahmananda Reddy who after, resigning without surviving the full term, was accommodated in the centre in 1974, of course with some recess since resignation, as the Union Minister of communications and then as Home Minister. That is the sad story of A.P. Chief Ministers. The cases of other states were not encouraging either.

If we examine the case of opposition Chief Ministers, it is again another politically disturbing story. In this case the central government is playing the game which first started when Namboodripad was dismissed. Afterwards there not many such instances except during the late 60s when many opposition parties came to power in the states. Elsewhere it was a period of coalition politics. Where the coalition suited the convenience it was allowed to stay on as a marriage of convenience.

Otherwise the support was withdrawn and president's rule was declared. The provision of president's rule came in handy for the centre on many occasions and the only state where it is so far not put to use is Maharashtra. When the Janata party came to power in Karnataka in 1983 no stone was left unturned to topple it but in vain. The nation went a-gog with the notorious 'Moily tapes' and the money bags. Where the leaders show any symptoms of a clean political personality they were sought to be discredited. The story of the ignominious role played by the centre in toppling the Faruk Abdullah government is well known. We have already referred to an even more ignominious instance - The NTR case. The state party unit with the connivance and cooperation of the central government committed political harikiri in A.P. only after a month it had to restore the status quo ante. In this context the governor's role has come under a deep controversy about which we are not going to say anything except that Raj Bhavan's have over the period become dumping ground for defeated and discredited politicians of the ruling party whose continued presence posed a threat to the government there. This is the story of Chenna Reddys, Ram Lal, A.P. Sharma, Dixits and "Dadas".

All these developments have their effect on the Union Cabinet's quality of leadership. Men with doubtful political strength and weak social commitments are finding themselves in the Union cabinet. It can even be argued that the top level leadership is consciously during all this to project itself in better light and giving to itself a colour of charisma and

indispensability. Or else how are weak people accommodated in key positions? Chief Minister Stephen, for instance the opposition leader of the congress party in parliament had a weak political base in his home state of Kerala as a result of which he contested from Gulbarga in Karnataka in a by election. He was defeated in Delhi when contested against Vajpayee in 1980. The portfolio he held was not important though the person was important in the party in that he was the right hand man of Mrs. Gandhi during her hour of adversity. This strategy is not new. It was there even during Nehru's time when Krishana Menon had to contest from outside Kerala where the position was not favourable for him. Brecher says that Nehru felt more at ease with him because of his intellectual calibre and his incisive mind. But so is not the case with Stephen or Pranab Mukherjee or Narasimha Rao or Siv Shankar. They have not made a mark in the areas they administered.

Where are the people like TTK, Azad, Kidwai, Pant, Shastri etc. today? A recent public opinion poll has shown many of the prominent leaders in the cabinet of today in poor light. Or rather they were not allowed to be shown in better light by the banyan tree type shade of the leader. Even the prominent men in the present day both in party and government claim themselves to be men of nuts and bolts but not leaders of the centre of the stage. This is a very grave situation for the course which so far thrived on the primordial criterion of Nehru blood. But the line of lenearge has met with a cul-de-sac in Rajiv Gandhi. And to day the million dollar question in Indian politics is who is capable of succeeding Rajiv Gandhi in the Congress.

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