

**CHANGING NATURE OF THE INDIAN PARTY SYSTEM :
1977 - 1991**

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled "Changing Nature of the Indian Party System : 1977 - 91" submitted by Md. Sabir Raza is in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of this university. This dissertation has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this university or any other university and is his own work.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to examine the nature and development of the party system in India. This study concentrates on the period from 1977 to 1991. This is a significant period in the development of the party system in India. Important changes in the political arena, signalled by the dramatic defeat of the Congress party in 1977, heralded the beginning of major shifts in party politics which, in turn, affected the structure of party system itself. The most important sign of change was the emergence of the Janata party which, for the first time, challenged the supremacy of the Congress, both at the Centre and the state level. Some political scientists saw in this development the potential for the emergence of two party system. The collapse of the Janata party within two years of its coming to power suggested that this expectation was premature. Nevertheless it is a fact that the party system and party politics had undergone serious changes. Most important of them was the evidence that the Congress was unlikely to regain the kind of predominance it enjoyed in Nehru era. The trends set in motion in the late 1970s gained momentum in 1980s, in spite of the restoration of the Congress dominance in 1980, and the unprecedented victory in 1984 elections which were held in aftermath of Indira Gandhi's assassination. Events starting with the Bofors scandal and the

campaign against corruption in high places, triggered off a split in the Congress, culminating in the second ever defeat of the Congress party in the Lok Sabha election in 1989. Janata Dal formed the government at the Centre and several states.

This study is an attempt to detail these important developments in the sphere of party system outlined above. Focus of the study is on political cleavages and political conflicts manifested in the changing structure of party competition, resulting in realignments in the party system. While focussing on the political developments, this study tries to look at the underlying social bases of party change. The chief purpose of the study is to trace the changes in the party system and make an assessment of these changes in the party system. This is done mainly through a review of literature on the party system in India.

II

Various approaches have been employed for the study of political processes, political parties and party system of India. These approaches can be divided into two groups. In the first group would fall those studies which focus on the political institutions and processes as the key to under-

standing the character of political power and changes in it. These are usually put forward by political scientists who hold liberal modernist values. The second set of studies are those that regard political economy as holding the clue to the nature of the political processes and institutions.

W.H.Morris Jones in his book 'Government and Politics of India' and in many other articles, advanced the arguments that modern political institutions contrast with the traditional Indian society, symbolised by various idioms of politics. Modern political institutions - like administration, the one dominant party system and representative institutions, have accomplished vast social and economic changes as well as established the legitimacy of the state.¹

In his classic 'Asian Drama' Gunnar Myrdal characterised India, as 'soft state' for its failure to resolve the problems of poverty. He used this term to highlight inability of the state to enforce policies and to place obligations on the people.²

Robert L. Hardgrave also identified major problems in the political domain as a 'revolution of rising frustrations'. The modernisation process has increased the demands and expectations but the political institutions have shown their inability to accommodate the demands in the public policy.³

The most ambitious and most impressive attempt to understand the nature of political institutions exercising public power in India is the work of Rajni Kothari. According to him the Indian model consisted of establishing 'dominant political centre' in a society characterised by plural identities and segmental distances. The political institutions with high degree of institutional network is autonomous in dealing with pressures, and it tries to perform central role in bringing social and economic revolutions, and integrates the paraphrase with the mainstream. In his study of the Congress party, he emphasises the role of the Congress as an integrating institution, accommodating the various interests and resolving conflicts.⁴

Myron Weiner's study 'Party Building in New State' states the integrative role of the Congress. He argues that the Congress is successful because it has the capacity to adapt to its environment.⁵

Richard Sisson in his study 'Congress Party in Rajasthan' concludes that the character and change in the Congress system has been outcome of factional competition and other conflicts at successive points in time. Factional competition and bargaining have served a function of political communication within the Congress and also between the Congress and its higher environment. Thus, the competitive

system encourages the transmission of political messages not only from lower to higher echelon of the party organisations but also from opposition parties and groups to the ruling party.⁶

There are others who have studied the Indian party system through defection, factionalism and electoral system. For example, Horst Hartmann argues that the integration in the party system is due to the institutional arrangement of elections.⁷

There are a number of studies which are from the perspective of political economy. A.R. Desai in his study takes an orthodox Marxist position and seeks to demonstrate that despite contrary appearances, the state in India is a capitalist state.⁸

But Pranab Bardhan in his 'Political Economy of Development in India' views the Indian state as an autonomous actor in that it acts neither at the behest nor on behalf of the ruling classes, as capable of shaping class realignment, and which plays a catalytic role in industrial technological transformation, and is an important part of the economic base itself. But the conflict within the heterogeneous ruling classes, which ensures democracy, is such that this autonomy is reflected more in regulatory than developmental functions of the State.⁹

Sudipta Kaviraj in his many articles recognises the need to write a narrative of the Indian state in terms of actual political actors; in addition to a structural analysis of Indian politics.¹⁰

There are other studies from political economy perspective which are not Marxist. Francine Frankel's 'Indian Political Economy 1947-1977' views India's public power as a 'paradox of accommodative politics and radical social change'.¹¹

Susanne Rudolph and Lloyd Rudolph in their book 'In Pursuit of Lakshmi; The Political Economy of the Indian State' denote that India is a paradox of weak-strong state because the Indian state has 'alternated between autonomous and reflexive relation with the society. Drawing strength from various historical legacies, the state acts as the 'self-determining third actor', independent of both capital and labour, and has served at different times the capitalist, socialist, and the liberal-constitutional objectives or sometimes its own partisan interests. Highly mobilised though fragmented social forces are its source of weaknesses. The paradox is reflected in the realm of economic policy in the alternation between two models; 'command polity' when the state makes authoritative allocation or

'demand polity' when the state surrenders to popular sovereignty and fulfils societal interests and values.¹²

III

Methods used in this study are historical and analytical. This study is based mainly on secondary sources which include the published works of prominent writers on the party system and party politics, and has tried to analyse the ideas and views presented in the existing literature to make the assessment of the change in the party system.

This study is divided into four chapters, each dealing with a significant phase in development of the party system in India.

The first chapter covers the period from 1947 to 1977 during which the party system has passed through three significant phases. This chapter presents an assessment of different conceptualisations produced in some major works of political scientists, regarding these three different phases.

The second chapter deals with the major changes in the party system which was produced by the dramatic rejection of the Congress, and victory of the Janata party. It discusses the causal sources which produced this shift in the party

system. It also deals with the weaknesses of the Janata party which led to collapse of its rule within two years.

The third chapter opens with the return of the Congress in power both at the centre and in many states. Further, it examines the strengths and weaknesses of the Congress support base which provided the background for shifts in Indian politics. This shifts in Indian politics are also discussed in this chapter.

The last chapter discusses the change in the nature of party system which was produced by the second defeat of the Congress at the centre in 1989. The defeat of the Congress has seen that various political formations have strengthened their position in political arena. This gives a brief account of the rise of these political parties and examines the strengths and weaknesses of their support base.

NOTES

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CHAPTER 1

PARTY SYSTEM IN INDIA, 1947-77 : A REVIEW

The Indian party system has passed through three significant phases till 1977. These three phases are the One Party Dominance Model (1947-67), The Coalition Model (1967-71) and the Second One Party Dominance (1971-77). A brief review of these major phases would provide a meaningful understanding in the political processes which affected the nature of party system in this era. To understand them, we can not do better than assessing some of the major works on the party system of these phases.

One Party Dominance: The period beginning from 1947 until 1967 has been characterised as a dominant party system, a predominant party or Congress system¹. All the major studies done by scholars like, Rajni Kothari, Morris-Jones, Gopal Krishna etc, have underlined the dominant position of the Congress in the party system and in the political system as a whole. They have described the dominant party system wherein the Indian National Congress enjoyed dominant position both in terms of number of seats in the parliament and in State legislature and in terms of its organisational strength outside the legislature. While the opposition parties were not able to produce an alternative to the ruling party, they always operated as 'parties of pressure' on the periphery. Rajni Kothari writes about the role of opposition parties in such a system that they are "to con-

stantly pressurize, criticize, censure, and influence it by influencing opinion and interests inside the margin, and above all, exert a latent threat that if the ruling group strays away too far from the balance of effective public opinion, and if the factional system within it is not mobilised to restore the balance, it will be displaced from power by both opposition groups".² Morris Jones also writes that the main hope that opposition leaders had of increasing political influence was to address themselves to like minded groups in the dominant party system.³

The Congress was able to maintain its position as a party occupying most of the political system because of two characteristics. To quote Kothari, "there is plurality within the dominant party which makes it more representative, provides flexibility and sustains internal competition. At the same time, it is prepared to absorb groups and movements from outside the party and thus prevent other parties from gaining strength".⁴ Kochanek also believes that "the durability of Congress is attributable rather to its well exercised ability to adapt pragmatically to change its highly developed skill in managing internal conflicts and its evolution of a decision making process designed to aggregate the demands of a highly different following".⁵ The conflict management and aggregation of demands of varied

groups became possible because Congress inherited certain mechanisms and possessed a large number of skilled operatives who were able to arrange a bargain between important social groups, to interpret the logic of politics at one level of the system to people at high and lower levels, and to knit together the varied regions and sub-cultures of the sub-continent. To make the Congress a central integrating institution of India, its control over institutions of economic welfare like cooperatives and of democratic participation like Panchayati Raj, also helped a lot. B.S.Baviskars' analysis of the Congress at the sub-divisional level of Maharashtra has highlighted this phenomenon.⁶

The Congress, the predominant party, once in power, with its control over large patronage, tended to depend increasingly over concretely material rewards to build an electoral coalition. As Weiner remarks "the success of Congress depends very much on its adaptive qualities."⁷ We have seen that the local Congress party would rather adapt to than change the local power structure, we have pointed out that in rural areas the party has sought and won the support of those who own land, have wealth, control village Panchayats, manage the local cooperatives and can lead large number of persons. The expansion of governmental functions and regulations and close liason between the party and local

administration have made it necessary for those who want things from an expanding government to work through the party. Gould also observes with illustrative case that "Congress did not achieve political hegemony by transforming India's society, it did so by superimposing its organisational structure on it. By emphasising adaptive and accommodative rather than interventionist and transformative strategies in order to maximise its base of popular support, it catalysed the development of regional and local (i.e, provincial and district) political elites rooted in traditionally legitimised social formations like caste, sect and religion".⁸

Moreover, another factor contributing to predominance of the Congress party is the social and regional pluralism of India. To quote Weiner "the segmented character of India has made it possible for the Congress to lose overwhelmingly in a district through party defections or otherwise without having its position in neighbouring district similarly affected".⁹ Discontented caste or factions are often geographically confined, and it is unusual for an opposition party to build a coalition of all the discontented social groups within a state. If politics were organised on class basis and issues cut across the entire state, it would be difficult for the Congress to confine discontent to small

areas. The persistence of the parochial and segmented features of Indian life limits discontent and has made it possible for Congress to deal with each problem on a piecemeal basis.

In such a context, those trying to build and maintain opposition parties have to work against heavy odds. Where opposition parties occasionally win at the constituency level, the predominant party still controls the national and state governments with enough resources and will to starve the deviating constituencies. Social mobilisation particularly, successive waves of mobilisation and dissatisfaction directed against the Congress as the ruling party, of course, help those seeking to build opposition parties but the Congress can always reorient its appeals to adjust to the changing level and tone of social mobilisation, and steal the thunder of opposition mobilisation strategies. In her perceptive study of important opposition parties in U.P. Angela Burger concludes, "the most important function that opposition parties play is a feeder organisation to the dominant party. A dominant party is not necessarily an open accordion. It may be that the dominant party can open its ranks to new groups only when they have become politically significant which means pervious to the entry. Opposition parties in U.P. could be perennial minority parties,

serving to socialise, politicise, recruit, organise, integrate, and articulate the interests of groups only to see them incorporated into the dominant party".¹⁰

In spite of these factors, the idea of representation which held them together electorally was also symbolised in terms of the party's historical role in bringing independence to the country, and the promise it held for people of social and economic transformation.¹¹ Alongwith the historical role the success of the Congress has been attributed to the charismatic leadership of Nehru.¹²

Though the first model of Congress dominance worked well for almost two decades, it contained many serious flaws. First, the consensual picture which is emphasised in this model ignores the fact that Indian politics in the Nehru period and in later periods, was coalitional in the class sense and that political order was based on a coalition of classes, including different sections of the bourgeoisie, the professionals groups, the landlords and the rich peasants.¹³ And, it was the coalition of the interests of these social groups, and not the functional arrangement of the Congress organisation, which influenced the structure of dominance and working of the political institution. The Congress dominance worked because the social base of the coalition decided the course of action of the state. The

weakness of this model also lies in the fact that when the newly politicised groups of the society began demanding their share, this model started eroding. Further, factionalism which was an important element of this model did much harm to the party. It is because factionalism was very intense in the party and most of the time, representatives were involved in reconciling and aggregating the demands of various conflicting groups. The involvement of the leaders in factionalism affected public policy for the welfare of the people.

Second, the umbrella character of the party restricted its possibility of a coherent set of ideology for the party. Hardgrave and Kochanek writes, "at the national level, the Congress stole the thunder of the Praja Socialist party through its 1955 resolution in support of a socialist pattern of society. In the states, the Congress became the voice of regionalism in order to under cut the growth of separatism. At the local level, the party relaxed its policy of land reform to win support from the landlords and keep the Swatantra at a distance. At the top the Congress party repeatedly announced casteism as a reversion to a tribal mentality, but at the bottom, the Congress the Janta and even the Communists, anchored its organisation among the dominant castes.¹⁴

Third, the Congress has been intolerant towards the opposition governments in the states, and has departed from constitutional principles to keep itself in power. Opposition parties were tolerated only as long as they did not threaten the Congress monopoly of political power. Nehru himself used the instruments of President's rule to displace the non Congress governments from power. The Congress also used the state governors, who acted at the pleasure of Congress leaders at the centre without showing any regard to constitutional properties.

The coalition model :- The second phase in the party system evolution was a brief interlude of coalition politics. The period of one party dominance maintained so far by the Congress was shaken in 1967 general elections when it polled only 40% of the votes and its percentage of seats in Lok Sabha declined to 55%. Though reduced in majority the Congress could retain its hold at the center but it lost many states. The regional Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) came to power in Tamil Nadu with an absolute majority. In Kerala a communist-led United Front victory was decisive. Disparate coalitions of opposition parties formed shaky governments in Punjab, Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal. In order to retain power, the Congress entered into similar coalitions in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and

Rajasthan. Altogether there were more than twentyfive coalitions governments during the 1967-71 period.¹⁵ After the Congress split in 1969 the party had to enter into an implicit 'coalition' even at the center with the Communists and the Dravida Munetra Kazhagam parties. Technically, it was the Congress government, but it was a minority government and it had a legislative understanding with these supporting parties. But this model could not last long. Defections from one group to another, and non-performance of the coalition governments caused failure to the model.¹⁶

Various developments in the first two decades led to an end of one party dominance and beginning of the coalition model. The capital of the party began to dwindle with the changes that had taken place in the composition and character of the electorate. The electorate was one generation removed from the events of independence and the old charismatic leadership of the national movement had also departed from the scene.¹⁷ Again, the failure of leadership to translate into action ideological commitments to socialism and redistribution which was a consequence of both organisational weakness and the class alliance underlying governmental power brought disenchantment and dissatisfaction to the poor masses of India.¹⁸ India's diverse and dominant social classes had also claimed the share of public resources in

exchange for political support. The greater the share has been of governmental resources used in buying the support, the smaller the share has been available for economic development.¹⁹ Francine Frankel also notes that "the single party dominance worked well so long as the level of politicisation was low, the distribution of patronage was narrowly directed, and arbiters above politics were available to settle down factional disputes".²⁰ After Nehru, opposition groups, often with the help of defectors from Congress party occupied more political space on both the right and left and reduced the broad centre of Congress control. Within the Congress the demands of politicised backward classes for an independent share of power frequently overwhelmed the machinery of allocating ministerial posts and other patronage resources. A new alliance of interests had begun to emerge in politics marked by growing politicisation of vast population of the middle class groups.²¹ All this led to a large scale differentiation of the electorate with diverse party identification based on new interest and ideological alignments.

One Party Dominance Revisited : The 1971 elections brought about a massive victory for the Congress with two third majority and around 44% of votes. It appeared that the old one party dominance of the Congress was restored. But on

closer examination it is evident that there were many significant differences. The first major difference was the erosion of institutionalised politics and the growth of populist politics. The alternative before the Congress immediately following 1967 was two fold : "to regain dominance by energizing the party process through governmental function and through alliances of interests that had emerged in politics or to recognise the change in the party system which was then taking place".²² By splitting the party, she established her supremacy both in party and government and decided to go directly to the people and receive a fresh mandate. Indira Gandhi correctly sensed that her father's centrist emphasis on development was not sufficient and that emphasis on income distribution would win greater support.²³ Sisson and Roy argue that "the strategy was moderated by two centralizing opportunities. One was the availability of the centralised party finance made possible from national industry and international trade as well as from black money. Second the communication revolution that has brought radio to 90 percent and television to 70 percent of India's population has made attractive and possible the development of multi-media campaigns which have served to reduce dependence of the Congress centre on local and regional party notables and groups".²⁴ But at the same time, this strategy

brought to an end the first phase of the party dominance and destroyed the organisational strength of the Congress party.

The second major difference was the collapse of the competitive mechanism within the dominant party. Kochanek also maintains that "the major failure of the Congress party in 1967 was internal, for the post-Nehru leadership failed to perform what had become the central leadership most vital function - the mediation of intra-party disputes and diversity".²⁵ The new Congress party under Indira Gandhi abandoned intra-party democracy and all the positions were filled from above.

The centralisation of power within the party did not mean that factionalism ceased to operate. Instead, partly because the centralisation reduced the leaders ability to manage conflict, partly because Indira Gandhi set leaders and factions at the regional level against one another, the party's ability to respond creatively to the demands of the society greatly eroded.

Third, as distinct from the consensus making and accommodation of interests of earlier dominance model, the new model gave priority to ideological thrust with 'Garibi Hatao' (abolish poverty) slogan, with the help of radical economic programme, she deliberately tried to restructure the Congress support in order to maintain the dominance.

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She made attempts to reduce dominant middle caste representation and raise that of the lower castes to supplement the Congress traditional support base.

Indira Gandhi's efforts to restructure the party to downgrade the dominant castes and raise the lower castes is best illustrated by examples from the Southern states. As James Manor has shown in Karnataka, the Lingayats and Okkaligas had hitherto dominated the state politics.²⁶ A number of scholars have noted that during 1972 election, the Congress (R) under Urs gave tickets to persons belonging to small and backward classes, though it did care not to alienate the dominant caste completely.²⁷ Between 1972-80, Urs adopted a number of programmes to benefit the less privileged groups. A study of the composition of 1972 Urs cabinet shows that Lingayats, Okkaligas and Brahmin representation declined from 71 percent in 1967 to 46% while that of minority groups increased from 28 percent to 54 percent.

In Andhra Pradesh after 1969, Indira Gandhi attempted to widen the socio-economic base of the party and reduced the power of Kammas and Reddys. During the 1972 assembly elections, she selected a large number of candidates from the non-dominant groups and gave them 173 seats out of 287 of party candidates.²⁸ As a part of her strategy to weaken the dominant castes, Indira Gandhi appointed P.V. Narsimha

Rao, a Brahmin from Telengana, chief minister. A Study of Rao's 1972 cabinet shows that the representation of Reddy fell from 28 percent in 1969 to 13.8 percent while that of backward castes increased from 10.7 to 20.7 percent Rao was, however, forced to quit due to violent agitations in the state on the issue of Mulki rulers. It was widely believed that the dominant castes had played key role in the agitation.²⁹ Indira Gandhi then turned to Vengal Rao, who came from the small Valema caste. Vengal Rao, too, sought to limit the hold of the dominant castes on his government. We also reconstituted party and Panchayat committees to prevent these castes from using their socio-economic position to win election and reassert themselves.

In Maharashtra Jayant Lele shows that Indira Gandhi in collaboration with V.P. Naik, tried to reduce the Congress dependence on Marathas. During 1972 assembly elections Naik recommended a large number of non-Marathas for party tickets. He, however, confined this strategy to the Vidarbha region because he was neither strong enough to confront S. B. Chavan nor inclined to do so.³⁰

In Gujarat John Wood's study of the state Legislature party shows that the representation of the weaker sections Kshatriya, Harijans, Adivasis and Muslims (KHAM) increased

dramatically from 38.7 percent in 1967 to 68.6 percent in 1980.³¹

In northern India, the objectives were different in view of the far higher proportion of twice born castes in the population in comparison with South and Western India. Here, following the Congress split 1969, Indira Gandhi made efforts to accumulate backward castes but not to restructure the party to give it a different support base.

In Bihar, the Bhumihaar and Rajputs leaders supported the Congress(O) in 1969, while the Brahmins largely remained with Indira Gandhi. Unlike U.P. the middle castes did not leave the Congress in Bihar. A study of the composition of the Congress in Bihar over 13 years period indicates no major change in the party structure.³² Also no effort was made to change the power balance in the state government after 1969 split.

The social composition of the party largely remained unaltered in U.P. as well. Paul Brass study shows that after 1971 Indira Gandhi controlled U.P. through a rump party organisation dominated by Brahmins. Despite the loss of support among the middle land owning castes the Congress (R) was able to retain one third of the vote partly because of the support of the Brahmins and some of the Rajput castes. It also won grater support from the rural poor, the landless

and Scheduled Castes on the strength of policies designed to favour these groups.³³

In Rajasthan an attempt was made to come to terms with the Jats. So, in 1972 she reduced the Brahmins share by. The overall Brahmin Rajputs and Vaishyas representation among the Congress (R) declined from 35 percent to 26 percent. In 1972 over 35% of the Congress (R) nominees were from among the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes though only 28 percent of the seats in the assembly were reserved for this group. There was slight increase in the number of Muslims allotted Congress tickets.³⁴

The first two decades after independence witnessed a rapid rise of political awareness among the socially and educationally disadvantaged groups who began to demand political space which was earlier occupied by a coalition of small groups. Their demands for political space transformed the competition of political power between factions within the Congress party into competition between social groups. Second, Indira Gandhi very well understood the large scale change at the socio-economic level which made the earlier strategy of political mobilisation quite difficult. She, thus moved away from the earlier strategy of political mobilisation and made direct appeal to the people with the package of radical policies and programmes. By focussing on

the slogan of "Garibi Hatao", she opened a new era of populism in politics. But this populism again brought the Congress to the dominant position, and thwarted the process of pluralism and differentiation which had begun to take place in Indian politics.

NOTES

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CHAPTER TWO

TWO PARTY SITUATION, 1977-80 :

A TRANSITORY PHASE

1977 is a momentous year in India's political development which not only saw the fall of the authoritarian regime of emergency rule, but also produced a massive shift in voting trends and the structure of parties and party system. This drastic alteration in the voting patterns and the dramatic rejection of ruling party led many political observers to conclude that a new party system had been ushered in. This chapter attempts to analyse different frameworks and assessments of political parties and party system during this period made by political scientists, and assesses the shifts in the context of broader socio-economic changes that were taking place in the country.

This phase has been characterised by Ram Joshi and Kirtidev Desai as a shift from the dominant party system to some sort of two party system or two party system in a nebulous form.¹ Their characterisation of this system is based on many changes that this new phase signified. To them this system reflected political polarization and inter-party competition distinguished from the intra-party competition under the one party dominance system. The crux of their argument is that merger of major opposition parties into Janata party and an alliance with the Akali Dal, Dravida Munetra Kazagam, and CPI(M) on the one hand, and the

Congress and its ally Communist party of India and AIDMK on the other side, created a highly competitive two party situation. Such a structural polarisation of electoral competition became a catalytic factor for massive vote-shift on the one hand and the principal cause for bringing down seat-vote distortions which favoured only the Congress in the past.²

The Congress party received 35.4% of the popular vote in 1977 which meant 9% loss of popular vote in comparison to its 1971 record. This was the highest vote loss suffered by the Congress till now. Earlier, the party had lost 2.7% of the votes in 1962 and 3.8% in 1967 while it had gained 2.4% in 1957 and 3.6% in 1971. Thus, there is a clear manifestation that in all earlier elections, the Congress gain or loss had stabilized in the range of 2 to 4 per cent. That is why the loss of 9% in 1977 election must be considered as a massive shift.

Even such a massive shift by itself could not have resulted in such a landslide victory for the Janata party, had this not been aided by the sharp reduction in the advantage of vote-seat distortion which had, always on earlier occasions, helped the Congress to win much larger number of seats than the share of vote percentage. Generally, the Congress bagged 24% to 30% more seats than votes except in

1967 which had brought down the Congress vote-seat advantage to the level of 13.5% But the 1977 changed the entire scenario and the Congress, instead of establishing an advantage over other parties, lost 6.8% of seats than the votes. Thus, it was the first time that vote-seat distortions worked against the Congress and in favour of the opposition.

The pattern of support also revealed regional differences. The Janata party had made a clean-sweep in north India but made virtually no inroads into the South. Janata party bagged 222 seats from North India of its total 298 seats, while it won only six seats from four Southern states. In contrast, 92 of 154 seats the Congress won from South India, while it won only 2 seats from the North India.

Partly, the pattern reflected the vigour and intensity with which the emergency had been imposed and excesses of arbitrary arrest and forced sterilization that has been inflicted, notes James Manor. North India had been much more affected by the excesses of the emergency and the fear that has been generated by the forced sterilisation campaign was probably the most important factor in accounting for the Congress' massive loss in North India. It was ironic that the principal victims of forced sterilization and Sanjay Gandhi's slum-clearance demolitions were Harijans and Mus-

lims, who, in 1971, had been among Indira Gandhi's most ardent supporters.³

A few more factors contributed to this schism. First, the parties that had merged to form, the Janata drew their support primarily from North India, and on the critical language issue, they were viewed as strongly pro-Hindi. Second, in contrast to the North, where emergency was the issue, Southern voters were heavily influenced by local considerations.⁴ Third, as we have noted earlier, that in these states, the Congress could build their permanent base, through a number of policies and the active and shrewd handling of the issues by their chief ministers.

Another significant thing which came to the fore in this election was that the Janata and the Congress cornered between them 77.7% of the votes and 83.14% of the seats. If one takes into account the electoral allies of these two parties, the situation would be still more impressive. Out of 17 major states, the two parties received 80% votes in 12 states, and also acquired a large number of seats in these states. Only in five states - Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala the two party situation could not emerge clearly where Communist parties and regional parties prevented the advance of the Janata and the Congress. Thus, at the national level as well as the level

of states, the two party situation could potentially emerge. The assembly election of June 1977 also reinforced this trend. Where the Janata party and the Congress party cornered approximately 72% of the votes and 71% of the seats. Thus, the shift in the electoral choice as well as the change in the structure of competition seem to have generated a fairly competitive two party situation in Indian politics.

Electorate's Expectation And Congress Response:-

Before going into the validity of the conceptualisation it is essential to look into the prevailing situation and factors which led to the dramatic rejection of the Congress party. Congress defeat did not reflect the euphoria which was, quite often, explained in terms of the - "Janata wave" replacing the "Congress wave". Rather it shows the certain trends at the level of socio-economic changes as well as the workings of different parties and their interaction. The social and economic changes produced through governmental action, frequent elections and mobilisational efforts of political parties over the years have changed the size and character of the political community. Social groups which were once on the periphery of the political community are now very much a part of it. Increasing competition has heightened the consciousness. It has made people more aware

of their economic vulnerability. As the gap between the expectations and achievements widens and the sense of deprivation becomes more apparent, the frustration grows more intense. And this growing frustration is directed against the ruling party.

In 1967, when economic conditions in the country were extremely bad, following three successive droughts, and industrial recession and severe inflation, the electorate held the ruling party responsible for the prevailing conditions and pushed it out of the power in various states and also reduced its majority in the parliament.

Coalition governments that had come to power in several states, could not improve on the performance of the Congress governments. Their record in office was characterised by inaction and lack of forward movement. Economic situation also improved with the help of successful monsoon and the government-initiated agricultural programmes.

While the changing economic and political situations helped in reducing the anti-Congress feelings that had resulted in a major setback for the Congress in 1967, the split in the party in 1969 did much more. The split provided Indira Gandhi and her supporters an opportunity to play the role of progressive group against the "Syndicate" of the Congress. Further, Indira Gandhi's populist actions of bank

nationalisations and abolition of privy purses, the drawing of the battle lines for the Presidential elections to the Parliament with the conservative Jana Sangh and Swatantrata on the side of Congress (O), and the CPI and the DMK standing with the Congress (R). The emphasis on "Garibi Hatao" and a whole range of socio-economic measures in the campaign itself reinforced these images, giving to the electoral battle strong undertones of a conflict between the rich and the poor. With the radical image and most of the opposition parties in the dock in the states, the Congress swept to victory in 1971 elections.

Once her power was secure, Indira Gandhi addressed the issue of poverty, first, by familiar but identified, targeting of public sector programmes towards the poor. These soon ran into limits upon the government's capacity to deliver. Food grain distribution to vulnerable sections of the community was stopped far short of its goals by failure to procure enough grain from farmers. An innovative "Crash scheme for Rural Employment" began producing results but would have required six times the funds allotted to complete the programme.⁷ A progressive tax on agriculture had been officially recommended to raise revenues of this magnitude but it ran directly counter to the political support of the Congress in the states. Lack of financial resources also

thwarted an innovative policy proposal of C. Subarmanium, then Indira Gandhi's representative on the Planning Commission. The parallel system of agricultural credit for tenants and marginal farmers secured by crops, rather than lands might have encouraged these hard pressed farmers to adopt some of the new productive practices⁸.

An acid test of 'Garibi Hatao' was the redistribution of farmland held in excess of prescribed ceilings to the tillers of substandard holdings⁹. Under Indira Gandhi's initiative the Congress party set up the Central Land Reforms Committee; the idea was to commit Congress leaders in the states, where they had blocked previous efforts. After a struggle the committee adopted a tough ceiling, twenty seven acres for a family of five on land irrigated for a single crop. Where chief ministers who derived their power from large classes of land-owning cultivators dragged their feet, Indira Gandhi undermined them politically. But actual transfer was even more minuscule than before; 25,000 hectares nationwide from 1972 to 1975.

These failures on the part of the ruling party contributed more to the already disenchanted and dissatisfied electorate who had very high expectations. As a result, those disadvantaged rural dwellers, who largely used to vote according to the wishes of land owning groups that continued

to dominate life in the villages, became more assertive and competitive, and their appetites for resources from politicians grew. Interest groups crystallized and came increasingly into conflict, so that it became harder to operate a political machine that could cater to every organised interest, as the Congress had very nearly done in the Nehru era.¹⁰

An important issue that dominated this period was the decay of political institutions, which as James Manor says resulted in "a decline in the capacity of institutions to respond rationally creatively or even adequately to pressures from society".¹¹ This organisational decline affected both the formal institutions of state and most political parties including, above all, the Congress Party. It was partly the result of the tendency of Indira Gandhi and her associates to centralize power and to deinstitutionalize.

Centralization of power occurred in the nomination process for selecting party candidates to contest elections, in the direct selection of chief ministers by the prime minister and her advisors, in the direct distribution of patronage from the central government to district politicians, by-passing the state governments, and in the ruthless application of Presidents rule at the whim of the central government. Nationalisation of issues was facilitated by

the delinking of parliamentary from legislative assembly elections, by the increasing use of slogans and symbols to appeal to broad categories of voters such as the poor and the minorities, by the dramatization and distortion of local issues involving violence, and by other means that placed a high premium on demagogic skills. Intervention in state politics became increasingly necessary despite these tendencies, because they both undercut the very bases of stable politics in the states, namely, autonomous leadership and strong local party organisation. Finally because of the absence of autonomous state leadership and strong party organisations, the intervention of the center increasingly became misguided, misinformed and even desperate.¹²

The Congress also faced a new challenge in the 1970s that it had not faced before, namely, the use of agitational tactics by opposition leaders to bring down the Congress - dominated state governments and to threaten the central government as well. Two major agitations in 1974 led to the fall of a state government in Gujarat and the near collapse of the Bihar government in the same year¹³. In both these movements, it was the students and ex-jobless students who participated in large numbers. Between 1971 when she was re-elected and 1975 when her crisis of support came, the number of educated youths actually registered with the employment

exchange had grown from 1.8 million to 4.1 million. A sample survey showed one out of four urban literate youths was unemployed.¹⁴ Thus, the inability to fulfil her 1971 election promise to abolish poverty gave credibility to the charge of opposition leaders, notably Jaya Prakash Narayan that she was interested only in clinging to office¹⁵.

It was against this backdrop that in the summer 1975 Prime Minister Indira Gandhi suffered two major blows. On June 12 Indira Gandhi was found guilty by the High Court of Allahabad of election-code violations. The High Court decision was the result of charges brought four years before by Raj Narain, Indira Gandhi's socialist opponent in the parliamentary constituency of Rae Bareilly in U.P. The Court dismissed the more serious charges, including bribery and intimidation, but found the Prime Minister guilty of two relatively minor technical violations of the law. If the offences were minor, the consequences were not. Her election in 1971 was declared invalid. In losing her seat in Parliament, she would have to resign as Prime Minister. The law furthermore barred her from elective office for a period of six years. In order to permit an appeal to the Supreme Court the sentence was stayed for 20 days¹⁶.

The court ruling was followed a day later by the results of the state assembly elections in Gujarat which gave

the Congress and Indira Gandhi a severe blow. The state had been under President's Rule for more than a year when in April 1975 Morarji Desai began a fast unto death in order to force the Prime Minister to call elections. Indira Gandhi yielded to the man who had once been her principal rival for Congress party leadership. With elections set for June, four opposition parties the Congress (I) the Jana Sangh, the Bhartiya Lok Dal (BLD), and the Socialist Party entered into an uneasy alliance. With a common programme, a single set of candidates and the blessing of Jayaprakash Narayan, the Janata (People's) Front stood against the Congress in Gujarat. Indira Gandhi campaigned actively in the State and placed her prestige on the Congress victory. The Congress defeat was massive¹⁷. With these developments, she clearly feared also that, a mass nationwide opposition agitation was in the offing that would make it impossible for her to survive politically. The emergency regime from 1975 to 1977 was imposed in order to prevent the eventuality.

During the emergency period a lot of excesses were done by the government which also eroded the support of the Congress party. In 21 months of the emergency, a total of 110,000 people were arrested and detained without trial¹⁸. By presidential order, the right of any person to seek constitutional protection through the courts was suspended.

Newspapers were barred from publishing the names of those arrested. Arrests were often arbitrary, sometimes personal vendettas, and as investigation later confirmed, incidents of torture and even murder occurred in the jails. Sanjay Gandhi's rise in the party caused a severe blow to the party. Sanjay's favoured cause was family planning and, in Delhi and the Hindi-speaking states of northern India, the governments vasectomy programme was aggressively pursued by inducements and disincentives. Central government employees with more than three children for example, were ineligible for government housing until they produced a sterilization certificate. Some states imposed vasectomy quotas on government officials. Their pay and promotion depended on producing evidence that they had induced the requisite number of persons to undergo sterilization. Quotas provided the impetus for compulsory sterilization. Widespread stories recounted raids on villages by government officials and roundups from the "weaker sections" of society the poor, uneducated, untouchables and Muslims.

Often in concert with forced sterilization slum clearance in Delhi was another of Sanjay Gandhi's favourite projects, and demolitions were often carried out under his personal supervision. The squatter settlements around the Jama Masjid mosque were razed, and their dwellers transport-

ed to new housing miles away from the city and their place of works.¹⁹

Janata's Collapse and the Failure of the Two Party System:

The suddenness of Congress (I)'s collapse and the electoral victories of Janata party had led the political analysts to make hasty conclusions about a systemic change from the dominant party system to some sort of a two-party system. Desai and Joshi stated that this system was marked by; a) the political polarisation and inter-party competition ; b) there was very less seat-vote distortion which earlier had favoured the Congress to win elections; c) there was also regional differences in support pattern. The Janata party made a clear sweep in North India but made virtually no impact in South India, while the Congress won majority of seats from the South. These two formations received more than 75% of votes and around 85% of the seats. But, these conclusions were based more on fond hopes and theoretical assumptions that the Indian party system would follow the western model. The sudden collapse of the Janata Party raised many questions regarding the nature of verdict itself as well as the character and policies of the Janata party.

Discussing the nature of verdict of 1977, Rudolph and Rudolph note that the electoral outcome of 1977 was less a victory of the Janata party leadership ideology or policies

than it was a protest vote against the Congress emergency regime.²⁰ The electorate had said 'NO' to Indira Gandhi and Sanjay Gandhi, but at best it had said "perhaps" to the Janata party, which was till now an unknown political entity. If it wanted to consolidate this incidental gain, it had to convert negative votes into positive commitments of the voters. In order to meet this challenge, it had to resolve many strains which were inherent in its heterogeneous origin. But even in that attempt it failed miserably. The strains it had contained are as follows.

While it is true that the Janata party was formed by the merger of non-Communist opposition parties as an alternative to the Congress (I) empirical evidences show that the Janata was a single political party in appearance only. In reality, it was a federation or alliance of four different political parties the Bhartiya Jana Sangh, the Congress (O), the Bhartiya Lok Dal and the Socialist party. Thus, the Janata party was a dubious miracle. These political parties joined it without dissolving their separate identities and in some cases even their organisational network²¹. This was particularly so in the case of Jana Sangh, the BLD and the Congress (O), each of which retained its hold in the states where they were strong and tried to beat each other. It appeared that these political parties joined the Janata not

to merge their previous identities with new one but to use their position within the Janata to dominate the party itself.²² Thus, conflicts and breaks were inherent in the character of the Janata party.

In the formative period of party building, ideological distinctiveness of the party is of crucial importance because it helps not only in retaining the faithful follower but also in attracting new adherents to the fold of the party. That is why, every emerging political party evolves a coherent ideology and emphasises its ideological distinctiveness. For the Janata party, Gandhism and Jayaprakash Narayan's socialism constituted the broad ideological umbrella. But, in practice, all the constituents of the Janata party, instead of reconciling their ideological differences, tried to push the party to adopt their own programmes²³. Thus, the Janata party failed to evolve any set of ideology which was mutually acceptable to all. The failure on this front caused confusion in the rank and file and conflicts in the leadership. Consequently, when the dust and din of anti-Congress wave settled down, the Janata party appeared to be no difference from the Congress (I).

When the process of party building moves forward, building of party organisation becomes more important than ideology. It is because the sustenance of party ultimately

depends upon the content and strength of the organisation. Instead of building a new and fresh party organisation of its own, the Janata party simply incorporated the inherited diverse organisational network. As a result, the different constituents dominated the Janata party units in different states. The Jana Sangh had a very well-organised party organisation in Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, so it dominated in these states. Charan Singh led BLD in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and the Congress (O) in Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal, Assam and Sikkim²⁴. Thus, from the beginning itself, the party confronted with the organisational crisis as each dominant constituent was trying to increase its dominance and foil the efforts of the other constituents to gain a foot hold in the party organization. The organizational crisis became more evident in the membership drive in different states in which each constituent tried to beat others in filling up the party units with its own adherents as fresh party members²⁵.

The Janata party might still have survived, had the central leadership kept themselves above the fighting for dominance and disciplined their respective supporters. As this virus was not confined to the lower and middle ranks but was a feature of central leadership. The initial conflicts occurred between Charan Sing on the one hand, and

Morarji Desai and Chandra Sekhar on the other hand, while Vajpai maintaining a sort of neutrality waiting for his time to strike at the proper opportunity. By 1978, a bitter conflict ensued between BLD and the Jana Sangh groups²⁶. The break up of the party also started at the central level when Charan Singh and Raj Narain were forced to resign.

Apart from contradictions inherent in the party structure, there were also very important contradictions in the Janata party. Economic programme emphasised Mahatma Gandhi's ideals of austerity and economic decentralisation, with greater stress being given to agricultural development and Labour intensive cottage industries, as well as a larger resources allocation for the rural sector. But no concrete programme could evolve. It, thus, failed to achieve the amelioration of the conditions of the people. On the other hand, the Janata party could not adopt any clear cut policy regarding industry and rich peasantry which was fundamentally different from that of the Congress. The Janata, like the Congress, talked of the rural development without agrarian reforms, and it was based on an understanding of the leadership that democratic market needs an expansion to safeguard the interests of the industrial bourgeoisie. In fact, though Jayaprakash Narayan, Morarji Desai and Charan Singh talked of Gandhian economics and paid homage to it, Gandhi

meant very different things to all these leaders of the Janata.

The Janata party could not retain for long the coalition of three major social forces the middle and rich peasantry, the Muslim, and scheduled castes, which formed the support base of the party. The Janata party could retain its support among the peasantry only which depended largely upon the identification of peasantry with Charan Singh, the leading advocate and most articulate spokesman for this social category. Charan Singh's base among the middle peasantry of North India was also reinforced by the selection of the persons from middle and backward castes as chief ministers of three North Indian states - Devi Lal, a Jat in Haryana, Ram Naresh Yadav in U.P., and Karpuri Thakur, a barber in Bihar. These state governments also took various measures for the agricultural development and other various programmes in support of the backward castes in particular, that ensured continued support among the middle and backward castes.

But its Muslim support was weakened by the failure of the central government and the governments in Bihar and U.P. to make any significant concessions concerning the use of Urdu language, by the slowness of central government in framing a new Aligarh Muslim University Act that would

guarantee the Muslim character of the university, by the appointment of non-Muslim-Minoo Masani- to head the new Minorities Commission, established by the Janata government, and by increased incidence of Hindu-Muslim communal riots.

The support of scheduled castes was weakened by the failure of Janata Leadership to name Jagjivan Ram as prime minister, and more importantly, by growing attention given to the tension between scheduled castes and middle proprietary castes in the countryside, especially North and Central India. The press and Indira Gandhi were giving wide publicity to several, particularly, violent incidents in which scheduled castes were killed such as, at Belchi in Bihar, at Pantnagar and in Agra in U.P., and other places.²⁷

In the end, one can make a few points. Failure of the Congress party in meeting the rising expectation of the electorate brought the end of uninterrupted rule of the Congress at the national level, and the Janata party, a coalition of many parties came to power. This situation appeared to be a situation of two party system. But in reality, it was not the case because the very character of the Janata party could not qualify as a political party in the absence of any cohesion, organisational set up, any single ideology, and above all, hierarchical order of leadership. It, however, always remained a conglomeration of various political

parties which came together for the sake of grabbing power. There was constant fight among the leaders of these constituents of the Janata party. Thus, it is obvious that though there was major shift in the Indian party system but it could not evolve a 'two party system'.

NOTES

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CHAPTER 3

**ONE PARTY DOMINANCE RESTORED,
1980-1989.**

The mid-term parliamentary election in 1980 again proved the maturity of the electorate of India and produced the kind of verdict which led political observers to draw the inference that the election result restored the political situation that had supported one party dominance by Indian National Congress during the first 20 years in Indian politics after independence. The first part of the chapter will consist of an analysis of strengths and weaknesses of this new development and the second part will reflect shifts in the trends in Indian politics. These trends manifest in the rightward direction both in the polity and the economy. In the polity, political mobilisation was not based on socio-economic issues but on the communal appeal to the voters. In the economy, we observe the beginning of liberalisation process.

In January 1980, Indira Gandhi, after 33 months of being out of power, came back to power as Prime Minister of India. She led the Congress to victory with around 43% of votes and 67% seats, thus, reducing other opposition parties to no more than regional parties. The Congress won two third majority with 351 seats. The Lok Dal with 41 seats was reduced, to little more than a regional party with a strong base of support among the U.P. peasantry. The Janata party-

took only 31 seats. The other Congress, led by Devraj Urs picked up a scattered collection of 13 seats, but failed to win even a single constituency in his own state. In humiliation, he resigned from the post of Chief Minister of Karnataka. Only Communist parties among the opposition parties could improve their position in the tally of Lok Sabha. The CPI won 11 seats instead of 7 seats in the last election. The CPM, from its power in West Bengal and Kerala could gather 36 seats instead of 22 in the last.¹

The Janata party's victory in 1977 had been greeted with euphoria and hailed as a democratic revolution and defeat of authoritarianism. But 28 months later, amidst drift, discontent, defection and non-performance, the Janata government collapsed as we have seen in the previous chapter. In its place, an uneasy coalition came to power under Charan Singh, leader of the break-away Lok Dal faction. In less than one month, Charan Singh submitted his resignation as Prime Minister, and the President called new elections.

With both the Janata and the Congress party were torn by schism, the prospect of any single party emerging with a parliamentary majority appeared dim. Negotiations among the various parties for alliances and electoral arrangements continued until the final lists of candidates were filled. Defections from one party to another further weakened any

semblance of coherence. Two ministers from the caretaker government of Charan Singh resigned to join the Congress(I), and Finance Minister H.N. Bahuguna, with a substantial following among Muslims, in the state of U.P., was made party secretary.

Campaign issues of Indira Gandhi were specific; the deterioration of law and order and a faltering economy. Indira Gandhi applied each to the concrete experience of the individual voter. "Law and Order" for the industrialists was the code-word for strikes and labour indiscipline; for Harijans and Muslims, it was an appeal to their sense of vulnerability; for women, it was a question of personal security. On the economic side, grocery prices had risen sharply over the previous six months, and widespread shortages made the situation more desperate. Energy, whether kerosene for the home, or petroleum and coal for farm and factory, was deficient.

In such a difficult situation the elections were held, and the Congress (I) was voted back to power with massive majority. It was a protest against the non-performance of a government that got lost in the natural bickerings and personal ambitions of their leaders. It was a protest vote by the poor, minorities, and harijans who felt betrayed by

the support they gave for a coalition of parties that promised democracy to them.

The Congress (I) received support from the large sections of the society. The urban and rural middle classes drifted apart with the collapse of the Janata party. The rising prices of food items more particularly the exportable ones - like sugar and onion-on the eve of elections also made the urban voters resent the Lok Dal which by its own policies and publicity was identified with the interests of rich farmers of green belt region, particularly the wheat and sugarcane growers of Haryana and U.P. With the fragmentation of middle class votes, the old alignments of big bourgeoisie and feudal lords - emerged supreme. With the help of their slogans of 'Stability' and 'Law and Order' the landlords could bring their rural supporters together to vote for the party of their choice. By and large, all over India, the big landlords and rich peasantry voted for the Congress.

The Congress was also the party of princely homes. In Madhya Pradesh alone, the Congress put up four princes for the Lok sabha and 34 princely candidates for the Assembly. The election results showed that the influence of feudal princes had not really waned.

In addition to these factors, the frequent outbreak of caste-riots in the villages and the increasing eviction of small peasants, the non-payment of wages to the labour and burning of their houses along with kith and kin all over the Hindi heartland from Punjab to Bihar, made them vote for the Congress(I).

In the tribal regions where religion and tribal loyalties rather than caste were important in the electoral campaigning, the votes of the Congress were high. The poor tribals, mostly Christian, found their miseries as agricultural labourer and petty peasants compounded by religious insecurity. The Janata rule had played into the hands of its dominant constituents - the former Jana Sangh. The proposal of Hindu Bill which sought to prevent conversion of religions was viewed by Christians all over India as a threats to their existence. Its repercussions in the tribal region were immediate and sharp.

Unfulfilment of the promise of the Janata government and the massacres of Muslims in the towns of U.P. and Bihar (Aligarh and Jamshedpur) in the wake of communal clashes increased the insecurity of the minorities. Thus, they again, favoured the Congress (I) with substantial number of people.

This massive victory of the Congress in the election and also the failure of the opposition parties resembled the earlier outcome in the era of one-party dominance in 1952, 1957 and 1962. But resemblance was superficial, Rudolph and Rudolph note three significant changes. These are, a significant shift in the regional distribution of party support inducing Congress, which had previously relied on disproportionate support in the Hindi heartland, the breakdown of the minorities 'bloc support for Congress and progressive de-institutionalisation of Congress.²

Though the Congress won in 1980, it continued to remain weak among the middle peasantry particularly in North India. It was demonstrated by the electoral performance of the Congress in U.P., Haryana and Bihar etc, where it won only 36 per cent, 29 per cent and 36 per cent of the vote respectively.³ The Lok Dal, the party which claims to represent the interests of the peasant proprietors, won 29% of the popular vote in U.P., 17% in Bihar and 34% in Haryana. The party did well in this region in 1967 and 1971 also, while in 1977 it, as a constituent of the Janata party, defeated the Congress in all three states. In 1980, the Lok Dal improved its position slightly compared to 1967 and 1971 and the strength of the Congress (I) correspondingly declined.⁴

The Congress (I)'s hold among the urban middle classes was also not powerful in 1980. It has been known that the intelligentsia was not happy with Indira Gandhi's style of functioning. In this election, the Congress (I) lost majority of the seats in the metropolitan cities of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras although it won in Delhi.

Even among the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes of North India, the Congress (I) did not fare well in this election. It won 50 out of 79 reserved seats for scheduled castes and 29 of the 37 seats reserved for scheduled tribes. The Congress (I) won 49 of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes seats on majority vote. But it did not win any of the 18 seats in U.P. on majority vote. In Bihar also, the Congress (I) won six seats reserved for scheduled castes, all by a minority vote cast except in Bagha constituency. It shows that many of the seats were won by the Congress (I) by precarious margin of votes and a slight swing against it or opposition unity might have made all the difference between victory and defeat.

As for the Muslims, in 1980, the Congress (I) did not fare as well as it did in all elections before 1977. But it still wielded considerable influence in the community. In U.P., for example, the Congress (I) won only 16 of the 30 constituencies which have large Muslim concentrations elec-

torate while the Lok Dal of Charan Singh won 14. In 12 of the constituencies won by the Congress (I), the Lok Dal and the Janata together polled more votes than the winning Congress (I) candidates. Commenting on declining Muslim support to the Congress, Violette Graf notes that Muslims in most parts of India with the partial exception in 1967, voted predominantly for the Congress in all elections between 1947 and 1977. However, in 1977 Muslims deserted the Congress and voted en bloc for the opposition along with other groups. In 1980, many Muslims returned to the fold of the Congress. However, in 1980 and 1984, she notes that Muslims did not vote en bloc for either the Congress or the opposition but tended to vote more or less, in the same way as others within the region.⁶

With the weakening of the Congress support base, the strength of the Congress organisations also declined. The period of emergency of 1975-77 was an event that exhibited the pathological extreme of de-institutionalisation⁷, which resulted in further splits in the Congress party. It occurred in early 1977 and again in 1978. Just before the 1977, elections, Jagjivan Ram, widely acknowledged leader of Harijans, left the Congress (R) and formed his own 'Congress for Democracy'. After the Congress (R) was thrashed badly, a much reduced Congress again split for the third time after

independence, over the issue of sanctioning a financially autonomous youth Congress which was to be led by Sanjay Gandhi. At the Bombay annual session in 1978. Devraj Urs and other hitherto Indira loyalist organisational men were driven out of the party. Thus, Indira Gandhi renamed her party as the Congress (I) - for Congress (Indira). Once again instead of enhancing the organisation's strength by recognising leaders with independent bases of support and related policy preferences could be regarded as party assets, Indira Gandhi responded in a very authoritarian manner. She tried to eliminate such types of leaders from the party because she perceived their independent support base as a potential threat to her leadership. This resulted in continuous weakening and de-institutionalisation of party organization which "eroded further the capacity of the governmental institutions to respond adequately to the excessive flow of pressures, voices and demands that were made upon them".⁸

Meanwhile, the support building strategy, Indira Gandhi had pursued with success in the upper South India, began to run into trouble. This was evident in the Assembly, elections of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka in 1982 where the Congress lost power to regional parties in the states. Another important development of this period was Indira

Gandhi's realisation by that time that her socialism was not working. The anti-poverty programmes had not been successful. Thus, her continuing electoral support among the poor was dwindling in the absence of the distributive actions to improve their economic conditions. Whatever support she retained was largely due to her ideological and historical appeal. She believed that time the limit of rhetoric had reached and the more rhetoric would not have brought any further support.

Shift in Indian Politics and Congress Dominance

It is evident that though the Congress (I), came to power in 1980, but its support base was precarious. The Congress (I) remained weak among the peasantry class of North India. It also lost support of the urban intelligentsia. It could not regain the support among the Muslims which it used to get before 1977. At the same time, the Congress started losing its support in the upper South India because of the euphoria that she had created with the policies and programmes to benefit the poor and backwards, did not bring any significant change in their conditions. The prevailing conditions provided us the background wherein we can notice a decisive shift in Indira Gandhi's policy pronouncement and strategy of mobilising party support which reflect the direction of the right of the centre. Despite

her frequent rhetoric on socialism and economic independence and self-reliance, there was a clear cut shift in her emphasis from anti-poverty programmes and move to the IMF to accept loan with stiff conditionalities signalled the changes in the policy persuasion of the Congress party.¹⁰ James Manor notes that this period is the most important phase in Indian party politics, and during this period, a set of new and quite different trends in Indian politics began to emerge.¹¹

The rightward shift alongside communal appeal couched in the language of threats to India's unity was accepted as the creative strategy to win back the Congress party's traditional support base comprising of rural poor, backward castes, and minorities as well as to gain support from the petty bourgeoisie who had provided a strong support base to the BJP which posed a threat for the Congress in North India.¹²

The logic of the move to the left, after the 1969 split of the Congress and her move to the right since the early 1980s was similar in objective. Her populist radical posture during the beginning of the 1970s was meant to undermine the potents of the left force, while her later move to the right was guided by her political compulsion.

Indira Gandhi's move from the left of the centre values of secularism and socialism, to appeal to Hindu chauvinism and pro-business stance, must be viewed from the context of overall shift in the political orientation. Because in India's political culture, there are two alternative paths of development, which will ensure the ruling party the political legitimacy and popular support. The shift from the Nehruvian path of socialism and its acceptance of secular mobilisation as its inherent political logic was abandoned by Indira Gandhi after her soft victory in 1980.¹³

Indira Gandhi sought to capitalize the growing communal sentiments of the Hindus in North-Western India, over the killings of the Hindus in Punjab by the Sikh terrorists. By taking a confrontationist posture, towards the Akalis, Assam agitation and J&K Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah, she successfully projected herself as the protector of the national interest. She also frequently visited Hindu temples hobnobbed with the Acharyas. In spite of Indira Gandhi's change of attitude there was a frequent occurrence of communal riots. By contrast to the sixties and seventies whereas the ruling Congress party identified the Muslims as the victims of communal riots and denounced the communalism of Hindu community. But from the early 80s Indira Gandhi's main attack was on communal "violence" and not its

source.¹⁴ A number of communal riots which took place in the beginning of 1980's like in Moradabad and Allahabad where the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) played most blatant role in the riots. But Indira Gandhi never condemned the PAC for its partisan role.¹⁵ In several of her meetings, she openly attacked the minorities for creating problems in Punjab and Assam. For example, on 15 August, 1983, she appeared to question the very notion of minority community in some part of the country and majority in some other. Speaking in Patna on 17th October, 1983, she pointed out that whereas the minorities enjoyed rights and privileges, in certain places the majority community was being suppressed: the reference was to Punjab and Kashmir. Addressing the Arya Samaj gathering in Ajmer on 13 Nov, 1983, She stated quite explicitly that our religion and traditions were under attack, and at Kurukshetra meeting, she said, that a Dharmyudh was underway to resist the challenges posed, by the minorities.¹⁶ Soon after "Operation Bluestar", Indira Gandhi in her public meeting at Garhwal, said openly that Hindu religion was under attack from minorities.¹⁷ By invoking Hindu sentiments she had begun to inject a sense of insecurity and anxiety in the minds of the majority community about internal threats to national unity posed by aggressive minorities. Their frequent references to internal

and external threats were part of her attempt to provide the Congress a nationalist platform which cut through other considerations.¹⁸

The careful strategy of courting the Hindu majority paid dividends in the assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir, the municipal corporation elections in Delhi, wherein the Congress (I) defeated its main rival the BJP by driving a wedge between the former and the RSS. Further, numerous RSS activists deserted their political organ, the BJP, and campaigned in favour of the Congress (I) in the elections. In Maharashtra, the Congress (I) formed an alliance with the Shiv Sena to fight the municipal and panchayat elections. This new strategy appeared to the Congress (I) as the only viable election option to ensure the party's victory in the next parliamentary elections.

Till 1980 "Communal Politics" had been confined to the upper strata of the Hindu society in the North India. With the rapid development of communication and social mobility and economic transformation, Hindu religious festivals gradually transcended to the local horizons and indicated the growing community consciousness among these sections of Hindus. Communally sensitive issues like Meenakshipuram conversion in 1983, adulteration of Vanaspati ghee made the hitherto dormant communal organisations like RSS, VHP,

Jamait-e-Islami to rise. These events created a favourable condition for the Hindu communalist to launch nationwide mobilisation to save Hinduism from India's proselytizing minorities.¹⁹ The supporters of backlash alleged that the majority community is being besieged by the minorities as the latter are being pampered by the Indian state.²⁰

Much of the social support for the resurgence of religiosity is coming from nouveau riche in rural areas and entrepreneurs and professionals in the urban centres. These middle class found that patronising Hinduism and practising it in new ways not only earned them respect but also provided them a type of satisfying world view and social identity. The proliferation of religiosity can be traced when these classes are eager to channel a part of their newly acquired wealth to religious activities like the building or reclamation of the temples, festivals and gospels. But this quest for a positive social identity by a section of Hindu society also proved to be a source of tension and controversial identity in inter communal relations in India.²¹

Thus by the mid eighties India's centrist secular image reserved no longer a commitment from its post-independence political elites. In the closing years of Indira Gandhi, the Congress party moved slowly from a Nehruvian secular image to a Hindu confessional party.²²

After the assassination of Indira Gandhi, the generational change that was heralded by Rajiv Gandhi at the helm of affairs of the nation seemed to be inclined to accept the legacy of his mother's political strategies of 1980 rather than those of the mid 1960s and 1970s.

The assassination of his mother, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, on 31 October, 1984 evoked widespread sympathy for the novice pilot-turned politician chosen by the Congress (I) leadership to succeed her. Rajiv Gandhi's appeal for popular support during the general elections in December 1984 in the name of India's inviolable national unity aroused an emotional response among voters of diverse social and economic backgrounds in all corners of the country.

In the 1984 elections, the Congress (I)'s slogan was to preserve national unity and integrity and political stability.²³ His constant reference, for example, to Anandpur Sahib Resolution and threat to the unity and integrity of the country in his speeches of Nov-Dec 1984 had an irresistible appeal to the Hindu sentiment of central and North India. During the campaign Hindu chauvinism and anti-Sikh sentiments were important elements in the Congress election. For example, at November rally in Delhi. Rajiv Gandhi refused to prevent the city's Sikh mayor from being shouted down, and then went on to use the word 'badla' (revenge) in speech

that followed. He also refused to criticise the Hindu extremists organization, the RSS which at very previous election had supported the BJP but which heavily swung behind the Congress (I). The Prime Minister further refused to disown the RSS support, thereby confirming to the precedent set by his mother in mid 1980.²⁴

In his campaign, Rajiv Gandhi projected Indira Gandhi as not only his mother, but the mother of all the patriotic Indians, who sacrificed life for the cause of India's unity and integrity. By campaigning in such a style, Rajiv created an impression in the voters mind that only the Congress (I), can protect and safeguard the unity and integrity of the country. For the first time in the Congress parties election history, the party was less concerned about securing the Muslim votes. Even leaders of the Congress of U.P. in the public meetings expressed open antagonism to Muslims and lumped them together with the Sikhs, as internal threats backed by the external enemies.²⁵

The 1984 election held in this atmosphere brought an unprecedented victory for the Congress (I). The new election strategy paid unexpected dividends to the Congress party. It not only saved the Congress party. It also made a significant dent in the Lok Dal and the Janata party's backward

caste-support base and the BJP's Hindu votes and deprived them of their chance of winning majority of Lok Sabha seats.

Contrary to many observers viewpoint, the landslide victory of the Congress party was more to do with other factors, than due to 'sympathy vote' for the personality of Rajiv Gandhi. The forgoing facts and events bring home the point that pre-conditions had been created already before the assassination of Indira Gandhi for a wave by politicizing the communal issues²⁶ Indira Gandhi's death which, though it generated "sympathy vote" served as an icing on the communal electoral cake" already prepared by the Congress (I)²⁷ The party's victory was not only due to the sympathy wave rather sympathy for a bereaved son whose mother had laid down her life for a "Hindu cause" (or for unity?).²⁸ The 1984 election results thus proved that there is presumed to exist a "Hindu Vote" which can be mobilised for the sake of national unity and threats from Sikh extremism and Muslim separation and can bring a landslide victory to a party.²⁹

But the same strategy did not generate large scale support for the Congress in 1986 bye-elections. So the ruling party again made renewed efforts to woo the Muslim voter this time around the 'Muslim women Bill'.³⁰ Following the Congress defeat in the by-elections in Assam Bijnor,

Kishanganj, Bolapur. Kendrapara and Baroda, and the belief that every where Muslim vote had tilted the balance in favour of the opposition parties. Important leaders of the Congress advised the Prime Minister against the dangers of confrontation with the fundamentalist. Syed Shahabuddin's victory in a by-election was sharp reminder that the Congress would suffer electoral reverses in other constituencies as well, unless it gained Muslim support. The decision to bring the 'Muslim Women Bill' was part of th strategy to reverse the rising tide against the Congress party's effort to woo the Muslims.³¹

Another indication of capitulation to the communal pressures and the politicians willingness to play the communal card can be seen from the government's response to Ramjanambhoomi controversy, like opening the gates of the structure to Hindu devotees and then allowing Shilanyas processions etc. The opening of the temple was a coup masterminded by political authorities to appease and conciliate the VHP and Ram Janam Bhoomi Mukti Samiti who had organised a powerful movement to pressurise Rajiv Gandhi to accommodate Hindu sentiments. The strategy employed by these leaders was plainly communal. How can Rajiv Gandhi ignore the Hindu vote bank which gave him such massive majority at the

poll, far exceeding the votes polled by his grandfather?
asked the Hindu leader.

In the end, a few points can be made. First, the restoration of the Congress dominance had very superficial resemblance with the earlier phase of its dominance of the Congress. The victory of Congress in 1980 was more due to the failure of Janata party than to its programmes and policies. Also, its dominance rested on very weak support base because now the Congress did not have permanent support base on which it can rely. In addition to it, progressive deinstitutionalisation of the organisation made it more vulnerable. Second, in order to compensate these weaknesses and to sustain the hold of the Congress over Indian polity it was again in search of an overarching mobilisational strategy which could appeal to the electorate to give their allegiance to the party. Ultimately, it discovered this strategy in the form of ideological reorientation of the party from left of the centre to the right of the centre. Through rightward shift in both politics and economic programmes, it tried to appeal not only to the new emerging business groups and professionals but also to the Hindu majority. It could also make inroads into the support base of the BJP which was seemingly getting stronger.

NOTES

1. For detailed discussion of election, see Myron Weiner, India at Polls 1980 : A Study of Parliamentary Elections, American Enterprise Institute, Washington, 1983; James Manor, 'The Political Process amid awakening and decay : Reflections on the General Elections of 1980' in Peter Lyon and James Manor, (ed), Transfer and Transformation : Political Institutions in the New Commonwealth, Licester University Press, Licester, 1983, p.87-116.
2. For detailed description L.I. Rudolph and S.H. Rudolph, 'Transformation of Congress party : Why 1980 was not Restoration', Economic and Political Weekly, 2 May 1981, p-811-818
3. Myron Weiner, Indian Paradox : Essays in Indian politics, Sage Publications, Delhi, 1989, p.248.
4. Paul, R. Brass, Caste Faction and party in Indian Politics, Chanakya Publication, Delhi, 1985, vol. 2.
5. Ibid
6. Violette Graf, 'The Muslim role in Indian Lok Sabha Elections of December', in Paul R. Brass and Francis Robinson (ed), The Indian National Congress and Indian Society 1885-1985, Chanakya Publication, Delhi, 1987
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8. Paul.R. Brass, 'National Power and local Politics in India ; A Twenty Years Perspective', Modern Asian Studies, 18 :1 1984 pp.89-118.
9. Atul Kohli, State and Poverty in India, Cambridge University Press, Delhi, 1987, pp.41.

10. For this aspect see Atul Kohli, 'Politics of Economic Liberalisation', World Development, vol.17, No. 3, 1989, pp. 308
11. James Manor, 'Parties and Party System', in Atul Kohli (ed), India's Democracy, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1988, p.80-91
12. Ibid, p.80
13. Zoya Hasan, 'Changing Orientation of the State and emergence of Majoritarianism in the 1980's', Social Scientist, vol.18, Aug-Sep. 1990, 10-19. p.30
14. D.L. Sheth, Sympathy vote or communal wave? The Electoral scene in 1984, CSDS, Delhi, p.10.
15. See. Mohammad Aslam, 'State Communalism and Reassertion of Muslim Identity', in Zoya Hasan et. al, State, Political Process and Identity, Sage Publications, Delhi, 1989, p. 274.
16. On this part see Moin Shakir, 'Congress and Minority vote', in R. Sisson and R.Roy (ed), Diversity and Dominance in Indian Politics, Sage Publication 1990, vol.2; A.G. Noorani, 'Indira Gandhi and Indian Muslims', Economic and Political Weekly, 3, Nov. 1990, pp.2417-2418; Rajni Kothari, Communalism : The face of Democracy, Ajanta, Delhi, 1980; Robert L.Hardgrave, 'India on the eve of elections : Congress and opposition', Pacific Affairs, Vol, 57 (2) 1984pp. 404-25.
17. Rajni Kothari, Politics and Peoples : In Search of Humanity, Ajanta, Delhi, 1980, Vol. 2 pp. 407-60.
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21. K.N. Panikkar, 'Communalism in India - A perspective for Intervention', Peoples Democracy, 1 March 1991.

22. Rudolph and Rudolph, op.cit, p.46.
23. The Congress(I) hijacked the age-old slogan of the Hindu chauvinist-forces like "Desh Akhand Ishe Bachao" and made it as main plank, See, for example, Myron Weiner, op.cit, 1989, p.297.
24. James Manor, 'Parties and Party system' in Atul Kohli (ed), op. cit, 1988, p.73; H. K. Paranjape, 'The Wave', Seminar, 306, September, 1985, p.16.
25. See for detail, Paul. R. Brass, '1984 Parliamentary Elections in U.P.', Asian Survey, June, 1986, vol.26, pp. 263-64.
26. Rajni Kothari, 'Behind the Ballot', Seminar, No. 306, February, 1988, pp, 12-14.
27. D.L. Sheth, 'Sympathy vote or communal wave? the electoral scene in 1984' ; op.cit, pp.12-14.
28. Rudolph and Rudolph, op.cit, pp. 46-19.
29. Paul. R. Brass, The New Cambridge History of India Since Independence, Cambridge University Press, Hyderabad, 1990, p.14.
30. Zoya Hasan, op.cit, p.33.
31. Ibid, p.34.

CHAPTER 4

EMERGENCE OF MULTI-PARTY SYSTEM

1989-91

The parliamentary elections of 1989 and 1991 opened a new chapter in the history of Indian politics. The election verdict challenged the assumptions of invincibility of the ruling party, it ushered in new political forces, ventilating the grievances and demands of variegated forces in the society. My attempt here will be essentially to analyse the extent and nature of political change, and to assess the viability of the new system that has been produced.

The 1989 elections saw the end of the Congress hegemony. Unlike the one-party dominance phase in which dominance of the Congress was rooted in the organisational structure of the party which sought to represent different interests and identities within the society, in the hegemonic phase the party had become dependent on the leader. In the 1989 elections, however, neither the popular image of the leader, nor plebiscitary appeal of the party's electoral campaign could succeed in preventing the objective force in politics from articulating a more differentiated relationship between the leadership and the people. The outcome of 1991 elections have strengthened the trend. In terms of electoral outcome, despite some apparent changes in the party positions, the trends were a continuation of 1989 patterns suggesting a definite change in the nature of party system.

It is argued here that elections revealed certain basic shifts in electoral behaviour which contributed to a fundamental change in the structure of the party system. This correlation between electoral behaviour and party model is crucial for analysing the operational dynamics and viability of prospects of the new system. It is noteworthy that the election outcome in 1989 represented a large shift in voter's choice on the one side and the lower seat-vote distortion on the other hand. The Congress party lost 8.6 per cent of the vote, slightly less than the loss of 1977 election. Thus there was a massive shift of votes from the Congress (I) to other parties. The modest gain was achieved by the BJP which had polled 4.43 per cent of votes more than the earlier election and the Janata Dal had the massive gain of 11.3 per cent of votes.

For the first time, there is no majority party in the Lok Sabha. Equally, for the first time a minority party in Lok Sabha with the backing from outside by an assortment of parties helped to form the government. While the seats have, thus, been split, it has reversed a common trend of all these years, viz, the wide gap between voting-seats percentage. In the past the division in votes led to a majority for the Congress because of the first runner past the post method as well as because the Congress was the only party

that contested on an all India basis. The 1989 elections for the first time brought the seats and votes close together and the gap between the two was narrowed. The split in vote was to be uniform and total.

The 1989 elections, brought to the forefront four major parties : the Congress (I), the Janata Dal, the Bhartiya Janata party and the Communist parties (CPI and CPM). The Congress (I) was the largest party but no longer predominant, both from the votes and seats points of view. the Congress (I) got 39 per cent of vote and 37 per cent seat, the Janata Dal 17.93 per cent votes and 26.8 per cent seats and the BJP got 11.93 per cent votes and 16.73 per cent seats; and the Communist parties gathered around 10 per cent votes.

The outcome of 1991 elections has strengthened the trend of multi-partisanship which was thrown up in Indian politics in the last parliamentary elections but with slight modifications in political process which have brought together the parties of the same colour, thus producing large formation of parties.

It is evident that like the 9th, the 10th Lok Sabha also remains a hung parliament with no possibility of a one party government. The Congress has gained the plurality of both the votes and the seats, and unlike its reluctance in

1989 to stake its claims as the largest single party to form the government it promptly did so this time and formed a minority government headed by the veteran P.V. Narsimha Rao. The percentage of the Congress vote dropped from 39.5 to 36.7 but its seats share increased from 37.0 to 42.9. But without Rajiv Gandhi's assassination and consequent waves of sympathy, the Congress vote would have probably gone down below the present level as between the two phases of polling there was swing in favour of the Congress varying between 3.5 and 11.9 percentage points¹. The Janata Dal the major party in National Front Alliance, suffered a precipitous fall both in its votes (17.7 to 11.6per cent) and seats (26.8per cent To 11.0per cent). The most dramatic gains were registered by the BJP Janata Dal. Its votes almost doubled (11.5 to 20.3per cent) and seats rose from (16.3 to 22.8per cent). Consequently the electoral space which was nationally bifurcated between the Congress and the fractured opposition is now occupied by three party like formations almost equally poised for competition in the next election :- The Bhartiya Janata Party supported by Shiv Sena, and other para-political organisation like Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal, the Janata Dal with its parties in National Front in a loose coalition with the parties consisting the left front, and the Congress party, and its allies.

Viability of the new model:-

There have been similarities in tone, substantive issues and voting trend in the period of Indian Polity in 1980s. The specific social and economic forces which have crystallized during this period have also remained the same. We would see the major political parties - the Congress, the Bhartiya Janata Party and the Janata Dal in the above mentioned context and analyse the strength and weaknesses of these parties on which depend their viability in the political system.

Congress :- Rajiv Gandhi came to power with a large electoral majority in 1984. One of his most important priorities was rebuilding the Congress party. Given the significance of political parties for effective governance, it is not surprising that Rajiv Gandhi sought to reinvigorate the Congress party as an organisation. Central to the political project was his espoused commitment in 1985 to holding internal party elections. Such elections would have brought forward new and genuine grassroot Congress leaders at the level of districts and states. But, it is known that elections have not materialised.

As Henry Hart explains the Congress party that Rajiv Gandhi inherited was essentially a top-down structure of appointed officers. Many of those appointed individuals

were in power in states and districts because they enjoyed the support of those above rather than of those below them.² When Rajiv Gandhi announced that party elections would be held soon, it became readily evident that most party positions would go to those who could muster support of grass-root party members. This prospect in turn generated two types of power conflicts; one involving the appointed officials against those who sought to challenge them in open intra-party elections, and the other involving the top leadership, who became worried about ensuring their own power in the newly elected party hierarchy. Thus party elections became a victim of both these power conflicts. By 1987 however, this goal was more or less abandoned.³

Rajiv Gandhi attempted to shift India's economic policies away from controls and import substitution and towards a more liberal direction⁴, leaving aside the issue of the economic consequences of such a shift. The political dynamics accompanying the attempted shift are noteworthy. Very quickly, however, the policy shift mobilised a diverse set of reactions.

The push for liberalisation came mainly from Rajiv Gandhi and the bureaucratic elite that came to control the levers of India's economic policy making during his rule. The social support for these policies came from urban

groups, especially business and industry⁵. But here also business groups were in balance, reluctant to support any major opening of Indian economy to international competition in goods, services, or capital.

Concerted and direct opposition to the reforms came mainly from three quarters. Significant sections of the Congress party opposed some of the new economic policies, lest the party abandon one of its important vote catching assets among the poor, namely a pro-poor populist orientation. The organized working class in the public sector openly opposed the liberalisation thrust. Even before any move towards privatisation were made, the organised working class let it be known, through memoranda and strikes what the government should expect if it undertakes "modernization of the public sector, leading to layoffs. More diffused but more significant opposition came from rural groups. Middle peasants, for example sensed in the new economic policies especially in tax concessions that it mainly benefits the more prosperous urban dwellers, certainly very little for the peasantry. This opposition was expressed in farmers' movements demanding subsidized agricultural inputs and higher producer prices, as well as in electoral behaviour saw the widespread erosion of Congress popular base in green revolution states like Haryana⁶ The

rural poor, in contrast to the middle peasants, seldom react directly to shifts in macro-economic policies, what they do react to, however, when they suspect that anti-poverty concerns are being abandoned. There is evidence to suggest that Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress party lost some support among the poorest of the poor, the landless labourers of the scheduled castes.⁷

We have seen in the last chapter how the entire political atmosphere was communalised first by Indira Gandhi and then using the same planks, Rajiv Gandhi rose to power in 1984. During the campaign of 1989 elections there is evidence that Rajiv Gandhi deliberately conducted a pro-Hindu campaign. His visit in October 1989 to the temple at Ambagi in Gujarat, and his decision to follow the launch in Delhi of the Congress manifesto by helicoptering to visit Devraha Baba at Vrindavan, are indications of this trend. Devraha Baba preached harmony between religious communities. But, living as he did on the banks of Jamuna river close to the reputed birthplace of Lord Krishna he is clearly a Hindu mystic.⁸ Shortly before his visit to Devraha Baba Rajiv had started his campaign at Faizabad with the now famous claim that "only Congress can give you Ram Rajya", a campaign promise, that, in the circumstances of continuing Bhagalpur massacres, can be seen as insensitive at the very least and

perhaps thoroughly provocative in so far as the minority communities were concerned.⁹ The Congress government's failure to prevent the massacre of several hundred Muslims at Bhagalpur in eastern Bihar the months before elections undoubtedly contributed to further alienation of Muslims in Bihar, U.P., and other states. In an attempt to win pro-Hindu vote by the Congress again. Atul Kohli, comments 'though Rajiv Gandhi flirted with pro-Hindu themes but not with great success. The initiative quietly slipped out of his grasp. Parties like the BJP Janata Dal, with their longer commitment to pro-Hindu themes and their superior organisation were much better situated to take advantage of the new political situation than was less skillful Rajiv Gandhi.¹⁰

Despite all these advantages, the government's reputation was also marred by charges of corruption. Alleging that the Swedish company Bofors, made payments to high officials of the Congress government to secure a contract to supply guns to the Indian armed forces, this scandal dominated the attention of media, especially prior to the election. In 1988, a series of documents published in 'the Hindu' belied many government statements relating to the purchase of advanced artillery. In 1989, it was compromised further by the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India,

and then, in September, by the revelations of General Sunderji, the former Army Chief, which went against official statements concerning the way the choice of Bofors had been made and clearly showed that there had been orders from above. Never before had the image of a Prime Minister of India been so seriously damaged.¹¹

The other major factor that helps account for the Congress defeat was the capacity of opposition parties to work together. The non-Congress parties, for the first time, were able to make an alliance with a view to ensuring as far as possible what came to be described by the cliché 'one-to-one' contest strategy. In view of the fact that party was never able to secure, an absolute majority of valid votes polled in earlier elections, its representation would be greatly reduced in the parliament as a result of this sort of contest.¹

Notwithstanding all weaknesses, in the second half of 1988 and 1989, various steps, such as the lowering of the voting age, and a more balanced budget, most notably the social programmes of rural employment and benefits for women,¹³ aimed at pulling the carpet from under the feet of opposition leaders¹⁴ and countering the growing farmers movements. At the centre of this new set of reforms were the two constitutional amendments, an Panchayati Raj and Munici-

palties which were apparently meeting opposition demands. These reforms were advertised as means to increase participation as well as people's and women's power. Their impact was overshadowed by the resignation of 73 MP's in late July, 1989 (over the controversy concerning the report of the CAG). This tactic, thus, failed.

Rise of the BJP

The Bhartiya Janata party's electoral experience in the ninth general elections in 1989 was indeed a morale-booster for the party. The 1989 results were in striking contrast to the debacle faced by the BJP in the eighth general elections. From an incredible all time low of two seats in 8th Lok Sabha election to a reasonably resounding return of 85 candidates in the ninth Lok Sabha was the beginning of the BJP's upward journey culminating in the unprecedented and significant record of 120 Lok Sabha seats in the tenth general elections in May-June 1991.

The BJP's history over the past decade falls into two phases ; pre and post 1985. It was founded in April 1980, under the leadership of A.B. Vajpayee. A perusal of the documents released by the BJP at its conference, clearly showed that it wanted to shed its Bhartiya Jana Sangh image.

It adopted 'Gandhian Socialism' as its guiding philosophy and claimed to the legacy of Jayaprakash Narayan, the revered founding father of the Janata party. It also symbolised the distance placed between the new party and the million-strength the RSS cadre.¹⁵ Who had formed the core of the old Jana Sangh.

When "Gandhian Socialism" was abandoned after 1985, it was the outcome of electoral failure. The heartsearching that followed defeats in the local polls in the erstwhile Jana Sangh strongholds in Jammu and Delhi in 1983 presaged a fundamental rethinking that took place after the BJP Janata Dal's abysmal performance in the December 1984 general elections. In the aftermath of Indira Gandhi's assassination even RSS members proved susceptible to the Congress appeal for national unity in the face of separatist threat within and the bogey of external subversion without.¹⁶

The response of the BJP Janata Dal leadership was strategic re-assessment of party's strength and weakness. This recognised that the strengths lay in the time tested symbiotic relationship with the RSS and political legacy of neo-Hinduism upon these perceptions, the BJP National Executive and council took series of decisions through 1985. These included the restoration of 'Integral Humanism' as the party's doctrine and the adoption of policies such as

the repeal of Art 370 of the constitution granting special status to Kashmir, and support for an Indian nuclear weapons programme. At the sametime, at the state level, party leaders began to attend coordination meetings of the RSS and its affiliates.¹⁷

The new talk was reflected in changes in the party leadership. In May 1986 Vajpayee was succeeded by Lal Krishna Advani. One of his first action was to appoint men from RSS backgrounds at the party's four general secretaries. The decisive nature. of the shift that was occurring in the BJP Janata Dal's orientation was at first not apparent even to veteran observers of the party. In 1987 one concluded "the more attention the BJP Janata Dal gives to building up its strength in these target states. (Rajasthan, M.P. and Himachal), the more importance it will attach to pragmatic development policies and the less it will be concerned about creating a generalised rally in the name of Hindu nationalism. The main interest is now in regional power".¹⁸

The troubled backdrop to the 1989 general election highlighted the incompatibilities latent in the BJP Janata Dal's vision of India's future. The catalyst for the unrest that convulsed North India was the emergence of the VHP at the cutting edge of a populist campaigning of neo-Hinduism. By forming an indispensable aspect of the BJP Janata Dal's

pursuit of an aggressively pro-Hindu political agenda. This exposed the sensitive fault lines of the secular Indian polity.

Though founded in 1964, it gained national attention in the early 1980's. In response to the conversion to Islam of a thousand untouchables in the village of Meenakshi-puram at the southern state of Tamil Nadu in 1981, it launched a fund raising effort for a Hindu missionary order to work among groups considered susceptible to conversion. This culminated in a Ekatmate Yagna (sacrifice for integration) at the end of 1983 in which a sense of mass processions converged on Nagpur, the RSS headquarters in central India. carrying portraits of Bharat Mata (Mother India represented as a female deity) and bring pots containing water from Ganges, as well as from other sacred rivers and temple-tanks.¹⁹

The popular response elicited by the Yagna in its evocation of the unity of Hindu India was followed up within six months by the VHP's launch of the Ram Janam Bhoomi Mukti Yagna (sacrifice to liberate the birthplace of Ram). This had as its object the removal of the 16th century Babri Masjid from the site at Ayodhya in the northern state of U.P. The timing was intended to exert maximum pressure on politicians of all parties in the run up to the eighth

general elections in the event. The assassination of Indira Gandhi transformed the political context and the Congress coasted to an unprecedented electoral triumph posing as the guardian of India's unity.²⁰

The potential of RamJanamBhoomi issue was fully recognised by the BJP. The leadership determined to give the party a more distinctive and popular image. The ground was carefully prepared for the unambiguous adoption of the neo-Hindu platform. In October 1988 senior the BJP Janata Dal members attended a meeting of Kendriya Karyakari Mandal or central working committee of the RSS and subsequently several RSS figures were appointed to key party posts.²¹ The next significant step at the party's embrace of Hindutva was the conclusion of an alliance with Bal Thackeray's Shiv Sena in the Western state of Maharashtra which, after a decade of relative decline, shifted from a platform of Marathi regional chauvinism to one of militant Hindu communalism. The BJP National Executives decision in June 1989 to fully endorse, the Ram- JanamBhoomi campaign set the seal on the party's espousal of the Hindu cause at a time when the controversy of reaching fever pitch.²²

The ambivalence left the Congress governments in UP and at the centre discredited in the eyes of both Hindu supporters of the proposed temples and Muslim defenders of the

Mosque. On September 27 Home Minister Buta Singh signed an accord with VHP General Secretary Ashok Singhal and other Hindu leaders allowing the Shila Yatras (nationwide processions of consecrated bricks destined for Ayodhya) to go ahead in return for an undertaking to avoid sensitive areas and abide by the court order. Three days later Ram Shila Pujas were held in towns and villages throughout India to bless the bricks inscribed with the gods name and donate money for the construction of the temple.²²

Throughout this period, with the election campaign in full swing, the BJP stood alone among the major political parties in steadfastly supporting the Ramjanambhoomi movement. However, though Advani and other rank the BJP leaders attended the Ram Shila Puja, they remained in the background. For instance, Advani in an interview on the eve of the poll, chose to stress anti- Congress themes common to all opposition parties, saying little on the issue beyond expressing the view that it had influenced a large section of the electorate and that the BJP categorical stand had earned it respect²⁴ It provided a foretaste of the BJP unabashedly aggressive pro-Hindu stance in 1991.

In a year and half between ninth and tenth general elections, the BJP's adoption of a 'Hindu' constituency proceeded apace. While the party's achievement in surpassing

both the Congress and the Janata Dal in the 1990 state assembly polls was interpreted by Advani as the consequences of 'its strong organisation and distinct identity,²⁵ rather than Hindu resurgence. Within six months Advani had placed himself in the van of RamJanamBhoomi campaign.

Behind this apparent paradox were two important considerations. First the distinction of the BJP remained grounded in the political culture of neo-Hinduism ; and second the potential challenge posed by Prime Minister V.P. Singh's August, 1990 adoption of ten year old Mandal Commission Report. Its importance lay in the possibility that given the time, the nascent national Hindu political constituency could well be aborted by such a caste-based appeal. With this apprehension on September 03, 1990 Advani began his 10,000 km Ram rath yatra from the reconstructed Somnath temple in Gujarat to "Ayodhya. It was a striking portrayal of the face of neo-Hindu militancy. It evoked massive popular response and as had occurred with the Ram Shilas Movement in the previous year, which provided a catalyst for an epidemic of communal rioting. This time, however, the incidents were not confined to traditionally trouble prone areas such as U.P. and Gujarat but spread to Southern states as well, with scores losing their lives in Karnataka and others in Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

On October 30, Kar Sevaks, volunteers from throughout India, pledged to construct Ram temple - attempted to storm the Babri Masjid They scored a notable symbolic success in damaging the masonry and in planting a saffronflag atop the Mosque, though at the cost of about fifty lives in running battles with the place.²⁵

Unlike 1989 when the Shilanyas took place just two weeks before the Lok Sabha poll, seven months elapsed between the Kar-Seva and tenth general elections. However in the meantime the BJP and the VHP activists sought to sustain the impact of the Ram agitation by conducting procession of returning Kar Sevaks. Urns containing the ashes of Kar Sevaks who had died at Ayodhya were paraded in various parts of the country.²⁶

Thus, if the 1989 election prefigured the BJP embrace of Hindutva, 1991 marked the consolidation and consummation.

Emergence of the Janata Dal;

The Janata Dal with its partners in National front was another political formation which emerged in 1989 elections. the Janata Dal was formed on 11 October, 1988, by the merger of the Janata party, the Lok Dal and the Jana Morcha. The efforts for this merger had started more effectively in 1987

after V. P. Singh leaving the Congress. While looking into the social base of the Janata Dal, we are confronted with only one point of reference which was the shortlived Janata party which in its original, united incarnation, lasted just over two years from January 1977 till June 1979, when Raj Narain's Janata, (seculars) managed to bring the Janata party government down.

Though the Janata party collapsed in 1979, the farmers discontent with the Congress continued. This has been for two reasons. One the continued dominance of politics and patronage by the elite Brahmin and Rajput castes in the countryside and by urban trading castes in the towns, and the failure of the government of providing desired incentives of capital inputs and prices to increase the profitability of agriculture for the main cultivating castes, especially the Jats. From 1957 until 1969, the discontent of the middle proprietary castes was expressed in the form of voting for independents and other small parties but no single opposition party was able to organise this discontent until Charan Singh defected from the Congress in 1967 and founded in 1969 the Bhartiya Kranti Dal as party of agrarian interests representing the peasants. With the formation and victory of Janata party, agrarian politics were for the

first time transposed from the state to the national level.²⁷

Therefore, the farmers have been becoming more and more conscious of political power both for social and economic reasons. The manifestation of this is that in 1980s there emerged for the first time, since independence, a powerful, non-party farmer's organization in many states of India. Their agitational strength were shown jointly and severally on numerous occasions during the closing decade has brought the "Kisan-vote" in electoral arithmetic as a material factor.²⁸

With the progress of the green revolution and increasing prosperity in the countryside, the conflicts within the OBC status has also sharpened. The fact is that apart from Jats the upper segment of OBCs comprising Ahirs, Kumnis and Koeris have become the principal beneficiaries of the green revolution. Consequently they have emerged as an affluent section within the OBC combine and have effectively asserted their political importance.²⁹

It seems that in the latter half when efforts for opposition unity were started, the leadership was conscious of this class-caste situation. Therefore, to begin with, talks not for complete merger but for opposition unity and adjustments were made. Thereafter, it became a simultaneous

effort for merger and unity. In this, as Madhu Dandvate puts it, the broad unity consisted of concentric circles. The innermost circle consisted of total unification under one party banner. The next concentric circle consisted of a National Front comprising the unified party and regional parties. The third concentric circle consisted of electoral adjustments with parties which were outside the ambit of both the unified party as well as the front. Of course, the most significant impetus to these efforts was provided by a sharp erosion of Rajiv Gandhi's credibility and a corresponding rise in the prestige and popularity of V.P. Singh after the latter's coming out of Congress (I), V.P. Singh now, not only provided the nucleus for opposition unity but also realignment of social forces. The absence of Bhartiya Janata party and finally of the Congress (S) from the merger process and programmes announced by the Janata Dal clearly showed that apart from its concern for so-called clean politics it represented essentially a bid by the farmers including OBCs for power at the centre. The 16 page policy document unanimously adopted by the foundation conference at Bangalore reflect the same concern.

This programme of the Janata Dal and its mobilisational efforts for electoral support clearly shows which social classes it represents. Speaking in Bombay on October 13,

1988, two days after the Janata Dal was launched with him as President, V.P. Singh announced that the new party would reserve 60 per cent of tickets for parliamentary and assembly seats for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and backward castes. This announcement confirmed that V.P. Singh was cautiously trying to build his parallel electoral formation whose backbone would be the OBCs.

Thus, Mr. V.P. Singh had decided to adopt the only ready-made constituency available to him. But understandably, he had to make the right noises as regards the under-privileged groups. So while Mr. Devi Lal revived the AJGAR (Ahir, Jat, Gujjar and Rajput) formulation, Mr. V.P. Singh had to couch this in a different language by talking about giving 60 per cent of the Janata Dal tickets to SCs, STs and OBCs.³¹

Statistically speaking the AJGAR alliance is about as numerous as the Congress traditional base of the Brahmana, Harijans and Muslims. But while Charan Singh, a Jat never succeeded in attracting significant Rajput following. With V.P. Singh at the helm of affairs, substantial number of Thakurs also started rallying under the Janata Dal. In addition, due to mishandling of certain sensitive communal issues such as that of RamJanamBhoomi-Babri Masjid by the Congress and the emergence of the Harijans and Dalits with their own organisations like Bahujan Samaj Party, the Con-

gress traditional support base in these sections were also eroding.

What added further strength to the Janata Dal was its potentiality of forming an alternative and cleaner government and its broad left of centre ideological organisation. In V.P. Singh it had potential Prime Minister. But at the same time, the Janata Dal failed to project a national image. None of the leaders campaigned at the national level during the elections and crossed the vindhya. As a party of the Hindi heartland, a part of which was shared with the BJP Janata Dal, it could not project itself as a party capable of maintaining unity. Similarly the Hindi character of the Janata Dal as also the BJP Janata Dal could not inspire the South India which may tolerate Hinduised nationalism but not Hindised nationalism. In addition the arithmetic of electoral alliances in Tamil Nadu, split in the Janata Dal in Karnataka, Congress-leftist polarisation in Karnataka and caste combination against Telugu Desam in Andhra Pradesh helped Congress win a victory in the South.³²

The significance of 1989 elections, therefore, was that after a period of 1971-84 wave elections, it clearly brought out the nature of emerging configurations within the ruling bloc - newly emerged intermediate peasant castes, the growing and powerful urban and semi-urban middle class and the

influential business groups - on the one hand and growing expectations and insistence on governmental performance by politicised electorate on the other. While faced with a challenge from the masses, the consensus and minimalist politics was essential. The intra-class conflict within the ruling block cannot pursue this kind of politics beyond a point. Therefore, very soon it's compelled to drop its partners in power.

It is in this context that after 1989 elections, the Congress (I), the BJP and the Janata Dal got engaged in consolidating their social bases and making dents into each others vote banks. The the Janata Dal in order to convert its large social base to be converted into an electorally available political base produced an image; defined by its position on the Mandal Report and on the Mandir-Masjid issue. By doing so the Janata Dal, together with its allies, had hoped to win a secured majority on the strength of its belief that the OBCs, the Scheduled Castes and the Muslims would firmly rally behind it.

The election results point out that the loss of seats notwithstanding and in spite of distortions because of high pitched Mandir campaign and sympathy factor the social base of the Janata Dal among the rising peasant and artisan classes has proved quite stable. Of course, it is true that

at national level the Janata Dal has as yet not been able to consolidate the OBCs vote. There are various factors responsible for that.

First there is no single backward caste which has an all India presence. Like the professional diversities in their fields, backwards have different hues in different regions. Sharply different demographic patterns - like the Marathas in Maharashtra and the Jats in Uttar Pradesh - alongwith the varying levels of "caste consciousness" block the growth of "Pan-Indian OBC movement. The other infirmities, the Janata Dal suffers from, it is organisationally weak; in terms of factional balance it's prone to dissensions and splits; it has yet to develop a decision-making procedure within the party which is conducive to internal unity; and above all, it has yet to evolve a stable set of policies and programmes which can provide a long term basis of support across classes and communities.³³

A few points emerge from the discussion. First, now for the first time the political process in India has moved from the dominance phase to the phase of pluralism. Now the difference in the social structure have somewhat crystallized in the political process as well, and different political formations identify themselves with the different sections in the society. The forces of difference which had

been subsumed under the overarching organisation of the Congress, and this was sustained through various populist mobilisational strategies, have now found adequate opportunities to demonstrate in politics through different political formations. Second, these political formations are not operating on an ad hoc policy and programme but have presented clear-cut alternatives with different policy agenda. And, third, it is still too early to say that multipartism have come to stay. It is because the BJP ~~is still~~ a significant growing force still has to prove that it can sustain the same performance, the Janata Dal, too is marred by dissensions, and we are not sure that this formation would be able to develop a coherent ideology, organisational structure and strong party leadership.

NOTES

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3. James Manor, 'Parties and Party System' in Atul Kohli (ed.), ibid, pp.63-98.
4. For detail discussion on this aspect. see Atul Kohli, 'Politics of Economic liberalisation in India,' World Development, March 1989, pp.305-328.
5. Atul Kohli (ed.), 'India's Democracy', op.cit., p.328.
6. Ibid., p.329.
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8. Nicholas Nugent, 'Rajiv and the Congress Party - The Road to Defeat,' in Subrata K. Mitra and James Chiriyankandath (ed.), Electoral Politics in India, Segment Books, Delhi, 1992, pp.46.
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10. Atul Kohli, (ed.), op.cit. 1988, p.331,
11. Christian Hurtig, 'A vote for change but no Mandate', in Subrata K.Mitra and James Chiriyankandath (ed.), Electoral Politics in India, op.cit., pp.37.
12. For detail see Zaheer M.Quraishi, 'The Congress Performance' in M.P.Singh (ed.), Lok Sabha Election 1989 and Indian Politics in 1990s, Kalinga Publication, Delhi, 1992, pp.86 to 98.
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CONCLUSION

The pluralism and cultural diversity of the country, the tradition of national movement clashing ideological perspectives, the contrasting styles of party leadership, and the character of the political institutions created after independence have shaped the Indian party system in a unique way. Initially, India's social and cultural diversity was submerged under the umbrella organisation of Indian National Congress. Gradually, the party system fragmented. A process of alignment and realignment took place between and within parties. This process began when alignment of social forces was slowly altered by the economic and social changes, and the emergence of mass politics.

The unquestioned dominance of the Congress party in 1950s and 1960s rested in part on the legitimacy it inherited from its role in India's freedom struggle, in part on a complex multilayered factional and party political structure and, in part on a patronage network that stretched from New Delhi to India's numerous villages. The factional political structures were locally articulated along caste, community and factional lines in villages and districts. These forces were aggregated at the state level by reasonably autonomous set of party leaders in various states. These intermediary power structures were laid down at the national level with a

nationally aggregating supraregional coalition of national leadership under the leadership of Jawahar Lal Nehru during his long Premiership. Though Nehru, sitting at the top of party structure, tried to redesign the economy under the label of 'mixed economy' with a dominant public sector, but at the rural level, his concern for land reforms was always thwarted by the rural elites who had dominated the lower layer of the party structure. This happened because Nehru always depended in his endeavours, on the rural middle level leadership who were well-versed in mobilising masses and deradicalizing the Nehruvian reforms in state legislatures and administrative implementation. Even, the patronage system which helped the Congress dominance worked because the relationship between social 'superiors' and 'inferiors' especially in the villages were characterised in this period by the relative acquiescence. As a result, rural elites were able to influence the votes of lower strata towards the Congress in exchange for resources that the Congress government controlled.

The failure of the Congress to bring transformation in the economic structure it had promised, produced dissatisfaction and discontentment among the vast section of the population. In addition to it, the spread of democratic ideas and competitive parties have over time helped in

transforming the acquiescence of lower social groups into political activism in many parts of India. Within the Congress also, the demands of newly politicised backward classes for an independent share of power and resources grew and in case of failure, came out of the party to strengthen the opposition. These all led to a large scale differentiation of the electorate, with diverse party identifications based on new interests and ideological alignments.

Amidst these developments, the 1967 elections produced a severe jolt to the Congress dominance both in terms of percentage of vote and seat which it lost to the opposition parties. Though at the national level, it still remained dominant national party, but in many states, there was the era of coalition politics. These various coalition governments which came to power in the states, could not last long because these coalition were merely based on the principle of power share. Thus, this phase could not continue for long.

Indira Gandhi who became the Prime Minister in 1967 was watching the changes in the political environment that had made a return to the 'Congress system' of bargaining politics and patronage system among a plurality of competing social groups, impossible. It was clear in retrospect that her populist slogan 'Garibi Hatao' was aimed at capturing

the support of the new groups that were emerging from under the sway of traditional elites. In making direct appeal to the masses, she undermined the autonomous state Congress leadership and locality orientation of the electorate. With the help of populism, the Congress under Indira Gandhi rose to the level of dominance in the Indian politics. But the dominance of the Congress under Indira Gandhi was different from the dominance of the Congress in 1950s and early 1960s in many significant ways. This was the Centralised Dominance by the Congress party instead of dominance through locality oriented pluralist network in which the local leaders played important role. There were also the erosion of institutionalised politics and the growth of populist politics. Above all, instead of the consensus-making and accommodation of interests, the new Congress gave priority to ideological thrust with 'Garibi Hatao' slogan.

Indira Gandhi's success in identifying herself with the aspiration of the poor, simultaneously discredited the parties of the right and neutralised the left parties. Thus, it prevented the process of federalizing tendency in the Indian politics which had begun to take place, since 1967. These tactics also accelerated the institutional decay of the Congress. She put to an end intra-party elections which

could no longer serve as a mechanism for conflict resolution.

The failure to implement anti-poverty programmes in the 1970s made it difficult for Indira Gandhi to consolidate her position with her new supporters. The reason lies in the fact that Indira Gandhi governed India without any effective party organisation to mobilise grassroots support for implementing land reforms and other institutional changes at the core of the anti-poverty programme. On the contrary, the dominant castes and classes remained in place to thwart any such changes. As a result, Indira Gandhi could not launch any direct attack against the privileges of these groups. Instead, she fell back upon various social welfare policies. A series of schemes that were targeted at scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and small and marginal farmers, did not bring the desired changes in their status, but heightened the social awareness of these poor and dispersed groups without providing the political organisation to weld them into a cohesive force.

In addition to it, the Congress increased the number of tickets it gave to persons belonging to the backward classes, scheduled tribes, scheduled castes and Muslims without replacing the dominant castes. This effort to shift the social base of Congress party was most apparent in Karnataka

and Andhra Pradesh, though it was also important in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan. This attempt to shift the support base without undermining the dominant castes, made them to divert their resources against the Congress.

The unfulfilment of expectations of the electorate was channelised by the opposition parties to launch mass movement outside the space of the party system. Indira Gandhi, who had already atrophied the Congress organisation, had to rely on the executive machinery of the government, and imposed the emergency. The emergency placed enormous powers in the hands of the executives and the excesses done during this period further undermined the position of Indira Gandhi and the Congress.

The party system entered a new era with the victory of the Janata party which for the first time, brought to an end the long continuous rule of the Congress party. The victory of the Janata party had raised the hope of India entering into two-party system. But this hope, soon, faded because the Janata party was formed in a very hurried manner just to keep the Congress out of power. The four important constituents of the Janata party could never develop a coherent ideology, an organisational set up and stable hierarchical order of leadership. It could not evolve even a concrete economic programme during the period it was in the govern-

ment. Above all, the competition and conflict among the leaders of the party sent a very demoralising signal to the supporters of the party. In the end, the Janata party collapsed. With the disintegration of the Janata party, the transitory phase in the Indian politics also came to an end. But it is important to note, here, that it showed that Indian politics is moving into a plural and federal direction.

In mid term parliamentary elections of 1980, the Congress (I) came to power with two-third majority while opposition parties were reduced to the kind of regional parties. But the Congress dominance of this phase was based on very precarious support base. The Congress (I) remained weak among the peasantry class of North India. It also could not regain the Muslim support as it used to get in pre-1977 days. It also remained weak among the North India's scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Soon after the elections there was growing realisation that Indira Gandhi might not come to power again because problems also surfaced in the Congress bastion of the South by the early 1980s. Since the pro-poor programme of the Congress were populist in character, and did nothing to change the structure of economic power, the upper castes were able to shift their financial and other resources to regional opposition parties. It

became evident when regional leaders like the Janata's Ram Krishna Hegde in Karnataka and the Telegu Desam's N.T. Rama Roa in Andhra Pradesh appealing to regional self-respect, against growing central intervention in state politics, found it simple to outbid the Congress by promising even more social welfare, with less corruption or in the name of Telegu or Kannadiga honour. Indira Gandhi was, thus, increasingly in search of new strategies for securing electoral majorities. The demands of Sikhs in Punjab state for religious and political autonomy and the growing Hindu Muslim problems provided her the base to build political majorities around religious appeals. It was, for the first time, since independence and partition in the late 1940s, that religious issues resurfaced in Indian politics at the national level. By liberalising the economy from state control, she was appealing to the new professional and entrepreneurial class the size of which increased considerably in the past twenty years. The same strategies she had tested were continued by her son Rajiv Gandhi. Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984 by two Sikh body-guards added strength to the strategies. Moreover, this also created sympathy for her son across India. In 1985, elections, Rajiv Gandhi, thus, received enormous support - nearly 48% of the popular votes and 77% of parliamentary seats. This

election, thus, strengthened the Congress dominance. But this dominance was again not based upon stable support base and the concrete socio-economic programmes. It was based on emotional appeals to religious sentiments of the majority which could not sustain for long. Even the euphoria which was raised regarding Rajiv Gandhi era, soon faded with his failures in almost all counts. His accommodative approach to the demands of religious minorities and to the anxieties of linguistic and tribal communities did not result in an abatement of violence and conflict. His commitment to economic liberalisation was slowed down by coalition of public sector managers, government bureaucrats, business executives in protected sectors of the economy, and also by the dissent voice raised by the peasantry class and the poor. His goal of restructuring of the Congress to make it more democratic and more representative were also abandoned. Failure of the Congress party on every count produced the discontented and dissatisfied forces which aligned with the opposition parties. Even the communal plank which was used for political mobilisation at various occasion was also taken away by the BJP which could use the communal appeal in more open and emphatic manner around the issues of Ramjanambhoomi.

Amidst these changes, the last two parliamentary elections have seen the broad transition from centralised Congress predominance to the present federalised multi-partisan framework. The forces of difference which had been subsumed under the all-inclusive organisation of the Congress, and this was sustained through various populist mobilisational strategies, have now found adequate opportunities to demonstrate in political arena through different political formations. But it is too early to say that multi-partism have come to stay because the BJP a significant growing force still has to prove that it can sustain the same performance Janta Dal too is marred by dissensions, and we are not sure that this formation would be able to develop coherent ideology, organisational structure and strong party leadership.

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