



Department of Distance Education

Punjabi University, Patiala

Class : B.A. I (Political Science)

Semester : 4

Unit : II

Medium : English

Lesson No.

- 2.1. : Party System in India—General Features, Problems
- 2.2. : Congress Party—History and Role
- 2.3. : Bhartiya Janata Party
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PARTY SYSTEM IN INDIA - GENERAL FEATURES, PROBLEMS

It has rightly been observed that the political parties are the lifeline of modern politics. It is regarded as axiomatic that any country which either is modern or wants to be so would channel its political life in some type of party expression. La Palombara and Myron Weiner hold that the political party is a "Creation of modern and modernizing political system." They believe that the phenomenon of political party in one form or other is omnipresent. But there is no agreement among the scholars regarding the classification of political parties. For quite some time party systems have been classified by counting the number of parties whether one, two or more than two. Recently, however, instruments of power, academic discussion of party systems have centred round the questions of the degree of competition among parties. La Palombara and Weiner propose, for the competitive party system, A four-fold classification which drops altogether the numerical base, precisely "on the assumption that the traditional distinction between two party and multi-party patterns has not led to sufficiently meaningful insights."

The best classification yet offered seems to be that the Giovanni Sartori who has intelligently put it with an eye to 'how many' and 'how strong'. The traditional three-fold division is replaced by a seven-fold taxonomy which distinguishes among the following categories of party politics—

1. One-Party system
2. Hegemonic party system
3. Predominant party system
4. Two-party system
5. Moderate multipartism
6. Extreme multipartism
7. Atomised party system

The first three categories result from the break-up of the 'one party' lump of the traditional scheme. Whereas properly called, one party politics outlaws any other party, the hegemonic system permits the existence of subordinate parties under the conditions that the systems are, instead those systems in which the same party happens to win over time, on a competition basis, the absolute majority of seats. Thus, a predominant party system is a system in which not only other parties are permitted to exist but do exist as legitimate if not necessarily effective competitor of the predominant party system. The minor parties are truly independent antagonists of the predominant party system. Therefore, actually it is a plural party system in which rotation does not occur. It simply happens that the

dominant party manages to win every time, an absolute majority of seats in parliament and its predominance basically stems from the fact that it is consistently supported by a winning majority of voters.

On the other hand, Sartori retains the traditional two party category but has broken down the traditional multi-party category. When the number of relevant parties is limited from three to five parties are likely to be 'moderate' in their platform and their competition tactics whereas an extreme fragmentation—more than five parties—generally reflects and elicits a pattern of immoderate politics in which extremist appeals largely condition the overall drift of the politics. Finally, 'atomized' party system indicated the point at which we no longer need an accurate counting. It is that threshold beyond which the number of parties whether ten, twenty, thirty or more, makes little difference.

Indian Party System

Party system which prevailed in India till the first quarter of the year 1977 can be placed under the predominant party system which was called as 'one party dominance system' or the 'Congress rule'. It was so called because the Congress party had been only ruling party in the country since independence. This system of one party dominance was competitive one in which the Congress party was factionally divided which was both sensitive and responsive to margin of pressure. The opposition was no match to the Congress and so it did not constitute an alternative to ruling periphery in the form of parties of pressure. To quote Rajni Kothari, in such a system the role of the opposition parties is to constantly pressurise, criticise, censure and influence it by influencing opinion and interests inside the margin and above all exert a latent threat that if the ruling group too stays away from the balance of effective public opinion, and if the functional of system within it is not mobilised to restore the balance, it will be displaced from power by the opposition groups.'

The main characteristic of the Congress system were—

1. Plurality within the Congress party which made it more representative,
provided it with ample flexibility and imparted it strength to sustain internal competition.
2. Apart from this it was prepared to absorb movements from outside the party and thus prevent other parties from gaining strength.

The identification of the freedom movement with the Indian National Congress made the Congress a dominant entity in Indian politics. The compulsion of the national struggle prevented it from becoming a rigidly organized party. It remained a composite movement permitting to coexistence within its ranks of socially distant and ideologically diverse elements held together by their commitment to the national objective of independence. Moreover, the Congress had developed not only as movement of protest against the colonial regime but also against some of the most

stubborn features of traditional society. Regeneration was as much at heart of its programme as was national independence. This was the dual inheritance from the national movement of being an authoritative spokesman of the national independence as well as an affirmed agent to criticism and change of ruling party.

The Congress also showed a remarkable flexibility in respect of its political programme which defeated all attempts at providing real alternative to it. But adopting socialistic pattern resolution, it stole the thunder from the PSP, by modifying its agrarian policy in practice, it prevented the Swatantra party from mobilizing the land owning classes against it. Even the Communists were forced to choose between cooperating with the Congress, or else face its wrath and public disgrace.

The years between 1967 and 1971 were of severe strain for the Congress. The system was challenged and the Congress was dislodged from power in many states and its rank and file were facing disintegration from within. However, it regained its dominant position thereafter under the leadership of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Until 1974 things were cool enough for the Congress, but thereafter the political scene began to change. Inflation was galloping black-marketing and adulteration were spreading and corruption was taking deep roots in the country. The Congress did not show signs of coping with the demands of the people. The wide spread agitation and mass protests had succeeded in dislodging Gujarat Ministry. Now they were threatening the downfall of the Bihar and U.P. Ministries. Mrs. Gandhi, along with her kitchen cabinet, got panicked and imposed constitutional DIR under Article 352 of the Indian Constitution on June 26, 1975. The MISA and DIR were used blatantly to intern the opposition leader and others who questioned the legitimacy of the Congress rule, the promulgation of the emergency. Among the leaders who were jailed were Jaya Parkash Narayan, Morarji Desai, Chandra Shekhar, Atal Bihari and other prominent leaders of the opposition parties except those of Communist Party of India. The emergency was an open assault on the people's values and institutions. All the democratic institutions like the judiciary, the press and radio were stifled, people felt themselves impotent in the face of police oppression. Thus, when on January 18, 1977 Mrs. Indira Gandhi declared her intention to hold general elections in March and decided to relax provisions of the emergency including censorship of the press and release of a number of political detenu, she unwillingly, let loose the forces which led to the total reversal of her own as well as her party's fortune.

The Janata party was formed within 48 hours of the release of important political leaders arrested during the emergency. They took a vow to avenge the excesses committed on them during the emergency. All the opposition leaders assembled under the banner of Janata Party, the call for which was given by J.P. The merger of prominent opposition parties like Congress (O), Jana Sangh, BLD and S.S.P. was political event of far reaching significance. Thus, the process of polarisation which took off on the event of 1971 Lok Sabha elections in the form of 'National Democratic Front' was completed by the emergence of the Janata Party.

Pattern of Electoral Alliance

The arch type of electoral alliances and adjustments that took place in 1977 Lok Sabha elections accelerated a fresh trend towards the process of polarization among the political parties of India. While the Congress decided to fight the election largely on its own, it made alliance with the CPI and AIADMK where possible. The rest of the parties, rather all non-Congress or anti-Congress drew closer. It indicated a healthy trend as it reduced the splitting up of the non-Congress opposition parties. It also contained vast possibilities for transforming political forces into distinct channels and providing a viable national alternative to the Congress in India. Reacting with phenomenal fastness the Bharatiya Lok Dal, Bharatiya Jana Sangha, Congress (O) and Socialists reached a decision to unite for the election purpose under the label of Janata Party with the expectation that after the elections they would take steps to merge to form a single party. The emergence of Janata Party with Morarji Desai at the helm of its affairs, generated sufficient self confidence among the opposition parties and renewed their legitimacy in the eyes of the people. The presumption of the invincibility of the Congress Party had driven most of the opposition parties under one roof to Janata party, or to seek electoral alliances and adjustments within in order to fight the elections. Such alliances with the Janata Party were made by the newly formed organization of Jagjivan Ram, called the Congress for Democracy (C.F.D.) and regional parties like the Akali Dal in Punjab, DMK in Tamilnadu, Jharkhand Party in Orissa and Peasants and Workers Party in Maharashtra. The result was that for the first time the general elections in India, seemed like a straight fight between the Congress and its opponents collected under the banner of the Janata Party. This changed the character of the election campaign as well. While the Congress interpreted it as a struggle between the forces of 'consolidation and chaos' the Janata leaders described it as a fight between 'democracy and dictatorship'.

This was an event of great significance as it made India look like a biparty state where fight for power takes place between two major political parties.

Party Manifestoes

So far the party manifestoes were concerned, almost all national parties had proclaimed themselves as exponents of socialism and the issue differentiation was almost confounded. While the Janata Party manifesto talked of the 'Gandhian concept of Socialism, the CFD had declared that it stood for scientific socialism'. The Congress too had called upon the people to give it clear mandate to carry ahead the nation unitedly to peace, progress and prosperity through democracy, secularism and socialism. Since the commitment of the CPI and the CPM was taken for granted they did not use dubious epithets about socialism.

If the Congress emphasised the need for a strong central Government capable of introducing and implementing developmental programme, the Janata Party concentrated on the restoration of the freedom of the press, the radio, the engaging of the judiciary and the liberties of the people. Thus, it was not surprising when the Congress raised the slogan of democracy and development vs. disruption and chaos

and the Janata opted for the slogan of democracy vs. dictatorship. Not only that, the CPM and CFD as also the DMK and the Akali Dal laid great stress on the emergency and called it as 'the 18 month nightmare'. The CPI which had supported the emergency, had called for its lifting, because of its misuse and the growth of what it called 'the extra-constitutional power centres'. Despite difference of degrees, ideological or political, all the non-Congress parties were agreed on certain basic demands, which included the lifting of the emergency, the release of detainees, the restoration of basic freedom and the abolition of press censorship.

The Congress manifesto which was an easy in complacency was even much more rhetorical than that of CPM. This outrightly suggested a psychology of detence. It tried to show that development and dynamism were the inherent qualities of the Congress. It claimed all progress made in the country during the past thirty years as its own individual achievement. Apart from this it reiterated with great fervour and sentimentality its historic role in ushering in an era of independence, democracy and development. To these were added the newly acquired 'benefits' of the emergency. The Congress manifesto was entitled 'The Sole Hope of the People'.

As a direct rival of the Congress, the Janata manifesto proposed to expose the myths and pick the bubbles of the achievements and aspirations of the Congress both before and after emergency. The Janata document began with a narration of the nightmare of fear, and the perils of the subordination of individual to the state. It accused the Congress for the excesses during the emergency, for the development of extra constitutional centres of power. The notorious forty second amendment was described as a measure to satisfy and institutionalize a total concentration of power in the hands of one individual the 'Prime Minister'. It was 'a betrayal of the testament of faith that founding fathers bequeathed on the people'.

As a party national stature with the avowed goal of replacing the Congress, the Janata had a difficult task in shaping its manifesto. It had to avoid the lacunae not merely of the Congress, but also those of the CPI, CPI (M) and had to absorb the aspirations articulated by the manifestoes to the regional parties, like those of the Akali Dal and DMK. It had to absorb the ideological essence of all component like the Jana Sangh, the Socialist, the CFD and the Congress (O). It also had to rise above the parochial promises of the regional groups without altering them, retaining at the same time the sympathies of the regional elite.

Nomination Strategy

The Sixth general election took place in this setting. The people had only two alternatives—the Janata and the Congress. The nomination strategy of the Congress was accentuated by the chances of winning of particular candidate. Jagjivan Ram's departure from the Congress had made a lot of difference. Mrs. Gandhi could not depend on the youth wing of the Congress as it had gained public disfavour because of its excesses. Sanjay Gandhi and his followers were centres of scathing criticism by the opposition leaders and the public. Mrs. Gandhi's former strategy of making place for the youth in the Congress at the cost of the elder members had to be changed. She had no option except calling the veterans to fight the election for otherwise the Congress

would have been reduced to small fragmented organisation because of its inner conflicts. The nomination strategy of the Janata Party was procedurally less formal than that of the Congress. The criteria of selection was the integrity and how the particular candidate had withstood the pressure in the last 19 months of emergency.

But in practice the conflicting demands of the constituent parties of the Janata added to its difficulties. Each one wanted to have as many nominees of its own as possible with an eye on the post election developments. However, raising the wave of resentment against the emergency, the Janata was in a position to get the best candidates.

Looking at the nomination strategy of the opposition and their effort on board basing the 1971 shrunken base, it was mainly designed to prevent the spilling of opposition votes and to provide a viable alternative Congress.

The Outcome of the Sixth Lok Sabha Election

It was apparent almost immediately from earliest voting returns of 29th March, 1977 that something quite extraordinary was happening in the country. The outcome was really startling. Thirty years of Congress rule had suffered its loss of power. Indira Gandhi's personal claim to leadership of the country was rejected after seven years of her rule as Prime Minister the last of which had found her governing as an absolute ruler. The emergency was terminated and the reign of terror came to an end. The Janata Party was the choice of the electorate. For the first time the country came to have two major parties one in power, another opposition. The country seemed to have evolved a viable two party system.

The Congress losses though minor in Gujarat and Karnataka, were substantial in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi, the Congress rout was complete with not even a single seat for the party in these states. The obvious result was that Congress was no longer the dominant party it had been all these years. Of 542 seats in the Lok Sabha the Congress party could get only 153. Moreover, the strength of the Congress was confined to some southern states like Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. It was really reduced to the position of regional party with its support confined only to the southern states.

There was a striking similarity between the two parties. It is interesting to note that of the Janata's 299 seats, 254 or 85 percent were from the northern states including Orissa and West Bengal in contrast to the Congress the Janata had only 6 seats, 2 percent from four states of the 'deep south' and another 35 (12 percent) from Gujarat and Maharashtra. So if the Congress was reduced to regional party the Janata Party too was not able to take the place that the former once had as a national party with a truly widespread base.

With the emergence of Janata Party and its success at polls in 1977 and the Congress party in opposition, many felt that there would ultimately emerge a two party system in the country, a feature which is essential to the growth of healthy democratic countries which have modelled their political system on the pattern of

western democratic. The people felt that India was on the road to two party system, because despite the existence of multiple political parties in the country, only two truly national parties dominated the national political scene. The Janata and the Congress, together held 452 seats out of the 542 in Lok Sabha, leaving only 90 (just about 17 percent) for the other parties to share among themselves, of these seats 51 were held by parties like All India Anna DMK, the Akali Dal, the Peasant and the Workers Party, which are all one state or regional parties with not even the remote chance of developing into a national or even multi-state political force. It was felt that sometime these parties would have to merge with Janata or the Congress or to face extinction from the political scene. Alternatively, they might trend to act as pressure groups at some point of time. So it was felt that process polarisation which had started might end up with smaller parties merging with either the Janata or the Congress or at least maintaining feeble, political existence on the national scene.

There were others who felt that organisation and ideological character of both the Congress and Janata Party being identical and in view of success of C.P.M. in West Bengal and serious talk of unity in the country was felt. India was likely to have three national parties—the Congress, the Janata Party and some Leftist Parties.

Disintegration of Janata Party

Contrary to the expectations of the people, the Janata Party could not complete its term and became a victim of the politics of turncoatism. Charan Singh and his supporters defected from the Janata Party and formed its rival group which came to be known as Janata (Secular) which brought the downfall of Morarjee Desai's Government. The Socialist led by George Fernandes also broke away from the Janata Party and Mr. H.N. Bahuguna of the Congress for Democracy first joined hands with Charan Singh and later on joined the Congress (I) led by Smt. Indira Gandhi. The coalition government (comprising of Lok Dal and Congress U) led by Charan Singh also failed to survive, ultimately tendered the resignation before it could meet the Lok Sabha. It may, therefore, be noted that the mad race to become the Prime Minister brought the Janata Party to a shambel.

The Impact of Seventh Lok Sabha Elections—Re-emergence of One Party Dominant System

The Seventh Lok Sabha elections held on January 3, and 6, 1980 constituted another milestone in the political history of India which had brought into operation the peculiar phenomenon of one party dominant system. The Janata Party was defeated in the election and the Congress (I) re-emerged as the strongest political party. By capturing 351 seats it not only obtained two third seats in the Lok Sabha but also reduced the opposition to shambles. The Janata Party, which ended the 30 years Congress rule in 1977, got a fourth position by getting only 31 seats. The Lok Dal and CPM secured 41 and 36 seats respectively, the others being Communist Party of India and Congress (U) having eleven and thirteen seats respectively.

The Eighth General Elections of 1984 gave Congress party led by Rajiv Gandhi

unprecedented victory. The entire opposition was found off the guard barring CPM from West Bengal, while to an extent, sudden demise of Mrs. Gandhi had created a sympathy in favour of Congress, the strategy of opposition conceived against the Congress had also gone to disarray. The election strategy of Rajiv Gandhi which deliberately tried to give a fresh and young look to Congress Party succeeded to an extent. Even the style of functioning of Congress party seemed to be distinctly different from earlier leadership. The mood seemed to be to get result and policies implemented than playing without action. The resolution of Punjab and Assam problems indicated a new approach to crises management. But soon all such hopes were proved wrong. The Congress party could never regain its earlier image. The Bofors issue and the charges of corruption at high level put a question mark to the image of 'Mr. Clean' earned by Rajiv Gandhi. The resigning of V.P. Singh from the Union Cabinet on April 12, 1987 started the process of regrouping of the disgruntled Congressmen. The process of opposition unity was once again started. Devi Lal of Lok Dal and N.T. Rama Rao of Telgu Desham Party spearheaded the move on September 17, 1988. The Opposition leaders formally launched the National Front. The Lok Dal, Jan Morcha and a faction of Janata Party had merged together to form Janata Dal, V.P. Singh who was expelled from the Congress (I) was also a party of Janata Dal. The collective front which included Janata Dal, and the other like minded parties (TDP, DMK, AGP, Cong.(s) elected N.T. Rama Rao as its President. The Front took on the Cong (I) in the 1989 (ninth) Lok Sabha elections by making seat adjustment with BJP as well as left parties. The poll verdict of 1989 went against the Cong. (I); it was negative verdict. The National Front, though secured highest number of seats, yet lacked majority. The NF Govt. was sworn in under the Prime Ministership of V.P. Singh on December 2, 1989.

But this situation did not last long. The BJP roped up the Ram Janam Bhumi issue and its leader undertook Yatra in different parts of the country to counter the Mandal issue let took by V.P. Singh government and to mobilise the people. The leftist parties asked the government to impose ban on the Rath Yatra. Consequently, Advani and his followers were arrested by the government. Enraged by these developments, the BJP withdrew its support from the V.P. Singh government on October 14, 1989. Janata Dal also split, Chandra Shekhar and Devi Lal group of Janata Dal too formed a separate party Janata Dal (S). This led to the fall of V.P.Singh's government (November 9, 1989). Congress announced its support to Chandra Shekhar. The history of 1977-78 repeated itself in 1989-90. Janata Dal (S) with the outside support of Cong. (I) formed the government, but after about four months the Congress withdrew its support from Chandra Shekhar government. In this situation, Chandra Shekhar advised the President to dissolve the Lok Sabha and hold fresh elections. During the 10th Lok Sabha elections, the main contenders for the power were Congress, BJP, Janata Dal and Communist Party. The Mandal Commission Report and Ram Janam Bhumi dispute were the key issues in these elections. During electioneering it appeared that the BJP will get the largest number

of seats in the Lok Sabha but Rajiv Gandhi's assassination during the campaign helped the Congress in winning the sympathy of electorate. In the Lok Sabha elections also no party was in a position to win absolute majority. The Congress won 227 seats and BJP emerged as opposition with 119 seats.

The 1991 elections brought the Cong. (I) back, though with not an absolute majority. Cong. (I) won 227 seats out of 511 for which elections were held. The 1996 elections also resulted in a Hung Parliament with BJP as the single largest party. The voters rejected Congress but did not give clear mandate in favour of any one party.

Hence the internal contradictions of the coalition partners pulls and pressures from the supporters have been responsible for the failure of opposition parties unity every time. Though in 1998 the parties which used to be in opposition united to form 13 party coalition government but it does not mean that their inter-party fights have ended. Even in October 1999 elections, NDA with BJP and other parties was formed with more than 23 parties to form government. 2004 elections brought back Congress with the UPA. Congress got 145 seats. Communist parties supported the government from outside. In 2009 election, 15th Lok Sabha, UPA again formed Govt. with six parties and few independents with total 262 seats. In 2014 Elections (Lok Sabha) Congress Party secured only 44 seats. The worst ever performance by Congress Party in LS election has reduced it to such a level that the party may even lose the status of opposition in Lok Sabha, According to the constitution no party would qualify to be as opposition leader as none of them had won the minimum 10% 54 seats of Lok Sabha. In 2014 Lok Sabha Elections BJP got 282 seats and Its alliance with 29 parties got 336 seats in the Lok Sabha. The BJP has taken clear majority for government and Narinder Modi is the Prime Minister of India.

Characteristics Features

Indian political parties are characterised by a marked lack of ideological orientation. The historical and social context of party development in India has tended to make the Indian parties highly eclectic in outlook and amorphous in character and prevented them from adopting the label of any ism. Parties here are regarded as non-ideological entities, their major and almost exclusive concern being to dominate politics. Morris Jones rightly regards the political parties in India as product of modernity and tradition mix rather than having any definite ideological orientation. Applying this yardstick, he does not attach importance to the ideological division of parties into 'right' and 'left'. Almost the same opinion is shared by two other scholars, John V. Bondurant and Margaret W. Fisher. They too contend that it would be wrong to brand parties in India as 'right' or 'left'. Since all parties represent certain interest groups and work through channels best suited to their interests.

Social composition and intellectual inclination of parties in India have prevented them from stimulating inherent group organisation outside their fields. In one case where this could have been successfully done, among the urban working class, the parties fight with each in splitting it in order to prevent the accession of

its whole strength to any one of them. Articulate interest groups will tend to join either the Congress or BJP or CPI or CPI (M) the only National parties. These parties have built up alliances or sub-structures or sub-coalitions which provide substance to their power in the country.

One of the most significant characteristic of party-system in India it has evolved from an identifiable centre that was engaged in politics in the decades before independence. This political centre has been almost invariably confined to the middle class, originally urban and later on rural also. All political parties have recruited in its leaderships as well as in its rank and file persons from this identifiable social class. The course of development of this kind of party system has been due to the fragmentation of the political centre as a result of the growth of middle class. However, lately the lower classes of Indian society have become aware of their strength and instead of becoming a vote bank or one or the other party they have started having their own political organisation. The Parties of the 'Dalits' BSP has become one of the national parties.

As for the policy orientation, all the political parties have the same slogans as the Congress did. The New Society envisaged in the Janata Party or later Janata Dal Manifesto did not seem to be qualitatively different from the Congress vision of socialistic and egalitarian society.

Not only are the political and economic basis of the Congress and Bhartiya Janata Party are nearly identical but their organisation character is also similar. There may be different degrees of centralization and discipline. In one party single leader might dominate for a certain period, in the other, leadership may be collective, but their overall character is likely to be similar because of their politic-economic basis and their amorphous and eclectic character.

Although for the time being the Congress, BJP and the left parties are talked of as major national parties, the importance of regional and local parties cannot be minimised in the prevailing political situation as they have been in power in many states, especially their role has become all the more important after the 1996 elections of Lok Sabha. Now the regional parties are playing the role of ruling alliance partners at the Centre/ Parties like the Akali Dal, Telegu Desham and Janata Party in Karnataka and the AIADMK, DMK etc. have considerable bargaining power in the competitive political atmosphere of today. The AIADMK was in power in Tamilnadu which was replaced by DMK-TMC combination but now again AIADMK while C.P.M. in alliance with other left parties runs the administration in West Bengal. It is creditable thing for the left front that it is ruling the state for the twenty five consecutive years. In Kerala too, it has captured power. There is no doubt that it is plurality within the parties which makes them more representative and provides flexibility. Already the attempts of opposition parties to have conclaves and the decision to form a loose alliance of regional parties at the centre have shown serious impact on the Indian Political System. This would help to sustain internal competition and enable them to absorb groups and movements from outside the parties. This

would prevent other parties from gaining strength. However, the emergence of BJP as the main opposition party in the 10th and 11th Lok Sabha, and as the ruling party in the number of states looked upon as a matter of great importance more so, because the party has used the Hindutva as its main support base. The BJP had the taste of power at centre too though only for a short period of 13 days in 1996 then formed Govt. in 1998 and October, 1999 with support of other parties (NDA). In 2004 elections, government was formed by UPA with Congress, BJP was in opposition. In 2009 elections congress with other five parties few independents formed Govt. So UPA formed Govt. with 262 members in 15th Lok Sabha elections.

The Janata Dal had been variously described as a movement against Congress misrule 'Substitute for the Congress' a movement against the movement and beginning of a new era of political crystallisation, if not polarization.'

Problems of Party System

A critical deep study of the Party System reveals that it suffers from some important weaknesses. In the first place, the factor of clear cut ideological orientation is missing in most parties, be it Bhartiya Janata Party or Congress. The elections are held and masses mobilized not on the basis of socio-economic programmes but extraneous considerations. Almost all parties in India are ideologically neutral organisations more concerned with capturing power than with clear cut commitment to some particular type of social and economic philosophy. Even the Congress do not possess distinctive ideological orientation.

Another important weakness of the Party System in India is the absence of commitment to discipline. The politics of 'turncoatism' is so prevalent in the country that it marks the spirit of party system. Politics of defection results in serious political instability and administrative chaos. In fact, the politics of defection and fragmentation is responsible for the failure of emergence of a viable two party system in India. Near to elections members shift their loyalties and parties after taking into consideration which party will win the elections.

Conclusion

India was thought to be standing at the cross road to develop a healthy two party system. But the disintegration of the Janata Party in 1977 and again the fragmentation of Janata Dal 1989 had belied the expectations of Indian people for formation of two party system. Nevertheless, it seems right to presume that as Indian people have saved their democratic system they would do some thing to work for the establishment of two party system (or of three parties) which is as essential for the health of democracy as is the freedom of the press and radio, independence of judiciary and liberties of the people.

SUGGESTED READINGS

- | | | |
|------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| Morris Jones | : | Government and Politics in India |
| Norman D. Palmar | : | Indian Political System |

Horst, Harman : Political Parties in India

Myron Weiner : Political Parties in India

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the nature of Party System in India.
2. Give very brief answers :
 - (i) What is meant by one-party dominance system ?
 - (ii) Why was Congress called an 'Umbrella' organisation'?
 - (iii) What is meant by turncoatism ?
 - (iv) Name any three parties which are ruling in States. Also name the States.
 - (v) What is meant by political polarisation ? Give examples to make your answer clear.

**CONGRESS PARTY-ITS HISTORY, ACHIEVEMENTS AND
ROLE IN THE INDIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM**

Introduction

The Indian National Congress was founded on December 27, 1885 in Bombay. Starting in a casual way, almost in a fit of absent-mindedness and blessed by Englishmen and the local authorities, the Congress was ultimately to grow into a mammoth organisation, supplying a unified leadership to the nationalist movement. The birth of the Indian National Congress was an outgrowth of intellectual awakening social 'renaissance' and reformist activity in the nineteenth century which was a result of the system of administration, education, Law and communications developed under a long and powerful British Raj. The object of A.O. Hume in organizing the Congress was to propagate social reforms of the century. But the Marquis of Dufferin, the then Viceroy of India, suggested that the new organisation should assume the role of a political party. He desired that there should be a national body to perform in India the functions, which Her Majesty's oppositions performed in England. As the newspapers were not reliable, he considered it very desirable in the interest of the rulers as well as of the ruled that politicians should meet annually and point out to the government in what respect the administration was defective and how it could be improved. During the first twenty years of the career, the Congress met annually and passed resolutions drawing the attention of the Government of Public grievances and requested for various political reforms.

For more than sixty years after the founding of the Indian National Congress, Indians were still engaged in a 'movement' for independence. As it progressed and was led by a succession of outstanding individuals, it became a forum and training ground for social and economic reforms, ideological articulation, and organizational action. It had time enough to pass through a series phases, and developed various forms of mobilization activity. In its early phases, the Congress passed through a prolonged period of intellectual agitation when its modernist goals were articulated through long and strenuous debates. The movement was essentially an urban middle class intellectual movement, to begin with but extended itself into the vast hinterlands of India.

Pre-Independence Phase

The early patriarch of the Congress entertained no thought of expelling the British out of the country, they rather wanted to make use of the British institutions, British law and jurisprudence and British skill and intelligence for the uplift of the Indian masses. They had full faith in the British sense of justice and liberalism.

But the first decade of the present century saw a marked change in the thinking of the Congress leaders. The partition of Bengal (1905) was the event, which gave birth to the Swadeshi movement. The promises of the British to take Indian towards

democracy and constitutionalism after the First World War did not fruitify. Instead, the British gave them bullets and bayonets in Jallianwala Bagh massacre in April, 1919. This combined with other factors, compelled the Congress to spearhead a national movement. The Congress, which was busy strengthening its organisation from the first decade of this century, began to intensify its activities and awaken the masses against the evils of the alien rule after the return of Gandhi from the South Africa in 1915. Gandhiji brought to Indian politics what it had long lacked, namely, depth or broad-based organisation. Under his leadership the Congress developed from a 'party of notables' to an organisation-reaching deep into the villages. Gandhiji characterised his struggle against the British as experiment in the realization of truth. Himself driven by uncommon moral energy, he was successful in giving Congress a direction, a mighty organization base and a mass following. Thus, he imparted a powerful symbolism and great depth and diffusion to the national movement. The powerful campaigns of 'non-violent, non-cooperation' against the government led by him made the British bow out of the country. No doubt, the terrorist movement launched by some militant organisations was also instrumental in making them realise the predicament of their further stay in the country. But it was substantially, the act of the Congress under the unchallenged leadership of Gandhi which compelled the British government to proclaim independence to the brightest jewel of its crown on August 15, 1947.

Post-Independence Phase

The Congress which was a torchbearer of India's freedom struggle upto 1947 became the successor to the British authority in India. Being oldest and the best organised party, it was unchallenged in its inheritance. Of course, there was much 'heart-searching and stock-taking' in the Congress rank as to whether the Congress should continue to function when its mission had been fulfilled. However, the intention of Gandhi was that the organisation should continue only as Lok Sevak Sang and non-political institution devoted to social service and "Constructive Work" among the people. To quote Rajni Kothari, 'Just before his death in 1948 he proposed a virtual dissolution of the Congress as a political machine.' But the majority in Congress, however, as Prof. Avasthi points out, 'declined to commit political harakiri' and decided to stand for as a political party in the usual sense of the term. As a result, according to Kothari, 'The British Raj was followed by long period of Congress Raj:

1. For nearly thirty years after independence they remained in power. They were voted out of power only when the corruptibility of power had gone deep into this organisation and the leaders of the Congress had begun to think more in terms of their personal and family rule than in terms of the country.

The Congress Raj came to acquire various names like 'Congress System',

'One Party dominant system', 'One Party dominant situation', 'dominant non-authoritarian system', and 'Predominant party system' because of the dominance of the Congress alone on the political scene of the country.

2. It effectively operated in India till the early months of 1977, whereafter it was for the first time reduced to a party in opposition. Undoubtedly, in the thirty years it was in power it had to pass through many critical situations, though between 1967 and 1971 the strains were most severe.

For the first two decades of independence the Congress devoted itself successfully to the task of governing and gave the country a 'stable, effective and democratic government.' In the first three elections the Congress secured a majority of seats in the Parliament. Hartmann in his book, *Political Parties in India*, writes 'on the basis of the election results it can, therefore, be said that in this phase the party system could not be developed an alternating to the Congress government. The party system did not work as a system of alternating party Government; there was complete lack of a potential democratic alternative to the party in power.' In the same vein he adds, 'for the stabilization of parliamentary democracy in India it was more decisive that the Congress always captured an absolute majority of seats and with that it alone could form the Government.' In fact, during the period of Congress dominance only in 1957 could the communists muster a majority in Kerala Legislative Assembly.

But the result of the 1967 General Elections produced a shock, which was felt 'not only within a badly divided Congress but throughout the Indian political system. In fact, twenty years of one party dominance had come to an end in the electoral upheaval.' Kochanek holds, both the Congress and India had reached a new turning point in post-independence development, for the Congress would have to adjust to its loss of hegemony while the Indian political system adjusted to a shift from one party dominance to multipartism. At the very least, the Congress could no longer claim to be the possible repository of public trust. It was simply the largest among many parties with demonstrable popular support.

The period between third and the fourth General Elections was very crucial for the Congress party. Chinese aggression and the humiliating debacle of India at their hands resulted ultimately in the death of Nehru in May, 1964. The Congress had fought the first three elections under the dominating and indisputable leadership of Nehru, which always contributed to the success of his party. He was a 'father' figure, whose loss deprived Congress of many potential 'Nehru voters'. His successor Lal Bahadur Shastri did not live long and died in January, 1966 after signing the Tashkent declaration. With the nomination of Indira Gandhi for the post of Prime Minister once again the Congress tried to revive the memories of Nehru. But there were doubts then about the capacity of Mrs. Gandhi to keep the party together and bring more votes for the party, because the country was passing through a critical phase.

Before the election of 1967, economic situation had considerably deteriorated. The Third Five Year Plan (1961-66) had failed on many counts. The seed of acute economic crisis was sown by the unrealistic economic planning which was further aggravated by two successive bad harvests and the military conflicts with Pakistan and China. Moreover, the Congress had failed to keep up the promises and programmes implemented which were adopted at its annual session. Corruption among the Congress Ministers was also growing because of the corruptible nature of power. Instead of reform and development, there was inertia, corruption, nepotism and red-tapism all around in the administration. Instead of the fruit of freedom reaching in the hands of the common man, there was increasing hardships, suffering and lawlessness. The opposition parties which had failed to pose a bold to Congress all these years found their opportunity here when the Congress had failed in the eyes of the people from the pedestal of the 'Ideal'. The model of the two party system which was most popular among the intellectual circle could evolve on this ever or never, because the Congress was house divided within itself. Rajni Kothari in his book (Politics in India) writes, 'It was only in the mid sixties following the fragmentation in the Congress ranks, and taunted by the sparking ridicule of the dynamic Ram Manohar Lohia, that the various non-Congress parties began to evolve a recognisable strategy of 'opposition'.

II

Even in this atmosphere the Congress did not lose its central position and it remained the 'dynamic core of India's operating institutional system, its central piece.' In fact, the elections of 1967 still provided the Congress with an absolute majority at the centre, although it was dislodged from power in many states. Rajni Kothari rightly points out, 'The polarized view of the time sequences according to which Congress was everything before 1967 and is since 1967 no more than one among so many parties, is a gross over simplification on reality. While there is little doubt that 1967 represents a major step in the direction of an increasingly competitive policy, it should not be forgotten that even before 1967 the Congress had to content with very significant and often conclusive challenges to its authority.'

Following Shastri's death, Indira Gandhi was a 'Compromise' candidate for the position of the Prime Minister and for some time it seemed that Morarji Desai, the Finance Minister, was the real strong man in the cabinet. But she gradually moved out the shadow of the former. She only had minority government when Desai went into the opposition with sixty members of Parliament and formed the 'Congress in opposition' or in short 'Congress (O)'. Indira Gandhi was dependent upon support from other sides in the Parliament. And she more than occasionally socialist course she had taken. However, since the Congress majority in the states were also dissolving or even disappearing, Indira was, to quote Heinrich Bechtoldt, threatened by Pakistan, the conditions were incessantly changing coalition both in the Central government and in the States and the concomitant loss of stability at the top to which one had been accustomed for so long. 'Tired of all this Indira Gandhi announced on December 28, 1970 that the new elections which were not

due until 1972 would be held earlier'.

In the new election in 1971, the Congress was again able to obtain a two-third majority increasing its share to 67.95 percent of the seats in Lok Sabha from 54.42 percent held (in 1967). This later figure had been decreased in 1969 by the formation of Congress (O). Indira Gandhi's charisma was brought to the height by India's intervention in the war between the East Pakistan and the West Pakistan, which led to the partition of Pakistan and creation of Bangladesh. The great number of substantial electoral victories in the states in the course of 1972 was a splendid confirmation of the power of Congress.

The next two years from the 1971 elections seemed to be easy going for the Congress. But starting in 1973, ominous storm-clouds began to gather over the country. Serious economic problems threatening the stability of government came to affect political scene including Congress party. The total foodgrain harvest, which had amounted to 108 million tons in the year 1970-71, fell to 95 million tons in years 1972-73, but the number of mouths to be fed had again grown by several million in the meantime. Inflation was galloping but wages were left behind. The nationalisation of the wholesale trade of wheat by the Congress affected the situation adversely. It resulted in decrease of the amount of foodgrain available and in an expanded black market which meant deprivation and suffering for the poor. The government's decision to purchase foodgrain from abroad came too late because prices had gone up enormously. The so-called energy crisis then came at the end of 1973 due to the actions of O.P.E.C. India was forced to feel the full impact of this. To add to the difficulties in the spring of 1974, there were severe agitation especially in Bihar and Gujarat, and Uttar Pradesh as well. And finally, on May 8, 1974, the general strike by the Railway workers paralysed the entire economy for over a month. From beginning of 1973, the opposition saw its chance in the generally sorry economic and social situation. When disturbing situation set in, the Congress alleged that the opposition was responsible for that.

In order to check what the Congress government termed as disruptive elements, Emergency was proclaimed on June 25, 1975. This meant an internal state of emergency in addition to the external state of emergency, which had already been in effect since 1971. The period of emergency was projected as one of relative calm and stability because most of the opposition leaders and the persons who were indulging in political activities were detained in jails. Indira Gandhi, with a solid backing of the Congress party, tried to do away with which she considered as threat to stability of modifying the constitution so as to include a series of mechanisms which unless the electorate of the country provided legitimacy to the system of the functioning of the Government she would have liked to see institutionalized. But the emergency could not be continued for ever nor the elections postponed indefinitely.

Mrs. Gandhi, therefore, on January 18, 1977, announced her decision in favour of elections to be held in March. She chose the timing well. By taking the

initiative at the right moment she wanted to capitalise upon the concrete achievements in the economic sector. Statistics had been pointing to bumper crops, foreign exchange reserve at the time of pre-emergency, falling prices and unemployment before the end of the emergency. However, it did not help Congress. On the contrary, there was a new trend which indicated in people's disenchantment with the Congress. Perhaps it was also inevitable that people should not view the emergency as a gimmick. Mrs. Gandhi thought that perhaps any further postponing of elections may arouse public discontent and could lead to renewed civil disobedience. She further believed that in privacy of the polling both the common people would forge their complaints and vote in favour of stability and familiar government rather than hazarding the unknown. To cap them all was the consideration of the disorganized and badly shattered opposition which had only two months to organise itself. Whatever considerations might have led Mrs. Gandhi to announce the elections, by taking decision in its favour Mrs. Gandhi proved herself a true democrat.

But Mrs. Gandhi's calculation proved wrong. The excesses committed on the Indian masses during the emergency completely alienated them from the Congress. Suppression of civil liberties, forced sterilization and demolition of the houses of the poor in the urban areas, Janata Party came to power at the national level in 1977. The Congress ministries in many States were dismissed by Charan Singh. The Congress lost the support of the Muslims and Harijans during these elections.

The Janata rule, however, came to an end in 1980 as a result of the split in the Party. The Congress again returned to power in 1980 largely because of the poor performance of the Janata Party. The Congress leaders strengthened its position during the Eighth Lok Sabha elections held in 1985. The sympathy wave in favour of Rajiv Gandhi generated by the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi helped the Congress in winning the maximum number of seats. The Congress regained its support among the Muslims, Harijans and the middle classes. But the charge of corruption as there was a distinct shift in Congress Party's strategy of recruitment, and change in style of leadership, introduced since early 1980's. The Congress could not retain cohesiveness and its traditional support base.

As a result of these developments the Congress party was defeated in 9th Lok Sabha elections held in November, 1989. It could secure only 195 seats in the Parliament. It was a poor consolation for the Congress party that no other party had secured a majority. Even in the states also Congress support was badly eroded bringing either regional partner or new formation like Janata Dal to power. The formation of the National Front under the leadership of V.P. Singh made the Congress sit in opposition. But the factional conflict in the Janata Dal led to the downfall of the V.P. Singh Ministry. Mr. Chander Shekhar formed his government with the help of the Congress. But it could not last long. Fresh elections were held to the Lok Sabha in 1991. No party was in a position to secure absolute majority in these elections. The Congress being the largest party formed the government under the leadership of P.V. Narsimharao, the Congress

government began with getting support from the Communist parties and the BJP on issue to issue basis. It was a minority government with AADMK supporting it. It had to face the no-confidence motions but every time it survived, partly because of the different strategies of BJP and left supporting the Congress in order not to support each other. Engineering defections from opposition parties remained the main tool in the hands of the Congress leadership which succeeded in converting the ministry position (having only 227 seats out of 511 in the beginning) to absolute majority position (260 when the 10th Lok Sabha completed its term). And this included the now infamous Bribery case in which large amounts are alleged to have been paid to the JMM (Jharkhand Mukti Morcha) M.Ps. to vote against vote of no confidence motion.

The 5 year term of the Rao government will be remembered as doing more harm to the major party during which corruption, nepotism and scams ruled the roost. That is why that though the Congress government was able to complete its five year term (mainly because of the manipulating and manoeuvring style of its leadership) the party was rejected by the voters during the 11th Lok Sabha elections despite its wide ranging economic reforms and liberalisation, the party performed poorly. The 'Havala-scam' had its own role to play. The score of Congress with its tally of 140 has been the lower ever. However, the Congress is still happy, in its new role of first putting the BJP government (which lasted only 13 days) on the mat and then occupying the role of back driving by supporting the united front ministry from outside.

In the 1998 Lok Sabha elections also the performance was no better as it could capture again only 141 seats. In fact, the change of leadership from Sita Ram Kesri to Sonia Gandhi did bring some ray of hope which infact could bring the dividends in the assembly elections in four states held in November, 1998. Congress emerged victorious there. It replaced BJP government in Delhi and Rajasthan and was able to retain Madhya Pradesh. In 2004 elections it formed government with 145 seats. UPA who supported the government but Communist parties did not participate in the government. They gave only outside support which they withdrew in July 2008. In 2009 Lok Sabha elections UPA again formed Govt. with congress, five more parties and few independents. But in 2014 elections congress was deferts by BJP very Balls

Precisely, the history of Indian National Congress is the history of the freedom movement in the country, which after independence became the history of a freedom nation moving gradually on the road to progress. No doubt, all the impediments to the process of development could not be shattered by the Congress because of its own limitations and the limitations of a developing nation, yet the Congress has many feathers to its credit.

Achievement and Role

The Congress party has been able to impart the Indian political system a sense of continuity and change by virtue of being the oldest and the most well organised party in the country. It has acted as a socializing agency and norm setter for all other factions and parties rather than being a dominant party in any mechanistic sense as found in the analysis of Maurice Duverger and others. This

also explains why the inter party competition and dissidence within the Congress were at least important as the competition from outside : the two closely intertwined. It was primarily through the Congress infrastructure that Indian political process had been operating and also gained legitimacy. Institutions had developed their own norms and conventions had been laid down under the stable situation provided by the Congress rule for the last three decades.

The arena of power was not limited to ruling oligarchy or an aristocracy of birth : it was increasingly being spread to society as a whole. This was possible because the Congress, the only important nationwide party, drew new sections into its ambit. This differentiated the Indian case from the European case where, during the phase of rapid industrialization and social change political participation was confined to the upper classes of society. This also differentiated it from the revolutionary experiments of both Communist and non-communist varieties where, barring inter party feuds and military coups, political competition was generally not allowed to interfere with the process of development. In India, except for the emergency period, political power was neither suppressed nor confined to a small aristocracy. On the contrary, politics provided the larger setting within which decision making in regard to economic development and social change took place. Quite a few elections studies hold that the range of participation of the masses has been increasing in every election.

As for the utilization of industrial capacities, allocation of agricultural inputs, attacking the problem of unemployment, arresting the rate of population growth, the involving the educated unemployment and the youth of the country as a force for change and reconstruction it needs to be said that the Congress was aware of the problems and took measures to resolve them to the extent possible. No doubt, the pace of development could not be very fast. But compared to where the country started in the economic field one could say the performance to be considerably successful. By and large, the country's goal of capital accumulation and an increasing rate of investment and output in the industrial sector, and gradual independence from imports of strategic industrial goods were fairly well realised during the Congress rule. Five Year Plans contributed much to the economic and industrial development of the country. Still, much detailed work is possible in the country in utilization of ideal capacities and the implementation of already adopted schemes. The educational system offered unlimited scope for improvement, and the vast masses of unemployed and underemployed can be turned into a powerful force for rapid development by initiating specially tailored programmes. The administrative structure needs to be stirred from the present inertia and salvaged from the vestiges of obsolete rules and archaic structure. More capable personnel need to be brought in the every level of the development hierarchy.

The role of the Congress in imparting political education and bringing political socialization among the people of the country is, nonetheless, important. There is grain of truth not argument of the party spokesman that due to the transformation taking place in the caste system, the growing role of the party system, and other

intermediate structures, along with an enhanced political participation the country is developing the proper conditions for the channeling of aggressive drives towards a new horizon. In the meantime, the development of secular and national tendencies are leading towards political integration. The Congress party was able to receive a considerable cooperation on the issue of national integration and the National Integration Council has given serious thought to the problem.

India has a high tolerance of ambiguity and its society is historically and culturally eclectic encompassing a great many differences and contradictions. Naturally, the Congress which has been itself amorphous and eclectic in character and has come to stand before the people as an 'Umbrella organisation', included in it all the contradictions and differences in the society and has acquired an enviable place in the minds of the people. It symbolizes the nation and imports national integrity having 'developed' as a movement of protest, not only against the colonial regime but also against some of the stubborn features of traditional society; it had been accepted by many as the saviour of several millions of down trodden, and under dogs who have come to identify themselves with the Congress. The eclectic and amorphous character of the Congress permits it to have in its fold members of various sections and classes of society having different ideologies. As a result, there are persons of almost all shades of ideology in its ranks.

However, this developing structure of Congress had, on the other hand, deprived the policy of some of the conditions essential to the development of an effective democratic system. It had not been congenial for the growth of a viable party system where the opposition could emerge as a political alternative. The dominant position and the amorphous nature of the Congress did not provide an opportunity to the forces of opposition to make their support-base broader. Various interest groups found it more rewarding to maintain close links with the faction for dominant party than any of the two opposition parties. Even during Janata regime, the functioning of Congress despite being split into two groups, Congress (U) and Congress, the strategies of the two remained same. The debate of relevance of Gandhi Vs. Nehru during the Janata Party more than rhetorical support by the leaders to keep Nehru culture alive and accusing other for deviation, is clear cut example of this.

It took nearly thirty years for the opposition to unseat the Congress from power though many of the important members of the Janata Party had been at one time or the other members of the Congress. They had to choose to leave the Congress to join other parties or to organise new ones because of ideological and more factional and tactical differences with the Congress leadership. The process of unity, which began with the efforts of Mrs. Gandhi demonstrated once again the overshadowing character of the Congress. It evolved those elements which were not earlier with Congress and threw away those elements which did not adhere to the broad strategy to consensus of the Congress although formalised the formal structures of the party but reflecting the wishes of the leaders.

In international field the foreign policy of the Congress party had come to acquire high prestige. Most nations of Asia and Africa, which became independent after 1947 accepted the foreign policy of India which was one of the world peace. Freedom and self-determination for the colonies, preservation of link with Western democracies and

at the same time in advocacy of non-involvement in foreign, military and ideological enlargements. Although the policy of being a 'non-aligned' nation has its drawbacks in bringing foreign friendship peace aid, it has served the country well and has saved it from label of 'ism'. The treaties of friendship, peace and cooperation do not alter its position. Even the Janata government has chosen to take the same path which the Congress followed in the field of foreign policy.

Thus, we see that Congress Party of India achieved a great deal for the country and its people and still has the potential to perform that role. No doubt, there is another side of the coin. But in a developing nation sign of corruption and erosion of moral values show up during a period of transition. Two distinctly opposed forces pull in the opposite direction. But the speed at which country is moving toward 'modernization' would ultimately take it on development, would act as catalytic and light up the Indian horizon. The peace of modernization and development was set up by the Congress.

However, before any discussion of the achievements and role of the Congress party could be concluded, it is worthwhile to point out that the style and functioning of the party itself generated such crises which led to its split time and again, a kind of fluidity in the organisational structure of the party, particularly after the land-slide victory of Janata Party the opposition combined, the role of the Congress Party in opposition which led to split in the party from the top, manifests the significance of the factor of the individual leader symbolizing entire political ethos of a party. It is to an extent continuation of personality ethos characterized by the over dominance enjoyed by Gandhi and Nehru and later Indira and Rajiv even the so-called debates of relevance of Gandhi and Nehru as a mode of sustaining ideology of the party indicate besides other things the dominance of personality, factor determining the shape of the political party.

The manner Congress party conducted itself under the leadership of Mrs. Gandhi and the kind of cultural shift inducted into it with the infusion of young blood indicated that to sustain a party in the Indian context was primarily based on charisma of the leadership. The ideological basis and the strategies of the development rather become less important. Whether this evolving culture would be able to sustain the system and the dominance of political party like Congress in future, it may be debatable question. The fact, however, remains that Congress party would go again and again for the process of disintegration and cohesion along with the shift in the scale of the charisma of the leader. A stable growth of Congress and its future development could be assured by well articulated strategy of economic development in changed milieu.

After its dismal performance continuously during the last three Lok Sabha elections the party appears to resurging under the leadership of Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, at least to some extent. Its performance in the three states during the November, 1998 Assembly elections has brought the party back to the centre stage of Indian politics. The Congress appears to have won back its lost support base in the Muslims and the SCs and STs. How far it is able to continue its resurgence march under Sonia Gandhi is yet to be seen. In October, 1999 elections it got 112 seats only which cannot be considered any big achievement. But in 2004 elections it formed the government with UPA though it herself got 145 seats only. Similarly in 2009 elections it formed UPA and

Congress itself got 206 seats. In 2014 Elections (Lok Sabha) Congress Party secured only 44 seats. The worst ever performance by Congress Party in LS election has reduced it to such a level that the party may even lose the status of opposition in Lok Sabha, According to the constitution no party would qualify to be as opposition leader as none of them had won the minimum 10% 54 seats of Lok Sabha. In 2014 Lok Sabha Elections BJP 2002 seats and Its alliance with 29 parties got 336 seats in the Lok Sabha. The BJP has taken clear majority for government and Narinder Modi is the Prime Minister of India.

SUGGESTED QUESTION

1. Write important events (History) of Congress Party from 1987 to 2000.

SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Rajni Kothari, *Politics in India*
2. Stanley A. Kochanek, *The Congress of India*
3. A.H. Hanson and Janet Doughlas, *India's Democracy* (Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1974)
4. Giseller Wirising, *The Indian Experiment*
5. B.N. Pandey, *The Break-up of British India*
6. M.V. Raman Rao, *A Short History of the Indian National Congress*, (New Delhi, S. Chand and Co., 1959)
7. J.C. Johari, *Indian Government and Politics* (Delhi, Vishal Publication, Second Ed., 1976)
8. Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*
9. D.C. Gupta, *Indian National Movement*
10. Myron, Weiner, *Politics of Scarcity*
11. Hartmann, *Political Parties in India.*

BHARTIYA JANATA PARTY (BJP)

Now withstanding the fall of Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government barely after 13 days in office, the growing success of BJP is crucial development on the Indian political scene. The BJP's strength in Lok Sabha rose from 2 in 1984 to 119 in 1991 to 160 in 1996 and 182 in October, 1999, 138 in 2004 and 116 in 2009 Lok Sabha elections. Today it is the second single largest party in the Lok Sabha. Not only this, BJP remained in power in three states (Gujarat, Delhi and Rajasthan). A coalition partner in three states (Maharashtra, Punjab and Haryana) and the principal opposition party in the (M.P., Bihar, Karnatka and H.P.). After 2009 Lok Sabha elections with 116 seats it is working as opposition party.

The party system in the country generally reflects the social, political and economic environment of the country. Being a heterogeneous society in terms of language, culture and religion, India has evolved a multi-party system. In this system, Congress party remained a dominant force because of the aggregated nature of its support base and also because of its centrist position. In the present situation, when political polarization is taking place in the country on a massive scale, the BJP emerged as powerful opponent to the Congress on the basis of its communal appeal. In order to understand the role of the BJP in present day Indian politics and to assess its future prospects we shall have to understand its past history and evolution as a communal and rightist party. Political parties also form alliances and coalitions to deal with caste and religious identities. One of the important factors during the elections (8th, 9th and 10th) in North and North-Western India was religion in politics. The reason was inter-connected issues during 1984 and 1989, which connected, and strengthened religious feelings among large sections of the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs. The Ayodhya Temple and Babri Mosque issues divided the people on communal lines in their political alignments. The shift of Muslim vote to the Janata Dal and the Hindu vote to BJP is a success story of communalism.

Origin and Growth of BJP

BJP is the 4th oldest existing national party of the country. Actually, it is the new edition of Jan Sangh. The Jan Sangh in respect of politics, religion, language and education is described as the history of the Hindu reaction to the Western impact.¹ Its leadership gave a new name to their party, i.e., the B.J.P. So far the Jan Sangh is concerned, it was founded on 21st October, 1951 as an alternative to the Congress as well as the existing opposition parties, the CPI, the Socialist Party, and the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party led by Acharya Kripalani, a former President

1. Myron Weiner, Party Politics in India, Princeton University Press, 1951, p.56

of the Congress. The organisation backbone of the Jan Sangh the now BJP has been the RSS founded by Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar in 1925. During 1973-74 opposition parties had started feeling the necessity of forgoing a united front as an alternative to the Congress. Jai Prakash Narain, "Rise of BJP : An Assessment" (The Tribune August 4, 1996), Atal Bihari Vajpayee called for a total revolution against the prevalent situation and urged the other opposition parties for forging a United block within the Parliament also. The leaders of the different parties as Congress, Jan Sangh, BLD, BKD and the Socialist decided to contest the elections as a United opposition under the banner of Janata Party. But 'Historic Victory' with negative votes cast against Mrs. Gandhi and Congress for emergency excesses, brought the clash of personalities and insatiable political ambitions among the elected Janata government, hastened the fall of the Government. After sometime, Jan Sangh group left the Janata party dual membership issue resulting in the formation of Bhartiya Janata Party. It is not a secret that there was a strong differences of opinion over the name of the new party among leaders like Mr. Nana ji Deshmukh and A.B. Vajpayee. While the former thought that the Jan Sangh still commands a great deal of loyalty and respectability among its committed cadres, the latter felt that it would be more prudent to provide the new party with a more secular and broad based image, since the old Jan Sangh sullers to being sectarian and communal.² So they did not revive Jan Sangh. They named it Bhartiya Janata Party. Some non-Jan Sangh members also joined BJP. Its leaders decided to become a national alternative to ruling party. For this it was necessary to leave the philosophy of Hindu Rashtra and adopt some liberal ideology. BJP did not claim any departure from the Janata Party's ideology and on the contrary stressed that it would seek to work for the ideals of Jai Prakash Narain for which the non-Congress group got together in 1977. There was reputed stress at the inaugural convention on the faith of Indian Nationalism, democracy, secularism, based on respect for all religions, socialism based on Gandhian principle of decentralization of political and economic power. The party aimed at building up India as strong and prosperous nation, which is modern, progressive and enlightened in outlook and which proudly drawn inspiration from India's ancient culture and values and thus is able to emerge as a great world power and playing an effective role in the comity of nations for the establishment of world peace and a just international order.

In the initial stages party could not draw substantial support from any section and could get only seats in Lok Sabha with 7.66% votes in 7th Lok Sabha elections. Its debacle in 1980 and 1984 general elections made its leaders to review its policies and also reflection on its future course. So it prompted the national executive of the party to constitute a 12 member working group in 1985. The working group was entrusted with the twin task of reviewing the party's functioning, achievements and shortcomings and drawing a "five years action plan for the future of all front ideological, organisational, constructive and electoral". In the ninth Lok Sabha elections all non-

2. Dewan Berinder Nath : *Rebirth of Bhartiya Jana Sangh : Democratic World*, Vol. 9, No. 15, April, 1980, I, p.5

Congress oppositions contested from one platform with complete seat adjustment under the name of National Front but BJP's decision not to merge with any political party and retain its identity has helped the party to make gains. It contested the election with seat adjustment with National Front only and got 88 seats with 12.43% votes. The 1989 election manifesto of the BJP stresses the importance of seeking Indian solutions of Indian problems. It offered a new deal to farmers, a fresh policy, smaller states, consumer protections and determination to fight corruption at all levels. The Government was criticized on the issue of rebuilding of the temple at Ayodhya, demand made for a total ban on cow slaughter, replacement of the Minorities Commission with a Human Rights Commission, and a review of the personal law pertaining to various communities. The BJP, while guaranteeing justice and security to all minorities, also considers it imperative for national integration that the minorities do not develop what they describe as a minority complex. But in the tenth Lok Sabha elections the performance of BJP had been far better. It emerged the single largest party though could not muster majority. The total seats of BJP were 161 and combining the seats of its allies its number became 194. There was a lot of speculation as no political party was in a position to form majority. However, the President invited Atal Bihari Vajpayee to form the government on May 16, 1996 and asked the Prime Minister to prove the majority in the Lok Sabha before 31st May, 1996. However, the party could not add any more supporters to its list and the government had to go on May 28, 1996. The BJP succeeded in 1998 Lok Sabha elections to again emerge as the single largest political party in the Lok Sabha winning 182 seats and this time it had entered in pre-election alliances as well. And the parties ruled with its eighteen odd allies. But October, 1999 elections got 182 seats and with its pre-election alliance with other parties (NDA) the number reached 300 and formed government at the Centre. However, the BJP had to dilute its agenda while preparing NAG (National Agenda for Governance). The party seems to have been rejected by the people as is evident from its rout in Delhi and Rajasthan and also its defeat in M.P. in the Assembly elections. In 2004 elections it got 138 seats and became the 2nd largest party after Congress and sat as opposition party to the ruling party. Again in 2009 elections it is working as opposition party with 116 seats. NDA won total 157 seats only. In 2014 Lok Sabha Elections BJP got 282 seats and its alliance with 29 parties got 336 seats in Lok Sabha. The BJP has taken clear majority for the govt and Narinder Modi is the Prime Minister of India.

Organisation of the Party

This party has organisation just like any other party in the country. It has urban as well as rural base. Membership drive had been one of the significant tasks of the party since its inception in 1980. Article VII deals with the organisational structure of the party. There are three forms at the national level : (1) The plenary or special session of the party, (2) The National Council, and (3) The National Executive. At the state level there are two corresponding institutions : (1) State Councils and (2) State Executive. Then there are (1) Regional Committees (2) District Committees, (3) Mandal Committees and (4) Local Committees. All the levels of the

party from the lowest to the highest are organically linked. Every member on its enrolment has to contribute to the membership fund. He cannot seek election to any office or body of the party except local committee unless he has been active at least for two years after enrolment.

The National Council is the supreme organ of the party. Members of the state council elect members of the National Council equal to the number of Lok Sabha seats allocated to that state. All former National Presidents, all state Presidents, leaders of party in the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, leaders of the party in state assemblies, councils and metropolitan council and 40 members are co-opted. The National President is elected by the National Council. Then he will nominate his executive and all the office bearers. The National Executive shall consist of not more than 60 members of whom 3 women and 3 belonging to Scheduled Castes/Tribes to be nominated by the President. It is the highest executive organ of the BJP. It carries into effect the policies and programmes laid down by National Council and is responsible to it. In practice, it formulates all policy decisions and resolutions, and presents them for discussion and approval of the National Council. It issues directive for the proper working of the BJP constitution. It can be amended by 2/3rd majority of the members present and voting at any session of the National Council. It has also created several organisations such as Bhartiya Janata Yuva Morcha, Bhartiya Janata Mahila Morcha, the Kisan Cell, the labour cell and cultural cell to propagate the party programme among the different categories. Almost all, if not all, members of BJP are either the members of the RSS or sympathizers of its ideology.

The most serious weakness of the party organisation is the lack of functioning at the local level units. There is a lack of criticism and self-criticism in the party. Its leaders emphasize that it is secular party and is not in favour of a theoretic state.

Ideology

The ideology formulated and articulated by BJP has five principles, described as "our five commitments". These are nationalism and national integration, commitment to democracy, positive secularism "which means distillation of common moral values whether derived from different religions or from other historical and civilization experiences and approach which also remained integral to the Indian Civilization" and "Gandhian Socialism." Fifth, "the BJP would strive to build up a value-based politics and thus seek cleanse the filth abounding in public life today." The ideological structure of BJP as it stands now is a combination of both RSS, Jan Sangh and liberal Gandhian perspective.

The economic policy is not very different from other parties because the party rejects both capitalism and communalism because they promote concentration of economic powers either in hands of private individuals or state officials yet by and large it believes in all those economic policies which non-communist parties follow. Its development ideology seeks to provide full employment and remove poverty strengthening the agro-rural base and by inculcating the spirit of Swadeshi. The party believes that decentralisation of all economic and development activities

are an imperative for the rapid and balanced economic advancement of the country. The BJP also made a strong criticism of the Congress government's "New Economic Policy". It demanded a radical re-orientation in favour of the people of the country.

The Party also suggested the adoption of a six point programme to deal with the economical ills facing the country and priority to programmes to tackle poverty in rural areas, expansion of the public distribution system to cover the entire population, revival of programme like food for work and "Antyodayas", must stand up resolutely for the defence of the interest of the underprivileged.

Programme and Policies

Moreover, for becoming a national alternative a section of its liberal leader thought it is necessary to leave the philosophy of Hindu Rashtra which might not appeal to the minorities of India and adopt some liberal ideology to woo the ruralites and the minorities of India as Jana Sangh was confined to certain areas of North. Hence they tried to project the fundamental Plank of BJP is commitment to democracy. It believes in the policy of positive secularism based on moral values. It also means Gandhian Socialist which means reliance on right means. BJP takes flexible stand on other issues as it may compete even with ruling party, if that party designs to help poor masses without compromise on its opposition to authoritarianism, corruption and anti-national politics and activities. The party seeks to broaden its base, strengthen its cadres and try to penetrate the rural areas, labour and the weaker sections in favour of elimination of all forms of exploitation of the peasantry, particularly the marginal farmers and landless labour.

Though the party has adopted many resolutions to uplift the common man and denied its communal Hindu based attitude. But due to its leanings towards the RSS and other Hindu organisations and taking up of the issues like Ramjanam Bhumi and favouring the replacement of its attempts to give a new shape to its ideology. Actually, it bases itself upon the traditional ideas of Hindu nationalism considering Hindu society and nation as identical. The BJP manifesto in 1996 harped on Hindutava as its main plank. The party pledged that it will facilitate the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya. It also promised to carve out smaller states, Vanchal, Vidarbha and Chattisgarh and Uttranchal have been made. Its 80 page manifesto makes all promises to different sections of voters. The ideological and socio-economic orientation of BJP leadership appealed to the educated in urban areas whose cultural hunger was satisfied by the party because they found in it the realisation of their glorification of the past. The party wants more financial power to states and an end to the misuse of Article 356 against a validly constituted government. It strongly advocated the abrogation of Article 370 giving special status of Jammu and Kashmir.

During the 9th and 10th Lok Sabha elections, BJP emerged as the second largest party in the Parliament. It was the recognised opposition party, in both houses of Parliament. In the elections of Lok Sabha held in 1991, it captured about 119 seats. In 1996 elections it succeeded in tasting power at the centre

though for a very brief period. It reached its zenith in 1998 when it became the ruling party and in October, 1999 elections it made government with NDA total 300 seats. In 2004 Lok Sabha elections it was again opposition party and also in 2009 election it got 114 seats and working as strong opposition in party. It projected its image of the Hindu party—a representative of the Hindu majority during the vote of confidence debate in the Lok Sabha which was seen live on television by the people all over the country. From a party confined mainly to the urban areas, it has gradually broadened its support base to the rural areas. It has been successful in mobilizing the orthodox Hindus in the Hindi belt in its favour on the basis of its slogan of 'Hindutva'. The Babri Masjid Ram Janam Bhumi issue also provided it with an opportunity to arouse communal passions to achieve its political ends. This purely communal approach helped BJP in acquiring political power at the national level in the short run. But the long term consequences of the policy will prove disastrous for the country. Further political consolidation of BJP is likely to divide the Indian people on majority vs. minority basis. The only chance of the BJP being accepted as a national party by all sections of Hindu society is in the dilution of its present communal process. The party seems to have lost its charm to the people as is evident from its mode of government. At the centre the party has little to show as its achievements except the Pokhran blasts, its problems with the allies and its internal bickering are proving costly to it. The Assembly elections in four states (Delhi, M.P., Rajasthan and Goa) has gone against BJP. But in 2002 General elections it had neck to neck fight with Congress though it had made its government. The party is seen as lacking in providing its "able leader and stable government". The rising prices of essential commodities, the communal stance of the party on many crucial issues is being rejected by the people and the minorities and scheduled castes and scheduled tribes appear to be going back to the Congress fold. The BJP is seen as a party of high caste Hindus. In a multi-cultural and multi-religious society the BJP will have to win the confidence of all sections if it wants to stay as a ruling alternative.

In 2013 Party decided to side-lined its veteran leader L. K. Advani and announced then Gujrat Chief Minister Narinder Modi as their Prime Ministerial candidate for the 2014 general elections. After the massive political advertisement on the name Modi the National Democratic Alliance won 2014 elections, taking 336 seats, BJP got 282 seats. The BJP won 31.0% votes, which is the lowest share for a party to form a majority government in India since independence, while NDA's combined vote share was 38.5%. The BJP has taken majority for the Government and Narinder Modi is the P.M. of India. The Same strategy again worked in 2019 elections, Modi's BJP, won 303 seats in Parliament, well above the 272-seats majority mark. During this tenure Modi-Shah quickly took advantage of its strengthened position to launch a set of policies that fulfilled long-held ideological proposals of both the party and the RSS. These initiatives address

key elements of the RSS' Hindutva ideology, such as national unity and a culture rooted within South Asia. The first major policy initiative, announced in early August 2019, just months after the BJP's parliamentary victory, was a bill revoking the constitutional provisions of Article 370, which granted limited autonomous powers to Kashmir, an old demand of the RSS and BJP aimed at integrating the state more deeply into the Indian Union. The time will decide how the BJP's radical Hindu nationalist policies and vast privatisation drive would affect the Indian society and electoral politics.

SUGGESTED QUESTION

1. Write in detail important events in BJP party from elections 12th, 13th, 14th & 15th.

BOOKS CONSULTED

1. Election Manifestoes of BJP.
2. *Political Process in India* by C.P. Bhambhri
3. *Party Politics in India* by Myron Weiner.
4. *Rebirth of Bhartiya Jana Sang*, Democratic World, Vol. 9, No. 15, April 13, 1980, p/50.
5. *A Study of National Political Party in Regional Context—A Comparative Study of BJP in Punjab and Haryana* by Mujahid Hassan (A Thesis).
6. *Punjab Today* by Gopal Singh.

SHIROMANI AKALI DAL

Shiromani Akali Dal is one of the most important and powerful regional political parties. Akali Dal as a political party has a long and chequered history. It was set up on 14th December, 1920. It emerged out of the Gurudwara Movements launched in the second decade of the present century for the emancipation of the Gurudwaras from the clutches of corrupt Mahants. The struggle was long and arduous. Having passed through the fire of repression at the hands of the foreign Government, it was natural that Akalis should turn against the foreign rule and fight for the freedom of India. Hence, they were drawn into the national movement and remained in the Congress orbit upon the outbreak of Second World War. In the words of Kailash Chander Gulati, the Akali Dal, which had emerged as a paramilitary political organisation during the Gurudwara reform movement, although careful to maintain its separate entity, continued to support the Congress in freedom movement. At the same time it functioned as a pressure group of the Sikhs in relation to the Congress. For instance, the Akali Dal opposed the Nehru Committee because it was considered particularly not advantageous to the Sikhs. For its part, the Congress while receiving support from the Akali Dal, channelled the Sikh demand into the mainstream of nationalism Movement. Thus, in 1929, at its session at Lahore, the Congress acceded to the demand that it would not agree to the constitution which was not acceptable to the Sikh community.

While cooperating with the Congress in the freedom movement, the Akali Dal was engaged independently in political activity to secure privileges for the Sikh community. It was felt Muslim community was the main block to its demand for greater representation for the Sikhs in the legislature. At the turn of the century when increasing emphasis was being laid on separate political entity of the Sikhs, demands were made for separate and weighed representation for the Sikhs in the services and other representative bodies.

From 1928 to 1942, the Akali Dal-Congress relationships saw many ups and downs. But by and large, the Akali Dal had been siding with the Congress and other progressing political elements who were dedicated to the cause of national freedom. In the Punjab Legislative Assembly the Akalis joined the Congress to oppose the Unionist Government. The only anxiety with the Sikh leadership was that Congress might compromise the Sikh interests in its agreement with Muslim League. After the outbreak of World War II there was a shift in the Akali politics. In 1942, the then Akali leadership entered into a pact with the ruling Unionist Party in Punjab, with the Sikandar-Baldev Singh pact the Akalis choose to follow a political line independent of the Congress. While the Sikandar-Baldev Singh pact brought the Sikhs and the Unionists together which made the Punjab Congress leaders

uneasy. The Akali leadership was charged with betraying the national cause. Diwan Chaman Lal, characterised the pact as an attempt to strengthen a weak ministry. Master Tara Singh denied Chaman Lal's charge that the Akalis had bolstered a ministry by the Sikandar-Baldev Singh pact which he asserted was a pact between the individuals and not two parties. He declared that the Akalis would continue to fight as before against the Unionists or any other party on political issues like complete independence for India and opposition to the demand for Pakistan. After the pact, from 1942 to 1947 when India was partitioned the Akalis were confronted with the political problem to growing demand for Pakistan. During this period their main political activity was to safeguard the Sikh interests and oppose the demand for a separate Pakistan. In opposition to the Cripps proposals the Akalis insisted upon the creation of an Azad Punjab wherein the Sikhs' interests were safe. The demand for an independent Sikh State, "Khalistan", was the commanding ambition of the Akali leadership. In case India was to be divided on command lines, the Sikhs that they had an inconvertible claim for an independent homeland. The Akalis failed in both. Punjab was partitioned in 1947 as against their wishes and Sikh demand for a separate state was not conceded.

After the partition in 1947, the Akali mind was dominated by the question of respectful place for the Sikhs in independent India. This, they thought, was possible only if the Sikhs had a numerical majority in an autonomous state within India. The demand for such a State (Punjabi Suba) was made only after the demand for special constitutional safeguard for the Sikhs was rejected by the Minorities sub-Committee of the constituent Assembly. This rejection of special safeguards was considered by the Akali leadership as an act of going back from its commitment by the Congress leaders. In 1952, Akalis contested the elections on the plank of the creation of Punjabi Suba but was routed in Punjab and Pepsu. In October, 1952, it wrested the office of the President of the SGPC, from Jathedar Udham Singh Nagoke, a pro-Congress Akali. With its control of the SGPC, Akali Dal was in a better position to fight the battle of Punjabi Suba.

After a long struggle for about 15 years and in the face of a stiff opposition by the communal Hindus the Akalis succeeded in getting their demand conceded. Punjab was reorganised on the recommendations of the Boundary Commission whose recommendations came into force with effect from November 1, 1966.

The reorganisation of Punjab in 1966 was turning point in the history of Akali Dal. An erstwhile rival—the Jan Sangh became a leading partner in the ruling front in Punjab. The first non-Congress front ministry was formed with the Chief Ministership of S. Gurnam Singh. The United Front ministry was toppled following the defection of S. Lachman Singh Gill and 19 other M.L.As. (in November, 1967). S. Lachman Singh Gill remained Chief Minister upto August 24, 1968 with the support of the Congress. In the mid-term poll held in the state in 1969 the Akalis won 43 seats out of 104. It emerged as the single largest party in the house followed by Congress which won 8 seats. A coalition ministry with Jan Sangh was formed with justice Gurnam Singh as Chief Minister. But the internal cleavages in the Akali

Party brought the downfall of Gurnam Singh Ministry on 25th March, 1970. Another coalition assumed power and S. Parkash Singh Badal became Chief Minister. This coalition ministry also became the victim of Akali factionalism and the withdrawal of support by Jan Sangh on the language issue. The 5th general election to the Lok Sabha established the Congress supremacy in Punjab as in other parts of India. The Akali ministry could not withstand the defeat in the Lok Sabha poll. Defection by Justice Gurnam Singh alongwith 16 other M.L.As. in June 1971 prepared the way of imposition for President's rule in Punjab. In the 1972 State Assembly election the Akalis could win only 24 seats. The Congress again became the ruling party in Punjab.

From 1972 to June 1975 when Emergency was imposed, Akali Dal did not play outstanding role as an opposition party. With the imposition of internal emergency in India, the Akalis again got active. It was perhaps the only party in India which consciously chose the arduous path of opposing emergency. It carried on its crusade against emergency relentlessly upto the end and did not budge from the chosen path despite the alluring offers and baits thrown to it by the then rulers. The consistent fight put up by the Akalis against Emergency won them laurels and later on public adulation, money and votes. The sixth general election to the Lok Sabha proved most auspicious for the Akalis. They could win all the 9 parliamentary seats they contested in alliance with newly formed Janta Party and CPI (M). June 1977 elections to the state Assembly returned 58 Akalis in a house of 117. This perhaps was the highest watermark of the Akali popularity in electoral politics. The Akali Dal in partnership with the Janta Party formed coalition government in the Punjab and in turn received a share in the Janata ministry in the Centre, being the electoral partners.

The Akali Party has always suffered from acute factionalism and internal dissensions. The party which fought for achievement of Punjabi Suba in order to safeguard the interests of the Sikh community and Punjabi culture could not come up to its professions after the reorganisation of Punjab. The first Akali Dal United Front government formed in 1967 could not last for more than a few months due to lust for power on the part of Akali leaders. In 1969 mid-term polls Akalis were again able to form coalition government with justice Gurnam Singh as Chief Minister for the second time but it could not last for more than a few months and in July, 1970 it was replaced by ministry led by S. Parkash Singh Badal. Badal ministry also fell a victim to the internal dissensions. The people were so much disappointed with the Akali leadership that they punished the party by returning only one candidate to Lok Sabha in 1971 elections and 24 members to Punjab Legislative Assembly. As mentioned earlier, the misdeeds of the Congress government and the fight put up by Akalis during the emergency helped the party to regain its popularity. With the help of Janata Party and C.P.M. the Akali Dal won nine seats in Lok Sabha and 58 in the Punjab Assembly in 1976 elections. Soon after regaining power in Punjab, Akali leadership resumed its mutual infighting forgetting their responsibility to the people who had reposed their confidence in them. However, the people took

them to task at the time of elections held in 1980. Only one Akali member was returned to Lok Sabha and 34 members out of 117 were elected to Punjab Assembly. The Akalis did not learn from this defeat and continued fighting with the result that the Akali Dal again splitted into two groups each claiming to be the real Akali Dal. One was headed by Jathedar Jagdev Singh Talwandi and the other Sant Harchand Singh Longowal. The issues to divide them were apparently ideological as well as tactical. In reality, however, it was a clash of personality eager to lay hold over the power, organisation and the S.G.P.C.

After 1980, the Akali Dal witnessed a grim power struggle among its various factions. Having lost its roots in Punjab, the Talwandi group launched a morcha in front of the Parliament House in New Delhi for implementation of the Anadpur Sahib resolution. After slow disintegration of its cadre, this group ultimately merged in the United Akali Dal of Baba Joginder Singh in 1985. Various leaders later deserted the Dal.

The Longowal group launched a morcha against the central government which practically continued upot the Rajiv Gandhi-Longowal Accord in 1985. It started with 45 dmands, later reduced to mainly three. During its phased agitation a record number of its volunteers courted arrest. To consolidate the support base of its morcha it also aligned with the external leader Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindrawala. Its top leaders were arrested during the operation Blue Star. On their release in early 1984, the Dal had the accord with the Centre. The Dal withdrew its agitation and in return most of oustanding demands were accepted. The Dal was returned to power in Assembly elections which were held in September, 1985. The Akali Dal (Longowal Group) won 73 seats out of 117 and Surjit Singh Barnala became the Chief Minister.

The Longowal Dal, however, again got split in early 1985 with the revolt of Badal Tohra and Amarinder Singh against Surjit Singh Barnala's action of police entry in the Golden Temple. The Barnala-Balwant Singh combine constituted the Akali Dal (L). There was bitter power struggle between these two Dals. The Akali Dal (Badal) was making a severe propaganda against the Akali Dal (Barnala). It demanded the downfall of Barnala ministry. However, the Akali Dal (Barnala) enjoyed Congress support in the Assembly and continued to rule with this support till President's rule was clamped on Punjab on the eve of 1987 Haryana Assembly elections. During the President's rule which lasted for almost five years the Akalis were totally pushed to the background by the militant leadership. Ultimately, Congress normally returned to Punjab after the February, 1992 elections which were boycotted by the Akali factions except Akali Dal (K). Factionalism among the Akalis is a matter of tradition, particulary on the eve of elections. Though there were many factions, viz., Akali Dal (Mann) and Akali Dal (Panthic), but the Akali Dal (Badal) had emerged as the most powerful and may be termed as real Akali Dal in the SGPC elections held in October, 1996. Thereafter, Akali Dal (B) emerged as a single largest party in the Punjab Vidhan Sabha elections held in February, 1997. The Akali Dal (B) secured 75 out of 117 assembly seats in Punjab. And the Akali Dal (Badal) ruled in Punjab under the Chief Ministership of P.S. Badal. In 2002 elections it got only 41 seats. In 2017 Akali Dal with its alliance partner BJP retained the Authority in Punjab. In 2007 Akali's won 56 seats and

BJP won 19 seats. In 2012, Akali again Defeated the congress in Punjab vidhan Sabha elections. It was the first time Political History of the state that any Party or alliance won two elections consecutively. But Akali Dal lost 2017 elections very badly. In 2017 Akali Dal even lost status of Main opposition Party with just 15 seats in its kitty. It was the worst ever performance by SAD.

The performance of Akali Dal in different elections is given in the following table.

LOK SABHA ELECTIONS IN PUNJAB

Performance of Akali Dal

	Seats Contested	Seats Won	%age of votes
1952 (approximately)	8	2	11.1
1962 (approximately)	7	3	8.0
1967 --			
Sant Group	8	3	22.44
Master Group	7	0	4.30
1971	12	1	30.15
1977	9	9	40.57
1980	7	1	-
1985	11	7	36.9
1989 (Akali Dal (M))	8	6	
(Akali Dal (B))	4	0	
1991 (Boycotted)	-	-	
1996 (Akali Dal (B) and BSP)	10	8	
1998 Akali BJP 9 + 2	Janata Dal 1+	B.S.M.	1
1999 And 2 Cong. 8			
2004 8 Cong. 2			
2009 4 Akali + 1 BJP			
2014 10 4 26.3%			

ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

TOTAL SEATS

1952	88	33	14.7
186 (Punjab and Pepsu Combined)			
1962	46	19	11.7
154			
1967 (Sant Group)	58	24	20.49
(Master Group)	61	2	
1969	65	43	33.00
104			

B. A. PART-II (SEMESTER-IV) 36 POLITICAL SCIENCE

1972	72	24	27.66	104
1977	70	58	31.66	117
1980	-	34	26.30	-
1985	100	73	38.54	

1992 Akali Dal did not participate in February, 1992 elections. Only Akali Dal (Kabul) participated and could win only three seats. In 2007 election it won 49 seats.

	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Total Seats
1997	117	93 (Akali Dal (B) - 75 & BJP - 18)	117

Alliance of
AD (B) & BJP

2002	117	41
2007		

Alliance of AD (B) & BJP (Akali-49, & BJP-19)

Alliance of AD (B) & BJP 2012 (Akali-56, & BJP-12)

2017-SAD (B) & BJP 15 & 3

Party Organisation

The highest organ of the Shriomani Akali Dal is its working committee of 15 members in addition to the office-bearers. The most powerful functionary is the President of the Dal. The General body meeting of the Akali Dal elects the party president for a term of one year. The members of Akali Dal General body are elected by the District Akali Jathedars under the supervision of a nominee of the Central organisation. Lower down the ladder, the organisation is as under, where there a minimum, of 10 members, a Jatha can be set up representing a village, a town, or a city. Where there are 5 such Jathas or 100 members of the Circle Jathas can be created. The District Akali Jatha is elected by the delegates of the Circle Jathas of the District.

In State other than Punjab, provisional Akali Jatha can be set up with the approval of, and according to the rules made by, Akali Dal.

However, it must be noted that the Dal is not a cadre based party, it is a very loose knit and lacks strict party discipline. The elections to the Dal organisation are not held regularly. In 1978, (After a period of 18 years) organisational elections were held for Akali Dal and Jathedar Jagdev Singh Talwandi was elected President of the Akali Dal. As mentioned earlier, the Akali Dal was split into two groups—one headed by Jathedar Talwandi and other by Sant Longowal. When Simranjit Singh Mann came from jail he started new Akali Dal as Mann Group. But after that so many new Dals came into existence and every one claimed itself as real Dal. Many leaders tried to unite them also but they could not succeed. In 1995, the Acting Jathedar of Akali Takht, Bhai Manjit Singh took upon himself the job of uniting all the factions. However, Akali Dal headed by Badal refused to join the other Dals under Amritsar Declaration resulted in the emergence of Akali Dal (A). But the unity did not last long. Akali Dal (B) regained its lost credibility by winning two elections of the three bye-elections held in Punjab in 1994 and

Akali Dal won from Ajnala and Giddarbaha. In 1996, the Akali Dal had alliance with BSP. After winning 8 parliamentary seats the Akalis announced supporting the BJP. The Akali Dal (B) and BJP alliance won 93 seats, 75 Akali Dal (B) 18 BJP out of 117 assembly seats it contested in the Punjab Assembly elections held on February 7, 1997. The Akali Dal (B) won the election of Kila Raipur held in May, 1997. It could win only 2 seats in October, 1999 Lok Sabha elections. But in 2004 elections it won 8 seats.

Party Programmes and Politics

One may say at the outset that Akali Dal is not wedded to any political ideology as such. It was created to safeguard the religious education, social and economic interests of the Sikhs. It opposed the economic and political system based on exploitation and wants to establish a social structure based on the twin principles to Sikhism, earning the livelihood through honest labour (*kirta*) and sharing the earning (*wand Chhakhna*). The constitution of the Shrimonai Akali Dal professes to stand for the welfare of the panth, the nation, and the whole of mankind. In actual practice, however, the Akali energies have been consumed by the sectional demands of securing rightful place for the Sikhs. In electoral politics the Akalis assumed a radical posture with the ascendancy of Sant Fateh Singh. In its election manifesto issued before the 1972 Assembly elections, it asked for greater autonomy for the states. It declared itself in favour of ceilings on agricultural land and urban property. It promised seed, fertilisers and pesticides to small farmers at subsidised rates. As the Akalis remained busy in their mutual bickerings, they could do little to implement their programme when they came to power. Yet one has to concede that in practice Akali Party represented the interests of the big peasants in rural area and middle business group in urban areas. Such emphasis in practice was again due to the fact that these sections are the strong hold of its support. Ever since the Anandpur Sahib Resolution has been passed and officially adopted at all the factions swear by it and their ideological stand is said to be based on it.

Being a regional party claiming to represent a strong religious minority the Akalis have an advantageous position in Punjab. They have stronghold on the Sikh masses in general and Sikhs peasantry in particular. They have always managed to secure majority of Sikh votes in the Punjab Assembly. An analysis of 1980 elections shows that though they were badly defeated at the polls, majority of Sikh M.L.As in Punjab Assembly were with this party. However, there is one disadvantage unless they enter in alliance with some party representing non-Sikh elements or are able to win the confidence of Harijans and Hindus, they cannot hope to come into power. Whatever the case may be, the Akali Dal can hope to remain a strong party as long as it can appeal to Sikh sentiments. Moreover, the activation of Sikh politics on the question of Sikh as a nation has complicated the issue to a larger extent. Moreover, the Akali Dals of all shades were overshadowed by the militant groups and were badly pushed to the wall. The return of democracy has once again given the Akali Dal chance to play the role of a regional party. In the 11th Lok Sabha elections held in 1966 the Akali Dal had aligned with BSP & secured 8 out of 10 seats it contested. The Badal Akali Dal has certainly emerged as the real Akali Dal

in the SGPC elections held in October, 1996 in which it had a clean sweep. The Akali Dal (B) occupied unprecedented victory in the Punjab Assembly elections held on February 7, 1997. It secured 75 out of 117 assembly seats it contested. Akali Dal (Badal) ruled in Punjab though there was split in the party in the beginning of 1999 as Tohra group and Badal group. But in 2002 elections it could get only 41 seats.

Nature of Akali Politics

As to the nature of Akali politics we have two main view-points : one viewing it to be a communal party and the other stressing its essential secular character. Some of the writers about state politics have projected its image as a communal party without going into the 'why' and 'what' of its alleged communal character.

Akali communalism is sought to be proved by picking evidence from the constitution of the Party by J.C. Anand, according to whom it is professedly communal. Baldev Raj Nayyar, in his 'Minority Politics in Punjab' has viewed the major demand of the Akalis for a Punjabi Suba as communal. The view of the authors have further percolated in some other writings on the subject, e.g., Myron Weiner's State Politics in India, and Subhas C. Kashyap's 'Politics of Power'. Almost all the text books of Indian Politics and Government characterise Akali politics as communal. This view is based on the fact that the membership of the Akali Party is open to Sikhs only and its main object is the promotion of religious, social, economic and political interests of the Sikh community. During 1930, the Akalis coordinated with the Congress in the freedom struggle for the country. But after outbreak of the Second World War and as a reaction to the aggressive communal politics of Muslim League, the policy of the Akali Party underwent a change. Henceforth, their main concern has been to safeguard and to further the interests of the Sikh community. In a memorandum to the minority sub-committee of the Constituent Assembly the Akali Dal had demanded separate electorate for the Sikhs with weightage of seats in the East Punjab and Central legislatures.

As opposed to this, the Akali leadership and its spokesmen deny the charge of communalism against Akali Dal. They argue that Sikh culture and religion has so far been misunderstood, deliberately or inadvertently by those who should have tried to understand it. A.S. Sarhadi, summarises this view point in these words, "The Khalsa had been created to bring nearer the diverse and divergent cultures of this multi-religious and multi-cultural society in the country." For the purpose, the Sikh traditions and culture and the Sikh way of life must be developed and strengthened in this state. This is not a theocratic and communal approach, nor should it be considered as such by the Hindus or others. The Sikhs have to strengthen themselves not for their own benefit, but for the protection and service of the country as a whole. Sarhadi's view can be taken as an apology as it does not refute argument of communalism.

The Akali Party's election manifesto before the VIth general elections declared that the Dal is committed to a secular democratic and socialistic society, based on

equality of Guru Gobind Singh's conception. The Dal would carry on struggle to secure for the national minorities place of dignity and honour in Indian Polity and drawn them into the national mainstream on equal basis with the majority."²

The Anandpur Sahib Resolution of October, 1973 is today the basic source of the policies of Akali Dal. Its major postulates are :

1. The Akali Dal is the very embodiment of the hopes and aspirations of the Sikh Nation (Quam) and as such is fully entitled to representation.
2. The concept of distinct and independent identity of the Panth should be recognised.
3. The political goal of the Panth—is the pre-eminence of the Khalsa.
4. Expansion of Punjabi Suba to include all left out Punjabi speaking areas.
5. And, the Centre's interference should be restricted to defence, foreign relations and general communication only.

It is true that Akali Dal is a party of the Sikhs but this does not necessarily prove communal in character. According to Webster's Third New International Dictionary, "communalism stands for a system of communal organisation in which rival minority groups are devoted to their own interest rather than to those of the whole society. Again, in excess and with nationally decisive effects." Now, pursuing the sectional causes at cost of society at large has never been the aim of Akali Dal. Rather it aims at the welfare of Sikhs, the Indian and the humanity, at large.' Much of that which appears to be communal in Akali politics is due to the total political situation around. It is its dynamism and its logos. Its early demands for special safeguards for the Sikhs (any other minorities) can be explained in terms of general communal atmosphere generated by the sinister designs of the foreign masters and the attitude of the Congress leadership in properly understanding the urges and aspiration of the Sikhs.

In short, dubbing Akali Dal as a communal party on the basis of its anxiety for the interest of the Sikhs and its demand (now fulfilled) for a separate linguistic state is unfortunate as well as unwarranted, since the majority community is equally to be blamed for narrow communalism which resulted in the wake of Punjabi Suba movements and thereafter.

Another argument of those who consider Akali Dal to be communal party is that the Akalis in the inseparability to the religion and politics B.R. Nayyar writes, "the Akali Dal stands for inextricable mixture of religion and politics in repudiation of the ideal secular state." That inseparability for religion and politics is no doubt one of the basic doctrines is communal on the face of it. But the saving grace in it is that Sikh religion is catholic in its approach. In it every individual is equal to all others. It teaches in so many words that a true Sikh of the Guru is one who is above narrow considerations of caste or creed or community, including their own. It takes

whole of the humanity in its embrace. Welfare of all (Sarbat-ka-Bhala) is its ideal which forms the part of daily Sikh prayer. Sikhs catholicity and on sectarianism is evident from the fact that foundation of Sikh Harmandir Sahib at Amritsar, the holiest of the holy places of the Sikhs, was laid down by a Muslim divine Mian Mir. And that the 9th Sikh Guru had laid down his life, inter alia, for the cause of freedom of faith and worship. The true importance of the doctrine of inseparability of religion and politics, according to this view point, is that politics is not out of bound for the men of God. The Sikh Gurus had asked their followers not to turn their face from the realities of social life. They taught that effective participation in the things social for the higher ideal of human life is very much a part of their religious pursuits.

But if we go beyond the arguments and counter arguments on the issue whether Shriomani Akali Dal is communal or not and make an objective analysis of its performance, aims and objectives, we would find that this party has been adopting a positively communal attitude on various problems. This is also a fact that other political parties on the Indian scene, except the Communist ones, have not been always secular in their political outlook. It is another matter that the Hindu communalists always dub only the Akali Dal as communal without raising an accusing finger at the communalism of other parties and the apologists of the Akali interest try to paint even the blatantly communal character of this party as patently secular. The scholars who try to cover up the communal approach of the Shriomani Akali Dal by alluding to the principle of 'Sarbat Ka Bhalla' on which it is professedly based, conveniently forget the void between theory and practice. The sectarian communal and class character of this party cannot be concealed under platitudinal phrases like 'absence of caste and discrimination of high and low among its members.' All these phrases do not correspond to the facts of reality in Punjab. The popular argument of the biased scholar that the Akali Dal is not the only party to be communal, there are many others too, is also not tenable because by providing others to be communal, the Dal does not become secular. The facts, therefore, should be accepted at their face value and we should accept the truth as it is. At least in the field of academics the scholars should not yield to their sentiments. Objectivity of judgement should be maintained at all costs and at every step of political analysis. We can conclude that Akali Dal is both a regional and communal party. As a communal party it looks upon all problems from a sectional angle. As a regional party it necessarily seeks a large degree of autonomy within the framework of Indian federation.

SUGGESTED BOOKS

- | | | | |
|----|----------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1. | B.R. Nayyar | : | Minority Politics in the Punjab |
| 2. | Myron Weiner | : | State Politics in Punjab |
| 3. | K.C. Gulati | : | The Akalis Past and Present |
| 4. | A.S. Sarhadi | : | The Punjabi Suba |
| 5. | Devinder Singh | : | Akali Politics in Punjab (1964-1985) |

**D.M.K. PARTIES
(POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES)**

The origin of D.M.K. (Dravida Munnetra Kazgam) movement can be traced back to the Brahmanic supremacy in every sphere of activity in the South. In the state of Tamil Nadu most of the top rank positions in the secretariat and also other professional groups such as lawyers, doctors, political leaders, educationists belonged to the Brahmin class and they enjoyed the real power in the State upto the last decade of the 19th century. Therefore, some backward communities in the south founded the 'Justice Party' to demand a just treatment from the Brahmin class. This party led only self-restrained movement but later it transformed itself into the Dravida Kazhagam, an organization preaching hatred against the Brahmins and Aryans. The most popular and the architect of revolt against the Brahmins was E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker who led many movements and gave new interpretations to the Hindu as non-Dravidians Sculptures and branded the Brahmin as the only class to perpetuate their supremacy for so long.

Taking the inspiration from Ramaswamy Naicker the anti-Brahmin class among the Tamilians burnt the copies of Ramayan as being the story of conflict between the north represented by Aryans and the south by Dravidians. The D.K. revolted against the influence of Sanskrit over Tamilians and pleaded for lexical change in all the South Indian languages in order to cut the Sanskrit impact. Stressing the point further the D.K. gave a call for secession of the South from North on the ground that the two represented basically different cultures. Naicker tried to secure the help of Jinnah, the leader of Muslim League, so that Dravidasthan might be formed simultaneously with Pakistan. Jinnah refused assistance and the British ignored the Dravidian agitations. Outraged at the British betrayal of the Dravidian people in turning the bureaucracy to the Brahmin oligarchy, Naicker boycotted the independence day celebrations. He even refused to honour the National flag just as the latter refused to recognise the Indian Constitution, seeing it as a tool of Brahmin tyranny.

The vitality of the D.K. attracted many outstanding young men of whom one of the most talented was C.N. Annadurai (born in Canjeevaram in 1903) who was previously a member of the Justice Party in 1935. He became an ardent supporter of anti Hindu movement and participated in Naicker's 1938 campaign. In the formation of the D.K. in 1944, Annadurai became one of Naicker's chief lieutenants.

Annadurai differed from Naicker's point of view in several respects. He considered national independence as the accomplishment of all India, not merely the Aryan North. Naicker refused to listen, just as he ignored Annadurai's repeated

demand for democratization of leadership within the party. Naicker had no faith in democracy either in the organisations or in his visualized Dravidasthan. In 1948, D.K. Conference, Annadurai led a walk out in a protest against Naicker's political autocracy. Alarmed by the possibility Naicker attempted a compromise by appointing Annadurai as the President of the D.K. but disagreed to bring democratic decentralization in party. Added to this Naicker's popularity suffered a disastrous blow in 1949 when at the age of seventy two he married a twenty eight years old girl who had been an active member of the party. In a statement giving reason for his marriage Naicker said that because he had no confidence in his lieutenants, he was marrying a girl in whom he had full trust and who would lead the party after his death. The members of D.K. became furious of Naicker's point of view and considered that his marriage was contrary to the vowed social objectives of the party which included the elimination of the practice of unequal marriage.

Annadurai along with some important members of the party seceded from the party and termed it Dravida Munetra Kazagham in 1949. The original leaders of the D.M.K. included N.V. Natranjan, Karunanidhi and E.V.K. Sampath, who was the nephew of Naicker. He abandoned a considerable inheritance by leaving D.K.

The Party maintained most of the objectives of D.K. They demanded a loose federation of the Southern States with a greater autonomy for the units. They pleaded that the English should be the official language of the States. Even though they tried to make the D.M.K. as the party of the Southern region yet it could not unite South India with its emotional appeals to unite Dravidasthan. The Andhras could never appreciate Tamil domination and similar is the case of other States. However, the Southern were united on the language. The Tamilians were satisfied by concentration their energies in Tamilnadu as they saw Tamilnadu as an independent entity in itself.

Organisation

In reaction against the loose structure of the D.K. Annadurai sought welding in D.M.K. into effective political organization as set forth in the party constitution. Basic structural unit of the party was the Land Committee in the cities and the village Committee in rural areas. It required a minimum of twenty five members. There were an estimated 31,000 such branches, having grown from only a handful in the year of party's formation. The Taling Committee at the next level, was made up of the respective secretaries in the district in addition to five elected members from each Taling Committee. The District Committee, in turn, elected its own members to General Council. A man may be elected to the Council after three years membership of party. The District Secretary became ex-officio member of the council. The General Council, as the supreme body of the D.M.K. elected a Chairman and a General Secretary of the Party, a Parliamentary Board, A Treasurer, a Party Trust Board, an Appeal Committee and an Audit Committee. The General Secretaries, first secretary incharge of headquarters; second secretary, incharge of organisation, third incharge of party propaganda; fourth, incharge of trade union activities, and fifth incharge of party publications. Basic organisation structure of

the party has remained same even now.

Performance

The D.M.K. as a catalyst for social mobilization, has effectively exploited the identity anxiety of the transitional individual in its movement from a primordiality determined universe of family, caste and village to an urban environment. Through its appeal to basic language and nationality consciousness, the party has gained increasing support as the identity horizon of the Tamil people, has expanded under the impact of the forces of communication and industrialization. The socially and economically frustrated element of the urban population, the lower middle class, lower merchants, the uncommitted peasants and the educated, unemployed, provide a restless mass from which the aspiring D.M.K. draws support. In the urban setting, with rising degree of political literacy as a result of social mobilization the leadership of the party has manipulated the non-rational symbols of the community in such a way as to draw in expanded base of membership and with increasing support at the polls. The D.M.K. has sought to unite the Tamil people in terms of a broad identification base, to make them nationally self-conscious. Using the symbols of common culture with Tamilnadu, harping back to the glories of the Dravidian past, and dwelling upon the social oppression suffered by the non-Brahmins at the hands of the Brahmin, the Baniya and the Arya North the party has attempted to win the masses into a self-conscious community, where before there had been only the most narrowly defined primary associations. Through its broad based and hierarchially structured organisation its series of anti-Hindi agitations and through its propaganda and political campaigns the D.M.K. has sought power through exploitation of the symbolic paraphernalia of language and nationality which is bringing a new awareness of wider association and common interest to the formerly inter masses of Tamilnadu. The mobile youth, evidencing a fairly degree of political literacy, has been a major object of D.M.K's political recruitment. Alienated from the traditional village ties, influenced by new ideas through communications media, and frustrated in economic desires the individual is attracted towards the party, both as an expression of his discontent with society and as psychological substitute for association, thus, functionally replaced the primary affiliation. Leoyd Rudolph suggests that the advance of the D.M.K. among youth may be an expression of generational conflict. The party fills a felt need and the D.M.K. ideology, vague though it may be, reinforces the newly acquired orientation and provides an all encompassing view point. The D.M.K. in exploiting anxiety among the non-Brahmin youth has won widespread support from college students.

Through its organisation conference, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam at its inception, had aimed at building a mass party. Manipulating the symbols of Tamil Nationalism the D.M.K. exploited the anxiety of the urban masses, mobilizing them to political consciousness and action. Soon after the formation of the D.M.K., however, the party was faced with India's first General Election. In the First General Election of 1951-52, the Congress Party in Madras captured 133 of the 190 seats in the Legislative Assembly. Neither the Dravida Kazhagam nor the Dravida Munnetra

Kazhagam contested the elections. The D.M.K. supported independent candidates and two opposition parties the Tamilnadu Toliers Party and the Common Weal Party. While supporting opposition candidates against Congress, the D.M.K. in a resolution passed at its 1951 conference, said that since communists did not support Dravidasthan, the D.M.K. would not support CPI candidates. Annadurai declared the D.M.K. to be generally communist in its ideals, but that the D.M.K. would never ally with the communists until they signed a Pledge to support for Dravidasthan. Naciker's D.K. on the other hand, extended support to the Communist Party. The Communist D.K. alliance was a short-lived matter of mere convenience with the fissures of dissolution evident at its inception. The elections also marked the beginning of a series of separate agitations by the D.K. and D.M.K. against "northern imperialism." The imposition of Hindi was opposed with mass picketing and the burning of Hindi books. The Five Year Plans were denounced for discrimination against the South. The D.K. extended its attack to include such instruments and symbols of "Aryan-oppression" as the Indian constitution, the national flag, sacred Hindu relics and images, and pictures of Gandhi. These demonstrations were often accompanied by violence directed against the Brahmin community and numerous outbreaks brought D.K. members into jail. The D.M.K. demonstrations were more moderate than those of Naciker's storm-troopers. During the abortive campaigns which followed the 1951-52 elections, it became increasingly evident that the Dravida Kazhagam was moving away from its advocacy of a South India Dravidian state to that of purely Tamil speaking State of Tamilnadu. With the move toward State Reorganisation in February, 1956, high level talks between Nehru and the Chief Ministers of the State began on the proposal for the formation of Dakshina Pradesh which, would incorporate the State of Madras, Mysore and Travancore Cochin. For getting his earlier advocacy of a united South India, Naciker fearing the submersion of the Tamils in the Dravida State as the whole, warned that Dakshina Pradesh formation (would be) a life and death matter of Tamilians. It will also be a suicide for you and all. It may provoke unprecedented agitation by Tamilians. "pray, save us and Tamilnadu. The idea of Dakshina Pradesh was abandoned and, in December, 1956 the States were reorganised along linguistic lines. With Ramaswamy Naciker supporting Kamraj's Congress ministry the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam soon became the vanguard of the Dravidian Movement, in the years immediately following the split. The two parties, the D.K. and D.M.K. often demonstrated striking similarity in aim and action. Yet, in spite of unity of purpose, i.e., the creation of Dravidasthan—there emerged major differences. The D.K. abandoned its aim of a Dravidian State in favour of Tamilnadu and pledged its support to a Congress non-Brahmin Chief Minister. The D.M.K. in exploiting the anxiety created under the impact of social mobilization in expanding horizon, appealed to the "Transitional" individual with the promise of a new role orientation. It held out the image of Tamil identity and nationality, of a glorious history and traditions and of an unfulfilled aspiration of Dravidasthan. With the approach of the 1957 General Election, the D.M.K. became increasingly concerned with basic economic issues and the plight of the industrially underdeveloped South.

In the 1956 Trichi Conference, the D.M.K. decided to contest the elections and issued a manifesto embodying a socialist image. The party called for the abolition of northern domination over the South and of the fullest exploitation of natural resources in Madras. Dravidashan, the symbol of Tamil nationalist aspirations, was at the most a side issue for the manifesto implicitly accepted the existing constitutional order.

The Anti-Hindi Movements in State

On September 30, 1967, C.N. Annadurai said that any financial zeal on the part of Hindi enthusiasts to impose Hindi as a link language on the South would have grave consequences. "The people in Tamilnadu State were in a challenging mood and were feeling that they could do with Tamil and English alone and dispense with Hindi altogether. A lasting solution to the language problem, he said, could be found only by amending the Constitution to provide for Hindi and English as official languages. Anything short of that would not fully allay the misgivings of the South, and more particularly of those in Madras State.

Within one year Annadurai, as Chief Minister, became very popular but he died all of a sudden. The next with popular appeal was M. Karunanidhi who became the CM of the State. The DMK Government was very critical about attitude of the Central Government towards the non-Congress Governments in general and Tamilnadu in particular. The Chief Minister of Tamilnadu took advantage of the minority Congress Government of Mrs. Gandhi at the Centre. He tried to pressuring the Centre for more economic concessions when Mrs. Gandhi needed the support of the parties like the DMK in Lok Sabha for her political survival.

In the month of September, 1969 the DMK government appointed Rajamanner Committee to prepare a case for State autonomy. It called upon to examine the question of Centre-State relations in federal set up with a view to suggesting proper amendments to the Constitution to secure the utmost autonomy for the States. The Committee's approach to the issue of Centre-State relations was in accordance with DMK's political line.

The Rajmanner Committee laid down the following principles :

1. To abridge the powers of the Centre, confining them to defence, foreign affairs, communication and currency.
2. To revise the concurrent list in the Seventh Schedule to transfer some of its items to the State list.
3. To have new norms for the devolution of resources from the Centre to the States and for the division of the Central part of taxes among the States both on the basis of population and development tempo.
4. To transfer industrial licensing powers to most of the industries of the State.

The Tamilnadu Government renamed the Madras State as Tamil Nadu. The Chief Minister also agitated for the separate flag for State as if it were

sovereign independent state. Not satisfied with minor concessions he could get from the Centre, the DMK government sponsored a two-day State Autonomy Conference in the month of September, 1970, which was attended by former West Bengal Chief Minister, Ajoy Mukherjee.

Mrs. Gandhi was critical of Chennai Conference because of its emphasis on "autonomy". She felt it as a dangerous trend and expressed her surprise on the press report from Tamilnadu where a comparison was made between what had happened in Bangladesh and what would happen in Tamilnadu.

On the next day itself Chief Minister of Tamilnadu issued a statement that word "autonomy" is firmly set in our hearts. We cannot give it up merely because it has been described as dangerous by Mrs. Gandhi. The DMK was asking the Centre to convene a conference of all states to discuss the issue as PM expressed her inability to understand the autonomy demands. She further said that the DMK wanted much less from the six points of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman and not only Tamilnadu but all States should have autonomy. The DMK Conference at Kachipuram also reviewed its plea for State autonomy. DMK member Alodi Aruna (MLA) observed, if the Centre continued to reject the legitimate demands of State government, it would result in the creation of Mujibur Rehman in every district."

In the 1971 Assembly election, the DMK contested the election for all the seats in alliance with Mrs. Gandhi Congress. The following was the party position in the Tamilnadu Assembly:

TN Assembly Elections 1971

Total Seats	234
D.M.K.	184
Congress (O)	15
Swantantra	6
CPI	8
PSP	4
Forward Block	7
Muslim League	6
Independents	4

On March 15, 1971, a new Council of Ministers headed by Mr. Karunanidhi was sworn in.

Split in DMK

The DMK in Tamilnadu splited on October 18, 1972 into two groups. M.G. Ramchandran on his party as Anna Dravida Munnetra Kuzhagam (ADMK).

Announcing the setting up of the new party at a news conference he said that AIDMK would have the same constitution as DMK, with the difference, that there would not be any President but only a General Secretary. It would have also the same red and black flag of DMK, with the addition of a picture of late Shri Annadurai in the centre. He said the Ann DMK would have more than twenty thousand branch units in Tamilnadu to start with. He wanted cooperation from the opposition parties for pressing the demand for a judicial probe into the assets of DMK functionaries and their relations. He charged the DMK high command with suspending him in order to prevent him from scrutinising the accounts. He charged that there had been an "organised conspiracy" to throw him out of the party from 1971 on "false charges" to undermine his popularity and influence among the people and party. The AIADMK accepted "Annaism" as its basic ideology. Ann's solution to the problems of Tamilnadu contained a synthesis of principles of Tamil nationalism, rationalism, democracy, joint sector, socialism and mass communication. MGR accepted these basic tenets of Annaism into. However, he had a few more convictions of his own like casteless society, eradication of class influence, social order, clean administration and Prohibition to bring Annaism upto date.

All India Ann DMK Manifesto 1973

The Anna DMK manifesto declared on September 29, 1973, that the integrity of the Indian sub continent is important for the party's political policies. ADMK wants decentralization of powers and ensures adequate powers to the States. It supports the thesis that under the existing constitution the States do not really have the power to function for the welfare of the people. The Constitution does not provide enough financial resources to the States to meet their needs. "We shall not stay bound. We shall not demand separation, we shall unite as equals." That is the part of a larger slogan. The AIADMK stands as the vanguard of the opposition to Hindi as a country's sole official language. It stated that "so far as the Indian subcontinent is concerned, the development of the language should not be at the cost of others. The total prohibition should be enforced all over the country. The manifesto revealed that it wanted ceiling on income, nationalization of more banks, more effective implementation of the social goals of the bank nationalization. It wanted the nationalization of all private large factories and heavy industries without exemptions to the large plantation and take over the means of production and distribution of essential commodities. The manifesto also demanded the elimination of black money, eradication of corruption.

The manifesto asked for a constitutional amendment to grant the power to the electorates to recall elected representatives who had lost popular confidence.

The DMK General Council meeting on July 7, 1994 urged the State Government to take immediate steps to reserve 80 percent of the jobs in the State for Tamil.

The DMK Conference of Tamilnadu in unanimous resolution on December 28, 1975, appealed to the Prime Minister to convene a meeting of the leaders of all political parties for "early restoration of normalcy." In another resolution it demanded that General Elections should be conducted for the both Parliament and Tamilnadu Assembly in March, 1976. The election should be held without fail at the scheduled time in the best traditions of the democratic practice. In a reference to the language policies, it reiterated that all regional languages should be given equal status, dignity and scope for growth. The Conference called for uniformity in reduction of prohibition and urged the Centre to compensate the loss suffered by Tamilnadu and Gujarat on account of prohibition. It also demanded powers to State for price fixation, distribution and control of yarn while requesting the Centre to protect the handloom industry by reserving the certain variety of cloth.

The DMK government was sacked by the Central Government on charges of corruption, nepotism, favouritism and the President rule was imposed on January 31, 1976.

The Sixth General Elections

Sixth general elections to the Lok Sabha were held in March, 1977 and there was a stiff contest between the two electoral alliances, namely the Progressive Front which consisted of AIADMK, Congress (R), CPI and others and the Democratic Front consisting of DMK, Janta Party and the CPI (M). The Progressive Front carried the day with 35 wins. The DMK won just one seat and the Janta in 3 constituencies. Probably, it was the weight of AIADMK that was responsible for the clean sweep of the polls. In all it won 18 seats out of a total of 39 seats.

The DMK Manifesto, 1977

1. The DMK party reiterated its demand for state autonomy starting that it could not be called anti-national demand. It also stated that "today not only the powers of the States are curtailed but also civil liberties."

2. The manifesto sought the mandate of the people in DMK to "save democracy" and said the electorates had to choose between democracy and dictatorship.

3. The manifesto said that the issues before the electorates were to choose between democracy of one party rule, independent judiciary and controlled judiciary, principle of equality before the law and destruction of the rule of law, discipline and democracy, and atmosphere of peace with civil laws. It claimed that the DMK was the first party to come out against promulgation of emergency and demanded its withdrawal as well as release of MISA detenus and restriction on the freedom of press.

4. It also alleged political interference by those political party men who supported the Central Government.

Election Results - 1977 Vidhan Sabha Election

Tamilnadu	Total seats	234
Political Parties	seats won	
AIADMK	130	
DMK	43	
Congress	27	
Janata Party	16	
CPI	12	
CPI (M)	5	
Independents	2	

The AIADMK assumed power in Tamilnadu on June 30, 1977. The ministry was headed by the founder of AIADMK and Tamil matnee dot Mr. M.G. Ramachandaran.

In 1980 Lok Sabha elections the DMK Congress (I) alliance almost swept the polls and AIADMK could win only two seats. AIADMK ministry and the TN assembly were dismissed in February, 1980 and fresh elections were held in May-June, 1980. But AIADMK in alliance with Communist parties avenged its defeat in Assembly elections when it secured more than 2/3 seats in Tamilnadu Assembly. MGR government was formed on June 9, 1980. During the elections to TN assembly in 1984, AIADMK contested only 153 seats and won 132.

However, the party suffered a set back due to the death of its leader M.G Ramachandaran in December, 1987. Shortly after his demise the AIADMK split up into two factions, one led by his widow, Mrs. Janki and the other by erstwhile film heroine Jayalailtha. The month of December and January, 1987 witnessed an acute power struggle between these two factions leading to destabilisation of political set up in the State. That is why the 24 day old Janaki Government in Tamilnadu was dismissed and the State was brought under the President's Rule on January 30, 1988. The elections were held on 20th January, 1989, and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam won with an absolute majority. A 17 member DMK ministry headed by M. Karunanidhi was sworn in Madras on January 26, 1988. He staged a comeback after the lapse of 13 years. His government had been dismissed by the Centre in 1976 during the emergency. So he benefitted from the splits in the AI-ADMK after MGR's death. But the government was again dismissed in 1991 by Central Government and the state was brought under President's rule. When elections to assembly were held with General elections in 1991, AIADMK won majority with the coalition of Congress (I). AIADMK swept 163 seats of the 232 seats for which elections were held. In the Lok Sabha elctions (1991) the tally of the AIADMK was 11. The election results of May, 1996 both the Assembly and for Lok Sabha showed that AIADMK in alliance with Congress (I) was very badly disowned by the masses. The Party got crushing defeat at both levels. It was the DMK-TMC combine which

swept the polls. Tamil Mahila Congress under the leadership of G.K. Mooponar was formed when Congress (I) leadership decided to go ahead with its plan to contest election in alliance with AIADMK. K. Karunanidhi of DMK formed the coalition government after the DMK-TMC combine emerged victorious. The AIADMK soon after its defeat had to face internal dissensions and factionalism. But in Lok Sabha elections of 1998 it supported BJP and also its members joined the government at Centre. When elections were held in October, 1999, DMK sided (BJP) NDA alliance AIADMK made alliance with Congress (I). But in 2004 elections DMK sided with Congress and got 16 seats and became the part of UPA to form government at the Centre. In Vidhan Sabha election of 2006 it got 96 seats and formed Govt. In 2009 Lok Sabha elections it was in UPA 18 members were elected in the house and they are played important role in Govt. also but after sometime on the scam of Telecommunication they left UPA. Now in that AIADMK is ruling and DMK is opposition party. In 2014 Lok Sabha Elections DMK could not open account and AIADMK under the leadership of Jai laliyta won 37 seats. In 2016 assembly Elections AIADMK got 134/232 seats and Jai lalita become C.M. on the other hand DMK got only 89 seats. Late on in Dec 2016 Due to uncertain death of Jai lality AIADMK is now suffering from leadership crisis.

DMK and AIADMK are the regional parties in Tamilnadu. These parties stand for more powers and autonomy to the States. These parties appeal to the people of Tamilnadu in the name of Tamil language and Tamil nationalists. Besides Tamilnadu, DMK parties are influential in the union territory of Pondichery also DMK & TMC alliance was in ruling not only in the state but it is colaition parter at Centre level also. When on April 20, 1997, Inder Kumar Gujral was appointed the PM of United front ministry then Tamil Manila Congress of Moopnar decided to remain outside. But later on the PM Inder Kumar Gujral convinced this party and its members joined the Ministry.

BOOKS TO BE CONSULTED

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3. Jyotindra Das Gupta : *Language Conflict and National Development*, University of California, 1970
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SUGGESTED QUESTION

1. Give detailed history of AIADMK when it parted from DMK and reasons for that.

RELIGION IN INDIAN POLITICS

Contents of the Lesson

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Aim of the lesson

The aim of the lesson is to analyse the role played by religion in the politics of the country.

Introduction and Background

Religion is another important factor which has greatly influenced the politics, both at the centre as well as the state level. There was considerable harmony among the members of various religious communities in India during the pre-independence era, despite some occasional confrontations between the Hindus and Muslims. The members of the other religious communities such as Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, Christians etc. lived peacefully and accepted the leadership of the Congress in their struggle against the British colonialism. The Hindus constitute the majority in India and the Muslims constitute the largest minority group. Members of all other religious communities constitute minority groups.

Though the Constitution has declared India to be Secular State, which is completely detached in matters of religion, inspite of that religion has continued to be dominating factor in the Indian politics. The importance of religion in the Indian politics is further evident from the fact that a number of political parties, more particularly regional parties, are organised on religious basis. The Akali Dal of Punjab is mainly a religious party which stands for the preservation and promotion of Sikh religion and Punjabi language in Gurmukhi Script. Similarly, the Muslim League is a Muslim party which aims at securing a respectable place for the Muslims in Indian

politics. The Hindu Mahabsabha, though at present on the vane, was another prominent party based on religion which stood for the revival of the traditional values of Hinduism. Besides the Ram Rajya Parishad, Majils-e-Mushawaret, Jamat-e-Islami, Jamat-ul-Ulemai Hind and Jana Sangha were formed on religious basis. Jana Sanga (Now Bhartiya Janata Party) though it claims to be a nationalist party, is a party of diehard Hindus. During the last few years BJP has tried to win the support of the Muslims to wipe off the impression that it stands for *Hindutava* and *Hindu Rajya*. These parties were responsible for spreading religious fanaticism and fundamentalism. The parties always made fervent appeal to religious sentiments of the people at the time of elections for enhancing their electorate prospects. Even it was noticed that the so-called secular and national political parties also very often indulged in the game of political opportunism of the worst kind and not only gave weightage to religious considerations at the time of selecting party candidates and formulating political strategies and slogans but also at the time of formation of the government.

Constitutional Provisions

The Constitution guarantees full freedom of religion to its citizens. The people of India are free to profess, practise and propagate any religion subject to the limitations which may be desirable in the interest of public order, morality and health. The people of India have full freedom to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes; to manage its own affairs for religious and charitable purposes; to own and acquire movable and immovable property; and to administer such property in accordance with law. No person under the Constitutional purposes can be forced to pay any taxes, the proceeds of which are specifically appropriated in payment of expenses for the promotion or maintenance of any particular religious denomination. It is further provided that no religious instructions shall be provided in any educational institution wholly maintained out of State funds or receiving aid out of State funds, without the consent of the guardian. All these provisions have been incorporated in the Constitution to maintain the tradition of religious tolerance and bring about a sense of unity amongst the people of India. It is clearly envisaged in these provisions that religion is not to be used as a weapon to divide the people and thereby retard the attainment of the object of national unity and integrity. The electoral laws have specifically prohibited the use of religion as a propaganda media for capturing votes during the elections.

What is Religion ?

Religion has not been defined in the Constitution. Religion is not susceptible to a precise definition. It is a matter of faith and belief and comprises of various rituals and observances which are considered as an integral part of that religion by those who follow it. Some religions which do not have faith in the existence of God. Jains and Buddhists are not theistic but atheist.

Religion is not identical to *Dharma*. Very often the words 'religion' and 'dharma' are used to signify one and the same concept or notion; to put it differently, they are used interchangeably. This, however, is not so, the word 'religion' as used in Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution can not be confined, crabbed, to what is generally thought to be religion.....The English language having had no parralel word to *Dharma*, the word religion was used in these two Articles. The signs and symptoms of *Dharma* are that it has no room for narrow mindedness, sectarianism, blind faith and dogma.....A sectarian religion is open to a limited group of people whereas dharma embraces all and excludes none. Thus, the core of our dharma, our pshcye, observed Justice Hansaria.

Secularism

The Preamble of the Constitution from its inception proclaimed that its purpose is to secure to all its citizens Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship. Articles 25 to 28 guaranteed equality in the matters of faith and religion. The 42nd amendment tried to make it more explicit by adding the word 'Secular'. In the Preamble, it has not changed the Constitutional position and was perhaps the result of political expediency. Secularism means that the State shall observe an attitude of neutrality and impartiality towards all religions.

In India, the ethos is Hindu. The Hindus constitute the majority. Respect of all manners of thought, belief and worship is ingrained. Even without the Constitutional guarantees the minority religions would have enjoyed full freedom. Secularism does not require the state to be hostile to religion. If a person is devout Hindu he does not cease to be secular. Secular has many shades of meanings. In the Constitution it is used in two different senses. In the Preamble, it denotes that the state does not accept any religion as the basis of state action. The state treats all religions with strict neutrality. The second meaning of the word secular is *worldly* or *mundane*. Article 25(2) uses the word in this sense. There it means those activities which are not essentially religious functions but are of a worldly institution. The word secular used in the Preamble cannot override the clear provisions of Articles 25 to 30 or Article 351. While Articles 25 and 26 grant religious freedom to minority religions like Islam, Christianity, Sikhism etc., they do not intend to deny the same guarantee to the Hindus.

However, despite these measures the desired effect has not been produced. Communal riots have become more frequent, violent and highly organised. The expectations of the framers of the Constitution that the secular policy will wean away the people from religious fundamentalism and that in their relations with each other the various social groups will have less and less regard for religion and religious practices has been belied due to factors of political manipulation for achieving partisan ends.

Demand for Creation of States on Religious Basis

There have been demands for the creation of States on religious basis, though ostensibly the demand is represented in some other form. The demand of the Akali Dal in Punjab for the creation of Punjabi Suba, though outwardly based on language, was by and large, based on religion. Ultimately, the bifurcation of the State of Punjab into Punjab and Haryana was largely done on the basis of religion. Similarly, the Christians of Nagaland under the patronage of Christian missionaries demanded a separate state consisting of the areas with Christian majority and they made many sacrifices for this purpose. They have been active in North-Eastern States, Kerala and Goa.

Communal Tension

The impact of the religion on the politics of the country is further evident from the communal tension which has been generated in different parts of the country from time to time. The communal animosity between the Hindus and Muslims was largely the creation of the British rulers, who could foresee a great threat to their authority in the unity among the members of these two communities. They thus deliberately adopted the policy of 'divide and rule' and promoted hostility and confrontation among the Hindus and the Muslims for achieving their own selfish ends. They sowed the seeds of communalism by providing separate electorate for the Muslims and other minority communities. It is pertinent to note that while the majority of the Sikhs were supporting the freedom movement under the leadership of the Congress, the Sikhs were supporting the freedom movement under the leadership of the Congress, Master Tara Singh and his followers had started a separatist movement for the creation of *Khalistan* for Sikhs.

The Britishers were solely responsible for promoting and encouraging communalism in India, as a result of Hindu-Muslim riots frequently broke out in different parts of the country which led to unprecedented violence and destruction both of life and property. This ultimately led to the partition of the country into India and Pakistan.

Though this friction between the Hindus and the Muslims is a remnant of the British period, but it is hard to deny that it has persisted even after the adoption of secularism in India.

Hindu-Muslim communal riots have become a common affair and there may be a riot just for anything or nothing. In many instances there is no rhyme or reason for the occurrence of riots. The immediate cause may be stoning of a Ganesh procession from a mosque, desecration of the idols of the Hindu deities, butchering of some calves on the eve of Bakr-Id, firing of a shot from the mosque, attack on a Durga Puja procession or on occasion of marriage of a Muslim boy with Hindu girl or vice-versa do not explain away the real cause behind the riots.

During the initial years after attaining Independence, there was a

comparatively lull between the two communities and this lull was broken in 1961 when a clash between the Hindu and Muslim students took place at Aligarh Muslim University. Soon it had its repercussions in other towns of U.P., Bihar, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh which resulted in great loss to life and property.

In 1963, the state of Jammu and Kashmir witnessed a spectacle of religious frenzy, following theft of a relic of Prophet Mohammad (the sacred hair) from Hazratbal Mosque in Srinagar. In the wake of this theft the Muslims of Kashmir organised strikes, processions, protest demonstrations and also indulged in acts of violence. Even after the Government found out the relic, the fanatic Muslim leaders continued to incite the people on the plea that the relic was not genuine. This had repercussions not only in other parts of the country but also in Pakistan, where a large number of Hindus were killed. The impact was particularly strong in the States of West Bengal, Orissa, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. As a result of these disturbances, arson and violence followed and resulted in much loss of men and money.

Jammu and Kashmir State was again a scene of trouble in 1967 when a Brahmin girl was converted to Islam and married to a Muslim as well as over the sacrilege of Holy Koran.

In 1966, Maharashtra witnessed another riot between the Hindus and Muslims at Washim, when certain Muslims started stoning of a Hindu procession and the police had to resort to firing to bring the situation under control. This also resulted in the burning and looting of property as well as loss of life.

During the year 1968, communal frenzy again disturbed the peace in the State of Uttar Pradesh, Assam and West Bengal. In U.P. the trouble started in Meerut and Allahabad, while in Assam the trouble erupted at Karimganj following the killing of a cow. The states of Kerala and Mysore (Karnataka) which had witnessed an amity between the Hindus and the Muslims so far were also involved in riots.

But the worst riots broke out in Ahmedabad in 1969 which are said to have taken a toll 600, and 1200 people were wounded. This time the trouble started because certain Muslims chased away certain cows belonging to a Hindu Temple.

In 1970 riots took place at Bhiwandi near Bombay, in which thousands of houses were destroyed and about 80 persons were killed. The trouble started due to the stoning of a Hindu procession by certain Muslims.

Riots took place in Meerut in 1973, which took a toll of 45 lives. Riots took place in Delhi when a quarrel between a Hindu and a Muslim developed into a mob fight in the streets and resulted in the burning of about 100 shops.

But probably the worst riots since independence took place in the capital of India in 1984 after the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India when hundreds of Sikhs were put to death in Delhi and other parts of the country.

The Babri Masjid in Ayodhya; built in 1528 A.D. was razed to the ground on December 6, 1992. The destruction of the historical monument by the *Kar Sevaks* is the culmination of a planned campaign executed by the *Hindutava* forces over the past nine years. In the aftermath of the Ayodhya carnage, over one lac *Kar Sevaks* stayed back to construct the Ram Temple at the demolished site under the supervision of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. In the wake of the demolition of the Babri Masjid and the Hindu-Muslim riots that broke out in many parts of the country, the Government of India declared as unlawful the RSS, the Jamait-e-Islami, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Islamic Sewak Sangh, and the Bajrang Dal.

In January, 1993, Bombay, the most cosmopolitan, commercial, financial, industrial capital of India was in the news for the wanton killings, arson and looting perpetuated with impunity for well over 10 days. The mayhem accounted for more than 350 deaths, all in the name of injured religious sentiments. This was followed by a series of bomb blasts on March 12, 1993 killing 300 persons and injuring about 1500 persons. Property worth several hundred crores of rupees has been damaged. The same gang of smugglers and slumlords who had played havoc in the post-Ayodhya riots in Bombay blasted Calcutta on 16 March, 1993 leaving a gory trail of 60 deaths and destruction.

In the year 2002, riots took place in Gujarat, after setting on fire a Railway Coach at Godhara, in which incident 60 *Karsewaks* were burnt alive. This incident is known as *Godhara Incident*. Similarly, on March 1, 2002 in the Best Bakery case 14 people were killed at Vadodra.

In the 1980's, religious intolerance in Punjab increased to the extent that even minor variations in religious practices were treated as an unforgivable sin and sometimes they evoked violent reactions as well. The gradual decline of the Sehjdhari Sikhs and the violent opposition to the Nirankaris are cases in point. The seriousness of the situation is evident from the religious sacrilege committed by communalist Hindus and Sikhs and professional hired criminals and the environment of violence and terror generated by killings and assassinations.

Similar is the case in Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of the country where religion is being used for spread of communalism and to counter communalism.

Reasons of the Religious Intolerance

There are deep rooted reasons than those noticed by a casual observer, whatever may be the immediate provocation on religious grounds. Some of the important factors are stated below :

1. Muslims keep themselves aloof from the majority community and there is an attempt to assert their separate religious identity. This has led to tensions between the two communities. The Muslims keep themselves away from the secular-nationalistic politics.

2. Political leaders of the various parties have exploited the sentiments of the people in favour of the prospects of a party candidate. Such leaders act against secularism.
3. Hindu Chauvinism which came as a reaction against religious orthodoxy, separatism and fundamentalism was another important factor for the development of Hindu-Muslim confrontation. Organisations like VHP gave further emphasis on Hindu beliefs, values and the way of life. They argued that India was predominantly a Hindu land and it must be declared as '*Hindi Rashtra*'. They talk of the Indianisation of the non-Hindus. This was bound to create a fear psyche in the minds of the Muslims. The animosity between the two communities was thus first aggravated.
4. Communal organisations like the Muslim League, Majlis-e-Mashawarat, Jamat Majlis and Jammat-e-Tablighi propagated obscure and medieval glories of Islam, the importance of religion in day-to-day life of the individual, the importance of Muslim personal laws and the fundamental difference between the culture and religion of the Hindus and Muslims. These ideas were anti-secular and instead of integrating the Muslim with the Indian society, emphasised their separate identity and exclusiveness. The reaction to the judgement on the Shah Bano case and the enactment of the protection of Muslim Women's Right on Divorce Bill by the Indian Parliament are indications of the growth of Muslim fundamentalism in India.
5. The economic backwardness and poverty of the Muslims caused frustration and demoralisation and in order to show their wrath they indulged in violence and lawless activities against the Hindus who appear to be well placed in the society.
6. The role of Pakistan and some other Muslim countries in fomenting communal riots in India and spearheading hatred between the Hindus and Muslims can not be minimised.
7. The political parties do not follow any norm or ethics and in order to come to power they make unholy alliances with anti-national and communal parties.
8. The communal parties and organisations are gaining legitimacy and small and trivial issues are given communal colouring in order to win the support of the religious community at the time of election. The government both at the centre and the States have failed to check this menace.

Some Suggestions

- The following measures are suggested to check exploitation of religion :
1. Religious minorities must be given due representation in public services.
 2. People of all religions should be ensured due share in military and para-military forces.

3. Majority community must make all efforts to remove the sense of insecurity among the minorities.
4. Genuine grievances of religious minorities should be redressed to their full satisfaction.
5. Politics and religion must be strictly separated. The media should be used to propagate secular ideas—not merely in short propaganda films, songs and speeches, but through the view-point of entire programmes presented. In this context, a massive effort to promote a scientific temper is called for.
6. Political parties based on religion should be legally banned and no leniency should be shown towards parties with communal leanings.
7. The entire educational system should be streamlined so as to ensure the development of secular outlook and religious tolerance amongst the students who are the future citizens of India.
8. Rational efforts must be made to curb rituals and processions over which communal tensions generally take place. Similarly, the use of loudspeakers at religious places should be effectively supervised.
9. Innocent victims of communal riots be given adequate and timely compensation.
10. Communal riots should be sternly handled and deterrent punishment should be given to the rioters as well as to those government functionaries found guilty of negligence of duty.
11. Political parties must eschew their connections with anti-social elements who exploit tense situations, by arousing religious feelings. There should be no political protection for such forces from the action of law-enforcing agencies.
12. Fanatic organisations such as Dal Khalsa, Hindu Suraksha Samiti, Bajrang Dal etc. be banned altogether.
13. Communalisation of politics must not be allowed at any cost.

Conclusion

It is thus evident from the above discussion that religion has continued to be a dominant factor in determining the actions of the various sections of the society. Despite the best efforts on the part of the government to forge unity amongst members of various religions, they have occasionally been divided by religion. Therefore, it can logically be concluded that religion has continued to dominate the political scene in the various states even after independence.

Self-Check Exercise***Say True or False***

1. The Constitution of India has declared India to be a Secular State.

2. Bharatiya Janata Party was previously known as Jana Sangh.
3. Hindu Mahasabha was not based on religion.
4. Best Bakery case is still pending in the Law Court.
5. After the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, riots took place in 1984.
6. Babri Masjid was razed to the ground on December 6, 1997.

Answers : True: 1, 2, 4

False : 3, 5, 6

Fill in the blanks :

1. The Constitution guarantees full freedom of.....to its citizens.
2. Religion is a matter of.....and.....
3. The.....in India constitute the majority.
4. The demand of.....in Punjab for the creation of.....though outwardly based on.....was in fact based on.....
5. The Communal animosity between the Hindus and.....was largely the creation of the.....
6. Gujarat riots of 2002 are popularly known as.....
7. In 1963, riots took place in.....following the theft of a.....belonging to.....
8. Babri Masjid was razed to the ground by Kar Sewaks in.....

Answers : (1) Religion (2) Faith, Belief (3) Hindus (4) Akali Dal, Punjabi Suba, Language, Religion (5) Muslims, British rulers (6) Godhara Incident (7) Kashmir, relic, Prophet Mohammed (8) December 6, 1992.

Questions

1. To what extent religion has affected the Indian politics ? Explain.
2. "India is a Secular State, but religion has continued to dominate the politics in India", give your views.

Short-answer type questions

1. What is religion ?
2. How does religion differ from *dharma* ?
3. Define Secularism.
4. Give two impacts of religion on the Indian polity.
5. Name the political parties those are organised on the basis of religion.
6. How religion is responsible for creating communal tensions ?

ROLE OF CASTE IN INDIAN POLITICS

Introduction

The predominant feature of the social structure in India is the caste system. The caste system in its most general but fundamental aspects is an ascriptive system of status and hierarchy. It is pervasive and all embracing and is known for controlling and defining all social, economic and political relationships for the individual. M.N. Srinivas opines: "Caste is so tacitly and so completely accepted by all, including those most vocal in condemning it, that it is everywhere the unit of social action."

The point which needs to be emphasised here is that for purposes of sociological analysis a distinction has to be made between caste at the political level and caste at the social and ritual level. The latter is a much smaller unit than the former. The policy of the British government providing a certain amount of power to local self-governing bodies and concessions to backward castes provided new opportunities. In order to be able to take advantages of these opportunities caste groups entered into alliances with each other to form bigger entities. Gradually, the characteristics of and occupation of castes are weakening in cities and towns. Even the villages are experiencing a certain amount of change. This process has, however, been accompanied by the greater activity of caste in administration and politics. Adult franchise and Panchayati Raj have provided new opportunities for castes. In the course of exploitation of new opportunities, the caste system has undergone a certain degree of change. Numerically large castes have become important pressure groups in politics at the district and state levels. The politics of Rajasthan will not make sense if we do not take into account the rivalry between Jats and Rajputs. Similarly in Karnataka there is rivalry between Okkaligas and Lingayats; in Andhra Pradesh, the chief competing castes are Reddis and Kammas; in Kerala, there is a triangular struggle between Nayars, Izhavas and Syrian Christians; in Maharashtra, Maratha, Brahmin and Mahar; in Gujarat Banias, Patidars and Kolis; and in Bihar between Bhumihar, Kayastha and Rajput.

CASTE IN INDIA - HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

According to Hindu tradition the caste system owes its origin to the four *Varnas*, derived from the Brahmin, who sprang from the mouth of the deity; the Kshatriya who was created from his arms; the Vaishya, who was formed from his stomach; and the Sudra who was born from his feet. The Brahmins were declared to be the chief because of their creation from the mouth. The Kshatriyas were deemed vigorous because they were created from vigour. The Vaishyas were meant to be businessmen because of their creation from the stomach, the receptacle of food. The Sudra, because of their creation from the feet, were deemed to be the transporter of others. In this particular account of the creation, not only is the origin of the

classes interpreted theologically, but also a divine justification is sought to be given to their functions and status. From mixed unions between Varnas, come the various castes of which 2,378 were actually counted at the Indian Census of 1901.

The institution of caste has been one of exclusive characteristics of the Indian society since early ages. In spite of great changes in the history of India, caste has continued to be an important feature of Indian social life.

CASTE IN MODERN PERSPECTIVE

It is recognised that the traditional social system in India is organised around caste structures and caste entities. Hence, it is particularly interesting to study its implications on politics. Politics is a competitive enterprise, its purpose is the acquisition of power for the realisation of certain goods and its process is one of identifying and manipulating existing and emerging allegiances in order to mobilise and consolidate positions. For that what is needed is organisation and articulation of support, and where politics is mass based, the point is to articulate support through the organisations in which the masses are to be found. It follows that where the caste structure provides one of the principal organisational clusters along which the bulk of the population is found to live, politics must strive to organise through such a structure.

Caste as a fundamental aspect of the social structure of India and the economic foundation upon which it is based, is a major parametric variable of the Indian political system. In the opinion of many thinkers, castes are assuming new functions like influencing politics and their role in political dynamics is gradually increasing. It is almost playing the role of an effective interest or pressure group at various levels of the decision-making apparatus.

Parliamentary democracy and the system of political parties competing for the support of the electorate developed in a society where the individual was not born into a tightly organised group which demands his loyalty and affords him support in his dealing with the rest of the community. In India, on the other hand, such groups-the castes and sub-castes-dominate social life, and inevitably influence their members attitude to other groupings of a social or political character. In other words, the very fact that a caste is capable of functioning as an effective pressure group, and that its members cannot leave it and join another group as will, places it into a position of a political power, which cannot be ignored by the political parties depending for their mandate on the goodwill of the voters.

The relationship between caste and politics reveals the politicised nature of caste in the context of Indian politics :

1. Caste provides an extensive basis for organisation of democratic politics. The need to organise and articulate support in an open polity inevitably turns those engaged in political competition towards organisations and solidarity groups in which the masses are found. In a society such as India where caste remains the principal basis of social organisation and activity, this means turning towards caste groups and associations. In this way caste identity and solidarities became the primary channels through which electoral and political support is mobilised within the political system. Thus, as Kothari puts it, "it is not politics that gets caste ridden, it is caste that gets politicised."

2. Caste is used more extensively in mobilising support in rural than urban areas.
3. Political parties find it easier to mobilise support directly from the members of a caste community by appealing to them.
4. The present political system itself encourages or inhibits the use of caste as a means of breeding followers.
5. It has been recently argued that caste enables the illiterate and politically ignorant masses of India to participate in the modern democratic process.
6. The communication of ideas is strong within a caste and generally the members of a caste share the same views in relation to political parties, politics and individuals.

Political Dimensions of Caste : Rajni Kothari's Approach

Everyone recognises that the social system in India is organised around the structures and caste identities. In dealing with the relationship between the and politics however, the tendency is to ask the question: Is caste disappearing? In reality, however, no social system disappears. A more useful question would be : What form is caste taking under the impact of politics, and what form is politics taking in a caste oriented society? Those who 'complain of casteism in politics' in India are really looking for a sort of politics which has no basis in society. They also probably lack any clear conception of either the nature of politics or the nature of the caste system. The process of politics in one of identifying and manipulating existing structures in order to mobilise support and consolidate positions. Where the caste structure provides one of the most important organisational clusters in which the population is found to live, politics must strive to organise through such a structure. The allegeteism in politics is thus no more and no less than politicization of caste. By wing the caste system into its web organisation, politics finds material for articulation and moulds it into its own design. In making politics their sphere activity, caste and kin group, on the other hand, get a chance to assert their entity and to strive for positions. Politicians mobilise caste groupings and entities in order to organise their power.

In the context of interactions between caste and politics, Rajni Kothari has pointed out that three aspects of the caste system call for special attention:

The first is what may be called the secular dimensions. In emphasizing caste as a stratification system in which distances are rigidly maintained through endogamy, pollution and the legitimacy of rituals, caste as a system of conflict and interaction has received sparse attention. Yet, the fact is that functionalism and caste cleavages, patterns of alignment and realignment among the various strata, and a continuous striving for social mobility have always been prominent features of the caste system.

Second, there is the integration dimension. The caste system not only determines the individual's socialisation on the basis of the group to which he is born but also differentiates and assigns occupational and economic roles. It, thus, gives a place to every individual from the highest to the lowest and makes for a high degree of identification and integration. At the same time, it is an integration structure of a specific type, namely, one that is more intense in its small group orientation and particularistic loyalties and where wider loyalties operate only when they are structured through the prevailing differentiations. This aspect is important in

understanding the structural impact of democratic nation-building. For the competitive style of democratic politics involves group action and cohesion; democratic politics is as much a process of fusion as of fission.

Third, there is the dimension of consciousness. Caste enters politics through the 'Consciousness aspect' highlighted by its symbolism and value structure. This is where symbolic gestures for cultural mobility such as 'Sanskritisation', 'Westernisation' and 'Secularisation' assume or disguise political overtones in their manifestation. According to Rajni Kothari, "It is not politics that gets caste-ridden; it is caste that gets politicized." The operation of competitive politics has drawn caste out of its a political context and given it a new status and identity.

CASTE, ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL PARTIES

India, being a democratic state, the administrative machinery is operated by representatives elected by the people. The method of election has done much to encourage the caste system because the candidates want to achieve their ends by propagating casteism among the voters. In practice, people are asked to vote for their Caste candidate and thus, casteism is maintained by the elected leaders after the elections are over. Political parties also choose such candidates for election from the caste having significant voice in the constituency. In this way, the Indian political system, though 'modern' and 'democratic' in form, is not so in its working and content.

The political behaviour of the people of the members of different political parties and of the members of the Government is caste-oriented or is influenced by the caste considerations. Their attitudes are caste-based and their values are the values of the caste society. While admitting that caste influences 'political parties, the members of the government and the administration, it can be argued that politics also influences caste. When we say that caste affects political behaviours, we usually refer to the following types of behaviour:

- (i) People of a caste vote *en bloc* for a candidate of the same or different caste, either in pursuance of the decision of the caste panchayat or of a meeting of caste members or even without a formal decision.
- (ii) Even when they do not vote *en bloc*, they prefer a candidate of their own caste to other candidates irrespective of the merits or demerits of the candidates.
- (iii) The selection of the candidates for a constituency is based on whether he will be able to get the support of a particular caste or castes.
- (iv) In recommending candidates, the caste of those recommending plays an important role.
- (v) When a single caste is not likely to be effective, alliances are formed on caste basis by the candidates or by the voters.
- (vi) The office bearers of a party are appointed on the basis of caste to please, or not to displease a caste group in the party and in the constituency.
- (vii) If the caste candidate happens to belong to the caste in majority having large voters, it is presumed that he will be selected, because of his association with such a caste. If he is elected, he is presumed to have

been supported by the caste in majority. If he is not elected it is presumed that the caste did not support him, or the voters of all other castes united to defeat him.

In Kerala, it is known that in most districts of Malabar, only a Muslim or one supported by Muslims, has chances of winning an election because they are numerically strong and are living in tight clusters in those districts. It is also well known what role the Muslim League with its tight hold on its community has played in the twists and turns of Kerala politics. The Latin Catholics are supporters of the Marxists and even the CPI(M) have to be careful about putting up only Latin Catholic candidates. The Ezhava community is behind the CPI(M) and the Nairs with the Congress.

In Madhya Pradesh casteism has always been the bane of politics. Candidates for the Assembly are more intimately connected with caste groups and sub-groups than those standing for the Lok Sabha. Even in selecting their nominees for the Lok Sabha almost all parties in the state take into account the caste pattern of the constituency.

In Punjab, the caste-community role is found on a different pattern. Among the Hindus, the general attitude is that if a Hindu knows that a BJP candidate can win the election, he will prefer him but if he has the slightest doubt about his success he would vote for a Congress candidate whether a Hindu or Sikh. In this kind of political behaviour the principal motivation is to keep the Akalis in check. Similarly, Sikhs will prefer an Akali candidate but if he finds that he will not win, he would vote for a non-Akali Sikh, if need be even a Communist the principal ideas again being to reduce Hindu influence.

Caste forms the basis of election strategy and politics in Bihar as well. The selection of candidates and their election in Haryana is influenced by the Jats and the Ahirs, in Rajasthan by Rajputs and Jats, in Karnataka by the Vokkaliga and the Lingayat. In Tamil Nadu it is almost axiomatic that only a Naidu candidate can be expected to win from a predominantly Naidu area, a Mudaliar from a Mudaliar area, a Vanniar from a Vanniar area.

Caste is a determining factor at all the levels of governmental structure in India—Centre, state and local. Caste considerations play a decisive role in the formation of the Central Cabinet. It has been a convention to include at least one or two ministers from communities like Harijans (Scheduled Caste), Tribals (Scheduled Tribe), Sikhs, Muslims, Kayasthas, Brahmins, Rajputs, Jats, Reddis and so on. These ministers have direct links and contracts with their caste associations. Some of them are even supported and proposed for party tickets and for ministership by their respective caste associations. Currently caste politics happens to be most pronounced in U.P. and Bihar and selection of Mulayam Singh Yadav and Lallu Prasad Yadav as Chief Minister in respective states denotes the importance of their solid caste base. *India Today* writes : “The 1990 verdict has, however signalled the coming to power of intermediary castes and a post-1947 born leadership. For the first time two Yadav Chief Ministers rule almost one-fourth of the nation’s population in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. While at the centre, there are three ministers who belong to yet another intermediary caste—the Jats.”

ROLE OF CASTE IN STATE POLITICS

State politics in India has been particularly the hot bed of political casteism. Andre Beteille very candidly observes : "Caste enters much more directly into the composition of political elites at the state level.....Thus, the Mysore cabinet is dominated by Lingayats and Okkaligas, the Maharashtra cabinet by Marathas and some have referred to the Madras cabinet as a federation of dominant castes." Michael Brecher remarks : "Caste plays a major role in state and local politics but it is marginal at the all-India level. Tinker observes: ".....State politics will be caste politics throughout most of India for many years to come."

Bihar

Politics in Bihar has been mostly organised on the basis of caste. All those parties which happen to have a multi-caste membership have powerful functions. This was true of the undivided Congress as much as it is true of Congress (I), the Bhartiya Janata Party, and other major parties. The caste orientation of parties and groups does not mean that they are motivated only by caste interests of their members or that persons from other castes are completely barred entry or that the parties or groups actually serve any special or general interests of the caste. These are not service organisations for their castes but power machines which use caste labels for building loyalty around some personalities. In other words, the caste gets politicised and becomes a means in the elite politics of securing or retaining power.

The single case of Bihar is adequate to prove the thesis that caste considerations are vital in political matters. Almost all the top leaders of Bihar Congress Party have been connected with their respective caste associations. Rajendra Prasad, who held office as President of India, was for three decades connected with the All-India Kayastha Conference and had presided over its Jaunpur Session in 1925. A N. Sinha, another prominent leader, was connected with the All-India Kashtriya Mahasabha. S.K Sinha's association with the Bhumihaar Brahmin Mahasabha, and his use of it to put political pressures, are also well known.

Bihar, in fact, represents the scene of a clash among four castes, *viz.*, Rajputs, Brahmins, Kayasthas and Adivasis. The Adivasis or the backward tribal people of Bihar-Orissa border organised themselves into Jharkhand Party which in the elections of 1957 had been able to capture most of the seats reserved for tribal and backward sections of the society and with its increased strength intensified the demand for a separate tribal state (Jharkhand) comprising all tribal areas of Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. It afforded a potential challenge to the Congress Party. In order to face this situation, the Congress High Command deputed a Christian lady, Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, to go to the tribal areas in order to wean away many tribesmen (particularly those converted into Christianity) from the influence of this new organisation. The Congress succeeded in depleting the ranks of this party which in a truncated form is now known as the Hul-Jharkhand.

The influence wielded by the Raja of Ramgarh-a Rajput by caste-over his area and in Bihar politics as a whole despite all his acts of corruption, "misappropriation, etc., has been most extraordinary. The Raja and his family interests for a decade have been the cancer of Bihar politics. In the post-1967 period, his group acquired a balancing position in as much as its support or denial thereof could make or unmake many of the coalition governments.

Cases of Kayasthas (Sinha) struggling for power against the Brahmins (Jha)

have also come to light particularly at the time of Ministry-making or selecting the leader of the legislature party.

In Bihar, instead of trying to attend to the pressing problems of the people, the Janata Chief Minister, Karpoori Thakur, chose in early 1978 to introduce a controversial measure for reservation of government jobs for the backward castes. It was a highly emotive issue at a time of widespread unemployment among the educated youth. There were demonstrations and counter-demonstrations and caste riots on a mass scale. The real reason behind the reservation issue was precisely a desire to create riots and caste conflicts so that there should be a polarisation between the so-called backward and forward castes. In this way, Karpoori Thakur thought he could become the leader of the backward castes and could find a solid base of support among them. Thus, the caste riots were viewed with profound satisfaction in circles close to Thakur. They hoped that the deeper the caste cleavage, the more permanent will be their influence among certain castes.

Kerala

In Kerala also caste considerations have played an important role in state politics. As Selig Harrison remarked:

The success of the Kerala Communist Party as the first regional communist party in India to capture control of a state government can be explained, above all, to its ability to manipulate politically strategic caste lobbies within linguistic boundaries.....as in Andhra. The Kerala Communists were able to transform economic despair into a legislative majority because their footing on regional caste grounds, notably among the numerous Ezhavas provided the necessary; margin of block strength in the necessary number of constituencies.

According to the 1971 Census, the Hindus number 59.4 per cent and the two minorities, the Muslims and the Christians, account for 19.5 and 21.1 per cent respectively. It is generally held that four major groups are contending for a dominant place in the political life of the state: Nairs, Ezhavas, Christians and Muslims. Numerically Ezhavas lead with 26.4 per cent, followed by Christians with 21.17 per cent, Muslims with 19.5 per cent and Nairs with 12.5 per cent.

The Hindus account for 59.4 per cent of Kerala's population and caste ranking places the Namboodiri Brahmins at the peak of the Hindu hierarchy. Numbering less than 5 per cent of the population, the Namboodiris remain primarily a land-owning community. But despite the number of political leaders from this caste, such as the Left Communist E.M.S. Namboodiripad the Communists have had little political power. A far more potent political force is the Nair community-the traditional warrior of Kerala. As a land-owning and mercantile community today, the Nairs, numbering 17 per cent of the population, are a pivotal force in Kerala politics. They have traditionally held the balance, making or breaking a government by shifting sides. Economically subservient to the Nairs are the Ezhava or Tiyyar as they are called in Malabar. With 25 per cent of the population, however, the economically depressed Ezhava are perhaps the single most powerful community in Kerala. In addition to the mutually antagonistic Nairs and Ezhavas, the Christian community ranks as a major political power in Kerala. The Christians account for 19.5 per cent of the population, divided among the Syrians, the Protestants and the Roman

Catholics. It is the Catholic community that numerically dominates and holds the locus of political power, largely through the organisation of the Church. The Muslims, with 18 per cent of the population and represented by the Muslim League, are a major factor politically, particularly in the Malabar region of northern Kerala where Muslims are the dominant community.

Just as the Muslims are concentrated in certain areas of Malabar, each of the other communities dominate a particular region of Kerala. The Christians are concentrated primarily in Ernakulam and Kottayam districts. The Nairs form the dominant community in the area of Trivandrum district, and the Ezhavas are particularly strong in Palghat. Each political party in Kerala must, therefore, seriously consider the dominant community, or as the communists prefer to call it 'the social base' in the selection of its candidates. That each party tends to choose its candidates from the dominant community, however, does not cancel out community as a factor. Although, there are elements of each community in all parties (except for the Muslim League), the parties in Kerala have come to be associated with particular communities, and within each party, factionalism expresses the divisions of religion and caste. Indeed, the politics of caste form a fundamental reality of political life in Kerala.

The Nairs and even the Namboodiri Brahmins, soon followed in the creation of caste associations; the first of these being the Nair service society, followed by the Uthana Kerala Nayar Samajam in Malabar and Namboodiri's Yogakshema Sabha. Caste quickly became politicised when political parties began to form. In Malabar, the lower castes (like the Ezhavas) opposed the Congress as being Nair dominated. After Independence, the Congress became increasingly a party of Christian domination, just as the Praja Socialist Party was regarded as a virtual Nair preserve. The Muslim League commands allegiance from most Muslims in Kerala, and the Communist party has drawn its strength primarily from the Ezhava and untouchable communities. The district in which the Communists have maintained their strongest hold, winning more than 40 per cent of the vote in each election since 1957, is Palghat, the only district in Kerala with an Ezhava majority.

In Kerala, the elaboration of caste ranking and the generally common economic position shared by members of a caste, together with the high correlation between caste rank and economic position, have given rise to a political situation in which the most significant actors are castes and communities. While these communities are by no means wholly united, there is nevertheless a tendency toward an alignment of major communities with different parties. These socio-political constellations, reflecting a superimposition of ritual rank, social status, and economic position, represent essentially a class orientation. This is particularly evident in the social base of the Communist parties in Kerala. The Communists draw support from the poorer classes of each community-Nairs, Christians and Muslims;. While the majority of the depressed Ezhavas may support of the party, the middle classes and the SNDP itself, have leaned towards Congress-especially during the period of Sankar's leadership in the early 1960s. The 1965 election campaign, for example, was in large part fought by the Congress and the Communists to secure the affection of the Ezhavas. The failure of any party to secure a majority, however, only emphasised the fact that while the politics of Kerala may be caste-bound no party can rule with the support of one community alone.

Andhra Pradesh

Caste politics in Andhra Pradesh seems like a game of cock-fighting between the Kammas and Reddys. The important castes in the state are the Brahmins, the Reddys, the Kammas, the Harijans, the Velamas, the Rajus and the Kapus. Politically, the Reddys and the Kammas are regarded as the dominant castes for they are numerically the strongest in the village or local area and economically and politically exercise a preponderant influence. The most important source of their power is their control over land. As the major landholders and occupants of important positions in the villages, they control the village political life. The two castes cultivated feelings of jealousy and rivalry as a result of which while the Reddys joined the Congress Party, the Kammas lent their support to the Communists. It is owing to this that Andhra Communists struggled heavily to stage Telengana rebellion in 1948. Support of the Kammas to the local Communist leaders in the first general elections became alarmingly noticeable and the Congress had to take note of this fact on the eve of second general elections of 1957 when the official High Command nominee, S.K. Patil tactfully requisitioned the support of Kamma leader N.G. Ranga and "matched caste with caste in the choice of candidates,"

In Andhra Pradesh, the landed castes and particularly the Reddy rural gentry constituted the backbone of the Congress party. The Communist rebellion in Telengana, and later, a Communist bid to form the Ministry soon after Andhra state was formed in 1953, frightened the dominant castes so much that they gave extensive support to the Congress. Both the national and the state leadership of the Congress party tried to reach the voters not directly but through local influentials belonging to the dominant castes. This arrangement worked extremely well given the social status and economic power of the dominant castes and the low political consciousness of the other castes. The composition of the cabinet has reflected the same phenomenon. The Reddys, the Velmas and the Kammas held between them 45 to 58 per cent of the seats in the state cabinet, with the Reddys being the single largest group (28 to 38 per cent) till 1971. During the same period the representation of the backward classes and scheduled castes in the cabinet remained below 25 per cent.

After the 1969 Congress split an attempt was made to restructure the support base of the Congress party. The upper middle class, landlord and peasant caste support structure of the party was considered to be a hindrance to bringing about socio-economic changes, which the new Congress, in a radical mood, was talking about. With P.V. Narsimha Rao as the Chief Minister, changes, started. Though a Brahmin, but not from a landed caste, Narsimha Rao initiated the policy of giving greater representation to the backward classes and weaker sections in the legislature and the Council of Ministers. In the 1972 Assembly elections, a large number of tickets were given to backward classes and minorities. The 26-member Ministry formed under his Chief Ministership had the largest number of persons belonging to the weaker sections (4 Harijans, 6 from the backward classes, 1 Girijan, 2 from the minorities-total 13). The upper castes had for the first time a markedly lower representation with only 4 Reddys, 2 Kammas and 3 Brahmins (total 9).

After the formation of the Janata Party, the bulk of the prosperous agriculturists drawn from different peasant castes were attracted towards it. Its support came overwhelmingly from the Reddy community.

If caste politics in the states of the Indian Union is examined from a comparative standpoint, it appears that Andhra Pradesh occupies the most

conspicuous place. Harrison comments : "As an example of Hindu caste discipline in political motion, the post-war decade in Andhra merits special attention. Caste has played so fundamental role during this period that this examination becomes in effect a case history in the impact of caste on India's representative institutions. A very notable feature of caste politics in Andhra Pradesh finds place in its blending with the forces of regional politics. It has added much height to the politics of the Telengana agitation. The people of a particular caste living predominantly in a particular region have given a caste-cum-regional complexion to an issue in question. Obviously, this kind of relationship between a caste and a region is widespread in Andhra Pradesh as a result of which regional claims "are often only a disguise for caste claims."

Haryana

Next to Bihar, caste exercises the single most important influence on politics in Haryana. Some of the classes and castes have a more or less set pattern of political behaviour. In a population of a little over about 10 million in the state of Haryana, Hindus are 89 per cent. Muslims less than 4 per cent and Sikhs 6.5 per cent. The four major caste groups among the Hindus are : Brahmins 12 per cent. Jats 23 per cent, Ahirs 8 per cent and Scheduled castes 22 per cent; others are Gujars 8 per cent, Rajputs 5 per cent, and Baniyas 8 per cent. Castewise, the Jats are the toughest and constitute the single largest group with the Scheduled Castes coming next. The latter are sharply subdivided between the Chamars, the weavers and the sweepers. Of these, the Chamars are the more numerous (18 per cent) and the more privileged in as much as they always obtained a greater shares of political spoils. Among the higher castes, the Brahmins, for reasons of traditional caste superiority and higher level of literacy exercised a tremendous influence and occupied many positions of power quite disproportionate to their numbers.

Besides being the most numerous caste group, the Jats are the land-owning class, they also supply the largest number of recruits to the army. They are traditionally imbued with the ambition of love of power and they have been basically anti-Congress, particularly because of the influence of the Unionist Party. But now there is a slight change in their voting behaviour. They vote not for a political party but for a candidate and in this respect the sub-castes become more important than caste considerations. An Ahir in the Gurgaon Mahendragarh areas, for example, would not easily vote for any party unless its candidate happens to be an Ahir. The same holds good for other caste groups in other parts of the state. There is a very telling local slogan heard during the elections which says.: "Jat ki beti Jat ko, Jat ka vote Jat ko." In other words, just as a Jat's daughter should be married only to a Jat, a Jat's vote should go only to a Jat. The Ahirs and Brahmins, by and large (exceptions apart) are pro-Congress or anti-Congress according to the directives of Rao Birendra Singh and Pandit Bhagwat Dayal. The refugees, by and large, were with the Jana Sangh but like the Jats, they also vote for the candidate. If the contest is between a refugee and non-refugee candidate, they will, by and large, vote for a refugee candidate whatever may be his party. If the contest is between the non-refugee candidates, then they prefer a Bhartiya Janata Party candidate. The caste influence is not confined to Hindus alone. The Meo-Muslims have their own 'gotras' and they also prefer to vote for the candidate of their own gotra unless a Meo has to be supported

against a non-Meo.

The result of the 1967 elections soon after the formation of Haryana in November 1966 gave enough proof of this caste-based voting. This was again the main feature of the mid-term elections to the State Assembly in 1968 in which voters did not vote for various candidates on the basis of policies and programmes of the political parties. Even the candidates also contested elections not on the basis of election manifestoes but on the basis of caste, sub-castes, agriculturists vs. non-agriculturists, local vs. refugees and among refugees, on the basis of the place of migration.

Thus, Jats as a community had been a political force in Haryana. They constitute about 23 per cent of the total population of the state and have a commanding position. As a community, the Brahmins have tried to challenge their leadership. About Brahmins, it should be noted that their representation in the legislature is not very large but at the same time in the elections they have a substantial influence because in the first instance they are found practically in every village and as such they can exercise some influence. This is all the more because as a community they are more united than others and vote more or less *en bloc*. They also try to organise other non-agricultural communities at the village level and in every constituency. About the Jats, it should be noted that as a dominant community, they do no mind the leadership of other agricultural communities coming up concept that of Brahmins. One of the reasons why they are not prepared to tolerate Brahmin leadership is that there is a basic conflict between these two communities at the village level. In the Jat majority areas, the Brahmins try to organise the other communities against them in the elections which neither the Jats nor other agricultural communities would like them to do.

NEO-EMERGING CASTES (OBCs)

Broadly speaking, the three 'twice born' Sawarna Castes have dominated the religious, political, economic social life of this country. Even today, it is very common to say that the politics of this or that state is being controlled by the Brahmins or the Thakurs. Occasionally, Kayasthas have also thrown up fairly influential Chief Ministers and party bosses. But it may come as a bit of a surprise to most people to learn that the Brahmins constitute only about 5.5 per cent of the country's population, and the Kshatriyas hardly 4 per cent.

In fact, the overall proportion of forward Hindu Castes does not exceed 17.6 per cent of the total population of India. On the other hand, the share of Scheduled Castes (SCs) alone is 15 per cent. And if you lump SCs with Schedule Tribes (STs) they outnumber the forward Hindu Castes by 28 per cent. In between these two aggregates lies the vast cluster of the so-called 'Other Backward (Hindu) Castes', which constitute nearly 43.7 per cent of our population.

Another notable feature of our caste scennario is that the South has very different caste contours as compared to the North. In the North we have the classical Varna model of four castes. But in the South there are only three castes groups; Brahmins, non-Brahmins and SCs and STs (There are particularly no Kshatriyas in the South) and whereas the Brahmin domination in the services and the cultural life of the south, especially the Tamil region, was far more pronounced than in the North,

they numbered only 3 per cent of the population. In the North, and particularly in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, the Kayasthas relegated the Brahmins to the second place, both in services and in the field of education.

Thirdly, Caste antagonisms have tended to be much more fierce and violent in the North than in the South.

And Fourthly, in West Bengal and the north-eastern states, the hold of caste is much weaker. Regional and ethnic loyalties are much more important in the north-east.

It is, indeed, a fact that the caste conflicts have become much fiercer after independence, and the Caste factor has come to play a very important role in Indian politics. But it could not be otherwise. After all when the forward castes comprising 17.6 per cent of the country's population corner 70-80 per cent of its positions of power and patronage, the backward castes are bound to protest and agitate, and demand a more equitable sharing of the national cake.

The most important post-Independence development on the caste front has been the rise of the 'Other Backward Castes' (OBCs). As the label itself indicates, it is a sort of residual category. Whereas Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and the Sawarna Hindu Castes are quite clearly differentiated, OBCs embrace a very large spectrum of nearly 3,000- 4,000 intermediate castes. The more advanced amongst them owe their rise to power primarily to the abolition of Zamindari after independence. With the conferral of ownership rights on various categories of tenants, a new class of peasant proprietors was born. These cultivating and herding castes were generally very hardworking and after becoming peasant proprietors, they acquired both prosperity and social status. This naturally encouraged them to aspire for political power and patronage which was commensurate with their numbers.

Ram Manohar Lohia was the first national level leader who realised the political potential of OBCs and advocated the view that the surest way to dislodge the Congress from power was to mobilise these backward castes against it. After him Devraj Urs and Karpooori Thakur, two eminent backward class leaders, rode to power on the back of OBCs, but they could not weld them into a stable power base. Kanshi Ram has his dreams of leading "an alliance of 6,000 other Backward Castes", but in actual fact his influence is mostly confined to the scheduled castes of North India only.

Now that the Congress (I) has become jittery about its traditional constituencies, and the opposition is trying to annex all the floating vote-banks, the OBCs have become the primary object of courtship by both sides. After all, these castes constitute nearly half the population of the country.

As OBCs are too numerous and dispersed, the first concrete steps towards their mobilisation were taken in the form of grouping cognate or related caste by forming 'Caste associations'. Described as 'horizontal stretch' by Prof. M. N. Srinivas, this 'fusion' process has resulted in the rise of powerful caste conglomerates as Izhavas and Naris in Kerala; Nadars and Vanniyars in Tamil Nadu; Vokkaligas and Lingayats in Karnataka; Jats, Gujars and Minas in Rajasthan; and Yadavas, Ahirs, Kurmis and Koeris in Bihar and U. P. Further, the size and the spread of a caste grouping depends upon the level at which pressure is sought to be exerted. For instance, the Ahir Kshatriya Mahasabha speaks for the Ahirs of U.P., whereas All-India Yadava Mahasabha operates at the national level. AJGAR (Ahir-Jat-Gujar) in

the Hindi belt and KHAM (Kshatriya-Harijan-Ahir-Muslim) in Gujarat are the extreme instances of this process of jumboisation on sectarian lines.

The eclipse of the congress in the 1967 elections seemed to vindicate Ram Manohar Lohia's thesis. SVD ministries in UP, Bihar and some other states were formed with the backing of OBC MLAs who had been elected in large numbers than ever before.

Perhaps nothing shows the complexity of caste calculus more clearly than the case of the Yadava quarter; in U.P. Both the Congress (I) and Janata Dal are bending upon backwards to win over this highly influential intermediate peasant caste. After the Congress (I) had appointed Balram Singh Yadava as its P.C.C. Chief, it successfully hijacked Chandrajit Yadava and Ram Naresh Yadava to its ranks, thus strengthening its OBC base. The Janata Dal, on the other hand, appointed the crafty Mulayam Singh Yadava to head the state unit to attract the Yadava. Politics in U.P is more or less true of most other Caste groupings all over the country.

In the 2012 UP assembly election again the Samajwadi Party has been able to mobilise the OBCs and the Muslim in its favour. Mulayam Singh's son Akhilesh Yadav has become the Chief Minister.

In the just held assembly election in five states (Rajasthan, M.P. Chhatisgarh, Delhi and Mizoram) the pre dominant support of the Jats in favour of BJP in Rajasthan has helped the BJP to win a solid majority.

Conclusions

S.N.Sadasivan claims that "Caste has fractionalised national politics and caste politics breeds caste parties", According to him there are clear caste based differences in the leadership of all major parties and the actual force behind every defection, every faction, every splinter group and every new formation of party is in variably a caste or a combination of castes."

Caste has contributed significantly both positively and negatively. Neo emerging backward castes, have in many areas granted influences, access and power in state and society. They can change the tide of power in their favour and influence decisions regarding the allocation of resources and distribution of privileges and honours.

It has been widely believed by the political experts that in the 16th Lok Sabha elections in India the Modi factor was able to blunt the role of caste and religion. "Sab ka Saath & Sab Ki Vikas" the slogan given by Modi attracted people from all castes and religions to vote for BJP but if we analyse the under currents these factors (caste & religion) have had their share of influence, particularly in the State Assembly elections and the BJP strategists have used then. Even Narendra Modi has always been using his OBC and "Chai-wala" to win over the low caste poor.

POLITICS OF DALITS AD RESERVATIONS

After the attainment of independence, the national leadership took up the task of framing the Constitution of India in conformity with the assurances that it had given to the people during the course of freedom struggle. The "Founding Fathers of the Constitution were inspired by the ideals of equality and social justice. Hence our Constitution made special provisions for the advancement of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The demand for similar provisions was raised later on by the people of "other castes" who were extremely backward and socially oppressed. The Southern States with long history of backward caste movements took the lead in this matter. They made special provisions for "Other Backward Castes" in respect of reservations for them in Government services and professional institutions. Some states of the North, particularly Gujarat, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh followed suit.

It is being felt that there was nothing wrong with the principle of reservation. Without it the formidable task of removing glaring disparities and social inequalities in our diverse society could not be accomplished. But what was, in fact, meant to be a concession on the ground of uplift has become a "Vote Catching" instrument at the hands of the ruling parties.

1. Socio-economic Status and Background of the Dalits

It is a fact of history that scheduled castes (the untouchables) and other backward people have been the victim of exploitation for more than 2000 years. The customs and the conventions of the Hindu society (divided on the principle of Varna System) treated these people as "untouchables". Despite it, these very people rendered useful services to the upper caste privileged groups, collected filth, refuse, remnants and slurs on behalf of the society. They have been denied to take part in the social processes and their access to societal resources has effectively been blocked.¹

The scheduled castes now constitute 15.8 per cent in the total population of India. They are also known as 'Harjians' (children of God, a term coined by Mahatma Gandhi in 1933). The Harijan nomenclature is considered pejorative by some leaders of the caste. They prefer to be called Dalit, i.e., the depressed. Occupying the lowest rank in the Hindu Caste system, they are called 'Ayarna' those whose place is outside Chaturvarna system. Before independence, they suffered from certain restrictions in their food habits, dress and behaviour. They are not still allowed to fetch water from the common village well in many villages. Traditionally, they are expected to perform certain duties for upper caste Hindus. They were treated

1. Ramashray Roy & Richard Sissan, *Diversity and Dominance in Indian Politics*, (New Delhi, Saga Publications, 1990), p. 38

as untouchables before independence and their touch was considered to be polluting. Un-touchability now has been abolished under Article 17 of the Indian Constitution.

The Scheduled Castes are scattered all over the country, though their number is insignificant in the predominantly tribal areas of the North-East frontier. They are mostly small and marginal farmers or agricultural labourers, outcastes, depressed classes, scheduled castes, Harijans, Ex-untouchables by clean caste officials or social reformers. It may also be noted that only 21.4 per cent of the Scheduled castes persons are literate. Female literate constitute only 5.3 per cent. This is a reflection of the depressed economic condition of S.Cs. Only 36.1 per cent of the Scheduled caste constitute the main workforce, 3.4 per cent are marginal workers and 60.4 per cent are non-workers. Of the main workers, 28.2 per cent are cultivators, 48.2 per cent are agricultural labourers, 3.3 per cent are engaged in house-hold industries manufacturing, processing, servicing and repairs.

The Scheduled Tribes are known as adivasis, aboriginal, animist, Raniparaj (one who lives in the midst of wild animals), Vanjati (people living in the forests), Girijans (Hill people), Kaliparaj (Black people of forest) or tribals. The Scheduled Tribes do not suffer from all socio-cultural stigmas which are attached to the S.Cs. They have no obligatory duty towards caste Hindus as they are not a part of the Hindu Caste System. Nevertheless, they are often looked down upon by Caste Hindus as 'Primitive' and 'feeble minded'. Their means of livelihood are agriculture, hunting, collecting forest products and various kinds of manual labour. Their land is rocky and barren and most of them are not familiar with modern methods of cultivation in agriculture. On the whole, they belong to the lowest rung of the economic ladder and have been exploited by non-tribal landlords, money-lenders and forest contractors.

The tribal population can be divided into two principal territorial zones, the North Eastern or Frontier Zone and the Non-Frontier Zone. The frontier zone consists of states such as Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. The tribal people constitute 11 per cent of the tribal population. The non-Frontier Tribes constituting 89 per cent of the total population are distributed among most of the states though they are concentrated in large numbers in M.P. (23 per cent), Orissa (22 per cent), Rajasthan (12 per cent), Bihar (8 per cent), Gujarat (14 per cent), Dadra Nagar Haveli (79 per cent) and the Lacadive Islands (94 per cent) respectively.²

Tribals are ethnic groups. Different tribes have their own cultures—dialect, life styles, social structure, rituals, values etc., differing somewhat from those of the dominant non-tribal peasant social groups. At the same time, most of them are settled agriculturalists. Only 10 per cent are literate compared to the all India literacy rate of 36 per cent. Of the total workers among the tribals, 54 per cent are cultivators and 33 per cent are agricultural labourers.³

2. Rajinder Pandey, *Minorities in India*, (New Delhi, APH Publishing Corporation, 1997). p. 80.

The President of India by virtue of power conferred under Article 342 of the Constitution, has notified 212 Tribes to be belonging to the Scheduled Tribes. Later on, by an Act of Parliament some other groups were also included in this schedule

According to 1981 census, the Scheduled Tribes constitute 7-8 percent of the total population of India. But it is significant to keep in mind that Scheduled Tribes happen to have a dominant voice so far as their strength in the North Eastern States of the Indian Union is concerned. The tribals form 94 percent of Mizoram's population, 84 percent in Nagaland, 81 percent in Meghalaya, 70 percent in Arunachal Pradesh, 28 percent in Tripura and 27 percent in Manipur. Compared with the tribals of the plains, many of these tribes have, for geographical and historical reasons, been relatively more isolated and alienated from Hindu Society.⁴

So far as the question of 'Other Backward Classes' is concerned, the Mandal Commission has identified 3743 castes. That are socially and economically backward. These OBCs constitute 52 percent of the total population of India. In other words, practically half of the total population of India is backwards, depressed and are denied their legitimate share in the societal resources. This explains the dilemma of poverty, misery, hunger, food, clothing and shelter that is facing the down-trodden strata of the Indian society despite fifty years of independence. It is a gigantic task.

II. Constituent Assembly rejected the demand for separate electorate to the Scheduled Castes

When the Constitution of India was being formed, the Muslim leaders demanded separate communal electorate on the plea that they would lose their identity in independent India under the domination of the Hindu majority. They also demanded that all communities should be accorded proportional representation in all the elected bodies. They even echoed their choice for opting to the "Swiss Model" of Constitutional framework that ensures equal representation to all communities. Some of the Tribes in the North-East Frontier regions expressed similar apprehensions. Political leaders of Chhotanagpur region in Bihar demanded separate electorate for the Tribals. A small section of tribals in Gujarat also asked for a separate electorate for the tribals outside the Indian Union. The Scheduled Castes, under the leadership of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, also raised the demand for a separate electorate for them.

After a good deal of debate in the Constituent Assembly, it was felt that such a provision would not only strengthen separate identities but also would endanger the unity of India. Consequently, the Congress leadership (who dominated the Constituent Assembly), under the leadership of Nehru, evolved a strategy of reservation.⁵ The demand for a separate electorate for the Scheduled Castes was thus dropped. D.N. Sandanshiv, a jurist and a scheduled caste leader observed that

3. Ramashray Roy & Richard Sissan, oo, cit, p. 65.

4. Ibid. p. 74

5. For full details, please see, Ramashray Roy & Richard Sissan, oo, cit, p. 118.119.

"In 1947, on independence of India, Hindus got India, Muslims got Pakistan and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes got reservation."

III. Constitutional Safeguards for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

(i) Reservation of seats in Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies of the States :

It is significant to note that the makers of Indian Constitution made special provisions for the advancement of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and consequently reserved seats of these two categories of the backward classes in the House of People⁷ and Legislative Assemblies of the States.⁸ It also made a provision for the appointment of a Special Officer for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to investigate matters relating to various safeguards provided for them in the Constitution⁹ and also by providing for a Minister incharge to look after the welfare of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other backward classes in the States of Bihar, M.P. and Orissa.¹⁰

The reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were to be abolished after 10 years (until 1960). But these have been periodically extended for the past 60 years and will now with 95th amendment it was further increased for 10 year till 2020. It is very pertinent to note that there are 78 and 33 seats reserved for the S.C. and S.T. respectively—a sizeable chunk of 101 out of the strength of 543 members of the Lok Sabha. In the Legislative Assemblies of the states, their strength stands at 540 and 282 seats respectively for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

II. Reservation in Services and Educational Institutions

Subsequently, the constitution was amended in 1951 including a provision for protective discrimination in favour of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other socially and educationally backward classes of the citizens in services.¹¹ Under this provision, 15 percent and 7 percent jobs in the government were got reserved for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, respectively. However, Article 335 stipulates that while extending job reservation policy, efficiency of administration seemed not be blindly ignored. Seats in the educational institutions also have been reserved for the S.C. and S.T. with a view to ameliorate their backwardness.¹²

6. Ramashray Roy & Richard Sissan, oo, cit, p. 119.

7. *Constitutional of India*, Art. 330.

8. Ibid, Art. 332.

9. An office of the Commission for S.C. and S.T. was created under Art. 338 in (95).

10. Under Art. 164 the Directorate of Backward classes was created in 1967 and in 1978 Backward classes Commission was appointed by the Janata Government with B. P. Mandal as its Chairman.

11. The First Constitution Amendment Act 1951 inserted clause (4) to Article 15 of the Constitution.

12. Constitution of India, Act. 16 (4) and Art. 29.

Reservations under the Current Arrangements

Under the current arrangements, there are reservations for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and "Other Backward Castes". Preferences are of three basic types :

- (i) First, there are reservations which allot or facilitate access to valued positions or resources. The most important are reserved seats in Legislatures, reservations of posts in governmental services and reservation of places in academic institutions (particularly in Medical, Engineering and Professional Colleges). To a lesser extent, the reservation device is used in the distribution of land allotments, housing and other scarce resources.
- (ii) Second, there are programmes involving expenditure or provision of services like scholarships, grants, loans, health care, legal aid for the beneficiary groups.
- (iii) Third, there are special protections to protect the backward castes from being exploited and victimised. According to some critics, India's system of official discrimination in favour of the most "backward sections of her population is unique in the world, both in range of benefits involved and in the magnitude of the groups eligible for them.

The Supreme Court in its judgement (delivered on September 16, 1999 relating to reservation policy) has declared that reservation under the Constitution is not a fundamental right. The Bench reiterated that we hold that two Article 16(4) and 16(4-A) do not confer any fundamental rights, but are only enabling provisions, vesting a discretion in the state of providing reservation if the circumstances mentioned in the Articles so warranted. "Over-ruling the two earlier cases of "Jaganthan" and "Kuldeep Singh, "it held" that in the interest of administration, reservation or relaxation in marks is not appropriate, the court cannot issue a mandamus to provide for such reservation."¹³ Thus, in matters of "Admission to educational institutions" and "job quota in public employment" are justifiable provisions and are open to scrutiny by the apex court like other issues.

IV. Reservation Policy for Backward Classes

Article 340 empowers the President of India to appoint a Commission to investigate the conditions of socially and educationally backward classes within the territory of India. In conformity with the above provision, the government of India appointed the first Backward Commission on January 29, 1953 with Kaka Kalekar as its chairman. It submitted its report on March 30, 1955. The Commission identified 2399 castes as socially and educationally backward. The government did not accept the recommendations on the ground that it had not applied any objective tests for identifying backward classes.

However, by the end of 1960, it was difficult for the Congress to ignore the pressure of some backward castes particularly in Karnataka, Maharashtra and Bihar.

13. For details see *Tribune* dated 27-9-1999 and 4-10-1999.

Even a few state governments appointed their own Backward Commissions to identify "Other Backward Classes" for the purpose of granting reservation to them.

During the Janata Party regime, the Central government appointed second Backward Commission on December 20, 1978 with B.P. Mandal as chairman to determine the criteria for defining the socially and educationally backward classes and to recommend steps for their advancement. It submitted its report on December 31, 1980. The Mandal Commission identified 3743 Castes (constituting 52 percent of the population) and recommended that 27 percent job reservation be provided to them. The reservation recommended for OBCs was in addition to the existing reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes which pegged at 15 percent and 7.5 percent respectively, in accordance with their numbers.

The National Front Government headed by the Prime Minister V.P. Singh announced its decision on August 13, 1990 to implement the Mandal Commission Report by reserving 27 percent of the Central government and public sector jobs for the O.B.Cs. apart from 22.5 percent already reserved for the S.Cs. and S.Ts. This decision triggered off series of overt and spontaneous protests—both violent and non-violent. Property worth crores of rupees was burnt, about 200 precious lives literally gone up in flames and thousands suffered repression and brutalities of police.

Justification for Reservation Policy

- (i) The policy of reservation is being supported on the ground that for centuries, the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other backward classes have been the victims of exploitation by the upper caste Hindu dominated society of India. The backward classes, the Scheduled Castes suffered from the evil of untouchability and these classes were denied opportunities of bettering their lot. More than 80 percent of these people are landless and illiterate and as such had no provision of adequate food, clothing and shelter.
- (ii) The policy of reservation would lead to strengthen the process of integration of the people of diverse social groups. By affording opportunities for participation and well-being, it would promote the feeling of belonging and loyalty among the beneficiaries.
- (iii) It is also being argued that policy of reservation would prove beneficial in promoting harmony among various caste groups. The backward castes (which have been estimated at 3743 in number by the Mandal Commission) now constitute 52 percent of the total population of India cannot be allowed to be exploited in free India. The gospel of a Welfare State demand that all sections of the society be treated equally by the State. The Indian State, as an instrument of social, economic and political justice is to cater to the needs of all people. The upliftment of the backward people will eliminate "Caste Conflicts" and these backward classes will come to enjoy the fruits of the emerging egalitarian society in India.

- (iv) The policy of reservation would help in the establishment of a secular society. With the process of development and modernization, the outlook and psychology (including thinking process) of the people will undergo change with the spread of education, elimination of caste-barrier, poverty and other hinderances in the path of development.
- (v) The reservation of jobs provides, to a large segment of the Indian society regular source of income, status and prestige that go with government employment. Large number of reserved seats in Parliament and in the State Assemblies provide an excellent forum to the deprived sections of the Indian Society to directly participate in the decision-making process by acquiring ministerial berths and also wields considerable influence in formulating and influencing policy decisions favouring the backward classes. Reservation of seats in professional colleges, now enables them to enter into jobs which, in turn, has a multiplier effect on their income and for opening additional avenues to prosperity.
- (vi) It is also being felt that the policy of reservation is one of the weapon to fight against the evil influences of casteism. It be construed to be paving a way for more structural changes so that the ideal of "equality of all men and women" in India is to be realised in practice.

Opposition to the Reservation Policy

- (i) The principle of reservation has come to be discredited to "Merit" because it enables the incompetent to sneak from behind and deprive brilliant and deserving youth of "College seats" and "Jobs" thus destroying the nation's prospects of achieving greatness. The critics of the reservation policy maintain that nation's progress, its growth and development process in making India as one of the equal partners in the global community would be thwarted. Nations acquire greatness by respecting the merit of its citizens and not by passing the excellence and merit of its citizens.
- (ii) According to renowned sociologists like Late Prof. Desai, Upendra Boxi and Andre Beteille and many others, reservation is a good policy; but it should be on the basis of economic class (i.e. level of income and property) instead of caste. Caste-based reservation is against the basic spirit of the Indian Constitution which promises equality, non casteist and non-communal secularism. It is argued that caste-based reservation is an impediment to progress and social change.
- (iii) Reservations are being given on the theory (assumption) that by certain members of a particular caste holding public office, the level of the whole caste will be raised; this theory has proved to be false. Individual members of the caste getting government employment on a preferential basis had little effect on raising the community standard. What has happened instead is that

as the reservation is on the basis of the birth and not on that of "economic deprivation", the majority of the people who take advantage of these reservations are those who are already affluent. There has come into being a class among those favoured sections of society who monopolize the benefits of reservation while the rest of the members of the caste or tribe remain exactly where they were.

- (iv) The use of the "caste groups" to identify the weaker and backward classes will lead to the perpetuation of the caste system. It will further promote caste into politics. It is termed as a peculiar method of ensuring the unity of India by eliminating the caste-system (by according them protective reservation).
- (v) The opponents of the reservation policy maintain that the level of efficiency in administration will go down. The Supreme Court in one of its judgements remarked "excessive zeal for the depressed classes was a fraud on the constitution which could destroy the ideal of supremacy of merit, efficiency of the services and absence of discrimination.
- (vi) Although reservation policy was conceived as a progressive measure to provide benefit to the backward classes of the Indian Society, yet it has now turned into an instrument of party politics over the years. The politicians are cynically exploiting for narrow political purposes what was originally meant to be a short-term expedient. The reckless extension of relevant provisions has been used to further group hostility. The States of Gujarat, M.P., Bihar and Andhra Pradesh were rocked by anti-reservation agitations and these elements are threatening similar agitations in other states. The decision to implement 27 percent reservation as recommended by Mandal Commission by V.P. Singh (The Prime Minister of Janata Dal coalition government) saw a massive anti-reservation demonstrations in Delhi and other parts of India.
- (vii) The reservation policy has given a handle to many other caste groups who are clamouring that their caste groups may also be included in the original list (as recommended by the Mandal Commission).
- (viii) The omnibus reservations and meaningless quotas at all levels, from primary education to professional colleges are an unfair handicap on individuals who are deprived of opportunities which they deserve on merit. This heart-burning and depriving one's legitimate right is really a retrograde step and ultimately results in hindering the progress of our society. It is, therefore, being suggested that reservation of jobs etc. should be done by keeping the merit of reasonable standard intact. Reservation Policy should be reviewed periodically to offset its bad effects.
- (ix) Opponents of Reservation Policy are also opposed to the quantum of job reservations. A reasonable limit should be imposed on job reservations. The Supreme Court in its various judgements has maintained that reservation should not exceed more than 50 percent. The anxiety on the part of greedy

politicians to take it up to the level of 60 to 70 percent is really prejudicial to the national integration and unity of our nation.

Conclusions

The reservation policy has generated a good deal of controversy in our country. The reservationists tend to believe that "reservation quotas" are set too low and that some additional "backward classes" be included in the category of "other backward classes" for affording upliftment of such classes. While opponents of the reservation policy ask for a radical modification in it so that high ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity among the citizens of India are not jeopardised.

However, the principle of reservation has been blatantly distorted by the rulers of the country who did not care for the ceiling of 50 percent reservations for all categories of beneficiaries. "The unusually high percentage of reservation (upto the extent of 78 percent) in Gujarat, Bihar, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh etc., led to anti-reservation agitations. These agitations not only showed the height of opportunism the politicians could scale but also involved large losses in men and money. Both the Press and the Politicians criticized the pampering of backward castes with unending and ever-expanding reservations. A few were critical of the system on the ground that it accentuates and perpetuates caste differences. Reservation remains a national burning issue as before in our country.

A very controversial issue centres round the determination of the level of backwardness. Do "Other Backward Classes" comprise only of the Backward Castes or does it include others ? Caste is a relevant factor but not the sole factor in determining the backward classes. It may be noted that various factors combine to cause backwardness. Therefore, one has to apply several criteria such as castes, poverty, occupation, education, etc. in determining whether a group belongs to a backward class.

The reservations for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were supposed to be abolished after the expiry of 10 years (i.e., in 1960). But, on political consideration (as the S.Cs. and S.Ts. constitute a major "Vote Bank" in determining the political fortunes of the ruling elite in India) the reservations continue till today. It seems that this provision of extending reservation at the interval of every tenth year has become a permanent and un-alterable feature of the Indian Constitution. Even the Supreme Court of India in its judgement during 1978 and later on suggested that there is ample need to review the policy of reservations in India. The reservations must be withdrawn from such sections, groups or individuals who have been benefited from this policy and proper time frame be adopted to ensure justice and fair play to all the citizens of India.

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**ELECTION COMMISSION
ORGANISATION, FUNCTIONS AND ROLE**

India is perhaps the only country in the contemporary world for having incorporated a self-contained chapter of elections in its Constitution. The founding fathers of the Indian Constitution were fully conscious of the need for independent electoral machinery for ensuring fair and free elections in the country. It may be recalled that three proposals were debated in the Constituent Assembly of India, which inter-alia provided for :

- (i) a permanent Election Commission of four or five members who would continue in their office till they retire; or
- (ii) an Adhoc body to be appointed by President at the time of Election; or
- (iii) a permanent Skeleton or machinery providing for the office of a Chief Election Commission; or

Apart from this, the Constituent Assembly also discussed the issue of whether to have a centralized Election Commission on the British pattern or to allow the States to have their own separate Election Commission as in U.S.A.

After assessing pros and cons of the problem, the framers of the constitution decided to have a permanent election machinery for meeting the requirements of holding periodic elections to Parliament and Legislative Assemblies of all the States. Besides the size of the country (comprising the biggest electorate in the world) also influenced the minds of the members of the Constituent Assembly. The decision to have centralized Election Commission in India was also motivated by the fact that provincial governments dominated by different racial, religious and linguistic groups may not exclude voters from the electoral rolls on political considerations. Hence, a provision for the establishment of Central Election Commission was taken.

II. Structure of the Election Commission in India

The Election Commission consists of the Chief Election Commissioner and such number of Election Commissioners as the President from time to time may fix : (1) when any other Election Commissioner is appointed, the Chief Election Commissioner shall act as the Chairman of the Election Commission; (2) It may be noted that Election Commission was made a three member body and a notification to this effect was issued by the President on 7th October, 1989. Two retired senior officials (Mr. S.S. Dhanoa, IAS and Mr. V.S. Sehgal, IPS) were appointed on 16th October, 1989. Strengthening of the Election Commission was one of the proposals

recommended by the Election Commission itself in the past, but late Rajiv Gandhi Government's decision to act on the eve of Ninth Lok Sabha Elections scheduled in November, 1989, caused several doubts in political circles. The lowering of voting age from 21 to 18, however, seems to justify the strengthening of the Election Commission due to increasing workload. The Janta Dal government headed by V.P. Singh, however, removed these two additional Election Commissioners during December, 1989 and amended the rules to make the Election Commission as a single member body w.e.f. 2nd January, 1990. However, the strength of the Election Commission has again been raised to three when Congress (I) government headed by P.V. Narsimha Rao appointed two more Election Commissioners after issuing an ordinance in October, 1993. The Parliament of India passed the Chief Election Commissioner and other Commissioners Service Act in December, 1993. It may be noted that no qualification (educational, legal, judicial or administrative) has been prescribed for eligibility to the post of Election Commission. This obviously leaves much scope for the exercise of political influence. The Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners are appointed by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister. It has been suggested by the critics that Chief Election Commissioner (including the Election Commissioners) be appointed by the President in consultation with the Chief Justice of India, the Prime Minister and the leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha. In the year 2006 new Chief Election Commissioner N.Gopalaswami and election commissioner S.Y.Quashi were appointed and third member was Naveen Chawla. Now CEC is U.S. Sampatn and Harishankar Brahna and Syed Nasim Ahmed Zaidi are members. Another important suggestion to ensure the independence of Election Commission is that the retiring Election Commissioner should be barred from holding further appointment from the government. On 25th February, 1986, the former Chief Election Commissioner (Mr. R.K. Trivedi) was appointed Governor of Gujarat, which was considered in a bad taste. Such an appointment is considered an open invitation to the Chief Election Commissioner to work according to the designs of the government if he wants to get favour from the latter after retirement.

III. Independence of the Election Commission

The makers of the Constitution took adequate precautions to ensure independence of the Election Commission. Accordingly, the Election Commission has been accorded a Constitutional status and its autonomous functions have been guaranteed by incorporating specific provisions in the Constitution :

- (i) The Chief Election Commissioner (and other Election Commissioners) once appointed cannot be removed from his office save in the manner provided for the removal of the Judges of the Supreme Court of India.
- (ii) Once a person is appointed as Chief Election Commissioner his conditions of service cannot be varied to his disadvantage.

- (iii) The power of the Election Commission in regard to three matters—superintendence, direction and control of election are absolute and cannot be questioned by any one.

In pursuance to the law enacted by Parliament in December, 1993, the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners hold office for a term of five years or upto the age of 65 years of age, whichever is earlier. So far as the other Election Commissioners are concerned, they cannot be removed except on the recommendations of the Chief Election Commissioner.

Keeping in view the huge size of the country, it was though necessary that single Member Election Commission may need assistance in preparing electoral roles involving over crores of voters. Hence, a provision has been made for the appointment of Regional Election Commissioner in order to assist the Election Commissioner in performance of his functions. The Constitution stipulates that the President, after consultation with the Election Commissioner, may appoint Regional Election Commissioners. On the eve of first General Elections, four posts of Regional Commissioners were created by the President, but only two Regional Election Commissioners were appointed for 6 months with head quarters at Patna and Bombay. On the eve of the 8th Lok Sabha elections (1984), the Chief Election Commissioner recommended for the appointment of Regional Election Commissioners, but the government rejected the recommendations.

Electoral Machinery at the State Level

At the State level, the election machinery consists of the Chief Electoral Officer, who is selected by the Election Commission out of a panel of names provided by the State Government. Usually, such a person is of the rank of Secretary and in some states he functions in this capacity on whole-time basis whereas in others, he functions only on part-time basis. He is assisted by a Deputy Chief Electoral Officer on whole-time basis.

At the district level, these officials are helped by the Deputy Commissioners, who function as District Electoral Officers and at the constituency level usually the sub-divisional Magistrate functions as a Returning Officer. He is assisted by one or more Assistant Returning Officers.

The District Electoral Officer, according to electoral law, is required to discharge the undermentioned duties :

- (a) Provision of polling stations for Assembly/Parliamentary Elections;
- (b) Appointment or Presiding and Polling Officers for polling stations set up for general or bye-elections;
- (c) Receipt of accounts of election expenses of contesting candidates and submission of reports of these returns to the Election Commissioner;
- (d) Safe custody of hall of boxes and election records.

IV. Functions and Powers of the Election Commission

According to Article 324 of the Constitution of India, the superintendence, direction and control of elections to Parliament, the Legislature of every state, the offices of the President and Vice-President has been vested in the Election Commission. In order to discharge these duties freely and fairly, it has to perform the following functions :

(a) Preparation of Electoral Rolls

The preparation of electoral rolls is one of the major responsibilities of the Election Commission of India. The Constitution categorically has laid down that the name of the eligible voter shall be included in the electoral rolls irrespective of religion, race, caste, sex or any other consideration. The voting age in India has been lowered from 21 to 18 years (vide 61 Constitution Amendment Act adopted during December, 1988) for providing opportunity to the younger generation to give vent to their feelings and also to help them become a part of the political process. Unlike the practice in some democratic countries like U.S.A. the registration of voters is not the responsibility of the individual voters but the central government and especially of the Election Commission. Sometime, the State officials who prepare these electoral rolls on behalf of the Election Commission adopt partisan attitude on account of the pressure from the State Government, and in the process, they exclude the names of the eligible voters and include the names of ineligible voters. There were complaints of inclusion of names of bogus voters both in Haryana and West Bengal with the connivance of the state machinery. Because of the partisan attitude of the state official machinery the Election Commission sometimes find it difficult to prepare the electoral rolls correctly. It may be interesting to note that the number of voters in India has been going up with the rapid rise of the population. The list of eligible voters numbered approximately 173 millions in the first general election, 193 million for the second, 218 million for the third, 250 million for the fourth and 273 million for the fifth general election (held in 1971).

Hence, India is the greatest democracy in the world and its electorate has been increasing very rapidly. The following table indicates the increase in the electorate between 1980 to 1991 in our country.

(i)	Year	:	1980	1984	1989	1991	2009
(ii)	Electorate	:	355	379	498	514	71.40
	(in million)						crore

In 2009 there were 71.40 crore electorates.

(b) Conduct of the Poll

The conduct of the poll is one of the important functions of the Election Commission. In order to win the elections, the ruling party in power and various dominant groups and individuals try to use all sorts of underhand means. Hence, the Election Commission has to be very vigilant for preventing rigging of elections.

For this purpose, the Election Commission usually takes the following steps :

- (i) provides separate booths for the weaker sections of the society;
- (ii) appoints Election observers to have a watch on the conduct of the officials and other miscreants;
- (iii) checks impersonation. For checking this evil a time bound scheme was prepared for the photo-identity cards to be issued to the voters in India. The Election Commission had fixed January 15, 1995 as the dead line for issuing these identity cards. However, it could not materialize and till date the process is still incomplete.
- (iv) allows the candidates or his agent to put his seal on the Ballot box.
- (v) ensures secrecy of voting by shuffling the ballot papers before counting.

(c) Recognition of Political Parties and Allotment of Symbols

The Election Commission determines that political parties will be recognised as National, Regional and State level political parties and what symbols will be assigned to each party. The Election Commission has changed norms in according recognition to political parties. In order to get recognition as a National Party, it should get at least 10 per cent of votes in half of the States in the country in a general election. So far the criterion for recognition was that a party should get at least 4 percent of votes polled in four states. Now, if a party gets 10 percent of votes polled in a particular region, it can be recognised as a Regional party and if it gets 4 per cent of votes only in a particular state, it can be recognised as a State Party.

The revised rules also stipulate that all political parties must get themselves registered with the Election Commission for the purpose of according them the status of 'National' or 'State' parties on the basis of their poll performances. The Election Commission even decides intra-party disputes when two more rival groups cause a split in the party and claim themselves to be the main or real political party. For instance, when Mrs. Indira Gandhi broke away with from the syndicate in 1969 and the Congress got split into Congress (ruling) and Congress (Organisaton). Mrs. Indira Gandhi's plea that the group was a real original Congress party was not accepted by the Election Commission. Consequently, she lost her claim to the election symbol of pair of Bullocks and had to do with Cow and a Calf. Whenever, a political party gets split up, the Election Commission decides the dispute. The Election Commission not only allots symbols to political parties, but also to individual candidates. While doing so, the Election Commission can change the symbols of the candidates.

(d) Cancellation of the Poll

The Election Commission has not only the power of holding elections but has authority to cancel it and order fresh re-roll, if it is rigged. This has been done on a number of occasions. Such a re-poll was ordered in Ferozepur by-elections in 1977, this was so done in the Garhwal Lok Sabha bye-elections in 1981. Likewise,

the result of Doda assembly constituency in Jammu and Kashmir was cancelled during June, 1983. It may be recalled that the Election Commission had cancelled the election for five Lok Sabha seats in first phase of Parliamentary Elections held in May, 1991 on grounds of booth capturing and violence. It is also pertinent to note that the Election Commission postponed the Assembly Elections in Punjab, which were scheduled to be held on June 22, 1991 on the advice of Prime Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao, who had assumed office on June 21. Earlier, the Election Commission had ordered re-polling in 104 polling booths of 38 constituencies in Andhra Pradesh spread over nine districts due to alleged electoral malpractices in the first phase of elections for the Andhra Assembly held on December 1, 1994. Likewise, re-poll was ordered in all 86 polling stations of the Alampur Assembly constituency in Andhra Pradesh following large scale booth capturing and violence. In 2004 and 2009 polls, re-polling was done at many booths due to many reasons.

(e) Holding of bye-elections

It is also the responsibility of the Election Commission to hold bye-election, whenever any vacancy is caused in the Lok Sabha or Legislative Assembly. The Election Commission sometimes accused for its partisan attitude when bye-elections are not being held as desired by the state Governments. For instance, in West Bengal, bye-election was postponed after fixing the date in spite of the fact that the state government insisted that bye-election should be held, whereas in U.P., Garhwal Lok Sabha bye-election was postponed on the request of U.P. government and that too for more than twenty months. Candidates failed to file election returns and hence, as a result thereof, the Election Commissioner had to disqualify them. In 1977, as many as 720 candidates were disqualified on this ground. Similarly in 2004 and 2009 many candidates were disqualified.

f) Issuing of Model Code of Conduct

The Election Commission has developed a model code of conduct in consultation with the different political parties. When the elections are notified the parties are supposed to adhere to this model code of conduct and in case a candidate violates the code of conduct the Election Commission can cancel the polls or postpone it. The Election Commission can issue certain directions keeping in view the holding of free and fair elections, e.g., before 1998 Lok Sabha elections the Commission issued the direction that the state government will not make any changes in the list of OBCs (Other Backward Castes) till the completion of the electoral process for the 12th Lok Sabha.

(g) Disqualification of M.Ps. and M.L.As.

The Election Commission has the authority to decide if any sitting member of Parliament or State Legislative respectively, has incurred disqualification for holding a position as stipulated in clause (i) of Article 102 (in respect of M.Ps) and clause (2) of Article 192 of the Indian Constitution. The President is required to seek written opinion of the Election Commission in this regard and he is bound to act upon the advice of the Election Commission.

Critical Evaluation

As far as the working of the Election Commission in India is concerned, it

may be said that though there has been some lapses in the past yet by and large the Commission has worked independently and impartially as well as efficiently. It has fulfilled its constitutional obligation and has worked within the framework of the Constitution. When the Election Commission conducted the first general election in 1951-52, the electorate were just 171 million but the present strength of the electorate is more than 50 crores. The Commission has been able to cope with the ever-mounting responsibilities. Further, we can say when people's faith in other democratic institutions eroded to great extent due to the decline of democratic values the Election Commission has been able to strengthen people's faith in it. The Election Commission has now never hesitated to act against any erring party whether ruling or otherwise.

In the end it can be stated that the Commission provides solid base to the democracy in India by conducting free, fair and peaceful elections. But it needs to be made more independent of the government control.

SUGGESTED QUESTION

1. Role of Election Commission in Independent India.

**ELECTORAL REFORMS IN INDIA :
ITS NEED AND SUGGESTIONS**

Free and fair elections constitute the very essence of a democratic system. The ideal of people's government can only be realised if the citizens have unhindered freedom to elect representatives according to their own free will. Hence, it is maintained that the survival of democratic system of government is dependent upon fair and free elections. However, fair and free elections are possible only if there is an independent electoral machinery. Like Caesar's wife the Election Commission should be above suspicion. Although abundant cautions were taken by the framers of the Indian Constitution for creating an independent electoral machinery yet numerous defects have crept into the system. The working of the Election Commission also reveals that our electoral system has become defective and people's faith in the integrity of the electoral system is losing ground. The former Chief Election Commissioner, T.N. Sheshan, retired Cabinet Secretary, tried to assert the independence of the Election Commission in its working. And he did succeed in raising the creditability of the Commission. His successor, Dr. M.S. Gill, also continued the healthy traditions though in a more sophisticated manner. But, unfortunately, earlier the Commission did behave in some partisan manner in accommodating the views of the Central government in fixing or postponing the dates for holding elections in various states.

So far fifteen general elections have been held in our country. The people's faith in the democratic system has been stabilised. The voters have demonstrated their presence by bringing about change in the regime at the central level on several occasions by rejecting those who have bypassed the aspirations of the people. Likewise, the voters have ousted those governments from the citadel of power that misbehaved with the voters or respective status. However, the electoral process has come to be polluted due to malpractices that have emerged in our system.

We have below some details of the serious drawbacks that have come to affect the electoral system in our country.

(i) Defective Electoral Machinery : In order to bring credibility to the integrity of the Election Commission, it is being argued that all inbuilt short-comings in the Election Commission be removed to make it fully independent of the Central government. The appointment of two more Election Commissioners has to some extent made the Election Commission as a plural body. One man dictatorship has

been curbed as decisions now are to be taken after taking into consideration the advice/opinion of other two Election Commissioners. The Indian Constitution is silent with regard to the qualifications needed to become eligible for appointment as Election Commissioner. The Central Government usually, appoints such retired government officials who happen to be in the good books of the ruling party. It has been seen that mostly retired IAS or IPS persons have been accommodated for this prestigious post. Even after retirement, the Chief Election Officers are rewarded by the government by offering lucrative jobs as Governor of State.

At present, the Election Commission is completely at the mercy of the executive and Parliament for its manpower and financial requirements. It finds it difficult to maintain electoral polls update without active financial assistance from the State government.

It has been suggested that Election Commission should have its separate independent Department with branches upto the Tehsil level under its direct control and supervision on the pattern of Indian Audit and Accounts Department. Besides, the Chief Election Commissioner (including two Election Commissioners) should be appointed from the sitting judges of the Supreme Court and they should hold office till they attain the age of 65 years. Alternatively, it is being argued that eminent jurists/statesmen be appointed by the President of India after consultation with the Chief Justice of India, speaker of the Lok Sabha and leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha. They should retire with full pay as pension and they should be debarred to hold any other appointment or assignment after retirement. The salary and allowances be charged on the Consolidated Fund of India. Unless the Election Commission is provided with an independent cadre and enjoy the same autonomy as the judiciary, its objectivity and impartiality remains a theoretical concept.

(ii) Abuse of Money Power : Elections in India have become rich man's game. The poor and under-privileged people (roughly 40% of the people who live below the poverty line) cannot afford to contest elections as they lack financial resources to meet expenditure on election that runs into lakhs of rupees. In fact, the battle of ballot has become a battle of currency notes. Only those affluent sections of the Indian society who can afford to meet staggering amount of money can alone think of contesting the elections. The Election Commissioner (on November 3, 1989) had fixed ceiling on election expenses for the Lok Sabha that varied from Rs. 1,20,000 to Rs. 1.50 lakhs and for Assembly election this figure varied from Rs. 35,000 to Rs. 50,000, but now for Lok Sabha expenditure is 25 lakhs and for assembly it is 10 lakhs.

In view of the substantial hike in prices of petrol, diesel, printing of posters, banners and other material required by the candidates seeking election to Parliament or State Legislatures, the Central Government in consultation with the Election Commission has raised three-fold increase in the ceiling on election

expenses on October 21, 1990. The Conduct of Election Rules, 1961 were amended and the ceiling for Parliamentary constituencies was raised from Rs. 1.50 lakhs. For the Assembly elections, this ceiling has been fixed at Rs. 1.50 lakhs. For instance, the State of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and U.P. have been allowed election expenses upto Rs. 1.50 lakhs for each Assembly constituency. However, for smaller states, the ceiling on election expenses is fixed at a lower level.

The recent increase in the ceiling of expenses on elections does not keep pace with the inflationary rate that India is witnessing over the past two decades. The ceiling of Rs. 1.50 lakhs for Assembly Elections does not fully meet the expenditure as the hiring of jeeps and printing posters, banners, leaflets and renting of loudspeakers is costly. Mr. Seshan claimed that an elected member of Lok Sabha has confessed of having spent an amount of Rs. 8.000 crores on his election but now for Lok Sabha member expenditure is 25 lakhs and for state assembly member it is ten lakhs.

Unfortunately, the expenditure incurred on election by a friend or relative or political party or any other association is not counted while determining the limit of expenses to be incurred by an individual candidate. If the government is really interested in controlling the abuse of money power in elections, it must modify these rules. It may be recalled that the Supreme Court on October 11, 1974, had declared void elections of Congress candidate from Sadar Bazar constituency of Delhi on the plea that the candidate had exceeded the limit on election expenses. In order to save the other elected candidates from being unseated on this account, the Union government promulgated an Ordinance on October 19, 1974 which was replaced by an Act of Parliament at a later stage.

Likewise, the electoral laws have imposed ban on donations to be made by companies to political parties. However, the companies offer huge amount of money for advertisements inserted in the souvenirs that are published by political parties. from time to time. There is no ban on the money to be spent on hotel expenses etc. by the companies. The lacuna in the ceiling on election expenses allows unhindered use of money. The candidate is prohibited not to incur expenses beyond the statutory limit for the money which the relatives, friends, or political parties or any other association may spend on the election of an individual.

(iii) Abuse of Muscle Power : Over the past two decades, the political process in India has been criminalised. The quality of public life has deteriorated. The moral standard of our politicians, policemen and criminals are indistinguishable from one another. The political leaders have, without exception, become thoroughly unprincipled, unscrupulous and opportunistic. The nexus between the crime and politics has caused political and institutional decay in India. Persons with crime history have found their way to become members of Legislative Assemblies and of

Parliament. It is an open secret that anti-social elements (including hard criminals, cum-smugglers, thugs, persons involved in committing rapes, murders, of hijacking aeroplanes etc.) have manipulated to become members of elected bodies by using muscle power. The voters are threatened to vote for them; even election booths are captured and bogus votes are frequently resorted to in order to ensure the victory of such anti-social elements. It has been revealed that nearly 173 members of U.P. are suspected to be connected with various kinds of crimes. In March, 1985 Vidhan Sabha elections in Bihar alone about 100 persons were killed and more than 300 persons were wounded by muscle men of rival factions. In 1989 and 1991 Lok Sabha elections, there were cases of booth capturing on a very large scale. In the state of Bihar, 122 cases of booth capturing in 1985 Assembly Elections were reported. Earlier in 1977, as many as 67 pseudo politicians with criminal background were elected. It is true of many other states. Even political parties offer tickets to such elements. Even political leaders take help of such elements in order to win elections. The use of violence in elections is very much in evidence in the North Eastern States (like Manipur, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Nagaland, Assam etc.) of the Indian Union. The growing influence of muscle power is likely to erode people's faith in the functioning of our system. It is high time that political parties should desist from offering tickets to such persons. The electoral law should be made more stringent to check and neutralize the influence of muscle power in the holding of fair and free elections.

(iv) Mis-use of Governmental Machinery : It is a common fact that ruling party frequently abuse its authority in furthering its own electoral prospects. The ministers including the Chief Minister and the Prime Minister at the Central level use the official cars, summon important functionaries of the State officials including I.A.S. and other high officials for rendering help to the ruling party in winning elections. Foundation stones of factories, dams and canals etc. are laid down, concessions worth crores of rupees are announced to woo the voters for casting their votes in favour of the ruling party on the eve of elections. Even public platforms for addressing the public are raised by the bureaucrats who aspire to seek favours from the ruling party. In fact, every ruling party (whether at the State level or at the National level) abuse its authority in order to re-assure its victory in the elections. The members of the higher bureaucracy (including Deputy Commissioners, Tehsildars, Excise and Taxation Commissioners including police officials are frequently summoned and directed by the Ministers and other functionaries of the ruling party) to render all types of help to ensure victory of the ruling party. In order to seek favour like promotion, transfer, etc., the members of the bureaucracy lend all type of help to the ruling party. The Ministers use their discretionary funds in distributing favours according to their liking.

(v) Mis-use of Mass Media : The electoral law in our country allows that recognised political parties (by Election Commission of India) can approach the

A.I.R. and Door Darshan (televisions) for allowing its representatives to make direct appeal to the voters according to the time allotted to them by the authorities of A.I.R. and Door Darshan. But, it has been seen that these bodies often give more prominence for covering the activities of the ruling party. The A.I.R. and Door Darshan, though enjoying limited autonomy in its functioning, are not totally independent in its functioning. The abuse of mass media to further the interests of the ruling party makes election entirely unequal and unfair. Wide coverage is given for broadcasting and televising the election campaign carried on by the ruling party and very little time is allotted in depiction of the activities of the rival political parties. Since Indian electorate is not adequately educated, it does affect the voting behaviour of an average illiterate voter.

(vi) Multi-Party System : Despite the successful functioning of our democratic system, India has failed to produce a viable party system. The successful functioning of democratic system requires a viable party system (consisting of two or three political parties). Unfortunately, India is a land where political parties of all kinds of ideologies (Right, Left, Centrist and of all lives based on consideration of caste, religion, race, region etc.) are found. Obviously, therefore, large number of candidates are fielded. It makes difficult for the voters to select the best candidate. The fielding of large number of candidates in the elections causes confusion and unnecessary result in wastage of huge amount of money and energies on the part of the political parties and even by independent candidates. Ballot paper containing the large number of candidates results in wastage of money for printing the names of such candidates. A liable party system ensured responsible government and makes it fully accountable. If the party in power fails to come upto the expectations of the people, the electorate can oust it from power in the next elections and the voters can instal an alternative government. A multi-party system creates confusion and it always considers to bring unstable system of government. Unstable government is unable to formulate long range policies for betterment of the people. Hence, a liable party system alone can serve the people in a better way.

(vii) Large Number of Independents : According to our electoral law, anybody who has attained the required age (25 for becoming a member of a Legislative Assembly) can contest elections. Political parties field their candidates keeping in view the popularity and public image of a leader. Those who fail to get ticket from a political party, also file the names as independent candidates. Since 1952 elections, India have witnessed the going menance of the independent candidates. Independent candidates are not committed to any ideology or discipline of a political party. Large number of independents, who were elected during the IV General elections were an important factor in causing political instability in large number of states. We witnessed the rise and collapse of many United Front governments. The anti-defection law, to some extent, has sought to curb the nefarious activities of the

defectors. However, the independent candidates, after becoming elected member of an elected body often resort to the game of acquiring political advantage for themselves. Such activities of the independents lower the prestige of parliamentary institutions.

(viii) Defective Majoritarian Rule : According to our electoral system a candidate is declared elected to Legislative Assembly or Lok Sabha if he happens to get majority of votes as compared to other candidates. For instance, if there are four candidates for an Assembly seat, A gets 5000 votes, B gets 4500 votes, C gets 3500 votes and D gets 2000 votes. According to our system, A is declared elected as he secured more votes as compared to candidates B, C and D respectively. It also means that A candidate got support of only 5000 voters whereas he has been rejected by 10,000 voters (4500+3500+2000). In other words, Mr. A candidate represents by the opinion only 5000 voters and 10,000 voters expressed their lack of faith in him. Hence, this Majoritarian Rule in deciding victory of the candidates in election is highly undemocratic. Two-third voters expressed their lack of confidence and how a representative, representing the opinion of one-third of voters can be called truly democratic. In our country, we have seen that Congress party rules India uninterruptedly since 1952 to 1976. It got majority of seats in the Lok Sabha, but it always won in less than 50 percent votes of the total votes cast.

Hence, it is being suggested that India should opt for a list system where seats will be distributed according to the percentage of votes secured by each political party. The list system is being used in most of the European democratic countries.

(ix) Delay in deciding Election Petitions : Lot of time is spent in settling disputes that arise in the election petitions. A person who has violated the electoral process by resorting to malpractices in elections has no right to act as representative using the name of religion, caste, community for winning elections or offering bribery, using governmental machinery or providing transport to the voters or exceeding on election expenses, etc. becomes liable for resorting to the use of malpractices. He becomes guilty of violating the electoral law. If it is proved that a candidate has resorted to any of the malpractices, his election is set aside and he is also debarred to contest elections for a period of six years. There is a dire need that Special Bench in each High Court of the states be created to decide all election disputes. It should be made obligatory that election petition be decided within a period of three months from the date of filing such petitions. All the appeals in the Supreme Court be disposed off within another span of three months. Any delay in settling an election petition is bound to create bad impression among the voters. A person who got elected to the Legislative Assembly or Parliament has no moral, legal right to sit in these elected bodies.

(x) Impersonation : Bogus voting has often been resorted in rural and urban

centres of India. This malpractice was used by the greedy politicians to ensure their victory by fair and foul means. The previous Chief Election Commission (Mr. Seshan) had introduced the system of identity cards to the voters. The central government issued cards to the voters. The Chief Election Commissioner even threatened not to hold elections for a State Assembly if a particular state fails to provide identity cards to the eligible voters. Holding of fair and free election will become feasible with the introduction of the scheme of photo identity cards. The Returning Officer will now be able to check cases of impersonation as only persons having photo-identity cards will be allowed to cast their votes.

Electoral Reforms of India

There have been many suggestions for reforming the electoral system in India put forward by eminent scholars, and some important committees appointed in 1974 which is known as Tarkunde Committee and had such eminent persons in it as V.M. Tarkunde, M.R. Massani, P.G. Mavalankar and A.G. Noorani. Similarly, Dinesh Goswami Committee (1990) also came out with some suggestions for reforms. Some of the reforms which have been introduced are as under :

- (i) Lowering of voting age from 21 years to 18 years through 61st Amendment Act, 1989.

- (ii) Under the People's Representation Act (Amendment) 1998, a new Section 13-C has been inserted which provides that officers or staff engaged in electoral duties shall be deemed to be on deputation of Election Commission for the period of such employment and such personnel shall during that period be subject to control, superintendence and discipline of Election Commission.

- (iii) To keep the number of non-serious independent candidates low in the Lok Sabha election the amount of security deposit has been increased from Rs. 500 to Rs. 10,000 and the candidate's name must be proposed at least by 10 voters and also seconded by 10 voters.

- (iv) **Use of Electronic Voting Machines :** The People's Representation Act was amended to facilitate the use of electronic voting machines to rule out the possibility by any malpractices. Though the machines have not been put in use at larger scale but the beginning was made by their use in a few constituencies during the State Assembly Elections (November, 1998). In 2004 elections these machines were used in all constituencies.

- (v) There have been some amendments in the People's Representation Act for cancellation of polling because of violation of moral code of conduct and adjournment or countermanding of elections because of booth capturing.

Suggestion : In addition, the following suggestions are being offered to ensure fair and free elections in our country.

- (i) **Independent Electoral Machinery :** It is high time that the existing provisions of the electoral law pertaining to appointment of the Chief Election

Commission and other two Election Commissioners be amended; all these members be appointed by the President of India in consultation with the Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha and a Speaker of the Lok Sabha. After retirement, they may not be offered any appointment. They must retire after attaining the age of 65 years and they should be allowed to enjoy pension equivalent to the salary, which they were drawing on the eve of retirement.

(ii) To Check the influence of Money Power : In order to control the evil influence of money power, it is being suggested that all election expenses be borne by the State. It is pointed out that in many countries (like Argentina, Mexico, Uruguay, Canada, U.K., Germany, Israel, Australia, Costa Rica, Pretro Rico etc.) government provides subsidy for election purposes. Even in France, government makes payment to candidates for election expenses such as printing, postage, gasoline, bill paseing etc. In USA, the Presidential Electional campaign Fund Act allows each income tax paying citizen to contribute a dollar to the federally administered fund to be evenly divided between the major parties for expenditure on the Presidential campaign.

The government of India can easily raise the necessary fund by imposing a nominal tax on the one hand and by allowing companies to contribute a limited amount to the nationally administered Election Fund. If scheme of funding the election expenses by the State is accepted, then all the evils connected with elections can be curbed. All parties will be given equal treatment in allocation of funds and all funds will be spent by the State according to commonly accepted norms. No political party will be allowed to flout the rules and proper punishment can be imposed on those who dare to violate the sanctity of such rules.

(iii) Check on the abuse of Governmental Machinersy : It will be highly desirable if a provision is incorporated in our constitution for providing a scheme of care-taker government during the pendency of election. The President of India (at national level) and the Governor of a State should temporarily take over the administration till the elections are completed at the state or national level, respectively, not exceeding beyond two months.

(iv) Longer Period of Disqualification : Our electoral law should have the right to field their candidates in election. At present, security is refunded of the candidate who is able to poll one sixth of the total votes polled. This may be changed and the security be refunded if a candidate is able to obtain one-fourth of votes. A candidate securing less than 10% of the total valid votes may be disqualified for a period of six years. Besides, no candidate be allowed to contest from more than one constituency. All these provisions will help in reducing the number of fake candidates.

(vi) Compulsory Voting : It has been seen in India that large number of voters do not care to exercise their franchise. As a result of this factor, we came to have governments that represent the opinion of the minority. It cannot be called as

people's government. Only 60 to 70 per cent of voters take the trouble to cast their votes. Out of this percentage, political party by capturing 40 to 45 per cent votes is able to capture power in our country. During the 1977 and 1980 elections, more than 15 crores out of 35-40 crores eligible voters did not vote in these crucial elections. This is a dangerous symptom for the health of Indian democracy. If this trend continues, the participatory base of democracy will be undermined. Keeping this fact in view, the Chief Election Commissioner, as far back as 1968, had suggested the imposition of nominal fine on those who failed to vote in an election due to apathy or negligence. If some sort of compulsion is imposed, it will certainly be helpful in having governments according to the opinion of majority of voters.

(vii) Photo Identity Cards : To check impersonation and bogus voting the use of photo identity cards is highly desirable. Already the government of India has accepted this proposal of the Election Commission. The States have been busy in issuing photo identity cards to all the eligible voters. However, still the voters have not been able to be issued photo identity cards.

(viii) Time Limit for holding Bye-elections : The People's Representation Act is silent about the period within which a seat falling vacant is to be filled. Hence, the ruling party at the National and State level kept spending for years to hold bye-elections. It is suggested that a time limit of 3 to 6 months be fixed to hold all bye-elections. Sometime holding Assembly Elections (in a peaceful or orderly manner) may not be possible. The holding of Assembly Elections in Punjab on June 21, 1991 was postponed by the Election Commission on the advice of the Prime Minister, P.V. Narsimha Rao. These were held on February 19, 1992 under strict police and military vigil. So far as the bye-elections are concerned, all opposition seems to favour a time limit of six months.

(ix) Equal Broadcasting Facilities : All recognised political parties be given equal time for speaking to the voters for explaining the programmes and policies of each party. The A.I.R. and Door Darshan should act in an independent manner in projecting the election campaign of political parties on equal footing. During the last two Lok Sabha elections this practice was given practical shape. The ruling party should not be allowed to misuse the mass-media to her advantage.

(x) Government must quit two months before the poll : It will be better if the government quits office two months before the commencement of the polling. This is the best method to check the abuse of governmental machinery by the ruling party.

Unless the above stated suggestions are carried out, free and fair elections are doubtful. In addition to these suggestions some additional reforms are worth implementing :

- (a) person with criminal record should not be allowed to contest election.
- (b) Those persons who resort to violence during elections, should be summarily tried and if convicted, they should be disqualified.

- (c) Booth capturing and resorting to bogus voting (including impersonation) be made a convincible offence and the Election Commission be empowered to penal action against the poll officers if they are found to have abetted the crime.
- (d) The campaign period should be reduced from 20 days to 15 days.
- (e) The election to Lok Sabha and State Assemblies should be held simultaneously as far as possible. This practice will help in saving huge amount of expenditure.
- (f) The existing electoral law be amended. Expenses incurred on elections by other persons should be included in the ceiling fixed for election purposes.
- (g) Election petitions should be decided within a period of two months.

SUGGESTED QUESTION

1. How reforms can be brought in Electoral System in India ?

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4. It may be recalled that Election Commission had suggested four fold increase in the limit of election expenses to be incurred by candidates in a communication sent to the Prime Minister on 29.09.1994. The Home Minister (Shri S.B. Chavan) held a meeting with leaders of various political parties on 11.10.1994 in which most of the opposition leaders favoured a three-fold increase. For full details, please see : *Tribune*, dated 21.10.1994.
5. *The Tribune* dated 12.10.1994
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