

## **CHAPTER - II**

### **NATURE OF INDIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM**

India's relatively stable democracy and slow but steady economic development during the last five decades of independence appear exceptional to many observers. The existence and survival of the Indian democratic state and its capacity to oversee a reasonably sustained economic growth can be explained partly in terms of "the legacies of statelessness and state formation that distinguish India from most Third World countries. Their proximate determinant was the vice regal state of the British Raj. Their more distant determinants included the Mughal Empire from whose ideas and practice the British benefited and which the British assimilated, and the imperial states and regional kingdoms of ancient and medieval India".<sup>1</sup>

The troubled political history of many Asian and African countries, during the last several decades, has shown that the task of state building must precede parallel nation building and economic development. "Contrary to prevailing assumptions of scholarship and policy in the generation since decolonization, states create nations and economics more than nations and economics create states."<sup>2</sup>

#### **THE SUB-CONTINENTAL EMPIRE:**

India's political tradition of stateness is rooted in its ancient and medieval history. Unlike some emergent states in Africa, it was not imported from Europe. In ideological and constitutional terms, it was not a foreign transplant though British rule in some ways did influence state formation and the level and quality of stateness in India. But British rule in turn was built on Mughal rule

and incorporated many of its characteristics. The historical legacies of the sub-continental empires more than two millennia ago had established conceptions and institutions of the state that provided models for the contemporary multinational state of the Indian Republic. Regional kingdoms, however, constituted the principal state from the seventh to the sixteenth century. But the sub-continental state conception had already been realized in the Mauryan empire, particularly under Ashoka (312-185 B.C.), and under the imperial rule of the Guptas (A.D. 319-540).

India's ancient empires had established their hegemony in the entire sub-continent over diverse regional kingdoms, thus, creating the structures and conceptions of a pan-Indian state. The concept of a *Chakravarti* ruler remained a part of India's political history sometimes as a reality and sometimes as an ideal to be pursued by powerful conquerors. Indian political tradition reflects a dialectical tension between these ever present regional political identities and the perennial quest for an imperial state. "The history of Indian state formation is more comparable to that of Russia and China, where empires became multinational states, than to that of Western Europe, where regional kingdoms were transformed into absolute monarchies and then nation-states".<sup>3</sup> Had the Holy Roman Empire embodied itself in a modern European polity, it could have resembled the modern Indian Republic. In fact, the regional kingdoms have remained in dialectical relation with the sub-continental empire thought Indian history. Today the dialectical relationship manifests itself through a federal form of government in the Indian Republic.

On the Indian sub-continent, the regional kingdom and the 'national' polity became the 'recessive' but the 'multinational' empire the 'dominant' form

of the state. The Mughal, British and Indian states of the modern age incorporate the dialectical tension between these two alternating state forms in India's political tradition. India's sub-continental empires created means of penetration and domination which can be compared to those developed by European absolutism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These were: centralized fiscal instruments in the possession of the king; patrimonial agrarian bureaucracies barred from control of the means of administration and also from inheriting their office and estates; and armies financed and controlled by the king and not by feudal chiefs or independent military adventurers. Such arrangements were already in force in the fourth-century B.C. Mauryan imperial state and discussed in Kautilya's *Arthashastra*.<sup>4</sup>

However, their realization has differed over time. Reinforced in later imperial states, they have weakened under enfeebled emperors or under regional satraps, whose officials seize control over estates, office, army and treasury through manipulation or use of force. The mughals succeeded in constructing a centralized military-revenue arrangement, the *mansabdari*, which enabled it to extract the resources and maintain the army to conquer and govern an extensive empire. "Comparable in size to the domains of Charlers V., the Mughal empire probably controlled its area more severely. The emperor's dominion was exercised through a centrally appointed court nobility, the *mansabdars*, not through decentralized prebendaries as in European feudalism".<sup>5</sup> Noble estates were not hereditary. The Mughals were influenced by Ottoman models of administration and revenue collection, though the Ottomans were more ruthless in eliminating intermediary classes than the Mughals. The local rulers and chiefs survived in India, forming intermediary

layers of political, economic, and cultural autonomy. This contrasts with the model of 'oriental despotism' expressed in the Ottoman empire as well as with Russian Tsarist absolutism.

The administrative-revenue system of the Mughal rulers provided the network, units and methods of revenue collection and the conceptions of maintaining social peace. The division of the country into *subahs*, *sarkars*, and *parganas* was perpetuated in British administrative divisions. The *zebt* method of measuring land for fixing revenue traveled from the administrations of Sher Shah and Akbar to Cornwallis and the British rule. In the latter period of Aurangzeb's rule and under the last Mughal rulers, the authority and capacity of the state appreciably declined. It was restored under British viceroys, who revived and reformulated the notions and practices of the imperial state bequeathed from the Mauryan times.

Imperial states created the myths, rhetoric and symbols of the king's eminence and the state's glory. Both the Mughals and the British benefited from the age-old and pervasive Hindu concept of a universal emperor, the *Chakravarti Rajadhiraja*, who performed the *Ashwamedha* sacrifice. Akbar became a *shahanshah* (king of kings) and Queen Victoria assumed the grand title of Empress to legitimize their authority over the Indian elites and masses. Such iconography, rituals and sanctification elevated the ruler to a god-like status, who became an object of awe, wonder and celebration. "Here too there was continuity between British and Mughal empires. The British used Mughal ceremonies and language to revitalize the universalism and mystique of the imperial state. Through ceremonial enactments that closely emulated Mughal patterns, they revived in Queen Victoria's time imperial grandeur and

patrimonial ties in durbars, jubilees, and coronation ceremonies and rituals of loyalty between the Queen-Empress and her subjects.”<sup>6</sup>

The realization of the sub-continental state has waxed and waned in history. The Mughals and the British in their own different ways revived and restored the structures of the sub-continental imperial state after defeating their regional challengers. The creation of India and Pakistan in 1947 and Bangladesh in 1971 left the sub-continent with one sub-continental imperial state and two latter-day representatives of the regional kingdom in a dialectical tension between them. In contrast with modern European states, which destroyed or absorbed regional identities, the Indian state has tried to accommodate regional cultures and identifies through federal arrangements.

The strategy propounded in the fourth century *Arthashastra* – that subordinate rulers shall be preserved and respected in their customs and territorial jurisdiction, via tribute and respect, the superior authority of a king of kings governed the statecraft of the sub-continental empires in Mughal, British and Indian times. After independence, India’s federal system became its modern embodiment within the twentieth-century model of the sub-continental state.

### **SOCIETY, STATE AND INDIVIDUAL:**

The state-society relationship, as Rudolphs put it, can be measured on a continuum-ranging from complete state domination of society to complete societal dominance over the state.

They identify four potential positions on the continuum:

- 1) Totalitarian, in which the state totally dominates society, creating and controlling social institutions, maintaining a closed social order, and using force and terror to secure compliance.
- 2) Autonomous, in which the state can be independent because of its insulation from social forces, the only limits on its actions being consent and legitimacy.
- 3) Constrained, in which the state's freedom to act is limited by the representation of organized social interests; and
- 4) Reflexive in which the state lacks self-determination because organized social classes have seized state authority and its resources. A particular state's location on the continuum would depend "on historical circumstances, including ideology, leadership, conjunctural effects, and the balance of public and private power".<sup>7</sup>

The Indian state is the residual legatee of a long tradition of high stateness that goes back to ancient imperial states and medieval regional polities. More recently, this high stateness, expressed in terms like *sarkar* (government) and *raj* (rule) is derived from more recent Mughal and British empires. After independence, the Indian Republic can be located in the middle positions of the continuum, autonomous or constrained, rather than at its extremes, totalitarian or reflexive. The state as a third actor began its career in independent India as a creature of Nehruvian 'socialism', which was independent of the class politics of both private capital and organized labour. "For Nehru, socialism meant using the planned development of an industrial society to eliminate poverty, provide social justice, create a self-reliant

economy, and assure national independence and security in world politics. In a mixed economy, the state would occupy the commanding heights.”<sup>8</sup>

Apart from Nehruvian consensus on the mixed economy, traditional Hindu and imported liberal state theory have also made tremendous impact on state formation and the level and quality of stateness. Hindu theory emphasizes family, caste, clan, and tribe. Liberal theory regard is the individual as the basic unit of society. Liberal theory also stresses the contracture basis of obedience and authority. Hindu theory is related to *Danda Niti* (science of punishment) and *Arthashastra's* real Politik. It differs sharply with liberal conception of right reason and natural law as the source of order and morality. Yet the two theoretical traditions converge with respect to the priority of social values over state goals. The *dharmashastras* constitute fundamental prescriptive canons of Hindu culture in a society where the ruler and the ruled are equally bound by them. The doctrine implied restraints on the king's power inherent in the *Danda Niti* as liberal doctrines of consent and natural rights did in relation to the western state. The good Hindu king was required to protect the laws of the self-regulating orders of society.

At the extreme, both liberal and Hindu state theory reach the point of anarchism. This is suggested by the convergence of Thoreau and Gandhi on the philosophy, legitimacy and importance of civil disobedience to resist the state that violates social values and ethical norms of good and just governance. The founders of the Republican constitution benefited from the legacy of high stateness bequeathed to them by the political tradition of the Mauryan, Mughal and British sub-continental state. But they were obliged to combine the

principles of centralization with a parallel system of regional autonomy, derived from the political tradition of self-administering regional kingdoms.

Rudolphs conclude this dialectical interpretation of the Indian state by saying: “The ideas and practice of the sub-continental imperial state from Mauryan to British times and the Hindu conception that social order requires the state’s force, left a legacy of high stateness. On the other hand, the sovereignty-limiting ideas and practice of the regional kingdom and of the Hindu and liberal conceptions that society is prior to and autonomous of the state created a legacy of low stateness. These paradigms and parameters structured the possibilities and choices of those who created independent India’s state”.<sup>9</sup> The nature of the state cannot be determined a priori from theory. State-society relationships vary with historical circumstances and the process of the state formation produces polymorphous entities. Peter Nettl, therefore, argued that high and low stateness varied with historical experience, political, cultural and structural legacies.<sup>10</sup>

### **OBSTACLES TO DEMOCRACY:**

By the time of Queen Elizabeth-I in England, the Mughal conquerors of India had established in India what Jarl Wittfogel called an oriental despotism. Barrington Moore prefers to call it “an agrarian bureaucracy or an Asian version of royal absolutism, rather more primitive than that of China, a political system unfavourable to political democracy and the growth of a trading class. Neither aristocratic nor bourgeois privileges and liberties were able to threaten Moghul rule. Nor were there among the peasants any forces at work that would have been likely to produce either an economic or a political break with the prevailing



society”.<sup>11</sup> Village community and caste system prevented peasant discontent from taking the form of massive rebellion as in the case of China.

When the Mughal system simply broke down due to lack of qualitative change and the dynamics of increasing exploitation produced by its system of tax-farming, the collapse gave the European bourgeoisie the chance to establish its colonial foothold in the eighteenth century. There were then powerful obstacles to modernization and democracy in India’s social structure prior to the British conquest. The British rule damaged the artisan castes and promoted the rise of a parasitic landlord class. The colonial regime, the foreign bourgeoisie and the native landlords extracted a substantial economic surplus from the impoverished peasantry. The British presence, the failure of 1857 rebellion, and the character of Indian society ruled out the Japanese path to modernity and industrial development. Hence, economic stagnation continued throughout the British era and indeed into the present day.

However, the British rule prevented the formation of the reactionary coalition of landowning elites with a weak bourgeois class and thereby, along with British cultural influence, made a small contribution to political democracy and bourgeois parliamentary. The Indian manufacturers felt cramped by imperialist policies and allied with the nationalist movement. “As the nationalist movement grew. Gandhi provided a link between powerful sections of the bourgeoisie and the peasantry through the doctrines of non-violence, trusteeship and glorification of the Indian village community. For this and other reasons, the nationalist movement did not take a revolutionary form.... The outcome of these forces was indeed political democracy, but a democracy that

has not done a great deal toward modernizing India's social structure. Hence, farming still lurks in the background."<sup>12</sup>

According to Moreland, the fundamental features of the traditional Indian polity were a sovereign who ruled, an army that supported the throne, and a peasantry that paid for both. To this trio one should add the institution of caste for a better understanding of Indian society. The weakness of a national aristocracy was an important obstacle in the growth of parliamentary democracy from native soil. Land was held in theory and to a great extent in practice at the pleasure of the ruler. Again there was no such thing as the inheritance of office and so each generation had to make a fresh start.

By skimming off most of the economic surplus generated by the peasants, the Mughal rulers avoided the dangers of an aristocratic attack on their power. At the same time, wasteful use of surplus seriously limited the possibilities of the kind of development that could have broken through the agrarian order and established a new kind of society. "The point deserves stressing since Marxists and Indian nationalists generally argue that Indian society was on the point of bursting through the fetters of an agrarian system when the advent of British imperialism crushed and distorted potential developments in this direction. This conclusion seems quite unwarranted on the basis of the evidence, which gives strong support to the opposite thesis; that neither capitalism nor parliamentary democracy could have emerged unaided from seventeenth century Indian society".<sup>13</sup>

Cities like Agra, Lahore, Delhi and Vijayanagar rivaled the splendor of Rome, Paris and Constantinople but they were not centers of trade and

commerce. Despite the Protestant ethic of the Baniyas, there was no vibrant middle class in Indian cities. The French traveler Bernier says, "There is no middle estate. A man must be either of the highest rank or live miserably."<sup>14</sup> The Mughal legal system was behind that of Europe and no merchant could seek the protection of his rights from the court with the help of a lawyer as this profession was non-existent. The Mughal system was too predatory in relation to merchants as well as other property-owners. Yet chieftains and *zamindars* were left alone as long as they paid their taxes.

These local despots were too parochial and disunited to challenge and substitute for royal absolutism as the English aristocracy did from the days of Magna Carta. But they played a political role when the imperial system decayed and became more oppressive by becoming the rallying point for peasant rebellions. "Native elites together with the peasants could not wield India into a viable political unit on their own. But they could punish the errors of foreigners and make their position untenable. This the peasants did under the Moghuls, and with new allies, under the British; similar tendencies remain apparent even in the third quarter of the twentieth century".<sup>15</sup>

By the middle of the eighteenth century the Mughal bureaucratic hegemony had decayed into a system of petty kingdoms frequent at war with one another. This opened way for imperialist intervention and subsequent conquest of India. "As one looks back over the record, it is easy to conclude.... That the dynamics of the Moghul system were unfavourable to the development of political democracy or economic growth in anything resembling the Western pattern. There was no landed aristocracy that had succeeded in achieving independence and privilege against the monarch while retaining

political unity. Instead their independence, if it can be called that, had brought anarchy in its train. What there was of a bourgeoisie likewise lacked an independent base. Both features are connected with a predatory bureaucracy, driven to become ever more grasping as its power weakened, and which by crushing the peasants and driving them into rebellion returned the subcontinent to what it had often been before, a series of fragmented units fighting with one another, ready prey for another foreign conquerer.”<sup>16</sup>

The character of upper classes and political institutions prevented India's progress towards capitalism and political democracy. Besides, a closer look at the place of the peasants in India's social structure will account for their poor-productivity and apparent political docility. The structural contrast with China is quite striking. In India, the higher castes had the best land and could command the labour of the lower castes. As an organization of labour, caste in the countryside was a cause of poor cultivation. As the organization of authority in the local community, caste inhibited political unity. The system emphasized the individual's duty to the caste, not individual rights against society. “In the willing acceptance of personal degradation, by its victims and the absence of a specific target for hostility, a specific locus of responsibility for misery, the Indian caste system strikes a modern Westerner as a curiously intensified caricature of the world as Kafka saw it”.<sup>17</sup>

### **IMPERIALISM AND INDIA'S UNDERDEVELOPMENT:**

India's political tradition was abruptly unsettled and ruptured by imperialist intervention in the eighteenth century which started the process of India's underdevelopment. When this intervention began, India was

predominantly a feudalistic society. Of course, there are far-reaching differences between the European serfdom and pre-capitalist social structures of Japan, China and India but they had this similarity that the ruling class extracted an economic surplus from the peasants, though by different methods. So one should bear in mind that histories of feudalism, despite divergences, contain substantial similarities. Though many historians still object to the general applicability of the term 'feudalism', there is a wide consensus on the proposition: "that the pre-capitalist order, be it in Europe or be it in Asia, had entered at a certain state of its development a period of disintegration and decay. In different countries this decomposition was more or less violent, the period of decline was shorter or longer – the general *direction* of the movement was everywhere the same".<sup>18</sup>

There were three interrelated processes in this change. First, there was a notable increase in agricultural output accompanied by growing feudal pressure on the peasants, leading to their discontent and revolt and the creation of a potential industrial labour-force. Secondly, there was increased division of labour, evolution of the class of merchants and artisans and the growth of towns. Thirdly, there was visible accumulation of capital in the hands of the expanding class of traders and rich farmers. In the words of Marx, "what enables money wealth to become capital is on one hand its meeting with free workers; is secondly its meeting with equally free and available for sale means of subsistence, materials, etc. that were otherwise... the property of the now dispossessed masses."<sup>19</sup> However, it is the primary accumulation of capital to which strategic significance should be given. To quote Marx again, "Capital

formation does not stem from landed property nor from the guild but from merchant and usurer wealth".<sup>20</sup>

The state, as it came under the influence of capitalist interests, became increasingly active in aiding and advancing the emerging entrepreneurs. Marx said, "they all employ the power of the state, the concentrated and organized force of society, to hasten hothouse fashion, the transformation of the feudal mode of production into the capitalist mode, and to shorten the transition."<sup>21</sup> Western Europe's large leap forward need not necessarily have prevented economic growth in other countries like India. As Andre Gunder Frank testifies, development in Western countries was accompanied by simultaneous process of underdevelopment in colonies and semi-colonies. At the time of Western interaction, "the primary accumulation of capital was making rapid progress, crafts and manufacturing expanded, and mounting revolts of the peasantry combined with increasing pressure from the rising bourgeoisie shook the foundations of the pre-capitalist order. This can be seen whether we consider the early history of capitalism in Russia or whether we retrace the beginning of capitalism in India"<sup>22</sup> Marx said, "The country that is more developed industrially only shows to the less developed the image of its own future."<sup>23</sup>

In colonies like India, the colonizers "rapidly determined to extract the largest possible gains from the host countries, and to take their loot home they engaged in outright plunder or in plunder thinly veiled as trade, seizing and removing tremendous wealth from the places of their penetrations."<sup>24</sup> In the words of Maurice Dobb: "In the cruel capacity of its exploitation colonial policy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries differed little from the methods by which in earlier centuries crusaders and the armed merchants of Italian cities

had robbed the Byzantine territories of the Levant,”<sup>25</sup> Marx points out, “The treasures captured outside Europe by undisguised looting, enslavement and murder flowed back to the mother country and transformed themselves into capital.”<sup>26</sup> These ‘unilateral transfers’ of wealth multiplied economic surpluses available to Western capitalism for its growth and damaged the capacity of colonies like India to develop by robbing them of these aggregates of wealth and capital.

The record of India’s exploitation from the days of the East India Company has been summarized by a British economic historian, an authority not suspect of anti-British, prejudice as follows; “Up to the eighteenth century, the economic condition of India was relatively advanced, and Indian methods of production and of industrial and commercial organization could stand comparison with those in vogue in any other part of the world. A country which has manufactured and exported the finest muslins and other luxurious fabrics and articles when the ancestors of the British were living an extremely primitive life, has failed to take part in the economic revolution initiated by the descendant of those same wild barbarians.”<sup>27</sup>

This failure was not due to some peculiar inaptitude of the Indian race because “the great mass of the Indian people possess a great industrial energy, is well-filled to accumulate capital, and remarkable for a mathematical clearness of head, and talent for figures and exact sciences. Their intellects are excellent.”<sup>28</sup>

Brooks administration compares India’s plunder by the British with the worst examples of such loot in history: The Roman proconsuls who squeezed

out of a province the means of building marble palaces and obtain other luxuries just in a year and the Spanish Viceroy of Peru or Mexico who after plundering and killing the natives of Latin America, entered Madrid with a long train of gilded coaches and of sumpterhorses trapped and shod with silver. The British had outdone all of them.<sup>29</sup> “Very soon after Plessey the Bengal plunder began to arrive in London, and the effect appears to have been instantaneous, for all authorities agree that the industrial revolution,” the event which has divided the nineteenth century from all antecedent time began with the year 1790,<sup>30</sup>

Romesh Dutt concludes by saying : “In India, the state virtually interferes with the accumulation of wealth from the soil, intercepts the incomes and gains of the tillers leaving the cultivators permanently poor. In India, the state has fostered no new industries and revived no old industries for the people. In one shape or another all that could be raised in India by an excessive taxation flowed to Europe, after paying for a starved administration. Verily the moisture of India blesses and fertilizes other lands”.<sup>31</sup>

The calamity that the invasion of British capitalism brought upon India assumed staggering proportions. It is true that the process of transition from feudalism to capitalism has caused a vast amount of misery, suffering and starvation everywhere. Yet accumulation of capital ultimately served to lay the foundations for the eventual expansion of industrial output and productivity. Paul Baran points out : “Indeed, there can be no doubt that had the amount of economic surplus that Britain has torn from India been *invested in India*, India’s economic development to date would have borne little similarity to the actual sombre record. It is idle to speculate whether India by now would have reached



a level of economic advancement commensurate with its fabulous natural resources and with the potentialities of its people. In any case, the fate of the successive Indian generations would not have resembled even remotely the chronic catastrophe of the last two centuries.”<sup>32</sup>

But the harm done to India’s economic capacity was exceeded by the lasting damage inflicted upon the people as Marx put it: “All the civil wars, invasions, revolutions, conquests, famines strangely complex, rapid and destructive as the successive action in Hindustan may appear, did not go deeper than its surface. England has broken down the entire framework of Indian society, without any symptoms of reconsolidation yet appearing. This loss of the old world, with no gain of a new one, imparts a particular kind of melancholy to the present misery of the Hindu and separates Hindustan, ruled by Britain, from all its ancient traditions, and from the whole of its past history.”<sup>33</sup>

The British administration of India systematically destroyed all the fibers and foundations of Indians society. Its land and taxation policy ruined the rural economy and created a class of parasitic landlord and moneylender. Its commercial policy destroyed the artisan class and created the filthy slums of Indian cities filled with millions of hungry and sick paupers. Its economic policy prevented indigenous industrialization and promoted the proliferation of speculators, petty businessmen, agents and sharks of all types preying upon the miserable people of a decaying society. To quote from Kaye’s *Life of Metcalfe*. “It was our policy in those days to keep the natives of India in the profoundest state of barbarism and darkness, and every attempt to diffuse the

light of knowledge among the people, either of our own or of the independent states, was vehemently opposed and resented.”<sup>34</sup>

Jawaharlal Nehru Says : “British rule thus consolidated itself by creating new classes and vested interests who were tied up with that rule and whose privileges depended on its continuance. There were the landowners and the princes, and there were a large number of subordinate members of the services in various departments of the government. To all these methods must be added the deliberate policy, pursued throughout the period of British rule, of creating divisions among Indians, of encouraging one group at the cost of the other”.<sup>35</sup> It is thus a fair assessment of the impact on India of two centuries of exploitation by Western imperialism and a correct analysis of the causes of India’s continued underdevelopment, when Nehru further says : “Nearly all our major problems today have grown up during British rule and as a direct result of British Policy; the princes; the minority problem; various vested interests, foreign and Indian; the lack of industry and the neglect of agriculture; the extreme backwardness in the social services; and above all the tragic poverty of the people.”<sup>36</sup>

### **INDEPENDENCE AND PARTITION:**

Despite serious obstacles, an independent Indian bourgeoisie, as distinguished from a compradore mercantile class, did not come into existence during the period of British rule. A few industrial houses like the Tatas and the Brilas even played a monopolistic role in India’s industrial development. They extended moral and material help to the nationalist leaders in organizing an anti colonial movement against the British rulers. Indian National Congress during

the Gandhian era-1919-47 was financially supported by the Indian bourgeoisie. The Muslim League, from the beginning, was a movement supported by the Muslim landowners in the United Provinces but acquired some strength when the Muslims bourgeoisie from the Bombay Presidency extended its support to it. Similarly, the financial backing of the Marwari-Gujarati capital was crucial for the National Congress.

The Non-Co-Operation Movement of 1920-21 was one of the landmarks in the Gandhian era. Others were the civil disobedience movement of 1930-31, the Individual *Satyagraha* of 1940 and Quit India Movement of 1942-45. Almost all of them combined legal and extra-legal methods of struggle. Gandhi and his followers questioned the moral right of the imperialists to rule over India and courted imprisonment by violating their unjust laws. But he also tried to negotiate with the British rulers and to reach agreement with them in a spirit of conciliation. This strategy of struggle followed by compromises suited the Indian bourgeoisie perfectly which was itself vacillating in its attitude towards imperialism.

A fundamental characteristic of the movements led by Gandhi was its emphasis on non-violence. Even those disciples of Gandhi, who did not accept non-violence as a creed, accepted it as a practical and expedient policy. "Gandhi was a unique leader in many respects. He tried to fulfil many different functions. He was a social reformer, a nationalist leader and a world prophet. This created a lot of confusion among those who could only think within established framework. Some of them accused him of revivalism and others of reckless revolutionary activities. And many contended that he was strengthening anarchy in the country".<sup>37</sup> An Indian Marxist noted about Gandhi : "The

fact that India chose to remain a secular republic is in large measure to him. The Hindu communalist felt at an enormous disadvantage in combating him since it was impossible to contest the Indian-ness or the 'Hinduness' of the man or to dispute that. What he was telling the people sprang from the very depths of the traditions of India."<sup>38</sup>

While the form of Gandhi's thought and expression was based on Hindu and religious idioms and terminology to some extent, the content of his message was secular, national and universal. Within India, he was the greatest force in favour of democracy and modernization. He fought for the people's right to civil liberties in the Non-co-operation and Khilafat movements. Later, he struggled for the economic rights of the poorest of the-poor the right to make salt. In 1940, he protested against the British decision to make India a belligerent without her consent in an imperialist war. By 1942, he demanded that the British should quit India. In 1947, he stood for the country's unity and independence but without partition as this, he thought and feared, could lead to a communal holocaust and ethnic cleansing in both the countries. When the partition became inevitable he fought the battle against communal killings and fanaticism almost single-handed. Ultimately, a Hindu zealot shot him because of his convictions. Gandhi's in compromising nationalism, humanism and secularism became inseparable ideological components of Indian political tradition.

In a way, Gandhi and his philosophy of 'non-violence' can be interpreted as representing the ideology of the Indian bourgeoisie. This class did not want a violent anti-imperialist revolution with the support of the peasants and workers as this could lead to their own overthrow eventually. When the

Congress leadership led by Patel and Nehru accepted the Mountbatten plan of India's partition into two independent dominions in 1947, it was fulfillment of the aspirations of the Indian bourgeoisie as well as the ambitions of M.A. Jinnah and the Muslim bourgeoisie represented in the Muslim League.

D.G. Tendulkar, the authoritative biographer of Gandhi, records the events of 15 August, 1947 as follows : "There were festivities all over the land. But the man who, more than any one else had been responsible for freeing India from the alien rule did not participate in the rejoicings. When an officer of the Information and Broadcasting Department of the Government of India came for a message, Gandhi replied that he had 'run dry'. When told again that if he did not give any message it would nor be good, Gandhi replied : "there is no message at all; if it is bad, let it be so". (Vol. VIII,. pp. 95-96).

It may also be noted that on 26 January, 1948, the first time Independence Day was being celebrated in free India and just four days before his martyrdom – Gandhi said : "This day, 26<sup>th</sup> January, is Independence Day. This observance was quite appropriate when we were fighting for independence we had not seen, nor handled. Now? We have ahandled it and we seem to be disillusioned. At least I am, even if you are not". (Vol. VIII, p. 338). Disillusioned by the moral degradation of the ruling Congress Party, he even recommended its dissolution, withdrawal from politics and conversion into a Lok Sevak Sangh, i.e., a non-governmental organization for social service. He said that the Congress as a propaganda vehicle and parliamentary machine had outlived its utility.

Commenting upon the gulf between Gandhi on the one hand and Nehru and Patel on the other which was evident between 1945 and 1948: E.M.S. Namboodiripad pointed out: "It was this change in the position of the bourgeoisie as a class and its individual representatives that brought it into conflict with Gandhi, the man who still clung to the ideals which he had been preaching in the days of anti-imperialist struggle. The moral values which he had preached in the days of anti imperialist struggle now became a hindrance to the politicians who came to power. Gandhi, on the other hand, remained true to them and could not reconcile himself to the sudden change which occurred to his former colleagues and lieutenants. We may conclude by saying that Gandhi became the Father-of-the-Nation, precisely because his idealism to which he adhered to in the years of anti-imperialist struggle became practically useful political weapon in the hands of the bourgeoisie in the latter days of his life, because his idealism did in the post-independence years become a hindrance to the self interest of the bourgeoisie".<sup>39</sup>

Nehru was another important leader and thinker who contributed to the growth of India's political tradition both before and after independence. Gandhi had nominated him as his political heir despite differences in their political outlook and philosophy on some issues. Nehru was firm believer in the ideals and institutions of bourgeois democracy and liberalism. The non-communal approach to politics was interpreted by Nehru in Western secular terms. In his Autobiography and *Whither India*, he expressed some intellectual appreciation of the Marxist tradition, 'socialism' and Soviet Russia but kept away from the politics of both the Congress Socialist Party and the Communist Party of India as well as the working-class movement. This made him an acceptable leader

of the Indian bourgeoisie both during the anti-colonial struggle and after the formation of the Indian Republic. He also kept away from Subhash Bose's radicalism and pragmatism.

During the World War II, he remained sympathetic to the cause of the Democracies against the Fascist aggressors and supported the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany and the Republic of China against Japan. He opposed Bose's plan for seeking India's liberation with the Japanese support. "Nehru's greatest contribution lay in giving a definite international outlook to the Indian nationalist movement- He conceived the Indian nationalist movement as a part of the world-wide movement against imperialism. In fascism, he perceived the dangers to individual freedom and he was of the view that, under no circumstances, should Indian nationalism ally with fascism even if the fascist governments were fighting the Western imperial powers like Great Britain and France."<sup>40</sup> Thus, the political tradition of India's National Movement was not only liberal and democratic in a general sense, it was also at the same time anti-fascist in a specific sense which in a way was the extension of its deep-rooted anti-imperialism.

Modern India, however, also saw a strong Muslim separatist movement, which culminated in the creation of a separate Muslim state, under the leadership of Mohammed Ali Jinnah. But the ideology of Muslim separatism began with Sir Syed Ahmed. Unfortunately, the Muslim political tradition in India was characterized by the almost total failure of the Muslim intelligentsia to separate religion and politics and to achieve a secular outlook as well as their unwillingness to adapt themselves to the demands of reason, liberalism, modernization and secularism. Khilafat Movement, which was supported by

Gandhi, was a means to achieve the goal of Pan-Islamism, an ideal rejected by nationalist Turkey. The movement had no interest in democracy and no commitment to India's composite nationalism. It is a sad reality that those who followed the technique and strategy of this Pan-Islamic movement fought the battle of Pakistan and won it.

Iqbal, the celebrated poet who wrote *Sare Jahan Se Achcha Hindustan Hamara* (our India is the best in the world), also become the prophet of Muslim separatist ideology. Moin Shankir says, "Iqbal did not have sufficient courage to break with traditional Islam completely and accept the spirit of modern science. His thought is replete with paradoxes and antiquarianism. He failed to assimilate liberal forces and could not completely free himself from the moorings of tradition. His inconsistencies and contradictions make it difficult to regard him as a systematic thinker or a consistent philosopher."<sup>41</sup>

W.C. Smith says, "Iqbal was himself a bourgeois and in some respects a contented one, he never really deserted his class".<sup>42</sup>

Abdul Kalam Azad and Abdul Ghaffar Khan were two Muslims leaders of stature who understood the true nature of composite Indian nationalism, democracy, freedom, parliamentarism and secularism. While Azad was also a great thinker, Gaffar Khan was a great leader of the Pathans who converted them to the Congress ideology of anti-imperialism and non-violent struggle. Professor Mohammad Habib says this about Maulana Azad, "His thought was correct; and his faith in God, in his country and in himself was so firm that he would neither bend nor break owing to the onslaught of the madogs of Muslim communalism. In those days the Muslim University had become 'the armory of



the Muslim League” and I have good personal experience of that mad-dog Muslim communalism, which has fortunately be taken itself to Pakistan, where it is controlled by military regiments. “In the whole history of Muslim India”, no one thinker and scholar has been more intensely hated by his coreligionists than Maulana Azad during the ten years preceding the Partition. Jinnah took every opportunity of insulting him; the Muslim press kept on cursing him, he was abused from every communal plat form”.<sup>43</sup>

The real ideologue of the separatist Muslim political tradition in India was none other than Mohammed Ali Jinnah. Though in the beginning, he started as a nationalist leader of the moderate Gokhale school. At that time he was the most secular of all Muslim leaders. He was least interested in Islam and had no knowledge of its scriptures. He accepted the principles of nationalism, democracy, secularism and unity of the country. As a liberal, he stood for the ideals of individual liberty, absence of fanaticism, and constitutionalism. He said that the people should learn to separate religion from politics. He was a great lawyer who defended Tilak in the court when the British were determined to persecute him for his militant nationalism. He was metamorphosed completely after a few decades into a Muslim communal bigot and an advocate of the two-nation theory which became the ideological basis of the Pakistani state.

The portrait of Jinnah would remain incomplete if we do not state the fact that as a politician he was remarkably callous. “When a group of Aligarh Muslim students ventured to ask him what would be the fate of Indian Muslims he said he would give his answer when the time came. But when the time came, he declared: ‘I have written off the Mussalmans of India’”.<sup>44</sup> Jinnah personally and his Muslim League were never actively involved in any anticolonial struggle

directed against the British rulers. The only struggle he led just before partition was the so called 'Direct Action' directed against the Hindus in Bengal and Punjab. This resulted in large-scale ethnic cleansing of both Hindus and Muslims in North India but Jinnah did not shed a tear and had no plan or patience for peaceful transfer of the two communities across the newly created borders of India and Pakistan.

Jinnah argued that the Congress was a Hindu body, Swaraj meant Hindu Raj and National Government, by implication, would be Hindu Government. He gave an ideological and religious interpretation to the Two-Nation Theory. He argued that the Muslims in India are a nation who must preserve their culture and identity in a separate state of Pakistan. Democracy in united India would be the 'fascist' rule of the Congress-led Hindu majority. Jinnah described the Congress organization led by Gandhi as a "Fascist Grand Council under a dictator who not even a four-anna member of the body".<sup>45</sup>

Democratic rule will lead, he said, to the complete destruction of what is most precious in Islam; it will culminate in the creation of private armies of both the communities and to civil war.

Thus the conception of Indian nationalism and a central sub-continental government was a mental luxury of the Hindu Leaders. Another ingredient of the Two-Nation Theory was the emphasis on the 'Historical' and 'Spiritual' differences existing between the Muslims and the Hindus. The history of one thousand years, said Jinnah, failed to unite them into one nation. Therefore, "the artificial and unnatural methods of a democratic constitution will not create a sense of nationality". Jinnah held that Hinduism and Islam are "two entirely

distinct and separate civilizations,” the Hindus and Muslims, therefore, belonged to two antagonistic religions with different social customs, rival philosophies and two distinct bodies of literature, they did not inter-marry and did not inter-dine, and they belonged to two dissimilar societies, which were governed by two different social and legal codes. “They govern not only his law and culture but every aspect of the social life and such religions, essentially exclusive, completely preclude that merging of identity and unity of thought on which Western democracy is based and inevitably bring about vertical rather than the horizontal division democracy envisages.”<sup>46</sup>

There is another aspect of the Muslims separatist political tradition. The leadership of the Muslim League was in the hands of the North Indian landowners and the Gujarati Bohra bourgeoisie. The Muslim landlords were apprehensive of losing their lauded property as the Congress was committed to a policy of radical land reform at that time. The Muslim bourgeois class was not happy about the competition which it had to face from a richer Hindu bourgeoisie. A separate homeland could provide a refuge and better opportunity for trade, industry and profits. Penderal Moon rightly says, “the truth is that for the Muslim bourgeoisie the idea of a state, however poor, in which they and not the Hindus would be rich-men and hold all the best posts in government service, industry and commerce had a powerful attraction.”<sup>47</sup>

According to Moin Shakir, “The Two-Nation Theory and the Demand for Pakistan indicates the peculiar non-national trait of the Muslim mind. It was a self-defeating project and an escape from hard realities.”<sup>48</sup> Dr. S. Ansari argues that a careful study of Indian Islam reveals that “Islam in India is an Arabic version of *Sanatana Dharma* just as Sikhism and Arya Samaj are more or less

Gurmukhi or Hindu Editions of Islam.<sup>49</sup> Ansari also stated that the two-nation theory was a myth, a complete to cover up humiliation in the social sphere, and inequality in the economic field. "The story of the growth of the Muslim League is the story of the rise of the Muslim middle class". Moreover, the young bourgeoisie-both Muslims and Hindus - felt the need of having the state in its own hands. Therefore, Jinnah was more interested in the political liberation of the Muslims than in the social and economic emancipation of the exploited masses.<sup>50</sup> Pakistan was thus a new state of the Muslim Indian bourgeoisie.

### **EARLY YEARS OF THE REPUBLIC:**

The Indian Republic, according to Paul Baran, during its early years, when it was being governed under the undisputed leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, could be described as a nation-state with a 'New Deal' orientation. A New Deal type regime like that of independent India was brought to power by a broad popular movement. Its primary and unifying objective was to overthrow the colonial rule and replace it by a government of national independence. "Struggling against imperialism and its domestic ally, the feudal comprador coalition," the national movement assumed the character of a united front of "the progressive bourgeoisie striving to find a road towards industrial capitalism, of intellectuals seeking a better future for their country, and of active elements of the urban and rural proletariat rising against the misery and oppression of the feudal aristocracy also "joined the nationalist camp, interested primarily in deflecting popular energies from the struggle for social change into a fight against foreign subjugation."<sup>51</sup>

Immediately after independence, the unity of the nationalist movement was subjected to severe strains and stresses. Earlier also, its rightwing was

afraid that the national struggle might create conditions favourable to a social revolution by mobilizing and organizing the peasants and workers. Therefore, it sought to exclude or minimize the role of the popular masses in the anti-imperialist front and adopted a policy of negotiations and compromises with the imperialist authorities. Its left-wing was anxious to combine the goals of social justice with those of national freedom and insisted on greater mass participation in anti-imperialist struggle. Yet so long as the primary goal of national freedom was not attained, "the fight for national independence overshadowed and absorbed the struggle for social progress."<sup>52</sup>

Earlier the centripetal forces of the national united front were stronger than the centrifugal elements. This scenario began to change after the formation of the Indian Republic. Weakened by World War II, Great Britain was compelled to grant political independence to South Asian countries like Burma, India, Pakistan and Srilanka. As John Foster Dulles put it, "When the fighting in World War II drew to a close, the greatest single political issue was the colonial issue. If the West had attempted to perpetuate the *status quo* of colonialism it would have made violent revolution inevitable and defeat inevitable. The only policy that might succeed was that of bringing independence peacefully."<sup>53</sup>

With the problem of national independence resolved, the basic class conflict of an antagonistic society became intensified in India. While some significant, central issues of social and economic development were actually linked with the questions of national freedom, there were some other issues actually which were being obscured and confused by it. For example, the oppression and exploitation of the peasantry by the landowning aristocracy or

the strangulation of industrial development by monopolistic capital was merely a national question, it was more a social problem, to be faced and to be resolved in that way. Thus, the nationalist movement, after acquiring power in the Indian Republic, entered a process of disintegration. The socially antagonistic elements, tenuously integrated during the era of anti-imperialist struggle, became more or less quickly polarized into opposing class parties or fractions within the frame work of a new political order. The break-up between the Indian National Congress on the one hand and the Communist and Socialist parties on the other signified this schism in the early years of the Indian Republic.

The speed of this breakdown of national unity depended upon the accentuation of the internal class struggle in the context of the specific historical circumstances of a country. In China the advanced urban proletariat had played a decisive role in the anti-imperialist struggle and was strong enough to organize and assume the hegemony of the peasantry's armed struggle for an agrarian revolution. In this scenario, the split in the national front proceeded very rapidly. Its bourgeois, capitalist, component, frightened by the specter of a social revolution, turned swiftly against its former ally, and its mortal enemy of the future. In fact, it did not hesitate to make common cause with feudal elements representing the main hindrance to its own development, with the imperialist overlords just overthrown by the national liberation, and with the comprador groups threatened by the political retreat of their foreign protectors. They proved the correctness of Lord Acton's aphorism, that "the bonds of class are stronger than those of nationality."<sup>54</sup>

Under such conditions “the political independence barely won turns into a sham, the new ruling group merges with the old ruling group, and the amalgam of property-owning classes supported by imperialist interests uses its entire power to suppress the popular movement for genuine national and social liberation and reestablishes the *ancian regime not de jure but de facto*. China under the Kuomintang, Pakistan, South Korea, South Vietnam typify this process”.<sup>55</sup> India under the Congress rule during the early years of the Republic did not succumb to this degeneration. This is because the popular pressure for social liberation was less pronounced in India at the time of the attainment of national freedom.

The working class during the first decade after independence was politically and numerically weak and the peasantry except in certain pockets, was politically passive due to its age-old servitude and deeply rooted religious superstitions. In these circumstances, the Indian bourgeoisie felt more secure and tried to present the potential upsurge of social-revolutionary forces “by making an all-out effort to lay the foundations for the evolution of an indigenous industrial capitalism, to create a modern capitalist state”. The success of such an undertaking depended “on the quality of its leadership, on its determination to dislodge the feudal and comprador elements from their position of dominance, on the intensity of the resistance on their part, and on the extent to which the inter-national constellation permits the elimination or considerable weakening of the support given to these strata by the world’s imperialist powers.”<sup>56</sup>

In India, the united front of anti-imperialist forces was still, though precariously, intact, and provided the broad political basis for the government of

the national bourgeoisie. But this breadth of the national coalition which accounted for the great electoral strength of the Congress Party in sweeping general elections at this time was also responsible for paralyzing the administrative machinery of the state. Though the Congress leadership still enjoyed the overwhelming media and popular support, it encountered some insurmountable obstacles in formulating and implementing a programme of social and economic change. While intending to promote the growth of capitalist industrialization, it lacked courage to offend the interests of the landlords. While trying to reduce the most outrageous inequalities, it failed to interfere with the vested interests of the traders and usurers. It wished to improve the miserable condition of the workers but was also fearful of antagonizing capitalists. Though anti-imperialist by tradition, the Congress was now courting favours from foreign capital

The contradictions of Nehru's policy were limitless. On the one hand, Nehru assured the Indian capitalists that he was determined to promote and protect their private property. On the other, he promised the nation and the working class a socialist pattern of society'. Nehru was presiding over a Bonapartist regime which stood above the struggle of opposing classes though this merely reflected the stage which the class struggle had reached in Indian society at that time. Nehru was anxious to reconcile irreconcilable needs, to compose radical differences and to find compromises where decisions could not be avoided'. Losing much precious time in bridging recurring conflicts, the *Congress system*, at Rajni Kothari puts its, substituted minor reforms for radical changes and revolutionary phrases for revolutionary actions. The Congress



Party thereby endangered not only the very possibility of implementing its proclaimed programmes but even its very tenure in office.

Pual Baran's judgment on the achievement of the so-called Nehruvian Congress is harsh but, nevertheless, true. He says, "Handicapped by the heterogeneity and brittleness of its social foundations and by the ideological limitations resulting there from, the essentially petty bourgeois regime is incapable of providing genuine leadership in the battle for industrialization, is powerless to mobilize what is most important: the enthusiasm and the creative energies of the broad popular masses for a decisive assault on the country's backwardness, poverty, and lethargy".<sup>57</sup> In India, it is only the state that can mobilize the surplus present potentially in the economic system. It alone has the capacity to employ it for the expansion of the nation's productive forces. In India the amount of resources seized by the state is much smaller than the potential economic surplus. Even more important is the fact that the use made of it, despite good intentions, does not provide for rapid and balanced economic growth. As the Economist commented, "like the Red Queen, India has to run fast even to stand still".<sup>58</sup>

### **PERSISTENT CENTRISM OF INDIAN POLITICS:**

According to Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph, the outstanding characteristic of Indian politics has been its persistence of centrism. During three decades and five successive Lok Sabha Elections (1952, 1957, 1962, 1967 and 1971), the Indian National Congress was the dominant party among India's several parties. The ruling Congress Party benefited from three factors:

- 1) It had an apex body with a leadership and national goals which provided democratic legitimacy and bargaining power for a sub-continental state that included different regional political parties,
- 2) A centrist ideology of secularism, liberal democracy, socialist pattern and mixed economy; and
- 3) A pluralist basis of support that encompassed several interests, strata, communities and regions.

These features also applied to the Janata Party, which won the sixth Lok Sabha election in 1977; the Congress led by Indira that won the seventh Lok Sabha election in 1980 and the Congress led by Rajiv in the eighth Lok Sabha election of 1984; and the several parties that split from Congress from time to time.

The reasons for this continued feature of dominant centrist trend in Indian politics have been listed by Rudolph and Rudolph as follows:

- 1) The marginality of class politics.
- 2) The fragmentation of the confessional majority.
- 3) The electoral strength of disadvantaged confessional and social minorities.
- 4) The increasing political consciousness and effectiveness of 'bullock capitalists' and 'backward classes'.
- 5) The imperatives of capturing power in Delhi.
- 6) The constraints imposed on India's federal system by cultural diversity and social pluralism.

- 7) The advantages that accrue to a centrist national party or coalition when parliamentary seats are won by pluralities in single-member constituencies".<sup>59</sup>

An important condition for centrism is the marginality of class politics at national level. To some, class politics may seem inevitable in India with so much poverty, injustice and inequality. But the weakness of class organization and lack of class consciousness in the subordinate classes are the principal factors which have made class polarization difficult to achieve at an all-India level. Groups representing language, caste, community, and region and those speaking for scheduled castes, tribes and Muslims have been more successful than class-oriented organizations in creating a sense of identity and in influencing political decision-making.

Unlike Europe, Labour, Socialist and Communist Parties have not yet become national role-players and all-India phenomena and so there is no direct and visible confrontation between labour and capital. There is no national Conservative party either. The Swatantra Party was the closest approximation to an Indian Conservative party but its existence proved ephemeral. The Bharatiya Jan Sangh and its progeny the Bharatiya Janata Party constitute an amalgam of *Hindutva* and Conservatism but it has yet to overcome its Hindi heartland identity. At present, corporate capital in India finances two major political parties, the Indian National Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party. But they have yet to establish their authenticity as class-oriented right parties of the conservative type, though they are in the process of doing so as their common support to policies of economic liberalisation, privatization and globalization has shown during the previous two decades.

But it is difficult to agree with the thesis of the Rudolph couple that the two historic adversaries are playing a marginal role in Indian politics just because it is not adequately reflected in the nomenclature of political parties or the ideological masks that they wear. Nor can it be explained by the so called centrality of a third factor, the state. The state in India has built a public sector only to promote the growth of a private sector and bureaucratic capitalism and corporate capitalism have been intimate allies under the benevolent guardianship of a ruling elite under the Congress or Non-Congress system of governance.

The fragmentation of organized labour into several national federations has not prevented it from waging local and nation-wide struggles both against the state bureaucracy and private capital. Organized capital has also been quite influential in promoting its class interests through financing political parties and through pressuring state administration. Even the Rudolph couple has to conclude by saying: “Business” interests in India, while not publicly represented in comparative party politics (this statement is doubtful), are better represented than those of organized labour in bureaucratic, parliamentary, and (informal) party processes business interests in India focus their attention on executive agencies. Business contributions to political parties are an invisible but important channel of influence. Private-sector capitalists can also influence how the government applies and implements controls and regulations that affect very major area of decision: investment, expansion, new products, foreign exchange and collaboration, location, and pricing”.<sup>60</sup>

India’s ‘permit-license raj’ gave private sector capitalism protected markets and monopoly profits. Even the Birla-owned *Hindustan Times* admitted

in its editorial, “Over the last thirty years of Indian socialism and mixed-economy, the private sector has flourished and prospered many times over, much of the prosperity can be traced to the private sector’s capacity and ability to influence governmental policies and laws.”<sup>61</sup> Rudolph’s point out, “This interpretation of the relationship between private-sector capitalism and the state has led the neo-Marxist left to argue that the tail wags the dog, that despite the state’s socialist claims and its command of the economy’s industrial and financial heights, it serves capitalists and capitalism”.<sup>62</sup>

But this view, according to Rudolph’s, ignores the “dependent nature of private capitalism in India. He quotes with approval Kochanek’s opinion in this context.” Business has never succeeded in blocking or even in modifying a major distributive policy in India it could not delay or modify the decisions to nationalize life insurance or stop the nationalization of private sector banks what business can do however, is to try to convert a redistributive issue into a regulatory issue in which its interest seems self-evident rather than self-serving.”<sup>63</sup> By 1984, state capitalism was perceived by its critics as the problem rather than the solution. This shift in the public perception of the state affected its legitimacy in directing the planned and private-sector economies and enhanced private capital’s public standing and prestige in relation to state capitalism. “Despite this altered ideological climate, the state as third sector continued to dwarf both of the historic adversaries of class politics, capital as well as labour. Neither was in a position to challenge the centrist feature of Indian politics”.<sup>64</sup>

## **CONFESSIONAL AND MINORITY POLITICS:**

The term 'confessional' may sound unfamiliar to Indian ears. It has been used by Lloyed Rudolph and Susanne Rudolph to denote non-secular, communal or religion-oriented politics in the Indian context. Centrist ideology in India includes secularism as a part of its liberal ethos. Despite temptations to adopt a Hindu identity and programme, the Congress and other centrist parties have retained their commitment to secularism. In Western Europe the roots of confessional politics go back to the Reformation in the sixteenth century. It unleashed a civil war in several European countries. But it also gave birth to a secularizing process that contributed to the separation of church and state and to religious tolerance. In modern Europe, we have Christian Democrats and Christian Socialists who pursue policy aims which are consistent with their religious beliefs.

It is the European sense of confessional politics that the Rudolph couple has in mind when he intends to find out whether confessional politics in India could again give rise to a 'destructive' cleavage in Indian politics. The obvious aspirant for national confessional politics is the 'Hindu majority'. But this majority, according to them, is an 'artifact of categorization' that encompasses a diversity of gods, goddesses, holy texts, social customs, ontologies and epistemologies. "Without an organized Church, it is innocent of orthodoxy, heterodoxy, and heresy. Thus, until the transforming historical events and experiences that surfaced during the Jananta government (1997-79) and crested in the early 1980s, the 'Hindu majority' remained an illusory support base for a national confessional party. At the same time, minority religious communities-Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians were able to play a role in state

politics".<sup>65</sup> More important, the Hindu majority was more fragmented along sect, caste, class and regional lines of cleavage than were India's minority religious communities.

Before the emergency regime of Indira Gandhi, it was the Jan Sangh and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh that articulated and propagated the ideology of Hindu nationalism. Hindu confessional politics was India's counterpart to the ideology of Islamic Pakistan. However, the ideological and military threat of Pakistan could not sustain and give much political support to Hindu confessional politics before 1980. Jan Sangh could capture only 9 per cent votes in 1967 and 7.4 per cent in 1971 Lok Sabha elections which were its best performances. The break-up of Pakistan in 1971 as a result of India's military victory reduced the potential influence of Hindu confessional politics for a decade.

The Indian Republic began its career with a powerful commitment not only to a secular state but also to secularism as an ideology. It was challenged after 1980 when growing conflict among Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims made the latent contradictions manifest. The contradiction in the Indian concept of secularism was its simultaneous commitment to equal citizenship and to autonomous committees. Group identities were equally recognized by the British and nationalist rulers and this obstructed the growth of the concept of equal citizenship based on the rights of the individual. For Gandhi, confessional politics was a vehicle of community reform-khilafat agitation, campaign for Gurdwara reform and the ongoing massive campaign, against untouchability politicized Muslim, Sikh and Hindu communities.

By contrast, Nehru could not take religion seriously or recognize groups as valid components of the Indian nation. For him, the Muslim League before partition was just a group of Muslim landlords and nothing else. He did not visualize that this landlord clique could lay the foundation of an independent Muslim nation. He dismissed Hindu Mahasabha, Jan Sangh and the Akalis as political groups, which have no future in a secularist, Indian Republic. He thought that confessional politics was irrelevant in the context of more important issues of economic development, democratic rights of individuals and social and cultural modernization.

In the 1980s the Hinduism that had been an 'artifact of categorization' began to transform itself into a *Hindutva*, a condition of national consciousness. This development created an environment for the growth of a national Hindu confessional politics, Religious celebrations, demonstrations and performances began to acquire all-Indian dimensions. Hindu festivals became the occasions for displaying Hindu solidarity and militant nationalism. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad organized the Hindu holy men and their lay devotees into a noisy, strident and militant forum trying to play the role of a vanguard for Hindu nationalism. The Bajrang Dal emerged as a the lumpen storm troopers of the Sangh *Parivar* embracing the BJP, RSS, and the VHP. Romesh Thapar observed in 1986, "Imagine sects of Hindu priests moving from mandatory caste signs to other symbols of the faith-dhoti-clad, bare to the waist, trident equipped, and with the *bodi* tuft of hair. Soon the cult could take over in our offices as an exercise of the fundamental rights embodied in our Constitution.... The Muslims could overnight don the red fez to this could be added the trimmed beard of the *mullahs* and *maulvis*. We are on the edge of encouraging



a multitude of what are called 'psyches' one for each community, each caste, each tribe."<sup>66</sup>

Hindu confessional politics became a form of cultural nationalism for the Hindu heartland states. It was also exported to states where Hindus are a minority like Kashmir's Jammu region, the Punjab and Christianized North-East. Besides, it spread to Maharashtra and Gujarat which are closest to Hindi Heartland culture. The Janata Party's victory in 1977 put the advocates of Hindu confessional politics in the Central Government for the first time. The issue of conversion and the content of textbooks was used to articulate the Hindu grievances and to argue that Hinduism was threatened by India's minority religions. "The supporters of the Hindu backlash alleged that the minorities were privileged and pampered Congress governments were charged with appeasing the minorities out of political expediency."<sup>67</sup>

The cohesiveness and scale of India's minority groups contributes to the illusory nature of the Hindu majority. It also constitutes a hindrance to the practice of Hindu communal politics and obstructs the functioning of a Hindu confessional party. India's minorities like the American blacks, appear to share a 'group consciousness'. This helps them to achieve relatively higher levels of political participation than their social and economic status would lead one to expect. Group consciousness persuaded Muslims and scheduled castes to vote in larger proportions for the secularist Congress than did other voters in the first-three general elections. Muslims and scheduled castes have voted less cohesively as compared to the scheduled tribes. Electoral support of Muslim and *dalits* is vital for success especially in the five Hindu Heartland states of northern India. In these states vote swings have been widest since 1967.

Minorities are very significant in number in just those states where elections since 1967 have been most volatile. These states elect 39 per cent of parliament's 545 members. The three minorities together constitute 37 per cent of the electorate in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhy Pradesh, 34 per cent in Rajasthan, and 23 per cent in Haryana. Congress victories in 1971, 1980, and 1984 were due in part to strong support among minorities. Defeats in 1977, 1989, 1996 and 1998 and low voter support in 1980 and 1991 were associated with defection by the minorities.

The electoral successes of the Congress Party under Jawaharalal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi were largely enabled by support from India's largest minorities, Muslims and the Scheduled Castes. Janata's success in 1977 election reflected a new minority alienation from Congress. Since 1980 in both centre and state elections, the minority constituencies have consistently voted for the winning party, if it was at the same time a centrist party as well. The distribution of minority electoral support in the last seven parliamentary elections from 1977 to 1998 indicates that the minorities, rather than engaging in bloc voting for Congress, have responded to the centrist appeals of winning parties. Lloyed and Susanne Rudolph point out correctly, "Parties whose ideology, policies, and electoral strategy do not attend to representing minority interests and identities cannot compete for power at the national level. Centrist parties, in the coded language of Indian politics, espouses secularism and socialism to signal their regard and concern for the 38 per cent of the electorate who are poor and oppressed minority voters".<sup>68</sup>

## **BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY – ORIGINS:**

In order to understand the genesis of the Bharatiya Janata's Party, it is necessary to go back to Hindu Mahasabha, which was the Hindu confessional party before independence, the Rasthriya Swayamsevak Sangh, which was founded by Dr. Hedgevar in 1925 and the Jan Sangh, which was founded by Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherji just before the first general election in 1952. Its ideological inspiration also came from Hindu-minded Congressmen like b.G. Tilak, Lajpat Rai, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Vallabhbhai Patel and P.D. Tandan. Besides, both the present BJP and its predecessor Jan Sangh have been closely associated with non-congessional right wing parties like the Swatantra Party founded by C. Rajgopalachari, which later merged with the Bharatiya Lok Dal, led by Charan Singh. In 1950s it was also allied to Ram Rajya Parishad and Hindu Mahasabha, which were both Hindu confessional groups, at the parliamentary level.

Rightwing political parties could be divided into two categories:

- 1) Feudalistic, communal and confessional groups, and
- 2) Conservative, bourgeois-oriented groups. In the first general election the rightwing parties, including the confessional groups, secured 3,30,00,000 (three crore and thirty lakh) votes, which was 70 per cent of the votes secured by the Congress Party.

The Communists and socialists together got 2,80,00,000 (two crore and eighty lakh) votes. Even then, Congress secured 375 seats, the rightwing parties got only 75 seats, and the Left had to be satisfied with just 49 seats. Among feudal, Communal and confessional groups the Jan Sangh has a prominent

place. In the first Lok Sabha election it got 3.5 per cent votes and stood fifth in its ranking.

Jan Sangh, Hindu Mahasabha, and Ram Rajya Parishad together secured one crore (1,00,00,000) votes. These three parties believed in the ideology of Hindu nationalism and the ideals of Hindu culture and were hostile to Islamic Pakistan, Western Culture, Christianity, Socialism, communism, soviet Russia and Communist China. These parties denigrated Prime Minister Nehru as the 'Nationalist Muslim', a 'Russian-Chinese agent' or an 'ape who imitates the west' all the time. The RSS and the Anand Marg participated in politics in a clandestine manner. These elements were responsible for the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. Some critics have considered them the Indian versions of fascism. During the pre-emergency period, the Hindu confessional forces and their reactionary allies had openly ganged up against the Congress regime.

Among the conservative bourgeois-oriented groups main allies Jan Sangh were the Swantra Party and the BKD. C. Rajgopalachari founded the Swatantra Party 1959 as classic rightwing and pro-business party. Like Jan Sangh, both Swatantra and BKD opposed Congress-sponsored and Left-Supported policies of land reforms, the setting up of co-operative institutions, growth of the public sector, planning and socialism. All of them supported development through capitalism and private enterprise, demanded subsidies for rich farmers, reduction of income tax, facilities for foreign investments and an end to the 'license permit raj'.

The principal supporters of the Swatantra Party set up institutions like the 'Forum for Free enterprise', and the 'Federation of Indian Agriculturists'. In the 1962 Lok Sabha elections, the Tata industrial house provided enormous financial support to the Swatantra Party. This was because the Swatantra Party's programme had incorporated the demand of India's monopoly capital that the state should abandon its strategy of promoting 'state socialism' and adopt the policy of encouraging private capital including foreign capital. However, Charles Bettheim said, "Even then, big capitalists, despite their great fondness for the Swatantra Party, have not severed their relationships with the Congress Party. It seems that they have perhaps helped the Swatantra Party so that they can create an alternative to Congress in future and if the Congress Party were to desert them in order to support some other vested interests, then the other party could be used to put pressure on Congress."<sup>69</sup>

In addition to monopoly capitalists, the princes and landowners also joined the Swatantra Party and the Ganatantra Parishad in Orissa, which represented the feudal forces there, merged with this party. Maharani Gyatri Devi led this party in Rajasthan. In Andhra Pradesh, rich farmers joined this party. In 1967 Lok Sabha elections, Jan Sangh secured 35 seats but the Swatantra Party got 44 seats and became the main opposition group. The rightist parties together could win, more than 100 seats. Except West Bengal and Kerala, rightwing parties were the chief components of the several non-Congress governments which were set up at state level in different states between 1967 and 1972. Jan Sangh numerically and ideologically, became an important political constituent of the right wing governments that were set up in

Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. In Punjab, the Jan Sangh and the Akali Dal formed an alliance.

In 1971 Lok Sabha election, Jan Sangh, Congress-O (a splinter group led by Morarji Desai), Swatantra Party, BKD and Lohia Socialists formed a 'Grand Alliance' "to fight Indira-led Congress-R. this grand coalition had 160 seats in Lok Sabha before the general election but could get only 50 seats in the new Lok Sabha. Indira Gandhi swept the mid-term polls and established a stable government obtaining a two-third majority in the fifth Lok Sabha. India's victory in the Bangladesh war further strengthened Indira Gandhi's position as a national leader and Congress Party Supremo. However, she made certain mistakes in running the government and could not find answers for resolving the growing economic crisis. She toppled opposition-led governments in the states without discretion and changed even Congress chief ministers just to assert her imperial authority. Her authoritarian tactics displeased all rightwing parties, antagonized left-wing political formations except CPI and even some Congress factions.

Jaya Prakash Narayan emerged from his political hibernation to lead an anti-Congress youth movement which had its major base in Gujarat. It later spread to Bihar. Narayan raised the slogan of 'Total Revolution' and overthrow of the corrupt Congress regime led by Indira Gandhi. When JP movement, supported by student and opposition groups including Jan Sangh, started gathering momentum, Indira Gandhi imposed a national emergency putting a large number of agitating leaders and their followers in prison. The rigors and excesses of the emergency regime united all struggling opposition parties into an all-inclusive political formation, once Mrs. Gandhi decided to lift the

emergency after a period of 'dictatorial' repression extending to eighteen months.

Jan Sangh also merged its identity in the new political formation designated as the Janata Party. Other political parties, which joined the Janata band-wagon, included Congress-O led by Morarji Desai, BKD led by Charan Singh, the Socialists led by Madhu Limaye etc. and Congress for Democracy led by Jagjivan Ram. The victorious Janata Party got 300 seats in the Lok Sabha out of 542 with 43 per cent votes. The defeated Congress Party was reduced 153 seats with 34 per cent votes. Janata Party dissolved nine state governments by proclaiming President's rule holding new elections and winning most of them. CPI (Marxist) came to power in West Bengal in 1977 and since then it has been winning all state and parliamentary elections which have been held there.

In the sixth Lok Sabha, Jan Sangh led by a.B. Vajpayee, external affairs minister had ninety seats (31 per cent).

Bharatiya Lok Dal led by Charan Singh, some ministers, had fifty-five (19 per cent), the socialists led by George Fernandes, industries minister, had fifty-one (17 per cent), and Congress for Democracy, led by Jagjivan Ram, defence minister, had twenty-eight (10 per cent). When the Janata Party broke up into its constituent fractions, the Jan Sangh component, after the Seventh Lok Sabha elections, reconstituted itself as the Bharatiya Janata Party. In 1980, the BJP had only 16 seats. In the next Lok Sabha election in 1984 it was almost wiped out by Rajiv Gandhi hurricane and left with just two seats there.

## MINORITY AND COALITION GOVERNMENTS:

Bharatiya Janata Party's electoral success in the ninth Lok Sabha elections in 1989 was a morale-booster for the party. For the incredibly low figure of two seats in the eighth general election, its score now jumped to 85 seats. It was able to improve its tally to 120 seats in the tenth Lok Sabha in 1991. During this interregnum, the Party's ideologue and leader, A.B. Vajpayee had endeavoured to give a new centrist image to the BJP distancing it from the right-wing, communal programme of the Jan Sangh. He also appreciated Gandhi's economic ideas and JP's philosophy of *Sarvodaya* and decentralized democracy. But L.K. Advani continued to emphasize BJP's commitment to the saffron programme of *Hindutva* and cultural nationalism. But Vajpayee was quite determined to give a more liberal, secular and democratic image to Hindu nationalism, in spite of its latent contradictions.

This was done by interchanging and absorbing the values and experiences of the JP movement (1973-75), the emergency resistance struggle (1975-77), and the Janata experiment (1977-80). The RSS-BJS legacy was sought to be diluted by the social vision of the Janata-JP movement. However, this was more a mask than a real transformation. Yet it worked for some time. The emergence of V.P. Singh's Jan Morcha in 1987 represented a crucial development in Indian politics. After some time, he succeeded in forging a united opposition party-the Janata Dal. V.P. Singh followed a clever policy of equidistance from both the BJP and the Left. Despite differences on some major issues like Art. 37-0 etc. the BJP and Janata Dal entered into a mutually beneficial seats arrangements without entering into an electoral alliance.



In a protest against Rajiv Gandhi's refusal to resign on the Bofors issue, the entire opposition, including two BJP members, resigned from Lok Sabha. The Bofors corruption issue proved decisive in the defeat of Congress in 1989 elections. As a result, the Janata Dal, led by V.P. Singh, which secured 142 seats formed a minority government survived for a year but L.K. Advani's Rath Yatra, his arrest by Laloo Prashad's government in Bihar, the contentious issue of Ram Janmabhuni Temple, the sudden implementation of the Mandal Report giving 27 per cent representation to the OBC's created fissure in the JD-BJP coalition. V.P. Singh government fell when Congress and BJP ganged up to overthrow it. The outcome was another minority government led by the rump Janata Dal under Chandra Shekhar's leadership, which was supported by Rajiv Gandhi's Congress from outside. It was a case of a tail wagging the dog. This government also fell after a few months when Congress withdrew its support on a non-issue.

This led to the holding of midterm elections in 1991, the tragic assassination of Rajiv Gandhi by alleged LTT extremists and the return to power by a minority Congress regime led by Narasimha Rao. Rao engineered defections from Jharkhand and some other parties and succeeded in gaining absolute majority in Parliament and governed for a full term of five years. The general election for the eleventh Lok Sabha again resulted in a fractured verdict but the BJP for the first time emerged as the largest single party in Indian Parliament. Dr. S.D. Sharma, the President of India, then created history of some sort by inviting the BJP leader, A.B. Vajpayee, to form a government. The BJP remained in power uncomfortably for just thirteen days, could not find a single additional supporter to its otherwise impressive tally of 160 seats, and

tendered its resignation when it lost the confidence vote in the Parliament, Consequently, two minority third front governments were successively installed led by Deve Gowda and I.K. Gujral respectively which were at the mercy of Sita Ram Kesri-led Congress. Party both the governments were toppled when the cynical Congress leadership decided to withdraw its external support, thus, forcing mid-term elections in March 1998.

The outcome of the 12<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha elections in March 1998 was far from being conclusive. This fragmented verdict was not entirely unexpected. Neither the BJP nor the Congress, even with their so called alliance partners, could manage to secure a clear majority in Parliament, although the BJP did emerge as both the largest single party and as the leader of the largest alliance of parties. "The performance of the BJP", as the *Economic and Political Weekly* admitted, "marks, once again, an advance for the party in terms of the number of seats won, the proportion of votes polled and the evidence of expansion of support for it to new parts of the country".<sup>70</sup> Despite Sonia Gandhi's high profile campaign, the party failed to increase its tally of seats in the new house and its share of votes was actually smaller this time than in 1996.

It was the United Front, the aspiring third force in Indian politics, which came out the worst off in these elections, with the Janata Dal, the so called leader of this third force, was almost decimated. Along with the decline of the JD, the regional components of the erstwhile United Front, such as the DMK, the TMC, the TDP and the AGP also suffered severe losses. They should now worry about threats to their position in their own states while their role at the national level has been considerably diminished. The vote for the Left parties, confined as they are to Kerala and West Bengal, has further declined

from 9.1 per cent to 7.7 per cent though by default they have remained the principal actors in the diminished third front.

The seats and votes lost by the JD and constituents of the United Front have gone to other single-state splinter parties such as the AIDMK, BJD, RJD, making for the fractured and inconclusive electoral outcome. The CPI (M) and the CPI, in a typical Pavlovian reaction, declared that their parties and the United Front would support a congress government to prevent the BJP from coming to power. However, the support of the TDP, once convener of the United Front, now extended to the BJP led government proved crucial in the formation of A.B. Vajpayee's Ministry. The new BJP led government naturally lacked any ideological and programmatic coherence, as was the case with the two United Front governments, which had ruled for the last twenty-one months. With the aid of a lack-lustre, chauvinistic national agenda, which ostensibly excluded some controversial issues like Ayodhya, Art. 370 and the Uniform Civil Code, the main concern of this opportunistic and unprincipled alliance government was mere physical survival at any cost.

The Editorial concluded by saying : "It will equally naturally have to get busy actively covering up well established cases of corruption and abuse of governmental authority, whether it be Bofors or the venalities of that current object of adoration of BJP leaders, J. Jayalalitha, to mention just two out of an indeed rich pantheon. It may even be pushed into tampering with the Constitution to dismiss this or that duly elected state government. Such in sum is the quality of governance that is in store for the citizen, though the political fixers and wheeler-dealers, the self styled king makers and 'Chanakyas' will be undoubtedly in their elements once again"<sup>71</sup>. Most of this prognosis about the

BJP-led coalition government has proved correct. This government was essentially a regime of the Hindu Right, diluted and shaped to an extent, by the narrow interests of some of its coalition partners. It was finally brought down by the defection of the largest and most volatile ally, the AIDMK.

The BJP regime was communal and divisive in its outlook and approach. It colluded with the RSS's longstanding project of minority-baiting. It permitted the most fascistic members of the saffron outfit to unleash the politics of hatred and terror especially against the Christian minority, ostensibly on the issue of 'conversion'. Although the national agenda of governance excluded the BJP demands on the Ram Temple, Article 370 and Uniform Civil Code, the regime endangered the nation's commitment to secularism and the scarcity of the rule of law. Murli Manohar Joshi's plan even attempted to saffronise education, though it proved abortive. A.B. Bajpayee "hijacked India's independent and peace-oriented, nuclear policy, twisted it out of shape, and imposed on the people of India and Pakistan a dangerous costly new nuclear arms race. It has only undermined bilateral relations with China and Pakistan, before attempting unsuccessfully and unconvincingly, to repair some of the damage. Its economic policy, following the Pokhran nuclear explosions and the imposition of sanctions by the United States and some of its allies, was... a policy of 'placating foreign governments and international capital by offering economic concessions, through greater liberalization, greater incentives for foreign investors and offering the opportunity to enter captive Indian markets and buy up domestic assets cheaply".<sup>72</sup>

In addition, the BJP regime put destabilizing pressure on federalism and co-operative Center-State relations by using Article 356 to dismiss the elected

RJD government in Bihar, thus cynically threatening the existence of other legitimate governments at the state level. "Through its determination to hang on to power after clearly forfeiting parliamentary legitimacy, it forced the polity to register a new low in sordid opportunism and horse-trading. In sum, the BJP led regime set an unmatched and difficult to match-record of divisive, reactionary and chauvinist misgovernance."<sup>73</sup> Yet the people of India showed a better judgment of this government of the Hindu Right, when they booted out these saffron governments in Rajasthan and Delhi and disallowed the BJP to win power in Madhya Pradesh.

The state elections showed that the masses of the people were alienated by sharp rises in the prices of essential commodities and by the communal, divisive and inept governance. The constant tensions and vacillations within the coalition government were reflective of this truth of alienation from the electorate. It appeared that the saffron cause was in headlong retreat in the national political arena. The pendulum had swung in favour of the BJP's main antagonist, the Congress-I led by Sonia Gandhi. The only viable interim government that can be formed, before the elections for the 13<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha, would conceivably be a minority Congress-I government supported from outside by all anti-BJP parties. This interim regime can serve two constructive purposes, First, it must recommit the Indian state to a course of secular democracy. Secondly, it must enable the nation to get off the nuclear tiger.

The fall of the BJP led coalition government clearly demonstrated how the Indian political system, which was based on one party dominance in the past, has been transformed into a chaotic multi-party system. The following is

the detailed pattern of voting on the crucial confidence motion on 17 April, 1999, in the 12<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha, having an effective strength of 542 members”.<sup>74</sup>

<b>Those voting Against - 270</b>		<b>Those voting for – 269</b>	
Congress-I	139	BJP	182
CIP (M)	32	Samata	12
AIDMK	17	Telugu Desam	11
SP	20	BJD	9
RJD	16	Akali Dal	8
CPI	8	Trinamul	7
Janata Dal	6	DMK	6
RSP	5	Shiva Sena	6
BSP	5	PMK	4
RPI	4	INLD	4
TMC	3	MDMK	3
F.B.	2	Lok Shakti	3
IUML	2	National Conference Maneka Gandhi	1
Majlis (Owaisi)	1	TRC	1
ASDI	1	RJP (Anand)	1
Arunachal Cong. (M) AIIC (Ola)	1	Arunachal Cong. HVP	1
SJP	1	SDF	1
NC (Soz)	1	Independents	3
Kerala Congress	1	(Satanam Singh, Lallungmauna and S. biswamuithiary)	1
Buta singh	1	MSCP	1
PWP	1	Nominated	2

R. Muthiah (AIDMK) did not vote; Kim Gangte (CPI) and Malti Devi (RJD) were absent; Speaker-1, Vacancies-2

## **ANOTHER MID-TERM ELECTION:**

After the defeat of BJP-led government on 17 April, 1999, the Congress led by Sonia Gandhi decided, with the concurrence of her chosen party leaders, particularly Arjun Singh, to explore the possibility of setting up a Congress-led minority government with the outside support of all other parties and individuals that had voted to overthrow the Vajpayee government. The CPI(M) leader, Harkishan Singh Surjeet tried to secure the support of the left and other secular parties for the proposed Congress-led minority government. The leader of the Samajvadi Party, Mulayam Singh, and the leaders of the Revolutionary Socialist Party and the Forward Bloc with 27 votes refused to support any prospective Congress government. The leader of the Bahujan Samaj Party with 5 members said that she could not pledge her support to any government in advance. Mrs. Gandhi, therefore, could gather support only from 239 MP's which was not enough to form a new government. The proposal to set up Jyoti Basu as the new Prime Minister remained a non-starter as the Congress declared that it could not lend its support to 'any third or fourth front government' at that late stage. Earlier the CPI(M) itself had scuttled the candidature of Jyoti Basu for the post.

On 26 April, 1999, President K.R. Narayanan dissolved the 12<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha after getting recommendation from the caretaker Vajpayee government for doing the same. A Rashtrapati bhawan communiqué said that the President has, by his order under sub-clause(b) of clauses two of Article 85 of the Constitution, dissolved the 12<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha. The four page communiqué observed tersely that "the ruling alliance lost its majority because of lack of cohesion within its ranks and those who voted out the alliance showed the

same disunity while trying to form an alternative government. In this situation, the President reached the conclusion that time had arrived for the democratic will of the people to be ascertained once again, so that a government can be formed, which can confidently address the urgent needs of the people”.<sup>75</sup>

The communiqué referred to the ruling alliance’s plea that since the opposition had failed, the BJP should be given another chance to form its government. The President turned down the request finding no merit in its proposal. The President told Congress Chief Sonia Gandhi that inviting the Congress when its support base in the Lok Sabha remained well short of the ruling coalition’s proven strength of 269, was out of the question. The President added, “The recourse to dissolution on the defeat of a minority/coalition government arises when it appears to the President that a stable government cannot be formed without a general election”.<sup>76</sup>

Thus, the 12<sup>th</sup> the Lok Sabha has had the shortest term so far – a little over 13 months or 412 days in all. Constituted on 10<sup>th</sup> March, 1998, it had to be dissolved on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1999 after the BJP-led coalition government, headed by Atal Behari Vajpayee, lost the confidence vote by wafer thin margin of one vote. With the opposition attempts to form an alternative government ending in a stalemate, the dissolution was the only option left before President Narayanan.

The Ninth Lok Sabha which saw two Prime Ministers V.P. Singh and Chaudhary Charan Singh was the second shortest completing only 15 months. Constituted on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1989, the House was dissolved on 13<sup>th</sup> March, 1991, after a series of crises destabilized the V.P. Singh and Chaudhary Charan Singh government.



governments, both of them minority regimes, supported from outside by the BJP, CPI(M) and the Congress-I respectively. The life of the 11<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha, which saw the arrival and departure of three successive Prime Ministers, was also cut short by the inherent dangers of all minority regimes which depend on the external support of a single party.

While A.B. Vajpayee resigned after being unable to cobble together a majority in the 11<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha, H.D. Deve Gowda had to quit when Sita Ram Kesri suddenly withdrew the Congress-I support to his government. I.K. Gujaral presided over a similar United Front government, must Deve Gowda, but he also had to quit-unceremoniously when Kesri employed the same trick to unseat him from his post. The 11<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha had a life of 18 months and-a-half only from 15 May 1996 to 4 December, 1997.

In the last one decade, the only exception to this rule was the 10<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha which continued for its full five years term. It was a minority government too but its leader P.V. Narasimha Rao was able to establish his majority in the Lok Sabha by successfully engineering defections from some smaller opposition parties. The 10<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha was formed on 20<sup>th</sup> June, 1991 and was dissolved on 5<sup>th</sup> May, 1996.

### **The Twelve Lok Sabhas<sup>77</sup>**

Date of Constitution	Date	Dissolution
First Lok Sabha	17.04.1952	24.04.1957
Second Lok Sabha	05.04.1957	31.03.1962
Third Lok Sabha	02.04.1962	03.03.1967
Fourth Lok Sabha	04.03.1967	27.12.1970
Fifth Lok Sabha	15.03.1971	18.01.1977

Sixth Lok Sabha	23.03.1977	22.08.1979
Seventh Lok Sabha	10.01.1980	31.12.1984
Eighth Lok Sabha	31.12.1984	27.11.1989
Ninth Lok Sabha	02.12.1989	13.03.1991
Tenth Lok Sabha	20.06.1991	10.05.1996
Eleventh Lok Sabha	15.05.1996	04.12.1997
Twelfth Lok Sabha	10.03.1998	26.04.1999

There has been a quantitative shift in the Indian political system from one-party dominance of the Nehru-Gandhi era to multi-party fragmentation of the last decade which has led to instability of Indian cabinets and the consequential shortening of the life span of the Lok Sabha. Bourgeois Parliamentarism is at its best when it succeeds in developing a stable two-party system. By its failure to do so, capitalist democracy in India is facing a crisis, plunging its political economy in turmoil. The next Lok Sabha election returned BJP-led alliance to power with A.B. Vajpayee as the Prime Minister.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Rudolph and Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi : The Political Economy of the Indian State*, p. 60.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
4. See A.L., Basham, *The Wonder that was India* and Romila Thapar, *Ashoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*.
5. Rudolph and Rudolph, *in Pursuit of Lakshmi : The Political Economy of the Indian State*, p. 65.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 66.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
8. Rudolph and Rudolph, *in Pursuit of Lakshmi : The Political Economy of the Indian State*, p. 62.
9. *Ibid*, p. 68
10. J.P. Nettle, "The State as Conceptual Variable", *World Politics* 20<sup>th</sup> July, 1968, p. 566.
11. Barrington Moore Jr., *Social Origin of Dictatorship and Democracy*, p. 315.
12. Barrington Moore Jr., *Social Origin of Dictatorship and Democracy*, p. 316.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 321.
14. Quoted in W.H. Moreland, *India at Death of Akbar.*, p. 26.
15. Barrington Moore Jr., *Social Origin of Dictatorship and Democracy*, p. 326.

16. Barrington Moore Jr., *Social Origin of Dictatorship and Democracy*, p. 329-30.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 340-41
18. Paul Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth*, p. 268.
19. Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 269.
20. Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 270.
21. Karl Marx, *Capital* (ed. Kerr), Vol. 1, p. 823.
22. Paul Baran, *Political Economy of Growth*, p. 272.
23. Karl Marx, *Capital* (ed. Kerr), Vol. 1, p. 13.
24. Maurice Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, p. 208.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 209.
26. Kari Marx, *Capital*, (ed-Kerr), Vol, 1., p. 826.
27. Vera Anstey, *The Economic Development of India* (4<sup>th</sup> edition), p.5.
28. Quoted in Marx, "The Future Results of British Rule in India in Marx and Engels", *On Britain*, p. 398.
29. See T.B., *Macaulay's Lord Clive*.
30. The Law of Civilisation and Decay, *An Essay on History*, pp. 294.
31. R.C. Dutt, *Economic History of India*, (7th edition), pp. viii-xi.
32. Paul Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth*, pp. 281-282.
33. Karl Marx, "British Rule in India", in Marx and Engles, *Selected Works*, Vol. I, p. 313.
34. Quoted in Paul Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth*, p. 282.
35. Jawaharlal Nehru, *The discovery of India*, pp. 304-05.
36. *Ibid.*, pp. 306-07.
37. K.P. Karunakaran, *Democracy in India*, p. 12.
38. Mohit Sen, *The Indian Revolution*, p. 20.

39. E.M.S. Nambordiripad, *The Mahatma and the Ism*, p. 117.
40. P. Karunakaran, *Democracy in India*, p. 16.
41. Moin Shakir, *Khilafat to Partition*, p. 123.
42. W.C. Smith, *Modern Islam in India*, p. 112.
43. M. Habib's "Introduction" To Moin Shakir's *Khilafat to Partition*, p. xx.
44. *Ibid.*, p. Xxi.
45. Recent Speeches and Writings of Mr. Jannah, p. 233, *Quoted in Khilafat and Partition*, p. 190.
46. Quoted in Moin Shakir, *Kailafat to Partition*, p. 191.
47. Penderal Moon, *the Future of India*, p. 27.
48. Moin Shakir, *Khilafat to Partition*, pp. 204-05.
49. S. Ansari, *Pakistan*, p. 25.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
51. "Paul Baran", *Political Economy of Growth*, p. 366.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
53. John Foster Dulies, *War and Peace*, p. 76.
54. John Edward Dalberg Action, *Essays on Freedom and Power*, p. 224.
55. Paul Baran, *Political Economy of Growth*, p. 368.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 369.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 370.
58. "India – Progress and Plan" (22 January 1955).
59. Lloyd Rudolph and Susanne Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi*, p. 19.
60. Rudolph and Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi*, pp. 31-32.
61. *The Hindustan Times*, February 6, 1984.
62. Rudolph and Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi*, pp. 32-33.
63. Kochanek, *Business and Politics in India*, p. 329.

64. Lloyd Rudolph and Susanne Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi*, p. 35.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
66. *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 7, 1986.
67. Rudolph and Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi*, pp. 41-42.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
69. Charles Bettelheim, *India Independent*, p. 350.
70. *Economic and Political Weekly* – Editorial, 7 March, 1988.
71. *Economic and Political Weekly* – Editorial 7 March, 1998, p. 491.
72. *Frontline*, Editorial, May 7, 1999, p. 7.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
74. *The Hindu*, 18 April, 1999; (Note – Total strength of Lok Sabha is 545).
75. *The Times of India*, 27 April, 1999.
76. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
77. *The Hindu*, 27 April, 1999, p. 8.