CHAPTER VI

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All democratic countries - be they Parliamentary or Presidential - need Parties in Opposition as much as a ruling group to serve public interest and democracy effectively. In India since Independence the Opposition in the Parliament has been very weak. This is abundantly demonstrated by the results of the Nine General Elections held in India so far. Except during 1969-70, 1977 and from 1989 December no Party in the Lok Sabha had a minimum of 50 seats required for recognition as an "Opposition Party". Owing to the Splintered Opposition and the electoral system, in which the first-past-the-post wins, the Congress Party, inspite of frequently receiving less than a majority of popular vote, held a monopolistic sway on Indian polity for the first two decades of Independent India.

The Fourth General Elections of 1967 marked the beginning of a new era in Indian Politics in general and in the history of Opposition in particular. In that year Congress was greatly weakened at the Centre and Non-Congress Governments were formed in Seven out of the Seventeen States. Most of the elected Stalwarts of the Opposition Parties were more than a match to the ruling Party in talent, intellect and in Parliamentary skills.
Indeed it was a formidable Opposition. The offer of Chairmanship of the Public Accounts Committee for the first time to the Opposition to Sri Minoo Masani of the Swatantra Party, was an instance of the recognition of the fact that the Opposition was a force to be reckoned with by the Congress Government. After the Congress split in 1969, the Congress, for its survival in power, had an implicit "Coalition" with the CPI and DMK even at the Central level. The split gave a fillip to the process of polarisation of Political forces within the Country. Rightly, therefore, the term of the Fourth Lok Sabha, 1967-1970, can be described as the period "From anti Congressism to Polarisation".

The results of the Sixth General Elections of 1977 held in the wake of emergency imposed by Smt. Indira Gandhi, primarily to make her personal rule secure over the country relegated the Congress to an Opposition but the Janata Party failed to continue to be in power for long due to internal contradictions.

The 1980 Elections to the Lok Sabha brought about a significant break in the Structure of Political Competition. There occurred a Shift from the inter party competition model to intra-party competition model - from the two-party model to the One-Party Dominance model.
The 1989 General Elections to the Lok Sabha gave a shattering blow to the Congress dominance for the second time at the national level.

No Party would be content to be in Opposition for all time to come. The ultimate aim of a political Party is to come to power and stay on in power at different levels - local, State and national. A Party in power goes to polls on the basis of its record - the nature of the progress achieved and the benefits conferred through legislation and executive action during its rule. In the game of nerves at the time of polls, the Opposition, from this angle, is at a disadvantage by its very nature. The scope for Opposition to promote legislation as private member bills and or to amend the proposed or existing legislation is too limited in view of the 'brute' majorities which the ruling Parties have enjoyed in the State and national legislatures in India. At the best the Opposition may bring out in bold relief the unsavoury implications of controversial bills. A Party in Opposition with its sight on the seat of power or atleast on returning to the legislature in increased strength may make promises of beneficial legislation or executive action in its manifesto but has to convince the people at the time of polls that it
had done its best to safeguard the public interests by ventilating grievances of the people, by Championing the popular causes, and by exposing the mischiefs of the bureaucracy and the Party in power.

In view of the above, the focus of this study has been the role of the Opposition in ventilation of grievances and criticism of the Government and bureaucracy and so. Its role in legislation has not been touched.

The Opposition Parties in Andhra Pradesh during the period of our study (1975-1985) appear to have performed their role well. For the first time in the history of Andhra Pradesh State Legislature, there was a recognised Opposition Party — Janata—with 60 members. Its leader was recognised as the Opposition leader and the Deputy Speaker was chosen from the Party. It raised numerable issues such as the death of Sri Ahmed Hussain and the rape of Mrs. Rameezabi, opening of fire on students at Madanapalli, police firing on tribals at Indervalli Village in Adilabad District and the Corruption of the Congress(I) Ministers including the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh Dr. M. Chenna Reddy. Between 1978 and 1980, the Janata Party was the most powerful Opposition in Andhra Pradesh Legislature, on the basis of their activities relating to Questions, Calling
Attention Notices, Matters Under Rule-329 etc., in Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly in the selected Sample Sessions of the Assembly, S. Jaipal Reddy can be said to occupy the first place in highlighting the public issues through Legislative techniques in the Assembly, followed by M. Venkaiah Naidu, S. Chandramouli, G. Latchanna and K.B. Siddaiah in that order.

In the Legislative Council, eventhough the Janata Party had only 14 members in 1978, Jupudi Yeegnarayana, D. Surya Prakasa Reddy and V. Rama Rao - all belonging to former Jana Sangh and later Bharatiya Janata Party, and all elected from Graduates Constituencies—were the leading lights in that order in ventilating popular Grievances in the Selected Sample Sessions of the Council.

One interesting side aspect that came to the surface quite often was that while the Opposition parties, particularly the Janata Party, never lost sight of their common objective of Opposing the Congress Government, they could not at the same time resist criticising their Non-Congress Political opponents within the Opposition. They did not miss opportunities to criticise one another when occasion demanded. Given the nature of the Party System in India, this appears inevitable.

In the Seventh Legislative Assembly of Andhra Pradesh (1983-1985), for the first time in Andhra Pradesh Legislative history, the Congress(I) occupied the Opposition benches. The position continued in the next Assembly. The Telugu Desam Party led by N.T. Rama Rao was in power throughout between 1983-1989 except for a month when N.T.R. was sacked by the then Governor had to be called back later to power.

As an Opposition Party, the Congress(I) played a responsible role and its members drew the attention of the Telugu Desam Government to the problems concerning their constituencies as well as the State. In the Legislature, they raised many issues like the atrocities on Harijans of Padiri Kuppam Village in Chittoor District, Police firings on tobacco growers at Tangutur in Prakasam District, murder
of Sarpanch of Lingareddypet Village in Nizamabad District, Police firing at Allamanipally in Cuddapah District, deaths of Sri Gopal at Vijayawada in Police Custody, harassment of the Congress(I) workers, remunerative prices to agricultural produce, introduction of revised mid-day meal programme to school children, introduction of Urdu as the Second Official language in the State and abolition of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council by the Telugu Desam Government.

As an Opposition Congress(I) was the most numerous Opposition in Andhra Pradesh between 1983 and 1989 compared to the earlier period commencing 1956 including 1962-64 when the Communist Party of India had a strong base in Andhra Pradesh Legislature. In the selected Sample Sessions of the Assembly, Congress leader A. Madan Mohan can be said to occupy the first place in focussing the public issues in the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly followed by Dr. Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, D.K. Samarasimha Reddy, Dr. D.L. Ravindra Reddy and B. Sammaiah.

Coming to the Congress(I) role as an Opposition in the Legislative Council during this period, K. Rosaiah was the most leading spokesman of the Party in focussing on the TDP Governments' Omissions and Commissions. Dr. K. Keshava Rao, V. Hanumantha Rao and Majji Tulasidas come next in that order.
The Opposition was active outside the Andhra Pradesh Legislature too. From 1975 to 1985, the Congress(I) as an Opposition released the maximum number of Press Statements (43) followed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (24), the Janata Party (15), the CPI (15), the CPI-M (9) and the Congress-U (9). In the Congress(I), K. Rosaiah released the highest number of press statements and Party's resolutions followed by A. Madan Mohan, Dr. K. Kesava Rao, M. Baga Reddy, Dr. Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy and Jalagam Vengal Rao. In the BJP,

M. Venkaiah Naidu was the leading figure in releasing the Party's Press Statements. Next in importance to him were B. Dattatreya, Bangaru Lakshman, Ch. Vidyasagar Rao and P.V. Chalapathi Rao. In the Janata Party,

S. Jaipal Reddy was the only one who released Press Statements and Party's resolutions. Persons from other Parties who issued press statements include N. Giri Prasad and Ch. Rajeswara Rao of CPI and M. Hanumantha Rao and M. Omkar of CPI(M).

During the Sixth Legislative Assembly (from 1978 to 1982) the Assembly met on 257 days, i.e., an average of 51 days a year. A perusal of the debates gives the impression that about half of the time for which it sat was spent for the Ventilation of Grievances through the Questions, Calling Attention Notices, Matters Under Rule-329 and Adjournment Motions. The Seventh Legislative Assembly (from 1983 to 1984) met on 97 days, i.e., an average of 48 days a year.
roughly one-third of the time appears to have been spent for the Ventilation of Grievances. Comparatively speaking, it means that the Janata Party which had been in Opposition from 1978-1982 had utilised the opportunities for Ventilation of Grievances more than the Congress(I) did in 1983-1984.

In the past 40 years in republican India, some Parties have been in power as well as in Opposition at different periods at the national or State levels. The facts analysed in the previous chapters make it abundantly and prominently clear that the Parties in Opposition - Congress(I) or Non-Congress(I) - tend to be alike in their pattern of behaviour in and out-side the Legislature - in Ventilating Public Grievances, in raising popular issues and in criticising the bureaucracy and the Party-in-Power. The techniques used by the Opposition are routine and stereo-typed; and so it needs to be considered whether modifications in the legislature procedure and business such as introduction of a committee system would enable the legislators to utilise their energies in better and more constructive directions for shaping the legislation as well as controlling the executive.

A perceptive student of Indian politics would however not fail to observe that a Party's response to incidents and
events - like, for example, deaths in police custody or
due to police firings, or atrocities on weaker sections -
and its stand on issues of political significance depends
upon where it sits - the Treasury benches or the Opposition.
a Party in Opposition would demand a judicial enquiry when-
ever there is a death in police firing or ask for a trans-
fer of police officers whenever there is a failure of Law
and Order; yet it would not, when in power, normally order,
on its own, such enquiries or make such transfers.

The Telugu Desam Party before it was voted to power
in 1983 used to demand that the Ministers and others should
openly declare their assets, but once in power it dragged
its feet for long on this issue. Bharatiya Janata Party
in Andhra Pradesh, in its charge sheet against Telugu Desam
Government in 1987 documented many such instances of unkept
pious promises. Similar instances relating to Congress(I)
can also be cited. For example the Congress(I), then in
Opposition in Andhra Pradesh called for Bandh in the entire
State of Andhra Pradesh in March 1989 on certain issues,
but five months later in the same year, the Congress(I)
Government at the Union spared no pains to condemn and
frustrate the Bharat Bandh called by the Opposition Parties.
A Bandh can be either good or bad. It cannot be good when
it is led by Congress(I) and bad when it is resorted to by
an Opposition.
It makes us conclude that the political parties in India probably have two contradictory patterns of behaviour—shall we say, two cultures—one in Opposition and another in power. It is for the future researchers to explore this aspect and throw more light on the Political Systems and circumstances which lead to such dual culture of Political Parties.