CHAPTER - X

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The nature and working of the Indian Party system has been the subject of keen interests and much discussion by scholars and analysts. The most significant development in the Indian party politics, since late 1980s, has been the rise of a rightist force, namely, BJP, to the center stage. The present work, entitled, "Indian party system: A Study in the Profile and Performance of the Bharatiya Janata Party", is based on this emerging unique feature of the dynamic party system of India.

Broadly classifying the political parties into 'Cadre based Parties', and 'Mass based Parties', all the Indian political parties have been categorised into three major categories, in the ideological spectrum, such as Centrist', Leftist' and 'Rightist' political parties. In view of the changing patterns of Indian party politics the focus of the study has been directed for making a unique, comprehensive and empirical analysis of the dynamics of the Indian party system, in general and the emergence of the BJP as a powerful political force, in particular.

The nature, dynamics and trends of the party system in India are unique. The origin of Indian party system since the freedom movement days which resulted in the wide ranging political recruitment, vast political socialization and mobilisation of the masses. But it is difficult to fit Indian party system into any rigid typological illustration. Though India presents the spectacle of a multi-party system by virtue of sheer number of political parties that join the electoral fray still this system is basically different from that prevalent in western countries like France and Italy. With its competitive character, the Indian party system has passed through nine distinct phases which have a bearing on the epithet 'one party dominance system'. It remained, more or less one party dominance upto the 8th general election, held in December 1984. Except for a short period
between 1977 and 1980, in which the Janata Party assumed power at the Centre, the Congress remained as one-dominant party. The character of one-dominant Indian party system got changed in Ninth Lok Sabha election in 1989 which resulted in a hung parliament. The BJP came to the centre stage of Indian politics for the first time and it provided critical support, along with the Left parties, to novel alliance government of National Front led by the Janata Dal. The picture of hung parliament continued in Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth Lok Sabhas. In the Tenth Lok Sabha the BJP emerged as the second largest party and hence the main opposition party in Lok Sabha. The major outcome of Eleventh and Twelfth Lok Sabha elections has been the emergence of BJP as the firstever rightist single largest party and consequently the polarization of so called secular parties against the BJP.

An analysis of BJP’s historical backdrop as well as its process of formation has been carefully made. The party has been viewed as the representative of a unique political culture which incorporates Bharatiya Samskriti (Indian Culture) and Bharatiya Maryada (Indian glory). The real genesis of the party lies in the sincere efforts of the high priest of ‘Hinduism’, Hindu revivalist and Hindu nationalist of different movements. Based on the legacy of Hindu Renaissance started with Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Hindu politico-national awakening with the formation of Hindu Mahasabha, RSS’ militant Hindu nationalism, the BJP emerged as the reincarnation of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh which was a post independence Hindu based party formed with the politicisation of RSS. When the ‘dual membership issue’ rocked the Janata Party, the BJS constituent in the party decided to go alone and reconstitute itself as a new all India political party. In the dual membership controversy the BJS constituent was criticized by the other constituents of the Janata Party for remaining as members of the RSS. The RSS cadre which was working as a well-knit support network for the BJS, felt humiliated. Amidst the humiliations and revengeful mood, the members of the BJS constituent formed the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1980. Senior leader of the constituent
Atal Bihari Vajpayee became the founder President of the BJP who linked the emergence of BJP with JP's vision of a glorious India. The party was pledged to 'pursuing his unfinished tasks.' Few senior leaders of the Janata Party, who had no affiliation with the erstwhile BJP, like Ram Jethmalani, a Bombay based famous lawyer, Sikander Bakht and Shanti Bhusan, both ministers in former Janata Party government were included in the BJP in order to provide a mass base to it and also to expose the new party to the mainstream politics of India. Vajpayee emphasized the great task of nation building at a critical juncture when India was placed at a crossroad. Justice M C Chagla explained the emergence of BJP as a 'glimmer of hope' for providing a viable national political alternative. In its ideological commitments, the BJP tried to distance itself from the erstwhile BJS in the beginning years.

Unlike its predecessors, the party recognised the composite character of Indian Nation. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the founding President of the BJP put forward five ideological commitments, viz., Nationalism and National Integration, (ii) Democracy (iii) Positive Secularism (iv) Gandhian Socialism and (v) Value based politics, on the basis of which 'national consensus could be created'. However, the hard-liners like Rajmata Scindia became very critical towards some of the ideological postulates and criticised the leadership for diluting the pro-Hindu image of the party. Under Vajpayee the party sought to adopt a more liberal, democratic, secular and egalitarian image in order to become a meaningful, viable national political alternative. But this moderate line and adherence to mainstream political values led BJP to suffer an electoral debacle in the 1984 elections. This caused a serious introspection in the rank and file of the party. A twelve member working group with K L Sharma as the convener, was constituted to review the ideological and organisational framework of the party for drawing up a future action plan. The group considered the 'Integral Humanism', a concept developed by Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, as the only alternative on the basis of which a new socio-economic order can be successfully developed. Accordingly, the party
adopted 'Integral Humanism' as its basic philosophy. This ideological shift led the party to retain the RSS-BJS moorings. It was believed that a combination of both RSS-BJP and liberal-Gandhian approaches could accommodate the 'old' and attract the 'new'. However, in reality, the BJP shifted itself from a liberal image to a comparatively fanatic plank of Hindutva.

On the organisational front, the party appears like 'Duverger's federal party'. It has got a strong organisational set up spreading from national to local level. In the organisational setup, the National President occupies a key position. The National Executive is considered as a nucleus body within the party and plays the role of highest decision making authority. It consists of all the national office bearers of the party and also the senior leaders. However, the majority of top-ranking officials belong to the upper caste Hindus. Sikander Bakht is the only Muslim to be included in the high rank of the party. All the office bearers constitute the party bureaucracy. The National Executive appoints 'Parliamentary Board' and 'Central Election Committee' to streamline the parliamentary and electoral affairs. Besides, the party has got 'National Council' which is the highest policy making body and 'Plenary Session' or 'Special Session'. The Plenary Session is the largest organ of the party at the National level. Similarly, the party has got its own organisation at the state, regional, district, mandal, and local levels. Its parliamentary and legislative leaders, play the crucial in the process of legislation and floor management. These wings are activated under the leadership of the 'Leader', the Deputy leader' through the Party Whips. The party has been constantly revitalising its organisational setup on the recommendations of the Sharma working group. It has opened up different cells like Kishan Cell, Labour Cell etc. to mobilise the cross section of Indian population. Apart from the organisational setup, the party expands its support base through various support groups/front organisation like the RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal, ABVP etc. On the whole, the party structurally has adopted a democratic framework but, functionally, its organisation appears to be more authoritarian.
Being a cadre based party the BJP has got a firm leadership which is shaped by the BJS-RSS legacy. The three National Presidents of the party, both former and continuing, viz, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, L.K. Advani and Dr. M.M Joshi are placed in the first rank of the top leadership of the party. The founder President Vajpayee is a most respected charismatic leader of the party. He is popular among other political parties for his liberal approach, dynamic style, diplomatic sophistication and a visionary and romantic outlook. Being awarded with 'Best Parliamentarian Award' in 1995, he brought laurels to the party. Lal Krishna Advani is considered as top political strategist and mass mobiliser of the BJP. He happens to be a close associate of Vajpayee. Advani is respected for his pragmatic style and tremendous analytical and reasoning powers. Contrary to both of them Dr. M.M Joshi represents the young generations in the party's top leadership. He is a hard-liner pursuing the orthodox Hindu nationalism. Joshi has got Machiavellian and non-innovative styles. All the three top leaders of the party have got their background in RSS. While Vajpayee and Advani rose to the leadership position through BJS Cadre, Joshi came through ABVP Cadre. As it is seen, he is a low profile leader in the party. In the second line of the top leadership four national Vice Presidents of the party, both former and continuing, viz., Rajmata Vijaya Raje Scindia, Sundar Singh Bhandari, K.R. Malkani and K.L. Sharma have been placed. Except Rajmata all the three leaders have got their background in RSS. Rajmata rose to the leadership position through Congress-BJS Cadres while Bhandari and Sharma came through BJS Cadres. Among these four leaders Bhandari is close to Dr. Joshi while the rest three are closed to Advani. In the third line of top leadership the six national General Secretaries, both continuing and former, viz, Jagdish Prasad Mathur, K.N. Govindacharya, Promod Mahajan, Kushbhau Thakre, Smt. Sushama Swaraj, and Kedarnath Sahani are included. Except Smt. Swaraj all the five leaders have got their background in RSS. From among these leaders Govindacharya is the chief ideologue and theoretician of the party. Promod Mahajan is the young strategist, and Swaraj is the powerful spokesperson of the
In the parliamentary wing the members are largely drawn from RSS-BJS Cadres while few are from Congress, Janata Party and other small political groups. One of the remarkable features of the profile of the parliamentary members of the party has been the induction of more and more fresh leaders. These freshers will definitely try to change the nature of the party in coming years. The perceptions of the BJP leaders have got marginally ethno-religious orientations with emphasis on the ancient culture and traditional values. In their perceptions, the BJP leaders record the priorities of the party as: (a) establishment of a clean political system (b) pursuing the value based politics (c) creation of Uniform Civil Code (d) abolition of Article 370 (e) fighting against corruption and criminalisation and (f) ensuring Swadeshi and 'Swabalamban' in the economic field. Forecasting the major crises in national politics, such as, crisis of nationalism of consensus and of leadership, the BJP leadership is optimistic for the emergence of India into a strong, powerful and developed nation.

The BJP's policies, techniques and issue orientations, have got high potential for political mobilization. In the contemporary politics of India, BJP has emerged as a prominent and popular national party with deep ideological orientations. For mobilising the voters it pursues economic policy for modernisation without westernisation, growth with self-reliance, economic democracy and serving the 'Dandra Narayan' (The Poor). The economic programmes of the party are based on the ideals of 'Humanism', 'Swadeshi' and 'Swabalamban'. Within its policy frameworks the party adopts 'Agricultural and Rural Development Policy', 'Industrial Policy', 'Education Policy', 'Foreign Policy', 'Welfare Policy for weaker sections' etc. Most of the policies of BJP endorse the popular dissatisfaction against the continued policy posture of the Congress Party and offer a viable alternative dimension. In other words, the BJP through its policies and programmes present an alternative model against the prevailing Nehruvian model of policies as pursued by the Congress party and other centrist parties. It believes that its alternative policies will protect vital issues and problems affecting popular interest as well as the body polity in India.
It has taken a unique stand in projecting different issues, both regional and national. It played openly the 'Hindu card' in the explosive 'Ramjanmabhoomi - Babri Masjid Issue,' which paid unexpected political dividends to the party. It also strongly protested against the so-called 'Minorityism' and the prevailing appeasement policies of the Congress by taking up the issues like 'Uniform Civil Code' and abolition of Article 370. The party has shown its deep concern for the nation, the body polity and above all for the people of India by taking up the issues like Centre-State relation, Electoral and Constitutional Reforms, Corruption and Criminalisation, Liberalisation and Privatisation, Assam problems, Uttaranchal and Vananchal, Enron issues, Bangladeshi infiltration, Tin Bigha, Globalisation, GATT and Dunkel etc. For playing the real politics and mobilising the voters, the BJP has adopted 'Ethno-Religious Techniques' and the Political Techniques of pragmatic pursuit of power. In the Ethno-Religious techniques the party has resorted to 'Rath Yatra,' 'Kar Seva,' 'Yanadesh Yatra' etc. These techniques centre round the Ayodhya issue and the plank of Hindutva. The Ethno-Religious techniques are encouraged by the party hardliners. Through these techniques the party mobilise the sentimental Hindu voters which is evidenced in its electoral performance. The political techniques of the pragmatic pursuit of power are always preferred by both hard-liners and the moderate groups in the Party. The dynamic political technique of the party includes 'Politics of Alliance, and Electoral Adjustments,' 'Outside support to the Government,' 'Responsible Opposition,' 'Representative Government' 'Ekta Yatra,' 'Rotation Government' 'National Agenda' etc.

The growing electoral success of the party proves the capability of its policies, techniques and issue orientations for greater political mobilisation. In fact the Ethno-Religious issues and techniques have been instrumental for the party to mobilise the voters.

A comprehensive survey of the electoral performances of the BJP in different Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections has also been undertaken in the study. During its formative years the party suffered electoral setback due to the improper 'first-past-the-post' system.
the electoral politics, the BJP more or less followed the Leninist formulation 'Two steps forward, one step backward'. In 1984 Lok Sabha elections the party captured only two seats polling 7.4% of the votes. However, in early 1980s Vidhan Sabha elections, the party made its presence felt in Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. A sudden and unprecedented electoral rise of the party occasioned in 1989 Lok Sabha elections when it bagged as many as 86 seats polling 11.4% of the votes. It started to play a major role in national politics by extending critical outside support to the alliance government of National Front led by the Janata Dal. Its phenomenal success has been attributed to two major factors: (i) openly playing of Hindu card in the wake of Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy and (ii) popular dissatisfaction against Congress and Rajiv Gandhi's government. Further, in 1989 and 1990 Vidhan Sabha elections, the party performed well in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan. Remarkably the party captured power in the states like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh. In 1991 Vidhan Sabha elections the party significantly increased its positions in Uttar Pradesh and formed the government. Further, in the midterm poll to the Lok Sabha, the BJP sharply pursued the Hindutva politics in order to withstand the political designs of Pro-Mandal politicians and political parties. In its election manifesto, the party promised for Ram Rajya to be based on 'Clean Political System', 'Economic growth with Social Justice' 'Vibrant Social Order' and 'World Fraternity'. The much politicised Rath Yatra of the party attracted the voters and the Party President L K Advani became the greatest vote catcher after performing the Rath Yatra. Though the party went alone in the election, still it increased its tally in Lok Sabha to 119 polling 20.0% of the votes. With this performance, the party emerged as the second largest party as well as the main Opposition party in Lok Sabha. In 1993 Vidhan Sabha elections the party's earlier performance in Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh was reversed and it could not resume the power in these states.
However, in Rajasthan the party improved its position marginally by securing 95 seats in 1993 Assembly elections. Again in 1995 Vidhan Sabha elections it performed better in Bihar, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Orissa. It formed government in Gujarat, became a partner of the BJP-Shiv Sena coalition government in Maharashtra and emerged as the main Opposition party in Bihar. In 1996 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP was made a political untouchable and put under political isolation by the centrist and leftist parties. The BJP fought the election in the limited alliance with Shiv Sena, Haryana Vikas Party and Samata Party. Since this election the party had been projecting its stalwart leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee, with a comparatively clean image, charismatic personality and liberal outlook, as the Prime Ministerial candidate. Along with the Hindutva plank the party took up different vital national and regional issues. It captured 161 seats with a marginal improvement of poll share upto 20.7%. The outcome of this election has been unique because the BJP for the first time emerged as the single largest party in the Lok Sabha surpassing the Congress and other centrist parties. Finally, in the recently concluded Twelfth Lok Sabha Elections, the BJP continued to be the single largest party, bagging 180 seats. The party fought this election in alliance with more regional parties and leaders. Remarkably, the party was no longer treated as a political untouchable. It sought to provide a stable government and able Prime Minister. For the first time the party made comfortable entry into Southern and Eastern regions though it suffered setback in Rajasthan and Maharashtra. The electoral outcome led to the formation of a BJP led coalition government at the centre with Vajpayee as the Prime Minister. The trends of the electoral performance of the BJP reveal that, it has been confined to North and Western region i.e., the Hindi belt and Maharashtra and Gujarat. However, it is only in 1998 elections, the BJP could make a comfortable but late entry into the Southern and Eastern regions. Inspite of emerging as the single largest party, its own voting share remained still lower to that of the Congress. Though the BJP has polarised the forward caste, middle class Hindu voters, urban elites
rural voters and highly educated sectors in its favour, it has got a comparatively narrow support base among the marginalised groups like Muslims and STs. These few negative developments are risky factors for a national party like BJP.

The BJP has generated strong enthusiasm all over the country and attracted supports from different quarters. The outcome of 1996 and 1998 Lok Sabha elections made it as the single largest party, with 161 and 180 seats respectively. With confidence the leadership has started projecting the party as the anointed successor of the Congress. In the typical multi-party system of India a considerable cadre based party like BJP has made its presence felt due to the decline of Congress, failure of Janata Dal to emerge as cohesive force and inability of the Left parties to make inroads into the Hindi belt. 'Right of centre' is BJP in the contemporary Indian party system. The phenomenal rise of the BJP in late 1980s and 1990s has been the most significant development in Indian politics. The party is alleged to have come to the centre stage of Indian politics by playing the 'Hindu Card' in manipulative ways. As against the secular nationalism of the Congress and the centrist parties, the BJP pursues 'Hindu Nationalism'. That is why the party is often described as a party of 'Hindu Right'. The leadership projects the BJP as a cadre based mass party in the Indian Party System. Thus the position of BJP in Indian Party System is unique. However the party faces severe challenges and problems. It has been criticised as a 'Communal Party', as 'Fascist Party' etc. It has been suffering from internal conflicting perceptions, contradictions and dilemma. It pursues a confusing political culture. It is severely upset by the growing factional fights within the party in recent years. Above all the party has been spoiling itself by deviating from the 'value based politics' and thereby it is moving in the Congress way. Besides the party has been facing electoral problems and social, economic, political and cultural challenges. The greatest question mark has come before the party that how it can emerge as a viable national political alternative while...
playing the communal card of pseudo-Hindutva and remaining in 'Splendid isolation' as well as in the status of political untouchability?

The present work, entitled "Indian Party System: A Study in the Profile and Performance of the Bharatiya Janata Party", has established the truth of our most of the hypotheses. The ongoing conflict between Hindus and Muslims assumed severe communal dimension with the politicisation of Ramjanmabhoomi - Babri Masjid controversy, in late 1980s and early 1990s. This issue has been comprehensively analysed in the course of preceding discussions. Keeping in view the large capability of the VHP's campaign for Ayodhya issue, the BJP formally endorsed the Ramjanmabhoomi issue in its political agenda. The party in its 1989 election manifesto committed itself to the cause of Ramjanmabhoomi and criticised the Congress (I) for creating stalemate. In November 1989 the RSS-VHP-BJP combine played the Hindu card openly during the 'Shilanyas' ceremony. The BJP became the sole gainer in this controversy by phenomenally increasing its tally from 2 to 88 in 1989 Lok Sabha elections. Further, the Hindutva movement reached its crescendo during Advani's Rath Yatra from Somanath to Ayodhya in 1990. Subsequently the BJP increased its position to 119 in 1991 Lok Sabha elections. With pledge to build the Ram Temple at Ayodhya, the BJP won the UP Assembly election in 1991. By this time the party also performed well in few other states. In the Ayodhya controversy neither the central government nor the judiciary could respond sincerely, fearing the wrath of the Muslims. The BJP exploited this for its political advantage by projecting a Hindu nationalist image and adopting ethno-religious techniques, policies and programmes. The party leaders in their perception, attribute success of the party to Ayodhya issue to a large extent. Thus, the hypothesis, namely, "the social conflicts acquiring ethno-religious dimensions and the inability of the State to cope with this may have favoured the emergence of the BJP", stands proved.

In the contemporary Indian party politics the Congress is
declining speedily and is becoming a spent force. The BJP leaders try to fill up the vacuum created by the Congress. They relate the failure of the Congress and popular dissatisfaction against it with the outdated Nehruvian model of policies and programmes. The party presents alternative models in its policies, programmes and issue orientations against the prevailing Nehruvian model, as adopted by the Congress. By presenting alternative model before the people, the BJP seeks to emerge as a viable national alternative to the Congress. The growing electoral strength of BJP at the cost of Congress substantiates this point. As indicated in Table 8.6 the Congress lost 103 seats and the BJP gained 60 seats in 1996 Lok Sabha elections. Thus it would be more appropriate to say BJP has grown in the electoral field at the cost of Congress. Again in 1998 elections, the BJP grew at the cost of Janata Dal and its partners. In other words, there has been a considerable shift of the vote banks of other parties in general and the Congress (I) in particular, in favour of the BJP. This proves the hypothesis, namely, "BJP may have been originated as only a viable alternative to the Congress and other parties", partially. However, regarding the point of emerging as a viable national alternative, it seems that the BJP has to march further to emerge as a national alternative. As has been analysed the vote share of BJP is higher in several states than its national vote share. In 1996 Lok Sabha elections though the party gained 161 seats and emerged as the single largest party still its vote share remained at 20.7% around 10% lower than that of the Congress, during the days of its worst defeat. Further, in 1998 elections, its vote share still remained marginally lower than that of Congress. But in any democratic system based on universal adult franchise, percentage of votes polled by the party is a true reflection of its popularity among the masses and its wider acceptability by the people. Further the party, more or less remained confined to Hindi belt and other states of western region (see Table 8.8) upto 1996 Lok Sabha Elections. So far as the support base is concerned the party has got a narrow base among the marginalised groups viz., the minorities, the Dalits, SC/STs, unlettered groups and
above all the rural voters (see Table 8.10) In 1998 elections the party expanded its support base in rural areas. Its capture of a large number of seats with less percentage of votes could be due to the faulty 'first-past-the-post' electoral system in India. Thus, with a comparatively lower percentage of vote share, with very marginal presence in Eastern region and virtual absence in Southern region upto 1996 and with a narrow support base among the marginal groups, it is very difficult for the BJP to emerge as a national alternative to the Congress. Considering the electoral performance and ideology of the BJP, it can be drawn that the party has to improve itself in order to become a viable national alternative independently. Hence, the hypothesis, "BJP may have been originated as only a viable alternative to the Congress and other parties", is proved as partially correct.

The BJP increased its support base among the highly educated groups, forward castes, Hindus and urban voters already reflected in the Table 8.10. The party has mobilised the Indian electorate who remained disgusted with the stereotype functioning of the congress over the years. Its slogan "Sabko Dekha, hamen bhi dekho" (you have seen all, try us) appealed to most of the Indian voters, even rural voters in 1998 elections, who require desperately a change of government. The party took full advantage of the popular dissatisfaction against the Congress and presented alternative policies and programmes and took up different popular issues highlighting the drawbacks of the Congress. The electoral performance of the BJP is a record of its success in this direction. In other words, the growing electoral success of the BJP is primarily due to the negative votes against Congress and United Front. People want a change of government and a dethronement of the party in power. As there is no other viable political party as opposed to the established Congress party, except BJP, people vote for BJP. Hence the hypothesis, "The anti-establishment voting choice of the people may have helped the BJP to pull more votes", has been supported by the analysis of electoral performance of the party.

As already mentioned, the BJP is the reincarnation of the
erstwhile BJS Its ideological shift to adopt integral humanism as the main philosophy of the party in 1985, brought it closer to the RSS once again. Its participation in Ayodhya movement in line with VHP-RSS techniques exposed the party as a strong member of the Sangh Parivar. In the Lok Sabha elections of 1989, 1991, 1996 and 1998, the BJP heavily depended on the RSS Cadre for mobilising the voters during the campaign. The RSS which has a well-knit support base helped the BJP to increase its strength in these four Lok Sabha Elections as well as in various Vidhan Sabha Elections. Besides, as a political heir of BJS the party naturally utilised its support base. Therefore, it has been proved that 'being the reincarnation of the BJS, the BJP may likely have utilised its support base and also the RSS net'.

The BJP is trying to create a mass support base due to the failure of centrist and leftist political forces to present viable political programmes before the electorate. The party expanded its support base due to its calculative political techniques and electoral gimmicks. In the backdrop of the declining of congress BJP played Hindu Card to a great extent towards its electoral success. The party adopted few ideological postulates, like, 'Gandhian Socialism' and 'Positive Secularism', to wear a mask for hiding its real character and also for sharing the legacy of the nationalist leaders like Gandhi, Jay Prakash etc. Its alternative policies and ideological orientations have definitely attracted urban elites and few intellectual quarters. But the party is yet to receive a mass support on the ideological front. Hence, the hypothesis, "the ideology of BJP may likely have a mass support", does not stand proved in this dissertation.

It is a fact that the debate of 'communalism versus secularism' and 'positive secularism versus pseudo secularism' started with the rise of BJP to the centre stage of Indian politics. But the Congress and other centrist parties had been pursuing soft communalism" by

1 BG Desmukh, "Another Historic Blunder", Front Line, 4 April 1997, p 107
undertaking various ethno-religions issues in a manipulative way, from time to time. The BJP played the communal card of 'Hindutva' in the wake of Ramjanmabhoomi - Babri Masjid issue. It committed the mistake of pursuing pseudo-Hindutva. The history of communalism in India shows that when secular and democratic forces fail to meet the challenges faced by the nation as well as to overcome the crises plaguing a society, the communal forces grow. Thus, the adherence of BJP to the communal plank of Hindutva and subsequently increasing its electoral strength is mainly due to the failure of the so-called secular democratic parties like Congress and other Centrist and Leftist forces to offer viable solutions to different national and regional problems. The BJP as a political party, aspiring for power, only exploited this for its political advantage. Hence, for the communalisation of Indian politics, both BJP, on the one hand, and the Centrist and Leftist parties, on the other, contributed equally in their respective capacities. In view of this, the hypothesis, "The BJP may likely create an anti-secular India", appears to be more exaggerated and does not stand proved.

Essentially, the BJP is an Indian phenomenon emerging in the context of unprecedented politico-economic changes in the country. In fact the BJP has been adjusting itself to the socio-economic and political realities in India more rapidly than any other party. That is why the bedraggled BJP which Advani inherited from Vajpayee in 1986 has come to the centre stage in Nineties as a front runner shaping the terms of national political debate as well as leading the nation. It is no longer confined to the upper caste culture rather the party has successfully expanded its base among the backwards and other stratum of the Indian society. The party has already overtaken the Congress in 1996 and 1998 Lok Sabha Elections thereby emerging as a top contender for power at the centre. It strives to fill up the vacuum created due to the decline of Congress and also projects itself as a natural inheritor of the stability platform.

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In the present study, an attempt has been made to point out the reasons for the spectacular growth of the BJP in Indian party system. The organisational rigour of the party with a democratic style and also self-updating through study camps and working group helped itself to face the challenges in the real politics. Its ideology and also the alternative policies and programmes for the people and the nation as a whole, rejecting the existing Nehruvian model, appealed to the intellectuals as well as the middle class and the aspiring youth in India. The party's systematic work at the grassroots and its people-oriented rural development and agricultural policies helped it to enter into the rural areas. Further, the traditional support base of the erstwhile BJS and also the RSS network and the lumpen organisations like VHP and Bajrang Dal helped the BJP to grow. In the electoral field, a flexible, imaginative as well as a pragmatic strategy contributed to the strength of the party. Above all, the strong mobilising ability of Advani and his successful harnessing of Hindutva paid the party good dividends. A comparatively disciplined cadre becomes an added strength of the BJP. More than any other political party, it sought to carve out one single, massive Hindu vote bank across the country through an aggressive campaign on the Ramjanmabhoomi issue. Almost every kind of resource was mobilised for this struggle from the moderates Advani and Vajpayee to the vituperative Sadvi Rithambhara and Uma Bharati, from the enormous organisational acumen of the RSS to the VHP and the lumpen Bajrang Dal not to speak of the thousands of Sadhus. Thus various factors catapulted the BJP from the fringe to the centre stage.

In 1996 and 1998 Lok Sabha Election the BJP totted up millions of votes and emergered as the single largest party. This is one unique development in the democratic party politics of India because, for the first time, a rightist party overtook the centrist and leftist forces in the electoral race. But the major non-BJP parties clamoured to isolate the BJP and keep it out of power thereby showing modicum of respect for the verdict of the electorate. They got polarised, under the 'myth of
secularism' against the BJP branding it as a communal outfit and hence a political untouchable. Interestingly, the Left parties, the National Front and few small and regional parties, some of whom fought the election against each other, formed an opportunistic combination i.e. United Front to hijack power from the BJP. The Congress (I), with an evil design cooperated with this camp and forced the Vajpayee-led BJP government to collapse within 13 days in 1996. All these opportunistic non-BJP Parties in order to gain power interpreted the verdict of the electorate in such a way as if the nation has gone to the polls to choose between 'secularism' and 'communalism'. But in 1998, the BJP formed a viable coalition government with Vajpayee as the Prime Minister, reversing all the manipulations of Congress (I) and United Front.

It is highly improper to isolate the largest party in the popular House of the Indian Parliament, i.e. the BJP, as a communal outfit which is getting itself elected democratically by the people. Comparing with other political parties, the BJP seems to be less communal, casteist and sectarian. The Congress party had already presided benignly over some of the worst Hindu-Muslim communal riots in Indian history like Meerut, Maliana, Bhagalpur, Bombay etc. Further, the Congress government at the centre tacitly allowed the communal riots in 1984. After the brutal assassination of Mrs. Gandhi, H.K.L. Bhagat, then a Minister in the Central Government spearheaded the riot in Delhi. It was the Rajiv government which entered into a tussle with the apex court of India in Sah Bano case and got the judicial verdict suppressed to appease the Indian Muslims. Besides, the Congress had forged a politico-electoral alliance with Indian Union of Muslim League (IUML). Coming to Janata Dal, it appealed to the sentiments of Indian Muslims in 1989 election. Imam Bukhari gave a call to the Indian Muslims to cast their votes in favour of Janata Dal and V.P. Singh. After getting himself elected and obtaining Muslim support for the Dal, V.P. Singh visited Imam for his blessings. Further, the Left parties remain sympathisers of the Indian Muslims throughout
On the Ramjanmabhoomi - Babri-Masjid issue, the BJP can not be solely blamed for playing 'Hindu Card' and also playing instrumental role in the demolition of the disputed Babri Masjid. It was a Congress Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi who allowed Shilanyas at the disputed site by VHP. Mr V P Singh participated in the ceremony. On this issue the Central Government adopted dillydallying approach. It could not take a clear stand and virtually the government was hypnotised by the Muslim lobby and Marxist historians. But the BJP demanded that the Central Government should follow the precedence already set by Pandit Nehru on Somnath, which was similar to Ayodhya problem. Finally, due to the callousness of the government and confusion of judiciary, the disputed Babri Masjid was demolished. The BJP President Advani accepted the moral responsibility for this and resigned from the Leader of the Opposition, Lok Sabha. Vajpayee described the incident as most unfortunate. But on the other side, the Congress Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao remained silent throughout the demolition. The central troops were despatched lately to Ayodhya. Thus, the entire Ayodhya episode reveals that along with BJP, the Congress, Janata Dal and other parties are jointly responsible for the demolition. The Left parties took sadistic pleasure out of this episode. They accused BJP as communal. But these Leftists remained silent spectators when Pak sponsored Islamic organisations demolished hundreds of temples in Kashmir and forced the Kashmir Pandits to leave their native places and take shelter at the Boat Club, in New Delhi almost as refugees. Hence, the BJP can not be singled out as a communal party and almost all the Indian parties pursue the communal politics in some form or other. And the Congress, United Front and other small parties can not be treated as secular alternative to the BJP.

The BJP has got its concern for the development of Indian Muslims also. The Party's Minority Cell has been working out plans for the benefit of the Muslims. It is the BJP which denies to accept the Muslims as minority because with their population, touching near about 15 crores, they have almost become a majority community. Moreover
in the BJP ruled states there has been no serious complaint by the Muslims against the government. There have been quite a good number of Muslim members in the party. Thus, it is very difficult to accept that the BJP is totally against the Muslims. With this type of completely different analysis, the parameters of secularism need to be applied to the BJP. As one columnist, Tavleen Singh remarked: "... My understanding of the word secular is that it should prevent the state from associating itself with any particular religion and, as far as we know, we have never had a BJP government in any of the four states which does not fit this description."³ The communal character given to the BJP, by the so-called secular forces, can be better termed as 'pot calls the kettle black.'⁴ On the fronts of casteism, criminalisation and corruption, the Congress, United Front and the other so-called secular forces have got worst records in comparison with BJP. The Janata Dal *Mandalised* the whole country leading to severe caste violence in the length and breadth of India. The leaders like Laloo, Mulayam, Mayawati and others thrive on the caste politics. Similarly these political parties have become the breeding grounds as well as rehabilitation camps for the criminals. Most of the prominent leaders of Congress and Janata Dal are facing corruption charges today. The BJP, on the other hand, started lately to play mild caste card. Except in Kalyan Singh's jumbo cabinet in U.P., the presence of criminals is virtually nil in the party.

The Third World Political Parties, in general, and the Indian parties, in particular, operate within the typical political compulsions. That is why, the Indian political parties do not imitate wholly their western counterparts neither they fall within the frameworks developed by the western political scientists. Because of their colonial past, the Third World countries are the latecomers in the field of development. The political parties always work with the socio-economic and political compulsion of the nation. In India, the political parties operate within

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⁴ *Ibid*, p 238
broad spectrum of the society. Starting with the stewardship of Pandit Nehru up to Mrs Gandhi's 'Garib Hatao' programme, the umbrella political party, Congress could mobilise the people of India across the country for their speedy socio-economic welfare. But the Congress more or less failed miserably to see the welfare of the people at large. The hopes of the millions of Indians with Congress became shattered. By this time Congress had already suffered from its own division. So many political parties competed for power with Congress. They picked up alternative issues, more or less sectarian, to mobilise the voters, in view of the failure of the Congress to lead the nation on the basis of common issues and programmes. In the later part of 1980s, the parties adopted sectarian approach strongly. The Congress concentrated on the villages and also on the woman section. The Janata Dal played the Mandal card and also went to the Muslims. The BJP openly played the Hindu Card in the wake of Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy. With this the Congress ceased to play the 'Hindu Card' which Mrs Gandhi started to play in 1982. Thus, the Hindutva, Ram Rajya, Hindu Card etc. are the politico-electoral gimmicks of the BJP rather than communal planks. At present, almost all the political parties perceive threat from the BJP so far as their electoral prospects are concerned. It is only out of fear spycnosis, they are blaming BJP as a communal outfit. Again it is a contradictory stand particularly for the partners of the erstwhile National Front, who had electoral alliance with BJP in 1989 and had formed the government with its support, to blame BJP as a communal party.

However, against the BJP's impressive showing must be weighed some of its stark failures and setbacks. For one thing the relative success of the BJP was far below the grandiose claim made on its behalf by its leaders and section of the media. Its strength in the Lok Sabha is well below its expectations. Moreover the party has already suffered electoral reverses in its own strongholds like Rajasthan, M.P. Maharashtra and Himachal Pradesh. Its vote share remained well below (10%) to that of Congress. Secondly, after its worst ever split in Gujarat, the monolithic character of the party, as a
disciplined organisation, has been lost. Over the last few years of its phenomenal growth, the BJP has expanded rather indiscriminately, and the contradictions between the old RSS-style cadres and leaders and the brash new breed of recent recruits appear to be mounting steadily. As the BJP searches for ultimate power in Delhi, these contradictions are bound to intensify. Thirdly, it is a wrong thing that whenever the party anticipates a possible failure, it strictly goes back to 'Hindutva'. In the long run the 'Hindutva' plank may not be acceptable to the people at large.

It is good that the party had down played its 'Hindutva' in order to attract the political parties and the combinations particularly in the Southern and Eastern regions in 1998 elections. In the context of growing number of regional parties, in the wake of emerging pluralism in state as well as national politics of India, it is unlikely that a national party can capture the magic number of majority in the Lok Sabha in the coming years. The hung Lok Sabhas in 1989, in 1991, 1996 and in 1998 have revealed this truth. Hence without the cooperation from the different strong regional parties and leaders particularly in Southern and Eastern regions, the continuation of BJP strongholds in the states and in the country as a whole can not be expected. Therefore, the BJP leadership, at one point of time may be dissociated from the party being guided by non-political and militant outfits like the VHP and Bajarang Dal. Being a prominent national party, it may make compromise with its ideology. The party has shed its one track approach to politics and pursue the urgent socio-economic agenda for the benefit of the people at large, as it has been stated by the present BJP Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee through the formulation of his National Agenda.

In general, the party suffers from less criticisms in comparison with the Centrist and Leftist Parties. It pursues alternative policies and

Asian Age, "Editorial", 28 October, 1997
programmes, to the Nehruvian model and also to the communist model, for the people. It has adopted a comprehensive, socio-economic and developmental programmes for the people. Its issue orientations are unique in comparison with other political parties. The leadership has got high qualities of understanding of the national problem with a nationalistic vision as well as orientations towards the ancient cultural heritage and ethos of India. The party is privileged to have the statesman like Vajpayee and a mass leader like Advani, who have got unmatched counterparts in other parties. Vajpayee is a charismatic leader as well as best parliamentarian, who can guide the party in proper direction and lead the nation to 21st century with a commitment of 'nation-building'. It is good that the party has been projecting him as the Prime Ministerial candidate since 1995 and had made him the Prime Minister in 1996, though for a short period of 13 days and again in 1998. Advani is the mass mobiliser in the party and a super strategist. It is his voice which is final in the affairs of the party. As a strong leader, Advani can lead the party to the resounding victory. It is in the interest of the party as well as the nation, the BJP is expected to be shaped by Vajpayee-Advani legacy. Besides, the party has got good number of intellectuals. With these types of so many good qualities, which are rare to an Indian political party today, the BJP no doubt, would certainly add to its success in the near future. It is obvious that the people are supporting the BJP as a cadre based mass party in the absence of a matching alternative. Hence the BJP watchers should see the party having comprehensive socio-economic as well as developmental programmes in its agenda, with a popular support base, rather than a mere Hindu nationalist force.

In the contemporary Indian politics the debate of 'communism versus secularism' stands irrelevant. The people of India need a government in Delhi that can govern with political stability. They barely need a government that puts on its list of priorities such issues as literacy, poverty, price rise, health care, employment, development etc instead of banging on endlessly about caste and communalism. The United Front is one unholy opportunistic alliance which does not
have cohesion The Left parties do not have any ideological stand. They are becoming opportunist and favouring IMF way of liberalisation. They are on the verge of decline The Congress is speedily declining and is unlikely to regain its lost glory. The Janata Dal, the Samajwadi Party and the Congress would split further because of their internal contradictions and self-aggrandisement of their leaders. Ultimately, the BJP will flourish in a natural way. That is why the people of India are looking to the BJP for presiding over the destiny of their nation at this critical juncture. In the parliamentary trial of strength in Eleventh Lok Sabha the BJP lost dismally. But by taking the privilege of national media through his oratorical styles, Vajpayee seems to have won the hearts and minds of the electorate and has emerged triumphant. "He has turned failure on its head and come out of a sordid battle smelling roses." This created a wave in favour of the BJP in the 12th Lok Sabha elections. The BJP and its allies emerged as the largest political combination in 1998 elections. The party formed the government under the leadership of Vajpayee in coalition with its pre-electoral and post-electoral partners. The performance of Vajpayee government will determine the future of BJP to a large extent.

Remarkably, with the emergence of the BJP as the single largest party, and also along with its allies as the largest combination of parties in 1998 Lok Sabha Elections, the Indian Party System has moved from the 'one dominant party system' to 'alternate party combinations'.

6 Indian Express, "Editorial", 26 May, 1996