Chapter V

First Two Elections in India

The dawn of Independence in August 1947 threw a challenge to the Indian people and politics. It was a best era to determine the values and vitalities of the western democracy imported in an Asian country with her characteristics traditionalism, conservatism and ignorance. The old values had not yet changed nor the new responsibilities sufficiently understood, Ivor Jenning has argued that "..... it is one of the difficulties of the extension of democracy that democracy can not extend without education and that it is difficult for education to extend without democracy."

In India, significantly both democracy and education were in a primitive state. The situation was brought with misgivings and doubts, the only reducing feature was that the congress which was to succeed the British Government was wedded to democratic principles. It is highly creditable that the congress did not lose balance and steadfastly to those principles even during the days following independence.

The origin of elections in India may be traced to 1892 when the Indian Council Act was enacted by the British Parliament for the first time the element of education was introduced into the Indian political system. There after in
1909, 1921, and 1937, the right to vote was extended to a steadily increasing proportion of the population, yet on the eve of independence less than fourteen per cent of the population could exercise the franchise.

By all comparison the greatest even of the Indian political history was the adoption of the constitution in 1950 and the establishment of a republican system based on democracy, justice, equality and secularism. The most remarkable feature of the constitution is however, article 326 which provides for universal adult suffrage at all political levels in India. The elections for the parliament are held in accordance with the provisions and amendments made in two principal status the representation of the people's Act, 1950 and 1951. The two statues form the basic law governing the elections, specific provisions have been made in the


3. It is called India's Act of faith - (Faith in the common man of India and in his practical common sense). Part XV (article 324-329) of the Indian constitution deals with the subject of election. According article 326, every person man or woman, who is citizen of India is not otherwise disqualified on grounds of non-residence, unsoundness of mind enemies or corrupt or illegal practice, will have the right to be registered as a voter-see Government of India, Election Commission Report on the First General Election in India 1951-52 (New Delhi) 1955, p.10.

4. See in detail the representation of the people's Act 1950 (Act 43 of 1950) on pp. 1-109 and the representation of the people's Act 1951 (art; 43 of elections petitions in India by Nanak Chand Pandit & Gian Chand Mathur Metropolita-
constitution for the composition of the Union Parliament. It counts of the two houses, namely the house of people and the council of states. The former is the representative of the people as a whole and is composed of members chosen by direct election on the basis of adult suffrage in territorial constituencies. A citizen of India above the age of 25 years can be a candidate for the House of the people, provided that he is under the constitution not otherwise disqualified. The qualification for the members of the council of states are the same as those of the House of the people except that the requisite age is 30 years instead of 25 years. The scheduled castes and scheduled tribes have been given special representation in the House of the people. The normal life of the House of the people’s is 5 years, unless it is dissolved earlier by the president. The council of states is not subject to dissolution, but one third of its members return on the expiration of every second year.

The period between the declaration of the Indian republic in 1950 and the first General Elections in 1951-52 was full of hopes and expectation and was marked by great

political enthusiasm and exuberance. Any one endowed with political intelligence and ability of leadership who was able to muster some popular support could aspire of guiding the nation to progress and prosperity through a party of his choice or one of his own maturity. Any ideology appeared as good as any other. "The election was an invitation to political adventure and no one could be quite certain that it would be worth while. There was no restriction on organizing political parties for the furtherance of any cause what so ever. This unrestrained and unchallenged growth of parties coupled with political inexperience and Parochial thinking ultimately proved to be dangerous to national unity and integrity. The responsibility for the mush-room growth of political parties is also to be placed at the door of the congress if it claims the credit for establishing democracy in India.

On the eve of the first General Elections 1951-52 the political atmosphere in India was surcharged with an unparalled political activity. "The sinequo non for a true democracy is the holding of fair and free elections. The people repre-sentatives to the legislative bodies." In other words, the

7. Election Commission of India report of the first General Election, p.3.
election must be conducted and directed in a completely non-partisan spirit.

Article 324 provides a permanent constitutional body that is Election Commission for the superintendence, direction and control of the preparation for, and conduct of all elections to the legislatures and to the offices of the president and the vice-president independent of the government of the day.

The states are divided into territorial constituencies for the purpose of election. Every citizen of India, not less 21 years of age, who fulfills the prescribed qualification is entitled to be registered as a voter. Candidates are nominated in accordance with the procedure laid down by the representation of the people's Act, 1950 and 1951, for contesting a parliamentary seat the name of the contesting candidates should appear in the electoral rolls of any parliamentary constituency in any of the states. Every candidate has to pay Rs. 500/- (Rs.250) for scheduled caste and scheduled tribes) for contesting a seat of the House of the people as a security deposits. After the completion of the final scrutiny a date is fixed for the election and the battle

for ballot swings into motions. All restrictions encouraged a large number of candidates to contest election and for the same reason quite a number of new parties also came into being.

The House of the People (Lok Sabha) in 1952 was to consist of 499 members of which 489 were to be elected and 10 nominated by the president—of the ten nominated members two were nominated under Article 331 of the Constitution to represent the Anglo-Indian Community and the remaining eight were to fulfill seats allotted to the state of Jammu and Kashmir, the Andaman and Nicobar Island and for Tibet areas of Assam.

In all, 5, 155 nomination paper, in respect of 2,333 persons were filed for the 489 elective seats of the House of the people. After scrutiny and rejection and withdrawals 1874 persons actually contested the election. It was nearly four times of the number of seats and 42,244 nomination papers in respect of 2,3287 were filed for elections to the state legislative Assemblies. And after scrutiny and rejection


11. Ibid., p. 113 in which rejected 133 and withdrawal 826.
and withdrawals 15,361 persons actually contested the Assembly election. The bulk of the polling of the House of the People took place during December 1951 and January 1952 except that for eliminate consideration polling in some difficult areas of Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh respectively took place in October 1951 and February 1952. In all 93 candidates were returned unopposed out of these, 41 candidates were elected to seats reserved for members of the scheduled casts and scheduled tribes. As many as 72, out of the total 93, were official candidates of the Indian National Congress.

Besides the large number of candidates, striking feature of the first general election was the plethora of political parties that came into being and participated in election. The main reasons for this were ambition, jealousy, enthusiasm and the parochialism, "on the eve of the election says Ashok Mehta, "Because of the unpopularity of the Congress and absence of an effective alternative, a number of new parties were formed. It appeared that the Congress prestige and stumbled body and the vacuum could be filled by any group of daring man. Almost every able political figure, therefore, form a party and stated his claim. Dr. S.P. Mukherjee organised

12. Ibid., in which 1,405 rejected and 6,521 withdrawal.
13. Ibid., p. 27.
Jan Sangh. But the more important effort were made by veterans who came out of the congress. Acharya Kripiani joined hands with J.P.Narayan and Profulla Ghosh both Chief Minister under the Congress regime, to form the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party. Professor Ranga who had initially joined hands with the later parted company and formed a party of his own the Kirshikar Lok Paksh.

A number of new parties came up because of local differences stubborn grievances and felt or imagined injustice. The Lok Sevak Sang (in Bihar) Lok Paksh (in Bombay) and Travancore Tamil Nad party, Tamilnad toilers party, the common wheat party (in Madras) are parties of this type.

The total number of parties went up to as many as 178 excluding the 14 recognised all India Parties and 53 as state parties to their respective strength in their states. The futility of such hasty formation of new parties without any real roots in the country was hardly realised. It is not surprising that in the gruelling test of the actual elections where they came, most of these parties virtually disappeared many of their candidates forfeiting their Political parties recognized on the national level were as

follows - Congress, socialist party, communist party, K.M. P.P, Jan Sangh, forward Bloc (Marxist), forward bloc (Raikhari group), Hindu Mahasabha, U.R.P., Schedule caste federation, R.S.P.; Revolutionary Communist Party, Bolshevik Party and Krishakar Lok Party. For securing recognition as national and state party, the election commission decided that a party should have polled at least 3% per cent of the valid votes in their respective spheres.

To obviate some of the problems created by the illiteracy of perhaps 80 per cent of the voters, the use of symbols and the multiple ballot box schemes were enjoyed. Each of the many parties was assigned a symbol, either by the national election commission or by a state election commission. The symbol could not have special political or religious significance; thus no party was allowed to use a picture of Gandhi, or a cow, or the Charkha Wheel (which appears on the Indian flags) or a hammer and sickle. Some of the parties, however, benefited greatly from the symbols assigned to them. The Congress party, for example, obtained approval for a pair of bullocks as its symbol, and this suggested all kinds of favourable cannotation. Many Indians could be persuaded that they should certainly not vote against bullocks, which symbolized the source of their livelihood, their main source

17. Pratyal, H.S. Ibid., p.36.
of power and transportation, and perhaps even this religious faith as well. While the communist could not use the hammer and sickle, they did obtain approval for a sickle and an ear of corn, a very appealing symbol to the Indian farmers. Following are the details of symbols which were allotted to them by commission after considering their claims of national parties and symbolized them accordingly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>SYMBOL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. All Indian Forward Bloc (M.G.)</td>
<td>Standing Lion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. All India Forward Bloc (Reikher G.)</td>
<td>Hammer and hand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Akhil Bhartiya Hindu Maha Sabha</td>
<td>Horse &amp; Riders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. K.M.P.P.</td>
<td>Hut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A.B. Ram Rajya Parishad</td>
<td>Rising sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. A.I. Schedule Caste Federation</td>
<td>Elephant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Indian National Congress</td>
<td>Two Bullocks with Yoke on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Socialist Party</td>
<td>Tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. C.P.I.</td>
<td>Bar of Corn &amp; a Sickle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Bolsvik Party of India</td>
<td>Star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Krishkar Lok Party</td>
<td>(A Cultivation Winning Grain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. A.I.B. Jan Sangh</td>
<td>Lamp</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recognition to the above fourteen party was accorded on ad hoc basis. The number was of far too high the reason was that some of the parties had been found and their popularity was yet be tested. It was, however, decided that the recognition would be withdraw of the voters polled by all the candidates of the party fall short of 3% of the total valid votes. On the basis of this criteria only the following four parties were found fit for recognition.

(i) The Indian Nation Congress.
(ii) The P.S.P. (formed by the merger of S.P.) & K.M.P.P.
(iii) C.P.I.
(iv) All India Jan Sangh.

Opposition parties made an effort at achieving unity to defeat the congress party. Jai Prakash Narain, the then socialist leader called a conference of the opposition parties for this purpose on July 1, 1950 and it was attended by the representatives of the socialist party, the Hindu Mahasabha, the National liberal federation, the scheduled caste federation and the servants of India society. The memorandum, presented to the president, consisted of the following recommendations with a view that the election may be free and fair.

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19. 59 parties were recognised before the election but afterward 19 of them were found fit for recognition.
(1) The preventive Detention Act 1950 and various state public security measures should be suspended and the action taken against members of various parties should be withdrawn.

(ii) The electoral rolls should be published and checked to eliminate fictitious names and the recent immigrants from Pakistan enfranchised.

(iii) Multi-members constituencies should be established and committees including non-official members should be appointed for the delimitation of constituencies.

(iv) Broadcasting facilities should be available to all parties open spaces under the control of the government should be made available to all parties for all election meetings.

Legislation should be introduced on the following points. Limitation of election expenses, state aid to candidates for election purposes, provision of free copies of electoral rolls to candidates and the prohibition of the use of private conveyances for election purposes on polling day etc.

Quite understandably, moves among the political parties for electoral alliances, adjustments and understanding generally take place on the eve of the elections in a multi party system. The exigencies of party politics may bring together strange...
bad-fellows and necessitate adjustments of certain principles for the sake of successes at the polls. Of the different parties, having little in common with each other except the objective of dislodging the ruling party agree to avoid three cornered contests as far as possible to maximize the chances of their victory. Taking into consideration, the opposition parties attempted to form effective electoral alliances. The Communist Party and its sister organization were a head in this race. The Communist Party formed alliance in Bombay with the Kamgar Kishan Pakhs, in Orissa with the united Socialist Organization in Punjab FSU with the Lal Communist Party. In Punjab with the United Progressive front included the Lal Communist Party, in Delhi with the United Progressive Bloc which consisted of the forward bloc (Marxist), the Lal Communist Party and the left Socialist Party, the Revolutionary Communist Party and the Gorkha League. In Tamil Nadu, the United Democratic front consisted of the Communist Party the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party, Dravide Munetra Kazagham, the Tamil Nad tailors party and the common weal party. In Travancore-Cochin, the United Progressive Bloc consisted of the K.M.P.P.; the Kerala Socialist Party and the revolutionary socialist Party. (In Bihar a United Left election alliances Committee was formed. In Assam, an election Committee was the formed with representatives of the forward bloc, revolutionary,

socialist party, the revolutionary communist party of India and the Gorkha League. In Hyderabad, four parties namely the all Hyderabad Kisan Sabha, the Democratic people's front and the league of the socialist workers merged into a single party to form the peoples Democratic front. The front formed alliances with the Communist Party.

In Punjab, the Zamindar League and in Madras, the Royat Koli Praja Party entered into electoral alliances with the Krishkar Lok Party. But with the socialist not the right wing parties formed any major electoral alliances in the election and contested the election on their own strength. Never theless, the Jan Sangh, the Ram Rajaya Parishad, and the Hindu Mahasabha supported on another in Madhya Pradesh, despite the fact that there was no formal electoral alliance between them. In Punjab Jan Sangh entered into an electoral alliance with scheduled castes in Jullundher and Hoshiarpur districts and with the Akali Dal in Kangra Parliamentary constituency. Similarly in the Ambala Simla parliamentary constituency, there was an alliance between the Jan Sangh and the Akalis and in the Gurgaon district there was alliance between the Zaminder Party and the Jan Sangh, so also in the Thanesar constituency.

24. Ibid., pp. 138-40. See also Jhan Gian, M.A., Ibid., p.142.
In Uttar Pradesh, Local Election agreements were made between the U.P. Praja Party, the Jan Sangh, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Ram Rajya Parishad and the scheduled castes federation.

In Delhi, there was an electoral agreements with the Shiromani Akali Dal and her attempts to form an electoral alliance between the Jan Sangh, the Hindu Mahasabha and Ram Rajya Parishad did not materialized and Jan Sangh supported some of the independent candidates.

Thus none of the major national parties formed an electoral alliences. The main reason which prevented them to form effective electoral alliances was the ideological difference. The extreme leftist parties and right wing parties were dead enemies with each other. The communist party tried to form a United Front of left wing parties, but the socialist parties because of the extra territorial loyalties to the communist party, did not agree to join the communist led united front. The socialist party equally opposed any alliance with right wing parties on the ideological basis.

It is difficult to isolate the real issues in the election. In a sense there was no real national issues, except

25. Ibid., p. 155. Also see Ibid., p. 142.
26. Ibid., 233-34 Also See Ibid., p. 142.
those arising from differences in party alliance or support of different personalities. Broadly speaking, in the voting for members of the House of the people, the voters were either voting for or against the congress. Naturally the magic of Nehru's name, and the memories of Gandhi, were great source of strength for the Congress, whereas the congress was vulnerable because over the years it had alienated many people for one reason or another or because, as the party in power, it could be balanced by almost any one who was frustrated or unhappy with his lot in life. Very often the issues in the campaign were described as these of food and freedom. Nevertheless, the Leftist, on the other hand branded the congress as the party of landlords and assured the people that they would form a government of peasants and workers and would abolish inequality for even on the right, the Jan Sangh, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Ram Rajya Parishad raised issues like Indo-Pakistan relations, refugees problems, cow slaughter etc. Regional parties raised their respective local issues.

Quite understandably, campaigning in India was characterized by a variety of familiar techniques, such as speeches and meetings, ceaseless travel by the candidates, more or less effective party organization for campaign purposes, hand shaking and house to house canvassing, extension use of placards


29. Pratyal H.S., op. cit., p. 32.
and posters, partisan appeals and profuse promises. But broad-cast facilities were not given to parties.

On the whole, India's first nation-wide elections went off well, and were an encouraging demonstration that masses of voters, mostly illiterate could act with dignity and with a fair measure of judgement in selecting those who would represent them in the central parliament and the state assemblies. The actual process of voting was simplified as much as possible, but even then it was a new and strange experience for the most of the voters—an experience at once frightening and exhilarating. The most reducing feature of the elections was the enthusiasm and lively and intelligent interest in all elections on the part of the uneducated masses. And it was on this reason that, "despite many gloomy predictions, the prospects for democracy in India seemed brighter after the general elections than they had before." The elections were a major event in India's experience as an independent state, and the fact that they were run of in good order, over a period of several weeks, and that so many of the eligible voters had actually participated augured well for the future.

32. Ibid., pp. 221-223.
As a result of the election, the Congress party won overwhelming majority over all other parties. Out of a total of 489 elective seats in the House of the people, the Congress Party won 362 or 74% of the total seats and polled 44.9% of the total vote cast. The opposition secured 127 or 26% of the total seats and polled 55.1% of the votes cast, the detailed results of the election of the House of people are given in Table No.1.*

1951-52 ELECTION RESULTS
HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>party</th>
<th>No. of Candidates</th>
<th>Seats Won</th>
<th>Vote Rolled</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>47,665,875</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communists</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3,484,401</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialists</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11,216,779</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K.M.P.P.</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6,156,558</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan Sangh</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3,246,238</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Parties</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>17,395,845</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>524</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>16,778,747</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,374</td>
<td>489</td>
<td>105,944,495</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, it was not surprising that the Congress had won an overwhelming majority of seats—both at the centre and in most of the states. It was so because of the long history and experience and large organisation of the party. However, the other side of the story was not as bright. The performance of the Congress in terms of popular support was disappointing. It could not muster more than 45 per cent of the total votes. "Leaders of the Congress party were alarmed, and rightly so, because, inspite of their overwhelming success including candidates to both the House of the people and the state assemblies, less than half of the voters had casted their ballots for congress candidates and there were disturbing signs of a trend away from the Congress in many part of the country." The state of affairs was far from being happy. The drift from the congress was favourable to the leftist parties. The Socialist Party secured 11 per cent of votes polled, whereas the C.P.I. got 4 per cent. The performance of the Communal organization was far too poor. Similarly, the scored of other parties that were formed hastily at the time of Election and of the Independents was some too good. The Congress Party being the highest single unit in the house was called upon to form the government. The poor performance at the polls must have been a shock to the Congress an occasion for impospection.

34. Palmer, Norman, D. Ibid., pp. 222-223.
Though at the same time there is no doubt that votes may have been caste for quite other reasons and the real change to the congress came evidently from the left rather than from the communal parties rule out the possibilities that caste and community played a big part. Where as the votes were quite "meaningless because of the popular mentality was still authoritarian and in certain areas votes went where local land lords wanted them to go yet." There appears to be little doubt too that the vote for Congress was not merely a vote of thanks for past glories and not merely a vote of loving trust in Pandit Nehru and the party of Gandhi - though both these were important - but also a vote for the only party that could look for a moment capable of forming a reasonably stable and competent government.

The inaugural period of Parliamentary institution in India has been presided over by one overwhelming powerful party. "It was well, says Maurice Jones" that it was this. Nothing would have made the future of democratic institutions in India more uncertain than an initial period of unstable government." The Congress had the additional advantage of having with fold a galaxy of charismatic leaders

36. Ibid., p. 113.
whose popular image was by and by reproach. This was a sustaining and morale boosting factor to the party.

The first parliament of India which met in New Delhi on 13,9,1952, had three outstanding features. "First, the overwhelming dominant position of Congress, second, the very divided character of the opposition groups; finally, the comparatively large number of members returned as independents and members of local parties of one kind or another. 37

The opposition in the first parliament of India was an assortment of groups or parties as well as independents representing every possible shade of opinion. Because of the ideological and personal cleavages the parties and independents pulled their weight in different direction rather than strive to put up an organized opposition to the Congress. They could find faults, here and there with Congress policies and administration and sometimes could kick up row on the floor of the House. But it was not possible for them to check these policies or to offer alternative ones because none of them could independently claim popular support as much as the Congress did.

The post election era may be described as a period of rethinking and recapitulations. Every party liked its wounds while some succeed to them. They had gauged the extent of

popular support that they could muster for their ideology to be effective in the legislature. The interlude between the first and the second general elections 1952-57, therefore witnessed a great deal of political maneuvering and adjustments both in parliament and outside. "More important were the charges, says Morris Jones" affected by movements of parties and groups without reference to the electorates." The activity was more evident in the socialist camp. The like minded parties believing in socialist democracy - such as socialist party, Kisan Mazoodra Praja Party, Jhar Khand Party and the scheduled caste federation realize need for close co-operation and uniformity to merge into one party to challenge the Congress. At the inauguration of the first parliament in May 1952 the socialist party and K.M.P.F. agreed to establish a parliamentary alliances and later was followed by merger of the two into one. The Praja socialist Party in August of the same year, in the House of the people, certainly, the merger was an asset to the opposition and the House itself."

Like the left - the right wing parties were also making an effort to effect a United opposition to the Congress. Dr. S.P. Mukherjee, a prominent member of Central Cabinet and a Veteran parliamentarian, resigned his cabinet post in 1951.

to form Unity among the right wing parties in the House. He favoured a group 'the National Democratic Party', which included the members of the Jan Sangh, Hindu Mahasabha Ram Rajiya Parishad, certain regional parties and independents. The Right wing alliances like the Left Wing did not last long. "Dr. Mukherjee's death in 1953 not only removed an outstanding parliamentarian but seriously prejudiced the chances of a coherent rightist group." 39

Towards the end of 1954, an attempt was made to create a parliamentary group of the left in the House. All the non-communist parties agreed to form a United group "Union of socialists and Progressive - Under the leadership of Acharya Kripalani as P.S.P. was naturally the largest element. The group, though not recognised by the speaker as sufficiently homogenous and state organization provided a useful parliamentary organization for the tiny leftist group.

If not any thing else, these grouping and alliances dispelled the doubt that the opposition was too weak and divided. The Congress ascendency and dominant position in the House was scarcely affected in any way, but the government was to meet the arguments of the opposition and has lead to state its case. It has its own position a little more

seriously and has not had to face a challenge of members. A feature of the development was that the frequency of division in the House greatly increased. During the three months of the first session (3 May - 12 August 1952) there were 14 division, in one months of the second session (15 November 20 December 1952) there were 8 division and so on.

The strength of the opposition in the House of the people was too weak to be effective and the Congress too complacent to be afraid of or even considerate to the opposition. The most unfortunate part of this phenomenon was that the evolution of the opposition parties did not take place in the right direction. This growth was rather haphazard, marked by a parochial or sectarian outlook and approach. The explanation for the mushroom growth of Parties and the absence of an organized effective opposition in India is to be found in the political opportunism but loose after independence.

The opposition parties in the parliament both the rights and the leftists had not yet succeed in forging a unity among themselves, nor had they evolved a clearly alternative policy to the Congress when the election commission announced the programme for the second general election in February & March 1957. In all 2281 nomination papers were received for the 494 elective seats of the House of the people. But

40. Ibid., p. 105.
ultimately there remained only 1593 candidates in the field. The largest number of candidates were put up by the Congress party which contested 490 seats for the House of the people. The P.S.P., the Jan Sangh and the Communist Party put up 194,133 and 181 candidates respectively. The number of candidates of other parties and of independents totalled 667. There were 312 single and 91 double member constituencies. The total number of voters was 193 million. The election commission recognized only 4 parties as national and 12 parties as state. The Congress, the P.S.P., the Jan Sangh and the Communist Party were the national parties.

The number of eligible voters had increased by about 20,000,000. The experience gained by the commission the electorate and the political parties during the first general election must have been an invaluable asset to provide confidence, efficiency and faith in the conduct of general election. "In 1957, the Indian people voted with more confidence and presumably, with greater understanding and judgement that they had in 1951-52. Many of the fears and suspicions which had kept thousands of eligible voters from registering properly, or from casting valid ballots, were removed by 1957. The commission streamlined its machinery; the electorate became

41. Fratyal H.S., Ibid., p. 42.
42. Palmer, Norman D., Ibid., p. 227.
conscious of the importance of the sufferages; but the parties, despite their reverses in the past, failed to rise to the occasion and offer an enlightened leadership. The opposition parties suffered from three basic hardships. First the organization was limited and the appeal restricted. The C.P.I., for example, did not have a large organization and enjoyed restricted and limited popular support. It was unable to carry enough weight to challenge the congress. Second, the opposition parties had not yet involved an ideology conducive to the interest of modern India and consistent with its social problems and which could provide a clear alternative to the Congress policies. The policies of the parties in the socialist camps were not basically opposed to those of the Congress; whereas as the policies of the right wing parties were either parochial abscurantistic or echo the Congress line with little modification. Third, the virus of regionalism and casteism was running into the working of the political parties. Both the electorate and the parties fanned the virus to gain their ulterior ends. The Gantantra Parishad in Orissa, the D.M.K. in Madras (now Tamil Nadu), the Maha Gujrat Janta Parishad and the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti, were some of the powerful regional organizations. The element of casteism, on the other hand, were present in almost all the parties even the communist party which so avowedly committed itself to the ideal of secularism was in actual practice not free
from it. It may some anomalous that the communists should also be caste minded, but in India they certainly have been.

It is, therefore, understandable that the position of the opposition parties was not basically different in 1957 than what it was in 1951-52. At the same time, the political problems facing the country at the home front at least, were not such where clearly alternate policies would really matter. These problems in various fields except that of determining priorities and pooling the resources. There were other problems of comparatively secondary importance such as regional and linguistic. Problems which did not require formation of policies and programmes for solution but understanding and consultation. Further, the popularity and prestige of the Congress had not fallen what it had been in 1951.

__43__ C. Von Furer Haimen Dorf has elaborately explained this point in his analysis of Khamma, Reddi rivalry in the Krishnag Godawari delta of Andhra Pradesh where the C.P.I. and the Congress viewed with each other in playing upon the caste rivalry of the two dominant caste group (See Furer Haimen dorf C. Von op. cit., pp. 58-62) See also Harrison Seligs; India; the most dangerous Decades, Princeton University Press 1960, p.111 and pp. 204-25.

__44__ Palmer Norman D., Ibid., p. 231.

__45__ In 1950 there were 826 district languages in India. The officially recognized 179 languages. 14 are recognized by the Constitution of the India. See Don, Martindale; "Some Problems presented by Caste, religion and culture in Chakrabarti, A. (ed.), India since 1947, Calcutta 1967, p.33.
Taking all these factors into account it can be concluded that the political tone in 1957 was subdued and the enthusiasm in elections was by no means as high as in 1951-52. The factors that dominated the elections and influenced the electorate were mainly the local and regional problems rather than any national or international issues. At the same time the influence of personality, rather than ideology was not, in any way, small. However, one common issue raised by the opposition parties was the formation of the two separate linguistic states - Maharashtra and Gujarat. All the parties organized big or small public meetings and some of the spectacular means adopted by the opposition parties were posters, processions, slogans, dramas, kirtans, etc. The Congress party used the posters displaying profile of Jawahar Lal Nehru with the slogans "for peace and prosperity vote Congress." It also showed the Congress symbol with a pair of bulls with yoke on, entitled symbol of service." The opposition parties paraded big pictures and posters portraying ghastly scenes of shooting bearing slogans like," vote for the Congress is a vote for treachery and murder, vote for samati is a vote for justice and Martyres."


The election strategy of the opposition parties was not, in any way, small; the election strategy of the opposition parties was characterised by the negative approach of late congress campaign. In several states they formed united fronts of heterogeneous elements against the Congress. The unity was formed for electoral purposes to defeat the Congress rather than to bring the like minded parties together to form ideological units. In West Bengal, for example there were three main opposition fronts. The united election committee, composed of the five main leftist parties, the communists, the BSP. The Revolutionary Socialists, the forward bloc, and the Marxist forward bloc. (ii) The United Left Front composed of eight other small leftist parties and (iii) The United Democratic Peoples Front, composed of a coalition with a coalition called the National Democratic Party. (The Hindu Mahasabha, the Jan Sangh and the Ram Rajya Parishad plus a section of the revolutionary communist party of India and some dissident congressmen.

But in Kerala the negotiations, between the C.P.I. and the P.S.P. did not succeed. An agreement was, however, reached between the P.S.P. and the Muslim League where by the former agreed to support the Muslim League candidates in Malabar, while the league agreed to support the P.S.P. candidates in Travancore-Cochin, on the extreme right, with the

exception of the Jan Sangh, none could form alliances with other parties. "A comprehensive alliances was formed in the state of Bombay where almost all the opposition parties decided to fight unitedly against the Congress on the issue of linguistic state. In them city of Bombay all the major opposition parties were united with the samyukta Maharashtra samiti to advocate a separate Marati state with Bombay city as its capital."

Within some of the parties considerable divergence of opinion developed over the wisdom and desirability of entering into electoral arrangements with other groups which were hardly ideological bed fellows. In Punjab, where linguistic and religious issues were fairly significant, the Major Sikh political organization the Akali Dal, agreed to support Congress candidates. The best known leader of the Akali Dal Master Tara Singh repudiated this agreement on the eve of the voting, but most of the member of his party refused to following his advice. It is also significant that a heated debates raged within the top circles of the P.S.P. regarding the question of entering into electoral arrangements with the communists. Jai Prakash Narain favoured such arrangements, on the ground that this was the only way to build up an effective opposition to the Congress. Ashok Mehta, however, was strongly opposed on the ground that entering into alliances

49. Usha Mehta, Ibid., pl 152. Also see Pratyal, H.S. Ibid., pp. 42-43.
with the communists was playing into the hands of a group which was basically opposed to the democratic system. The compromise which the PSP reached was strictly a pragmatic one. The party took a stand in opposition to these arrangements with the communists, but also authorized them in certain cases, if the local leaders deemed them to be necessary. As a result, in some states, notably in Bombay state, the P.S.P. did join with the communists and often with other parties in anti-Congress arrangements.

However, despite their best efforts and election strategy, the opposition parties failed to make any appreciable act in the Congress hold on the electorate. It, once, again emerged victories in the second general election with overwhelming majority at the centre and in most of the state assemblies. On the other side the opposition parties, inspite of emerging patrons of unity, now still as divided and scattered as ever before. One more factor that helped the Congress to maintain its position was that it reoriented its socio-economic policies to establish its claim as a progressive party. In 1955 at the Avadhi session the congress committee itself to establishing a socialistic pattern of society; what ever the merit and meaning of the ideal, it released considerable stream out of the left

opposition. The ideal was intended to be attained through social ownership of the principal means of production progressed by speeding up the equitable distribution of national wealth. The next step in the direction was more clever and calculated. In 1956 the ideal of socialistic pattern society was modified to be empty socialist society and the second five year plan was inaugurated the same year. This obviously took the sting of the leftist criticism and augmented the congress prestige.

In all thirty political parties contested the elections to the House of people (Lok Sabha) of which 18 could not secure at least non seat. The congress, the RSP the CPI and the Jan Sangh continued to be recognized as national parties. The results of the second general elections did not change the political complex of the House not that of the country. However, the position in the states was not as happy for the Congress, which secure of the results for the House were quite unexpected. The Congress gained a few seats in the House (364 to 369) but lost a large number (about 400) in the states. The heaviest loss in terms of popular support was in Kerala, and U.P. The other states where the Congress lost assembly seats were Bombay, Bihar, West Bengal and Orissa. In all these states anti-Congress feelings had been aroused on linguistc and regional problems. Some central ministers were defeated in Maharashtra mainly because of these policies.
However, the congress retained its ascendancy in all the states except Kerala where it captured 43 seats against 60 of the C.P.I. in a House of 126 and in Orissa where it could secure 56 seats in the House of 140.

The C.P.I. retained about same number of members in the Lok Sabha, but greatly increased its percentage of the total vote and won substantially more seats in the state assemblies. It won striking successes in Kerala, West Bengal and Bombay and U.P. In Kerala it were invited to form the government.

The PSP received a considerably lower percentage of the popular vote than had the socialists and the K.M.R.P. in 1951-52, but it retained the same number of seats in the Lok Sabha. It lost a few seats in the election for numbers of the state assemblies, despite some important gains in West Bengal, the Hindu Mahasabha lost two of its four seats. The Ram Rajya Parishad was unable to elect a single candidate to the national parliament. The party position in the House was as follows:


In the period between the second and the third general elections (1957-62) the socio-economic and political changes that took place in the country affected all the parties. The division of Bombay state into Maharashtra and Gujarat in 1960, the dissolution of the communist ministry in Kerala in 1959, the increasingly aggressive policy of China and Pakistan and the policy followed by the government of India towards them, the transfer of Barabari—a part of West Bengal—to Pakistan and the increasing problem like poverty, corruption, nepotism and favouritism affected the bye-elections and biennial election and also the third general elections held in 1962.

During this period, there were no major mergers among the parties. The major event was however, the emergence of
the Sawantantra Party in 1959 against the policies adopted by the Congress Party. Nearly half a dozen local parties, namely, Krishkar Lok party, the common weal party, the Nag Vidharbha Andolan and the Janta Party, merged with the party. The bye-Election which were held to fill the seats in the House of the people and state assemblies only strengthened the position of the Congress Party. Other major opposition parties, namely, the BSP, the C.P.I. and the Jan Sangh gained at the expenses of the minor parties. The Congress increased its representations from 371 to 375. The C.P.I. from 29 to 30, the Jan Sangh from 4 to 6, the P.S.P. from 19 to 20 and the S.P. from 7 to 8 seats.

53. Fratyal, H.S., Ibid., p. 45.