CHAPTER-III
INDIAN PARTY SYSTEM: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The creation of parties is a continuous process. The historical graveyards are cluttered with parties, which dominated the political scene.\(^1\) Perhaps, it can distinguish the beginning of party at the city-state in Athens of ‘Pericle’ and Rome of the Gracchi. However, its development was prevented partly by the lack of true representative system and limitation of citizenship.\(^2\) Moreover, political parties are attained fruition only in democracy. The extension of popular suffrage and parliamentary prerogative led to the formation of parliamentary groups and electoral committees and finally establishment of permanent linkages between these two elements by clique or club/party.\(^3\)

The growth and emergence of political parties are closely related with parliamentary democracy and electoral system. Ernest Barker considered British system as ‘mother of parties’ and hence, mother of all Parliamentary systems of the world. According to Barker, Royalist or Cavaliers (Tory) and Parliamentarians or Roundhead (Whigs) stood against each other for the King’s prerogatives and rights of Parliament, during the civil war. Later on, both these groups changed their names as Conservatives and the Liberals in 1830.\(^4\)

They were admittedly the prototype, modern English bi-party system. The major step in the creation of party organization in Britain is associated with the electoral reforms of 1832, 1867 and 1884. As a result of this, suffrage was expanding; struggle for power shifted from aristocratic elite to open and now, citizens play an active role.\(^5\) That is why; it is rather difficult to discuss the

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\(^3\) Maurice Duverger, Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in Modern State, (translated by Barbara and Robert North), London: Methuen and Co. 1967, p. XXIV.
\(^5\) Palmobara and Weiner, n.1, p.9.
development of one without the other factors. Palombara and Weiner suggested three types of theories, which deal with the origin of the party system.

(I) **Institutional Theories**:- These focus on inter-relationship between early Parliament and emergence of party system.

(II) **Historical-Situational Theories**:- These focus on the historical crisis or tasks the system encountered at the time, when parties evolved.

(III) **Development Theories**:- These relate parties to the broader process of modernization.\(^6\)

Besides this, Duverger discovered, origin of parties lie within electoral and parliamentary groups and outside the legislature, known as internally or externally created parties;

(I) **Internal Parties**:- These emerge slowly and gradually from the activities of the legislators themselves. At the first stage, there is creation of parliamentary groups, then there is appearance of electoral committees and finally with the establishment of co-ordination between parliamentary groups and electoral committees led to the existence of a true party. The regular linkages unite them, to find oneself with true party, on one side. It is related to the local groups, and the development of egalitarian feelings as well as the desire to oust traditional social elites, pave the way to evaluation of parties, on the other. Later on, the local groups eventually become ideological groups, such as Breton Club in France were important, which organized regular meetings among themselves. They shared certain ideas not only on regional matters, but also on the fundamental problems of national policy. An analogous process, transforming local groups, into nucleus of an ideologies faction, was later to give rise to Girondin Club.\(^7\)

(II) **External Parties**:- These parties formed by pre-existing institutions and groups outside electoral system and the Parliament. Simply, these groups grew outside the Parliament and demanded some representation by challenging the ruling groups. The birth of political organization emerged out from numerous groups and associations

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\(^6\) Ibid., p.7.
\(^7\) Duverger, n.3, pp. XXIV-XXX.
such as trade unions, university students, intellectuals, religious organizations, philosophical societies, ex-service-men’s associations and clandestine groups etc.\textsuperscript{8} In this regards, British Labour Party, socialistic parties and christian democratic parties are best examples in Italy, France, Belgium, Scandinavia and Australia etc. The parliamentary circumstances, under which some European parties might emerge, were viewed as simply of one type based on historical circumstances, and not as the general case. According to Duverger, externally parties tend to be more centralized than internally parties, which are more ideologically coherent and disciplined, less subject to influence from the legislative contingents of the parties. Duverger’s theory of the internal and external parties is related with European parties and not applicable to Indian parties. The origins of the Congress Party and others parties lie in a broad based anti-colonial movement, which encompassed all regions and classes.

In the countries of Africa and Asia, most of the political parties are formally based on nationalist movements, messianic movements\textsuperscript{9} and results from caste, religious or tribal associations. They generally developed outside of and in some instances, hostile to whatever parliamentary framework was created by the colonial master.\textsuperscript{9} As a matter of fact, parties and party systems are the product of many complex factors, such as tradition and history, social and economic structures, religious beliefs, racial composition and national rivalries, which varies with each individual country.\textsuperscript{10} The political party is uniquely, the ‘child of modern political system’ and must also be the most sensitive political institution in reflecting the distinct and peculiar sentiments of each particular political culture. Certainly, within limits, the existence of particular attitude, values and culture in tradition politics of some of the Asian societies has facilitated the development of more modern party structures. In India, the interplay of caste and community leadership, with cliques of officialdom produced skills in the calculations, which are essential to party organization and strategy.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., pp. XXX-XXVI.
\textsuperscript{9} A religious movement/group is one which has belief that a leader will or has the power to change the world and bring peace.
\textsuperscript{9} Palmobara and Weiner, n.1, p.10.
\textsuperscript{10} Duverger, n.3, p.203.
The cultural diversity, social, ethnic, caste, community, religious pluralism, traditions of the national movements, contrasting style of leadership, and clashing ideological perspectives helped to shape Indian party structure in general and political parties, in particular.\textsuperscript{12}

**Evolution and Growth of Party System in India**

The history of origin and growth of political parties can be traced from the days of Indian’s struggle for freedom. The mass social awakening eventually crystallized into the framework of party system, initiated by the twin factor of socio-religious reforms and political reactions to colonialism.\textsuperscript{13} The colonial experience was producing political parties in Asia. The colonialism and its natural product of nationalist movements, tended to strengthen and reinforced the essential spirit of politics, basic to imperial traditions. The most significant direct impact of colonialism was the realm of public administration, law and order, as well as the introduction of some social welfare measures, in most of the Asian countries. These patterns gave some room to the creation of political parties in colonial countries, but many countries were reluctant to exploit such opportunities. In case of India, there were various groups and factions, participating in local elections dating back to the 1840’s and 1850’s. They might form some significant political parties at that time. However, India did not have a long tradition of local elections. These traditions emerged from the evolution of local governments, were largely pushed aside by nationalist movement.\textsuperscript{14}

Rashiduddin Khan points out that a major heritage of the national movement was built around national consensus on certain issues, such as, national unity and integration, national defence and security, on the one hand and ‘socio-cultural regional diversity’ provided by the objective condition for the rise of regional parties and various groups, on the other. Khan further adds that the co-existence of Left, Centre and Right forces in freedom struggle laid down foundations of tolerance and

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Pye, n.11, pp.382-384.
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accommodation of different points of views in Indian polity. During the independence movement, two types of trends took place; (I) **Horizontal**- large masses joined the movement across the country and (II) **Vertical**- the process of integration of certain regions under the growing linguistic middle classes in the region, such as Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan- Hindi speaking, Madras, Bengal, Tamil and Telugu. These regional identities provided firm room for all-India parties.

The events, reform movements, such as Brahmo Samaj-1829, Arya Samaj-1875, Rama Krishna Mission, Theosophical Society-1875, Aligarh Movement and Singh Sabha Movement-1873 etc, demanded representation of Indians in civil services and decision making bodies and also helped in developing a protest against the policies of colonial masters at various stages. These movements were led by powerful, committed self-less leaders. Obviously, the emergence of committed leadership at different stages of the reforms, protests and anti-colonial movements played a crucial role in the emergence of democratic political culture, that not only led to the emergence of party system in the country, but also to its sustenance and institutionalization, in the critical years after decolonization.

As a matter of fact, over a period of time, numerous social, economic and political organizations, notably British Indian Associations of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay-1851/52, Landholder Society-1838, Poona Sarvajanik Sabha-1870, Madras Native Association-1862, Aligarh British Indian Association-1866, Western Indian Association-1872, Shankarseth Party, East Indian Association-1866, Indian Association Prajahitavardhak Sabha Surat-1882, Sindh Sabha Karachi-1883 and Mahajan Sabha Madras-1884 etc, tried to generate a political consciousness among the masses, in general and made a platform for the party system, in particular.

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17 Mehra, n.13, p.50.

However, these societies did not meet much success, nor did it have a long life, but the idea of an ‘all-India political organization’, borne and continued to live on.\textsuperscript{19}

The formation of Indian National Congress by Allan Octavian Hume in the last week of December 1885 was the beginning of new life for evolution of parties and vindication of their growing ‘unity’ as a nation.\textsuperscript{20} The Congress brought together different points of view, ideologies and processes, functioning as composite party system. Meanwhile, the formation of Swaraj Party in 1922 by C.R. Das and Moti Lal Nehru was very important from the perspective of evolution of the party system in India. They stuck to their guns and took democratic dissent within the Congress Party to a new pitch. Later on, they returned back to parent party. It reflected the consolidation of the dynamic process which was based on ideologies, splits and convergence of moderates and extremists.

The Congress Socialist Party, created by Acharya Narendra Dev in 1934, was nurturing the values of multi-stream and multi-ideology, within the Indian National Congress (INC), which developed the seeds of a national party system in the country. The Congress leadership compelled the members of Socialist Party to leave in 1945. Finally, the Socialist Party emerged out as a significant political force in post-independence period, providing an alternative to the Congress Party.

The creation of the All India Forward Bloc in July 1939, by Subhash Chandra Bose, was his protest against the undemocratic politics of Congress Party. The INC became the foundation for the emergence of party system in the country. Of course, the formation of Muslim League in 1906, by Syed Ahmed Khan, remained part of the pre-independence Indian party system. It promoted the interests of the Mohammedans and ultimately, made a demand for separate sovereign state of Pakistan for the Muslims. The tussles and stresses between Congress Party and Muslim League over various issues, demonstrated true spirit of the party system, which came to stay in the emerging Indian polity. Despite the partition, the spirit of multi-cultural party politics stayed and was further nurtured through competitive politics.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p.296.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p.418-419.
The origin of Communist Party of India in 1924, and foundation of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in 1925, became essential components, contributing to evolve party system in the country. The emergence of entire spectrum of political ideologies, created a firm base for the party system in the country, from the right, the Muslim League, and Hindu Maha Sabha as well as RSS. To the Left, Communist Party of India, and even ultra Left etc, each point on ideological scale, was fully represented.\(^{21}\) Therefore, the development of party system in this phase was characterized as ‘movement party system.’\(^{22}\)

With promulgation of Indian Constitution on 26 January 1950, the political parties began preparing themselves for the first general elections. By the year 1951, four major group of parties emerged. As:

**First Group:**- It included Congress Party, Socialist Party, Kisan Mazdoor Party, and Krishikar Lok Party in Andhra, which accepted democratic values and secular principles.

**Second Group:**- It contained Communist Party of India (CPI), Bolshevik Party of India, Revolutionary Socialist Party etc. These parties advocated Soviet or Chinese model.

**Third Group:**- Jan Sangh, Hindu Maha Sabha, Ram Rajya Parishad were in this group, which promoted Indian traditions and culture.

**Fourth Group:**- It referred to Akali Dal, Schedule Caste Federation, Jharkhand Party and Tamilnad Congress. These were concerned with some provincial and communal interest.\(^{23}\)

**One Party Dominant System (1952-67)**

The Congress Party maintained its position as a party, occupying most of the space in the political system, because there was plurality within the dominant party system, which made it more representative and flexible. At the same time, it

\(^{21}\) Mehra, n.13, p.68-81.


absorbed other groups and movements from outside. Thus, the party prevented other parties from gaining strength.\textsuperscript{24}

Morris Jones stated that Congress Party over a period of two decades, in three general elections 1952, 1957, 1961 and also 1967, enjoyed unshared governmental power at the Centre and in most of the states. Its legislative majorities were massive as the party won 1096 out of 1477 seats in Lok Sabha, its proportion of the votes, casted, seldom over fifty percentage. While, the opposition parties, had no alternative to Congress in the exercise of power, nor did they share power in any coalition form.\textsuperscript{25}

Rajni Kothari and Morris Jones conceptualized it as ‘Congress system’ and ‘one party dominant system,’ respectively. The continued existence of particular kind of dominant party system was not to be accounted for by any single factor. The history, social structures and political style, all have to be called upon.\textsuperscript{26} Kothari states that a party system in which free competition among parties occurred; Congress Party was a dominant party. However, it was a competitive party system in which competing parties played a rather dissimilar role. The Congress was ‘party of consensus,’ while, the opposition parties were ‘parties of pressure.’\textsuperscript{27} In net shell, the party was the dynamic core and centre-piece of India’s operating institutional system.

**Polarization of Regional Political Parties (1967-77)**

The 1967 elections was a watershed in Indian politics, which followed major structural changes in the political system, which led to shift from dominant party system to competitive polity. The overwhelming dominance of Congress at the Centre eroded,\textsuperscript{28} on the one hand, party lost majority in eight state assemblies, namely Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, Madras/Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Rajasthan, Kerala and Uttar Pradesh out of sixteen states, on the other. The national proportion of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{26} Ibid., p.220.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Kothari, n.24, p.1162.
\end{itemize}

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Congress votes declined from 44.7 percentage to 40.8 percentage. The elections gave staggering blow to Congress dominance. A disintegrated, faction ridden, and shapeless party, still shocked by Nehru’s death, as well as the intricacies of two succession, led by a lady (Indira Gandhi). She was unacceptable to many party bosses, was badly mauled at the polls by somewhat frustrated electorates. The party was divided against itself. Indira Gandhi was not yet powerful enough to control the government and the organization. Although, the opposition parties which were less faction ridden, were only in a little better shape to take advantage of the public disillusionment.

The Indian political system in its evolutionary process passed through the essentially transitional phase of politics of one-party dominance to another phase of politics of polarization of which the present stage seems to be one of the political coalitions. In a way, the opposition parties entered into a number of pre-poll alliances in different states with a view to dislodging the ruling Congress. The Marxist-Communist in Kerala, DMK in Madras/Tamil Nadu, and Swatantra-Jana Congress in Orissa, made alliance pacts, which were cohesive regional forces in the respective states rather than an ad-hoc alliance of various parties. The dissident leaders of Congress Party joined hands to win more seats than the official candidates as elsewhere.

The Congress-regional parties’ bi-polarization came into existence over the period 1967-89 in Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Goa, Andhra Pradesh and Assam. The Akali Dal, National Conference and Maharashtra Wadi Gomantak Party (MGP) had a very long history in politics. In Tamil Nadu, the process began of eliminating the Congress Party from the top two positions, was started during this period and now DMK and AIADMK occupy two top positions. Jan Sangh/ BJP came into existence as second party in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and

30 Ibid., p.113.
Delhi, because of the consolidation of non-Congress votes in these states.\textsuperscript{33} During this phase, the pace of defections touched new heights. When, there were as many as 438 defections in a year after the 4\textsuperscript{th} general elections as compared with an estimated 542 defections during the preceding decade. In the state assemblies of Bihar, Haryana, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Rajasthan ‘the independent MLA,’\textsuperscript{34} (Member of Legislative Assembly), played a determinant role toppling and installing new governments. Many of the defectors were constantly sitting on the fence and some of them changed sides as many as three times in a day. However, the political parties were entering into alliance politics more as an opportunity, than as responsibility and tried to use this alliance to strengthen their political support base. This led them to take possession of key portfolios in the government by which vast power of resources and patronage could be commanded.\textsuperscript{35}

In the words of Morris Jones, outcome of elections indicated the emergence of ‘market polity.’ By this, it meant, a system in which large number of decisions are taken by a substantial number of participants, who stand in both positions, being dependent on with each other as well as in conflicts. The decisions in this alliance are reached by a process of bargaining, where no one is strong enough to impose his decisions. There is plenty of competition and bargaining before 1967, it took place largely within the Congress Party, between groups and in semi-institutionalized forms. In fact, it was this internal competition, which was responsible for the 1967 change. The dissident Congressmen played an important role in the weakening of party at the time of polls and became important reason for the defeat of the Congress Party in all states except Tamil Nadu. The outcome of this, more open competition and spreading of market power over number of groups. This led to ‘monopoly’ to competition. Morris Jones considers coalition governments as ‘small markets’ and


\textsuperscript{34} Independent members of assembly can be regarded as defectors since most of them contested elections as independent candidates because they had been refused party tickets. The intense conflicts over allocation of party tickets produced triangular contest among Congress dominant Centre, Congress dominant state and states ruled by non-Congress parties’ coalitions, in Kamal and Meyer, n.29, p.124 and Kothari, n.28, p.940.

\textsuperscript{35} Legislators (MLA) of Haryana, changed their party affiliation three time in one day, known as \textit{Aya Ram} and \textit{Gaya Ram}, in Kamal and Meyer, n.29, pp.120-123.
says that all the new non-Congress governments were of this kind except Tamil Nadu. The new tug of war between Congress Party and non-Congress parties established a ‘pretty regular’ and continuous ‘defectors market.’ For example, in Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh (non-Congress states), Congress Party formed governments after the elections but were brought down by defections. Thus, the party system was only modified by fresh form of competition, and not replaced.\textsuperscript{36}

It was the consolidation of non-Congress opposition parties state by state, that took place over a period, led the displacement of Congress Party. The bipolar consolidation was the key feature of this phase and driving force of the fragmentation of the national party system.\textsuperscript{37} Kothari points out that, it was wrong to conclude that Congress Party did not hold monopoly of power even before 1967. There were large number of parties opposing it, the combined strength of non-Congress parties and candidates were always more than that of the INC. The 1967 elections did represent a major step in the direction of increasingly competitive polity and more differentiated structure of party competition.\textsuperscript{38}

A fresh trial of strength took place in four state assemblies’ elections in 1969, known as “little elections.” The former kind of cohesive regional or coalition emerged as a viable alternate to Congress Party in West Bengal and Punjab, while, the later kind failed to do so in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. In West Bengal, United Front made the most drastic comeback and in Punjab, Akali Dal achieved dominance. After continuous instability for a long time this party system witnessed an increasing polarization between the INC and a coalition of regional parties.\textsuperscript{39} However, a number of serious disturbances took place in 1969 and 1970 in Maharashtra, Assam and Bengal. Indira Gandhi emphasized to ensure stable and strong government by saying that alternative was an invitation to anarchy.

At the national level, the schism in Congress Party in 1969, was a major shock to the political system, in general and party system, in particular.\textsuperscript{40} The

\textsuperscript{36} Jones, n.25, pp.146-157.
\textsuperscript{37} Sridharan, n.33, p.482.
\textsuperscript{38} Kothari, n.32, pp.171-175.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., p.184.
\textsuperscript{40} James Manor, “Parties and the Party System”, in Hasan, n.33, p.439.
Congress Party was divided into two groups—one faction of Congress (R) headed by Indira Gandhi and another was, Congress (O),\(^{41}\) led by Nijlingappa group. The factionalism did not remain confined to Congress Party alone but other parties also experienced this particularly Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP), Communist Party of India (CPI), Swatantra Party, and Jan Sangh. The minor and regional parties were also faction ridden. The reasons for splits were due to personal ambitions of leaders.\(^ {42}\)

Due to factional fight, the central government was not able to pass the Bill for “abolition of privy purses” from Rajya Sabha and it was lost by a margin of only one vote. On the moral grounds, Indira Gandhi advised, the President of India to dissolve Lok Sabha and order a fresh polls.\(^ {43}\) On the eve of general elections in 1971, Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP), Jan Sangh, Swatantra Party and Congress (O) forged ‘grand alliance’ at national level to give a way for an alternative government.\(^ {44}\) It had neither a common programme, nor it had a single leader, as a result, alliance faced difficulty in projecting a coherent image.\(^ {45}\)

Indira Gandhi fought elections on two major striking points/planks; (I) Nationalization of banks and (II) Abolition of privy purses.\(^ {46}\) The posters and the newspapers’ advertisement given by Congress Party attracted public attention, which attacked opposition parties by projecting opposition alliance as old guard of Congress,’ ten point agenda, which focused on simply ‘Indira hatao’ (remove Indira Gandhi from power), but Congress Party had only one point agenda ‘garibi hatao’ (get rid of poverty).\(^ {47}\)

The Congress (R) under the leadership of Indira Gandhi contested 442 seats and got 352 seats in the popular House, with 43.7 percentage of votes, whereas, united Congress fought elections on 544 seats but retained sixty seats only. Congress (O) did perform badly, lost forty five percentage of votes and reduced to ‘Gujarat

\(^{41}\) “R”-stands for ruling and “O”-stands for organization.
\(^{43}\) Kamal and Meyer, n.29, p.141.
\(^{44}\) Markandan, n.42, p.749.
\(^{45}\) Kamal and Meyer, n.29, p.144.
\(^{46}\) At time of integration of the princely states into the Indian Union, on the eve of independence, the government of India fixed an annual amount, varying according to size and revenues of each princely state, which was to be paid to each ruler in lieu of his agreeing to integrate his state.
\(^{47}\) Jones, n.25, p.169-171.
party."\(^{48}\) It was the charismatic leadership or personality cult of Indira Gandhi by which Congress (R) won landslide victory in 1971 parliamentary and state assemblies elections of Bihar, West Bengal, Tripura, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Mysore, Gujarat, Punjab, Haryana, and Maharashtra. The new trend emerged, party sought to lose its identity in its leader because major thrust of Congress (R) was to project Indira Gandhi as its undisputed leader of the party and cry was ‘vote for her,’ unlike previous appeal of party vote for lamp-post.\(^{49}\)

Indira Gandhi adopted a more confrontational posture both towards opposition parties at national level and towards non-Congress governments in various states. She created a ‘pyramidal type of decision-making structure’ in party as well as in government.\(^{50}\) Indira Gandhi started purging politicians such as Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Assam and Madhya Pradesh. Earlier, all disputes in the party were resolved through the Congress High Command but she started resolving all the conflicts at intra-party level. Jayaparakash Narayan symbolized it as “Indira is India and India is Indira.” As a result, India was poised towards ‘one party dominant system to one-party authoritative rule.’\(^{51}\) The post-1967 period witnessed a very important delinking of parliamentary as well as state assembly elections since 1971 and also suspension in organizational elections within the Congress Party from 1972 to 1992.\(^{52}\)

**Evolution of Bi-Party Situation: Mergers and Splits (1977-79)**

The general elections in March 1977 brought to an end thirty years of Congress Party rule, eleven years of government of Indira Gandhi and twenty one months of an emergency that had set the nation on an authoritarian course.\(^{53}\) Obviously, highly centralized rule of Indira Gandhi contributed to the formation of oppositional organization/movement, such as the *Nava Nirman Yuvaik Samiti* in Gujarat and *Chhatra Sangharsh Samiti* in Bihar as well as the student bodies that spread rapidly

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\(^{48}\) Kamal and Meyer, n.29, p.146.


\(^{51}\) Markandan, n.42, p.752.

\(^{52}\) Sridharan, n.33, p.482.

to other states, which further set the pattern of future polity. At that time, public
strikes were on rise, especially industrial and railway strikes. The situation became
tense, when there was a mutiny within police in Gujarat and in Bihar, on the one
side, the opposition parties were instigating popular agitations, as well as demanding
the resignation of the state government, on the other hand. The political system
seemed unable to cope with severe inflation, industrial recession, unemployment,
food scarcity and slow down of economic growth rate. Kothari rightly points out this
type of situation as “insecurity at the top and unrest at the bottom.”

A new dimension added to Bihar movement, when Jayaprakash Narayan
agreed to take over the leadership of the movement, between 1974 and 1975. Jayaprakash Narayan called for ‘total revolution’ and advised the students to give up
their studies for a year to ‘save democracy.’ The Congress (O), Jan Sangh,
Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD) and Socialist Party extended their full support to the
Jayaprakash Narayan.

Besides, the Allahabad High Court verdict against Indira Gandhi, resulted in
clamping emergency on the midnight of 25 June 1975 and detention of all non-
Communist opposition leaders. Morarji Desai and Ashoka Mehta from Congress
(O), Charan Singh, Piloo Mody and Biju Patniak of the BLD, Lal Krishnan Advani
and Atal Bihari Vajpayee from Jan Sangh/BJP, Surendra Mohan of the Socialist
Party, Jayaprakash Narayan and nearly thirty Members of Parliament (MPs)
including dissident Congressmen such as Chandra Shekhar and Mohan Dharia were
a few leaders of the main opposition parties, arrested during Emergency because of
their political differences with Indira Gandhi. However, several prominent leaders
such as George Fernandes, Nanji Deshmukh and Balraj Madhok escaped arrest for
some time and participating in underground agitational politics. None of the top
leaders of the CPI (M) and DMK were arrested. A few days later, RSS, Jamat-i-
Islami, Ananda Marge and Naxalite groups were banned and cadre of these

Bipin Chandra and Mridula Mukherjee (eds.), *A Centenary History of Indian National Congress*,
55 Weiner, n.53, p.3.
56 Bipan Chandra, “JP Movement and the Emergency”, in Mukherjee, Chandra and Mukherjee,
n.54, p.481.
organizations also put behind jail. The detention of these leaders opened a new chapter on party politics in the country. In these circumstances, discussion on the merger of parties held by leaders in Tihar Jail in Delhi and in Bombay, where Jayaprakash Narayan was convalescing. After the announcement of Lok Sabha elections, on 18 January 1977, simultaneously, four parties—Congress (O), Jan Sangh, BLD and Socialist Party decided to fight elections under ‘one-flag and one programme’ on the banner of Janata Party on 20 January 1977.

The issues of democracy versus dictatorship and stability versus chaos were main themes in Lok Sabha elections in 1977. The major issue of the campaign was the Emergency, while, the compulsory ‘nasbandhi’ (vasectomy), slum clearances in Delhi, acts of highhandedness of Sanjay Gandhi, son of Indira Gandhi also influenced the results of national elections. There were 2439 candidates in fray for 542 parliamentary seats. The party wise break up was: Congress-493, Janata Party-423, CPI-ninety one, CPI (M)—fifty three, (national political parties), state parties—seventy seven, unrecognized parties—eighty and independent—1222. The Janata Party won 298 seats and Congress was reduced to just 153 seats in the Lower House.

Nonetheless, it was quite clear that elections consolidated the electorates into two camps; that is, the Congress Party and Janata Party got seventy eight percentage votes and eighty three percentage of seats in Parliament, ninety eight percentage electorates in twelve states such as Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh out of the seventeen states, casted their votes in favour of two parties in the national elections. Factually, all India differences between the Janata Party and the Congress, was 8.6 percentage in terms of votes and 26.7 percentage in term of seats. In five states namely Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, bi-party system could not emerge as it was blocked by regional parties and Communist parties. They were institutionally part of the

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57 Ibid., p.493.
local party system, which was well established, socially rooted and historical forces since pre-independence. The regional parties are still the wild card in Indian politics.

In June 1977, fourteen state assemblies’ elections held in which Janata Party swept all except four- Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. In these states, regional parties as Akali Dal, National Conference, AIADMK and Left parties respectively formed governments. More or less, it was straight fight between two major contenders (Janata Party and Congress Party). However, the massive shift of votes and unfavorable vote-seat distortion was responsible for rise of bi-party situations instead of two-party system. Because, both Congress and Janata Party were experiencing stresses and strains, there arose skepticism about their long term viability.

Once again, Congress Party after defeat in elections, faced another split in 1978, which divided the party into two groups, one section led by Indira Gandhi known as a Indira Congress or Congress (I) and other faction led by Swaran Singh, later on, by Dev Raj Urs, group named as Congress (S). At the same time, the heterogeneous composition of the Janata Party and fierce ambitions of its three leading figures-Morarji Desai, Jagjivan Ram and Charan Singh, reflected that government was unable to achieve much cohesion. Ultimately, Janata Party government disintegrated in mid 1979 and many of its components splintered. This period was marked by free competition between political parties and greater instability in party system. The abundant alternation between parties in power at state and national levels led to continued decay. The fragmentation within parties by tendency towards personalized control of parties or splinters by different interests led to great fluidity within the party system as factions and ‘rumps.’


The outcome of the 7th Lok Sabha elections in 1980 restored, Congress (I)’s dominance with two-thirds (2/3) majority in the Lower House, securing 351 seats. It constituted sixty seven percentage seats in the House of People by polling less than

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61 Weiner, n.53, pp.90-94.  
63 Manor, n.40, p.445-446.
forty three percentage of total valid votes casted in its favour. The CPI won eleven seats, Lok Dal secured forty one seats, while, Janata Party reduced to just thirty one. The state parties, other groups and independents had drastically shrunken their support base. Only the CPI (M) in West Bengal and Kerala withstood the Indira Gandhi tide by winning thirty five Lok Sabha seats.

However, the Indian National Congress secured less than forty three percentage of votes, which was a loss of more than six percentage of votes from the 1971 national elections, when Indira Gandhi attained two third (2/3) parliamentary majority, with forty eight percentage of votes in 1971 polls. So, the breakdown of the popular votes made it clear that outcome was less a positive mandate for Indira Gandhi than a negative judgment against perceived ineffectiveness in government. In spite of facts, there was neither an Indira wave, nor a solid organization behind her. Due to this, she chose to contest safer seat in Andhra Pradesh, was tell-tale evidence of her own nervousness about ‘mood of the people’ of north India.

The Congress dominance was the product of fractured opposition, (which united in 1967 and 1977 only to displace Congress government) that opened the doors to Indira Gandhi, return to power. Thus, it was estimated that over 100 seats won by Congress (I) because of the split in combined votes of Janata Party in 1977 general elections. The votes divided between the rump Janata Party and Lok Dal. It was clear that the process of the disintegration of Janata Party started in 1978 when differences among the top leaders as Morarji Desai, Charan Singh and Jagjivan Ram emerged and secondly, in the first half of 1979. Consequently, the central government and party started breaking into various groups such as BJP, Lok Dal, Janata Dal (S) and so on.

From the beginning, the Janata Party government was stigmatized as an alliance of opportunistic parties, whose only purpose was to defeat Indira Gandhi.

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67 Roy, n.64, p.227.
The hoarding, black marketing, unabashed large scale tax evasion, inflation shot up to twenty five percentage, fear of lawlessness particularly massacres of Kanpur, Faridabad, Bailadilla and Dalli-Rajhara were still fresh in the mind of people of Hindi belt, were the main themes, which influenced the voter choice in the elections. But, an immediate factor, was the attempt by Janata Party leaders to malign and humiliate Indira Gandhi by arresting her for corruption case in October 1977.

Therefore, Indira Gandhi might benefit from these issues and support came from a broad spectrum of populace, from very rich to very poor, from Brahmins to former untouchables, from well to do business men and bureaucrats to tribal, agricultural labours and Muslim weavers. After forming government at the Centre in 1980, Indira Gandhi promptly superseded Janata Party’s (JP) supported governments in nine major states namely Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Punjab, on the patterns of previous central government of JP in 1977. No doubts, Congress Party won majority in eight of the nine states except Tamil Nadu. But, the results of the nine state assemblies’ elections showed that regional players like AIADMK and SAD were still forces to be reckoned with at state level, on the one side, the electorates had learned to discriminate between Vidhan Sabha elections and Lok Sabha elections and react differently to them, on the other.

Myron Weiner concluded India had many party systems reflecting the varied social cleavage, class structures and historical circumstances of each state. All these shared by 1980, was national party system. The important developments of 1980s were, the appearance of Sanjay Gandhi, son of Indira Gandhi onto the legitimate political stage, emergence of new classes such as upper class and middle class peasantry who were now, staking claim to share power, rise of politically conscious

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69 Roy, n.64, p.227.
70 Praagh, n.65, pp.221-223.
71 Pai, n.54, p.84.
backward classes/castes and above all, no party able to win sufficient number of seats to be declared as a ‘recognized opposition.’ This indicated that Indira Gandhi did not face any serious challenge to her position.\textsuperscript{75} Indira Gandhi turned increasingly to ‘bureaucratic’ rather than the politicians for counsel. The decision-making process became personalized, centralized and ad-hoc. She sought to transform the party into an instrument of personal power and assumed that no one challenged her position or endanger the succession of her children-Sanjay and now, Rajiv.

Consequently, Congress Party’s Chief Minister dangled like puppets on strings,’ imposed from above, personal loyalty rather than competence as prime qualification for office. Indira Gandhi dominated the Indian political scene, as no leader of independent India—including her father J.L. Nehru ever did.\textsuperscript{76}

The challenges to Congress Party at central level arise out of the ‘regionalization of politics.’ The weak organizational structure of the INC, and its lack of responsiveness to regional concern as well as the absence of a strong national opposition party, contributed to the growth of regional parties and regionalization of national parties.\textsuperscript{77} There were many regional parties formed government, at state level, National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir, CPI (M) in both West Bengal and Tripura, newly emerged Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in Andhra Pradesh and Janata Dal in Karnataka in 1983.

Meanwhile, Indira Gandhi ministry faced serious economic and political crisis such as price rise, shortage in food grain products and heavy deficit in the balance of trade, on the one hand,\textsuperscript{78} raised the demand for state autonomy and ethnic movements, espousing conflict and violence in Assam, Nagaland, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand and Punjab, created difficulties to the smooth functioning of the government at the Centre, on the other. Certainly, these hiccups pushed the opposition parties to revive anti-Congress sentiments, were leading to the further confrontation.\textsuperscript{79} The next troubles for Union Cabinet, involved attacked on ‘Golden

\textsuperscript{75} Observer, n.73, pp.11-13.
\textsuperscript{76} Hardgrave, n.66, pp.405-411.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., p.413.
\textsuperscript{78} Roy, n.64, p.288.
\textsuperscript{79} Weiner, n.74, p.349.
Temple’ by Indian army in June 1984, the Jammu and Kashmir Governor installed Ghulam Mohammed Shah as Chief Minister of the state by dismissing Farooq Abdullah’s government in June 1984, and in August, the Governor Ram Lal toppled the N.T. Rama Rao ministry in Andhra Pradesh.\(^8\) Thus, Indira Gandhi’s authoritative style of functioning was responsible to great extent for operation Blue-Star on 5 June 1984 in ‘Golden Temple,’ Amritsar, which culminated into her assassination on 31 October 1984.\(^9\)

The 1984 national elections were overshadowed by the assassination of Indira Gandhi, generated sympathy wave in favour of Congress Party. During the election campaign, Congress Party projected Rajiv Gandhi as the logical heir to his mother and party itself as the bulwark against the forces of secession. The main theme of campaign was ‘save India’ from external and internal enemies by using slogan ‘desh akhand’ (country indivisible). Paul Brass describes it as a ‘lamp-post elections’ in which electorates casted their votes in favour of local Congress candidates irrespective of their character and abilities. As a result, the Indian National Congress (INC) obtained 404 Lok Sabha seats with 49.10 percentage of votes, surpassing any elections held under Indira Gandhi and reaching the level, which obtained under Nehru in 1957.\(^2\)

However, the outcome of the eleven state assemblies’ elections produced serious doubts about the interpretation of polls verdict in term of ‘waves’ in March 1985. The Congress (1) won an absolute majority only in four states, managed wafer-thin majority in other four and lost three state legislatures by wide margins. The party suffered 26.79 percentage declined in seats, but gained number of assembly segments.\(^3\) The INC faced another set-back in elections to Punjab Vidhan Sabha in September 1985 and Assam state assembly in December 1985, where regional parties, Shiromani Akali Dal (L) and Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), respectively, got absolute majority. It reflected a trend, inclined towards regionalization of state level politics persists. In a way, the national parties took note

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\(^8\) Hardgrave, n.66, p.428.
\(^9\) Pai, n.54, p.87.
\(^2\) Ibid., pp.87-88.
of the legitimate regional aspirations of the people, so that, their ventilation was not left to regional parties and groups.\footnote{Ibid., p.256.}

Rajiv Gandhi, became youngest premier of the country, began his tenure with resolve to reform and democratize Indian polity in general and Congress organization, in particular. But, the party continued under his highly centralized leadership, with state and local units fragmented and with an absence of organizational vitality.\footnote{Paul R. Brass, \textit{The Politics of India since Independence}, New Delhi: Cambridge University, 1994, pp.72-73.} To prevent defection within Congress Party and enhance tight control over his elected Members of Parliament (MPs), Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi passed anti-defection law under fifty second amendment in 1985. It was a moved towards clean politics and proved a major step of realignments among parties in1990 and 1991.\footnote{David Butler, Ashok Lahiri and Prannoy Roy, “India Decides: Elections’ 1952-1995”, in Partha Chatterjee (ed.), \textit{State and Politics in India}, New Delhi: Oxford University, 1997, p.152.}

The era of Rajiv Gandhi signaled the advent of new blend of political and economic ideology. It saw decline of radical populism, replaced by new slogans of ‘efficiency,’ ‘competition’ and ‘modernization.’ However, due to criticism from the opposition and within party, the economic reforms process was piecemeal and by stealth. A section of leaders within party felt that the reform measures like reducing the role of public sector, cut in subsidies and public expenditure etc could affect its mass base and it might be alienated from its social constituencies.\footnote{V. Bijukumar, “Economic Reforms, Populism and Party Politics in India”, \textit{The Indian Journal of Political Science}, Vol. LXV, No.2, April- June 2004, pp.168-169.}

Over a period of time, Rajiv Gandhi lost his image as ‘Mr. Clean’ in politics. Because, in early 1987, his party’s led government was rocked by series of major scandals. These scams were alleged favouritim to business allies, illegal secret oversea bank account in Bermuda, Cayman Island, Hong Kong, Bahrain and offshore facilities in United States, held by party supporters and huge kickbacks on government defence deals\footnote{Stanley A. Kochanek, “The Briefcase Politics in India: The Congress Party and the Business Elite”, \textit{Asian Survey}, Vol.27, No.12, December 1987, p.1294.} such as two submarines from Howaldt Deutsche Werke of Kiel, (HDW) West Germany and Swedish Bofors. In these defence deals, an Indian agent paid rupees 300 million (seven percentage) commission on deal by
HDW. Further, a state owned Swedish radio broadcasted a story, alleging that payment worth $ 4.92 million paid to an Indian as commission on $1.3 billion (rupees 17.5 billion) deal to purchase Swedish Bofors 155mm howitzer. It was clear that Prime Minister fell into serious political trouble, when, he expelled his Union Defence Minister V.P. Singh from party, it created potential rallying points for his opponents inside and outside Congress Party. V.P. Singh emerged as the apostle of rectitude, who insisted that cash nexus between businessmen and government to be snapped and fund held abroad must be returned back home.89

In brief, it was a time that characterized overwhelming victory of Congress (I) in 1980 and 1984 as well as subsequent state assemblies, under the leadership of Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv, which strengthened traits of charismatic leadership. The party in this phase was totally dependent on leader as hegemon, on the one side and failure of non-Congress or anti-Congress parties at national level, on the other. Thus, Indira Gandhi had a patrimonial view of Indian politics. She thought that estate (Indian political system) inherited from her father (Nehru) should be transmitted to her heirs (sons). That is why; she was reluctant to allow Congress leaders with an independent popular support to emerge in states or in the Centre.90

The Congress Party was organizationally weak because, there was gradual erosion of inner-party democracy, due to suspension of party elections, tight control over ticket allocation; finance party machinery and appointment of Chief Ministers etc, all became the prerogative of the Centre. Rajiv Gandhi failed to reserve these trends and revitalize the party structures. There was a total shift from a mediatory to plebiscitary model in which leader overshadowed the party, thereby weakening it. In fact, by the late 1980s, institutional decay was so advanced in party organization that one could hardly talk of a ‘pre-dominant party.’91

The alienation of upper caste from Congress Party, disaffection and factionalism within party in mid 1980s, increasing incidents of violence and riots in various states, further contributed to growth of regional parties as Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), and other national parties like Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The formation of these parties marked the transition

89 Ibid., pp.1296-1298.
90 Dikshit, n.72, p.241.
91 Pai, n.16, p.171.
from ‘traditional class politics to democratic politics.’ The immediate electoral victory of the regional parties due to their successful use of alliance strategies and appeals different from national parties.

**Emergence of Multi-Party System at National Level and End of Congress Dominance (1989-96)**

The 1989 parliamentary elections constituted a watershed in Indian politics in general and the party system made a formal switch over from one party dominant system to multi-party system, in particular. Three successive minority governments, formed by National Front under the leadership of V.P. Singh as Premier, then the Samajwadi Janata Dal with Chandra Shekhar as Prime Minister and Congress Party government headed by P.V. Narasimha Rao, were the reflection of multi-party system. It was more diversified and differentiated pattern of party domination in Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and Vidhan Sabhas, tended to give rise to more federalized structure of power, that is, there was significant shift in the power structure at the top.

A tri-model party system took shape in 9th general elections in 1989. The three national parties emerged, Congress (I), BJP and Janata Dal led National Front (NF). The NF evolved under the leadership of Vishwanath Pratap Singh, former Defence Minister, who played a major role in uniting opposition parties particularly Janata Party, Lok Dal (A) and Lok Dal (B) to merge in National Front. V.P. Singh worked hard to unite anti-Congress forces on single platform. Besides this, Congress (S), DMK, CPI, CPI (M), AGP and other parties retained their identity, but agree to come on a common platform to defeat the Congress. Meanwhile, the NF also made some seats adjustments with BJP in Rajasthan and Gujarat etc. Paul Brass considers that NF emerged as a ‘new Janata coalition’ which sought to duplicate unity and victory of Janata Party of 1977. The concern for stability and integrity of the country, an urge for socio-economic equality, consciousness of community, caste

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92 Ibid., p.173.  
93 Mahendra Prasad Singh, “Political Parties and Political Economy of Federalism: A Paradigm Shift in Indian Politics”, in Bhatnagar and Kumar, n.16, pp. 128-129.  
94 Bidyut Chakrabarty, “The Third Front or The Third Force: A Political Maze or an Ideological Oasis”, in Mehra, Khanna and Kueck, n.13, p.251.  
96 Brass, n.85, p.85.
and ethnic identities and above all, resentment against corruption/scandals\(^97\)-
(kickback to middlemen in connection with huge defence procurements with the
Swedish Bofors company) were major issues in 1989 elections.

In 1989 parliamentary elections, no party even came close to 263 seats which
was the requisite number for majority in the Lower House. Consequently, the ‘hung
Parliament’ was thrown. The Congress Party lost its majority but emerged as the
single largest party in the House of People by gaining 197 seats, with 39.5
percentage of votes. Sudha Pai, coined the term the ‘federation of parties’ (NF)
obtained 143 seats, with only 17.8 percentage of votes. The partners of NF did not
perform on expectation lines, as TDP got two seats, Congress (S)-one, DMK-none,
the BJP improved its position from two to eighty eight seats in Lok Sabha,\(^98\) third
place behind Congress and Janata Dal.

The NF minority government formed by V.P. Singh better known as the
‘crutch government’-because the National Front (NF) brought together two
diametrically opposite political forces, the BJP, on the one side and the Left parties,
on the other, with the aim to keep the Congress at bay by any means. However, V.P.
Singh ministry faced internal and external crisis right from the beginning. Internally,
Devi Lal’s deputy Prime Minister, son Om Prakash Chautala was forced to resign
twice as a Chief Minister of Haryana, despite being elected to assembly. That
created a rift between government and in party cadre. The external crisis built by the
NF confrontation with the BJP on the issues of ‘Ram Mandir’ (Lord Rama temple)
and implementation of quota programme\(^99\) according to ‘Mandal Commission
report’ i.e. fifty two percentage reservation for schedule castes and other backward
castes. The implementation of report was highly objectionable and unpopular among
urban upper caste and middle class Hindus, who served as BJP’s vote bank. Very
soon, the BJP leadership came to realize that purely religious issues could unite the
Hindus, irrespective caste/class divisions.\(^100\)

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\(^{97}\) Yogendra K. Malik and V.B. Singh, “Bharatiya Janata Party: An Alternative to the Congress
(1)?”, *Asian Survey*, Vol.32, No.4, April 1992, p.318.g

\(^{98}\) Pai, n.16, p.175.

\(^{99}\) Chakrabarty, n.94, pp.254-255.

\(^{100}\) Malik and Singh, n.97, 333.
Thus, V.P. Singh Cabinet decided to counter the political threat of Lal Krishnan Advani’s ‘Rath Yatra’ (chariot pilgrimage) in August 1990 by implementing Madal Commission report and enhance support among the backward classes. The ‘Rath Yatra’ was ‘march’ (walk) from Somnath temple, Gujarat to Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh through ten states to mobilize the masses. The ‘Rath Yatra’ stopped and L.K. Advani arrested in Bihar. Consequently, the BJP withdrew its support from Union Ministry and V.P. Singh government lost majority in the Lower House.\(^{101}\) Then, Chandra Shekhar bolted Janata Dal and made a new Samajwadi Janata Dal, which formed Cabinet under him. The central government was constituted with help of eleven regional allies and outside support of Congress Party. The central government could barely muster one-tenth of Lok Sabha’s strength. As a matter of fact, the INC extended support to Chandra Shekhar ministry because it did not want to face mid-term elections, unlike previous installation of Charan Singh government, as part of well worked out strategy to pull down the Janata Party and to force fresh general elections in 1979.\(^{102}\)

Thereafter, Chandra Shekhar’s ministry collapsed, just after four months because, the gulf widening between Congress Party and Council of Ministers on the issues of refueling of the American war-planes during the Gulf war and budget. In a way, on 6 March 1991, Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar resigned from the office and advised President of India to dissolve the popular House and conduct fresh elections.

The shocking assassination of former Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi on 21 May 1991 during parliamentary election campaign in southern part of Tamil Nadu, generated sympathy wave for its slain leader. However, no party or combination of parties could aspire towards a majority.\(^{103}\) There were various issues raised by the NF, the BJP and Congress in 1991 mid-term elections. The National Front and its Communist allies made social justice a central theme, and V.P. Singh proposed quota programme for backward classes, the Congress offered the only ray of hope of


stability and peace in the country. The BJP called for construction of Lord Rama temple at controversial site Babri Masjid (mosque built by Babar) in Ayodhya.

The Congress Party emerged single largest party by winning 226 seats in the Lower House. The National Front reduced to just seventy-six seats, a loss of almost half their strength from 1989. The Left parties won fifty-five seats. The BJP and Shiv Sena combine took 121 seats and emerged second largest party in Lok Sabha. The Indian voter did not give a clear mandate in favour of any one of them. In 1991, the Indian National Congress (INC) was able to form a minority government led by consensual leader P.V. Narasimha Rao, with the support of eleven members of AIADMK and some smaller parties. The Congress Party government’s viability was dependent on abstention in ‘vote of confidence’ by a section of opposition parties. Obviously, the mantle of power in Congress Party shifted from the Gandhi-Nehru family to others. With the appointment of Manmohan Singh, as Finance Minister in P.V. Narasimha Rao government indicated that the emergence of ‘new’ leadership within INC, away from the heritage and ethos of the national movement.

P.V. Narasimha Rao initiated policy of economic reforms, which included devaluation of rupees, cut in public expenditure, privatization of public sectors and reducing subsidies, better known as liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG). The new fiscal policy created intra-party and inter-party conflicts. The Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao confronted another problem, his ministers Buta Singh, Balram Jakhar, Madhava Rao Scindia, Arjun Singh, K. Natwar Singh and N.D. Tiwari etc. were involved in Hawala scam and JMM bribery case. These cases tarnished the image of Congress Party in public eyes. Narasimha Rao’s chanakya method further generated rift in the party. As a result, G.K. Moopanar formed Tamil Manila Congress; N.D. Tiwari and Arjun Singh left the party and organized themselves as Congress Tiwari. Moreover, after the death of Rajiv Gandhi, the INC was weak electorally and organizationally than at any time since 1977. The party

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104 Ibid, pp.978-979.
105 Sridharan, n.33, p.486.
106 Bijukumar, n.87, pp.171-172.
* P.V. Narasimha Rao used every means to hold both positions as a party President and Prime Ministership.
strength reduced to third place in two largest states of Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.\textsuperscript{108}

The decisive stimulus for change came between 1989 and 1991 in what was christened as the three ‘Ms’ of Indian politics, that is, ‘Madal, Mandir and Market’. The Madal related with the implementation of Madal Commission recommendation for OBC reservation. The Mandir concerned with Ramjamboomi-Babri Mashid dispute and Rath Yatra. The Market covered new economic policy and IMF sponsored package of liberalization. These three Ms possibly created a new cleavage that cut across the established cleavage structure and thus engaging in new kind of mobilization. Clearly, the changes were so basic that generated ‘new kind of party system.’ Yogendra Yadav refers it as emergence of “third electoral system”, that is, in first two systems; the voter exercised only one choice, whether to vote for or against the Congress Party. Now, there were many non-Congress alternatives in existence. The Congress was no longer the pole against, which every political formation was defined. In this sense, the Indian polity entered into a ‘post-Congress polity.’ The BJP was no longer confined to an urban bania-brahmin party. It developed a formidable rural base extending well into the lower OBC and some adivasis.\textsuperscript{109}

By and large, after two elections of 1989 and 1991, national party system as reflected in distribution of seats, by the parties and in the alliance pattern among parties, took the shape of a loose, three or four coalition systems in which parties combined with regional and other smaller parties, in alliances or fronts, to enhance their position and to coordinate their policies and action in the Parliament. After the by-election held in November 1991, the Congress Party stood at the center of the largest such coalition, in which its own representation of 227 was increased to 251 through an alliance with AIADMK and four other minor parties. The BJP alliance with Shiv Sena accounted for another 123 seats. A third coalition, comprised two groupings the Janata Dal led National Front whose combined strength in the House was 140.\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{108} Brass, n.85, p.85.
\textsuperscript{110} Brass, n.85, p.75-77.