

CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION – THE PROBLEM – CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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Section : I

INTRODUCTION

Modern India, politically speaking, emerged as the outcome of myriads of influences spread over a considerable period of time. The important influences were, largely, the influences of Hinduism, Rational-legal authority of British import and above all, the reconstructive Nationalism of Pre-independence era.¹

Three quarters of a Century of ideas and struggle over defining the Indian nation, over getting rid of alien subjugation and over the preferred shape of the social and economic structure in future independent India had provided the Nationalist leadership at independence with a set of ideas and goals which facilitated to structure their responses to the problems of Governance confronting the newly independent India.²

By and large, most nationalist politicians were in love with the narratives of western modernity, its dominant hegemonic form which saw the nation-state as an agency of collectively intended social change, in particular. Eventually, it was this political imagination which was translated into the founding institutions of the Indian state with several parallel and mutually re-inforcing principles of pluralism.³

Therefore, the modern state in India was the outcome of decolonization and the transfer of power to a political elite representing certain classes and regions of the country and had to carve out a nation around it which had to be democratically accountable to the society as a whole.⁴ The leading ideas of the nationalist elite at independence was beautifully summarized by an old India-expert in these words, “The state was perceived as the instrument which would establish India’s sovereign independent presence in the world, would

preserve its unity against foreign enemies and internal secessionist, ensure authority, order, and discipline in a society perceived as always on the brink of disorder and violence, promote economic development through centralized planning which would bring India out of the backwardness of agrarian life and free it of a social order dominated by feudal institutions and practices and by religious superstitions, and make it possible for Indians also to maintain an effective parliamentary system.”⁵ However, Democracy in India did not come as a necessary follow-up of capitalist industrialization and development. The advent of Democracy in India was neither as a response to an absolutist state nor as the realization of an individualist conception of society. World wide experience in this respect, the European experience, in particular, is at variance with that of India’s. So much so, that the establishment of Democracy in India can not be even dubbed as an obvious outcome of the nationalist movement. The inheritance of nationalism was such that the end of colonialism may have imparted a sense of pride and hope to the people but independence meant freedom and sovereignty of the nation as a collective of people, rather than for individuals who together made up the people. Nevertheless, Independent India went ahead with a constitution which created a democratic republic and pledged to secure justice, liberty, equality and fraternity for all its citizens. The republicanism of the western world was perhaps at the back of the mind of the political elites who crafted a modern nation-state inspired by liberal democracy. Thus, Democracy was conceded to the people from above and not on the basis of claims by the people from below.⁶

In any case, the political institutions of the Indian state were, in the beginning, a gift to the masses by an elite political class primarily comprising of Hindu men of the twice-born Varnas, heavily weighted towards urban, English-educated Brahmans who shared a secular orientation. This gift from above represented in significant degree the political values of intellectuals who perceived the parliamentary system

as the most highly developed form of modern politics. For the weaker sections of the population, the single greatest gain from Independence was in the principle of one person, one vote.⁷

A combination of fortuitous circumstances ensured that the effective control of the State devolved upon political elites around Nehru.⁸

However, the Nehruvian elite did not proceed with a coherent ideological plan. The Government policies got transformed into an internally consistent strategy for the development of a reformist, politically independent capitalist society through constant improvisations of the first decade. The important political objective was to translate the aspiration of development into a mammoth state - directed project of social change. The state was to confer and realize the rights of citizenship of its people, who had virtually, no exposure to democratic politics.

Moreover, the state was entrusted with the responsibility of getting rid of obscurantist social practices like un-touchability and to create conducive conditions to economic growth.⁹ The Congress Party was successful in establishing itself as the inevitable intermediary between the British State and the Indian people. This helped the Congress establish institutional paramountcy among the parties as agents of the articulation and aggregation of popular claims. This legacy of the Congress Party contributed handsomely towards both the cause and consequence of the heterogeneity of its mass-base which eventually conditioned the very nature of the post-independence political dynamics of India earning a sobriquet as the 'Congress System' especially during Nehru's life-time.¹⁰

The leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru both as leader of the Congress and head of the Government until his death in 1964, was of paramount importance for the Congress system as well as for the institutionalization of power. His leadership was marked by two

contradictory tendencies – centralizing and at the same time respectful of regional autonomy. This has helped the state to further spread its authority beyond the core geographic areas where the Congress movement had been historically active. Nehru's leadership had provided some institutional innovations such as the re-organization of States on the linguistic principle, devolution of authority to the village level through panchayati raj, and involving the majority of the population in the economy through State-directed reforms. The mixed economy and economic planning offered an opportunity for coordinating the expansion of both the state and the market. On the other hand, the cooperative movement and the community development programme supplemented the endeavours of both from the cities to the villages.¹¹

Moreover, Nehru's design for a new India put in place the all India services in keeping with a British model of Governmentality. Besides, the planning Commission, the Five year plans, regular election a supreme court, respect for a free press, an implicit consensus among major political parties to keep religion out of public politics, reserved jobs and constituencies for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, and an apparent commitment to agrarian reform were the mythologies of Governance associated with Nehru's India. However, Nehru's Development project ran into rough weather in the absence of political and economic reforms at the local and regional levels. To achieve political and economic reforms, the presence of weak bourgeoisie during the Nehru years, had indeed, played a spoilsport.¹² Nevertheless, as Sudipta Koviraj argues, "The democratic and reformist –rhetoric of Nehruvian policies in the first decade after independence irreversibly altered one of the fundamental facts of Political life in India. From an agency which was spectacular, mysterious and distant, the state has become something vast, over extended, extremely familiar at least in its sordid everyday structures - the panchayat, the revenue department, the local courts, the post office, railways, public

sector industries, and above all the elections, an ambiguous combination of serious decision making, social festival and farce. Nevertheless, it seems that its domination of Indian society in some form or other is historically irreversible.”¹³

By the late sixties, it was found that inequalities of wealth, health or consumption during the two decades of independence, could not make much headway in terms of reduction. Nehru’s death and the electoral reversals suffered by the congress party primarily pushed the Indian State to the brink of a crisis of de-institutionalization.¹⁴

The economic crisis and the electoral drubbings suffered by the Congress party prompted them to give a new emphasis on agriculture. The agricultural strategy deemphasized institutional reorganization of agriculture, instead, it put emphasis upon price incentives coupled with technological innovations for augmenting productivity which, eventually, swelled the kitty of the Rural rich farmers.¹⁵

However, the decline of the ‘congress system’ led to an “Organizational vacuum at the core of India’s political space.”¹⁶ Mrs. Indira Gandhi was, finally, catapulted onto the national stage. She, on the one hand, came up with her famous “Garibi Hatao” programme to build up popular support bases and on the other, steered the congress as a more personalistic vehicle with obvious authoritarian style. This led to the demise of the old institutional ethos of the Congress Party.¹⁷

In the 1970s, Mrs. Gandhi undermined the constitutional and legal safeguards available to the citizens against the possible encroachment of state authority upon the personal domain. The emergency saw the Zenith of centralization which provided for political interference in the affairs of the states which was, indeed, unheard of in the post-colonial India. The restoration of formal Democracy was achieved through the election in 1977 which also categorically rejected India Gandhi’s brand of authoritarianism. Thus, a legitimate political process was restored despite the fragility and frailty of the coalition

which unseated Indira Gandhi in the election that took place immediately after the Emergency.¹⁸

However, the roots of this decay again are traced to Mrs. Gandhi, but it is also acknowledged that the demands coming from below for sharing power were increasing beyond the capacity of Mrs. Gandhi's regime to handle. She reacted to them by blocking the access of rival claimants to power by undermining the democratic institutions.¹⁹ Rajani Kothatri argues in this context, "In seeking to absorb the dynamics generated by social change engendered by the democratic political process, the new congress leadership under Mrs. Gandhi adopted a style that threw the old institutional order out of gear, but was unable to replace it by a new structure. It was instead, replaced by an increasingly personalized and plebiscitary politics on one hand, with a tendency to negotiate political and economic issues with local potentates rather than an All-India elite."²⁰

The mid - 1980s, witnessed the emergence of the middle caste farmers of North India in political formations under the banner of Bharatiya Kishan Union. The mobilization and over - politicization following this development led to an ever increasing demand on the state which eventually crippled the state institutions and rendered it unable to accommodate these conflicting demands, precipitating a "crisis of Governability."²¹

However, democratic institutions and practices, adapted to the Indian historical and social context, have had a huge transforming implication. The legitimacy of the hierarchical social structure has been undermined which impaired and crippled the historical capability of the upper castes to impose unequal status and power relations on the low-caste people justifying it as the basis of stability in society. Thus the democratization led to an upsurge of participation from among the poor and illiterate of the lower social strata. This "democracy of caste groups" has thrown open new vistas for their representation in elected

institutions of Governance. The reservation in educational institutions and the civil services for dalits and other backward classes paved the way for more opportunities for social mobility among the upper echelons of the disadvantaged groups.²² However, it could not successfully challenge the inequities embedded in the social and economic structure for ushering in increased levels of equality in social and economic life of the overwhelming majority of Indian population. As Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal write, "The quest for substantive democracy has been in large part a material struggle for social and economic security that could provide more meaningful context to culturally informed values and a sense of human dignity. Democratic development can be a worthwhile ideal only if it addresses material and cultural concerns by assuring individual and group rights at different levels of the polity."²³

The two core constituents of modernizing project of the Indian State are, no doubt, democracy and development. However, electoral democracy's success could not have been converted into an effective wherewithal for realizing the full potential of democracy as the concentration of economic and social power predisposed the state to act in ways that, finally, tipped the balance in favour of the "dominant coalition" rather than the under-privileged.²⁴

In any case, India saw the unprecedented rise of militant Hinduism around the issue of the Babri Masjid in the late 1980s and 1990s.²⁵ The campaign that the BJP Launched, was essentially motivated to integrate the Hindu Community around religious beliefs and it was unfailingly bound up with the BJP's opposition to the minority United Front Government's decision in 1990 to implement the Mandal Commission recommendations.²⁶ Again, the emergence of BJP as the victor to reconstruct India politically through multiple endeavours may be attributed to the decline of the congress system and the loss of faith in the Nehruvian masterframe.²⁷

Assessing the impact of the Mandal Commission's recommendations by the V.P. Singha Government in 1990, Niraja Gopal Jayal writes, "Caste was now no longer simply an important basis of political support, as political parties claiming to represent particular caste interests emerged. For many of these political formations, control over state power lay at the heart of these agenda of social transformations, and this at a time when challenges to the State had manifestly begun to proliferate ." ²⁸

However, Militant Hindu Nationalism represents the gravest danger to the Indian State and one of its foundational principles-secularism, in particular.²⁹

On the other hand, Globalization Process and its domestic face-Economic reforms has led to the weakening of state authority. With this, some measure of erosion of legitimacy of the state was inevitable. Furthermore, the regionalization of the political and party system, as well as various autonomy movements and separatist demands along with the relentless march of globalization, directing economic deregulation and liberalization have contributed decisively to the weakening of central power in the Indian federation.³⁰

Thus, the project of democracy in India is both fragile and beleaguered. Though it is commonly believed that the greatest signifier of its success is the fact of its having survived and endured that is to make a virtue of necessity. It might be more accurate to say that, despite all its alarming deficiencies, the singular merit of Indian democracy lies in its success in providing a space for political contestation and an opportunity for the articulation of a variety of claims.

THE PROBLEM

India's procedural Democracy survived and sustained well since independence barring an interregnum of less than two years during Mrs. Indira Gandhi's rule when she clamped National Emergency even

suspending fundamental rights. One of the prime objectives of post-colonial state in India was to address the Governance issue in its totality. So, the project of Democracy has had its supporting pillars in the form of secularism, welfarism and the adoption of a quasi-Federal State structure and a strong judiciary. This position was further buttressed by embarking on an elaborate Planning programme. So, the concern for "Good Governance" is not a new experience for the Indian State. The project of "Good Governance" as it is part of the project of globalizing democracy has an important bearing on the ways in which questions of development and Democracy are currently being understood and conceptualized. The distorting logic of Democracy in the context of an unequal society like India necessitates State Welfare providing further protection of the underprivileged and this cannot be taken care of by Governance alone without responding positively to the concerns of distributive Justice.

However, the project of Globalizing Democracy and its prescribed regime type in the name of 'Good Governance' presupposes hollowing out of the State by encouraging (minimal State) it to abdicate welfarist obligations and significantly, emphasizes upon managerial and technical aspects of Governance in order to ensure "smooth-sailing" for the market forces, to effect a change over from state-led Development to market-led Development type of Economy. So, the "Good Governance" package masquerading as the champions of development and Democracy across the globe, is out and out, ideological in nature and the impact of such global ideological programmes on India's quest for desired Social change along the routes of Development and Democracy, is our areas of concern and enquiry.

CONCEPTUAL FRAME-WORK

There is no dearth of serious intellectual enquiry on post-independent India's politics and Democracy. Here we intend to divide scholastic works on post-colonial India's politics into four distinct schools of thought. They are as follows:-

1. Liberal Democratic Perspective ;
2. Functional and Political Economy Perspective ;
3. Marxist Perspective and ;
4. Social movement-Perspective ;

1. Liberal Democratic Perspectives

Either explicitly or implicitly the vast majority of American Scholars in the behavioral tradition doing empirical works on India, placed themselves within the world view of modernization. In a way this lead was presented by Shils (1961) and Weiner (1962b, 1966, 1967, 1983) who extended the developmental paradigm to the field of electoral analysis. Those writings in this category have examined the relationship between modernization and consolidation of Democracy in India (Field, 1980), diffusion of the norms of participatory Democracy, and institutionalization of political competition and bargaining (Hardgrave and Kochanek, 1986) and Electoral competition and party politics (Eldersweld and Ahmed, 1978; Palmer, 1975; Weiner, 1978, 1983), modernization of religion (D.E. Smith, 1963) interest groups and pressure groups (Weiner 1962b). Later, more complex variants of the modernization theory were produced, most notably by Rudolph and Rudolph in the modernity of Tradition (1967) and in the collection on caste in Indian politics (1970) edited by Rajni Kothari, in which it was argued that even elements of "Tradition" such as caste or religion could infiltrate a modern system of political institutions, adapt to it and, by transforming themselves, find an enduring place within it as parts of political modernity itself. The most influential account of the Indian

“system” from this perspective was produced by Rajni Kothari in his politics in India (1970). His theoretical tools were largely structural-functional. He identified the “dynamic core” of the system of political institution in India in the Congress party. The whole systems worked through the dominance of the Congress. Through an accommodative system, the political centre consisting of a modernizing elite was shown to be using the powers of the state to transform society and promote economic development. Kothari gave it the simple name “Congress System”.

The current version of the modernization paradigm has found an explanation for India’s problems in the “theory” of deinstitutionalization and criminalization of politics, which suggests the moral case for the resurrection of the institutions of State to their original stature which they have presumed to have enjoyed during the Nehru era. For example, Rajni Kothari in his recent writing has attempted to develop a normative framework that serves less as an explanation and more as a critique of the present political system. He notes that unlike in the early decades after independence, the national political elite has lost its autonomy and the State has ceased to be an agent of social change and has instead become more and more repressive. His arguments is that there is a need now to assert, through grass-roots movements and non-party political formations, the autonomous force of civil society over repressive and increasingly unrepresentative State. Another notable theorist of Indian politics Ashis Nandy with his revised Gandhian position, argues that modernist State has repeatedly failed whenever it has tried to impose on Indian society a set of institutional practices adopted from the modern west that go against the firmly entrenched everyday practices of collective living in local communities. Social change, if it is to be both successful and just, must emerge out of these collective everyday practices.

2. Functional and Political Economy Perspective

Precisely, the functional school of thought have rendered major conceptual contribution through the writings of Morris-Jones (1963, 1987), Rudolph (1967) and Bailey (1970). Bailey's theoretical formulations on a model of Indian politics, based as they are on excellent field work, deserve careful attention. He describes the Indian political system on the aggregation of a set of interlocking and "nested" arenas at the locality, district and national levels. Each arena operates according to rules specific to it, which is why that is homogeneity across the larger political system. Therefore, issues of cross-systemic significance have to be "translated into something else at constituency level and have to be translated yet again at village level." (Bailey, 1970:232). While Bailey leaves open the possibility of a successful "breakthrough" in the direction of irreversible modernization, Rudolph and Rudolph are more fully anchored to the resilience of endogenous culture. (Rudolph and Rudolph- *The modernity of traditions: Political Development in India*, 1967;8).

Morris-Jones (1963) had first given a formal recognition to this problem by stipulating the modern, traditional and the saintly as three "idioms" of Indian Politics. In the epilogue to the new edition of the *Government and politics of India*, Morris-Jones talks about a major change in the tone and content of Indian politics during the last two decades. The "peaceful interpretation of tradition and modernity" which characterized the first two decades after independence has given way to a political contest that is much more violent. This is the basic loss suffered by the political system in the last two decades; it is the loss which has largely removed the nation-wide stabilizing element; without whose management capacity to contain particularist thrusts the system continually falls apart, with a centre which does not effectively hold (Morris-Jones, 1987:226).

Atul Kohli's (1987) study of poverty reform in three states accorded explanatory primacy to the state, even as his data indicated important ways in which State capacity to effect redistributive reform was constrained by social and economic factors. There were other studies, however, which showed the limitations of the statist approach in the context of the third world, where it is the structure of society that determines the capacity or incapacity of states to implement social policies and mobilize the people (Migdal; 1988). Thus, if Kohli finds the Indian state to be the prototype of the statist approach, Migdal finds its putative strength considerably restrained by a fragmented, heterogeneous society. An intermediate position is taken by Lloyd and Susane Rudolph (1987:13) who locate the Indian state on "a shifting continuum between constrained and autonomous and view it as a "third actor", along with capital & labour."

Atul Kohli in his illustrious book, "Democracy and Discontent" : India's crisis of Governability" has focussed attention on the growing disjuncture between weakening institutions and multiplying demands. He cautions that if these trends continue, they are likely to chip away at India's democracy. On the other hand, Pranab Bardhan has argued, even state ability, which is arguably an important factor for the successful pursuit of long-term developmental goals, may be only partially determined by the democratic or non-democratic nature of the regime. Other factor, such as the social homogeneity of the population, an initially more egalitarian wealth distribution and dense network of connections between public officials and private capitalism, are among the important determinants of State ability to accomplish economic development (Bardhan 1993:46-7), Francine Frankel, one of the powerful commentators on the Indian political scene, has put forward an altogether different thesis as to how to transform the hierarchical social structure so as to create a relatively egalitarian pattern of development by reformist, non-revolutionary means. Frankel's analysis leads her to conclude that it was primarily due to the failure of the

political leadership to mobilize and organise the lower classes as a social force in their own right. Only such mobilisation could have influenced the policy process in favour of the poor. (Francine Frankel, *India's Political Economy, 1947-1977: The Gradual Revolution* 1978).

3. Marxist Perspective

The Marxist Literature on Indian State provides abundant insight and Yields a rich variety of possible hypotheses. Michael Kalecki attempted to capture the class nature of the State, in a formulation that was clearly intended to apply to India in order to explain the character of the attempted capitalist transformation (Pursued via development planning) which, he posits, differed qualitatively from "Classical Capitalism". (Kalecki, 1972P.123). Kalecki Portrayed the Indian State as an intermediate regime. The Central defining characteristic of an intermediate regime is that it is a "regime", a "State" or a "government" (Kalecki uses all three categories) which represents the interests of and in which, therefore, "the role of the ruling class" is performed by two classes : the urban lower middle class and the rich peasantry- or two fractions of one class. Kalecki pointed to the weakness of the native upper middle class and its inability to perform the role of "dynamic entrepreneur" on a large scale; which, it seemed, distinguished the Indian case from "classical capitalism". The intermediate regime idea is intended as a way of distinguishing the non-classical capitalism which, in his view, was in operation in India and of clarifying the working of State Capitalism. A.R Desai, a renowned Marxist, in one formulation (*Politics and Society in India-need for new Hypothesis, Seminar, July, 1968*) depicted the Indian State, un- problematically, as Capitalist State, pure and simple. Desai goes on to add, "the state which has evolved after independence is essentially a capitalist state, representing the interests of the Indian Capitalist ruling class; and the major function by the state is to act as Chief Instrument of modernisation on Capitalist lines, to protect,

develop and defend a Capitalist socio-economic formation". (Desai, 1975, PP. 139, 140, 142 and 149).

Sudipta Kaviraj's writing on Indian politics is informed by new insights and more nuanced accounts that is underpinned by not only enduring structures of class power but also specific changes in political processes and institutional practices that began to emerge in 1980s. His focus is on the State but the analysis taken the state as a site over which several dominant classes, try both to out-manoeuvre one another and to work out Coalitional arrangements in order to preserve their dominance as a whole.

Partha Chatterjee, another powerful Marxist Commentor on Indian Politics, argues that India needs to be seen as an example of "Passive Revolution". He uses the Gramscian category to identify two crucial features which have had profound implications for development planning and the possibility of thorough-going capitalist transformation. Firstly, it has failed to produce a full scale assault on the institutional structures of the colonial state, and secondly, it has failed to attempt an attack on pre-capitalists dominant classes. Within this framework, the failure of agrarian reform, the constrained dominance of Capital over the nation state, and several other issues, may be examined in terms of the tensions between emphasis on the dynamic of accumulation and stress on the importance of legitimation.

4. *Social Movement Perspective*

The theoretical tradition of Social movement politics is the literature on social movements and democracy that has grown out of the historical experience of social movements in the United States and Western Europe. The earliest set of discussion within this literature was set against the backdrop of fascism and the rise of Communism, focusing on the immediate post-war period. A major shift in perspectives developed as social scientists sought to make sense of the social movements of the 1960's and 1970's. Rather than portraying

social movements as the expression of the social anomie and undirected frustrations, social movement is pictured as enhancing democratic processes by providing unrepresented sectors of the population with alternative channels for political participation. Social movement is viewed as collective action to effect change. This conceptualisation of social movements includes activism that may prioritise a protest agenda or may emphasize, as does much of the NGO sector, development work informed by a deep Commitment to grassroots social change. This understanding of social movements also comprises organisations whose mobilisation targets state institutions as well as those that engage with the state. As Niraja Gopal Jayal writes, 'To accord sacrosanctity to the agenda adopted by the state at a given moment in its history is to leviathanize democracy'. (Niraja G. Jayal, Democracy and the state-Welfare, Secularism and development in Cotemporary India, up (New Delhi) 2001 P. 257).

Neera Chandoke, another strong votary of this perspective, argues that Civil Society as a Check upon the potentially arbitrary and even tyrannical tendencies of the State. This implies that civil society must be independent of the state, in principle, accessible to all citizens and a genuinely participatory arena of free civic engagements, deliberation, discussion and dialogue. (Neera Chandoke. The State and civil society, Exploration in Political theory, New Delhi: SAGE Publication (1998) P. 162).

It is argued that it is precisely through the range and dense welter of social movements and organisations that democratic institutions (such as the courts and bureaucracy) have been able to fine tune their responses to the fluidity and diversity of India. (Social movements politics in India by Mary Katzenstein, Smitu Kothari and Uday Mehta in Atul Kohli edited book 'The success of India's democracy', Cambridge University Press 2001 P. 268). In an illuminating article and using the social movements perspective, Pramod Parajuli argued that conventional assumptions about

development have reached an impasse. New social movements of women, indigeneous people and the rural poor are challenging statist indicators of growth and asserting livability, sustainability and equality as new parameters of development.

Thus, the political significance of these struggles is that they challenge the notion of the integrationists and Developmentalist Indian state. Moreover, there is the recognition that the ruling elite has articulated its class interest as the common interests of the whole Nation. The domain of the subalterns, however, could not be incorporated into the ruling class ideology during the struggle for independence nor after independence. (Prmod Parajuli, Power and Knowledge in Development Discourse : New Social Movements and the State in India in Niraja Gopal Jayal edited 'Democracy in India', OUP, (New Delhi) 2001 P. 258 and P. 274).

A fundamental lacuna impairing Indian Democracy as Niraja Gopal Jayal points out, is its in-authenticity and un-representativeness. Despite the clamour of celebration that attends every election ritual and the tributes paid to the vibrancy and resilience of Indian democracy, there is cause for concern as the intermediaries are crucial to this democracy, not just as brokers of votes, but also when it comes to representing the needs of the vulnerable. That the hungry of Kalahandi or Muslim women divorcees could not represent their own cases is not accidental. That it took a Group of middle class activists to energise the movement against the Sardar Sarovar Dam in the Narmada Valley is also not surprising. Thus, it becomes possible for the State to pay only token attention to the demands of welfare, to compromise secular principles and deny its Muslim women citizens equal rights, and to answer challenges to its development strategy by resorting to technocratic arguments. (Niraja Gopal Jayal, Democracy and the State- Welfare Secularism and Development in contemporary India, OUP, New Delhi (2001) PP. 255-256).



Another perspective developed over the years, which points out the dichotomy between the institutions that emerged out of European Civilisation and transplanted into India at independence and age-old Indian values and practices which call for reconciliation in case of conflict (Parekh, 1989 : 57). Some believe, that the search for a more effective paradigm for comprehending the Dynamics of India's Politics and Social change ought to be set within terms of discourse derived from Indian Political experience and articulated in endogenous political vocabulary. (Subrata Mitra : 1999-P. 60).

Any conceptual frame of reference on India's Politics, Governance and Social change can not escape three important elements to be studied seriously. They are: the extent of socio-economic inequality, the pivotal position of the state and continuing patterns of subjugation to the west. But, any theorisation endeavours ought to be informed by explicit recognition to the responses of 'India's other'(s).

However, the conceptual framework that would be used to understand, comprehend and analyse India's Politics in terms of social change against the backdrop of introduction of Democracy, initiation of Development process and particularly, Globalising Democracy's prescription of good Governance" for fine tuning the " loose-ends" of existing Democracies like India so as to produce more efficient and corruption-free implementation of Policies as well as reducing the load on the State by encouraging it to abdicate responsibility for welfare and development, would not stick to any particular frame work of analyses, rather draws upon different repertoire of knowledge and perspectives to illuminate and enhance the current levels of understanding of the problem at hand.

May be, moral critique of Indian democracy lacks a pragmatic orientation as it fails to provide opportunities for consistent democratic interventions by the excluded in terms of institutional strategies. Finally, again the notion of a democratically negotiated shared public

interest might become difficult to achieve given the individualist premises of the new theories of State and society which are being put forward and the emphasis on technocratic solution is propagated.

Finally, effort at depoliticising development is an important element of "good Governānce" package and is, obviously, fraught with an ideological 'end'. So, essentially the ideology and the definite kind of politics that it generates, is critical for providing wherewithal for the under-privileged in fashioning a society. Polity and economy that is informed by indogeneous cultural values, bereft of dominance and ever vigilant to prioritise the claims of social justice and equality.

Section - II

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROPOSED STUDY

The Modernising elites' vision in 1950 was vitiated to a large extent since the rhetoric at independence and the pioneering aims of the Indian Constitution with regard to equity and social justice, India's parliamentary democracy has failed to deliver comparable improvements in social welfare, poverty alleviation or economic growth. Though subalterns may be victims of State Policies or lack of it, they retain some capacity for independent Political action since their modes of behaviour and organisation are based on indigeneous culture and traditional laws of life although they may appropriate modern liberatory ideals like equality or social justice. So, while democracy remains an important end in its own right, more than 50 years of electoral multi-party democracy in India have failed to guarantee good Governance in the economic sphere, in particular.

In terms of its implications for democracy, economic liberalisation in India has created a "Leaner" State with less personalised economic relations and more autonomous civil society. On the other hand, removal of subsidies has reduced coverage provided by the state welfare system and eroded the purchasing power of the poor through steep rise in the cost of essential commodities. It has, therefore, compromised standards of social welfare in India, as well as has diluted the Commitment to equity and social justice that has underpinned India's development strategy since independence.

Moreover, good Governance agenda presupposes an active civil society which is primarily defended as a means by which the state can offload some functions in the interests of efficiency and economy. Again, a restricted definition of democracy - in terms of formal institutions and procedures alone necessarily follows from the outlawing of Politics. Governance without politics forces us to question the centrality accorded to audit and accountability.

So, democratic good governance is better understood as an intimate part of the emerging politics of the New World Order. And clearly, the barely submerged structural model and ideal of politics economics and society on which the contemporary notion of Good Governance rests is nothing less than that of Western Liberal (or Social Democracy) the focal concern and teleological terminus of much modernisation theory. Therefore, the 'technicist' notion of Governance coupled with promotion of 'pliant' NGOs in the name of expanding civil society groups to take care of social sector initiatives, in particular, substituting the state, can not guarantee 'good governance'. Again, the formal-procedural dimensions of Democracy is not a sufficient condition, the invigoration and re-energization of which is crucially, dependent upon peoples' protest and social activism for successfully heralding Democratic Governance in a country of sub-continental dimensions like India.

Section - III

OVERVIEW OF THE EXISTING LITERATURE

There is already a large body of literature available on postcolonial India's democracy, politics and social change. The earliest writings on Indian Democracy were embedded in the institutional studies of Government and politics, in which context democracy essentially connoted the party system, party Politics and Election. Norman D. Palmer's 'The Indian Political System' (London : George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1967) is a general over-view of this type. W.H. Morris Jones's 'The Government and politics of India' (London : Hutchinson University Library, 1971, 3rd edition) is possibly the most perceptive work in this genre which noted the role of the dominant congress party in under-mining the federal structure of Government, and diminishing both parliamentary independence as well as the institutionalisation of the party system.

Among the most useful contemporary overviews of Indian politics is Paul Brass's 'The Politics of India since Independence', (Delhi : Foundation Books, 1992), though his explanation for India's crisis depends a trifle too heavily on an argument about the centralising tendencies of the political leadership. Brass's rejection of structural factors is challenged by the argument of Achin Vanaik's 'The painful transition: India's Bourgeois Democracy' (London : verso, 1990) which is also the best Marxist analysis of Indian Democracy. The sociology of India's democratic structure is discussed by Satish Saberwal in his essay, 'Democratic political structures' in T.V. Satyamurthy's edited volume State and Nation In the Context of Social Change, which is the first in the Four volume series on 'social change and political discourse in India: structures of power, movements of resistance' (Delhi : Oxford University Press, 1994). The relationship of India's democratic structures with society was also the subject of much scholarly writings in the 1970s. Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph's 'The

modernity of Tradition' (Chicago : University of Chicago Press 1967) and Rajni Kothari's (ed.) 'Caste in Indian Politics' (Delhi : Orient long man, 1970) are the best examples of this category. Kothari's 'Politics in India' (Delhi : Orient Longman, 1970), adopting the then influential structural functional mode of analysis, also interpreted the process of modernisation in India in terms of the politicisation of a fragmented social structure. Among the more wide-ranging recent contributions to this body of literature is the two volume book entitled 'Dominance and state power in modern India', edited by Francine Frankel and M.S.A Rao (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1989 and 1990). These volumes examine the interaction, in several states, of state Power with the social dominance of caste, class and ethnicity.

There is surprisingly little Scholarly writing on the darkest period in the history of Indian democracy, the Emergency. Written from a Marxist point of view, Sudipta Kaviraj's 'Indira Gandhi and Indian Politics' is a welcome addition. (Economic and political weekly Vol 21, Nos. 38-9, 1986). Rajni Kothari has three essays on the Emergency in his 'State against Democracy : In search of Humane Governance' (London : Aspect Publications Ltd., 1990). More recent survey research is reported in Subrata Mitra and V.B. Singh's, 'Democracy and social change in India : a cross-sectional analysis of the National Electorate' (New Delhi : Sage Publications, 1999). Based upon the post-poll National Election study 1996, conducted by the centre for the study of Developing societies, this book presents empirical findings on a variety of theme: from a cohort analysis of the electorate to economic policy and regionalism. Francine Frankel, Zoya Hasan Rajeev Bhargava and Balveer Arora's edited volume entitled 'Transforming India : Social and Political Dynamics of Democracy' takes stock of the country's experience of democratic functioning conceptualised as a set of interactions between liberal ideas and institutions on the one side and hierarchical social structures and heterogeneous cultures on the other. Democratic forms of Governance in India have unleashed profound

transformations which the essays in this volume seek to analyse and understand. More recent works on India's democracy have assumed a broader focus. Atul Kohli's book, 'The State and poverty in India-The politics of reform' (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press and Delhi : Orient Longman, 1987) explains the differences in the performance, on redistributive and welfare policies of the state Governments in Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and West Bengal in terms of the nature of parties and political regimes. Kohli's 'Democracy and Discontent-India's growing crisis of Governability' is a cogently argued thesis that pitches for over-politicisation encouraged by Indian Democracy leading to 'crisis of Governability'.

In pursuit of Lakshmi : The political Economy of the Indian state (Bombay :Orient Longman, 1987) Llyod J. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph argued the centrality of the State as the determinant of India's political economy. The political economy of rural society is characterised by the pluralist politics of Community and Caste rather than class Politics and though rising levels of mobilisation have weakened the capacity and autonomy of the State, they have, never the less, resulted in a more equitable distribution of economic benefits and political power, in turn enhancing the legitimacy of the State. Kothari's Politics and the people : in search of a Humane India, the volume (Delhi : Ajanta Publications, 1989), a collection of his essays on Indian Politics before and after the emergency, documents the shift from his earlier functionalist view of the Indian Political system and his later concerns about peoples' movements, human rights, ecology, ethnicity and the interrogation of the dominant model of Development.

Gail Omvedt's 'Reinventing Revolution-New Social Movements and the socialist tradition in India' (New York : M.E. Sharpe, 1993) Examines the women's, peasants', tribals' and environmental movements, to suggest that the conventional ways of looking at these movements in class terms has to be rethought. This is because, though these groups are engaged in economic struggles, it is not class struggle

in the narrow Marxist sense, provoking to widen the analysis of relations of production and exploitation.

Francine Frankel's 'India's political economy 1947-1977 : The gradual revolution' (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984) is the definitive work on the political economy of the development in the first three decades of Indian independence. Frankel shows how accommodative politics, and especially the power of the propertied classes in India, impeded the implementation of the social and economic reform. Pránab Bardhan's 'The Political economy of development in India' (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984) – provides an account of political and economic constraints on Development in India. The impact of a democratic polity on the growth of the economy is discussed in terms of the conflicting pressures on the state for subsidies and patronage by the dominant proprietary classes such as the Industrial capitalists, rich farmers and the professionals.

Partha Chatterjee's, 'Development Planning and the Indian State, in T.J. Byres (Ed.), 'The state and Development planning in India' (Delhi :Oxford University Press, 1994) and reproduced in Partha Chatterjee's (Ed.) 'State and Politics in India' (Delhi :Oxford University Press, 1997) is a fine philosophical analysis of the politics and discourses of Indian Planning. Shalendra D. Sharma's, 'Development and Democracy in India' (Boulder : Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999) examines India's development strategy from the Nehru era to the present with a concluding chapter comparing post liberalisation India with post authoritarian Chile. Ashutosh Varshney's, 'Democracy, Development and the country-side : Urban-Rural struggles in India' (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1995) analyses the cost to the economy of rural collective action on prices and subsidies.

Sudipta Kaviraj has two articles on Democracy and Development in the Indian context. The first, 'Dilemmas of Democratic Development in India', in Adrian Leftwich's (Ed.) 'Democracy and Development'

(Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995), while the second, 'Democracy and Development in India'; is in Amiya Kumar Bagchi's (ed.) 'Democracy and Development' (London : Macmillan/st. Martin's Press in association with the International Economic Association, 1995). Deepak Nayar's article titled 'Economic Development and Political Democracy: Interaction of Economics and Politics in independent India' in Niraja Gopal Jayal's edited volume, 'Democracy in India' (New Delhi Oxford University Press, 2005) is a fascinating one. He argues that the ability of the State to mediate is constrained by the spread of markets and the march of globalization. The credibility of the state as an institution has eroded and the Government, it appears, is abdicating its role in reconciling Economic and Political Democracy. A very influential article written by Bob Currie appeared in the Third World quarterly (Vol. 17, No. 4 P.P. 787-807, 1996) titled 'Governance, democracy and economic adjustment-conceptual and empirical problems', concludes that Democracy and good Governance are significant factors in shaping international trade and lending policy; but seemingly far more significant for some States than others in the eyes of those charged with monitoring it.

Adrian Leftwich's article titled 'Governance, democracy and Development in the third world' which appeared in the Third world quarterly (Vol. 14, No. 3, 1993) is an attempt at theorisation. He believes that both good Governance and democracy depend crucially on the character and capacity of a state. And the capacity of a state to deliver good Governance and protect democracy is in turn a function of its politics and its developmental determination.

The range and diversity of the literature surveyed, amply demonstrates that they have shed light almost on all aspects of independent India's politics, Democracy and Social change. But, surprisingly, there is scant amount of publications available focusing our attention on post-liberalisation India's political trajectory .

The mainstream academic literature on Indian politics, especially in the west- from Weiner to Kohli - have concentrated attention on the theme of Governance as the cardinal ingredient of democracy. The dimension given to democracy by social forces, engaged in struggles to resist oppressions is of far greater importance than the means employed by the State to increase its capacity for Governance without regard to the human and Democratic costs involved.

On the other hand, Marxist scholars and proponents of the political economy perspective have provided us with new and newer insights for understanding the bewildering complexities of India's post-colonial political reality. However, they suffer from limitations for over-emphasizing the economic factor with little regard to socio-cultural reality. The works using the social Movement perspective as well as cultural approach, though some-times help us in understanding the dynamics and incongruities involved in the post-independent politics of India yet, they appear to be found lacking in practical orientation and concrete suggestion of alternative avenues which rendered them some times a little ambiguous. The Social Movement 'Perspective in particular, with its anti-statist position, may not fit into India's reality in its entirety calling for reformulation based on a mix of Institutional vibrancy coupled with peoples' resistance and grass-roots movements for animating Democracy. A Developmental State operating, within the frame-work of representative politics, would necessarily require the state to assume the role of the central allocator if it has to legitimize its authority in the political domain. In any case, the liberalization Process is bound to belittle the role of the Indian State as the Central allocator of resources since it creates a 'leaner' State with less personalized economic relations and a more autonomous civil society. This will be, further, reinforced by world bank's notion of 'Good Governance' as it seeks to encourage, in the name of efficiency, competition and markets, privatise public enterprise: reform the civil service by reducing over-staffing, introduce budgetary discipline: decentralize administration

and make greater use of Non-Governmental organization. In short, 'good governance' marries the new public management to the advocacy of liberal Democracy.

Thus, Indian state is not only confronted with the problem of sticking to the commitment to equity and social justice but also sooner or later, will face the legitimation crisis in the Political Domain. So, the universalizing project of the west with all its institutional and ideological paraphernalia, can be a sure-fire recipe for spelling doom to the democratic state like India which is, plagued by sharp social and economic inequalities, the redressal of which, further, requires a huge state sponsored welfarist support system. On the other hand, the retreat of the State and simultaneously, emphasis upon Governance issues alone, would, invariably, render the whole exercise to a 'cosmetic' one and would lead to abridgement of Democracy "doubly".

Section - IV

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The proposed study raises several research questions. They are as under :-

1. Is there any perennial conflict between Liberal Democratic Governance and the claims of social and economic rights?
2. How does the discourse of the Indian State respond to the claims about justice, rights and equality?
3. Does the Indian State serve the interests of the powerful in society without fully excluding those on the margins?
4. What are the implications of globalisation process for India's democracy and welfarist programmes?
5. Is the organisations and mobilisation of marginal groups a befitting strategy for influencing policy process in favour of the poor?
6. Can the "Good Governance" notion, bereft of politics, be the answer to the huge, developmental problems of a state like India?
7. Does the notion of good Governance constitute an important part of emerging politics of the new world order?

Section - V

METHODOLOGY

The present study is a historical analytical sort of exercise. The study makes liberal use of Books, periodicals Journals, newspapers documents etc. In order to develop its logical rigour and analytical depth. This is essentially a library-based study. The Researcher also stood immensely benefitted by engaging in protracted discussions on some finer aspects of post-colonial Indian politics, with some experts on the subject. Besides, the study will examine Government, Policy declarations, process of policy implementation, judicial responses to such policies, the nature of political dynamics in the context of India's changing power structure. Consequently, Occasional references to the role of political parties, both in power and in opposition, will help understand the subtle issues which lie at the Governing process of the country. Another important aspect which will form a very significant methodological tool for the present study is the issue of leadership question. In fact, India's march towards development process begins with the end of the colonial rule. Quite naturally the leaders at the initial phase, decided to take up two tusks – nation – building and state building- simultaneously, obviously, much depended on the ability of the leaders to guide India's Democracy at its initial phase. Side by side, the study has also examined the nature of the Indian State and analysed the concepts and ideas of a good number of scholars as India journeys through the path of Democracy and Development for heralding social change in the post-colonial phase. In a word, the methodology covers the multi-dimensional aspects and in that respect besides being historical analytical, it is exploratory and prescriptive in nature.

Section - VI

PLAN OF THE STUDY

Chapter-I deals with the introduction for the purpose of initiation of discussion, the problems under investigation and the proposed theoretical/conceptual frame work for establishing the appropriateness of a theory for the justification of the present study.

Chapter-II tries to identify the historical influences impacting India's journey along the path of democracy and development especially against the backdrop of colonial rule. This provides a clue for comprehending the nature of democracy and the development initiatives unfolded in the post-colonial Indian State.

Chapter-III deals with post-independent India's Democratic experiments which remain a "mixed bag" in terms of success. The logic of democratic politics interrogates the elite-domination quite successfully leading to the participation of the low-caste people on an unprecedented scale. However, Indian democracy faces by far the most formidable challenge to its existence as the Hindu fundamentalist groups are about to tear the fabric of the constitution asunder. Democracy faces yet another daunting task especially in the wake of Globalization Process which tries to decimate the state in terms of its welfarist obligations and thereby weakening the foundations of Democracy.

Chapter - IV unravels the evolving role of the Judiciary in India's Democracy. The conservative and loyalist nature of Judiciary got its image tarnished especially during the emergency. Thereafter, Judiciary's transition to an independent institution of Governance is phenomenal. However, it is yet to be totally free from 'conservative biases'. However, it has definitely contributed immensely to further invigorating democracy through its unique innovation of Public Interest litigation.

Chapter - V discusses myriad facets of Development priorities of policy-makers since independence. Nehru's socialism and Indira Gandhi's Populist postures failed to solve India's massive poverty, widespread illiteracy and poor health. Hence, India was already on a tenuous base of social and human development, and is exposed to the 'Shock-therapy' of economic reforms which openly advocates for 'downsizing' the state leading to further, enhancement of the vulnerabilities of the 'social majorities'.

Chapter-VI looks at the Globalizing Governance framework and its impact on India. A robust and vibrant 'middle class' has emerged in India lending support to the reform process. While, for the vast majorities, with their low level of education, health and skill, "opportunities" remain a pipe-dream. The abdication of social responsibilities by the State as part of reforms process, has brought to the fore a new actor in Indian politics. Therefore, apart from Institutional actors like political parties and judiciary, social movement activism also provides a ray of hope for the vast majorities in articulating their rights and claims against reform proposals which Impair their capacity and effective disenfranchisement.

Chapter - VII contends that wider participation never weakens democracy as long as it retains its Democratic Character. Rather, it strengthens the roots of Democracy. So, Social Movement activism is a welcome addition in a Democracy along with political parties and resurgence of other democratising institutions. Again, in the context of India's Democracy, if Governance is conceptualized in sync with the prescriptive formulae of the West, it may end up being a lopsided one. However, growth potential of an economy is to be tapped to the fullest extent possible. Economic growth by itself can not remove poverty and can not also, automatically, make people ready to capitalize on the "opportunities" unleashed by the Reform Process. Therefore, "dedicated" Policy Intervention in favour of the under-privileged is indispensable. Finally, for translating this possibility into a reality,

politics of Institutions and politics of protest should be the sine-qua-non of any scheme of Democratic Governance. Thus, it assesses the problems and prospects of development within a democratic framework in the context of a globalizing governance agenda.

Chapter - VIII concludes the study by arguing that the role of struggles should not be under-emphasized as it constitutes a bul-work against the authoritarian tendencies inherent in the state structure and efforts at "downsizing" the state under influence of the globalization process. No doubt, the politico-economic framework initially adopted in India could not make any serious inroads in the abject poverty, the overwhelming majority of the people are steeped in. But the globalization process is about to undermine the democracy itself that was virtually a proud possession of every Indian despite its procedural nature. However, the ultimate goal is not to either pursue democratic or developmental goals because both of these are mutually re-inforcing and cannot be pursued to the exclusion of the other.

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