

Chapter II

The Evolution of Indian Party System and the Indian Party System till 1989

Time and again the INC had been given the status of a party which made the Indian party system. On the contrary, other political parties also existed in the canvas of the Indian political system. However, due to various reasons INC could surpass other parties in terms of influence and come to power. However, it could just emerge as the ‘majority party’ and not a dominant party because with successive elections due to various political developments its performance decreased in terms of share in the number of votes and seats and it even occupied the position of an opposition party for numerous times. The party system was never a Congress system. It was multi-party in origin where INC in few general elections could just bag for itself more than half of the parliamentary seats in the absence of any potential alternative. Through my chapter I have tried to sketch the evolution or rise of the Indian party system and then describe the nature of the Indian party system since its inception. Besides, I have tried to show the position of the Congress party, one of the most significant and veteran political party that has since independence occupied a notable position in the Indian party system. With the first general election and assembly election Congress emerged as the “majority party” in the Indian party system. Along with that I have also tried to include in my chapter the various developments, mostly political, that has facilitated changes in the nature of the Indian party system and led to subsequent reconfiguration of the party system at both the levels. The chapter also includes discussion of the general and assembly election results since 1952 till 1989 and have subsequently tried to show the changes in the party system from a ‘Competitive Multi-Party System with Congress predominance as a majority party’ to a ‘Competitive Multi-Party System which remained Fragmented and Bipolar since 1967’ followed by a ‘Partial restoration of Congress as the majority party in a fragmented multi-party system’ and then I have tried to show how the trend of coalitional politics stabilized since 1989 using electoral verdicts.

The Rising dissidence

The various socio-religious reforms¹ and political protest² to colonialism in India during the early half of the nineteenth century eventually led to mass awakening in the country. The spread of western liberal ideas among the middle class urban intelligentsia consisting mostly of government's servants and professional people, protest against the then social evils and the consequent reform movements along with the freedom movement against the exploitative divide and rule colonial regime of the British Raj during the nineteenth century sowed the seeds of evolution of the party system in India.³ The series of reform movements and movement for freedom from the British rule in India led to the emergence of a nationalistic consciousness among the masses in the country.⁴ These movements stood against the exploitation of the

¹ Nineteenth century India was crippled by numerous infected religious and social beliefs and practices and British conquest facilitated its regeneration. Idolatry, polytheism, precarious status of women in the society, caste related atrocities were some of the few social and religious evils. Raja Rammohan Roy from Bengal ushered the movement for reform with the formation of Brahma Samaj, a monotheistic reformist and renaissance movement of Hindu religion in 1828. Apart from it, there were some other movements like the Paramahansa Mandali and the Prarthana Samaj in Maharashtra and the Arya Samaj in Punjab and North India. There were several other regional and caste movements like Kayasth Sabha in Uttar Pradesh and the Sarin Sabha in Punjab. The spirit of reform was felt by the backward caste too and therefore initiated the movement with Satya Sodhak Samaj in Maharashtra and the Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Sabha in Kerala. The Muslim, Sikh, Parsees were also a part of these reform movements with the Ahmadiya and Aligarh movement, the Singh Sabha and the Rehnumai Mazdeyasana Sabha respectively. Akshay Kumar Dutt, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Vivekananda were some of the other leaders providing leadership to bring religious reformation that can facilitate social reconstruction of the society. Raja Rammohan Roy fought for social upliftment of the society and abolished Sati, banned child marriage. Vidyasagar stood for widow remarriage, education for girls, etc. Ranade, Dayanand, Vivekanand denounced the then existing caste system and social segregation. All these reform movements whether social, cultural or religious aroused consciousness of the masses against the colonial culture that has seeped into the soil of the India with the British conquest.

² The Revolt of 1857, the Peasants movements such as the Indigo Revolt of 1859-60, series of peasant riots in Assam during 1893-94, the Mappila outbreak of Malabar and others and Tribal movements such as the Santhal outbreak of 1871-72, the rebellion of the Munda tribesmen led by Birsa Munda during 1899-1900, etc., the Revolutionary Terrorists and the Ghadar and Home Rule movement, Akali and the Temple Reform movements of the 1920s, the struggle in the legislature and in the Press, the working class struggles, the INA revolt, the rise of left inside and outside the congress were some of the movements that were launched to defy the British rule and atrocities and are the precursor to the Indian Independence movement for freedom from the clutches of the British conquest.

³ Raja Ram Mohan Roy and his associates had virtually led the foundation for western education. He was in favour of a liberal and enlightened system of education. Mehra, "*Historical Development of the Party System in India*", p.50.

⁴ The nationalistic trend got accentuated by the British attempt to keep the Indian Civil Service as their preserve by imposing conditions on entry, the unpopular Afghan war of 1878-79, the 1878 Indian

British regime which ranged from indulging in repression, sending people and freedom fighters to prison, curbing newspaper with Press laws⁵ for better control of publication of ‘seditious’ writings in vernacular language that would highlight the ‘injustice and tyranny’ of the British Raj, indiscriminate use of Police forces upon innocent masses, massacres, etc. and stood for a system that can represent the causes of the masses at large and hence this led to the emergence of a democratic political culture in the country that consequently led to the establishment of a formalized party system in the country.⁶ The exploitative policies of the British regime favoured the growth of a group⁷ which gradually evolved and took the shape of a political party in the country which was then under the atrocious rule of British imperialist forces. This party was known by the name of Indian National Congress (INC) that evolved as the greatest opponent of British imperialism and was then the most organized medium to express the aims and wills of the Indian people who were under the repressive colonial rule.

The Rise of Indian Party System

Allan O. Hume, an ex-official of Indian Civil Service, floated the idea of organizing an All-India party that would work for the material, moral, political advancement of the people in India. However, Lord Dufferin had asked Hume to form such an

Arm’s Act as a result of Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 that deprived Indians of the right to have arms in their possession, the Vernacular Press Act which gagged Indian newspapers, the famines of 1896, 1899, 1900 as well as Lord Curzon’s cruel attempt to partition Bengal in 1905.

⁵ The vernacular Press Act stated that (a). The magistrate may require the printer or publisher of any vernacular paper to enter into a bond not to print or publish anything likely to excite feelings of disaffection to the government or antipathy between persons of different race, castes, religion or sects. (b). If a newspaper contain matter of the description mentioned the local government may warn such newspaper and if the offence be repeated seize the plant of the newspaper and confiscate the money or securities deposited. (c). the publisher instead of making a deposit may undertake to submit proofs to a government officer and to publish nothing which such officer objects to. (d). no proceedings under the Act may be called into question by any court of civil or criminal jurisdiction. See Dacosta John, “*Remarks on the Vernacular Press Law Of India Or the Act IX of 1978*”, Bristol Selected Pamphlets, 1878. Also see Uma Dasgupta, “*The Indian Press 1870-1880: A Small World Of Journalism*”, Modern Asian Studies, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1977, p.213.

⁶ Congress was from the very beginning committed to the democratic ideology.

⁷ A section resorted to moderate type of policies of prayer,petition and persuasion, affirming loyalty towards the imperial authority and demanding for petty reforms such as Indianization of the government services, Repeal of Arms Act, reduction in land revenue,etc. They did not ask for self-government and the other section was the one which followed aggressive nationalism (known as extremists and the most notable being Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal) and demanded nothing short of complete independence and this aggression saw the imperial authority left with no option but to quit India and liberate it.

organisation to discuss political matters by leading Indian politicians so that the British government could keep itself abreast of the growing Indian opinions and political developments (Chandra et.al., p-69, 1989)⁸. Hume joined the Theosophical society⁹ in 1881. The Brahmo and Arya Samaj¹⁰ tried in different ways through the western-educated Hindus to cleanse the Indian culture from its numerous dogmas and amalgamate it with western education which was a new world of modern and progressive scientific, political and social ideas. However both of the movements were unsuccessful in stimulating the necessary zeal among the western-educated Indians to develop an organizational structure for political development. These movements were religious in nature with a hue of nationalism and were Hindu in nature too. Hence Muslims did not identify themselves with these movements and therefore it remained restricted in terms of its influence (Nehru, 2004, p.507). The Theosophical Society also attempted to synthesize Indian culture with western education and set asides the numerous dogmas that had crippled it and at the same time was able to assemble some of the prominent Europeans as well as western-educated Indians under one roof to create a pan-Indian organisation. It was able to bridge the religious and intellectual gulf separating Hindus, Buddhists, Parsees, Sikhs, Christians, and even some Muslims. The Theosophical Society brought together a remarkable group of Indians

⁸ For Madame Blavatsky and her association with Hume See Bipan Chandra (et.al), *“India’s Struggle For Independence”*, Penguin Books India, New Delhi, 1989, pp.65-70.

⁹ From its inception, the Society aimed at bridging the gap between religion and modern science and free religion itself from “superstition” and “sectarianism”. Theosophical society was founded in 1875 in New York by Col. Henry S. Olcott, a New England veteran of the U.S. Civil War, and Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, a Russian emigree and cousin of Count Witte (Czar Nicholas II's great minister). The Theosophical Society developed out of the spiritualist movement in Europe and the United States. Initially concentrating on psychic phenomena or "scientific mysticism" as they called it, Theosophy claimed its roots in the Western occult tradition of neo-Platonism, the Kabbala, Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry.

¹⁰ Both started as reform movement to free Indian culture and religion from its evils, although retaining its indigeneous nature and refurbish it by synthesizing it with western education. British imperialism has handicapped indigeneous institutions, culture deformed Hindu religion. Rammohan and others tried to achieve a cultural synthesis, purify Hinduism and reform it to make with consistent with western science and technology to ensure development of the society on its own. Roy was one of the most important Hindu reformers of the early nineteenth century. Rammohun Roy took up the cause of Indian women in Bengal. He preached the abolition of sati and child marriage and he condemned the traditional bans on remarriage of widows. To carry out his program, in 1828 Roy founded the Brahmo Sabha in Calcutta. He wanted to reform Hinduism free it from numerous dogmas, restore the Vedic form. He preferred to see India retain its unique cultural identity. Like Roy, Debendrenath Tagore, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshav Chandra Sen, Harish Chandra Mukherjee, Dayananda Saraswati was the greatest Punjabi Hindu reformer of the nineteenth century. His goal too was to reform Hinduism through a return to the pure Aryan faith of the Vedas. He attacked idol worship, child marriage, traditional death rites and even food prohibitions.

and Europeans who eventually strove hard to launch the Indian National Congress, the first all-India nationalist political movement (Travis Hanes III, 1993, pp.-71-72).¹¹

The Society provided the organizational catalyst necessary for an all-India political movement with its yearly conferences. At the 1884 Theosophical conference in Madras, Raghunath Rao, former diwan of Indore state, expressed his desire to use the annual "conventions" to discuss the political and social issues that was crippling the colonial Indian society. However, it is often argued that Hume had desired only to create an organisation that would discuss only social matters and not political issues that had crippled the then Indian society (Chandra et.al., 1989, p.69). However, Rao failed to receive support from Blavatsky, one of the founders of the society. Rao remained undwindled on his stand and convened a meeting in his own home of those Theosophists interested in political questions. Following the meeting, the local members decided to establish a new provincial society, Madras Mahajana Sabha, and chalked out a detailed program calling for the establishment of an all-India political organization. The Indian Association of Calcutta headed by Surendranath Banerjee under the influence of Narendranath Sen, proprietor of the *Indian Daily Mirror* and a leading Bengali Theosophist also decided to convene for an all India political conference in Calcutta in December. Clearly, despite Blavatsky's reluctance, the Theosophical Society had become a boiling pot for brainstorming discussion on various brewing political and social concerns of the then colonial Indian society. The Indian leaders used it to fulfil their aims for organizing their political agitation against the British Imperial authority.

The meeting at Raghunath Rao's house in Madras in December 1884 has been claimed by some scholars as the immediate predecessor of the Congress. Hume himself was not at this meeting. He was in Bombay working with western Indian leaders, particularly Dadabhai Naoroji and B. M. Malabari, toward the creation of what he hoped would be a truly national Indian political movement¹². The immediate

¹¹The second half of the 19th century saw the formation of many political associations due to rise of national consciousness. The Bengal India Association of Bengal, the Bombay Association and the Madras Native Association were some such associations that promoted Indian interest. Naoroji organized East India Association in 1886 to represent the grievances of the Indian people and seek remedy from the British administration. Similarly Poona Sarvajanik Sabha was founded by Justice Ranade to arouse public opinion. These associations were considered as fore runners of Indian National Congress.

¹² It is claimed that although Hume was chosen to pacify the Indian discontentment by creating a organisation for discussing social issues only but after his retirement from ICS service he has been

result was the creation of yet another provincial organization, the Bombay Presidency Association, which fell far short of his aspirations for an all-India organization. Undaunted, Hume continued to work throughout 1885, wooing his former Theosophist colleagues and friends around India, as well as other leaders among the western-educated Indian elite, to join in an all-India political conference to be held at Poona in December 1885. Hume, however, was heavily influenced by the Theosophical Society in his efforts to advance the cause of Indian nationalism, perhaps even more profoundly than his Indian colleagues in Madras and Calcutta¹³. Although the Poona arrangements had to be changed at the last minute due to an outbreak of cholera, Hume's Indian National Union based largely on the Bombay Presidency Association, later supported by the Madras and Poona groups, as well as others throughout the subcontinent finally convened in Bombay in December 1885, immediately renaming itself as the Indian National Congress. In 1886 the Congress convened in Calcutta, where it absorbed Banerjee's National Conference. Thus, largely through the medium of the Theosophical Society, the Indian National Congress became the all-India political expression of the western-educated Indian elite (Travis Hanes III, 1993, pp. 89-95)¹⁴. Hume received support from other nationalists such as Dadabhai Naoroji, Ferozshah Mehta, Badruddin Tayabji, etc. Naoroji at the meeting in Bombay in 1885 suggested changing the name Indian National Union to Indian National Congress (INC). It was on 28th December 1885 when 72 gentlemen representing 27 districts of British India met in the Gokuldas Tejpal Sanskrit College and Boarding House in Bombay (now Mumbai) to attend the inaugural session of the Indian National Union and this signalled the birth of a

largely working in motivating Indians to do something significant in resolving their political problem, the problem of being under a repressive foreign rule. See Bipan Chandra et al. *India's Struggle for Independence*, Penguin Books, 1989, p.67-70.

¹³ According to Travis Hanes, Hume was fully prepared to believe that the Theosophical Society had been expressly created by the spiritual guides of humanity, the Mahatmas of the Himalayas, to forward the political aspirations of India. And so he set in motion plans that led to the creation of the Indian National Congress. Thus, the Theosophical Society became the seedbed for modern Indian political development. The connection lasted for some time. In 1917, for example, the president of the Theosophical Society, Annie Besant, an outspoken advocate of Indian nationalism as well as women's rights, was also elected president of the Indian National Congress; she later founded the Indian Home Rule League. As late as the 1920s, most leading advocates of political reform in India were also Theosophists. See "On the Origins of the Indian National Congress: A Case Study of Cross-Cultural Synthesis", W. Travis Hanes III, *Journal of World History*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring, 1993), pp. 94-96.

¹⁴ Western-educated Indians came to regard themselves as the natural indigenous leaders and spokesmen of India because they had acquired knowledge and had become educated based on the British educational system. See W. Travis Hanes III, "On the Origins of the Indian National Congress: A Case Study of Cross-Cultural Synthesis", *Journal of World History*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring, 1993), p.73.

political party (Mehra, 2003, p.50). Thus, the foundation of Indian National Congress (INC) formally gave a quick start in the evolution of an organized medium to express resentment over the rule of an alien force over India. The birth of INC heralds a struggle for power between the British Imperial authority and the Indians and between the Hindus and the Muslims over the rate and method of transfer of power from British to the Indians. Hence, after the origin of INC a constellation of numerous other political parties came into being and this led to the genesis of the formation of a party system in the country within which they competed for power from time to time and shared intricate inter-relationships among themselves over sharing of power.¹⁵ It played a key role sufficient to pressurize the British to quit India. The Mountbatten Plan stated that power would be handed over to successor government in India after its withdrawal on 15th August, 1947. Lord Mountbatten who was sent to India by Clement Attlee to negotiate and transfer power to Indians could not unite the then two major parties; Indian National Congress (INC) and the Muslim League and concluded that partition of the country was inevitable.

Hence after long years of continuous struggle freedom from colonial rule came to India but at the cost of the tragic partition—the division of British India into Pakistan and India. According to the two-nation theory, advanced by Muhammad Ali Jinnah of Muslim League India consisted of not one but two major communities, viz., Muslims and Hindus. That is why there should be a separate homeland for the Muslims.¹⁶ Thus partition of the country took place. Pakistan was born. Partition was the consequence of the age-old rift between the Hindus and the Muslims and the failure to reconcile on how and to whom power would be transferred¹⁷. However, it is often stated that independence was largely due to the result of the mass action of 1946-47 in which many communists participated often as leaders. But the bourgeois leaders of the

¹⁵ ‘Political parties’ are those which are engaged in a struggle for power and together they go onto form a “party system”. Parties, according to Sartori, make for a “system” only when they are parts (in plural) and a party system is precisely the system of interactions resulting from inter-party competition. That is, the system in question bears on the relatedness of parties to each other, on how each party is a function of the other parties and reacts competitively or otherwise to the other parties.

¹⁶ Muhammed Iqbal, a Persian-Urdu poet and the founding father of Pakistan at the Presidential address delivered at the Muslim league session in Allahabad on 1930 profounded his theory for a separate homeland comprising of Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan and North-West Frontier Province into a separate state for the protection of Muslim cultural identity from the onslaughts of Hindu majoritarianism. His idea initially received less support but was later on realised by Jinnah with the 1940 Lahore Declaration in the form of two-nation theory that proposed to form a Muslim state to protect their political and cultural aspirations.

¹⁷ Partition led to unprecedented violence, trauma, tragic transfer of population, killing in the name of religion and various other atrocities became the order of the day.

Congress frightened by this revolutionary upsurge and of getting overpowered negotiated with the imperialist power by which power was transferred to them and the nation paid the price of partition (Chandra, 1989, p. 487). However, according to the Cambridge School of thought, it is believed that the British colonial elite had the aim to introduce the native population with the ethics of parliamentary democracy and hence gradually handed over power to them in subsequent doses (Bjorkert, 2006, p.41). Whatsoever may be the case, the massive mass agitation across the country made one thing evident that people of India would not settle for anything short of complete independence. Amidst such a situation the introduction of communal electorate gave birth to communal hatred between the two communities, Hindus and the Muslims and this steadily drifted them apart. Moreover the failure of the Coalitions Talks in U.P between the League and the Congress by 1938, the introduction of Wardha scheme of education, the use of Vande Mataram as a national song, the Mass contact movement launched by Congress in 1937, the reverence paid to Mahatma Gandhi, the emphasis on cow protection, etc. acted as further catalyst in setting the Muslim League apart from the Congress party.

In 1920 Jinnah left the Congress over various disagreements (mostly on policies) and soon became an important figure in the Muslim League. Jinnah was apprehensive about his prospects in free India. Nehru and Jinnah both were on a rat race for the post of Prime Minister in a free India. Though Gandhiji suggested offering the august post to Jinnah but Nehru and Patel disagreed eventually materializing the creation of Pakistan¹⁸. Thus, India and Pakistan was largely the outcome of power politics. As Jinnah wanted a separate country called Pakistan,¹⁹so power in India was transferred to an interim government composed mostly of Congress leaders. Congress was the representative of the masses and did not adhere to any particular communal ideology neither did it have any religious label attached to it like the Muslim League nor was the largest organization existing at the time of independence (Pandey, 1978, pp.631-637).

¹⁸ Chaudhry Rahmat Ali proposed to create a sovereign independent state, naming it as Pakistan. See V.N Datta, "*Iqbal, Jinnah and India's Partition: An Intimate Relationship*", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.37, No.50, Dec.2002, p.5036.

¹⁹ See R.J Moore, "*Jinnah and the Pakistan Demand*", Modern Asian Studies, Vol.17, No.4, 1983, pp.-529-561.

Multi-Party in origin

Indian population comprised of millions of Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians, Jains, Sikhs, the depressed classes and various other castes, religions, languages, etc. The heterogeneous and stratified nature of Indian society made the Indian political system diversified and hence the party system that it possessed was naturally multi-party in nature since its origin. Many political organizations existed to speak for these varied groups. The orthodox Hindus were represented by the Hindu Mahasabha, the Moderates by the Non-Party Conference, Dr. Ambedkar spoke for the depressed classes, the Muslims had several parties to represent them, the most vocal being the All India Muslim League under the leadership of Mohammed Ali Jinnah. In addition to it, there also existed Krishak Lok Party in Bengal, the Unionist Party in Madras, the Azad Independent Party in Sind, the leftist groups such as the Ahrars (a tenant-farmer organisation), the Communist Party of India formed in May 1920, The Radical Democratic Party of M.N. Roy, the Swaraj Party, the Congress Socialist party formed in 1934 with the demand for a more radical and egalitarian Congress which later on came out of Congress to form a separate party known as the Socialist party in 1948 (Kane, 1944, p.50-51). Socialist party in its later period went through many splits and reunions and formed many other parties such as the Kisan Mazdoor Party, The Praja Socialist party, Samyukta Socialist party, etc. Hence it can be stated that the Indian party system ever since the pre-independence period has been multi-party (a system that has more than two parties²⁰) in nature because of the existence of varied political organizations. The Indian party system was a cooperative competitive party system where the other parties apart from Indian National Congress (INC) existed but played a less meaningful role in the system.²¹

²⁰ For Multi-party system See Maurice Duverger, *“Political Parties: Their organisation and Activity In Modern states”*, 1963, pp.207-234.

²¹ In terms of composition it can be described as multi-party in nature but structurally it was one-party pre-dominated system till 1967, remained bipolar till since 1977. Since 1980 till 1989 the one party predominated character was restored partially but since 1989 the coalitional feature has remained unaltered till date, though since 2004 the Congress party has regained the status of ‘majority party’ in a highly fragmented multi-party system.

Congress as the *Majority party*

Amongst these varied groups the strongest and the most representative was the Indian National Congress.²² INC originated in 1885 as a pressure group for the newly educated, English speaking, professional and commercial classes dominated by upper caste Hindus, upper middle class and urban elite to a mass movement in the 20th century. With every civil disobedience movement its social base widened. It accommodated within it numerous groups of peasants, industrialists, urban dwellers, and dock and textile mill workers. Congress in its Lucknow session adopted a resolution that divulged its belief in not being a class organization. In the session it claimed that “it was a national organization having its member persons belonging to all classes and states of society” (Pandey 1978, p.633)²³. In a resolution, adopted at the congress working committee meeting at Calcutta (now Kolkata), Congress expressed a similar opinion that the aim of the party was to achieve an independent and united India (Pandey, 1978, p.633). Upper, middle, lower classes and castes all found space in the Congress. Its leadership too expanded beyond the upper castes and class coalitions to agricultural based leaders, dock and mill based workers. Since its formation it has attempted to widen its base by taking within its fold diverse classes, groups, castes, religions, languages and various interests. Congress gradually got transformed into a social coalition consisting of different element united by common aims. This is how Congress party has tried to adopt a nationalistic base and outlook for itself unlike other than existing political parties. Hence it was able to surpass other political parties electorally.

Besides, in order to bring the Congress closer to the masses Hindustani language was adopted as the medium of language for the proceedings of the Congress sessions (Krishna, 1966 pp. 418-419).²⁴ Women in large numbers stepped out into the public

²² Its attendance grew from seventy-two to six thousands delegates and had three and a half million dues paying members as well as the same number of members who cannot pay but acted unofficially as party workers suggested that its influence was far greater than its membership suggests. Albert E.Kane, “*The Development of Indian Politics*”, Political Science Quarterly, Vol.59, No.1, March 1944, p.50).

²³ However, according to Professor Coupland, the congress was a Hindu organisation. Its Muslim membership was small and comprised of few Muslims of outstanding ability and influence but its background, its modes thought, conduct were essentially Hindu in nature and not muslim- centric.

²⁴ In order to increase mass participation in the Congress activity it was decided to conduct the deliberations of the Provincial Congress Committee on the linguistic basis as it would draw people into the work of the Congress party. The provision was laid down in the 1920 constitution. The provincial

domain due to special appeal by Gandhiji and participated in the nationalist movement mostly through non-cooperation and Khilafat movement. They gradually became active members of the Congress and later on occupied important positions within the Congress.

With the adoption of secularism Congress made the stay of Muslims in India secure and comfortable. With the dismantling of the Muslim League after independence, Indian National Congress became the sole alternative for all those Muslims who stayed back in India after the historic and tragic partition. With the non-cooperation and Khilafat movement, the party started assuming the character of a mass organization. Through its mass movement from 1920 to 1945 it was able to build up an unbridled position for itself in the Indian subcontinent unlike the other political organizations.

Moreover, it had a well-knit organizational structure with district, town, taluka, 'firka' or circle and village units which were under the Provincial Congress Committee, a key part of Congress's structure. The Provincial Congress Committee conducted its deliberations in local languages to draw masses into its fold. At the apex existed the Working Committee, Pradesh Congress Committee, and All India Congress Committee to look after the day to day functions of the entire organization. The organizational structure of INC was well-knit and permeated at all level and this enabled Congress to chalk out some strategies, assimilate themselves and start campaigning well ahead of other political parties for the first general election for the democratic, independent, republican India. Congress maintained its popularity because it was perceived as the party which had brought India her independence. Hence its success can be attributed to the legacy of the freedom struggle. Moreover, some prominent leaders who were part of the freedom struggle were contesting elections as Congress candidates. Moreover, it drew its legitimacy as Chatterjee writes, "through the system of identification with a particular leadership, its agents and heirs" (Chatterjee, 2006, p.47). Even before other parties could chalk out some strategies and assimilate themselves, the Congress by then had already started campaigning. Coupled with it people had a special inclination towards the party as

units were laid into 21 linguistically homogeneous provinces. Later on by the end of 1921 it was decided that some flexibility would be maintained and no imposition will be made upon the members of the various Congress organization to use Hindustani language for official deliberations. See Krishna, *'Development of the Indian National Congress as a Mass Organisation, 1918-1923'*, pp.415-419.

Gandhiji was associated with it. By 1935 Congress represented the politically conscious masses of India which was by then under the stewardship of Gandhiji and as says Ehrmann, was assisted by “the eloquence of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and the organizational ability of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel” that helped in building up a strong party machine in India (Ehrmann, 1947, p.669). Nehru was also a determining factor for the success of the Congress as he was adored by the masses and was perceived as the leader of the masses. Moreover, there had been no revolutionary changes in the economic system, the government through its community project works, land reform measures, dams and irrigation schemes had been able to successfully reach out to large number of masses. Adequate availability of food grains and no such shortages has helped in cementing the position of the Congress party. The ability of the Congress to keep divergent economic and social groups under one roof has been an added advantage for the Congress (Weiner, 1954, p.186). Moreover there existed conciliating relationship between the Congress party and other opposition parties. The opposition parties are said to have existed as parties of pressure but they played a less meaningful role in the system²⁵. The inclusive character of the Congress party enabled it to attract different sections, groups and interest making it a broad based social and ideological centrist party. The Congress party had tolerated and accommodated various groups that mushroomed inside the party preventing the possibility of growth of any strong and powerful opposition parties. It was within the Congress where all the different groups and factions that could have exercised some influence or challenged the existence of Congress party were encompassed. This is how the INC occupied a very dominating position in the Indian politics and consequently in the Indian party system before and after independence. Congress had contested the election of 1936-37 so as to bring within its fold the administration partly so that the Congress can contribute towards the Indian causes which was not being protected and addressed by the exploitative British imperial authority. The Congress won majorities in eight of the eleven provinces and participated in coalition governments in the other three. It won 711 out of the total number of 1585 seats. The Muslim League contested for only 482 seats out of 1585 seats and won 108 seats. It did not get a majority in a single province not even in North West Frontier Province (NWFP),

²⁵ The Congress claimed that it represented all groups in India and was intolerant of opposition from any other political parties. Ehrmann, “*Post-War Government and Politics of India*”, The Journal of Politics, Vol.9, No.4, Nov., 1947, p.669.

Sind, Punjab and Bengal. NWFP and Sind had Congress governments and the latter two had coalition ministries (Ehrmann, 1947, pp.669-670). The League with the election appeared weak in the Muslim majority province and could make little impact in Punjab, Bengal and Sind as well as in NWFP (Datta, 2002, p.5037). After the 1937 election Nehru infused with confidence due to better performance in the 1937 election landed up remarking that the Congress and the British Raj were the only two parties in India and immediately invited protest from Jinnah who claimed that the Muslim League was the third equal competitor (Moore, 1983, pp.533-534). Hence, although various political parties co-existed in 'different modes and forms' in the Indian party system but it was the Indian National Congress that was able to scale the ladder of prominence and dominance in the map of Indian politics as well as gradually emerge as the majority party in the Indian party system.

Therefore, after independence this very organization won the five parliamentary elections and enjoyed an unimpeachable hegemony, managed two successions, sustained the democracy in the country, undertook the process of developing the free India through planning and industrialization and took up the task of nation-building.

A Competitive Multi-Party System with Congress predominance as a majority party

The need to install the first democratically elected government cropped up. Till 1950 the country was ruled by an interim government.²⁶ Hence, ultimately the first general election was held from October 1951 to February 1952 with some 17 Crores eligible voters; out of which some 15 percent were literates. The Congress started with its preparations to fight the first general election. It had started campaigning for the election much ahead of any other parties. It was then already blessed with coherent, well knit organizations at all levels, whereas, the other parties were busy forming one. The party came forward with plethora of pledges and promises. Thrust was given on economic and social reorganization of the country which was already in a dilapidated condition because of its colonial past. The need of the hour had been to rewrite the

²⁶ On August 1946 the first interim government was formed with Nehru as its head, seven portfolios were given to Congress members, five to non-League Muslims, five portfolios to members of Muslim League (after much discussions and deliberations). See Winston W. Ehrmann, "Post-War Government and Politics of India", The Journal of Politics, Vol.9, No.4, Nov. 1947, p.681.

fate of the rural population and improve the condition of the farmers or the agricultural labourers. The party sincerely had believed that industries of basic importance such as steel, heavy chemicals, fertilizers should be developed (Ralhan, 1998, pp.6223-6235).

The Congress party thus gave a call for a large unity of purpose, endeavour and cooperation and headed to contest the first ever Lok Sabha election of 1952. The INC won the first general election surpassing all the other parties. It won 364 of the 489 Lok Sabha seats, i. e; 75.99 percent of seats and 44.99 percent of votes. In comparison to it the Socialist Party, the largest opposition party could secure only 4.72 percent of seats and 10.59 percent of votes. Congress won a majority of seats in all the states except in Travancore, Cochin, Madras and Orissa. But later on it even formed government in these states (<http://www.eci.nic.in>).

In the State Election of 1951 to the Legislative Assembly of Uttar Pradesh, the Hindi speaking heartland of India, the INC contested 429 seats and won 388 seats and 47.93 percent of votes. In Bombay (now Mumbai) too it emerged victorious surpassing the other national parties and state-based parties. It won 269 seats out of 313 seats with 49.95 percent of votes whereas the Socialist Party could win only 9 seats out of 182 seats. In Madras, it could not secure a majority but surpassed the other parties and won 152 seats only out of 367 seats and 34.88 percent of votes. The Justice Party could win only one seat with 0.48 percent of votes. The Socialist Party could bag just 13 seats out of the 163 seats that it had contested polling 6.48 percent of votes making CPI the second highest with 62 seats out of the 131 seats. In Travancore–Cochin the INC performed fairly and secured 44 seats and of the 105 seats and secured 35.44 percent of the votes followed by the Socialist Party which secured 14.38 percent of votes and 11 of the 70 seats (<http://www.eci.nic.in>).

In Punjab, INC had performed well by securing 96 seats out of 121 seats and 36.69 percent of votes. Shiromani Akali Dal won just 13 seats out of 48 seats with 12.44 percent of votes whereas socialist Party drew a blank. In Bengal, the state, which played an important role in the nationalist movement apart from other states such as Bombay, Madras etc. the INC bagged 150 out of the 236 seats with 38.82 percent of votes, followed by CPI which secured 28 seats out of 86 seats that it had contested for with 10.76 percent of votes. Socialist Party, in Bengal, too drew a blank (<http://www.eci.nic.in>).

The first general election and the Assembly Election of 1951 has shown that apart from achieving Independence India has also successfully conducted its first ever election and became evident that among the then existing political parties Congress was recognized as the party of the “masses” who reposed their absolute faith on it.

With the establishment of the first government in 1952 headed by INC India started adopting measures to rebuild the nation that was ravaged the ill effects of exploitative colonialist policies. Development of the country became the first concern of the government headed by INC as India was then hardly inflicted with economic crisis as a consequence of colonisation. The position of the Congress in fact got consolidated and legitimized through its initiative to develop the nation through planning and guiding its growth so as to ensure welfare of the people. It undertook land reform measures and invested in the agricultural sector which was largely affected by the colonial policies and was destabilized by the process of partition. It, in fact, rapidly took up the task of industrialization to make the country self-reliant and free from the clutches of poverty (Chatterjee, 2006, p.12).

The 1st Congress led government successfully completed its full term. The country conducted its second general election in 1957. For the second Lok Sabha election it was seen that the Congress made some policy shifts in its course of action. It laid greater emphasis on industry. In the manifesto of 1957 the need for production of steel, setting up of iron and steel industries and machine-making industries was given utmost importance to facilitate rapid industrialization of India. The party had even pledged to fight poverty, ignorance, disease and inequality of opportunity, communalism, unemployment (Ralhan, 1998, pp.6238-6254). In the second general election of 1957 the Congress emerged victorious and secured 75.71 percent of seats and 47.48 percent of votes. In comparison to it, the Praja Socialist Party could secure only 10 percent of votes. One major aberration was that the Congress had a major defeat in Kerala where the Communist Party of India (CPI) emerged victorious with 40.57% of seats and 35.28% of votes. CPI won 60 seats out of 100 seats that it had contested whereas Congress could secure only 43 seats out of the 124 contested seats

with 37.85% of votes. Kerala had a CPI led government for a brief period from 1957 to 1959 (<https://www.eci.nic.in>).²⁷

In West Bengal it was the Congress which had won the state election of 1957 to the legislature Assembly with 152 seats out of 251 seats and 46.14% of votes, whereas CPI could just secure 46 seats and PSP 21 seats. In Uttar Pradesh too Congress emerged victorious. In Orissa the performance by the Congress party's was consistently not laudable because it could not secure majority in the legislative assembly election and could win only 56 seats out of 140 contested seats with 38.28% of votes (<http://www.eci.nic.in>). However the state party, Ganatantra Parishad performed very well and was 5 seats behind congress by winning 51 seats out of 108 seats with 28.74% of votes. In Punjab too Congress emerged victorious with 120 seats out of 154 seats and 47.51% of votes, surpassing all the other parties. BJS could secure only 9 seats, CPI won only 6 seats and PSP could manage just one seat (<https://www.eci.nic.in>).

In Madras, too Congress emerged victorious but could not secure absolute majority. It bagged 151 seats out of 204 seats and secured 45.44% of votes. In Bombay the Congress could win 234 seats out of 396 contested seats with 48.66% of votes. However, the performance of the party in the state got deteriorated in terms of seats with the 1957 state election in comparison to 1951 state election when it acquired 269 seats. In Bihar too Congress emerged victorious with 42.09% of votes and won 210 seats out of 312 contested seats (<https://www.eci.nic.in>). In Assam too it was the Congress party which had emerged victorious. Hence Congress came to power both at the centre and state for consecutively two terms thereby establishing its complete monopoly over the party system. The Congress party was hence enjoying a smooth sail.

In the 3rd General Lok Sabha Election, 1962, Congress again emerged victorious. It won 361 seats out of the 488 seats and 44.72% of votes. CPI secured 29 seats out of 137 contested seats with 9.94% of votes. PSP could secure only 12 seats with no improvement in its prospects. Jana Sangh contested 196 seats but could bag just 14 seats with 6.44% of votes and 7.14% of seats. In the state election to the Legislative

²⁷ The CPI won 60 seats and had the support of five Independents. E.M.S Namboodiripad became the Chief Minister of the state. The state had a non – Congress government. In 1959 the communist government was dismissed by imposing Art.356 by the centre headed by a Congress ruled government.

Assembly of 1962 Congress could not secure majority in Andhra Pradesh but won the highest number of seats in comparison to other parties. It secured 177 seats out of 300 seats with 47.25% of votes. CPI secured 51 seats out of 136 seats with 19.53% of votes. PSP drew a blank along with Jana Sangh. In Bihar, too it could not secure majority of seats but won 185 seats out of 318 seats with 41.35% of votes. PSP secured 14.17% of votes and won 29 seats out of the 84 contested seats with 6.23% of votes. Jana Sangh secured only 2.77% of votes and could win only 3 seats (<https://www.eci.nic.in>).

In West Bengal, the INC maintained its dominance and secured only 157 seats out of the 252 contested seats with 47.29% of votes. The CPI won 50 seats out of 145 seats with 24.96% of votes. However Jana Sangh could not cast any impact and drew a blank whereas the PSP could secure just 5 seats out of the 87 contested. In Assam, the INC contested for 103 seats and won 79 seats with 48.25% of votes. The Jana Sangh, the Socialist Party and the CPI drew a blank. PSP could secure 6 seats out of a blank. PSP could secure 6 seats out of the 53 seats (<https://www.eci.nic.in>).

In Madras, the INC bagged 139 seats out of 206 seats with 46.16% of votes, DMK, the state party, won some forty seats with 27.10% of votes. Jana Sangh and the Praja Socialist Party could not win a single seat in the state election to the Legislative Assembly. However, the CPI was able to win just 2 seats out of the 68 seats that it had contested with 7.72% of votes. In Uttar Pradesh, the heartland of India, the INC secured 36.33% of votes and won 249 seats out of 429 seats. CPI won 14 seats with 5.08% of votes. Jana Sangh won 49 seats with 16.46% of votes. PSP secured 11.58% of votes and 38 seats out of 288 seats. In Punjab too the INC surpassed all the other parties. Akali Dal could secure just 19 seats out of 46 seats with 11.87% of votes. However, the INC maintained its position and won 90 seats out of 154 seats and secured 43.72% of votes. The PSP could not manage a single seat in the 1962 state assembly election. The CPI won just 9 seats and BJS secured 8 seats (<http://www.eci.nic>).

It is very well discernible from the past three general and state elections that the Congress party had emerged as the ruling party or a majority party. It had consistently dominated the political scenario of the country. Although nine other parties such as Praja Socialist Party, Communist Parties, Bharatiya Jana Sangh, etc. had been recognized as national parties by the Election Commission but none had been able to

effectively challenge the dominant position of the Congress Party. None of the existing party was able to evolve as a possible strong “alternative” to Indian National Congress and this particular phenomenon facilitated the continuous rule of Indian National Congress (INC) mostly at the centre for some decade since independence. Congress remained as the only viable option and exercised a ‘monopoly’ in the Indian party system and this helped in its election as the ruling party for repetitive terms. The party system in terms of nature gradually got transformed from a co-operative multi-party system to a competitive multi-party system which structurally remained a one party predominated system at the central level.²⁸ However, it will not be very correct to term the party system as “Congress system”²⁹ because lot many states had in some instances elected non-congress governments. Although with some aberrations in strength and impact the Congress did rule in most of the states till 1967. In Travancore–Cochin, Madras and Orissa, Congress failed to win an absolute majority and came to power by forming coalition with other political players (<http://www.eci.nic.in>). In Jammu and Kashmir it was the National Conference which was the ruling party. In Kerala, too, the CPI-led government had come to power during the era of Congress dominance. With the 1960 assembly election in Kerala, INC could not bag majority of seats and formed the government in alliance with PSP and Muslim League. Nagaland too had a non-Congress government headed by Naga National Organization with its first assembly election after it became an independent state in 1963 (<https://www.eci.nic.in>). Hence it can be stated from the very beginning the party system was bifurcated into two levels, i.e.; the central and the state level. The Indian Party System as a whole is not uniform structurally, neither in terms of composition. Although scholars such as Rajni Kothari(1964,1974), Morris Jones (1967) and others have categorized the party as Congress-party dominated system, it cannot be accepted as true because since the first general election the party system was bifurcated into two levels and in some states Congress had failed to win a

²⁸ According to Sartori, a “predominant” system is one which is actually a system characterised by the existence of ‘more –than- one’ party system in which rotation does not occur in fact. It simply happens that the same party manages to win, over time, an absolute majority of seats (not necessarily of votes) in parliament. See Giovanni Sartori, “Parties and Party Systems: A framework for Analysis”, 1976, pp.195-197.

²⁹ See Rajni Kothari, “The Congress System in India”, Asian Survey, Vol.4, No. 12, December, 1964.”The Congress System Revisited: A Decennial Review,” Asian Survey XIV, 12, December 1974, pp. 1035-54. Morris-Jones identified the system as “one party dominance”. See W.H. Morris-Jones, “The Indian Congress Party: Dilemmas of Dominance,” Modern Asian Studies, April 1967.

absolute majority. Infact, since 1967 there was breakdown in the so called Congress system and with the 1977 general election the fall of the so termed ‘Congress System’ (Kothari: 1964) became more pronounced. Congress was able to consolidate its position after independence by undertaking the process of developing the state, removing feudalism, reorganizing the state on the basis of linguistic principle as a part of the attempt to maintain unity amidst diversity. During the period of Congress rule measures were taken by it to protect the interests of the socially disadvantaged sections of the society and promote their welfare which made Congress popular among this section of the society. Congress also gradually absorbed the minorities, especially the Muslims within its fold. The minorities even ran for offices and contested elections under the aegis of the Congress party and naturally drew support from this section of the society too (Hasan, 2002, p.50).

Moreover, during the Nehruvian era the party could maintain its dominance due to the flexible relationship between the central leadership and the provincial party units. The recommendations of candidates for parliamentary or assembly seats by the provincial party units or other opinions was without hesitant accepted by the central leadership (Chatterjee, 2006, p.11). However, in due course of time this feature of the Congress party got altered as Nehru tried to retain more and more of power in his own hand. This intention got materialized through the “Kamraj Plan”.³⁰ This drive had been taken to suppress the role played by the powerful Chief Ministers of some selected states.

Reasons for Congress Decline since the late 1960s:

The massive credibility and popularity of Indian National Congress suffered a decline. Nehru and his policies came under direct criticism and for the first time in sixteen yeas his government faced no-confidence motion in Parliament in 1962. Nehru’s aura suffered an eclipse with the border war with China in 1962. It revealed the military unpreparedness of the country and its lacunae. It was a great humiliation for the

³⁰ The Kamraj Plan was adopted on 10th August 1963 by the AICC. The main crux of the plan was to secure the voluntary relinquishment of the ministerial post by the senior Congressmen to devote all their time to the organizational work of the party so that the organizational strength and cohesiveness can be maintained. The resignation of some 12 senior leaders were accepted which included Morarji Desai, Kamraj, Shastri, S.K Patil, Jagjivan Ram, B.Gopala Reddy and Dr. K.L Shrimali. See footnote Kothari, ‘*The Congress System in India*’ in Zoya Hasan, ‘Parties and Party Politics In India’, 2002, pp.52-53.

people of India. (Chatterjee, 2006, p.13). However, Nehruvian era came to an end with his death in May, 1964. Lal Bahadur Shastri had a clear and a smooth succession and he continued as Prime Minister of India till 1966 when he suddenly expired on 10th January, 1966. Meanwhile numerous crises crept in to jeopardize the status of the Congress party as the majority party at the centre.

There was over emphasis on industrialization which led to the neglect of the agricultural sector and hence there was a setback in food grains production. Hence, the nation faced food crisis. During the period from 1965 to 1967 severe droughts occurred in many parts of India along with famine. Bihar was hardly hit by the food crisis. Moreover, rural poverty in general got increased. The underground Naga tribes and the Mizo National Front were creating disturbances. The demand for a separate Punjabi Suba state and devaluation of the Rupee announced on June 5th worsened the situations further (Kothari, 1967, pp.86-87). All these conditions destabilized the position of the Congress party which was in power at the centre during this period. It was losing its popularity among the agricultural farmers and the poor people. The Congress government in their attempt to solve the food crisis and to increase food grain production decided to provide high yielding variety seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, etc. to the farmers at a subsidized rate. However, only the rich peasants and large landlords of some regions like Punjab, Haryana, and Western Uttar Pradesh gained from it. This is what was popularly known as the 'Green Revolution'. This led to resentment among the poor peasants and increased polarization among regions. In addition to these there was some other problems as well which were coming up in the nation and made the position of the Congress party difficult for the 1967 polls. Kothari identifies some such problems such as "soaring prices, considerable hardships for the urban population, language riots in the south, decline in production activity all around, accentuation of factional rivalries within the Congress, conditions of deprivation all around the country, decline in communication between the congress party machine, managed largely by an ageing and complacent organizational leadership and the people which had begun to display a critical outlook to anyone who took them for granted" (Kothari, 1971, p.248).

Amidst such crises the country as well as the Congress Party again had to confront with the problem of political succession with the expiry of Shastri. Following this, as against Morarji Desai, Indira Gandhi, daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru, was elected as

the next Prime Minister of India. However, one thing needs to be mentioned at this juncture was that the third Congress led government was about to complete its tenure and the country was about to face its fourth general election of 1967. The developments as mentioned brought changes in the Indian party system at both the levels. All the above mentioned problems had already jeopardized the pre-dominant position³¹ of the Congress in the country. Eventually one thing became evident that Congress may not repeat its past performances.

A Competitive Multi-Party System: Fragmented and Binodal since 1967

With the 1967 election Congress failed to win a majority in some nine states which included Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, Madras and Kerala.³² Hence its undisputed monopoly over the party system suffered an eclipse. INC contested 516 seats and won 283 seats with 54.84% of seats and 40.78% of votes. Its vote's percentage dropped by some 5 percent and it secured lesser number of seats (there was a drop by some 30 percent). BJS secured 35 seats out of 249 contested seats with 9.31 percent of votes. CPI could bag just 23 seats out of 109 contested seats with 5.11 percent of votes. CPI (M) won just 19 seats out of the 59 contested seats with 5.11 percent of votes. CPI (M) was a breakaway group of CPI. It got divided for the CPI's reluctance to condemn the 1962 border war of China. PSP contested for 109 seats and won just 13 seats with 3.06 percent of votes (<http://www.eci.nic.in>). The fourth Lok Sabha and State Assembly polls in 1967 took place in the backdrop of severe popular discontent and polarization of political forces. Various parties organized themselves to protest against the rule of Congress. A wave of non-Congressism swept the country.³³ Various ideologically incongruent parties came together in some states to topple the hitherto hegemony of the Congress. Hence, the party system got divided between the Congress party and the non-Congress fronts. Thus, it led to the polarization of the party system when we saw that forces were

³¹ For the definition of pre-dominant system See Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and party systems: A framework for analysis*, 1976, pp.195-197.

³² These states were able to produce "alternatives" for themselves hence was able to offer the voters to choose from the menu of choices.

³³ The Socialist leader Ram Manohar Lohia coined the term non-Congressism and said that the Congress rule was undemocratic as well as against the interest of the people.

emerging to challenge the unimpeachable hegemony of the Congress. These forces grouped them into a coalitional force and were known as Samyukt Vidhayak Dal or SVD governments. These forces appeared to be effective and Congress lost majority in as many as nine states. In the state election of 1967 to the Legislative Assembly of Andhra Pradesh, INC performed well. INC secured 165 seats out of 287 contested seats with 45.42 percent of votes. PSP drew a blank. BJS secured 3 seats. In Assam, INC contested for 120 seats and won 73 seats with 43.60 percent of votes. BJS and CPM drew a blank. The CPI managed some 7 seats and PSP secured 5 seats. In Maharashtra, INC secured 203 seats out of 270 contested seats with 47.03 percent of seats. The CPI (M) secured 1 seat, BJS managed to bag just 4 seats and the Peasants and Workers Party secured 19 seats out of 59 seats (<http://www.eci.nic.in>). It needs to be mentioned that with the 1967 elections many non-Congress government were formed in various states which were a coalition of several parties but were ideologically different. The anti-Congress parties (which were born out of the anti-Congress wave in the country) chalked out some common programmes and united themselves with the aim to topple the Congress dominance. Bihar had a non-Congress government (the Samyukta Vidhayak Dal Government) which comprised of the SSP, Praja Socialist Party, the Jana Sangh the Jan Kranti Dal (JKD) and the CPI. In the State election to the Legislative Assembly Bihar INC secured 128 seats out of the 318 contested seats with 33.09 percent of votes whereas BJS secured only 26 seats, PSP got some 18 seats, SSP managed to secure 68 seats, JKD bagged just 13 seats and the CPI won 24 seats (<http://www.eci.nic>). SVD formed a coalition and secured majority in the assembly and Mahamaya Prasad Sinha of JKD became the first non-Congress Chief Minister of Bihar.

However, the case was altogether different in case of Madras (now Tamil Nadu). In Madras the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, the state-based party, came to power in the state with absolute majority. Congress was just wiped out of the state's political scenario. In the State Election to the Legislative Assembly of Madras, 1967, DMK won 137 seats out of 174 contested seats with 40.69 percent of votes and 54.32 percent of seats whereas INC could manage just 51 seats out of the 232 contested seats (<http://www.eci.nic>). DMK became popular with its anti-Hindi, anti-North and

pro-Tamil campaigns in the state. The DMK protested against the forceful imposition of Hindi as the official language of the state by the centre³⁴.

Punjab too had a non-Congress government in the state. The Popular United Front formed the government which comprised of the Akali Dal (Sant group), the CPI (M), the CPI, the Jana Sangh, the Akali Dal (Master group), the SSP and the Republican Party (RPI). INC despite of securing the highest number of seats (48 seats with 37.45 percent of votes) could not manage to form the government. The coming together of all the other parties jeopardized the position of the Congress in the state. The Akali Dal (Sant and Master group) won 24 and 2 seats respectively. CPI secured 5 seats and CPM had to satisfy itself with just 3 seats. The Jana Sangh bagged 9 seats, the SSP had to settle down with just one seat and the RPI got 3 seats (<http://www.eci.nic.in>).

West Bengal too experienced a similar phenomenon when the two non-Congress fronts led by CPI (M) and the other by Bangla Congress came together to form the United Democratic Front consisting of fourteen parties and formed the non-Congress government in the state under the Chief Minister ship of Ajoy Mukherjee. In Kerala, a United Front ministry came to power. In Kerala INC could secure just 9 seats whereas CPI (M) won 52 seats, CPI won 19 seats, SSP secured 19 seats, Kerala Congress won 5 seats and the Muslim League captured 14 seats. In Orissa, the breakaway group of Congress called Jana Congress allied with Swatantra Party to form the government in the state. The former won 49 seats out of 101 seats with 22.58% of votes and the Jana Congress (JAC) won 26 seats out of 46 seats with 13.47% of votes. INC won 31 seats out of 141 seats with 30.66% of votes (<https://www.eci.nic.in>). Hence it failed to win a majority in the election. Hence 'coming together' of non-Congress parties invited discomfort for the Congress party. Moreover, defections became the major concern for the Congress party as it led to the downfall of its government in almost three states, namely, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh.

In Haryana, the Congress had won an absolute majority in the elections. It won 48 seats out of 81 seats with 41.33% of votes. SSP, PSP, CPI, CPI (M) all drew a blank. BJS secured 21 seats and RPI won only 2 seats and the Swatantra Party secured just 3 seats (<https://www.eci.nic.in>). However the Congress government got defeated within a week after assuming the office as a large number of Congressmen left the party and

³⁴ The anti-Hindi agitation by Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam party (DMK was after the split in Dravida Kazhagam, DK) brought immense popularity to the party in the state.

joined the opposition. A United Front was formed which came to power replacing the Congress Government. In Haryana Gaya Lal, an MLA changed his party thrice in a fortnight from Congress to United Front, back to Congress and then within some hours back to United Front. The country saw the biggest mockery of politics by the politicians. This incidence gave birth to the expression '*Aya Ram, Gaya Ram*' to describe the phenomenon of defection.³⁵ Madhya Pradesh had to witness a similar situation. There was a case of defection. Vijay Raje Scindia, the Rajmata of Gwalior, had left the Congress party and joined the Jana Sangh. An SVD ministry consisting of Congress defectors, the Rajmata's group, the Jana Sangh, the SSP and the PSP conglomerated themselves to form a government. In Madhya Pradesh, the INC was way ahead of others with 167 seats out of the 296 seats that it had contested for and secured 40.60% of votes. BJS got 78 seats, and 28.28% of votes. PSP secured 9 seats. SSP secured 10 seats whereas CPI could win only a single seat. The Swatantra Party could win just 7 seats (<https://www.eci.nic>). Hence it was the defection by the Rajmata group that primarily led to the collapse of the Congress government in the state.

In Uttar Pradesh, too the Congress failed to win an absolute majority. An SVD Government under the Chief Minister ship of Charan Singh came to power. Moreover due to a friction between C.B. Gupta and Charan Singh the Congress Government in UP could not survive. The Governor asked C.B. Gupta to form the ministry but it could only continue for three weeks because Charan Singh along with his followers left Congress to join the opposition. Hence an SVD ministry headed by Charan Singh came to power in the state (Chatterjee, 2006, p.17). In Uttar Pradesh the INC contested 425 seats but could bag just 199 seats. Hence, it failed to win an absolute majority. BJS bagged 98 seats, SSP won 44 seats, CPI won 13 seats, Swatantra Party secured 12 seats, RPI could manage just 10 seats and the PSP won 11 seats. In Rajasthan Congress did not win a majority in the 1967 polls but formed a government with help from others. Besides, the INC formed government in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Assam, and Tripura. In Tripura, it secured 27 seats out of 30 seats. The SSP and the BJS drew a blank. The CPI and the CPI (M) secured one seat and 2 seats respectively (<https://www.eci.nic>).

³⁵ Defection can be explained as a phenomenon whereby an elected representative leaves the party on whose symbol the representative was elected and join another party.

Hence the ability of the non-Congress parties to form electoral alliance has helped in assimilation of the non-Congress vote. The prevalent anti-Congress wave in the country led to the erosion of the hitherto hegemonic position of the Congress party and brought substantial realignments in the party system of the country at both the levels. The splintering of anti-Congress votes had kept the Congress in power since independence. Even in its heyday, the Congress Party failed to win a majority of votes at any election; in the three parliamentary elections of 1952, 1957 and 1962 it could secure votes between 45 and 48 per cent of the total. According to Sartori, a party that cannot fetch more than 50% votes cannot be considered as a pre-dominant party.³⁶ It was a ‘**majority party**’ among the other existing political parties in the party system because it possessed by itself more than half of the parliamentary seats (Duverger, 1969, p.307).

The 1967 elections showed that people of the country were much more interested in ‘performance’ and substantial socio-economic developments rather than on vague promises and manifestoes. A large chunk of the people such as the young and new voters, urban voters, highly educated, the white collar class, the skilled workers voted against the Congress. In 1967 even the Muslim voters deserted the Congress in large numbers along with the Harijans and the tribals (Kothari, 1971, pp.235, 237, 239, 241, 248). Despite of this the Congress was able to retain itself at the centre but with some changes in the federal structure of the country, as several states were now having non-Congress governments. The state specific condition influenced the voting pattern of the people. As in Tamil Nadu we saw the Congress was ousted from power and the DMK a state based party came to power on its own by winning a clear majority. The people of the state were antagonized due to the forceful imposition of Hindi as the official language upon the state by the centre.³⁷ In Bihar too the SVD formed government and Congress was ousted from power following the lack of development in the state. Hence performance became a significant criterion for coming to power. However, most of these non-Congress coalitions’ governments in the state collapsed within a short period. They either lost majority or new ministry replaced them. In certain cases President’s rule was imposed to paralyze the existing non-Congress

³⁶ See Giovanni Sartori, “*Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis*”, Volume- I, 1976, pp.195-196.

³⁷The anti-Hindi agitation by Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam party (DMK was after the split in Dravida Kazhagam, DK) brought immense popularity to the party in the state.

governments. This earmarks that the popularity and unimpeachable hegemony of INC suffered an eclipse.

Besides, the credibility of INC suffered a setback. Apart from the Congress debacles in various states, the Congress from within was highly fractured. It got crippled by factionalism. Quest for power by the party bosses, rivalry among the party comrades eroded the organizational cohesiveness in the structure. Moreover, the inability of the veteran leaders to control Mrs. Indira Gandhi and make her dance to their tunes created a grave environment within the Congress party. She had to face constant challenges to her leadership. Hence she resorted to centralization (concentration of power in her own hand). She decided to assert her position within the government and the party. This annoyed the veteran leaders of the Congress, generally labelled as the 'Syndicate' which included leaders like S. K. Patil, S. Nijalingappa, N. Sanjeeva Reddy and some other big and powerful men of Indian politics. Ultimately, this friction between the Syndicate and Indira Gandhi reached its zenith with the Presidential election in 1969 following the death of the then President Zakir Hussain. Both Mrs. Indira Gandhi and the Syndicate put forward their candidates. The Syndicate nominated the long time opponent of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, N. Sanjeeva Reddy, and the Speaker of Lok Sabha as the candidate for the forthcoming election (Hardgrave.Jr., 1970, p.257).

Mrs. Indira Gandhi too suggested the name of V.V. Giri, the then Vice President of India for the post. She also recommended the name of Jagjivan Ram. But the Congress parliamentary board nominated N. Sanjiva Reddy for the post. V.V. Giri then decided to contest the election as an independent candidate and appealed for a vote of conscience. Giri drew support for him through vigorous campaigning from Samyukta Socialist Party, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, the Muslim League, the CPI and the CPI (M), and from the members of the United Front governments of Kerala and West Bengal. The Jana Sangh, the Swatantra Party and the Bhartiya Kranti Dal put forwarded the name of C.D. Deshmukh for the presidential post (Hardgrave, Jr., 1970, p.257). Nijalingappa the then Congress President issued a whip asking all the Congress MPs and the state legislative assemblies to vote for Sanjiva Reddy. The Prime Minister refused to issue a whip for Reddy and urged the members to go for a vote of conscience in the election. This move was immediately endorsed by a large

numbers of Congress MPs. Hence a tug of war had initiated following the Presidential election between the Syndicate and Mrs. Indira Gandhi.³⁸

The election result was in favour of V.V. Giri. With the defeat of the official candidate the split in the Congress became inevitable. By November 1967 the split got formalized, leading to the division of the Congress into Congress (Organisation) led by the Syndicate and Congress (Requisitionists) led by Indira Gandhi. Gandhi declared that it was an ideological split between the socialists and the conservatives, between the pro-poor and the pro-rich. The following events weakened the stature and strength of the party in the country. Mrs. Indira Gandhi in order to regain her lost grounds and consolidate her position as well as the party's position she adopted some pro-people policies. She adopted a Ten point programme which included social control of banks, nationalization of General Insurance, restriction of monopolies, move for immediate land reform measures, ceiling on urban property and income, public distribution of food grains, provision of housing sites for rural poor, abolition of privy purse, ceiling on rural holding, removal of disparities in income and opportunities, emphasized on growth of public sector and such various other populist provisions and programmes. She tried to widen her support base among the poor, the disadvantaged sections of the society, the landless labourers, with her famous slogan "*Garibi Hatao*" (Remove poverty). This gave her instant popularity and enabled her to acquire a nationwide political support base. The Syndicate had reservations towards these policies of Congress because it symbolized a change in the orientation of the Congress (Chatterjee, 1998, pp. 18-23).

With the split Mrs. Gandhi's government got reduced to a minority government after sixty two Congress members withdrew support and joined the opposition. But Mrs. Gandhi continued in office with the support of the DMK, the CPI, the Akali Dal, the Muslim League and the independents. In December 1970, Mrs. Indira Gandhi decided to dissolve the Parliament before the completion of its full term. She recommended for fresh elections. The congress promised to advance in the path of socialism through democratic process and curb violence and disorder with heavy hands.

The Fifth General Election to the Lok Sabha was held in February, 1971. This election saw Congress (organization) and Congress (requisitionists) confronting each

³⁸ Jagjivan Ram, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, the Communists, the other Left parties, the DMK, the Muslim League and the Akalis all had supported Mrs. Indira Gandhi.

other. A Grand Alliance was formed between the SSP, PSP, Bharatiya Jana Sanga, Swatantra Party, Bharatiya Kranti Dal; Congress (R) forged an alliance with CPI. By the 1971 election several equally influential political parties were a significant part of the race for political power. Several parties were seen to have formed coalitions to compete with the Congress party. By then the Congress had got divided between Congress (Organization) led by the veteran leaders, the syndicate and the Congress (Requisitionist) led by Mrs. Indira Gandhi. These two parties were seen to be at two different poles competing to have control over the reign of power leading to bipolarization of the party system. Hence by the eve of the 4th Lok Sabha election the Indian Party system got transformed into a fragmented bi-polarized multi-party system.

The election saw INC securing 352 seats out of 441 seats (79.82 percent of seats) polling 43.68 percent of votes. CPI, its ally won 23 seats out of 87 seats polling 4.73 percent of votes. The Indian National Congress (Organisation), NCO secured 16 seats out of 238 seats with 10.43 percent of votes. BJS secured 22 seats out of 157 seats with 7.35 percent of votes. CPI (M) won 25 seats out of 85 seats polling 5.12 percent of votes. PSP secured only 2 seats polling 1.04 percent of votes. SSP managed to acquire only 3 seats. SWA won 8 seats only. The Grand Alliance together could bag less than 40 seats (<http://www.eci.nic.in>).

The Congress (R) won the election and restored back its dominant position in Indian party system and emerged as the real Congress with the support of such huge mandate. Mrs. Indira Gandhi was able to regain back the popularity of Congress. It adopted every measure to win the 1971 election and unleashed several popular programmes (as discussed in the earlier paragraphs) to woo the heart of millions of Indians, especially the rural poor. Indira Gandhi succeeded Jawaharlal Nehru after his death in 1964 and altered the democratically maintained coalitional structure of the Indian National Congress and personalized it by usurping all the powers in her hand. She suspended organizational elections, she, thus, became an unpopular leader among a large chunk of Congress cadres. To combat the anti-Congress wave in the country she adopted populism as her policy for survival and added socialism as a significant feature of the party's ideology. She gave the famous slogan 'Garibi Hatao' (Remove poverty) to win the hearts of the millions of deprived Indians. Due to lack of any established political culture and a defined party system, 'performance' became the

sole barometer to sustain oneself into power. Hence the Congress (R) came up with lofty promises and packages. The strategy did wonders and Congress (R) swept the Lok Sabha polls and emerged as the real Congress backed by the mandate of the people of India. Congress (R) secured 352 of the 441 seats polling 43.68 percent of votes and 79.82 percent of seats. Hence its tally of seats again got increased by the same 24.98 percent and share of votes got better by some 3 percent (<http://www.eci.nic.in>). Hence, Indira led Congress restored back itself to the position of the majority party in the Indian multi-party system but with a decline in institutionalized politics and demise of mediated politics. Her party swept all the state Assembly polls in 1972. But certainly the spell of Congress had subsided in the country. The trump card of 'populism' and the ideologically incongruent unappealing oppositions actually favoured the electoral fortunes of the Congress (R). If the 1967 election jeopardized the position of Mrs. Indira Gandhi as a leader, 1971 election was able to re-establish her dominance.

Indira Gandhi began to lose her credibility and popularity from 1973 onwards due to nation-wide spread of droughts and some other serious challenges. Although the 1971 Indo-Pak War which led to the creation of Bangladesh gave Mrs. Indira Gandhi a stature of a national leader due to the humanitarian intervention by India during the period of crisis in Bangladesh but it enormously strained the India's economy. The economy toiled through the effects of inflation. Prices of all commodities increased manifold. Oil prices shoot up following the Arab-Israel War in 1973. Hence there was an international oil crisis. The economy got engulfed with the after effects of inflation which caused hardships to the people. There was decline in industrial growth and agricultural productivity, along with reduced employment opportunities. With the deteriorating economic situation sporadic discontent erupted in several parts of the country and eventually took the form of movement (Chatterjee, 1998, p. 24).

The country witnessed Naxalite upsurge in various parts of the country organized mostly by poor peasants and the landless who were grossly deprived of their legitimate claims and rights and were oppressed by the feudal lords. The Naxalite movement have had spread almost throughout the country but was most prominent in

the state of West Bengal (in the Naxalbari area of Darjeeling District), Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Punjab.³⁹

The country also witnessed movements organized by the students in protest against corruption in the government, rising prices of food grains, cooking oil and other essential commodities, food scarcity, unemployment etc. Under the leadership of Jay Prakash Narayan these students movement, which were mostly intense in Bihar and Gujarat, gained rigorous momentum and assumed a national stature.⁴⁰ The movement demanded dismissal of the government at the centre led by the Congress. Besides, there was a nationwide strike by Indian Railway and its workers in 1974, paralyzing the entire nation (Chatterjee, 1998, pp. 24-25).⁴¹

The climax to the entire episode was drawn by the judgement given by the Allahabad High Court in June 1975 which found Mrs. Indira Gandhi guilty of electoral malpractices⁴². She was said to have used the service of the government servants in her election campaign. The judgment made her ineligible to remain M.P. any longer. This jeopardized her position as the Prime Minister of the country, until re-elected as a Member of Parliament and led to renewed agitation by the opposition parties. They demanded resignation of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. There was massive upheaval and demonstration against the Congress nationwide. The government at the centre repressed these upheavals by declaring a state of Emergency under Article 356 on 25th June 1975. Before the dawn of 26th June, 1975 the Chief opponents were put behind the bars. By using powers bestowed on the government under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act of 1971 (the notorious MISA), the Defence of India Rules, and other emergency measures, she ordered the arrest of several opposition leaders such

³⁹ The naxalites used to forcefully take away lands from the rich landlords and gave it to the poor and the landless.

⁴⁰ These movements were non-violent in nature and had assumed a political character.

⁴¹ The National Coordination Committee for Railway men's Struggle led by George Fernandes gave a call for nationwide strike by all employees of the Railways for pressing their demand related to bonus and service conditions.

⁴² Mrs. Indira Gandhi's defeated opponent, Raj Narain of the Samyukta Socialist Party in 1971 filed a case against her and charged her of numerous corrupt electoral malpractices in her campaign for election to Parliament from the Rae Bareilly constituency in Uttar Pradesh. Mrs. Gandhi testified for two days before Justice Jag Mohan Lal Sinha of the Allahabad High Court, the presiding judge in the case. And on June 12, in a ruling that startled the nation and threatened to drive Mrs. Gandhi from office, Justice Sinha found Mrs. Gandhi guilty of two rather minor charges, which nevertheless, according to the Representation of the People Act of 1951, were "corrupt electoral practices. See Norman D. Palmer, *India in 1975: Democracy in Eclipse*", Asian Survey, Vol. 16, No. 2, A Survey of Asia in 1975: Part II (Feb., 1976), pp. 95-110.

as J.P Narayan, Morarji Desai, Asoka Mehta, Raj Narain, Pilloo Mody, and Jyotirmoy Basu. The government resorted to press censorship. Within those thirty-six hours India changed from quasi-democracy to quasi-dictatorship. Fundamental Rights of the citizens got suspended; all agitations and demonstrations got curtailed. She told that these measures were important because this would “restore calmness, stability and a climate of trust” (Morris–Jones, 1975, p.453). The Indira Gandhi government committed various other ‘excesses’ which earned it massive resentment and unpopularity among the people of the country.

The Congress in order to stabilize their precarious conditions decided to unleash a social and economic programme through democratic processes. By implementing the twenty point programme it attempted to create its base among the hitherto neglected sections of the society. The Twenty Point Programmes included:

- 1) Continuance of steps to bring down prices of essential commodities. Streamlined production, procurement and distribution of essential commodities. Strict economy in government expenditure.
- 2) Implementation of agricultural land ceiling and distribution of surplus land and compilation of land records. Special care will be taken to ensure that tribal people are not deprived of their lands.
- 3) Stepping up of provision for providing housing sites for landless and weaker sections in rural areas.
- 4) Bonded labour, wherever it exists, will be declared illegal.
- 5) Initiative will be taken for liquidation of rural indebtedness.
- 6) Review of laws on minimum agricultural wages and suitable enhancement of minimum wages, wherever necessary.
- 7) Provision of drinking water especially in drought prone areas, provision for better irrigational facilities. National programme to be undertaken for use of underground water.
- 8) Super thermal stations to be brought under central control. An accelerated power programme would be undertaken.
- 9) New plans would be undertaken for development of the handloom sector.

- 10) Improvement in quality and supply of peoples' cloth should be undertaken.
- 11) Socialization of urban land. Ceiling on ownership and possession of vacant land.
- 12) Special squads for valuation of conspicuous construction and prevention of tax evasion. Summary trials and deterrent punishment for economic offenders.
- 13) Special legislation for confiscation of smugglers properties.
- 14) Liberalization of investment procedures. Action against misuse of import licenses.
- 15) New schemes for workers participation in industries.
- 16) National permit scheme for road transport.
- 17) Income tax relief to middle class – exemption limit rose to Rs.8, 000.
- 18) Essential commodities of controlled prices to students in hostels.
- 19) Books and stationary at controlled prices to students; banks to be established.
- 20) New apprenticeship scheme to enlarge employment and training (Morris-Jones, 1975, p.454).

These programmes were basically designed for the different sections of the society and to legitimize her step of imposing emergency. In addition to it the Congress (I) had declared some other packages to woo the sentiments of the people. The Congress had tried its best to retain its base by promising to continue with its policies of socialism and to safeguard the interests of the weaker sections and the minorities of the society.

Although under the Congress regime, the nation was able to witness large-scale nationalization of banks and other public sector organizations, abolishing of the privy purse, faced the Bangladesh crises of 1971 boldly, gave assistance and required support to the millions affected by the droughts of 1972-73 to a great extent, carried out peaceful nuclear explosion at Pokhran in May 1974, adopted stern measures to control inflation, go ahead with its 20 point programme which provided solace to millions of people, entered the field of space technology by launching Aryabhata in earth orbit in April, 1975 but nothing could contend the ire of the people which got ignited with the 'excesses' committed by the emergency of 1975 (Paul, 1977, pp.101-115).

Meanwhile, the opposition parties had assembled themselves all the more coherently under the banner of the Janata Party with the slogan of “Save Democracy”. The Janata Party was formed of Congress (O), Jana Sangh, the Swatantra Party, Bharatiya Lok Dal and the Socialist Party (Joshi- Desai, 1978, P.1104).

In January 1977 the government announced its intention to hold the elections in March, 1977. The result of the election was historic. For the first time since independence, the Congress was ousted from power. It got defeated in the Lok Sabha Elections of 1977. The result of 1977 election was the manifestation of people’s discontentment and sufferings during the emergency period of 1975-1977. The Janata Party emerged victorious. The Janata Party and its allies bagged 330 seats out of 542 seats in the Lok Sabha election. Hence, they secured a clear majority. The Congress could win only 154 seats out of 492 seats polling just 31.30 percent of votes (<http://www.eci.nic.in>).

The Janata victory both in the parliamentary and state Assembly elections seemed to mark the end of the pre-dominant party system⁴³. Janata’s successes and Congresses’ reduced but substantial strength had brought two national contenders for power viz; INC and a group of non- Congress parties who went onto form a new party, Janata Party into the forefront of the Indian Party system, hence transforming it into a competitive bi-party system (it became binodal structurally but remained multi-party in nature). The party system was never uniform structurally and since 1977 election it acquired a binodal feature even at the central level which since 1952 was predominant system.

The Janata Party emerged victorious in the state of Uttar Pradesh with 352 seats polling 47.76 percent of votes, whereas INC could secure just 47 seats out of the 395 seats that it had contested for polling 31.94 percent of votes. The Janata Party even managed to capture the state of Bihar by occupying 214 seats out of the 311 seats that it had contested for polling 42.68 percent of votes. However, INC could secure just 57 seats out of the 286 seats, polling 23.58 percent of votes. The Janata Party could even manage to win in the State of Rajasthan by winning 152 seats with 50.39 percent of votes. INC could manage to win just 41 seats out of the 186 seats that it had contested for with 31.49 percent of votes (www.eci.nic.in).

⁴³ For “pre-dominant party system” definition See Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties*, 1969.

Janata Party even swept the Assembly Elections to the State of Madhya Pradesh by securing 230 seats out of the 319 seats with 47.28 percent of votes. The INC could bag just 84 seats out of the 320 seats, polling 35.88 percent of votes. In the State of Orissa the Janata Party won 110 seats out of the 147 seats with 49.17 percent of votes. Whereas INC could win just 26 seats out of the 146 seats that it had contested for with 31.02 percent of votes (www.eci.nic.in).

In the state of Assam Janata Party swept the polls by winning 53 seats whereas INC could secure just 26 seats and INC (I) 26 seats. In Delhi, too Janata Party emerged victorious by winning 46 of the 56 seats, polling 52.58 percent of votes, whereas the INC could win just 10 seats out of 52 seats that it had contested for (www.eci.nic.in).

However, in the state of Andhra Pradesh it was the INC (I) which emerged victorious with 175 seats out of the 290 seats polling 39.25 percent of votes. The Janata Party could win just 60 seats and INC could manage to get just 30 seats only. In Karnataka too INC (I) emerged victorious with 149 seats with 44.25 percent of votes. Janata Party could manage to win just 59 seats with 37.95 percent of votes whereas INC could win just 2 seats, polling 7.99 percent of votes. In Kerala too it was the INC which emerged victorious with 38 seats out of the 54 seats that it had contested for with 20.02 percent of votes. CPI and the CPI (M) could win 23 seats and 17 seats respectively. In Tamil Nadu it was the DMK which left its mark with 48 seats out of the 230 seats, polling 24.89 percent of votes whereas the Janata Party could win just 10 seats and INC could win just 27 seats only. In West Bengal the CPI (M) could win the state Assembly election with 178 seats out of 224 seats with 35.46 percent of votes. Janata Party and the INC could manage to get just 29 seats and 20 seats respectively (www.eci.nic.in).

Actually the verdict of 1977 election was less in favour for Janata Party or its leadership, ideology or policies than in protest against the authoritarianism of Mrs. Indira Gandhi and the emergency of 1975. However, the Janata Government could not live up to the expectations of the people. Although it had tried to implement a different developmental strategy designed on the basis of Gandhian strategy, emphasized on the development and growth of the rural areas and articulated its

intention of giving incentives to the farmers and small manufacturers but actually could not adhere to any of its promises and implement them.⁴⁴

The Janata government after assuming power soon fell into crisis got crippled with dissensions and squabbles on various issues. The Janata Party faced its biggest challenge when the party was confronted with the challenge to elect the Prime Minister. Jagjivan Ram of Congress for Democracy, Charan Singh of Bharatiya Lok Dal and Morarji Desai of Congress (O) were serious contenders for the post. But when Morarji Desai was elected as the Prime Minister the other two felt left out and serious friction started within the Janata Government. Besides, distribution of tickets for State Assembly seats aggravated the problem. Even Raj Narain and Charan Singh aspired to become the Prime Minister of the country. Later on Raj Narain deserted the Janata Party due to the latter's association with RSS and formed Janata Secular. The Congress (Indira) emerged victorious in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh in the Assembly Election in February, 1978. Janata experiment proved to be a failure because it lacked a defined leadership, coherent policies and a single ideology (Frankel, 1990, p.531). Janata Party lacked a clear vision on governance. It was mainly a manifestation of desire for power by few prominent leaders. It was the personal ambition and self-interest of the leaders that has crumbled the conglomeration of all these non-Congress parties.

The climax was drawn and the fate of Janata government got sealed when allegations of corruption were labelled against Kranti Desai, son of Prime Minister, Morarji Desai. The Congress (I) was most critical and vociferous about this matter. In July 1979, a no-confidence motion was brought against the government by Y.V. Chavan of the Congress, accompanied by series of resignations from the ruling ministry and defections from the ruling party. Morarji Desai too had resigned.

Charan Singh along with a group of defectors from the Janata Party and in coalition with the Congress formed a new government. It had the support of the Congress-I and the Left parties. However, the Congress-I withdrew their support from the new government compelling Charan Singh to resign on 20th August 1979. On 22nd August

⁴⁴ A rapid upside down change in the emergency regime ,the reinstatement of the rule of law and the dismantling of the structures of authoritarian control established by the Congress party were probably the most impressive accomplishment of the Janata party. Das Gupta, "*The Janata phase: Reorganization and Redirection in Indian Politics*", 1979, p.395.

1979, the President dissolved the Lok Sabha and ordered fresh elections. Until then Charan Singh's government continued as a caretaker government.

Partial restoration of Congress as the majority party in a fragmented multi-party system

In the elections held in January 1980, the Congress (I) led by Indira Gandhi emerged victorious to constitute the seventh Lok Sabha with her slogan of "the government that works". An appeal was made to elect a government which is progressive, secular and democratic. The INC in its election manifesto for the mid-term poll of 1980 clearly outlined the much needed and the radical reformist policies to renew the system. It accorded the highest priority to revive the Indian economy which was in doldrums due to poor management by the former Janata Government and was crippled with poverty and unemployment. Therefore, the Congress made an appeal to the farmers, workers, entrepreneurs, intelligentsia and the public sector and government employees to extend their hand of co-operation. The Congress also reaffirmed to reset the trend of vast investment in the public sector and revive the sector which has suffered some reverses in the past. It also committed itself to restore the confidence and faith of the people in the public sector. It had also declared that the Congress was in the position to continue, expand and intensify the various schemes for widespread employment opportunities, such as the rural employment programme, small farmer's development guarantee scheme, to provide employment and income opportunities to landless agricultural labour and small and marginal farmers. For fighting poverty, the Congress in its manifesto decided to effectively fight poverty through a scheme of guaranteed employment.

However, it expressed its intention of modernizing agriculture along with structural reform in the ownership of land and in the operational holdings. Congress had also promised to undertake a comprehensive programme to increase employment and income of small and marginal farmers and landless labourers. Congress also assured to protect the rights and aspirations of the working classes. Workers will be ensured with opportunities to participate in management of the industries and participate in the ownership of industry. Congress had again reaffirmed its intention to provide better and quality health, education, housing, nutrition, supply and sanitation facilities.

Drastic step was proposed to be taken to prevent child labour. Congress in the manifesto of 1980 expressed its concern to deal with local needs and requirement and therefore had proposed for an administrative set up suited to the needs of development at the grass root level in the rural areas. Congress also assured to maintain its laudable record of maintaining law and order in the country for over three decades in an efficient way. It sought to redress the fiscal system by revamping direct and indirect tax structure, curb wasteful expenditure, encourage savings and discourage evasion of tax.

The Congress during the emergency period distorted the freedom of the press but in the manifesto of 1980 pledged to safeguard the freedom of the press and encouraged the press to have its own regulatory measures and code of conduct. Special programmes will be undertaken to uplift the social and economic position of the people. Minorities were assured with provisions to preserve their autonomous character. The Congress had promised to take adequate steps to protect the interest of the scheduled caste and scheduled tribes and adopts measures to ensure their economic upliftment. Women were assured of opportunities for enhanced participation in economic, political, administrative system of the country. Elimination of corruption at all levels and achieving a clear and efficient administration were some of its other promises which the party had vowed to provide to its people. The party had also promised to take up requisite steps to protect the environment and develop and maintain friendly relations with other nations (Zaidi, 1980, pp.242-256).

Hence with all its promises the Congress (I) contested the 1980 Lok Sabha election. Congress (I) of Mrs. Indira Gandhi came back to power by securing 353 seats out of the 492 seats that it had contested for polling 42.69 percent of votes as compared to the 352 seats and nearly 44 percent of popular votes in 1971. Whereas the Janata Party (JNP) could bag only 31 seats and Janata Party (Secular) could secure just 41 seats (<http://www.eci.nic.in>). Congress swept the assembly election in Andhra Pradesh by securing 60 seats whereas JNP could secure just 1 seat. Congress even won in the election to the state legislative Assembly of Bihar by winning 169 seats out of the 311 seats that it had contested for, polling 34.20 percent of votes. JNP drew a blank and BJP could win just 21 seats polling 8.41 percent of votes. Even in Maharashtra the INC (I) won the state Assembly election by securing 186 seats out of 286 seats with 44.50 percent of votes. In the state of Rajasthan too the INC (I)

emerged victorious and won 133 seats polling 42.96 percent of votes. BJP could secure 32 seats with 18.60 percent of votes. The Janata Party (JP) could manage to win just 8 seats and JNP (SC) won 7 seats and JNP (SR) drew a blank. The congress was able to win from Uttar Pradesh as well by bagging 309 seats out of 424 seats with 37.65 percent of the popular votes. BJP could win just 11 seats and Janata Party drew a blank (<https://www.eci.nic.in>)

In West Bengal, INC (I) of Mrs. Indira Gandhi could not renew its performance. It was the CPI (M) which continued with its dominance in the state with 174 seats and 38.49 percent of popular votes. Whereas the INC could win just 49 seats polling 35.73 percent of votes. In the state of Tamil Nadu too it was the ADMK which swept the assembly election by securing 129 seats with 38.75 percent of votes. DMK and INC (I) was able to win 37 and 31 seats respectively (<http://www.eci.nic.in>).

With the 1980 Lok Sabha election it was seen that the party system was entering into another phase where the dominance by the Congress party was not overwhelming. There was a tendency towards accentuated federalized multi-party system as in many of states non-Congress parties were coming to power. Hence there was a nominal restoration of pre- dominant party system with the 1980 general elections.

The restoration was not all inclusive as there was erosion in the support base in the Hindi heartland. Many regional parties had emerged. Tamil Nadu and Kerala favoured regional parties. Despite of it, the Congress (I) came to power at the centre under the Prime Ministership of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. The central mode of governance was centralization and ‘control’ of powers in the hands of few. The Congress (I) government deviated from the adopted path of development and on the contrary encouraged freeing of private sector from the regulation of the Central Government and also favoured liberalization.

In the meantime it was seen that in many of the states non-Congress governments came to power. The principle of federalism, as alleged, was getting violated due to the acting of the central government in an authoritarian manner. Gradually, this led to a growing sense of regionalism and demand for separate states gained momentum in many of the states during this period. In the North- East⁴⁵ such as in Nagaland and

⁴⁵ At the time of Independence the entire North- East region except Manipur and Tripura comprised of Assam. The reorganisation of Assam was completed by 1972. Meghalaya, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh were carved out of Assam.

Mizoram there was resentment over the rule of Congress and new regional parties came to power. Regional opposition took the form of insurgencies in many of the states such as in Assam and in Punjab. In Punjab the extremist wing of Akali Dal demanded a sovereign state of Khalistan.

However, amidst all these tensions Mrs. Indira Gandhi remained committed to the principle of socialism and announced a new twenty point programme which constituted the core of the Sixth Five Year Plan on 14th January, 1982. It included measures to expand irrigational potential of rural areas, rehabilitate bonded labour, supply of drinking water to all villages, expansion of public distribution system through more fair price shops, spread universal elementary education for the age group of 6-14 with emphasis on girl child, and such various other means so as to ensure social justice with equity. With these twenty point programme she forged ahead with her government with a vow of not to pause at any time or in any situation.

However, the rule of Indira Gandhi came to an abrupt end with her assassination in October 31st, 1984. She was killed by her own Sikh Bodyguards in retaliation for the attack on Golden Temple under the name of Operation Blue Star. Indian Army had entered the Golden Temple in Amritsar and fought a battle with some secessionists, captured a number of them and occupied large piles of arms and ammunitions. Large number of people died in this attack and it had hurt the religious sentiments of the Sikhs. Following her assassination riots broke out in several parts of the country (Bryjak, 1985, p.32). Amidst so much of tensions the country was due to face its eighth general elections.

In December 1984 the Eighth General elections took place. The mandate went in favour of the Congress (I) and was against all disruptive forces which threatened integrity, peace, unity and progress of the country. Rajiv Gandhi, son of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, was elected as the Prime Ministerial candidate on the advice of some senior Congress leaders. Congress (I) won the 1984 election with an overwhelming majority of 404 seats, polling 49.10 percent of votes. BJP could win just 2 seats and Janata Party could bag just 10 seats (<http://www.eci.nic.in>).

In the State Assembly Election of 1985 to the state of Arunachal Pradesh the INC emerged victorious with 21 seats polling 43.07 percent of votes. JNP drew a blank. In Assam too the INC emerged victorious with 25 seats and 23.23 percent of the popular

votes. JNP and the BJP drew a blank and the CPI (M) could win just two seats. In Bihar the INC could win 196 seats out of 323 seats with 39.30 percent of votes in the State Assembly election of 1985. In Gujarat too it was INC which won in the Assembly election by winning 149 seats out of the 182 seats that it had contested for, polling 55.55 percent of votes. BJP could win just 11 seats and JNP bagged 14 seats (<https://www.eci.nic.in>). In Uttar Pradesh, the INC was able to retain its base with 269 seats and 39.25 percent of the popular votes. BJP secured only 16 seats and the Janata Party could win just 20 seats. In Rajasthan too the INC was able to perform well and won the assembly polls of 1985. It won 113 seats out of the 199 seats that it had contested for polling 46.57 percent of votes. BJP secured 39 seats and JNP bagged just 10 seats. Even Madhya Pradesh INC did well and secured 48.87 percent of votes with 250 seats. In Maharashtra, INC emerged victorious in the 1985 assembly polls with 43.41 percent of votes and 161 seats out of the 287 seats that it had contested for (<https://www.eci.nic.in>).

However it was seen that in many of the States the Congress was not able to retain its bases. In the 1985 State Assembly Election to the State of Andhra Pradesh it was the Telegu Desam Party (TDP) which had emerged victorious with 202 seats with 46.21 percent of popular votes; INC could secure just 50 seats with 37.25 percent of votes. The CPI and the CPI (M) both secured 11 seats. JNP secured 3 seats and the BJP could win just 8 seats. In Punjab, too, the Shiromani Akali Dal won 73 seats out of the 100 seats polling 38.01 percent of votes whereas INC could win just 32 seats, JNP managed to get just one seat and BJP won some six seats (<https://www.eci.nic.in>).

Similarly, in Tamil Nadu it was the ADMK which swept the assembly polls by securing 132 seats out of 155 seats that it had contested for polling 37.03 percent of votes. The INC secured just 61 seats and DMK won 24 seats and Janata Party could bag just three seats (<https://www.eci.nic.in>). Hence it was evident that the Congress could not emerge victorious in all the states. In fact, fragmentation of the Indian Party System had already become a dominant phenomenon due to various reasons such as uneven economic development, regional disparities, over centralization, growth of region specific demands, needs and aspirations, growing ambition of local leaders, etc.

Hence, the Congress dominance at the centre and in most of the States was retained with the 1984 general election to the Lok Sabha and the subsequent assembly

elections. But the Indian party system was also seen to portray existence of federalized multi-party system with growing predominance and popularity of many state-based parties and regional parties. Hence it cannot be stated that the Indian party system, during the 1980s, was characterized by the absolute dominance by a single party.

The victory of the party can be attributed to the fact that with the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi there was a wave of popular sympathy for Rajiv Gandhi. This election was not decided on any concrete issues or by the performance of the government. Despite of the fact that the party was crippled with serious organizational weakness but still it was able to come back to power at the centre and in numerous state assemblies. The victory of 1984 placed Congress (I) in a dominant position among the other competing political parties at the central level but the party system remained fragmented at two levels.

The Congress (I) government under the Prime Ministership of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi embraced the process of liberalization to make India a developed nation. In March 1985 the government scrapped the license of twenty five broad categories of industries such as steel, electronic, mechanical engineering industries etc. and encouraged the growth of private sector. It believed that the public sector has a role to play in India's industrial development. A policy for promoting the export of software was announced by the Rajiv Gandhi government in December 1986. Rajiv Gandhi also opened up the telecommunication equipment sector for the private sector. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) was established during era of Rajiv Gandhi government to regulate the stock market operations and protect the interests of the small investors. The Rajiv Gandhi government did not abandon its policies of social justice and equity and announced its twenty point programme in September 1988 which included strategies to redefine agriculture, poverty alleviation programme, enforcement of land reform measures, better use of irrigation, bigger harvests, special programme for rural labour, clean drinking water, health for all, two child norm, expansion of education, a responsive administration, etc. (Morris-Jones, 1975). Rajiv Gandhi administration resorted to decentralization of governance. Hence during his regime the Panchayati Raj Institutions was established. His efforts produced very vibrant economy with a high growth rate. He had also earned goodwill by initiating peace talks and signing accords in sensitive spots like Punjab and

Assam.⁴⁶ However, his governance was maligned with charges of corruption and for erratic decision making. Scandals like Bofors jeopardized his chances of coming back to power and tarnished his public image (Frankel, 1990, p.531). Hence the Congress (I) government under the leadership of Rajiv Gandhi was gradually losing credibility in the eyes of the masses and as apprehended it was not able to come back to power with the next general election which was held on 1989. With the election of 1989 another non-Congress government came to power. It was a conglomeration of numerous parties and was named as the “National Front” under the leadership of V.P. Singh.⁴⁷

This unfurled a new era in Indian politics. It saw coalition politics (two or more parties came together to form a government) becoming an order of the day. The unbridled competition for political power between political parties became acute and an unchangeable phenomenon of Indian politics. Not a single party was able to secure absolute majority on its own. The Indian National Congress suffered a decline in its position in the Indian party system. Due to its inability to withhold the trust and faith of the people and lack of potential leadership, political insights and maturity the party had to encounter the downfall of 1989. This testifies the sound electoral logic of the people of India and the victory of democracy.

The trend of pronounced coalitional politics since 1989:

The onset of coalitional and minority governments at the centre led to a significant changes in the Indian political system. The later part of 1980s saw the decline in Congress dominance and inability on the part of any one party from centre, right or left to accumulate majority for it to run the government at the centre. This accentuated the multi-party nature of the party system and made it fragmented in nature. The Ninth Lok Sabha elections in 1989 for the first time produced a ‘Hung Parliament’ in which no single party had a majority. The election of 1989 was held in an emotionally

⁴⁶ In July 1985 Rajiv Gandhi had reached an agreement which was known as the Rajiv Gandhi – Longowal Accord of 1985. Through the agreement it was agreed to transfer power to Chandigarh to Punjab, resolve border dispute between Punjab and Haryana and it also dealt with the issue of sharing of Ravi-Beas water. Similarly in 1985 Rajiv Gandhi had signed the Assam Accord with the AASU leaders by which the infiltrators who had migrated to Assam would be identified, detected and would be deported. Later on AASU and Asom Gana Sangram Parishad came together to form a regional party called the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP).

⁴⁷ Since then a series of political instability gripped the Indian political system.

aggravated situation caused by the murder of Sikhs in Delhi, in the backdrop of heightened instances of communalism, rising prices, along with instances of leaders of the Congress (I) government being accused of serious charges for corruption (Frankel, 1990, p.530).⁴⁸ It was against this backdrop that the non-Congress parties were able to forge alliances against the dominant Congress party, which was in power till 1989. Congress (I) had given a remarkable performance in the 1984 Election. The Congress (I) under the leadership of Rajiv Gandhi was able to secure 197 seats out of the 510 Lok Sabha seats with 39.53 percent of votes in the 1989 Lok Sabha elections (<https://www.eci.nic.in>). The Congress's share of popular vote dropped from almost 50 percent in 1984 to just below 40 percent in 1989 and its number of seats in Lok Sabha tumbled down from more than 400 to 197.⁴⁹ The most serious competition to Congress (I) came from the National Front which was under the leadership of V.P. Singh. The National Front comprised of seven parties and came into force since 17th September, 1988 which were ideologically disparate, regionally based political parties. The seven parties included: the Jan Morcha, the Janata Party, the Lok Dal, the Congress (S), the Telegu Desam, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, and the Assam Gana Parishad (Chander, 2004, p.34).

V.P. Singh, a cabinet member of Rajiv Gandhi after his resignation and subsequent suspension from the Congress (I) formed the Jan Morcha as a platform to express his views and protest against the corruption at high levels. Other groups and parties joined the Jan Morcha in the crusade and designed an alternative strategy with new agendas to produce a better social order. These conglomerations of parties expressed their intentions to introduce electoral reforms, decentralization of political and economic power, and elimination of corruption at all levels as well as produce a stable economy marked by balanced development both in the rural and urban areas (Chander, 2004, p. 34). It had also promised to usher national unity, democracy, socialism, secularism and federalism.

Simultaneously, Congress (I) too came up with several pledges and promises through their 1989 election manifesto to maintain unity, stability, democracy, secularism, socialism. In the election manifesto of 1989 the ruling Congress (I) expressed its

⁴⁸ Scandals like Bofors had actually jeopardized the prospect of his government. It was alleged that a huge amount of bribes were paid to the close associates of Rajiv Gandhi in 1986 by the Swedish manufacturer Bofors in order to obtain a contract for the sale of artillery to the Indian army.

⁴⁹ The Congress party has never won more than 49.10 percent of total votes polled in any of the India's nine general elections. It had formed government in seven of these nine elections at the centre.

intention to reorient the administration and make it more people sensitive, responsive, efficient and open. The Congress affirmed that once brought back to power it will strive hard to enhance the Freedom of Press, introduce judicial reforms, make judiciary accessible to the poor, weak and the deprived and bring back the Panchayati Raj and the Nagarpalika Bills in the Parliament.

Congress (I) took up some programmes to make India self-reliant, eradicate poverty, and illiteracy accelerate the process of industrialization and justice for all. Congress (I) accorded a special scope and attention to the special social groups and their issues in the 1989 manifesto. The Congress (I) had proposed to provide educational concessions to the students belonging to the backward classes, along with generous financial assistance. The Congress (I) had also promised to ensure social and economic development to the religious minorities and spread literacy among them, provide equality of status and honour and provide opportunities to the women of India for development and also assured reservation of seats in panchayats and other areas. It had also promised to provide provision for special reservation and attention towards the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The Congress (I) had also expressed its desire to curb the forces of communalism and had pledged to resolve the issue of Ram Janam Bhoomi and Babri Masjid in Ayodhya (Singh, 1992, pp.50-71).

The Lok Sabha Election Results of 1989

However, the loss of credibility of the Congress (I) government of 1984-1989 led to the defeat of the party in the election of 1989. The Congress (I) in the 1989 Lok Sabha election could secure just 197 seats out of 510 seats with 39.53 percent of votes. The National Front emerged with a disappointing 142 seats. Janata Dal (JD) contested 244 seats and won 143 seats with 17.79 percent of votes. BJP improved its position from 2 to 85 with 11.36 percent of votes (www.eci.nic.in).⁵⁰ Following the 1989 election National Front under the leadership of V.P. Singh came to power as Congress (I) made it amply clear that it had no intention to form the Government at the centre although it was the largest party but was not having the required majority. Hence, National Front came to form the government being the second largest party with the

⁵⁰ All the parties in the 1989 election had performed miserably, the only exception being the BJP who was found to have improved its electoral performance.

outside support from BJP and the left parties.⁵¹ Congress (I) again acquired the role of an opposition party. In the states too the position of the Congress became precarious.

The State Assembly Election Results

In Uttar Pradesh, the heartland of India it was seen that INC was not able to perform well in the state Assembly Election of 1989. It secured just 94 seats with 27.90 percent of votes whereas the same party was able to secure 296 seats polling 39.25 percent of votes in the state assembly election of 1985.⁵² BJP won 57 seats with 11.61 percent of votes. Hence the party was gradually improving its performance. It was the Janata Dal which secured the highest number of seats in the state. It bagged 208 seats with 29.71 percent of votes out of 356 seats polling 29.71 of votes. However BSP was able to secure just 13 seats only (<https://www.eci.nic.in>).

In Madhya Pradesh, it was BJP who was able to steal the show by fetching 220 seats out of the 269 seats that it had contested for with 39.14 percent of votes. Indian National Congress secured only 56 seats out of the 318 seats polling 33.38 percent of votes whereas the Janata Dal was able to grab only 28 seats with 7.71 percent of vote. In Bihar too a trend of decline was noticed in the performance of INC. It was able to win just 71 seats out of the 323 seats, with 24.78 percent of votes. It was Janata Dal which secured 122 seats with 25.61 percent of votes. BJP was able to bag just 39 seats and JMM was able to win just 19 seats. However, in the state assembly election of 1985 the scenario was totally different. Congress had experienced an overwhelming victory in the state. It secured 196 seats with 39.30 percent of votes (<https://www.eci.nic.in>). Hence, there was a steep decline in the share of votes for the Indian National Congress. Therefore if we give an aerial view it can be safely concluded that the Congress party had then suffered a steep decline in its overall performance.

In the state assembly election to the state of Karnataka held in 1989 INC won 178 seats polling 43.76 percent of votes. BJP secured only 4 of the 118 assembly seats. Janata Dal won 24 seats with 27.08 percent of votes. In the 1985 Assembly election

⁵¹ BJP and the left parties had cooperated with the National Front on the issue of its anti-corruption drive led primarily by V.P Singh.

⁵² The erosion of the support base among the Muslims and the Scheduled Caste led to the decline in the Congress's share of votes and seats in the state.

INC had secured just 65 seats and it was JNP which had surpassed all the other parties in the State by securing 139 seats (<https://www.eci.nic.in>). Hence it was seen that there was an improvement in the performance of the Congress party in the state. To the State Assembly Election of 1989 for the state of Andhra Pradesh it was seen that INC had surpassed Janata Dal and had secured 181 seats polling 47.09 percent of votes whereas JD was able to secure just one seat. TDP was able to bag just 74 seats polling 36.54 percent of votes. In Tamil Nadu too the INC secured just 26 seats and it was DMK, the state based party which had bagged 150 seats with 33.18 percent of votes. However in Kerala, INC had contested 91 seats and had won 55 seats with 32.07 percent of votes. CPI (M) had contested 64 seats and won only 28 seats with 21.74 percent of votes whereas in 1987 assembly election it was the CPI (M) which had secured 38 seats followed by INC with 33 seats (<https://www.eci.nic.in>). There was a revival for the Congress party in the state of Kerala. In south too therefore the Congress was not able to fare better. In most of the states it stood defeated during the period of 1989-1990 which indicate that there was a decline in the popularity of the Congress party in the south as well.

In Rajasthan following the state assembly elections of 1990 it was seen that the state had voted for an alternative to the Congress party. BJP had won 85 seats, polling 25.25 percent of votes whereas Congress won only 50 seats out of 200 seats with 33.64 percent of votes followed by Janata Dal with 55 seats and 21.58 percent of votes. However, in the 1985 Assembly election INC had secured 113 seats whereas BJP was able to bag just 39 seats. In Maharashtra, the performance of the party had declined in the state. INC won 141 seats out of the 276 seats in the state Assembly election of 1990. However, it had secured 20 more seats in the 1985 Assembly Election. In Gujarat too the Congress party had suffered a setback. It won 33 seats in the Assembly election of 1990 whereas in 1985 assembly election, the INC has secured 149 seats out of 182 seats with 55.55 percent of votes. In the Assembly election of 1990 the state had voted most for a non Congress alternative- the Janata Dal which had won 70 seats out of 147 seats polling 29.36 percent of votes. BJP secured 67 seats with 26.69 percent of votes (<https://www.eci.nic.in>). In west too the dominance of Indian National Congress has suffered a drastic blow.

In the state of West Bengal, INC was almost wiped out of the state as it was seen that it was not able to secure a good number of seats. In 1991 the INC had secured just 43

seats out of the 284 seats with 35.12 percent of votes. Even in 1985 Assembly election INC had secured only 40 seats. The state became a bastion for the left party. CPI (M) had emerged victorious for the Assembly election of 1991. It had bagged 189 seats out of the 213 seats with 36.87 percent of votes (<https://www.eci.nic.in>).

In the state election of 1990 to the legislative assembly of Orissa, INC had secured 10 seats only whereas JD won 123 seats out of 139 seats polling 53.69 percent of votes. In the state, INC was not able to retain its dominance. It had secured 117 seats with 51.08 percent of votes in the Assembly election of 1985. There was a steep decline in the number of seats as well as in the percentage of votes. It had secured only 29.78 percent of votes in 1991 compared to above 50 percent votes in 1985 assembly election (<https://www.eci.nic.in>). In the East too Congress was seen to have been cut to size by other parties. The North-Eastern region was seen to be almost under the reign of Indian National Congress. In the State election of 1990 in the State of Arunachal Pradesh INC had secured the highest number of seats with 37 seats, polling 44.25 percent of votes whereas the Janata Dal was able to secure only 11 seats with 33.34 percent of votes. In Manipur too INC had fetched for itself 24 seats with 33.71 percent of votes in comparison to 11 seats of Janata Dal with 19.82 percent of votes in the Assembly election of 1990(<http://www.eci.nic.in>). In the state legislative assembly election of 1989, INC had secured 36 seats and Nagaland People's Conference was able to manage 24 seats only. The situation was similar in the state of Mizoram too. In the 1989 Assembly election the Indian National Congress surpassed all the other parties with 23 seats whereas the Mizo National Front was able to secure 14 seats only. Despite of intensive attempt to provide India with a non-Congress government it was seen that the North-Eastern region voted in favour of the Congress party. It was only in Tripura where the Congress party was not able to cast its spell. In the assembly election of 1993, INC secured only 10 seats which was fifteen less than 1988 assembly election. The CPI (M) emerged victorious in both the consecutive assembly election. It had secured 44 seats in 1993 and 26 seats in 1988 (<https://www.eci.nic.in>). Its performance was in fact improving.

Congress was able to retain its base only in a few states like Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Kerala and in the North Eastern states. Hence the decline of the Congress was not absolute but yet substantial. It was only its inability to perform well during its tenure of 1984-1989 when it was voted to power with a massive mandate

and its inability to live up to the people's expectation had actually led to its downfall in the ninth general elections and in the subsequent assembly elections. The frequent charges of corruption and failure on the part of Rajiv Gandhi to emerge as an efficient leader further maligned the electoral fortune of the Congress party.

The disparate ruling National Front under V. P. Singh was not only ideologically different but also lacked a common minimum programme. These differences aggravated when the V. P. Singh government in 1990 decided to implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission (reservation of seats in government jobs for Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Classes).⁵³ It took the decision without consulting the parties supporting it from outside. This had antagonized the Bharatiya Janata Party as it affected its interests.⁵⁴ The already existing dissensions between V.P. Singh, Devi Lal, and Chandrashekhar over the position of leadership culminated into the breakup of the front into a new political outfit. Chandrashekhar with the support of 55 members founded the Janata Dal (Samajwadi) and finally assumed office on November 1990 with support of Congress(I) (Chander, 2004, pp.38-39). Soon several issues of differences cropped up between the government and the Congress (I) and this finally led to the collapse of the Chandrashekhar government. He had to submit his resignation and a fresh election was ordered which was held in 1991. Considering the series of collapses of the government at the centre in the course of these 11 months, the Indian National Congress projected and claimed itself as the only party capable of providing stable governance at the centre in its election manifesto of 1991.

Conclusion:

The Indian National Congress has always remained a significant component of Indian politics. It had been the inheritor of the nationalist movement and could out distance its rivals for a certain period of time but its presence was never omnipotent or singular. Absence of any potential alternative enabled it to enjoy an undisputed rule

⁵³ The Mandal Commission had recommended introducing reservation of 27 percent of seats in educational institutions and in the public services for the Other Backward Castes considering the educational and social backwardness among this section of the society. The National Front had introduced reservation only in the public services.

⁵⁴ The implementation of the recommendation of the Mandal Commission report had in fact added a new momentum to caste politics.

for a certain period of time. Hence categorizing the Indian party system as a Congress predominated system would be an exaggeration. Indian politics is presently driven by four Ps namely, performance, populism, popularity and positivism. The symmetry between 'as promised' and 'as delivered' sustains a party in power. People vote in favour of progress and tangible developments. Leaders and parties who associate themselves with the aspirations of the common masses and raises hope of forging ahead as well as ensures substantial developments in all areas emerge as their popular leader, win elections and hence come to power. Inability on the part of the Congress party to abide by these parameters initiated a process of downfall for the Congress Party and enabled the birth of non-Congress alternatives at the expense of the Congress Party. These alternatives replaced Congress from power both at the national and state level. However, they could not emerge as a formidable force to reckon with and hence made the party system volatile in nature. Since 1989 the party system was seen to be in a serious state of flux. Defection, indifferences, dissensions and conflict over political opportunities and striking mismatch between poll promises and actions (performance) accentuated the instability and incoherent nature of the Indian party system at both the levels.