

CHAPTER-11 Era Of One Party Dominance.

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Learning Objectives: - Students will be able to Understand:-

- Nature of Congress dominance at National Level.
- First three General Elections.
- Uneven dominance of congress at state level.
- Coalition nature of congress.
- Emergence and role of opposition parties.

Introduction

Despite all odds, India decided to choose the democratic path of nation building after getting independence. Our leaders did not see politics as a problem rather saw it as a means to solve the problem. The biggest test before Indian leadership was to install a democratically elected government of the country. The election commission of India was set in 1950 with SUKUMAR SEN as the first chief election commissioner. Elections are essential for modern democracies. The first general election was held in 1952, second in 1957 and third in 1962. Congress dominated the first three general elections. Pt. Nehru became the first PM of the country.

ONE PARTY DOMINANCE :- (Definition).

The one party dominant state is a system of majority rule where one political party has successively won election victories by a large majority and is therefore the dominant ruling party, which does not have to form coalitions with other smaller political parties.

Nature of Congress dominance at National Level.

The Indian National Congress dominated the first three general elections held in 1952, 1957 and 1962 by winning almost three fourth seats in the Lok Sabha. Its success was the result of the following reasons.

- **Oldest Party:-** The congress party is oldest party and was established in 25th Dec. 1885 by A.O.Home.
- **Strong Organization:-** Compared to the opposition, the congress had a well-knit organization across the country since the freedom struggle which helped the party to maintain its dominance.
- **Charismatic Leaders:-** The party was led by charismatic leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru. The other leaders of the party were well known figures and very popular among the people.
- **Legacy of National movement:-** the congress party had inherited the legacy of the National Movement of India as a party which had brought independence for the country. This was the main reason for its countrywide popularity.
- **Weak Opposition:-** The opposition parties were weak and divided. Many of them had been formed just after the independence. The congress had "the first of the block advantage". After the first general election the largest opposition party was the communist party of India with only 16 seats in the Lok Sabha.
- **First Past the Post System of election:-** This system of election also helped the congress to maintain its dominance. The party never got popular votes but managed to win more

seats than its proportional share of votes as majority got divided among different opposition parties.

The first three general Election or Congress dominance in the first three general Elections

As far the first three general elections are concerned, "Rajni Kothari writes, no one was sure how the ruler and illiterate masses would respond to this wholly new ceremony in the relationship between government and society." However the respond was great. The congress won the election under the leadership of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru. The Indian party system was one party dominant system. Several political parties participated in the elections but the congress dominated the scene at the center as well as in states before 1967. The first three General elections were held in 1952, 1957 and 1962. In 1952 election congress got 364 seats out of 489 around 45% vote share. The communist party got only 16 seats. In the state election the congress secured big victory in all the states except Travancore Cochin (Kerala). In 1957 election congress got 371 out of 494 seats. The communist party of India got 27 seats. In the state like Kerala a coalition led CPI formed the government in 1962 elections, congress got 361 out of 494 seats. Communist party of India got only 29 seats. Despite existence of opposition, congress was the dominant party. Rajni Kothari coined the term "one party dominance" for this phase of India.

Uneven dominance of Congress at State Level

There is no doubt that congress dominated at the national level, but its dominance at the state level was uneven due to the existence of a large number of political parties. In madras, congress party could only save its government due to separation of Andhra Pradesh. However in 1954 CPI government was brought down and president's rule was imposed. After the 1954 assembly elections in Travancore, Cochin, PEPSU and Andhra, congress could not maintain majority but later congress got majority in PEPSU.

In 1957 general elections congress got majority in Andhra Pradesh Madras but failed to do so in Orissa and Kerala. In J and K, NC donated from 1952-1967. Linguistic reorganization of states led to the separation of Telugu speaking areas of Madras as Andhra Pradesh. Malabar was Separated from Madras. It helped congress to get majority in these states.

Coalition nature of Congress

The congress party one of the oldest party in India dominated by English speaking upper caste and upper Middle class. With the passage of time its leadership passed into the hands of diverse groups. The civil disobedience movement widened its base. All types of people with diverse interest became the members of congress party. Peasants and Landlords, industrialists and workers, urban and villages, capitalists and poor, upper casts and lower casts all became members of congress. The coalition nature of congress tolerated and managed to strike a balance between all the factions.

- **Principle of accommodation:-** The party accommodated various ideologies within its fold. The revolutionaries, radicals, moderates and extremists all existed within the party fold. Despite differences regarding the policies, programmes and methods within its fold party managed to build consensus.
- **Principle of Tolerance:-** The coalition character of the congress party allowed it to avoid any extreme position and strike a balance on almost all issues. The party showed greater tolerance for difference of opinion and ambitions within it. This allowed the group who

were not happy with the position of the party to remain within the party and fight the other group rather than leaving the group.

Emergence and Role of the opposition:

After independence there was no national party besides congress. The opposition parties had small representation in the legislature but they play a crucial role maintaining the democratic character of the system. Since opposition had no separate identity. Many leaders who left congress failed to mobilize votes.

Before 1967, the opposition was weak and divided, while the congress got 45-48% votes and 70-75% seats, no single opposition got more than 10-12% votes or 5% seats. The political parties to be recognized after congress were communist party of India, Bhartiya Jana sang (BJS) in 1951 founded by Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, Swatantra Party in 1959 idealizing capitalism, certain regional parties also emerged but were not of much significance. In 1952 election there were two socialist parties, Socialist Party and Kissan Mazdoor Sabha.

In 1960, and 1970, these political parties played an important role.

- They were helpful in maintaining the democratic character of the system.
- They offered a sustained but principle criticism of the programme of the congress party.
- They kept the ruling party under check and helped in changing the balance of power within the congress.
- They helped in grooming young leaders who played a crucial role in giving shape to the future of the country.
- They kept a watchful eye on the government activities by criticizing it on the floor of the house through press and the public meeting.

Major opposition Parties

The Socialist Party

Socialist party traces its origin to pre-independence days. The congress socialist came an existence in 1934 by a group of young leaders who wanted a more radical and egalitarian congress. In 1948, the congress amended its constitution to prevent its members from having dual membership. This forced the socialists to form a separate socialist party in 1948. The socialists believed in the ideology of democratic socialism. They criticized the congress for favoring capitalists and landlords and by ignoring the workers and peasants. Jayaprakash Narayan, Ashok Mehta, Ram Manohar Lohia were some of the prominent socialist leaders.

Communist Party of India:-

The communist party was founded in 25 Dec. 1925 at Kanpur and M.N.Roy played a vital role in its foundation. The communist party of India advocated socialism as a solution to the problem of the country. The party was banned in 1934 and the party worked within the fold of the congress. In 1957 it became the first non-congress party to form government in Kerala in 1964 under the leadership of A.K. Gopalan founded the separate party called the communist party of the India (Marxist). Both CPI and CPM under the banner of left front got power in West Bengal and Kerala. They even won over 60 seats in 2004 Lok Sabha elections.

Policies and Programmes:-

- To provide equal opportunities for all particularly women and the weaker section of the society.
- To protect and encourage small scale industries/cottage industries.
- To fight for right to work as a fundamental rights.
- It claims to be champion of the workers and the peasants.

Bhartiya Jana Sang (BJS)

The BJS was founded by Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee in 1951. It traces its roots to Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sang (RSS) and Hindu Mahasabha before independence in 1977. It merged with several other parties to form the Janata Party.

Agenda of BJS

- It is focused on the idea of one country, one culture, one nation.
- It believed that the nation could become strong, progressive and modern only by following Indian culture and traditions.
- It even called for the reunion of India and Pakistan in Akhand Bharat.
- It opposed to grant any concession to the culture and religious minorities.

Swatantra party

Swatantra party was founded in August 1957. It was led by old congressmen like C. Rajgopalachari, K.M. Munshi and Minoo Masani.

Agenda

- The Swatantra party did not believe in state involvement in the control of economy. It believed that only individual could lead to prosperity.
- The Party gives priority to the basic needs i.e. food, housing, and clothing.
- The party believed in social justice and equality of opportunity for all people without any discrimination.
- The party opposed cooperative farming and state trading.

Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP):-

The Bharatiya Janata party was created in 1980, but its origin lies in the Bharatiya Jana Sang formed in 1951 by Shyama Prasad Mukherjee. In the 1984 general election, it grew in strength on the back of the Ram Janam Bhoomi Movement. In 1998 election, BJP led coalition known as the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) formed government under PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee last for year. In 2014 general election, Narendra Modi led to a landslide victory. As of 2019, general election BJP won 303 seats under the leadership of (PM) Narendra Modi. Today it is the largest political party in terms of representation in the parliament and state assemblies.

LEARNING OUTCOME

After learning the chapter you would be able to answer the following Questions:-

- Discuss the first three general elections for the Lok Sabha elections?
- Describe the nature of Congress dominance at the national level. What are the factors which helped it?
- What is one party dominant system? Discuss the factors which helped Congress to remain as a dominant political party? Describe the coalition nature of Congress?
- Describe the uneven dominance of Congress at the state level?
- Discuss the role of opposition in India?
- Write note on Socialist party.
- Write note on Communist party of India.
- Write note on Bharatiya Jana Sang (BJS).
- Write note on Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Objective Questions:

- 1947-1967 period is called:
Ans: Congress System
- The first general elections were held in:

Ans: 1952

- Who became the first PM of India:

Ans: J.L Nehru

- The communist party of India was formed in:

Ans: 1925

- When was congress party formed:

Ans: 1885

- Era of one party dominance is related to:

Ans: Congress

- Bhartiya Janta Party was formed in:

Ans: 1980