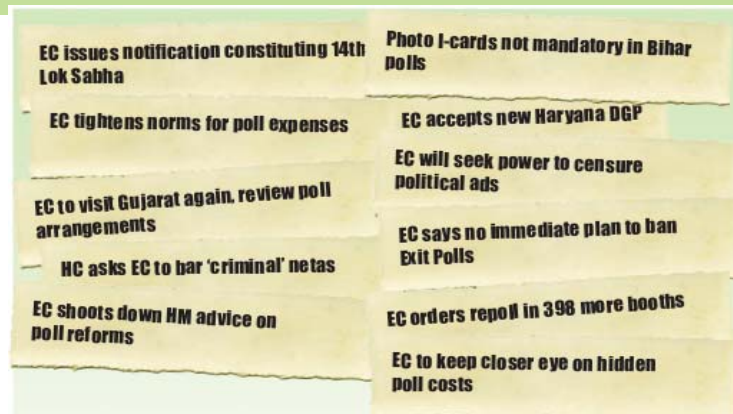


The Election Process in India

Why are elections necessary in the democracy? In this lesson we would learn about the setup and mechanism to conduct elections, what powers that setup has and what measures it takes from time to time. We even analyse the democratic, smooth and fair manner in which the elections are conducted. We even assess the role of Election Commission in conducting the elections. We discuss the reforms that are suitable to the present day situation to improve the prestige of Democracy.



Read these headlines carefully from newspapers during the time of elections. Whose powers are indicated in the lines? What might be the main objectives? Discuss.

Election System in India

In a vast country like India which has an enormous population, it is never possible for all the people to gather and take decisions. So, the need for elections arise. India is the largest democratic country in the world. Since independence, a strong basis for democratic values was laid, by the elections.

The Election Commission of India conducts elections in our country. This Commission frames a Code of Conduct to the political parties. It declares the results of the elections and submits to the central or state authority concerned. By this, it becomes easy to form the government.



Fig: 16.1 Ballot Box

The Election Commission of India

The Election Commission of India came into existence on 25 January 1950. This is an autonomous constitutional body. With its authority, it prepares electoral roles and conducts elections to Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, State legislative bodies, the President and the Vice President.



Fig 16.2: Office of the Election Commission, India

By the completion of 60 years on 25 January 2010, the Election Commission of India celebrated Diamond Jubilee and announced 25 January 2011 as 1st Voters Day .

Autonomous status for Election Commission

It is very difficult to conduct elections in India because of a huge population. During the British rule, only 14% of the population had right to vote in the elections. At the time of first General Elections in 1952, there were 17.32 crore voters. At present, the number of voters is above 67 crores. For such a country, the Election Commission conducts elections with the help of about 45 lakh staff.



Fig 16.3: Election Commission logo

The Central Election Commission has no separate staff to conduct the elections. As per the article 324(6) of the Constitution, with the permission of the President of India and the Governors of the states, it utilises the services of central and state government employees. During such times, the Election Commission has a complete control over the government employees. Without the prior permission of the central Election Commission, the staff can neither be transferred nor be given promotions.

The Chief Election Commissioner

The Chief Election Commissioner is the head of the Election Commission of India. The constitution guarantees certain powers to the Chief Election Commissioner to conduct elections for central and state legislatures in a smooth and a fair manner. Usually, he/she is from Indian Civil Services. His/her tenure is 6 years or upto 65 years of age, whichever is earlier.

Earlier, the Election Commission of India had only one Election Commissioner. A three member commission has come into existence from 1993 with one Chief Election Commissioner and two Election Commissioners.

In Indian political system, the Election Commission has been playing an important role. But after T.N. Seshan

(1990 - 1996) assumed the office, the Election Commission earned a considerable popularity. He took much initiation for the eradication of corruption in the elections of India. There was a nationwide recognition to the powers of the Election Commission.



Collect the information of other autonomous bodies in India.

There is no difference among the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners as to their salary, privileges/ designation and powers are concerned. Usually, the decisions are taken unanimously or else taken by a majority vote.

Recommendations of T.N. Seshan

- * 14 days time limit for campaigning after the date of withdrawal of nominations.
- * One candidate should not contest from more than two constituencies at a time.
- * If any candidate is punished for two years, he/she is barred from contesting elections for the next six years.
- * If the contesting candidate expires, the election shall be postponed but not to be abolished.
- * After completion of campaign time, sale of liquor shall be banned for 48 hours.

Functions of the Election Commission

Article 324, part 15 of the constitution states the formation, powers and functions of the Election Commission. The constitution gives some powers to the

Election Commission to conduct elections. The functions are classified as

1. Administrative functions
2. Advisory functions and
3. Quasi judicial functions.

Under these functions, the Election Commission prepares electoral rolls, revises them in due time, demarcation of constituencies and their territorial limit as per the Delimitation Commission. It announces the schedule of elections, receives nominations, scrutinises, finalises the polling dates, gives recognition to the political parties and allots the symbols to them. It frames and implements the code of conduct to be followed by the parties during elections. It appoints the enquiry officers to observe electoral mall practices.

Initially, the constitution of India declared 21 years as the voting age. But in 1988, 61st amendment was passed and this was reduced to 18 years of age.



It advises the President and the Governors of the states regarding the disqualification of the representatives to the parliament and the state legislatures. It solves the disputes between parties. At this time, it acts like a Quasi judicial authority.

As per the guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India, all the people who attain the age of 18 years on or before the 1st January in the year of elections irrespective of caste, creed, religion, gender, language etc., shall be registered as the voters. The right to vote without any discrimination is called as “universal adult franchise”. The body of voters is called as an ‘Electorate’.

Political parties in Elections

A political party is formed when it has a written code of conduct and registers at the Election Commission. The party symbols can be allotted by the Elections Commission based on the mandet in the elections, parties are declared by Elections Commission regional or national parties. In a state, if a party wins 3% of valid votes are 3 Assembly seats, it is declarad as a regional party. A party can be recognized in more than one state. If a party is recognized in four states with 6% of valid

Collect some symbols of national parties and state parties.

votes or 11 Lok Sabha M.P. seats from 4 different states, it is called a national party.

Elections - The code of conduct

The Election Commission announces the schedule of election. Since then, the model code of conduct comes into effect. According to this,

all the people and the candidates contesting the elections shall abide by the rules and regulations of the Election Commission. Violation of these rules and regulations is treated as malpractices for which disciplinary action shall be initiated.

1. The contesting candidates and political parties shall not make any statements pertaining to caste, creed, religion, or regional, while criticizing other parties.
2. No personal comments shall be made that are not relevant to political life.
3. No political announcements targeting a caste or religion shall be made.
4. In places, such as churches, mosques, temples, other holy places, educational institutions, no candidate should canvas/campaign.
5. No candidates shall influence the voters either by giving cash or any articles.
6. No voter shall be used to cast his/her vote in other's identity.
7. No campaigning within 100 mtrs on the day of polling.
8. There should be no campaigning after or before the permitted hours.
9. No political party shall either get voters to the polling station or drop the voters from the polling station.
10. Every one has the right to lead a peaceful life. Taking out rallies in the residential areas and picketing is against the rules.
11. Hosting party flags, tying banners and writing on the walls, pasting posters on the houses are not allowed without permission.

* Find out if any disciplinary action was taken against any candidate for violating the code of conduct.

* Find out if any candidate was found guilty by the judiciary and disqualified from the elections or any political portfolio.

A few people and some organisations have approached the court on the model code of conduct.

Conducting Rallies and Public Gatherings

1. The political parties shall obtain prior permission from the local police to conduct public gathering. They should inform the police about the place of gathering and its time. So that the police could make arrangements to protect law and order and



regularize the traffic movement.

2. The contesting candidates shall find out if any prior instructions are there in the place where they are planning to hold public gathering while entering the prohibited areas shall strictly follow the rules.

- Should political parties campaign through public meetings and rallies only or are there any other ways?

3. They must take prior permission to use loudspeakers. If any one obstructs to the conduct of public gathering, they shall not directly attack instead inform the police.

On the day of Polling

1. The polling personnel shall make all the arrangements to the voters to cast their vote in a democratic and peaceful atmosphere.

2. Leaders of all political parties shall cooperate the polling staff to discharge their duties.

3. The polling agents sitting in the polling booths shall be issued identify cards.



Fig 16.8: Voters in Queue

The names or the party symbol shall not be on these cards.

4. The campaigning should end before 48 hours of polling day. SMS's also prohibited, alcohol shall not be distributed.

5. Neither the contesting candidate nor the supporters shall gather in large number near the polling booths.

6. There shall not be any posters, flags, symbols and election material in the camps. Any kind food shall not be kept in the camps.

Elections - Court Judgments:

* In 2013, in the case of Dr. Subramanya swamy, the Supreme Court stated that the voting machines shall allow the voter to verify that their vote was cast correctly. The Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) shall enable the notes to get the feedback to whom he/she has caste vote.

* In 2013, in the case of Peoples Union of Civil Liberties, the Supreme Court stated that the voter has the liberty to cast his/her vote against all the contesting candidates. To implement this judgment the Election Commission of India has inserted "NOTA".

* In 2013, in the case of Peoples Union of Civil Liberties, the Supreme Court stated that the contesting candidates either parliament as to the state legislature bodies, shall compulsory declare the details regarding, his/her crime record, spouse, children's, assets/liabilities, educational qualifications.

Ruling party at the time of elections

There is a chance to the ruling party to influence the voters by misusing the power. In order to check this, the Election Commission has laid down some rules and regulations. They are:

1. The ruling party leaders shall not misuse the power, they should not use bureaucracy for party related works.
2. Their official visits and party related visits shall not be mingled.
3. They should not use government vehicles for campaigning.
4. If more than three security vehicles are used in campaigning, it should be shown in poll expenditure
5. The movement the election schedule is issued, the election expenditure will come into force.
6. The public properties like government buildings, offices, places shall not be used for campaigning by any party.
7. No advertisements of the government schemes shall be given either in print media or in electronic media.
8. Before giving announcements on TV, the political parties shall obtain permission of the Election Commission.
9. After the election notification is issued, the ruling government shall not release any grants, make payments, issue new schemes. They should not start any new projects or give any kind of promise.

Voters' pledge

we the citizens of India, having abiding faith in democracy, here by pledge to uphold the democratic traditions of our country and the dignity of free and fair peaceful elections, and to vote in every elections, fearlessly and without being influenced by considerations of religion, race, caste, community, language or any inducement.

Conduct of elections at various levels

The Chief Electoral Officer at the state level assists the Election Commission of India. He/She is appointed by the Election Commission of India, after consulting the state government concerned. This post doesn't have a constitutional status. Generally, the senior most IAS officer shall be appointed. The elections to the parliament and state assembly in the state are held under his/her monitoring. At the district level, the District Collector acts as the Chief Election Officer.

To conduct and monitor elections in every constituency, an officer is appointed. He/she is called as the "Returning Officer". The candidates, who registered their names in the voters' list, are eligible and have zeal to be elected as representatives submit their nomination papers to the Returning Officer. Their nominations must be supported by at least one registered elector of the constituency. If a candidate is sponsored by a registered party, he/she is called the party candidate. The others are called the independents.

The Returning Officer scrutinizes the nominations and announces the eligible contesting candidate's list. The contesting candidates are given the option to withdraw their nominations within the specified period. Later the Returning Officer shall declare the final list of contesting candidates in the constituency.

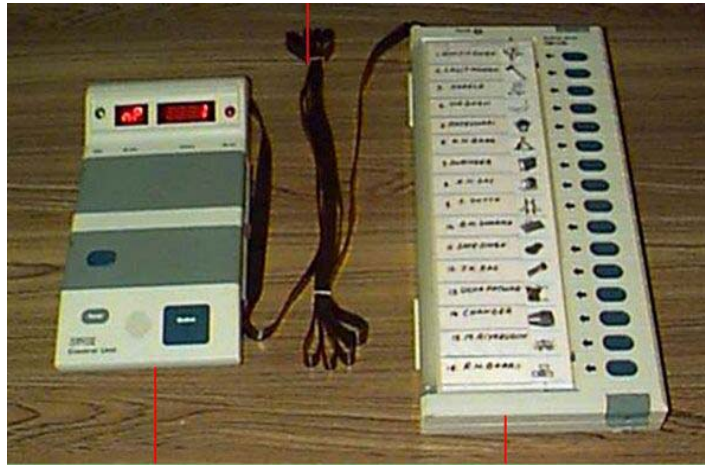


Fig 16.9: Control Unit, Ballot Unit

The party candidates are allotted the party symbol and the independent candidates will be allotted the symbols available at that time. After this, the names and symbols of the contesting candidates are entered into EVM's (Electronic Voting Machine). The same procedure is followed for conducting elections to the Parliament, state assemblies and local self-governing bodies.

Voting Mechanism

The Chief Election Officers in the districts make elaborate arrangements to conduct the polls. They depute polling personnel as Presiding Officer and polling officers to every polling booth to conduct the polls. The Election Commission appoints observers to monitor the polls on the polling day. On the day of the poll, all the voters whose names are enrolled in the electoral list are allowed to cast their votes. Polling agents assist the polling staff to identify the voters, who are appointed by the contesting candidates. Indelible ink is applied to the left forefinger before they cast their vote. In case, EVM is not there, Swastik mark (卐) shall be applied on

the ballot paper folded in the proper manner and put in the ballot box.

After the completion of polling, EVMs or ballot boxes are sealed and brought to the counting centres. Counting of the votes takes place at the counting centres. The candidate who secures highest number of votes is



Fig 16.10: Staff, Doing Duties in Polling Booth

declared as elected

General Elections are conducted for every 5 years at national/state level. Before completion of 5 years tenure, if the elections are held for either Assemblies or Parliament are called '**mid term elections**'. The elections are conducted for one or more vacancies are termed as "**By-Elections**".

Vote to reject – NOTA (None Of The Above)

On the basis of the judgment given by the Supreme Court in **2013** in the case of Peoples Union of Civil Liberties, NOTA is introduced. The Supreme Court stated that NOTA is a part of the freedom of expression. NOTA was first introduced as an option in the state assembly elections held in Delhi, Mizoram, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh in 2013. NOTA is an option only. It does not affect either the winning or the losing capability of the candidates. Even though the highest number of votes are polled for NOTA, the candidate who secures second position would be declared win.

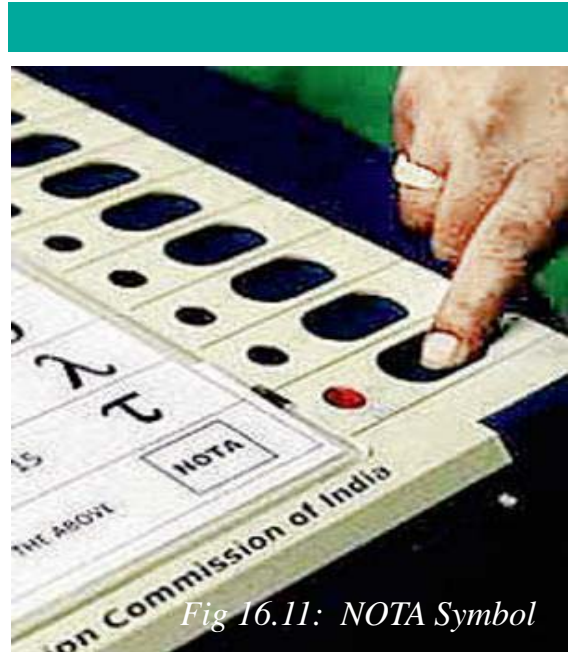


Fig 16.11: NOTA Symbol

The need for Electoral reforms

India is the second most populous country in the world. It is a magnum opus task to conduct elections in our country. Every political party promises to give good governance, socio - economic equality, and the eradication of poverty. But few corrupted politicians, those who have criminal background adopt illegal practices to manage the voters. These practices are making fun of the democracy.

Even though there are some problems in the democratic process, many examples of sincere and dedicated politicians made our democracy proud.

- Suggest a few measures for better democracy and ethical governance.
- If only one family enjoys the reservation in elections, how can the other members belong to the same community get the opportunity? Discuss your opinion.
- If a candidate spends a lot of money and wins the elections, how will his/her thought process be? If the voters take money to cast their votes, do they have a moral right to question their elected representatives for their problems? Discuss.

Postal Ballot

The polling staff who have deputed for polling duties responsibilities, they have no scope to cast their vote because they will be deputed for polling duties to other stations rather than their working place. To avoid this the Election Commission facilitated with “postal ballot”. It means, those who are deputed for election duties, they utilize their right to vote, before the commencement of the polling date with ballot paper. The election authorities send the Postal ballot to the voter’s respective places with special facility.

The Election Notification for these two Assembly seats is cancelled:

New Delhi: For the first time in the history of Election Commission, it cancelled the notification that it released earlier. The EC had cancelled the polls of Aravakurichi, Tanjavur constituencies “By-Elections” in Tamilnadu, after the allegations of large sums of money is being distributed. So the elections on 16th May 2016 have been postponed by the Election Commission.

Key words

- 1) Vote 2) Code of Conduct 3) EVM 4) Constituency 5) NOTA

Improve your learning

- 1) How can you say that right to vote plays a key role in democracy?(AS1)
- 2) Estimate the role of Election Commission in India. (AS1)
- 3) Define the functions of the Election Commission. (AS1)
- 4) What is the necessity of model code of conduct in a democracy? (AS1)
- 5) Our responsibility doesnot end with casting the vote. To protect the democracy, we should always be alert. Support.(AS1)
- 6) Have you ever observed any malpractices in the elections of your area? Which rule of Code of Conduct was violated?(AS4)
- 7) Read the paragraph under “Need for election reforms “ and comment. (AS2)
- 8) Prepare a pamphlet creating awareness about the importance of voting.(AS6)

Project

- Collect the information of ideal politicians who have sacrificed their life for the nation? What do we learn from their lives?
- Collect the information, create a table and analyse the results of Loksabha elections held recently.



Independent India (The First 30 years - 1947-77)

On the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognising the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up.

- B R Ambedkar

In the previous chapter, we read about how the Constitution of India was made. The Constitution sought to fulfill multiple goals simultaneously, including making democracy work, unification and creation of a single political community and bringing about massive social and economic changes. The setting of national goals and putting in place institutional mechanisms to achieve them within a relatively short span of time was undoubtedly a great achievement for a people who had been ruled by foreign power for more than two centuries.

The early years after independence are arguably the defining period in India's post-independent history. The main challenge before the leadership was the need to maintain unity and integrity, bring about a social and economic transformation and to ensure the successful working of the democratic system. These challenges are interrelated and great care had to be taken to ensure that the system did not get imbalanced. For instance, developmental goals, unity and integrity should not come at the cost of democracy. In this chapter, we will examine three interrelated issues including how the Constitution and democracy worked and how India resolved some key issues of nation building.

- In your opinion, have we been able to achieve social equality: think of instances that you would identify as examples of social equality and inequality.

First General Elections

The first general elections to be held under the new Constitution were immensely significant for Indian democracy. It represented India's determination to take the path of democracy after independence from British rule. India adopted Universal Adult franchise at one go, unlike in the West where franchise was extended in stages, first to the propertied and only subsequently to other sections of society. For instance, women in Switzerland got the right to vote only in 1971.

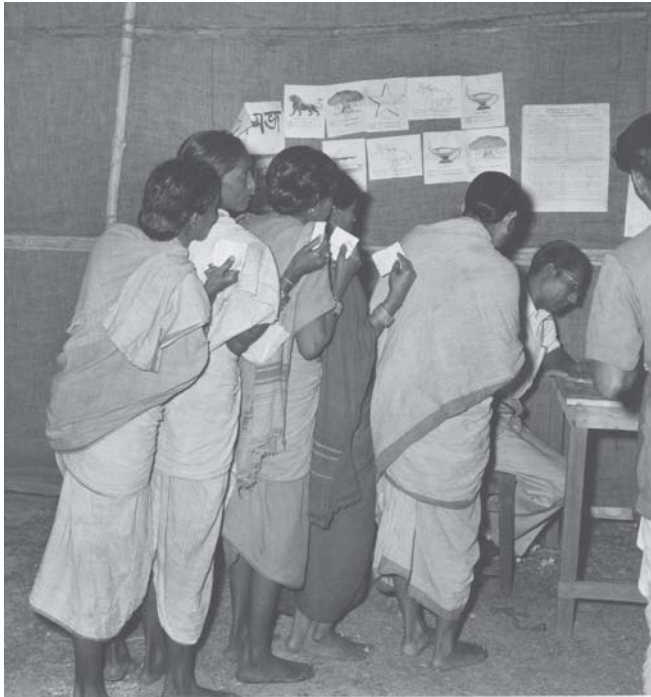


Fig 17.1 : Voting in first general elections

- How do you think does illiteracy affect elections, especially when it comes to exercising the choice of voting? How do you think can this problem be solved?
- Could we have considered that our country was democratic if all the people did not have voting rights?
- Given the literacy rate of women being low, if women were not allowed to vote how would it affect our policies?
- Being able to conduct regular elections can be considered a clear sign of being able to establish democracy. Do you agree with this statement? Give reasons.

The first elections were difficult because of the social dimensions also. A large section of the population did not know how to read and write. How were they going to indicate their choice? In some parts of the country, women were known by their father's or husband's name, they did not have an independent identity. This had to change if women were to have equal rights and take the country towards greater social equality. How were electoral rolls to be made? An Election Commission was set up to take care of the practical matters of conducting elections across the length and breadth of the country.

To overcome the problem of illiteracy, the Election Commission came up with a novel idea of having symbols from everyday life to represent political parties and candidates. This creative innovation dispensed with elaborate instructions and required only visual identification. This basic idea continues even today. To make it even easier, in the first election each candidate had a separate ballot box with the symbol stuck outside; the voter only had to drop their ballot paper in the box of their preferred candidate. In the run up to the elections, there was a massive campaign to encourage the voters to go out and vote.

Description of Elections

In districts where purdah was strictly observed, separate voting booths, staffed entirely by women were usually provided.

In Ajmer, a Rajput woman arrived at the polls in a heavily veiled chariot, her whole body was draped in velvet. The only part she exposed to the public gaze was the left forefinger which, as was required to prevent repeated voting, she extended to be marked with indelible ink.

Some villages voted as body. From Assam came the report of a tribal village whose members journeyed to the polling station the day before voting was to take place. They spent the night dancing and singing around large bonfires until sun-up when they marched to the booths in orderly fashion.

The people of PEPSU(Patiala and East Punjab States Union) region solved the problem of which of the two rival candidates to support by arranging a wrestling match between two of their young men, each named to represent a candidate, having agreed that all would vote for the candidate whose representative won.

Many offerings were brought, petitions professing loyalty or begging for food and clothing were sometimes found when ballot boxes were opened.

(Extracts from “The Indian Experience with Democratic Elections” 1958 by Margaret W. Fisher and Joan V. Bondurant, Indian Press Digests.)

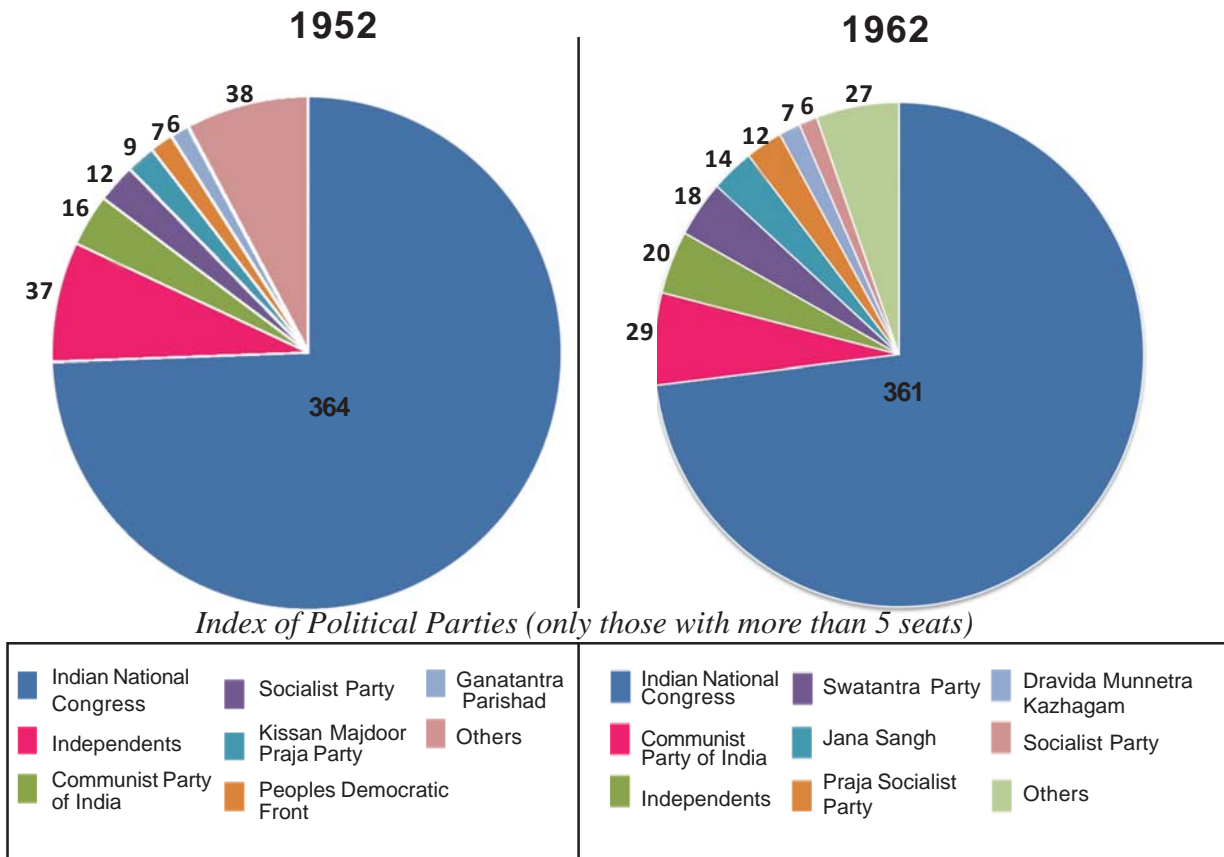
OneParty Dominance in Political System

In Independent India’s first three general elections in 1952, 1957 and 1962, the Indian National Congress won reducing other participants to almost nothing. Jawaharlal Nehru became the first Prime Minister of India. None of the other parties individually got more than 11% of the votes polled. The Congress consistently won over 70% of the seats by obtaining about 45% of the total votes cast. No other party was anyway near the Congress.

The Congress party formed the government in many of the states as well. This inaugurated what some observers called the Congress System. This period is identified specifically by the nature of the relationship between the almost always ruling Congress party and the other parties. However, the Congress always had smaller groups within it. Though these groups originated on the basis of personal competition between leaders, they shared in the overall goals of the party but differed on some policy issues.

The groups took different positions on various issues depending on the interests of the members. This made the Congress appear as if it was a party representing diverse interests and positions. At times, these groups also tied up with other political parties to pressurise the leadership. This also acted as an inbuilt corrective mechanism within the ruling party. Political competition in the one-party dominant system therefore took place within the Congress and the opposition parties only posed a latent and not a real threat.

Graph 1 : Seat Share of various political parties in 1952 and 1962



It was therefore not an undemocratic situation marked by the absence of other political parties. It was that other parties contested but were not able to win enough seats to challenge the Congress. However other political parties gradually built themselves and within a couple of decades became strong contenders for power. This period, to a large extent helped nurture democracy in its early years allowing the establishment of a multi-party system based on free and open competition.

It was the strength of the Constitutional framework and the democratic foundations laid by the freedom movement which enabled Indian politics to develop a multiparty democracy. Ruling parties have often acted in a partisan manner to silence the opposition and prevent multiparty democracy from striking roots.

- Summarise the features that could explain the Congress was able to dominate the political system.

India's experience, was therefore, very different from that of other colonial countries which got freedom around the same time like Indonesia, Pakistan, China, Nigeria and so on.

Demand for State Reorganisation

Among the first challenges that the new nation faced was the demand for reorganisation of states on the basis of language. During the British period, the country was divided into Presidencies (Calcutta, Madras and Bombay) and a number

of very large states like Central Provinces and Berar. A large part of the country was under princely states. In each of these, people speaking many different languages were living together. For example, Madras Presidency had in it people speaking Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, Telugu, Gondi and Oriya languages. All the people speaking a language and living in contiguous areas demanded to be organised under one state. These included the campaign for Samyukta Karnataka (uniting Kannada speakers spread across Madras, Mysore, Bombay and Hyderabad), Samyukta Maharashtra, the Mahagujarat movement, the merger of Travancore and Cochin princely states and the state of Punjab for Sikhs. Would agreeing to these demands help to build the unity of the country or would it lead to the breaking of the country along linguistic lines was the main concern?



Fig 17.2 : Jawaharlal Nehru inaugurating a road in early 1950s

The partition of the country on the basis of religion had created doubts and fears about the security and stability of India in the minds of the leadership. There was a fear that language reorganisation would lead to break down of the country. Hence, even though the Congress itself was organised on the linguistic lines and had promised to restructure the country on those lines, it developed cold feet when independence came.

The most vigorous of all the movements was that of the Telugu speakers which called upon the Congress to implement the old resolutions in favour of linguistic states. The Andhra Mahasabha had been active even during the British rule and was attempting to bring together the Telugu speaking people in the Madras presidency. This movement continued even after independence. The methods used included petitions, representations, street marches and fasts. Given the Congress opposition to this demand, the party did badly in the Telugu speaking areas in the first elections. The seats went to parties who supported the linguistic movement.



Map 1 : A graphic representation of various regions in the southern peninsula before State reorganisation.

Jawaharlal Nehru was not opposed to linguistic states; he only believed that this was not the right time for it. It was also the consensual position among the leaders of the day. They believed that India was in the process of consolidating itself and there should be no distraction.

State Reorganisation Act, 1956

Potti Sriramulu who demanding the formation of a separate Telugu speaking state began a hunger strike. In 15th December 1952, he died after 58 days of fasting. Potti Sriramulu's death was a turning point. Consequently, the states of Andhra State and Tamil Nadu were created. In August 1953, the States Reorganisation Commission (SRC) was appointed, with Fazl Ali, K. M. Panikkar and Hridaynath Kunzru as members, to address the issue of formation of states on the basis of the linguistic principle. On the basis of its report in 1956, the States Reorganisation Act was passed in parliament. This led to the creation of 14 states and six union territories. It should be noted that when the linguistic states were being formed, the tribal languages like Gondi and Santhali or Oraon were not taken into account;

- Do you think that the unity of India would have been better served if linguistic states were not formed?
- Why do you think were the tribal languages were ignored at this time?
- Do you know how many states and Union territories are there in India today?
- Which are the newest states of India and when were they created?

only languages like Tamil or Telugu spoken by dominant or powerful populations were considered.

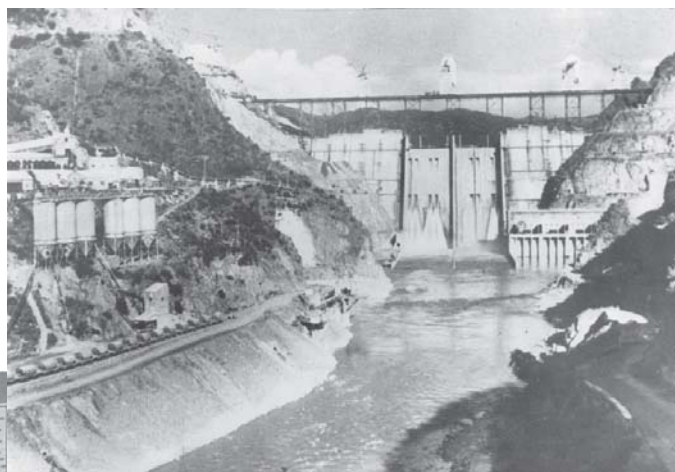
The creation of linguistic states was an example of how popular will triumphed and also showed how politics resolved a problem. Looking back today, linguistic reorganisation actually helped consolidate India and did not necessarily weaken India as expected.

Social and Economic Change

The Constituent Assembly had called for social, economic and political justice and equality of status and opportunity, it put social and economic change at the top of the agenda of modern India. The Planning Commission was set up within a month of the inauguration of the new Constitution. For Nehru, planning was not only about good economics but good politics as well. He hoped that planned development would dissolve the divisions of caste and religion, community and region as well as other disruptive and disintegrative tendencies and help India to emerge as a strong and modern nation.

The First Five Year Plan focussed on agriculture and stressed on the need for increasing food production, development of transport and communications and the provision of social services. It also stressed the need to industrialise India as quickly as possible. Given that food was a basic requirement, there was a consensus on increasing food production but there was no agreement on how this should be

Fig 17.3 Bhakra Dam under construction during 1960. This was one among the first dams India built after Independence. (below) Image of an adult literacy class from early decades. Discuss how different ideas of development or changes in society are reflected with these projects.



achieved. The two main questions that divided political opinion were: What place agriculture should have in the larger development strategy? How should resources be allocated between industry and agriculture?

For Nehru, agricultural transformation was not simply an economic issue, but a political, social and economic transformation of the rural sector. The strategy favoured by Nehru and finally adopted included three components: land reforms, agricultural cooperatives and local self-government. Three types of land reforms were contemplated: abolition of Zamindari system, tenancy reform and land ceilings. The primary aim of all these was to ensure that the land went to the hands of the actual tiller and this was to be an incentive for them to produce more. Cooperatives were to bring economies of scale and also provide valuable inputs like seeds, manure, fertilisers and so on. Local self-government would ensure that the land reforms were carried out and the cooperatives run according to the collective interests of the village.

Land reforms were however implemented in a half hearted manner across India. While Zamindari system was abolished, redistribution of land to the landless did not take place. The rich and powerful in the rural areas continued to control most of the land. The dalits continued to be landless but benefitted from the abolition of forced labour and abolition of untouchability.

The First Five Year Plan focussed on improving agriculture by building large dams to irrigate and produce electricity. Dams benefitted both the agriculture and the industrial sector. Though there was an increase in agricultural production, it was still not sufficient to meet the needs of the population.

The planners felt that for the country to develop, it was essential to develop industries so that more people can shift to towns to work in factories and in the service sector. Hence, from the Second Five Year Plan onwards, the emphasis shifted to industries. You would have read about these aspects of economic development of India in the earlier classes.

Foreign Policy and Wars

When India became independent, the Cold War had just begun and the world was being polarised into countries in the US or USSR camp. Jawaharlal Nehru followed a policy of not joining either camp and tried to maintain an equidistant and independent position in foreign policy. He also joined hands with several other countries that had become independent around the same time and wanted to follow

- If you live in a rural area, find out if institutions like cooperatives were established before 1970's and who became members in it.
- Compare the land reforms carried out in India with that of China or Vietnam.

a similar policy – Indonesia, Egypt, Yugoslavia and so on. Together they built the Non Aligned Movement. As for the immediate neighbours, he formulated the Panchsheel policy of non-interference in each other's internal affairs. However, India had to face wars during this period, first with

Pakistan over Kashmir in 1948, 1965, over Bangladesh issue in 1971 and with China over border issue in 1962. India was not well prepared for the wars, especially the war in 1962 and sustained heavy losses of human life and money.

The Succession

With Nehru's death in 1964, critics raised doubts as to whether democracy itself would survive, or would it lose its democratic ethos like other countries?

The Congress however managed a successful transition by choosing Lal Bahadur Shastri as its leader in the government. Shastri was immediately put to test with a series of issues which challenged the fundamental values and goals of the Indian nation. These included the Anti-Hindi agitation led by the DMK in the South, which threatened the goals of unity and integrity, the shortage of food which came in the way of social and economic transformation, and a war with Pakistan in 1965. Indira Gandhi succeeded Shastri as Prime Minister after his untimely death in 1966.

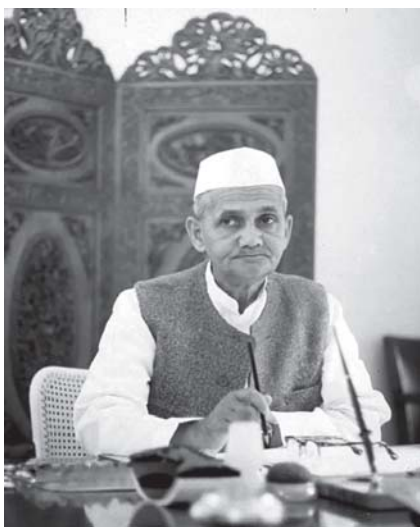


Fig 17.4 : Lal Bahadur Shastri

Anti-Hindi Agitation

When the Official Languages Act was passed in 1963, the DMK believed it was an attempt to foist Hindi on the rest of the country and they began a state-wide campaign

protesting the imposition of Hindi. These included strikes, dharnas, hartals and burning of effigies, Hindi books as well pages of the Constitution. Hindi signboards were also blackened in many places. There were pitched battles between the police and the agitators. The Central government had to soon take note of these protests. The Congress itself was divided between pro-Hindi and anti-Hindi camps. Some felt that the unity of the country was at stake.

Finally, when things seemed to be going out of hand, Shastri, though he supported the pro-Hindi stand, made a series of concessions to assuage the feelings of the anti-Hindi camp. These included among others, the right of each state to have a language of its own, which could be the regional language or English, communications could be in regional languages with English translations, English would continue to be the communication language between the centre and the states and that the civil service exams would be conducted in English rather than Hindi alone.

Here again, we see how a popular social movement forced the government of the day to reconsider the official position. The prime minister in both cases went out of their way to ensure that things were within control, despite not being personally in favour of the stand by the agitationists. It was clear for both Nehru and Shastri; the unity of the nation came first over personal standpoints.

- How did the language policy help foster national unity and integrity?
- Is there a need for a national language? Why?
- Should all languages have equal status? Why?

Green Revolution

The debate regarding the developmental strategy was not simply an economic one but also had political implications. While Nehru and the left of centre group within the Congress favoured the state-controlled and institutional strategy in agriculture, there was right of centre faction which was opposed to state control. They constantly criticised these programmes and attempted to water down the proposals. Since this group was most powerful at the state level, they also ensured that most radical plans were not implemented properly.

Once it became clear that the existing strategy was not increasing food production, there was a shift to a different strategy between the years 1964-67. This attempted to secure the cooperation of the state governments as well as increase food production. In a way, it also reflected the changes in economic policy after Nehru's death and also the changes in economic thinking.

Rise of Regional parties and Regional movements

The 1967 election was a landmark election in the history of India. It showed that elections had come to be taken very seriously and had a life of their own. By this time, there were gainers and losers from the economic development process and this changed the pattern of political competition. It was not surprising that the Congress party suffered its worst defeat till then. It was returned with the lowest majority it had since independence (284 seats). It was defeated in assemblies like Bihar, U.P., Rajasthan, Punjab, West Bengal, Orissa, Madras and Kerala. This was the first big transition in India. The party which had ruled continually for nearly 30 years was now being challenged. The defeated party did not try to cling to power but allowed the victors to form the government. This showed that democracy had taken roots in India and the country was moving towards a competitive multi-party system.

The prominent losses for the Congress included Tamil Nadu and Kerala. In Tamil Nadu, the DMK won by a huge margin. It also showed that strongly organised regional movements could challenge the dominant party. The DMK had strong links with the film industry and was able to galvanise fans organisations of the popular hero, M G Ramachandran popularly called MGR across the state.

The Congress also lost in the neighbouring state, Kerala, as also in West Bengal and Odisha. These defeats and challenges also weakened the Congress internally. In many states in the north, where it had won narrow victories, its members defected to opposition parties. Consequently, the Congress governments fell and they were replaced by Samyukta Vidhayak Dal (SVD) governments. These were basically a coalition of legislators against the Congress - made up Jan Sangh, Socialists, Swatantra Party, and Congress defectors, besides local parties.

The new governments are an important marker in India's political history because it was in a way the first democratic upsurge. It was for the first time that the intermediate castes; the groups who had first benefitted from the land reforms and acquired some degree of economic standing gained political power. These castes included the Jats in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, Kurmis and Koeris in Bihar, Lodhs in MP as well as the Yadavs in all these states; the Reddys and Kammas in Andhra Pradesh, the Vokkaligas in Karnataka and the Vellalas in Tamil Nadu. They were the dominant castes in their respective states and also had a significant numerical presence. The DMK itself is the best example of the coming to age of the other dominant (backward) castes.

Many of these SVD governments were however short-lived. Their life was marked by defections and corruption. Power seemed to be the only thing that united them. These governments had nothing to showcase. However, the problem is that even today, the regional or state parties are evaluated from this standpoint.

This period saw a renewal of a regional sentiment in different parts of the country. In Andhra Pradesh, there was demand for the separation of Telangana. The movement was spearheaded by the students of Osmania University, whose main

grouse was that the benefits of development were reaching only few regions of the state.

In Assom, a new state called Meghalaya was created in December 1969 out of the tribal districts of Khasi, Jaintia and Garo hills. Punjab, despite being formed in 1966, did not have a capital of its own. During the period 1968-69, there were a series of demonstrations asking for Chandigarh which served as the common capital of Haryana and Punjab to be given to them. In Maharashtra, there was a curious demand of Bombay for Maharashtrians only. This was led by the Shiv Sena. The main target of this party was the South Indians who the party believed were cornering all the employment in the city.



Fig 17.5 : Indira Gandhi

At the same time, old demands also continued. The Kashmir and the Nagaland demands also came up during this period. Sheikh Abdullah came back to the state after he was freed from house arrest. Similarly in Nagaland, a new younger leadership came up to take the struggle forward.

This was also a period of communal tension. There were riots in different parts of the country including Ranchi (Bihar), Ahmedabad (Gujarat), Jalgaon (Maharashtra) as well as Aligarh (Uttar Pradesh). These were difficult times. A political transition has just happened and a new leadership was taking its place. The new leadership was yet to be equipped to handle the multitude of pressures that were arising as a result of the growing political awareness and articulation of demands.

Jammu and Kashmir

The circumstances under which Jammu and Kashmir acceded to the Indian union were very different from these of the other states. Unlike most other states, the ruler Hari Singh wanted the state to remain independent of both India and Pakistan. The state had a Muslim majority population and was being ruled by a Hindu ruler. Around the time when India got independence, there was a popular movement, All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim conference in the state led by Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah against the Maharaja asking for greater representation of Muslims in government employment and for a representative government among other things. This movement became the National Conference and it had Hindus and Sikhs as its members. The National Conference shared many similarities with the Congress in terms of both a commitment to religious harmony and socialism.

Towards the end of 1947, the state began to face an external invasion on its western borders by Razakars supported by Pakistan. With the attackers nearing Srinagar, the Maharaja requested Indian forces for their defence. The Governor General of India, however held that Indian forces would be available only after the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India. At the same time, various options available regarding the future of the state, including being autonomous, were being widely discussed.

In January 1948, India took the case to the United Nations. However, the case was not presented convincingly and the issue got transformed into a India-Pakistan question. Meanwhile, Sheik Abdullah reached what is called the Delhi Agreement, whereby Kashmiris would become full citizens of India and have greater autonomy as well as powers compared to the other states of India. Most of the clauses of this agreement that were intended to protect the essential characteristics of the state found a place in the Constitution in the form of article 370.

At the same time, there was also an economic divide in the state which acquired a religious tone. The land reforms in the state disposed many of the landlords who happened to be Hindus, of land beyond the ceiling limits, while the major beneficiaries of this economic programme happened to be Muslims. During the period of 1950-1990, many attempts were made by the central government to reduce the autonomy of the State and bring it in line with other States. This caused a severe reaction among the people of Kashmir. This was used to ferment a movement of Independence in Kashmir in 1990s. During this period a large number of Hindu families in the Kashmir valley were forced to migrate to other parts of India.

Indira Gandhi took up the challenge both from within her party as well those outside by taking a sharp left turn post the 1967 elections. She attempted to create a new social base of her own and for her party by identifying with the poor and down trodden. This move was a double edged weapon. Old promises of social and economic development were yet to be fulfilled and this was seen to be the major reason for the defeat of Congress party in 1967. Yet, the Congress under Indira Gandhi was making new promises. Less than a decade later, the lack of fulfilment of rising mass expectations created frustration and disheartenment and culminated with the imposition of Emergency.

Bangladesh War

In the early 1970s, trouble was brewing in East Pakistan (what is now Bangladesh) as a movement for the assertion of Bengali identity and protest against what was seen as a step-motherly treatment by West Pakistan. In the general elections, the party led by Mujibur Rahaman won but he was arrested and taken to West Pakistan and a period of military repression of East Pakistan began. Lakhs of

refugees streamed to India which had to feed and house them. Meanwhile, a liberation movement started in Bangladesh and India was asked to assist in it. In 1971, a war broke out between India and Pakistan and India decisively intervened to ensure the liberation of Bangladesh and its establishment as an independent country. India was able to do this not only because it had built up its military strength but also because it skillfully used its non-aligned position between the two super powers to ensure that they did not intervene in the war.

The Left turn

Indira Gandhi charted a new path for the Congress and herself by introducing new policies and programmes. This policy also helped her get control over the party organisation.

Until 1971, the elections to the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assembly were held simultaneously in most States. Indira Gandhi broke this pattern, by calling for early elections in 1971 rather than 1972. The Congress went to elections using popular slogan “*Garibi Hatao*”. It also promised radical restructuring of the system to benefit the poor and marginalised. The Congress won with a record margin and this raised the popularity of Indira Gandhi. The opposition was decimated, her critics were silenced and she became the darling of the masses. Soon after, there was the war with Pakistan and India’s victory further raised the popularity of Indira Gandhi. In the legislative assembly elections held subsequently in 1972, the Congress did well and was riding on the popularity wave of Indira Gandhi. She now had control over both the party as well as the parliament.

Among the important legislations that were passed during this period apparently to achieve the goal of social and economic transformation were the nationalisation of many private banks and abolishing of princely pensions. Both these legislations were challenged in the Courts and this, in a way, made the Court appear as if it was coming in the way of the political goals.

The judiciary, however, had other ideas regarding the policies and programmes. The Supreme Court was afraid that the Constitution was being amended rapidly in the name of achieving social and



Fig 17.6 : Family Planning Clinic in Calcutta (Kolkata).

economic change which and this was unbalancing the existing relations between different institutional structures. In 1973, the Court came up with the landmark decision on the Basic Structure of the Constitution, which put a check on the governmental power to amend the Constitution.

Events beyond her control put Indira Gandhi in a spot and made it difficult for her to fulfil all the promises. Her term coincided with a rather grave social and economic conditions. The 1973, Arab-Israeli war raised the oil prices to an all time high and put huge pressure on the government. Inflation and the rise in prices of essential items, scarcity of food and unemployment began to have an effect. There was a general unhappiness among large sections of the population. This gave the Opposition a chance to get its act together. They began to tap into this discontent in different parts of the country. The opposition, united under Jaya Prakash Narayan, ran a series of campaigns in different parts of the country against the Congress and especially against Indira Gandhi. This was the JP movement and it was very prominent in Bihar and Gujarat.

Emergency

The government reacted harshly by coming up with a series of laws which violated civil rights in the name of maintaining order. The opposition also criticised the P.M. for personalising the government. Meanwhile, due to a decision of Allahabad High court, Indira Gandhi was unseated from Lok Sabha for violating some election provisions during the 1971 elections. However, she got a stay from the Supreme Court.

A few days later, with the JP movement gaining more strength, the government imposed Emergency and justified it as necessary to preserve order, save democracy, protect the social and economic transformation and preserve national integrity.

With this, democracy was put on hold. The government began a series of repressive measures, claiming that this was necessary to bring order in the country. Many of the fundamental rights were suspended. There were also instances of arbitrary detention, torture and other violations of civil liberties. While people welcomed control over price rise and the campaign against black marketing and bonded labour, many programmes undertaken by the emergency government such as demolition of slums and forced sterilisation in the name of population control became very unpopular. However, in the absence of civic freedom, people could not express their discontent and the government, therefore, could not take corrective measures.

The major highlight of this period was the 42nd Constitutional Amendment which brought about a series of changes. It had the following aims: a) Excluding the courts from election disputes; b) Strengthening the central government vis-à-vis the state governments; c) Providing maximum protection from judicial challenges to social and economic transformation legislation; d) Making the

judiciary subservient to parliament. While the supposed aim of the Amendment was to protect social and economic development from judiciary, strengthen national unity and so on, in reality, it actually weakened the democratic fabric of this country.

Summing up

Though the first thirty years ended with the Emergency, if a balance sheet were to be drawn, there would be more credits than debits.

The most important achievement of this period was the establishment of a stable democracy. The gradual emergence of a competitive multi-party system, with parties representing diverse interests was a real achievement if one were to compare India with other countries that got independence around the same time. India, unlike other countries, not only had regular, free and fair elections but also had genuine change of governments and leaders as well. The Indian Constitution not only guaranteed civil rights but also had an institutional architecture in place to ensure its protection.

India also set up an impressive institutional framework with independent institutions like the judiciary, Election Commission, Controller and Auditor General and so on. Bureaucratic neutrality was also an important achievement. The establishment of civilian control over the armed forces was another significant achievement. In comparison to our neighbour, Pakistan, India stands far ahead in the institutions of democracy.

India has been extremely successful in holding together and maintaining its unity and integrity. India was seen a fit case for break up given its extreme diversities and the fact, that it has not done so is a valuable lesson for many other countries.

In terms of economic goals, the setting up of the Planning Commission and the aim of balanced regional development is noteworthy. There was a genuine concern for the social and economically deprived sections of society. From a state of dependency for food, India gradually became self-sufficient in food production. It laid down the foundation for an enviable industrial base. However, balanced regional development did not take place and some regions developed better than others. Similarly, employment opportunities also did not increase as much as they should have.

One of the greatest weaknesses was undoubtedly the low priority given to primary education and public health. This was going to haunt India for a long time to come. Other countries like China and Korea which also began a new innings around the same time did much better on these two counts as compared to India.

While the more obnoxious effects of the caste system, like untouchability were removed, there still remained a large amount of discrimination. Gender discrimination continued.

Key words

State reorganisation
Regional movements

One party dominance
Nationalisation

Emergency

Improve your learning

1. What measures were taken to bring in socio-economic change during the initial years after independence? (AS₁)
2. What do you understand about one party dominance? Would you consider it as dominance only in elections or also in terms of ideology? Discuss with reasons. (AS₁)
3. Language became a central rallying point in Indian politics on many occasions, either as a unifying force or as divisive element. Identify these instances and describe them. (AS₁)
4. What were the major changes in political system after 1967 elections? (AS₁)
5. Think of the other ways in which states could have been created and how would they be better than language based reorganisation. (AS₁)
6. What measures of Indira Gandhi are called 'left turn'? How do you think was this different from policies of the previous decades? Based on the knowledge gained in the economics chapters, describe how is it different from the current policies. (AS₁)
7. In what ways was the Emergency period a set back to the Indian democracy? (AS₁)
8. What were the institutional changes that came up after the Emergency? (AS₁)
9. Locate the following on the map of India. (AS₅)
 - a) Maharashtra
 - b) Gujarat
 - c) Bihar
 - d) Uttar Pradesh
 - e) Jammu-Kashmir
 - f) Nagaland
 - g) Punjab
 - h) Meghalays
10. Analyse the advantages and problems faced by the people due to the Multi-party system in India. (AS₄)
11. Read the para 2 of page 242 and comment on it. (AS₂)