

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 saw how the Constitution of India was made. The Constitution sought to fulfil 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, is arguably the defining period in India's post-independent history. The main challenges before the leadership was the need to maintain unity and integrity, bring about a social and economic transformation and to ensure the 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, development goals and unity and integrity should not

- 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.

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.

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 18.1 : Voting in first general elections

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 has 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.

- How do you think illiteracy affects elections, especially when it comes to exercising the choice of voting? How do you think this problem can be solved?
- Could we have considered that our country was democratic if all 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.

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 village 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.)

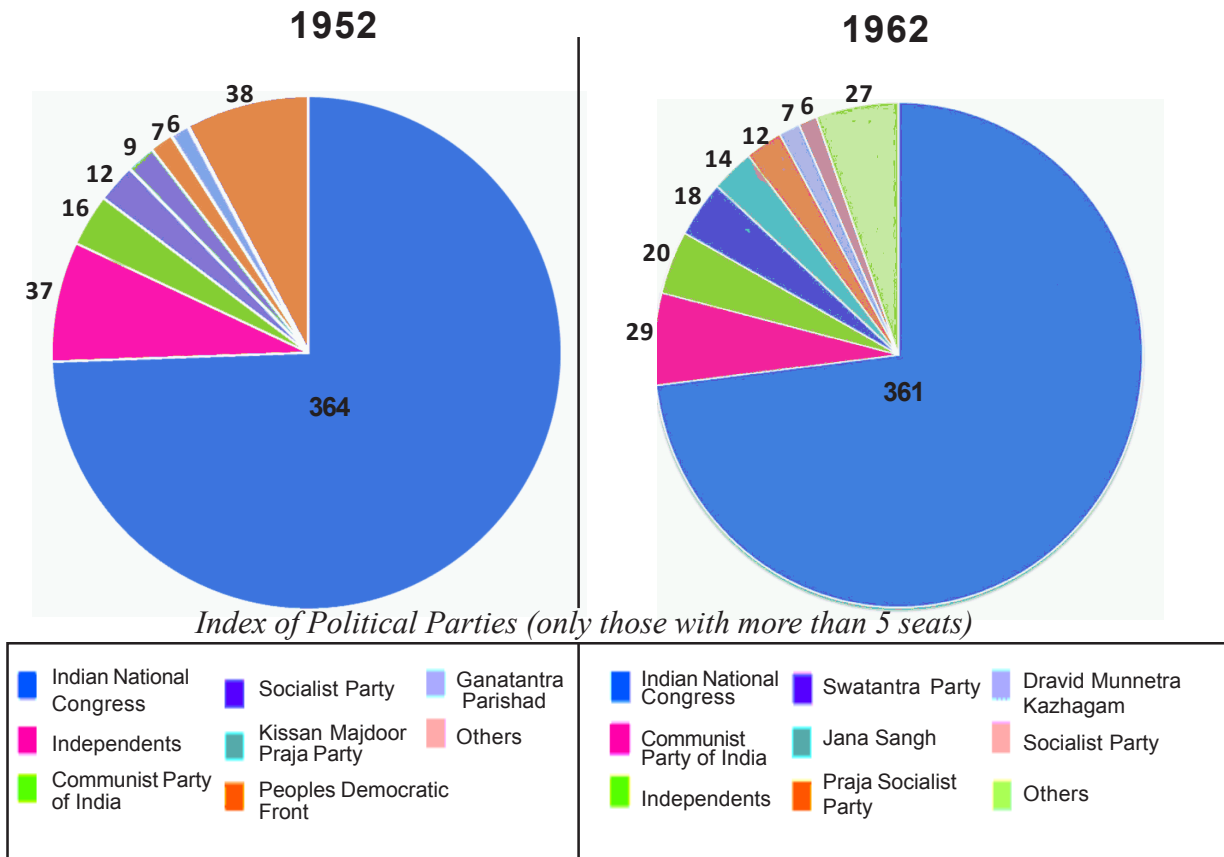
One Party Dominance in Political System

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 within it smaller groups. 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. The opposition parties therefore 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 the other parties which contested but were not able to win enough seats to challenge the Congress. The 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 features that could explain 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 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 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. Will agreeing to these demands help to build the unity of the country or will it lead to the breaking of the country along linguistic lines was the main concern?

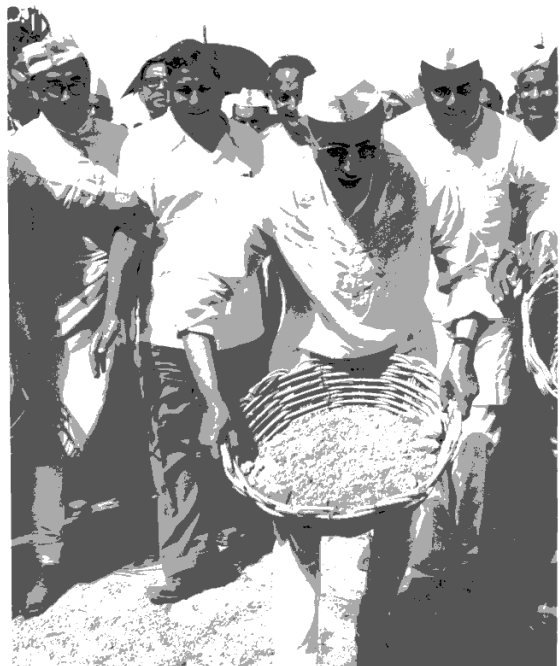
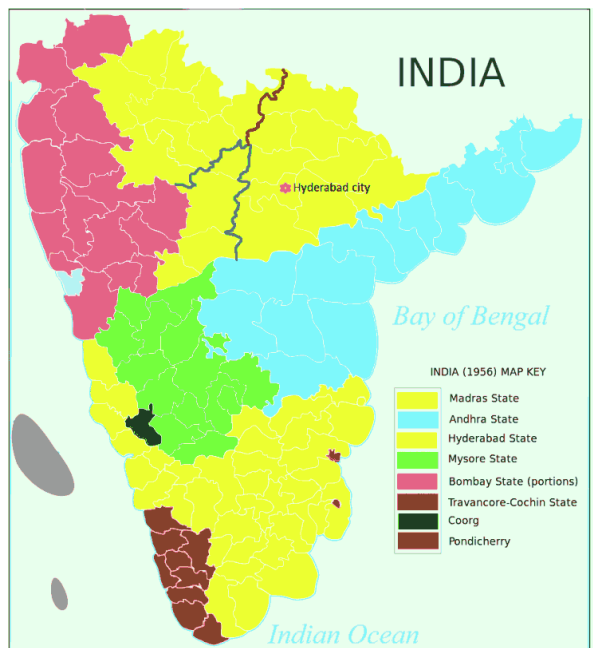


Fig 18.2 : Jawaharlal Nehru inaugurating a road in early 1950s

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 the fear that language reorganisation would lead to break up 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 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 demanding the formation of a separate Telugu speaking state died after 58 days of fasting in October 1952. Consequently the states of Andhra Pradesh 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 unity of India would have been better served if linguistic states were not formed?
- Why do you think 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 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 18.3 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 were 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 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 two wars during this period, first with Pakistan over Kashmir in 1948

and with China 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 the death of Nehru in 1964, critics raised doubts as to whether democracy itself would survive, or would it like other countries lose its democratic ethos?



Fig 18.4 : Lal Bahadur Shastri

The Congress however managed a successful transition with the choosing of Lal Bahadur Shastri as its leader in 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, besides a war with Pakistan in 1965. Indira Gandhi succeeded Shastri as Prime Minister after his untimely death in 1966.

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 and hartals, burning 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 to 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?
- Should all languages have equal status?

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 the 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 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 the death of Nehru and also the changes in economic thinking as well.

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 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 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 neighbouring Kerala as also in West Bengal and Orissa. 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, 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 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 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 students of Osmania University, whose main grouse

was that the benefits of development were going to only some sections of the state.

In Assam, 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 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 was cornering all the employment in the city.



Fig 18.5 : 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 was very different from that 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 Hindu ruler. At around the time when India got independence, there was a popular movement, All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim conference in the state led by Sheik 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 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 the 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 other states of India. Most of the clauses of this agreement were intended to protect the essential characteristics of the state found 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 large number of Hindu families from 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 Congress defeat in 1967. Yet, Indira 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 skilfully 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.

Immediately after the victory in the War, using the popular slogan “*Garibi Hatao*” the Congress won with a record margin in the 1971 General elections and this raised the popularity of Indira Gandhi even more. The opposition was decimated, her critics were silenced and she became the darling of the masses. 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 ostensibly 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 economic change was actually disfiguring it and 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.



Fig 18.6 : Family Planning Clinic in Calcutta (Kolkata).

Events beyond her control put Indira Gandhi in a spot and made it difficult for her to fulfil all her promises. Her term coincided with rather grave social and economic conditions. The 1973 Arab-Israeli war raised 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 also 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 series of campaigns in different parts of the country against the Congress and especially Indira. This was the JP movement and it was very prominent in Bihar and Gujarat.

Emergency

The government reacted harshly with series of laws which violated civil rights in the name of maintaining order. The opposition also criticised the Prime Minister for personalising the government. Meanwhile, due to a decision of Allahabad High court Indira Gandhi was unseated from Lok Sabha for violating some of the provisions of the Representation of the Peoples Act 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 prices 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 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 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 something of a 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 set up 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 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

One party dominance

Emergency

Regional movements

Nationalisation

Improve your learning

1. Identify statement or statements in bracket that are relevant to statements in italics on left
 - a) *political equality can be identified with* (right to get admission in any school, principle of one person one vote, right to be enter any religious worship place)
 - b) *universal adult franchise in the Indian context meant* (allowing all people to vote for any political party, allowing all people to vote in elections, allowing all people to vote for Congress party)
 - c) *Congress dominance would include* (being able to attract people from various ideologies; being able to win most state, assembly seats after elections; being able to use police force during election)
 - d) *Emergency imposed* (restrictions on people's rights; ensured eradication of poverty; accepted by all political parties)
2. What measures were taken to bring in socio-economic change during the initial years after independence?
3. 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.
4. Language became a central rallying point in Indian politics on many occasions, either as unifying force or as divisive element. Identify these instances and describe them.
5. What were the major changes in political system after 1967 elections?
6. Think of other ways in which states could have been created and how would they be better than language based reorganisation.
7. What measures of Indira Gandhi are called 'left turn'? How do you think this was different from polices of previous decades? Based on your economics chapters describe how it is different from the current policies.
8. In what ways was the Emergency period a set back to the Indian democracy?
9. What were the institutional changes that came up after the Emergency?