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Origin and Development of Indian Party System

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Abstract

The evolve of Indian Party system have a long history. At first it came from national liberation movement. The Indian Political Party emerged with the help of different type of association and also the rise of protest movement against colonial rule to provide the emergence of political parties. At the British period political parties acted as a platform of Indian freedom struggle and addressed to the goal of Indian National Movement. From pre-independence to post-independence Indian National Congress was dominant party in India and most of the political parties in India emerge from split of Indian National Congress. Today there are different political parties at the national and regional level on the basis of local needs, provincial facts, language etc.

Key Words: Zimindar, Gandhian philosophy, Indian National Congress, Forward Bloc, Akali Dal, Lok Dal.

The Indian political parties came from national liberation movement and, “diversities and social fragmentation of Indian society”.¹ As other third world countries, evolve and development of Indian political party emerge through reaction against the colonial rule. At the 1830’s some social and economic zamindar association evolved as faction at the regional and local level. The rise of strong national consciousness gradually led to strong mass movement under British India. The local and regional level faction were lead to the movement to participate . Though these faction were unable to grow mass movement and to participate in all section of society. These faction had no universal approach, ideology and stand point of future planning. So there was not such strong single voice against British rule.

The emergence of newly association, member were came from different profession of society. After the Munity of 1857, the students of Calcutta University led the main part and took membership from different profession. The members of land holder association leave from older association and organized newly association, were quite different from feudalistic pattern of land holder association. Though, “the British Indian Association of Bengal had increasingly identified itself with the interest of the Zaminders and thus, gradually lost its anti-British edge, the Bombay Association and Madras Native Association had become reactionary and moribund. And so the younger nationalists of Bengal led by Surendranath Banerjee and Anand Mohan Bose, founded in Indian Association in 1876. Younger men of Madras – M. Viraraghavacharior G. Subramaniyalyer, P. Ananda Charlu and others – formed the Madras Mahajan Sabha in 1884. The Bombay,, the more

militant intellectuals like K.T. Telang and Pheroseshah Mehta broke away from older leaders like Dadabhai Framji and Dinshaw Patel on political grounds and formed the Bombay Presidency Association in 1885. Among the older associations only the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha carried on as before. But, then, it was already in the hands of nationalist intellectuals.”² Though these association / faction were leading voice of middle class and the English speaking people and they also helped participate the particular section of Indian people.

The rise of protest movement against colonial rule to provide the emergence of political parties and party system in India. The growth of national feelings concentrated to the Indian people in local level and that is gradually led to its galvanization into a mass movement, “The Indian National Congress was able to capture unexplored, political space at the national level and projected itself as an authentic repository of spirit of Indian Nationalism.”³ In 1885, Indian National Congress was created and “soon became a leading voice of the Indian middle class, constantly clambering for more jobs under the colonial government and for greater political participation.”⁴ After all in 1885, congress was set up and all faction / association were stand within a single umbrella.

Alan Octavian Hume, a retired English Civil Servant, was of the view that the emergence of educated class should be accepted as a political reality and that timely steps should be taken to the expression of the grievances of this class. This educated class also came from the landlord or zamindar class who are created a new strata of the society. Hume believed that efforts must be made to satisfy the ambitions of this class. Lord Rippon also shared with Hume’s views. On 1st March 1883 O.A. Hume addressed students of Calcutta University urging them to form an association for the mental, moral, social and political regeneration of the people of India.

The Indian leaders cooperated with Hume in starting this National Congress, were patriotic men of high character who willingly accepted Hume. The efforts of A.O. Hume yielded results and he organized the first session of the Indian National Congress at Bombay in Dec. 1885. It was presided over by Umesh Chandra Banerjee of Bengal and attended by 72 delegates.

After along time congress acted as a platform of Indian freedom struggle and addressed to the goal of Indian National Movement. In the first decade of 20th century there was much public debate and disagreement between the Moderates all Extremists. M.K. Gandhi took control of the national movement in 1919. With this, significant phase of Indian national began and which continued till independence. Though Congress took off Gandhian philosophy, emphasized the strategy of Satyagraha and Ahimsa in fighting against the British. Gandhi evolved the technique of Satyagraha based on truth and non-violence. Congress, under the leadership of Gandhi showed the people a new way of fighting injustice without violence, for what one believed to be right and Gandhi called this Satyagraha. In pre independence Congress protest against different types of British decision, such as Swadeshi movement, the Rowlatt Act, Khilafat Movement etc. Congress in a special session at Calcutta in 1920 adopted the new program of non-violent, non-cooperation movement. The aims of this movement were to redress the wrongs done to Punjab and Turkey, and the attainment of Swaraj.

An unfortunate development after the calling off of the non-cooperation movement was the growth of communal tension and the occurrence of communal riots. The growth of communal tendencies hindered the nationalist movement. These sidetracked the attention of people from the need for complete independence from foreign rule. The civil disobedience movement began with the famous Dandi March on 12 March 1930. In this place, Gandhi and his followers made salt in violation of the salt laws. This act was a symbol of the Indians refusal of live under the British-made law and also under the British rule. In May 1934, the entire Civil Disobedience Movement was

called off. The resistance involved millions of people in the country, young and old, men and women, and people belonging to all regions and communities.

Even though the congress condemned the Government of India Act, 1935, it decided to participate in the election to the provincial legislatures that were to take place in 1937. In the election of 1937, were participated congress, Muslim League and others. Different provinces wherein the congress formed its ministries. The congress ministries soon after coming to power took some important measures such as the release of political prisoners and the lifting of ban on the newspapers.

The quit India Movement or the August Revolution marked a new era in the history of Indian National Movement. Through the Quit India Movement was a lived one, it exhibited the depth the nationalist feeling had reached in the country. Besides it also revealed the great capacity for struggle and sacrifice that the people rendered. It also served as an eye opener to the British Government about India's attitude to British imperialism. It was a revelation to the British that they cannot dominate over India for long. It was a landmark in India's struggle against British imperialism.

It is fact that, "after independence, the Congress was transformed from a movement into a ruling party and shifted its attention from political mobilization to administration except for the purpose of contending election."⁵ However "after independence, the Congress retained its legacy of being a movement, as it had to carry on with the formidable task of nation building."⁶ The Indian political parties are mainly two types – national level parties and state level parties. Some of the political parties have their origin from before India's independence, for example, Indian National Congress, Forward Bloc, Akali Dal, National Conference and some other parties. (Some of these parties were either social or political organization before India's independence and they became political parties after India's independence. But many of the present parties were established after India's independence. Members, who split from larger parties, established some of these parties. For example, in the 1939 Forward Bloc was established by S.C. Bose in pre independence period, in the 1960's Lok Dal was established by people who split from Indian National Congress. CPI (M) established after the split from CPI etc. This is the nature of Indian political party.

It is important "to understand India's parties and party system from Independence in 1947, just after Indira Gandhi first became Prime Minister and the year of the fourth general election, we can do no better than to turn to the accounts that Kothari and Morris-Jones provided. Their views are sufficiently similar, though they are developed independently to be considered together here. They describe a 'dominant party system' that is multiparty system, in which free competition among parties occurred but in which the Indian National Congress enjoyed a dominant position both in terms of the number of seats that it held in parliament in New Delhi and the state legislative assemblies, and in terms of its immense organizational strength outside the legislatures. It is extremely important that we organized that congress was dominant in both spheres. Indeed, it was its dominance at the organizational level that was more important, for on the rested its legislative superiority. The might, the rich, and the subtlety of its organization also enabled it to dominate the actions of bureaucrats who were changed with the implementation of policies and laws at regional and, especially, at sub regional levels."⁷

In the first period, it has now become conventional to begin any discussion on political parties in India with emergence of the congress dominance during the 1950s and its breakdown during the 1960s and 1970s. At that time opposition parties forged alliances and formed governments in eight major Indian states. And "that the new situation brought a number of opposition parties fully into the

market place, and competition that had previously occurred within the congress was now brought into the realm of interparty conflict".⁸ And "dominant party model giving say to a more different tilted structure of party competition."⁹ Several interpretations given to the emergence of non-congress parties and their rise to power, one was that the central leadership of the congress was divided. Congress was unable to perform its earlier function of moderating and neutralising factional splits in several states. It is fact that, "from 1977 to Dec. 1984, was marked by freer competition between political parties but also by greater instability in the party system and within many parties. It was a time characterized by abundant alternation between parties in power at the state and the national level, by continued decay and fragmentation within parties, by a tendency towards personalized control of parties or splinters by eminent and not so eminent politicians, and by great fluidity within the party system as factions and rumps and individuals defeated or realigned themselves this why and that."¹⁰

"The United Front experiment through which the left, regional and minor parties came to the centre stage of Indian politics and were called upon to play an important role in running the government heralded new patterns of party competition. The pluralistic nature of India's federal polity began to assist itself in the party domain. Suddenly we found how dependent national parties are on regional and small parties. From a time when the term regional party was considered not a very respectable one (often they are describe as parochial parties), now they are much sought after. From a time when the national parties dictated the state leaders and changed the chief ministers at will, the regional parties now decided who the prime minister should be. They gained a voice in national politics. They demanded for a more federal government and more autonomy to the states."¹¹ This is for, Indian politics to explain the changes in the parties and party system during this period, namely democratisation and decay. Whatever, "as people at all level of society became increasingly aware of the logic of electoral politics, a new a awakening occurred among the great mass of India's voters. They became assertive and their appetite for resource from politicians grew. India became increasingly democratic and increasingly difficult to govern. The period also saw a decline in the capacity of institutions to respond to pressure from society. This decay affected most political parties. The awakening of the electorate and the decay of parties combined to generate two major tendencies : i) the way the election were won or lost. A change from the day before 1972, when incumbent at the state and national level usually own re-election, to a period in which they usually lost; and ii) growing divergence between the logic of politics at the national level and the logic of politics in various state level arenas. Thus this period was marked by greater competition among parties and also by greater instability within many parties. It was a time characterised by abundant alternation between parties in power at the state and national levels, by continued decay and fragmentation within parties and by a tendency towards personalised control of parties."¹² At the end 1990's there were tendency to forge alliances with several parties to come to power marked the party politics. And as it is the trend of Indian political system.

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