

Introduction to Human Sciences

Political Science: Lecture V

The Indian Party System

- Two major functions
 - articulation of the demands and aspirations of the common people
 - the constant efforts to capture political power through legitimate means
- Active since before independence
- In the post-Independent parliamentary democratic setup political parties became the “primary instrumentality through which democracy could be operationalized in letter and spirit”
- Initial Phase called as the “Congress System”
- Split in 1969 – Formation of Congress (O) and Congress (I)

Evolution of the Indian Party System

- Monopoly of Congress
 - Upper and Middle Class with Mass Support
- Only Feeble Alternative was the Communist
 - decrying the intimacy of the Congress with the cause of the bourgeoisie classes
- Congress dominated first 3 elections and the opposition was fragmented
- Formation of Swatantra Party in 1959
- Homogeneous elite in roles of authority and decision-making
- Locality oriented pluralist model of electoral mobilization

Indira Era

- Two turning points
 - Indo-China War
 - Demise of Nehru
- Fading of the Nationalist Charisma
- Populist Politics of Indira Gandhi
 - Garibi Hatao
 - India-Pakistan war of 71
 - Green Revolution
- De-institutionalization of the Congress party culminated with the replacement of the loyalists and favourites at state and constituency level for party officials and candidates with local knowledge and support
- Outside support from Communists – Coalition sustained by hitherto sworn enemies, but preeminence of Congress party

Indira Era II

- Charismatic Indira and the end of the Nehruvian Era
- Many opposition leaders were so mesmerized with the personality of Mrs Gandhi that they somewhat forgot to play the role of a formidable opposition to her government
- Rising Protests in States – Strikes and Processions in Bihar (1974)
- The JP Movement
 - against the rising corruption under Congress
 - Demanding resignation of Government
 - Court in Allahabad ruled that Mrs Gandhi was guilty of electoral malpractice
 - Declaration of Emergency
 - Opposition leaders were jailed, and the press censored

Indira Era III

- Sanjay Gandhi's Slum demolition and sterilization of youth campaign
- 1977 elections
 - Formation of Janta Party (Congress (O), Jana Sangh, Bhartiya Lok Dal, and the Socialist Party)
 - Congress witnessing an astounding loss
 - Shift from a One person dominant leadership to collective leadership
- Constitutional reform under Morarji Desai
- Internal contradictions within Janta party leading to its collapse in 1979
 - Exposing the vice of coalition politics
 - The folly of the Janta coalition as a means of humiliating Indira Gandhi
 - Lack of a viable political alternative other than the Congress
 - Indian majority opinion had for the longest time remained Centrist, at least at the national level

The Coalition Era

- Post-1989 - *fait accompli*
- 1989 general elections – backdrop of the Bofors revelations and the high plank of the anti-corruption campaign
- Janata Dal, leading the formation of the government at the Centre with support from the regional parties like DMK, TDP, AGP and Congress (S) – National Front
- Rath Yatra and the Fall of the coalition
- 1991- Congress coalition with P.V. Narshimha Rao as PM
- 1998 mid-term elections in which the political scenario of the country began to crystallize around the two parties – the Congress and the BJP

Regional Parties

- The growth of state parties, which fall broadly under the rubric of regional parties, picked up particularly after 1967
- About four dozen recognized state parties and about two dozen more which are not yet recognized by the Election Commission of India
- Exploiting the national parties' neglect of the political and economic interests of the region or even the state
- Controlled and driven by one leader whose writ runs large in party affairs and whose command cannot be challenged - Immediate family members and relatives invariably wield considerable clout in these parties
- Longevity of such parties, under normal circumstances, should be closely linked with the life span of their respective leaders

Regional Parties II

- Family members, close relatives and friends run the affairs of the party and one of them inherits the legacy of that leader either in his or her times or after he or she passes away
- The Samajwadi Party (SP) family feud before the elections in Uttar Pradesh - two distinct factions led by UP Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav and his uncle Shivpal Singh Yadav preparing for post-Mulayam times
- Bahujan Samaj Party - founded in 1984, was formed by late Kanshiram with the purpose of giving better representation to 'Bahujans'. Mayawati as his successor and after his death, the BSP's existence and survival depends upon her
- Mayawati shifted her objective and guiding philosophy to crafting effective electoral strategy to capture power (Dalit-Muslim alliance)

Pressure Groups

- Non-political formations to safeguard and secure the interest of their members by putting pressure on the government to adopt or desist from adopting certain set of policies or programmes which have been found to be prejudicial to the interests of their members
- Level of political maturity and accommodation in a political system pressure groups in India are viewed as some sort of extra-constitutional entities which may not be afforded any space in the political system of the country
- traditional pressure groups, not on the basis of occupational and secular bases but on the basis of the ascriptive affiliations like caste, language, and religious loyalties of the people
- RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal, Jamaat-e-Islami, All India Kisan Sabha, Bharatiya Kisan Union, Harijan Sevak Sangh, Nadar Caste Association

Pressure Groups II

- Putting forth demands - arousing the political consciousness of the people – translating political participation
- Safety valve to ventilate the grievances of the people against the governmental policies and actions thereby deflecting any probability of untoward events in the political sphere of the country
- Presenting memorandum to the select committees of the Parliament and giving oral depositions before them
- Demonstrations, *dharnas*, picketing or blocking traffic on the highways and main streets of the cities
- Policies and their implications – SEZ in West Bengal, Utilizing the Yamuna Catchment Area for CWG

Major Issues in Indian Politics

- Caste – politicized by the British, gained legitimacy because of the nationalist insistence on caste based reservation
- Rise of the backward castes has radically altered India's political texture in recent times
- OBCs formed the social basis and provided the leadership of those parties which pushed the Congress party out of power in 1967 in a large number of Indian states
- Resurgence in post-Independence era because of the Mandal Commission report (1989) – deepening of democracy
- the OBCs comprise a very large segment of India's population and their representation (only 5 per cent) in the public sector is abysmally poor

Reservations – For whom?

- Difficulty arises the moment groups or communities that deserve reservation are identified on the basis of ascribed identity, namely caste
- Reservation in higher education seems to be an empty slogan
- Reservation in higher education makes no sense so long as drop-out rates in schools are alarmingly high
- The benefits of reservation continue to be uneven among those who can avail them
- Social justice agenda will always remain a distant goal
- Political considerations however remain paramount

Religion and Politics

- Mandir agenda
- *Hindutva* ideology – “appreciating that cultural heritage of the country should not be ignored or dismissed simply because it does not measure up to modern criteria”
- Rath Yatra
- Shift in BJP’s political stance
- ENVP (Wilkinson)
- Institutionalized Riot System (Brass)
- Clientelism and riot politics (Berenschot)

Economic Reforms

- The first was the collapse of the former Soviet Union and their East European satellite states that moved towards a market-oriented economic system eschewing altogether the model of planned economic development.
- Second, the spectacular success of the socialist market economy of China with the opening of the economy since 1978 and its concomitant favourable economic outcomes cast serious doubts on India's development strategy, based on economic nationalism

Gender

- Women's Movement (1975 onwards)
 - Sati
 - dowry
 - anti-rape
 - personal laws
 - Sex-determination of the fetus
- Women's involvement in other movements
- Women's reservation bill
- Section 377 and the Naaz foundation
- Transgender person's rights (2014 supreme court judgment)

Conclusion

- The regionalization of politics
- Growth of new social constituencies
- Changing terms of political discourse