# Parliamentary Efficacy and the Role of the Opposition:

*A Comparative Study of the 2nd and 14th Lok Sabha*

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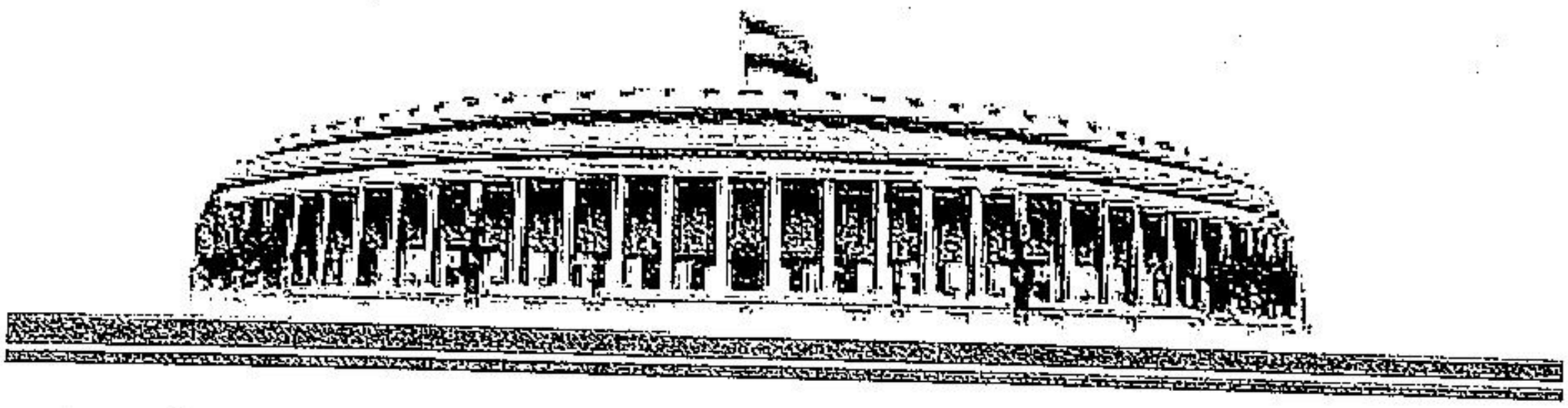

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# Acknowledgements

In a democratic political system, the opposition to the government comes from a variety of sources: public opinion, political parties, pressure groups, civil society, media, secessionists, extremist groups and the like. However, the parliamentary opposition determines the nature of legal opposition in the country. The manner in which opposition functions in the Parliament sets the tone and temper of democracy. It lays down the agenda for political discourse, determines the efficacy of Parliament, and is the primary institutional mechanism of not merely exercising control over the executive, but also preventing governmental arbitrariness. In an evolving polity like India that is witnessing a surge of democratization, and where the state still continues to enjoy vast powers, the role of opposition is of utmost significance. This makes the study of opposition in India not just important but also interesting.

A study of this nature can only be the product of collaborative effort of a large number of people. I am deeply thankful to Prof. Sanjukta Bhattacharya of Jadavpur University who motivated me to continue my research in the area of parliamentary democracy. She inspired me to study the role of the opposition in India; a topic not covered very exhaustively in the literature of Indian politics. I am also thankful to Prof. Peter Ronald deSouza, Director, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla. He encouraged me to research in the area of parliamentary institution and gave concrete suggestion to improve the present work. His support and suggestions have been invaluable. Prof. Suhas Palshikar of Pune University and Prof. K.C. Suri of Hyderabad University gave valuable inputs that helped in conceptualizing and organizing the entire work. They spared their valuable time to go through the drafts and give detailed suggestions that gave a new dimension to the work. Smt. V. S. Rama Devi and Dr. V. K. Agnihotri, Secretary-General, Rajya Sabha as Members of the Search & Advisory Committee for Chair/Fellowships on Parliamentary Studies gave valuable insights while drafting this report. This is the research report under the Rajya Sabha Fellowship on Parliamentary Studies awarded to me for the year 2010-11.

The present study is based on quantitative data. It would not have been possible to collect and compile the data within such a short span of time without the active assistance of Shrimanti Sarkar. She meticulously collected and compiled the data from various sources.

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I am also thankful to all the experts and interviewees, particularly Smt. Sushma Swaraj, Leader of Opposition, Fifteenth Lok Sabha, and Shri Rajnath Singh, Member of Lok Sabha and former President of Bharatiya Janata Party, who despite their hectic schedule spared time for the purpose.

Finally, this work would not have been possible without the active support of my family members, particularly my mother, and my husband who not only stood by me, but also inspired and motivated me. This work would not have been possible without their faith in my abilities.

Dr. M. Manisha

# Preface

The Parliament enjoys position of pre-eminence in a democratic political system. It is not merely a deliberative or a supervisory forum but is the central repository of the people's trust. The manner in which the Parliament functions determines the nature of political democracy in the country. In a Parliamentary democracy, where the Government is drawn from the legislature and has the support of majority in the House for as long as it continues in office, the role of the Opposition assumes tremendous significance. The Opposition not merely checks the arbitrariness of the executive, but is also entrusted with the responsibility of articulating an alternative agenda for governance, developing a national consensus, initiating a national political discourse, and representing the opinion of the people whom the Government may have ignored or side stepped. These are onerous responsibilities.

The task of the Opposition becomes even more important in the light of democratization of Indian society and growing responsibilities of the State, where every act has serious national and international consequences. The failure of the Opposition may result in the failure of parliamentary institution giving room to other democratic and non-democratic institutions to usurp the functions of the Parliament. This may mean not merely the erosion of dignity of the Parliament, but may also move the decision making out of the purview of democratic process.

The present research was started with the objective of analyzing the role of the Opposition and its contribution to parliamentary efficacy by comparing the changes in it with respect to its socio-economic and political composition and its performance of legislative business. The work attempts to assess the manner in which the new opposition leadership defines its roles and functions as well as the role of the parliamentary institution in the light of the vast changes that have taken place in India's electoral politics.

Since the research is mainly empirical in its nature and is based on the statistical analysis in a large measure, the data for the purpose has been derived from a variety of sources. The most important source of the data has been the Lok Sabha Secretariat, which maintains bio-profiles of Members of the House.

The data on conduct of business of Lok Sabha has been derived from the Lok Sabha Secretariat. In addition to these, the data published by the Election Commission of India has been used to assess the extent of electoral participation in the study period.

Empirical data alone may not give a clear picture of the functioning of parliamentary democracy in India. Hence, statistical analysis has been substantiated with content analysis of some debates and discussions in the Lok Sabha. Further, few MPs and academic experts have also been interviewed to get a first hand opinion about parliamentary functioning.

A work of this nature is bound to face some constraints. Perhaps the greatest constraint has been the scarcity of material on the subject matter. It may be mentioned here that despite India being one of the largest democracies in the world with a vibrant parliamentary tradition, very little work has been carried out on the functioning of Parliament in India. The role of Opposition within the Parliament has been studied even less. Rajni Kothari's article '*India: Oppositions in a Consensual Polity*', in Robert A. Dahl (ed.) *Regimes and Oppositions*, published in 1973, remains till date one of the best works on the subject. Subsequently, Subhash Kashyap's *History of Parliament in India* and *Bharatiya Rajniti Aur Sansad: Vipaksh Ki Bhumika'*, H.S. Fartyal's *Role of Opposition in Indian Parliament*, shed some light on the working of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha. However, most of the works on the subject lack analytical content, are historical in nature, or have become outdated.

The paucity of data has also been a significant constraint. The available data such as those of age, education and occupation of MPs is not classified according to party affiliation. Similarly, the party affiliation of MPs participating in Lok Sabha discussions is not indicated in the Lok Sabha debates. Since this work entailed a study of Opposition party members alone, the researcher had to manually collect them from the profiles of individual MPs in 'Who's Who' of the Lok Sabha. Moreover, the data provided by the different sources, for example, the Election Commission and Lok Sabha website were different giving rise to confusion.

This research also suffers from absence of adequate personal interviews with the Members of Parliament. The hectic schedule of MPs and their disinterest in any research work has also hampered the study. Therefore, scheduled interview could either not be fixed, or kept, during the stay of the researcher in New Delhi. Questionnaires sent to

MPs also did not elicit responses. The locational disadvantage of the researcher, studying a national legislative body located in Delhi, while being in Mumbai was also an important constraint.

Notwithstanding the lacunae, the importance of this work lies in the fact that it attempts to fill a gap that has existed in the study of political institutions, particularly the Lok Sabha. This kind of work, though vital for the functioning of Indian democracy, has been much neglected.

Dr. M. Manisha

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### SECTION 1

1.1.1 One of the most significant developments of modern polity is the institution of the 'Opposition'. It is today generally accepted that one of the hallmarks of genuine democracy is the existence of a vigorous, legal opposition. Opposition in some form or other exists in all political systems, irrespective of the form of government, nature of political institutions, or number of political parties. However, in non-democratic political systems, it may take the form of dissent, dissident groups and minority tendencies that attempt to criticize the government. Democratic government is unique in the sense that it institutionalizes the opposition and makes it an integral part of the political process. Robert Dahl, an American political scientist and an authority on democracy points out, that the "very existence of opposition is the most distinctive character of democracy itself; and we take the absence of an opposition party as evidence, if not always conclusive proof, for the absence of democracy."[1] Political Scientists G. Ionescu and de Madariga hold a similar position and write, "the presence or absence of institutionalized political opposition can become the criterion for classification of any political society in one of the two categories: liberal or dictatorial, democratic or authoritarian, pluralistic-constitutional or monolithic."[2] Democratic political systems rely on institutionalized opposition and it is doubtful that any regime could long survive as minimally democratic without them.[3]

The emergence of an organized and institutionalized opposition has been a gradual political process. However, what does 'opposition' mean? and what are its defining characteristics? How is the institution of opposition in democracy in general and parliamentary democracy in particular, different from opposition in general? These important questions need to be outlined in the theoretical context of the present discussion.

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[1] Robert Dahl, *Democracy and its Critics*, (Yale University Press, New haven, 1965), p.xvi
[2] G. Ionescu and Isabel de Madariga cited in Rodney Barker (ed.) *Studies in Opposition*, (Macmillan Press Limited, London, 1971), p.5
[3] Barrington Moore Jr., *Liberal prospects under Soviet Socialism; A Comparative Historical Perspective*, cited in Ian Shapiro, Courtney Jung (eds.) 'South Africa's Negotiated Transition: Democracy, Opposition, and the New Constitutional Order', Politics *and Society* , no.23 , Sage Publications, 1995, pp.269-308.

The word opposition is used to account for a variety of developments. However, used in a generic sense the term has a wide variety of connotations that do not always refer to the institution of opposition in a parliamentary democracy. In some African languages, the confusion is exacerbated by the word for opposition deriving from the word for enmity.[4] Etymologically, the term opposition is derived from Latin word *'oppositio'*, which means to oppose'. As an activity, it includes everything from revolution to mild criticism.[5] Rodney Barker identifies six essential interpretation of the term

- It may mean resistance to form and basis of state, and a determination to overthrow it by any means
- Resistance to the power of the state when the state is viewed as an instrument of oppression
- Resistance to the group, faction or dynasty in command of the state and denial of legitimacy to it
- A loyal opposition which opposes the commanding group without either contesting its legitimacy or threatening, or rejecting the basis of the state power, or Constitution
- A system of checks and balances whereby the Constitution guards against and corrects its own excesses
- Methods whereby citizens or groups without condemning the state as oppressive, modifies its actions, mellows its harshness and prevents its tyrannies

Given the large number of interpretations of the term, it is necessary to clarify its meaning. 'Opposition' in the present context implies constitutional opposition, which presupposes quiet politics, in which the opposer is not perceived as an enemy. Differences in ideology, policies, practices, and methods are not merely tolerated, but systematically accommodated by procedures that are legally established.

Gilbert Champion defines Parliamentary opposition as

> .... the party for the time being in the minority organized as a unit and officially recognized, which has the experience of office and is prepared to form the government when the existing ministry has lost the confidence of the country. It must have a positive policy of its own and must not oppose destructively.[6]

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[4] Leonard Shaparlo, *Government and Opposition*, vol.1, no. 1, October, 1965
[5] Rodeney Barker , n.2, p.7
[6] Gilbert Champion, *Development in Parliamentary System Since 1911*, (Macmillan, London, 1951), p.19

The Great Soviet Encyclopedia defines Opposition as a

> ...party, or a group that acts contrary to the opinion of the majority or the dominant opinion. In the capitalist countries, the parliamentary opposition consists of parliamentary parties or groups that do not participate in the formation of the government and that come out against government policy on a number of issues.[7]

It may be deduced that the parliamentary opposition refers to

- A party or a number of parties that have a minority of seats in the legislature
- That is ready to form an alternate government, if the dominant group/party loses confidence of majority
- Criticizes the ruling party/group and offers alternatives to it

In addition to these, existence of opposition presupposes

- Separation between the person or persons symbolizing sovereignty, and those exercising governmental power
- Constitutional structure or a political system that is based on universal suffrage and that which is recognized as legitimate by all groups
- Political system where dissension is sought to be contained within the system. This means that major conflicts of the society are either being managed or are not sufficiently major to disrupt the functioning of the existing system
- Existence of groups that are organized as political parties that aim to contest election with a view to capture power
- Freedom of groups to deliberate and discuss alternative policies
- Existence of deliberative assembly with partial/ complete power of rational decision making, and
- Possibility of turnover of power from one group to another based on electoral inputs

Once the meaning of the term is clarified, it is origins need to be traced. The subsequent section therefore, briefly describes the origin of legal and loyal opposition.

### 1.1.2 Origin and Recognition of Parliamentary Opposition

The idea of a legal and loyal opposition as it is found in countries like Great Britain is of recent origin. Its roots can be traced to European, more specifically to English politics

[7] The Great Soviet Encyclopedia, 3rd Edition (1970-1979). (The Gale Group, Inc. , Moscow, 1910)

during the 17th century, when two groups in Parliament began calling themselves 'Whigs' and 'Tories'. Their original line of cleavage was that—the Tories represented the country interests surviving from feudalism; and the Whigs represented the new interests, which later transformed the economic and social structure of Britain. They along with other factions and cliques were loose groupings; they did not call themselves political parties. There was no large party organization outside Parliament, and in view of the fact that each member of the House of Commons prior to the Reform Act of 1832 represented an average of 350 electors, there was little need for one. British parties in the modern sense date back from the later part of the 19th century. The Conservatives, as the Tories began to be known, established a national party organization outside Parliament in 1887 and the Liberals, the successor of the Whigs, followed suit ten years later.

During the 19th Century and the first decades of 20th Century, opposition became a fully accepted institution of British Constitutional System. However, it remained an unrecognized part of the English Constitutional law until 1937, when the 'Ministers of the Crowns Act' was passed. The Act recognized the leader of the opposition as "the member of the House of Commons who was for the time being the leader on the House of the party in opposition to His Majesty's Government."[8] John Cam Hobhouse, a radical statesman was the first to coin the phrase 'His Majesty's Opposition'.[9]

In case of United States of America (USA) also, the party system emerged as an extra constitutional growth. In the USA, the framers of the Constitution did not have faith in party government. Most delegates of the Philadelphia Convention, that had been constituted to frame the Constitution of USA, like Madison, were determined to create a system of government free from the violence of faction. George Washington, the first President of USA was equally opposed to political parties. Although the fact was not openly recognized, the delegates to the Convention themselves were divided along party lines. The majority group led by Hamilton (the Federalists) wanted to create a strong Union by giving large powers to the Federal government. The opposition (anti-Federalists) who later came to be led by Thomas Jefferson, championed states rights and advocated limited powers for the national government. During Washington's presidency (1789-96) party division remained somewhat in the background and he tried to give a non-party color to his administration by including both Hamilton and Jefferson in his

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[8] Harvey and Bather, *The British Constitution* , (Macmillan Ltd, London, 1966), p.166
[9] For details see A.S. Foord, *His Majesty's Opposition,* (OUP, London, 1964), p.1

cabinet. But, Washington's efforts went unheeded and before long political parties took a dominating position. Along with the recognition of parties, opposition became institutionalized part of American politics.

The recognition of the institution in political thinking is as important as its existence in practice, for such recognition adds to the legitimization of the institution itself. In 1855, an article by Cornwall Lewis singled out parliamentary opposition as one of the cardinal features of British political system.[10] But Lewis did not accord to the parliamentary opposition the characteristics that it is given today. To him, as to early British political scientists and founders of American Constitution, opposition was selfish and factional and capable of serving a useful purpose only when subjected to checks of public responsibility, which arose with the publicity of parliamentary debates and limitations that the possibilities of office placed on it.

The idea of a loyal and responsible opposition, as is accepted today, is rooted in broad definition of western liberalism and its emphasis of freedom of speech and expression as well as representative government and rule by majority.[11] However, these ideals of western liberalism did not automatically lead to recognition and institutionalization of the opposition, though compatible with it. Thus, one of the most significant liberal thinkers J.S. Mills, in his seminal work '*Considerations on Representative Governments*' makes no mention of loyal opposition.[12] Mill recognized that in any Free State, debates and discussions that emerge from widely divergent viewpoints and approaches to the problems of the governments, were necessary. He was equally emphatic on the critical quality of such debates in order to sustain the quality of public life. The deliberative assembly provided the forum for such reasoned debates. However, he entrusted the responsibility of critiquing not to the opposition, but to the free press. To Mill, the 'parliament was a whole' not a part of it or any organized body within it. The Parliament was both the 'Committee of Grievances and the 'Congress of Opinions' within which ultimate unity is always to be hoped for in subordination of the sections. It symbolized the ultimate ideal of unanimity. Mill opined that Members of Parliament (MPs) represented either their own free will or, of their constituents.

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[10] Rodney Barker,n.2, p.36-37
[11] A.S. Foord, in Rodney Barker n.10, p.2
[12] For details see
J.S. Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, (Harper and Collins, New York, 1862)

Political parties too, did not fit into the liberal theory of representation. They were thought to be divisive and sectional; corrupting the democratic character of politics, and the only way to restore the democratic polity was to destroy political parties through a system of electoral reforms.[13] Party government and by extension opposition were considered incompatible with parliamentary democracy in particular, and democracy in general. Liberals therefore valued not the opposition, but freedom to oppose and criticize, which they sought to maximize. Parties and opposition were thought to be inimical to liberalism.

By early 20th Century, while political philosophers were still trying to come to terms with political parties, they had become quietly, but publicly respectable.[14] As A.L. Lowell observed,

> The recognition of the opposition as a legitimate body, entitled to attain power by persuasion, is primary condition of the success of the party system, and therefore popular government on a large scale.[15]

Hence, they emerged both as the conscience as well as the policeman of the government. The functions which had been attributed to the Parliament were actually being performed by opposition political parties. In 1936, Sir Ivor Jenning in his work Cabinet Government, described Opposition as a necessary condition of democratic politics.[16] Even then, the recognition of opposition as an indispensible part of the Parliament was not complete. Harold Laski, an eminent political scholar, made no mention of parties or opposition in his work '*A Grammar of Politics*'. Ramsay Muir too declared

> In a democratic political system there are two factors: the Government and the machinery for exercising criticism and control of it on behalf of the people – the Parliament[17]

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[13] Writers such as Henri Sidwig, The *Elements of Politics* (Macmillan, London, 1891),Mosei Ostrogorsky, James Bryce and Fedrick Clarke, *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties*, (Macmillan,London, 1902) in Britain and George Washington, in USA were of opposed to existence of political parties due to their divisive impact on national polity. A truly democratic polity must give due weightage to both diversity of political opinion and differences in intellectual merit. Parties denied both. The American Constitution too does not recognize the existence of political parties.

[14] Rodney Barker,n.2, p.18

[15] A. Lawrence Lowell, *The Government of England*, (Macmillan, New York, 1924), p.452.

[16] Ivor Jennings, *Cabinet Government*, (Cambridge University, Cambridge, 1959), P.109.

[17] Ramsay Muir, *The Future of Democracy*, (The Liberal Book Club, London, 1939), p.109

The works of L. S. Amrey, Benn and Peters, D.E. Apter[18] and finally the establishment of the journal, *Government and Opposition* indicated the final establishment of the idea of Opposition. The classical liberal view of representative government responsible to the nation was gradually replaced by plebiscitary government, where there was competition between the political parties for the votes of the electorate and the policies of the ruling party are subjected to close scrutiny by the party waiting to grab governmental power.[19]

The rise of pluralism and internationalism in post world war two period, when the state was under attack, created a situation where there was increased debate about the relationship of the state with its citizens. Further, the state was assuming greater responsibilities in the post war period. As a result, the pluralist felt the urgency to include a variety of groups and organizations within the arena of political study and political parties found a place in such studies.[20]

In the later part of the present century, the emphasis on pragmatism has placed every political institution and speculation in the crucible of practice.[21] This has formed the background within which the academic study of politics has been carried out and in this the notion of Opposition has emerged as a valuable and a proper subject of descriptive and analytical study.

Thus, the development and recognition of opposition as a positive institution, fulfilling an essential need of democracy was a product of long course of development and was closely intertwined with the emergence of organized party system. Further, the recognition of the fact that the functions that were attributed to the Parliament were actually performed by the parties in the legislature has also contributed to the institutionalization of the opposition.

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[18] For details see
L.S. Amrey, *Thoughts on the Constitution*, (OUP, London, 1916, reprint 1947); S.I Benn and R.S. Peters, *Social Principles and Democratic State*, (George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1959)
D.E. Apter, 'Some Reflections on the Role of Opposition in New Nations', (*Comparative Studies in History and Society*, vol. IV, no.2, January, 1962); Barker, n.2,p. 20.

[19] Barker. n.2,p.20

[20] Barker, n.2, p. 25. Also see:
Ernest Barker, *Political Thought in England from Herbert Spencer to Present Day*, (H. Holt and Company, London, 1915)

[21] For details see
James Bryce, *Modern Democracies*, (OUP, London, 1912); Brian Barry, *Sociologists, Economists and Democracy*, (Collier Macmillan, London, 1970)

## 1. 1.3 Types of Opposition

Robert Dahl identifies six different ways in which the opposition differs from one another.[22] These six differences may be understood as the six distinctive characteristics of opposition.

I. Organizational Cohesion or Concentration of the Opposition: Opposition to the government either maybe concentrated in a single organization or maybe dispersed in a number of organizations that operate independent of one another. However, probably in no country and certainly in no democracy, is the opposition concentrated in one organization. The greatest concentration of opposition is found in two party systems, where the party that is out of power has substantial monopoly of opposition. In multi party system, on the other hand the opposition is dispersed. The concentration of opposition has a second dimension, i.e., internal unity. A formally cohesive single opposition party may have a number of factions within it. This may be visible in the way in which they vote in the legislature. However, this may not be construed as formal parliamentary opposition in the strictest possible sense of the term.

II. Competitiveness: Competitiveness means the way in which gains and losses of the political opponent in elections and Parliament are related. Two parties can be regarded as strictly competitive if they pursue policies and strategies such that both cannot be a part of the winning coalition. No legislature is strictly competitive at all times, some measures gain unanimous approval of all members of a party, in others, the party leaders allow the followers to vote as they choose. Key voting such as, voting during the passage of money bill, no confidence motion, on the other hand is strictly competitive. In a parliamentary system in which two parties are highly unified competition is complete. Yet, even in such system, the parties may deliberately choose a policy of collaboration either in parliament, or in elections, or in both. In USA, the two parties are strictly competitive during the elections but within the Congress, the cohesion is weak. In Britain, on the other hand the competition is severe both within and outside the legislature, though it is not without instances of coalition.

In multi party system, strict competition is unlikely; unless one party can form the government on its own, competition is impossible, for unless the parties agree to form a coalition no government can be formed. Thus, the extent of competitiveness depends

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[22] Robert Dahl, *Political Opposition in Western Democracies*, (Yale University Press, New haven, 1973), pp.334- 354

on the numbers and the nature of political parties and the extent to which the opposition is concentrated.

III. The Site or the Setting of the Encounter between the Opposition and the Government: The situation or the circumstances under which the opposition uses its resources to modify the government policies is referred to as the site or the arena of the opposition- government encounter[23]. Parliamentary elections provide an important site for contest. This is so because the opposition can hope to be successful in modifying government policies only if it has considerable electoral success

Public opinion constitutes an important site of encounter in every democratic country. This is because success in the sphere of public opinion creates a capital that can be converted into influence at any point of time at other sites. The amount and the distribution of public support required for an opposition to gain a victory vary.

IV. The Distinctiveness or the identifiability of the Opposition: The distinctiveness of the opposition is the result of the above-mentioned factors namely, cohesion, competitiveness and relative importance of various sites. According to Dahl, in a classical model the opposition is clearly identifiable on the basis of the above mentioned three criterions. The principal sites for the encounter are the parliament, the elections, communication and media. The parliament enjoys virtual monopoly over day-to-day encounters and in a bi party system there are only two major political parties; both highly unified hence, the opposition is concentrated and distinct. The opposition is strictly competitive in both the parliament and the parliamentary elections. As a result the opposition is sharply distinguishable.

However, this may not always be the case. The sites of the conflict may be dispersed among the two houses of the legislature, the bureaucracy, the state governments etc. The parties may be decentralized or there may be more than two opposing political parties. There may also be groups within a single political party. They may alternatively pursue competitive and co-operative strategy to suit their needs. Hence, it may not always be easy to distinguish the opposition.

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[23] H.D. Lasswell and Kaplan, Power and Society, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1950), p. 78

V. Goals of the Opposition: Oppositional goals vary depending upon the term circumstances, location of the nation, etc. it is difficult to reduce the goals of the opposition to a manageable analytical scheme. Political actors have long term and short-term goals that are not necessarily deducible from one another. The long-term goals of a party may be nothing but the extension of the short run goals. Goals may also be real or ostensible. Ostensible goals of the political actor may not be the real goals. The controlling goals are the objectives that the opposition seeks to arrive at by changing the conduct of the government.

VI. Strategies of the Opposition: The strategy of the opposition consists of means that it chooses to obtain its goals. The opposition may oppose the conduct of the government because it wants to change the personnel of the government, specific policies, or structure of the political system. The specific strategy that the opposition uses can be of an infinite variety. The adoption of a particular strategy may depend in part on the characteristics discussed above. However the opposition may use four broad types of strategies.

Firstly, the opposition may concentrate on strict competition to gain enough votes in the elections to win a majority of seats in the Parliament and form a government with its own leader. This strategy is encouraged in countries where there are two main parties that are highly unified, the opposition is highly distinctive, and elections are decisive. Secondly, the opposition will not try to convert the voters to gain additional seats in the legislature, if seats in the parliament are not of immense consequence and the party is not in a position to form the government. Then it may concentrate on gaining entry into the coalition and gaining as much as it can within the coalition by negotiation and bargaining. This system is encouraged where there are more than two political parties and there is a degree of party unity and the selection of the government is relatively decisive. Thirdly, in countries characterized by the existence of multiple parties and strong corporatism, opposition is not deterred by its failure to enter into the executive. This is so because in such countries, important decisions are made not just by the executive but also through quasi-official bargaining among giant corporations. Thus, opposition adopts a strategy that is conducive both to its entry into the coalition as well as bargaining with quasi-official giant associations. Fourthly, the opposition may assume that gaining public support and electoral votes are both

important but not necessary and sufficient, since any one of the great variety of sites may prove decisive in a specific case and none may prove generally decisive. Hence, the opposition adopts specific tactics and its resources are directed to the most vulnerable sites. It may concentrate on pressure group tactics, intra party bargaining, legislative bargaining, action at the state or local level, etc. This kind of strategy is popularly used in countries where constitutional rules and practices prevent any one site from being decisive and where opportunities for preventing or inhibiting government action are innumerable. Fifthly, the opposition pursues survival strategy when it is committed to the survival of its political entity, when the government and the opposition believe that survival is threatened by internal crisis, war, subversion, etc. Sixthly, the opposition may be committed to the destruction of the political entity or the main features of the Constitution pursue destructive strategy. The essence of this strategy is to use whatever resources are available in order to disrupt the normal proceeding of the political process, to discredit the system, to impair its legitimacy and in general to increase the vulnerability of polity and seize power by revolutionary opposition. Nazis and Communists used this strategy.

### 1. 1.4 Functions of the Opposition

A brief outline of the functions that the opposition is expected to perform in a parliamentary democracy is essential in order to asses is role in the political process of the country. As Ivor Jennings pointed out that the term Her Majesty's opposition is no idle term, Her Majesty needs an opposition as well as a government.[24]This statement underlines the importance of opposition and its immense role in a parliamentary system of government. The constant presence of an opposition is recognized as an obstacle to despotism. The existence of a party in opposition with a programme fairly within the limits of possible public opinion is bulwark against tyranny not only of a despot, but also a fanatical majority.[25] The opposition is at once the alternative government and a focus for the discontent of the people. Its functions are almost as important as the government.

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[24] Ivor Jennings, *Cabinet Government*, (Third Edition, Cambridge University Press, London, 1959), p.15

[25] A.L Lowell, *Public Opinion and Popular Government*, (OUP ,New York, 1913 ), pp97-98

Harvey and Bather in their work 'The British Constitutions' observe,

> On the one hand we have her Majesty's government; and on the other 'Her Majesty's Opposition'. Indeed, it could equally be regarded as her Majesty's Alternate Government'.[26]

This indicates in no uncertain terms the importance of opposition in the British political system.

The functions that are today attributed to the opposition did not always exist. As mentioned, in the earlier section, the opposition was conceived in purely negative functions. Its duty was regarded as one of 'proposing nothing and opposing everything'. However, today the opposition is regarded as an important ingredient of democratic government. Its functions have extended far beyond mere criticism of the government.

The importance of the opposition arises primarily from its ability to hold the government accountable on a day-to-day and continuous basis. Rule of majority is the touchstone of modern governance, yet what distinguishes it from other non-democratic political systems is the importance that is attached to minority opinion. The opposition is vested with the responsibility of bringing to forth the opinion of the minority through the criticisms and challenges to governmental policies. Harvey and Bather point out,

> ...upon Her Majesty's Opposition falls the main responsibility for ensuring that the acts and policies of the government are exposed to the glare of publicity and subjected to constant challenges[27]

Secondly, governance is a complex process. With the increase in sphere of governmental activity, the reach of policies has also expanded. The complexity of issues involved has changed the nature of policymaking. The opposition though its criticisms and amendments plays an important role in this process. It draws attention to all the objections to the government's proposed course of action and tries to modify its policies to accommodate the interests of the minorities. It draws the government and public attention to undesirable elements in governmental policies that may lead to arbitrariness. As Quintin Hogg points out, 'policy is the product not as is generally supposed, simply of

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[26] Harvey and Bather, n.8, p.166
[27] Harvey and Bather, n.8, p. 166

majority rule, but of government by discussion, of the interplay between opposition's reasoning and objection's, and the government majority in the lobbies' [28]

Thirdly, the opposition not merely criticizes government policies but also cooperates with the government in the actual business of legislature. This is based on the fundamental premise that the opposition recognizes that the government has duties to perform and the government realizes that that the opposition has a definite and positive role to play. While protests against government are neither unknown nor uncommon, such protests are tempered by public opinion and unwritten principles of co operation. Further, on certain matters such as foreign affairs, non-party legislations, etc., the Prime Minister may seek the opinion of the leader of the opposition. In times of national crisis, the opposition may support the government in putting up a united front and may even identify with it.[29]

Fourthly, the opposition embodies the spirit of free speech and expression. In any democracy and more so in a parliamentary democracy, the government which has complete control over the legislature may become arbitrary. The opposition checks the arbitrariness of the government by constantly critiquing not just legislations of the government but also its policies and administration. Any restriction on the opposition is construed as the restriction of liberty. Thus for instance, when Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, declared Emergency in 1975, one of her first act was of press censorship and arrest of leaders of the opposition. As Sir Ivor Jennings observed, "the test of a free country is to examine the status of the body that corresponds to her Majesty's Opposition"[30]

Lastly, the opposition is the alternative government, waiting in the wings to assume the responsibility of government should the electorate desire such change. It has an alternate policy and programme that it aims to put into effect if and when it is called upon to do so. All criticisms that are leveled by the opposition are with the knowledge and expectation that it may be called upon to assume the responsibility of administration. Opposition criticisms are therefore not always directed towards the government, but at the larger audience, the electorate to whom its members have to return to seek a mandate in its favor. However, the opposition does not desire such a

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[28] Quintin Hogg, *The Purpose of Parliament,*(Blanford, London, 1946)
[29] Harvey and Bather, n.26, p.168
[30] Ivor Jennings, *Law and Constitution*, ( *University of London,1944, London*), p.62

change by subverting the constitution or overthrowing the government. It does not seek power by means that deny democracy.[31]

The existence of a responsible and loyal Opposition ensures that the government constantly on vigil and at all points responsive to public opinion at all points of time. In a democratic political system, it is implicit that failure to do so may result in the government being voted out from power. The opposition therefore acts as a check on the arbitrariness of the government in expressed and unexpressed ways.

### 1.1.5 Techniques of Opposition

In performing its functions, the opposition in a parliamentary democracy uses a series of methods, which are provided for by the rules of the Assembly

**Table 1.1**

**Procedures Used to Perform Parliamentary Functions**

| Function | Parliamentary Procedures |
|---|---|
| Law Making | Private Members Bill, Amendment to Legislation, Legislative Debates, Parliamentary Committees, Voting on Bills, Parliamentary Committees |
| Accountability | No Confidence Motion, Adjournment Motion, Budgetary Discussion, Parliamentary Committees |
| Controlling the Purse Strings | Budgetary Discussions, Vote on Account |
| Representation | Question Hour, Calling Attention Motion, Short Duration Discussion, Zero Hour, Legislative Debates, Budgetary Discussions |

[31] A. B. Keith quoted in Harvey and Bather, n.26, p.168

| | |
|---|---|
| Seeking Information | Question Hour, Legislative Debates, Budgetary Discussions, Zero Hour, Calling Attention, Parliamentary Committees |

### 1. 1.6 Factors Determining the Efficacy of Parliamentary Opposition

The opposition's ability to perform its functions effectively depends on two factors: a) the strength of the Opposition and b) the quality of the Opposition. The former refers to the numerical size of opposition within the legislature. Too small an Opposition may be ineffective in utilizing legislative time effectively. The government too, may take the Opposition lightly in view of its inability to replace it. This may also adversely affect the Opposition's ability to perform other democratic functions, namely controlling the government and elicit information.

The size opposition alone may not ensure its efficiency. The quality of opposition is of vital importance. A large but fragmented opposition, without unity of purpose and policy may be less effective than a small opposition with the requisite leadership and policy initiative. The opposition must be able to present a united front, must be qualified and informed and willing to take initiative against arbitrary actions of the government.

The quality of the opposition may be determined in terms of

- Socio- economic and political composition of the opposition
- Legislative experience
- Ability and willingness to utilize opportunities provided by rules of legislature, particularly legislative debates, Question Hour and No Confidence Motion, budgetary discussions
- Unity of purpose and policy

The opposition tries to secure governmental action in the interest of those whom it represents both by enforcing accountability and by giving indication of what the interest of the people may be. Hence, the socio- economic and political composition of the opposition, would determine 'whose interest' the members of opposition represent in the legislature. Legislators may not necessarily represent either the voters or their interests, but they may be sufficiently influenced by them in performance of their functions. If

parties are ideologically or programmatically different, the members of opposition may represent a worldview that is different from the ruling party. However, it may be mentioned that in a system of territorial representation the interests or the voters that members of the opposition represent may not be different from that of the ruling party. The legislative experience of the members of opposition may determine the familiarity of the opposition to procedures of legislature. More experienced members are likely to formulate better strategies to counter arbitrary acts of the government and unchecked support of the members of ruling party to the government in a parliamentary system

The efficacy of the opposition also depends on the unity of purpose in the ranks of the opposition. Harold Laski, an eminent political scholar wrote,

> Divisions on policy within the opposition, if they are on points of major importance, so weaken its striking power as to prevent it from seizing the initiative when the moment comes for its seizure. A bad government can live for long time when the ranks of its opponent are divided; it may even win an election by default. For the opposition is not agreed upon the positive policy it presents to the electorate, the chances are overwhelming that the country will not understand the case it is trying to make. A Government, in these circumstances, may well be returned to power because the electorate cannot be persuaded that the victory its rivals implies the ability to use their majority successfully.[32]

In this sense, a bi party system where a single party forms the opposition is in a better position to perform its functions. In a multiparty system, strategy formation which may involve a common minimum programme, floor co ordination, united front may be some of the effective ways of forging unity.

When the government takes an important decision, it presents the opposition with an opportunity to use the issue not just for criticizing it but also suggesting suitable amendments and alternatives; for making known the central philosophy. The members of the opposition must be able to seize such opportunity effectively. The initiative of the opposition is not merely confined to criticizing the government. It can introduce bill and resolutions that the government cannot oppose, debate on subjects of its own choice at time that it chooses.

The role of the opposition leadership needs to be emphasized. In countries like UK, the opposition constitutes a shadow cabinet, as a policy-making committee of the opposition.

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[32] Harold J. Laski, *Parliamentary Government in England*, (The Viking Press, New York, 1938), p.144

The shadow cabinet irons out the differences amongst the different constituents of the opposition. Further, it decides on the policies to be pursued by the opposition and strategies to be adopted by them to ensure governmental accountability. By drawing out the best talents within the parliamentary opposition, the shadow cabinet creates effective leadership on the one hand, and holds out the prospects for the future, should the opposition be returned to power. The successful working of this system in Britain indicates the role of the leadership in uniting the opposition, strategizing and selecting issues that would ensure the efficacy of the opposition.

Post independent India adopted a parliamentary democracy based on First Past The Post (FPTP) system and single member constituencies. In the last sixty years, there have been significant changes in India's political landscape. India has moved from being a 'one party dominant system' to a multi party system and coalition governments. The average number of legislations enacted has increased significantly. Further, there has been an increase in walkouts, Adjournments and No Confidence Motions. All these changes may have been the result of changes in the nature of Opposition. On the other hand, it may have contributed to the changing nature of parliamentary opposition in India. While some of these changes like increase in the size and the composition of the opposition, are visible and have been quantified. Others such as the efficacy of the opposition are not so evident. The present work therefore, attempts to assess the nature and functioning of the opposition. This work attempts to address the following questions:

- Has there been a change in the size and composition of the opposition within the Parliament? If so what have been these changes?
- Have there been changes in the composition of the opposition in terms of the socio-economic and educational profile of its members such as age, education, occupation, and experience? Whom do the members of the opposition represent?
- In the light of developments in Indian Parliament, has there been a change in the nature of oppositional techniques in the conduct of parliamentary business?
- Has the opposition contributed to better parliamentary efficiency of the Parliament?

It may be mentioned here that the work attempts to study the role of the opposition only within the Parliament and not outside it with a view of ascertaining the contribution of opposition in ensuring parliamentary efficacy. Hence, the changing nature of the party system, the role of party leadership and ideology in shaping the function of the

opposition are touched upon only as a part of the working of the opposition within the parliament, and not separately.

The researcher attempts to study these by examining the functioning of the Lok Sabha. The Lok Sabha is the popular chamber of the Indian Parliament. The Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues are individually and collective responsible to the Lok Sabha as it is the popularly elected House of the Parliament. Important legislative initiatives are taken by the Lok Sabha. All important policy related statements and foreign policy decisions taken by the government are discussed and debated in the lower house of the Parliament. Though the Rajya Sabha or the Council of states is equal to the Lok Sabha in many respects, it is however, as the name suggest, the federal chamber of the Indian Parliament. Moreover, it is an indirectly elected body. Since MPs of Rajya Sabha do not have to return to the electorate, members of Rajya Sabha may be guided by regional, federal and party considerations rather than national consideration. Hence, a critical analysis of the Lok Sabha in the study period provides a better basis to understand the role of opposition in Indian Parliament.

Critical examination of the functioning of the opposition within the Lok Sabha is not possible without tracing the brief history of the origin of the opposition in pre independent and immediate post independent India. The subsequent section therefore briefly traces the origin and development of institutionalized opposition in India.

## 1.2.0 Section :2

### 1.2.1 Evolution of Parliamentary Opposition India

The emergence of opposition is associated with the establishment of modern democratic political system characterized by separation of executive from legislative and judicial institutions, adult suffrage emergence of legislature as the primary institution of democratic decision, parliamentary procedures, and political parties. Many of these evolved over a period of over two hundred years of British rule in India. It culminated with the adoption of democratic political system, the basis of which was laid by the Constitution of India.

Democratic traditions are not completely new to the Indian society. Institutionalization of the opposition, presuppose governance by debates and discussion. It necessitates a liberal understanding of divergent views and a synthesis of majority and minority views. This ideal was sought to be achieved in ancient India through deliberative bodies; the *Sabha* and the *Samiti*.[33]The Buddhist *Sanghas,* of the 6th century too, were in essence Parliaments, which observed the rules of Parliamentary procedures. They had rules relating to a host of deliberative activities, such as motions, resolutions, quorum, counting of ballots, censures and even about seating arrangements. It was however, the long period of British rule, first under the East India Company and then under the British Crown that led India to modern parliamentary democracy. In course of opposition to British rule, a central legislative body akin to the modern day Parliament was established. Along with this political parties and groups along modern lines emerged that formed the basis of parliamentary opposition in independent India. A brief outline of the emergence of these institutions may provide a better understanding of the evolution of parliamentary opposition in India.

### 1.2.2 Administrative Reforms under East India Company and Establishment of Legislative Institution

In the period between 1600- 1858, India was administered by 'The Governor and the Company of Merchants' popularly referred to as the English East India Company. It gradually transformed itself from being a trading body to a territorial body, gaining control over large parts of India. The transformation of the Company into a territorial body drew the attention of the British Parliament and it sought to control its growing powers through a series of parliamentary acts. Significant among these was the Regulating 1773. By this Act, the Government of Bengal in India was to be carried out by a Governor- General, elected for a term of five years. Warren Hastings became the first Governor- General. The Governor- General was to be assisted by four councilors.[34] Thus, for the first time it established an administrative authority, which exercised legislative powers along with a judicial authority, along modern lines. The defects of the Act of 1773

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[33] They consisted of leaders of different groups charged with the purpose of resolving disputes. . .
[34] The Governor General and his Council were vested with the power to control and superintend the entire civil and military administration of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. They were made responsible for the entire territorial acquisition and revenues of the company. The subordinate Presidencies were to obey the supreme government, giving them their advice and consent on any matter concerning them.

necessitated the passing of the Charter Act of 1784, popularly known the Pitts Act.[35] This act established the Governor General as the supreme head of the Executive Department. A body of six commissioners, known as the Board of Control was established to guide, supervises and controls the activities of the Government of India. The Governor- General and his Council had the power to "control, superintend and direct the civil and military affairs of all the territories under the East India Company or to be acquired hereafter."[36]

The next in the series of administrative acts was the Charter Act of 1833, which added a law member to the Governor General's Council to assist the Council in law making. Following this, the Charter Act of 1853 brought about the separation of executive and legislature a step further. The Act came into existence in response to petition made by Bombay Association to give representation to Indian interest in the legislature. The Council of the Governor- General was now to consist of 12 members including the Governor- General himself.[37] The Council though not representative in any way, of the Indian populace was responsible for both legislative and administrative affairs of the nation. One of the fundamental principles of the Act was that all decisions were to be taken by discussions and debate within the Council. However, the Council was a nominated body consisting of officially chosen members usually, non Indians.

By the Act of 1861, the Governor- General's Council was further reorganized. It was now to consist of six to twelve members. Half of these members were to be non-official and some of them were to be Indian. It was to be concerned with legislative matters alone. It could even repeal any imperial law passed prior to 1860, except those defining the organization and functioning of India office. In its legislative capacity, the Council was to be known as Imperial Legislative Council. The Provincial Council of Bombay, Madras and Bengal were also given the power to legislate for their respective territories.

The non-official members of the Governor General's Council were not elected but were nominated. Moreover, the previous permission of the Governor General was essential for introducing certain bills. No bill could be enacted without the assent of the Governor General, who alone had the power of promulgating ordinances and laying down rules for the conduct of the Executive Council. There was no proper distinction of jurisdiction

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[35] It placed the Governor General at the mercy of the Council who could outvote him on any issue

[36] Ram Sharma, *A Constitutional History Of India*,(Karnataka Publishing House, Bombay, 1979), p. 49

[37] The Commander in Chief, the Chief of the armed forces, four members of the executive Council, and four representatives from the Provinces. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court was made the ex-officio member of the Council.

between the Central and Provincial government. The Provinces could legislate only on those matters on which the Government of India did not. Moreover, laws were made by the Provincial Council, had to have the approval of the Government of India and were subject to modifications and consent by the Governor General.

The Act of 1861 served as a first step in the direction of provincial autonomy. It made a beginning in Indian representation in the Legislative Council. It enabled non official Indians to enter into the Legislative Council and enabled them to put forward their grievances. However, the nominated Indians were usually princes from the native states or members of the old aristocracy, who possessed neither much ability nor the popular appeal. They were merely mute witnesses to the law making process. Despite these shortcomings the Act of 1861 accomplished the establishment of a law making body, which attempted to associate the Indian people at least in name.

The growing political awareness of the people found expression in the establishment if the Indian National Congress (INC), in 1885. The INC emerged as the first major political party and became a dominant force in Indian politics. From its inception the INC demanded indianization of the Civil Services, reform of the Imperial Legislative Council and its conversion into a representative legislative body. The constant petitions made by moderate Indians and the slow but steady growth of agitational politics perturbed the British. A. O Hume, a retired Indian Civil Services (ICS) officer and one of the guiding forces in the foundation of the INC, led the British Government to believe that the presence of some popularly elected members in the Legislative Council would give the Government of India some amount of legitimacy, as well as placate the nationalist Indians, simultaneously. Lord Dufferin set up a committee to study the problem, which formed the basis for the Act of 1892.

By the Act of 1892, the members of Legislative Council were given the powers to discuss Annual Financial Statement, ask questions on matters of public importance, subject to restrictions as prescribed by the rules or made by the Governor-General. Some of committee members of the Council were to be elected. Thus, for the first time in the history of modern India, the elective principle was introduced. The elections did not introduce popular representation in the legislature. There still remained an official majority in the Council. Moreover, the elected members could take their seats subject



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to the approval of the Governor General.[38] The Act of 1892 was a halfhearted concession to placate the rising Indian national movement.

Notwithstanding these drawbacks, the historical significance of the act cannot be underestimated. According to S.N.Banerjee, a moderate leader of the INC, the Act laid the foundation of representative government.[39]It widened the function of the Councils, converted them into petty parliaments and enabled eminent personalities like Gopal Krishna Gokhale and S. N. Banerjee, to distinguish themselves as parliamentarians.

All these Acts led India towards a modern system of governance, where the executive, the legislature, and the Judiciary emerged as three separate wings of the government. The legislature was entrusted with the task of law making through a process of rational debate and discussion in which both official and non-official members participated. Such debates were to bring forth divergent views, though given the imperial and non-elective nature of the legislative bodies these could not be very critical of the official line of action. It may be deduced that there existed a legislative mechanism without an institutionalized opposition to critique the official line of action. Opposition, to the government policies came from outside the institutional set up.

At the turn of the century tensions began to increase due to several reasons: a serious famine, the overbearing attitude of Lord Curzon towards Indians in general and towards the members of his Council of India, the partition of Bengal intended to divide the politically conscious Bengali community, and the emergence of extremist elements and violent activity undertaken by them. Further, the victory of Japan in the Russo-Japanese war broke the myth of European superiority. The appointment of a liberal, Lord Morley, as the Secretary of State also raised hopes. The Indian National Congress, a hitherto moderate organization, under the Presidentship of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, declared in 1905 that,

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[38] The number of membership of the Council was increased. It was not to be less than 10 and not more than 16 in case of the Imperial Legislative Council and not less than 8 and not more than 20 in case of Madras and Bombay Presidencies. Two- fifth of the total members of the Imperial Legislative Council were to be non-officials some of whom were to be elected. The Governor General could nominate a maximum of 10 non-official members.

[39] R. N. Aggarwala, *National Movement and Constitutional Development of India*, (Metropolitan Book Company, New Delhi, 1976), pp.270-271.

> The goal of the Congress is that India should be governed in the interest of the Indians themselves and that in course of time, a form of government should be attained in this country similar to what exists in self governing colonies of British Empire.[40]

The situation and drew the attention of the British Parliament and the result was the passage of the Government of India Act of 1909.[41]

### 1.2.3 Government of India Act of 1909

The Act of 1909 is considered a significant step in the Constitutional history of India. The act increased the size of the Imperial legislative Council. It was to consist of 69 members, 32 of who were to be non-official member. Of the 32 non- official members seven were to be nominated by the Governor- General. The rest were to be elected.[42]The system of separate electorate was introduced. Five members of the Imperial legislative Council were elected by Muslim members of the Provincial legislative Council.[43] Moreover, a system of indirect elections was introduced; the number of voters however, remained miniscule. [44]

The Indians, irrespective of their political and cultural affiliations considered the reform of 1909, inadequate to meet their growing demands. They wanted to control the agenda of the government, participate in policy decisions and associate with each other in task of choosing the best alternative for the development of the country. The demand for direct elections, therefore, began to gain momentum from this period of history.

It was during this time that the demand for *swaraj* became a common goal for the major political parties in India including, the Indian National (INC) and the Muslim League. In

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[40] Pattabhi Sitaramayyah, History *of Indian National Congress (1885-1947)* (S.Chand and Company, New Delhi, 1988), p. 13.

[41] The Government of India Act of 1909 is popularly referred to as the Morley -Minto Reforms.

[42]Territorial representation was considered unsuitable for India. Therefore, the British introduced representation by classes and interest. . Thus, eight members were elected by landlords, one member was elected by European Chamber of Commerce, one by Indian Chamber of Commerce, the remaining 17 members were elected by non- official members of the legislative Council of Bihar, Bengal, Assam, United Province, Punjab, Madras, and Central Province.

[43] The membership to the Executive Council of Bengal, Bombay and Madras was increased to four. The members of University Senate, landlords, district boards, Municipalities, Chamber of commerce could elect the members of the council.

[44] People elected members of local Bodies. The latter elected members to the Electoral College. The members of Electoral College elected the members of Provincial legislature, who in turn elected members of Imperial legislative council. The representation of the people was therefore, through a process of infiltration.

the annual session of the INC, held in Lucknow, in 1915, committees established by the INC and the Muslim League formulated a joint scheme of reform. The scheme which came to be referred to the Congress-League scheme proposed, an Imperial Legislative Council consisting of one hundred and fifty members, four-fifth of which were to be elected. The government however, refused to address to such demands on account of the War.

The reactionary policies of the British convinced the moderate Indians that the British were not willing to give a semblance of autonomy to the Indian people.[45]The demands for self-governance, autonomy and adoption of a system more suitable to India were now more clearly put forward, than ever. The annulment of partition of Bengal further strengthened the resolve of the Indians to win concessions from the British government.

At the Congress Session of 1916 certain demands were made for giving India a place in the Federal Council of the empire. The Congress demanded reforms in the administration of the country. It proposed that the executive powers must be vested in the Governor-General and his ministers, half of whom should be Indians elected by the Imperial Legislative Council. The demand for a cabinet form of government was therefore, most visibly endorsed. The Congress also demanded increase in the power of the Legislative Council, particularly in financial sphere.

The Imperial Legislature that met in Simla in September 1916, elected nineteen members of the Council to draw up a Memorandum, to put forth their views with regard to the nature of desired Constitutional reforms. The most vital of these demands was the establishment of responsible government in the country. An expansion in the composition and functions of the Legislative Council was also sought. Faced with rising nationalist movement the British government, under increasing pressure and weakened by the War, felt that the time was ripe to grant India a generous grant of self-government, with the opportunity to exercise it.

New forces entered Indian political scene by 1915 with the death of Gokhale and Tilak, both towering figures in Indian nationalist movement. Mahatma Gandhi returned to Indian in 1915 after a long *sojourn* in South Africa. Under the influence of Gandhi,

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[45] The passage of Press Act of 1910, which imposed restriction on the press and the Defense of India Act of 1915, which provided for trial of revolutionary offenders by a special bench of judges without appeal and internment of suspects, intensified the revolutionary activities in the country.

Congress adopted new techniques of non-violent, non-cooperation and civil disobedience against the British. Gandhi infused a new vigor into the nationalist movement and the Congress was able to garner greater popular support.

### 1.2.4 Government of India Act of 1919

The Government of India Bill, was introduced in the British House of Commons on June 2nd, 1919 which was passed by the House of lords on the 18th of December, 1919 and received the Royal assent on the 23rd December, 1919. It came to be known as the Government of India Act of 1919.

The significance of the Act of 1919 lay in the fact that it for the first time established a bi-cameral legislature at the center. The upper chamber was to be called the Council of States. The Lower House was to be called the Federal Assembly. It was to consist of 145 members of which 103 elected and the rest nominated.[46]The elections under the reform Act were held towards the end of 1920.The INC boycotted the election while the National Liberation Front, constituted by the liberals within the INC, were returned to the legislature in large numbers. Once elected to the Central Legislature they attempted to revise the Constitution.

In the subsequent years, following the Rowlatt Act Satyagraha, the Jallianwallah Bagh tragedy, the Khilafat and non - cooperation movements and the suspension of the latter, the Swaraj Party was formed with the object of Council entry.[47] In a special session of the INC, held in September 1923, the programme of Council entry was officially adopted, in view of the increased demand of a section the Congressmen to oppose the government from within. The *Swarajists* were able to form a coalition government at the center, and were able to capture power in Central Province. They were also the largest

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[46] Out of the 103 elected members, 51 were to be elected by general constituencies, 2 by communal constituencies, (30 by Muslims and 2 by Sikhs), and 20 by special constituencies (7 by landholders, 9 by Europeans and 4 by Indian Chamber of Commerce).

[47] For details see... Bipin Chandra, Aditya Mukherjee, Mridula Mukherjee, K.N. Pannikar, Sucheta Mahajan (eds), *India's Struggle for Independence; 1957-1997* ( OUP, New Delhi, 1967); Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India* (Macmillan, New Delhi, 1983), R.C. Mazumdar, *British Paramountacy and Indian Renaissance* (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1967); Tara Chand, *History of Freedom Movement in India*, (Publication Division, Ministry of information and Broadcasting, New Delhi, 1967); Durga Das Basu, *India; From Curzon to Nehru* (Collins, London, 1969); A. R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* (Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1991);Ram Sharma, *A Constitutional History of India* (Karnataka Publishing House, Bombay, 1979).

party in all the other provinces. The *Swarjist's* forced the Government to appoint the Simon Commission two years ahead of schedule

On December 31, 1929, The Indian National Congress adopted the famous Independence Resolution. The resolution stated "...that the word *Swaraj* as in Article 1 of the Congress constitution shall mean complete independence".[48] The British government attempted to negotiate with the Indians and three round table conferences were held following which it introduced a White Paper. A Joint Parliamentary Select Committee was appointed to discuss the proposals laid out in the White paper. A bill was drafted on the basis of the recommendations of the Committee and became, after receiving the royal assent, the Government of India Act of 1935.

### 1.2.5 Government of India Act of 1935

The Government of India Act of 1935 introduced a federal form of government for India. The Act also introduced for the first time, the concept of Diarchy in the Center. The Executive authority at the center was vested in the Governor- General whose functions were divided into two groups- the administration of defense, external affairs, and tribal areas was to be made by the Governor- General with the help of counsellors, appointed by him, who were not responsible to the legislature. In all other matters the Governor-General was to be directed by the advice of 'Council of Ministers' responsible to the Legislature. The Governor- General was vested with vast discretionary powers, in the exercise of which, he was responsible only to the Secretary of State.

The Government of India Act of 1935, provided for a Central Legislature consisting of the Federal Assembly and the Council of States.[49] The legislature had the power to make laws for British Indian Provinces with respect to Central and Concurrent lists. The parliamentary principle of asymmetric bi- cameralism was introduced. The Ministers were responsible to the Assembly and not to the Council. Both the houses however, enjoyed the power of debating.

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[48] Tara Chand, n.47, p.97.

[49] The Federal Assembly was to consist of 375 members. (250 from the Provinces, 125 from the Indian States) elected for five years. The Federal Assembly was to be elected indirectly. The Council of states was to be a permanent body, one third of its members retiring every three years. The Council of States was to be a directly elected body, consisting of 260 members of which 150 were to be from the British Indian Provinces and 105 from the Indian States.

Elections under the Act of 1935 were completed all over India by 1936.The Congress formed ministries in nine out of 11 provinces, by July 1937, including Madras, Central provinces, Bombay, Orissa, Bihar, NWFP and Assam by massive mandates. Neither the socialists, nor the Communists participated in the elections. The main opposition to the Congress came from Muslim league. The leader of the majority party in the provinces was called upon by the Governor to form the ministry. "Thus began a novel experiment- a party which was committed to liquidate the British rule took charge of administration under a constitution which yielded only partial state power to the Indians. The party itself had rejected the constitution in parts." The Congress was now to function as government of the provinces and opposition at the centre where all powers were located.

While reviewing ministries from 1937 to 1939 Prof. Coupland observed,

> "the Congress Ministries-proved themselves as capable, hard working men with a sense of public duty and responsibility. The legislature were well conducted, hard working and, except for an increasing tendency to ask unnecessary questions, businesslike"[50]

The Act of 1935 established many features of a parliamentary form of government, particularly in the provinces. The Governor of the provinces enjoyed the position of the head of the province and acted usually on the advice of Council of Ministers. The Head of the provincial government was elected by the people and was responsible to the legislature. The powers of the head of the state were usually exercised by the popular ministers. The Council of Ministers remained in office only as long as it enjoyed the confidence of the legislature. The legislatures were given the power to discuss all matters of vital importance. Thus, a parliamentary system of government was clearly established.

The outbreak of the Second World War however, interrupted the working of the Act of 1935. India was drawn into the war without the consent of its people despite the presence of a large number of Indian members in various Councils and Assemblies. The All India Congress Committee demanded that the British Government categorically declare that India would be made free after the war and given immediate control over Indian affairs. The British Government refused to give any such assurance. Lord Linlithgow, declared that Dominion Status was the goal of India.

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[50] R. Coupland, The Indian *Problem;* Report on The *Constitutional Problem* In *India,* (OUP, New York,1944),pp. 155

Only one sincere attempt was made to placate the Indians. The British government sent Cripps Mission led by liberal politician, Sir Stafford Cripps to India on 22 March, 1942. The Cripps' proposal envisaged complete transfer of power after the war and partial transfer during the war. In return, the British wanted Indian leaders to support the war efforts. The INC declined the offer. Following the end of the war and the victory of the Allies, Clement Atlee announced in the House of Commons that a British parliamentary delegation would visit India to discuss the problem (of self government) with the Indian leaders. The Indian Independence Bill was introduced in the House of Commons on the 4 July and received Royal assent on the 18 July, and the Indian State was inaugurated on the 15 August 1947. India was granted Dominion Status with Lord Mountbatten, as the Governor General as the head of state, till the framing and adoption an Indian Constitution.

### 1.2.6 Constituent Assembly and the Opposition

The Cabinet Mission plan had laid down a definite plan for the constitution of the Constituent Assembly that was given the onerous responsibility of framing the Constitution for independent India.[51]Both the Congress and League accepted these provisions of the plan after infinitely detailed negotiations, though they 'recorded' their reservations against it in public and private.'[52] The members of the constituent assembly were to be elected by members of Provincial legislative Assembly. The Provincial Legislative Assembly had already been constituted by elections in 1945. Elections were held for Constituent Assembly, which was duly constituted under the terms of the Cabinet Mission Plan.[53]

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[51] Each province and each Indian State or group of States were to be allotted a number of seats in proportion to their respective strength in the population roughly under the ratio of 1: 1,00,000.The seats in each province were distributed among three main groups, Muslims, Sikhs and General, in proportion to their respective strength. Members of each community in the Provincial Legislative Assembly elected their representatives by a method of proportional representation with a single transferable vote The method of selection in case of representatives of Indian States was to be determined by consultation. The Mission made its plan public on 16 May 1946.

[52] Granville Austin Granville, *Indian Constitution; Cornerstone of a Nation* (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1966), p.16

[53] The Constituent Assembly consisted of 389 members, of whom 95 members were from Indian states and 296 were from the British Indian Provinces.

Table 1.2

Party Position in Constituent Assembly

| Party | Seats |
|---|---|
| INC | 208 |
| Others and Independents | 15 |
| Muslim League | 73 |

Following the partition of the country, the share of the Congress increased as members of the Constituent Assembly elected from the Muslim dominated provinces of Sylhet, Sindh, East Bengal, West Punjab, North West Frontier Province and Baluchistan ceased to its members. Members of Muslim League too, were no longer its members. The Congress' share in the Constituent Assembly accordingly, increased. The Constituent assembly was to serve as Provisional Parliament, in addition to being a Constitution drafting body.

The Constituent Assembly was not organized on party lines but was an effort to give representation to the country's diversity. A number of eminent leaders who were not Congressmen but could make significant contribution to the process of constitution making were elected on Congress party tickets. A majority of the members of the Assembly belonged to the Congress party; the remaining ones did not belong to a political party or group. The members of Assembly were identified as "attached" and "unattached". In 1950, there were 22 unattached members. Their number went up to 28 in 1951, whereas there was an increase of 17 in the total membership. The unattached members did not belong to any legislative group and were for most part independent members.

Four important leaders of the Congress party, Nehru, Patel, Prasad and Azad held sway over the Congress during this period. The prestige and the power that they enjoyed within the Congress and in the Union government enabled them 'control the affairs of the

Assembly'[54] as well as its various committees through which it worked There were eight such committees [55] with and approximate membership of 36. Nehru, Patel or Prasad chaired each of these committees. As Granville Austin Observes,

> "with seven other Assembly members, these leaders constituted an inner circle in the Assembly's committees and demonstrated again the interlocking of the three ( Congress, Union government and Constituent Assembly) organization"[56]

**Table 1.3**

**Committee and Congress Party Position of Members of Constituent Assembly**

| Name | No. Of Committees | Congress Position |
|---|---|---|
| Rajendra Prasad | 2 | Working Committe |
| Abul Kalm Azad | 4 | Working Committe |
| Sardar Patel | 4 | Working Committe |
| Jawaharlal Nehru | 3 | Working Committe |
| Pant | 3 | Working Committe |
| Pattabhi Sitarammaiya | 4 | Working Committe |
| Ayyar | 5 | - |
| N.Gopalswami Ayyangar | 5 | - |
| K.M. Munshi | 6 | Member |
| B.R. Ambedkar | 3 | - |
| Satyanaryan Sinha | 2 | Member |

Nearly half of these most influential members had strong ties with the Congress. Only two members of this core group had been Opponents of the Congress. They were B.R Ambedkar and Sadulla. Nehru had personally invited Ambedkar to be part of the Assembly and he on his part agreed to join the government because he did not believe in

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[54] Austin, n.52, p.18
[55] Rules, Steering, Drafting, Union subjects, Union Constitution, Provincial Constitution and states
[56] Austin,n.52, p.18

opposition for the sake of opposition. Further, he felt that he could serve the interest of SCs better by being a member of the Assembly.

The non-existence of an organized Opposition gave rise to an opposition from within the Congress party, which was accommodated within the folds of the Congress Party through democratic, institutional mechanisms. The Congress party constituted the Congress Assembly Party- a forum to discuss the provisions that would be included in the draft constitution. The fate of the provision was decided in this forum itself even before it reached the floor of the house.

The Congress Assembly Party was different from the Congress Parliamentary party. All the members of the Assembly who were elected on the Congress party ticket could attend its meetings. Thus for instance, leaders like B.R. Ambedkar and John Matthai, the Cabinet Minister, S.P. Mookherjee a member of Hindu Mahasabha who had never been congressmen but were elected to the Constituent Assembly on Congress ticket, attended its meetings. In addition, members of princely state also attended its meetings and participated in its proceedings if they were members of All India States Peoples Conference, which was the Congress organization in the states, or if they had been elected to the Assembly. The all-inclusive nature of the Assembly Party meant that only 80 out of 300 members of the Assembly did not participate in the Assembly Party's proceedings.

Although the Congress leadership dominated the proceedings of both the Assembly Party and the Constituent Assembly, on important issues such as public services, due process in relation to property and personal liberty, federal provisions of the Constitution, language question, there was a diversity of views and opinions within the Congress itself. Like-minded members formed groups and supported Congress leaders like Nehru and Patel or spokesmen outside the group who constituted the main voice of Opposition.

The main opposition came from a handful of leaders. Prominent among these were Mahavir Tyagi, Acharya Narendra Dev, Jaiprakash Narayan, Pandit Kunzru, K.T.Shah and S.P. Mookherjee, Thakur Das Bhargava, H.V. Kamath. Majority of these members had

been elected on Congress tickets. Even non-Congressmen such as Ayyar and N.G. Ayyangar spoke their mind freely [57] and all opposition was given due weight age.

> Every amendment and every provision suggested... was put before the congress party and then it was finally debated upon and passed with or without amendments, which alone had the final say in the matter[58]

This intra party opposition became the main opposition within the provisional parliament. All important decisions were reached by compromise and consensus. On issues where there were difference of opinion the opinion of the majority was taken. A whip was rarely issued on major issues. When issued, it did not prevent debates but controlled the voting pattern. All members elected on the Congress party ticket, whether Congressmen or not were subjected to this discipline. Some members such as Pandit Kunzru and S.L. Saxena, H.V. Kamath, Thakur Das Bhargava defied the whip and no action was taken against them.[59] Others such as Purushottam Das Tandon resigned from the Assembly Party because they refused to obey the whip[60]. A whip, even when it was issued was done so after a detailed discussion on the issue

What is interesting is however, that the Congress leadership used its influence and its moral sense to tide over all opposition. All the leaders of the Congress party unanimously agreed that a "Constitution adopted with maximum of agreement would work better and provide a more stable foundation for new India..."[61] The leadership replied to all opposition and all questions and relied on techniques of persuasion rather than force.

It appears therefore, that despite the absence of a formal, institutionalized opposition, the Constituent Assembly evolved institutional mechanism that accommodated opposition and dissent of all nature.

The Constituent Assembly adopted a state structure and a Constitution that was very different from its predecessors. India was to be socialist, secular, democratic, republic. The founding fathers decided to adopt a parliamentary democracy akin to the British model. The reasons for adoption of this system were many. Primarily however, the members of the Constituent Assembly wanted to maintain continuity rather than

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[57]Austin,n.52, p.23
[58]Austin,n.52, p.23
[59] The Hindustan Times, (New Delhi),23rd August 1949
[60] Tandon refused to accept Munshi- Ayyangar formula on the national language issue and preferred to resign from the Congress Assembly party
[61] Austin,n.52,p.23

experiment with a new system of governance. K. N. Katju and Sardar Patel prominent members of the Constituent Assembly opined that India under British rule had followed British parliamentary institutions for 150 years, and these had become a model. The British ministers were responsible to the House of Commons and this was the essence of the British parliamentary system. To depart from this principle was almost unthinkable.[62] Further, a parliamentary form of government would provide for day-to-day responsibility of the executive to the legislature, where the government would constantly be under scrutiny and examination.

Though, it is recognized that the functions of the legislature is performed primarily by the opposition, the Indian Constitution does not explicitly mention about the opposition in any of the provisions. Article 53 (1) of the Constitution states that

> The executive power of the Union shall be vested in the President and shall be exercised by him either directly or through officers subordinate to him in accordance with this Constitution. [63]

However, no mention is made about the leader of the opposition. It may be assumed that the Parliamentary democracy of British type, where government is responsible to the legislature and the leader of the majority party forms the government, implicitly indicates the existence of a minority party that would constitute the opposition. Further, the Indian Constitution was being adopted fairly late in history. The precedents of a loyal and responsible opposition had already been established in almost all democratic countries of the world including Britain and USA. Hence, its explicit mention may not have been considered important by the Constitution makers. Moreover, a number of political parties and a small but effective opposition were in place both within the Provisional Parliament and within the Congress Party. This laid the foundation for development of the institution of opposition.

### 1.2.7 Conclusion

From the above discussion, it possible identify certain trends in the development of opposition in India. In the first place, the INC dominated India's political landscape in period 1885 to 1947. INC originated as a political group; however, it soon assumed the character of a political party. It contested the elections of 1919 and 1935 and formed

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[62] *Amrit Bazar Patrika* (Calcutta), 29th March , 1967
[63] Constitution of India ( Government of India, Ministry of Law and Justice, New Delhi, 2007), p.26

government in the provinces either by itself, or with the support of other parties. At the same time it opposed the policies of the colonial regime, sometimes through peaceful movements and at other times through civil disobedience and protests. It competed for popular support, ventilated sectional and national grievances carried out non co operation and non violent protests within the framework of liberal democracy. In fact, as Rajni Kothari points out, it was "more than a mere opposition".[64] It was massive stubborn opposition to several features of society. It was an opposition movement in itself. [65]

Second, the struggle against the colonialism necessitated unity amongst all political parties and groups. The Congress (which emerged as the most important political group), adopted the policy of accommodation and coalition. The goal of the party was to draw all other opposition movements within its broad fold. It accommodated parties from extreme left to extreme right. The Congress Socialist Party is a case to point. It even co operated with the Muslim league in the Lucknow pact in 1916, and under the banner of *swaraj* party tried to enter into Provincial Assemblies. This ability of the Congress to coalesce prevented the growth of a healthy opposition outside the fold of the Congress Party. Moreover, most of the leaders of the nationalist movements had at some point of time or other been associated with the Congress. Almost all political parties had their roots in the Congress party.

The Congress party was roughly based on the principles of socialism, secularism and liberal democracy. It was not ideologically rigid and adopted a middle path at allowed to "open its doors' to various factions and groups driving" both the left and the right to the fringes of national politics. Thus, there remained little by way of Opposition in the immediate post independence period. As in the period of Constitution making, so too in the post independence period, opposition came from within the Congress party, rather than outside it. The Congress was the single dominant party' with fringe players at the periphery of national politics keeping the tradition of democratic opposition alive.

Other than the Congress, the Muslim League, and the Hindu Mahasabha, the Socialists and the Communists were the other political groups that had significant support.

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[64]Rajni Kothari, 'India: Oppositions in a Consensual Polity', in Robert A. Dahl (ed.) *Regimes and Oppositions*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), p.310

[65] Sanjukta Banerji Bhattacharya 'The Nature of the Opposition in India's Parliamentary Democracy' in M. Manisha, S. Mitra Deb (ed) *Indian Democracy; Problems and Prospects*, (Anthem Publication, New Delhi, 2009), p.108

However, the Congress at the time of independence was the only political party of value with wide acceptance.[66] The Hindu Mahasabha had not played an important role in the independence of the country. Moreover, it could not really be called a national party. The Muslim League was the only other significant party. However, it demanded the partition of the country and creation of Pakistan. Once its demands were fulfilled, it went on to play a role in politics of that country. The Socialists on the other hand functioned as part of the Congress. The Communists too, did not make much headway in Indian politics before independence and as mentioned earlier many of its members either went underground or joined the Congress party. Regional political outfits such as the Akali Dal in Punjab, the Justice Party in Madras and the Scheduled Caste Federation represented special regional /caste/ sectional interest. Their basic goal namely independence was not very different from that of the Congress.

Fourth, the Congress adopted novel methods of opposing British rule. It adopted the strategy of struggle- -truce -struggle. While forming ministries in the provinces, it tried to bring about social reform through legislative and administrative measure. However, as a party that aimed to end British rule in India, it adopted the method of non violent mass movements outside the Assembly, within the bounds of legality. In fact, it was the strategy of the Congress to accept office, so as to use them to promote mass political activity. In U.P. for instance, after assuming office, the Congress party carried out carried out widespread political mobillzation activities, such as organization of Congress committees in the villages, setting up popular organs of authority in form of Congress police stations and panchayats, organizing mass petitions to officials , etc. Jawaharlal Nehru, the Congress president sent a circular to Congress members in July 1937 'emphasizing that organizational and other work outside the legislature was to remain the primary occupation of the Congress.'[67]

As a result, during its stint in power the Congress expanded its support base and exposed a generation of men to parliamentary procedure and decorum. It created an impression that it was capable, not merely of opposing British rule but even of successfully running the administration of the country. In the twenty-eight months of Congress administration under the Act of 1935, the prestige of Congress increased tremendously and people saw in the Congress rule a vision of things to come after

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[66] Banerji Bhattacharya, n.65, p.109
[67] Bipin Chandra,n.47 p.334

independence. This helped the Congress to create a political capital that none of the political parties could match up in the immediate post independence period.

Fifth, the Congress domination of the nationalist movement led to a continuous ideological commitment to liberal democracy, which India has sustained for over sixty years. This commitment created the essential foundation of a political culture of which the opposition and dissent were as essential as consensus and unanimity. In fact, the latter included the former. Various political parties, that emerged prior to independence and in the immediate post independence period were not united on fundamental principles such as democracy, non-violence, form of government after independence, etc. While the Congress and Socialists accepted secular democracy, the Communists were in favor of a proletarian dictatorship. The Hindu Mahasabha did not believe in secularism and raised the slogan in "Hindu Rashtra' in response to Muslim Leagues demand for the creation of Pakistan. This prevented the consolidation of strong and viable opposition parties.

In the first general elections, the Congress won a resounding victory winning 364 of 489 seats. The non-Congress opposition parties were broadly of two categories, the Socialists, the Communists and the right wing parties such as the Hindu Mahasabha. The Socialists, led by Acharya Kriplani had expected to do well but won only 12 of the 88 seats won by non congress parties, the Communists fared a little better with the CPI winning 16 seats. In fact, of the 14 parties categorized as national parties, 7 were Communist parties. The independent candidates did far better than any of the regional parties, winning 37 seats. Many of the national parties did not have enough candidates to field in the elections. Thus for instance, the socialist party fielded only 154 candidates, the KMPP 145, the CPI 49, and the Jan Sangh 94. This is in contrast to the Congress, which fielded 479 candidates for 489 seats.

The complete domination of the Congress parties raised important questions regarding the opposition in India. Would non-Congress parties be able to challenge Congress domination? What would be the nature of opposition within the parliament? What role would it play? The subsequent chapter attempts address some of these questions

## Chapter 2

## Changing Nature of Opposition in the Lok Sabha

2.1 The establishment of parliamentary democracy in a society characterized by myriad diversity of language, religion, ethnicity, and economic interest was both a difficult and a risky enterprise. It was, as a political leader opined, 'a leap in the dark' and an 'act of faith'.[1] The momentous decisions taken by the founding fathers at once changed the destiny of the nation and its people. It transformed 176 million voters of the country into citizens by a single act.

The democratic process in India must be assessed in terms of the great magnitude of scale.[2] It covers not just a territory but also cultural diversity, since India is not merely a 'nation state' but a 'civilzational state'.[3] It is one of the most heterogeneous nation states in the world. It is the second most populous country in the world. It contains every major religion in the world, apart from several minor ones. There are 550 million Hindus, 75 million Muslims, 13 million Sikhs, 16 million Christians, five million Buddhists, three million Jains, and uncounted million smaller sects.[4]The 1961 census identified 1652 mother tongues.[5]

The Indian Constitution converted this large, heterogeneous mass of people from subjects of the Empire to citizens of independent India and enfranchised them.[6] An ambitious project of social and political transformation was undertaken. A hierarchically divided society that shared relations of superiority and subordination was attempted at being transformed into an egalitarian political community. Equally important was the fact that the project of democracy introduced the principle of equality for the first time in modern history in a feudal socio- economic system.

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[1]Peter Ronal de Souza, "Election, Parties and Democracy in India", in Peter Ronal de Souza (ed), *Contemporary India-Transition* (Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2001), p. 206.
[2]de Souza, n. 1, pp. 206-207.
[3]R. Kumar, "State formation in India, Retrospect and Prospect" paper presentation in a IDAPD Seminar, on "State and Society: Changing Relations between State and Society in India towards an Emerging European State" (New Delhi 5-9 March, 1990).
[4]*Statistical Survey of India, 1986- 1987,* Tata Consultancy Services (Bombay, 1986).
[5]Jyotirindra Das Gupta, *Language and Conflicts in India* (University of California press, Berkeley, 1970), p 33.
[6]W.H. Morris Jones, *Government and Politics of India* (B.I Publications, Delhi, 1974), pp. 246-247.

The Constitution of India set into motion a process of political and legal equality. As Peter Ronald de Souza, a scholar of Indian politics points out, three aspects of this political equality are vital. First, equal freedom of participation, second, equal opportunity of participation seen not only in the existence of alternatives but also in the perception of alternatives and third, equal participation exemplified in the equality of vote.[7]

As a result of the working of the democratic process, the number and the range of people who participated in the political process has increased manifold. As seen from Table 2.1 the size of the electorate has increased from 1.7 crores to about 71.7 crores, while electoral turnout has increased from about 45 percent in 1950s to nearly 60 percent by the turn of the century.

**Table 2.1**

**Electoral Turnout in Lok Sabha Elections, 1952-2009**

| Year | Seats | Candidates | Electorate | Turnout | Poll Stations |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1952** | 489 | 1864 | 173,213,635 | 45.7 | 196,084 |
| **1957** | 494 | 1519 | 193,652,179 | 45.4 | 220,478 |
| **1962** | 494 | 1985 | 216,361,569 | 55.4 | 238,031 |
| **1967** | 520 | 2369 | 250,207,401 | 61.3 | 243,693 |
| **1971** | 518 | 2784 | 274,189,132 | 55.3 | 342,918 |
| **1977** | 542 | 2439 | 320,928,417 | 60.5 | 358,208 |
| **1980** | 542 | 4629 | 356,250,329 | 56.9 | 436,813 |
| **1984** | 542 | 5439 | 400,099,683 | 64.1 | 505,751 |
| **1989** | 543 | 6160 | 498,906,529 | 61.9 | 580,798 |
| **1991** | 543 | 8749 | 511,533,598 | 56.9 | 591,020 |
| **1996** | 543 | 13,952 | 592,572,288 | 57.9 | 767,462 |
| **1998** | 539 | 4,708 | 605,88 ,019 | 61.9 | 765,473 |
| **1999** | 543 | 4,648 | 619,536,847 | 59.9 | 774651 |
| **2004** | 543 | 5,435 | 671,487,930 | 58.07 | 687402 |
| **2009** | 543 | 8,070 | 716,985,101 | 58.19 | 830,866 |

Source: Election Commission of India, *Statistical Report on the General Elections to the Lok Sabha,* First to the Fifteenth Lok Sabha, 1952-1998 (1952, 1957, 1962,1967, 1971, 1977, 1979, 1984, 1990, 1991, 1996, 1998,199, 2004, 2009, New Delhi), Website: www.eci.gov.in retrieved on 30th December, 2010.

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[7]de Souza, n.1, p. 208.

Political mobilization of the masses including the underprivileged, tribals, women, and members of lower castes, rural and urban poor has changed the character of Indian polity.[8]

Further, since independence India has had fifteen General Elections. Of these, only the 1977 general election was held after a period of six years[9]. Five of the fifteen General Elections were held before completion of the full term of the Lok Sabha. In the period 1989-1998 alone, four General Elections were held due to the failure of any political party to continue to hold office for a full term. Almost the governments since 1989 (except the Narsimha Rao government (1991-1996)), have been coalition governments led by either the Congress, or the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). [10]

Opposition politics has been influenced by these developments. For one, it has made both the members of the opposition parties' representative of a larger number of citizens. New interests, hitherto unrecognized have found representation through numerous political parties and groupings as well as new forms of opposition, all of which are not always, parliamentary. Moreover, despite the frequent change in government, elections were held smoothly and transfer of power was unproblematic.

These developments have had serious consequences on the nature of parliamentary democracy in general and parliamentary opposition in particular. The present chapter focuses on two vital questions in the context of the role of the opposition in the Parliament: Has there been a change in the nature of the opposition in terms of its

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[8] For details see:
Yogendra Yadav, "Understanding the Second Democratic Upsurge : Trends of Bahujan Participation in Electoral Politics of 1990s" in Francine Frankel, Zoya Hasan, Rajeev Bhargav, Balveer Arora (eds), *Transforming India: Social and Political Dynamics of Democracy* (OUP, New Delhi, 2001), p. 121.
Also see...
Aditya Nigam, Yogendra Yadav, "Electoral Politics in Indian States, 1989-1999", *Economic and Political Weekly*, (Bombay), vol. 34, nos. 34 and 35, August 21-28, pp. 2391-2392.

[9] Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, extended the term of the Fifth Lok Sabha by a period of one-year following the imposition of National Emergency in 1975

[10] In 1989, the Congress emerged as the single largest party with 197 seats. However, it refused to form the government. The Janata Dal led by V.P Singh formed the government with outside support from the BJP. The V.P Singh government lasted for 11 month when the BJP withdrew support. A breakaway group of Janata Dal led by Chandra Shekhar then formed the government with the support of the Congress. In 1996, the government was formed by the United Front which was a coalition of 13 parties supported by the Congress from outside under two Prime Ministers, H.D. Deve Gowda and I.K. Gujral. Other than these two instances all other governments have been led either by the BJP or the Congress. Even these two Lok Sabah's led by four different PMs were formed either with the support of the Congress or the BJP.

strength? This would help in answering the second question: whom do the members of opposition represent? Has there been a change in the nature of representation?

There are a variety of means to assess the changing nature of opposition. A comparative study of the electoral outcome is perhaps one of the best indicators of changes in the strength of the opposition. This may indicate the composition of the opposition within the Lok Sabha, and in turn, help to explain the changes the techniques and methods used by the opposition within the Lok Sabha.

This chapter attempts to examine the changing character of parliamentary opposition in terms of

- Aggregate vote share and seat share of opposition parties
- Vote share and seat share of Left parties
- Vote share and seat share of Right parties
- State wise vote share and seat share of the opposition parties

Examination of seat share of the entire opposition may give us a macro level understanding of the strength of the opposition. However, it may not necessarily indicate popular support of parties in opposition and the nature of party system.[11] One must note that 'there are several party systems operating in different arenas (such as the legislative arena, electoral arena, etc) and they are linked to each other in a range of different ways, so that change in one system induces or reflects change in another.'[12] In this study, we focus on the interactions between two dimensions of opposition; the electoral dimension (i.e. the proportion of votes cast for opposition party/parties) and the legislative dimension (i.e. the proportion of seats won by a party).

India has moved from being a one party dominant system to multi party coalitional politics. Thus for instance, while in the second Lok Sabha, the Congress had a majority on its own, in the 14th Lok Sabha, it led a coalition government. The opposition too has

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[11]The party system, which usually denotes the way in which various parties interact at a particular level of political competition and/or cooperation (e.g., predominant party system, multiple party system, etc),

[12] Laver, Michael 'Party Competition and Party System Change: The Interaction of Coalition Bargaining and Election Competition', *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, vol.1, no.3, 1989 p.303

undergone significant changes. The Praja Socialist Party (PSP), the Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP), and the Swatantra Party that were important players in the period after independence no longer exist. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the successor of Jan Sangh has emerged as a major contender since 1989. The Communist parties too, underwent a split in 1967, and CPI and CPI (M) emerged. They were the part of the opposition in the second Lok Sabha. However in the 14th Lok Sabha, they for the first time supported the Congress and formed a part of the ruling coalition. Given the dynamic nature of party politics in India, disaggregation of the data (both electoral and legislative) may help in better understanding of Parliamentary opposition. Thus, the researcher proposes to study the strength of left as well as right to the centre parties in the opposition.

Further, spatial and geographical spread of opposition parties may help in examining the spread and penetration of opposition during the study period. This assumes vital importance in view of emergence of large number of political parties that contest elections.

## 2.2 Opposition in the Second Lok Sabha (1957-1962)

Elections to the second Lok Sabha were held in March 1957. Nearly 1600 candidates from four national parties and 11 state parties contested the elections for 494 seats. About 193 million people participated in these elections. In order to challenge Congress domination, almost all non-Congress parties tried to enter into electoral alliances. The Communist party formed united front with other left wing parties such as the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), and the Forward Block (FB). In West Bengal five parties, the Communist Party of India (CPI), Praja Socialist Party (PSP), RSP, FB and Revolutionary Communist Party entered into electoral adjustment.

The PSP entered seat adjustment with Muslim League in Malabar and Travancore. In Bombay, all the almost all the non Congress parties formed an alliance against the Congress along with Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti. As a result of these pre electoral alliances, the Congress faced stiff challenge from the opposition where ever they were united.

In spite of such alliances, the second Lok Sabha was in many ways a continuation of the first Lok Sabha.

**Table 2.2**

**Vote Share and Seat Share of Non Congress Parties**

| **National Parties** | **Contested** | **Won** | **Total Seats in the State** | **No of States in which Seats were contested** | **Vote Share** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| All India Bharatiya Jan Sangh | 130 | 4 | 326 | 11 | 5.97 |
| Communist Party of India | 110 | 27 | 403 | 17 | 8.9 |
| Praja Socialist Party | 189 | 19 | 402 | 16 | 10.4 |
| **State Parties** | **Contested** | **Won** | **Total seats in the state** | **No of states in which Seats were contested** | **Vote share** |
| Janata | 13 | 3 | 45 | 1 | 0.32 |
| Forward Block (Marxist) | 5 | 2 | 28 | 1 | 0.55 |
| Ganatantra Praishad | 14 | 7 | 15 | 1 | 1.07 |
| Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha | 19 | 1 | 113 | 3 | 0.86 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jharkhand Party | 12 | 6 | 45 | 1 | 0.62 |
| Peoples Democratic Front | 8 | 2 | 35 | 8 | 0.87 |
| Praja Party | 3 | 0 | 35 | 3 | 0.12 |
| Peasants and Workers Party | 7 | 4 | 58 | 1 | 0.77 |
| Akhil Bharatiya Ram Rajya Parishad | 17 | Nil | 171 | 4 | 0.38 |
| Revolutionary Socialist party | 3 | Nil | 16 | 1 | 0.26 |
| All India Scheduled Castes Federation | 22 | 6 | 167 | 7 | 1.69 |

Source: Election Commission of India, *Statistical Report on the General Elections to the Lok Sabha*, First to the Fifteenth Lok Sabha, 1952-1998 (1957, , New Delhi), Website: www.eci.gov.in retrieved on 30th December, 2010.

As in the first Lok Sabha, in the second Lok Sabha too, the Congress dominated the House with 371 seats. The Congress gained three quarter of the seats with nearly half of the valid votes polled (47.8%). In fact, the position of the Congress improved marginally from 364 seats in the first House. The continued dominance of the Congress may be attributed to the charismatic personality of Nehru. The importance of Nehru's vision of a modern India in which state would assume charge of economic development and nation building activities with appeals to socialism, secularism, federalism and democracy has been emphasized by political scientists.[13] Apart from this, the stability that Congress government provided in administering the country may also have contributed to Congress's strength. Above all, the organization strength of the party that had units in every state and large number of candidates that it put up, enabled the party to assume a pre eminent position.

[13] See:
Zoya Hasn (ed), *Parties and Party Politics in India*,(OUP, New Delhi, 1999), p.8.
Also see Rajni Kothari, Congress System in India, *Asian Survey*, vol 4, no.12,( University of California, Berkeley, December, 1964)

The second Lok Sabha did not have a recognized parliamentary opposition. This is not to say that there existed no opposition in the second Lok Sabha (see Table 2.2 and 2.3. However, there existed no recognized opposition party in view of the fact that no opposition party had managed to secure ten percent of Lok Sabha seats that was mandatory in order to be recognized officially as opposition party.

As seen in Table 2.1, the Communist Party of India (CPI) emerged as the principal opposition party in this Lok Sabha. Their position improved in this Lok Sabha compared to the first, where it had 16 seats. Their support base too, increased nearly three times from three percent to nearly 10 percent. It may be mentioned here that the Communists were most successful in forming pre electoral. Moreover, apart from the Congress, it was the only party to put up candidates in every state. The CPI was the only Left party that was able to do well in the second Lok Sabha (see Table 2.3 and Figure 2.1). The Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) failed to win any seats and the though the Forward Block won two of the five seats that it contested (as compared to one in 1952). Both these parties lost their status as national parties.

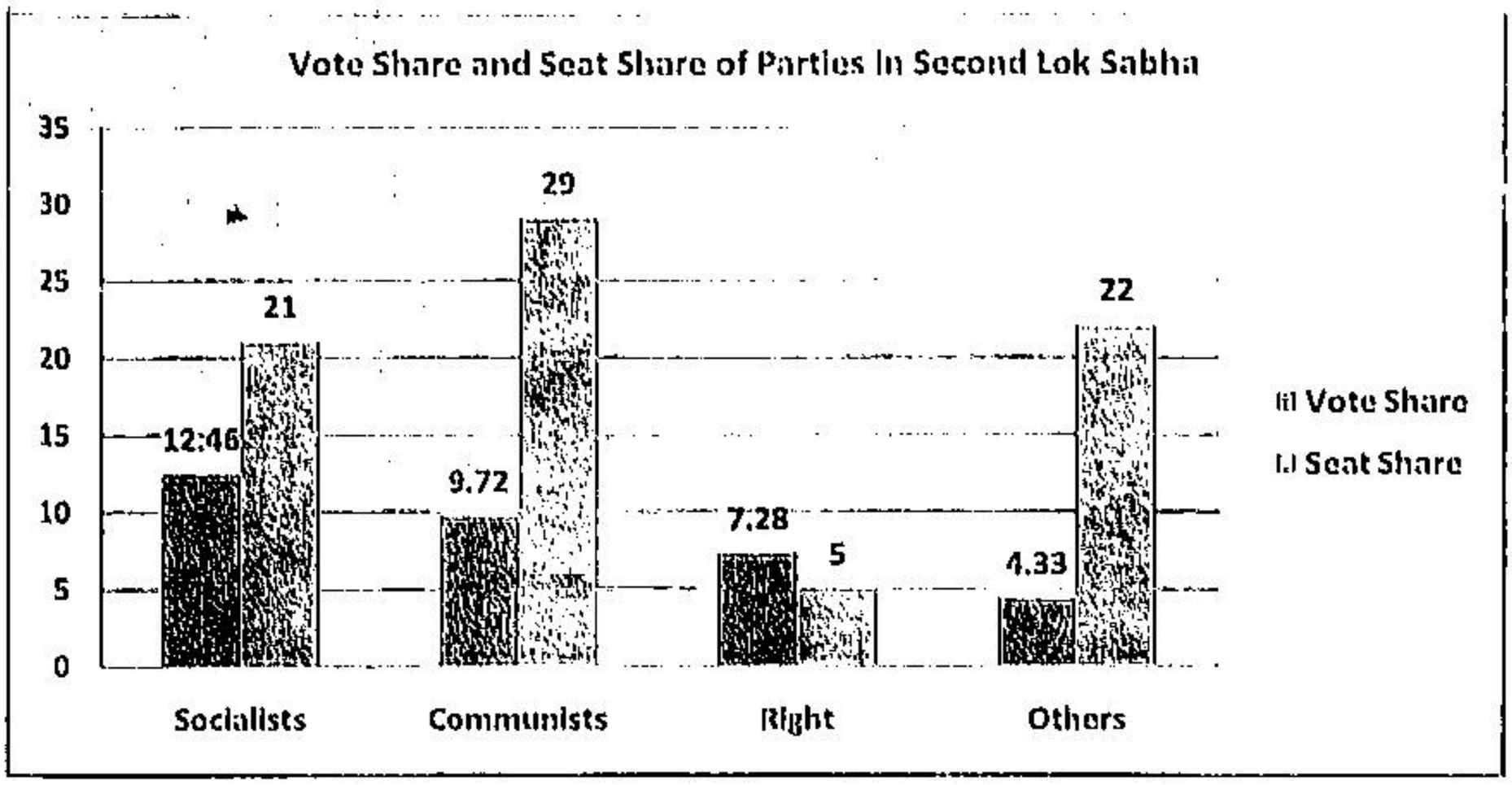
**Table 2.3**

**Vote Share and Seat Share of Communists, Socialists, and Right to Centre Parties**

| *Lok Sabha* | Vote share | Seat Share |
|---|---|---|
| Socialists | 12.46 | 21 |
| Communist | 9.72 | 29 |
| Right Parties | 7.28 | 5 |
| Others(CNJP, GP, JHP,SCF) | 3.92 | 22 |

Source: Election Commission of India, *Statistical Report on the General Elections to the Lok Sabha*, First to the Fifteenth Lok Sabha, 1952-1998 (1957, , New Delhi), Website: www.eci.gov.in retrieved on 30th December, 2010.

**Figure 2.1**




The rightist parties, such as the Bharatiya Jan Sangh (BJS) had modified their extreme stand and tried to reconstitute their position in the post independence period. Despite this, there was further erosion in their strength. The Hindu Mahasabha (HMS) won only one seat and the Ram Rajya Parishad (RRP) did not win any seat in the second Lok Sabha. In the first Lok Sabha, they had 10 seats (HMS 4, BJS 3, RRP 3). Some of the prominent members of these parties lost in the elections. N.C. Chatterjee, the President of Hindu Mahasabha and V.C. Deshpande, the secretary were both defeated. Both these parties lost the status of national parties as they failed to poll the required three percent votes to retain their all India status. Moreover, nearly half the candidates of BJS (43.8 percent) forfeited their deposit.

Further, the largest number of members of the opposition were elected from four states, Bombay, Orissa, Kerela and Bihar. As mentioned earlier, the Socialists and Communists had entered into pre electoral alliance in these states. The consolidation in the ranks of non Congress parties benefited them both in terms of seats and votes.

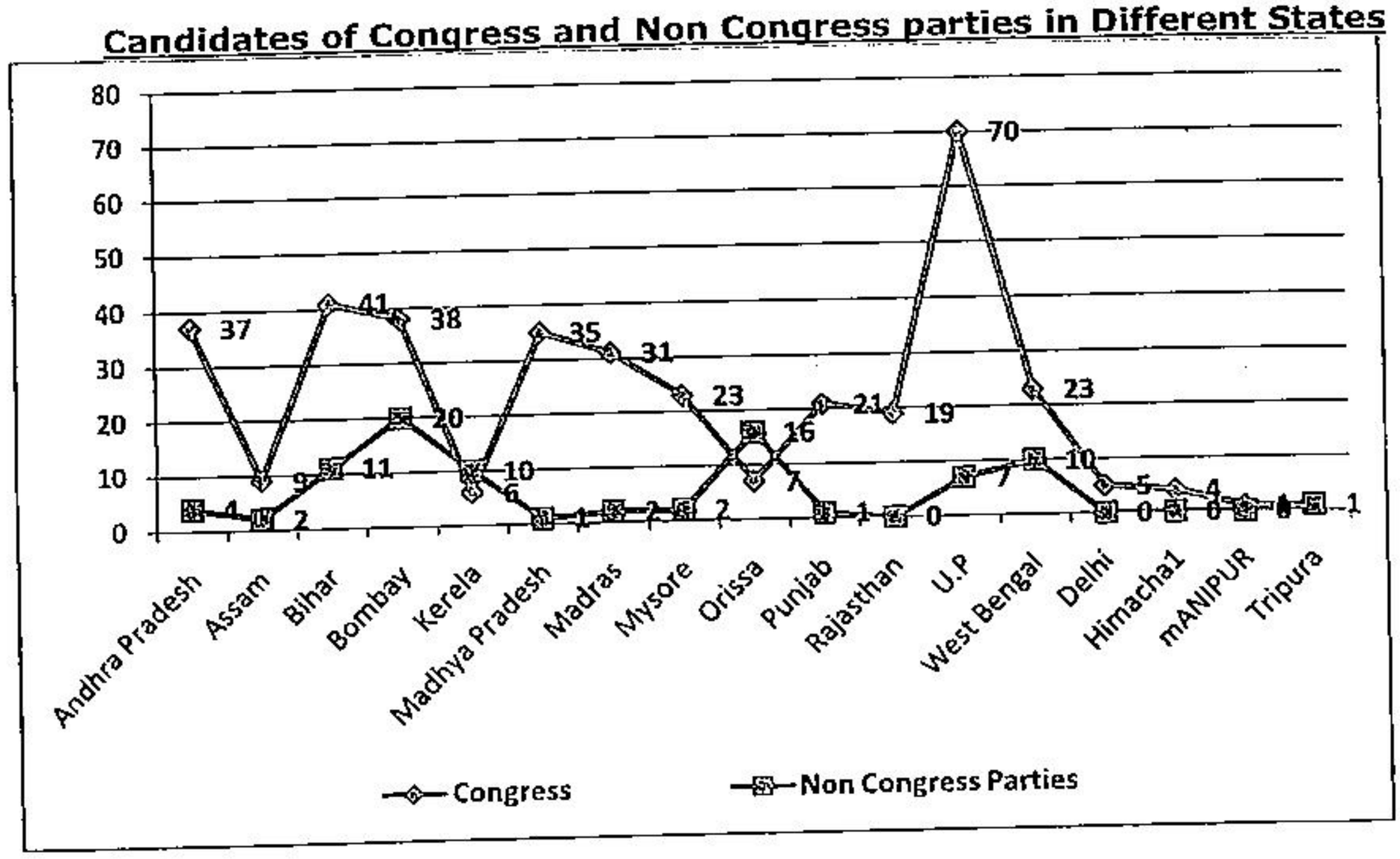
Table 2.4

**Candidates put up by Congress, Non Congress Parties and Independents in Various States in the Second Lok Sabha Elections**

| State | Congress | Non Congress Parties | Independents |
|---|---|---|---|
| Andhra Pradesh | 37 | 4 | 2 |
| Assam | 9 | 2 | 1 |
| Bihar | 41 | 11 | 0 |
| Bombay | 38 | 20 | 8 |
| Kerela | 6 | 10 | 2 |
| Madhya Pradesh | 35 | 1 | 0 |
| Madras | 31 | 2 | 8 |
| Mysore | 23 | 2 | 1 |
| Orissa | 7 | 16 | 3 |
| Punjab | 21 | 1 | 0 |
| Rajasthan | 19 | 0 | 3 |
| U.P | 70 | 7 | 9 |
| West Bengal | 23 | 10 | 3 |
| Delhi | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Himachal | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Manipur | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Tripura | 1 | 1 | 0 |

Source: Election Commission of India, *Statistical Report on the General Elections to the Lok Sabha*, First to the Fifteenth Lok Sabha, 1952-1998 (1957, , New Delhi), Website: www.eci.gov.in retrieved on 30th December, 2010.

Figure 2.2



From the above data, it is possible to identify certain features of the opposition parties in the second Lok Sabha. Firstly, parliamentary opposition in the second Lok Sabha was small and fragmented in nature. Although 22 national and state parties contested the elections, the main opposition to the Congress came from three national parties (BJS, PSP and CPI). These three parties had nearly 25 percent of the votes but occupied only 10 percent of the Lok Sabha membership (49 seats). This is in sharp contrast to the Congress, which occupied three quarters of the seats with only half of the total vote cast (48 percent of votes and 371 seats).

Secondly, seat sharing arrangements and coalitions assume particular significance in a multi party FTPT system.[14] This was established in the second Lok Sabha. The opposition parties that entered into pre electoral seat sharing arrangements were rewarded. Thus the CPI, which successfully formed a united front with other left parties was more successful than either the Socialists or Jan Sangh. Further, in states where opposition parties consolidated their ranks and put up a single candidate avoided fragmentation of votes. They were successful in converting their electoral support to legislative seats.

Thirdly, the opposition in the second Lok Sabha consisted of large number of state parties. There were about 11 state parties, which had some representation in the Lok Sabha. However, most of these parties had limited presence. Only four of these state parties had more than one member. The limited reach of these parties is also indicated by the fact that they were often confined to a particular region within the state and did not contest all the Lok Sabha seats from the state. Apart from Ganatantra Parishad, which put up candidates for 14 of the 15 Lok Sabha seats from Orissa, none of the

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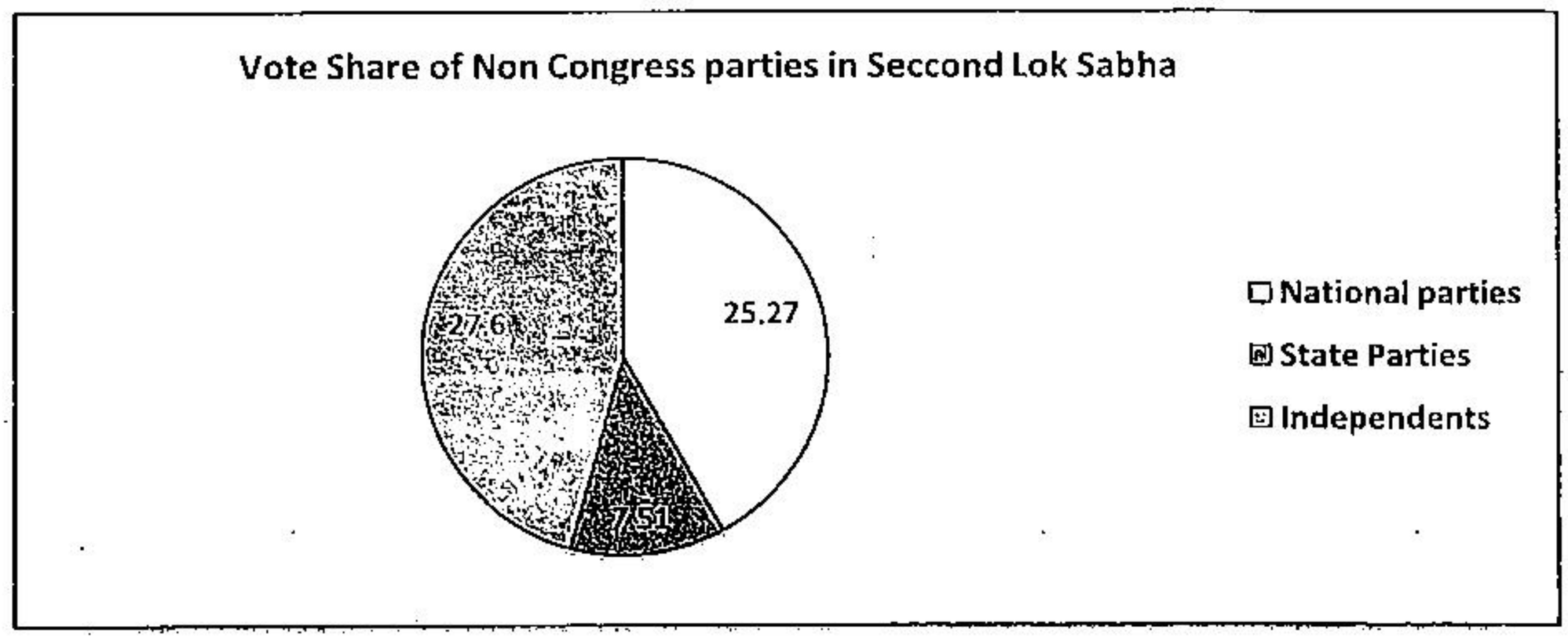
[14] The FTPT electoral system which India has adopted generally favors large parties or coalitions. For details see
*A handbook of Electoral System Design*, (International IDEA, Stockholm, 2007); Ardent Lijphart, *Electoral Systems and Party Systems: A study of twenty Seven Democracies, 1945-2000*( OUP, Oxford, 2004);David M.Farrell, *Electoral Systems: A Comparative Introduction*, (Palgrave,New York, 2001); David M..Farrell, *Comparing Electoral Systems*, ( Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1997);E Shridharan, 'The Origins of Electoral Sytems, Rules, Representation and power Sharing in India's Democracy,in Zoya Hasan, Eswaran Sridharan, R. Sudarshan (ed), *India's living Constitution: Ideas, Practices, Controversies*, (Permenent Black, London, 2002); Robert L. Hardgrave, Stanley A. Kochanek(ed) *India: Government and Politics in a Developing Nation*, (Thomson Wadsworth, Boston, 2000)

other political parties contested all the seats from the state where they had some presence. The popular support of these parties was also limited. Together, these parties gained 11 percent of valid votes.

Fifthly, it is interesting to note that the state parties were not always opposed to the Congress. Many of these state parties were allies of the Congress. Many of these state parties (GP, JHP) supported the Congress and could not be regarded as a part of opposition in the Lok Sabha. The Jharkhand party supported the Congress government both at the centre and the state. Thus, the presence of large number of state parties with local support weakened the ranks of the opposition in the Lok Sabha while the Congress gained by virtue of its coalition with smaller state parties.

**Figure 2.3**




In fact, the Independent candidates appeared to be stronger than the state parties. They occupied 30 seats in the Lok Sabha and got 20 percent of the votes. Many of the independent candidates won with the support of the Congress and supported the Congress in the Lok Sabha.

As mentioned earlier, the opposition to the Congress came from two main **national parties**; the CPI and PSP. The PSP could be labeled as a left to the centre party and in many ways similar to the Congress, being the result of split in the Congress party. The Communists were distinctively left in their ideology. Given the ideological underpinnings

and historical background of the two groups, the opposition appears to have been divided on ideological ground.

It appears therefore, that the Congress dominance relegated the opposition to the margins of political system as well as the party system. The opposition as it existed in the second Lok Sabha had little prospect of replacing the Congress, nor could it conceive of itself as 'government in waiting'. In such a situation, the only way in which the opposition could hope to exercise political influence was to address likeminded groups within the dominant party to extract some concessions from the government.[15] Further, it could hope to better its prospects only through performance of the other two functions of namely, oversight of administration and eliciting information. This was important both for its survival as well as its growth. The Parliament provided necessary political space to the opposition to reinforce its presence and make some contribution to political process. Given the limitations of its size, the quality of its members and their leadership skills also assumed vital importance.

In the long run, the opposition could challenge the Congress through better consolidation of its ranks and better co-ordination amongst its constituent elements.

## 2.3 Opposition in the Period 1957-2004

The Congress domination of Indian polity continued until the fourth Lok Sabha (1967). In the first three Lok Sabhas the Congress won over two thirds of the seats on the basis of plurality of votes against a fragmented opposition that varied from state to state. The 1967 elections marked a break in this continuity. The Congress won only 283 seats with the lowest ever vote share. The death of Jawaharlal Nehru and subsequent challenge to the leadership of Indira Gandhi by the veterans of the Congress party led to a split in the Congress party. The Congress Party in Organization (O) was recognized as the first opposition party in the Lok Sabha in 1964.

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[15] W.H. Morris Jones, 'Dominance and Dissent: Their Interrelationship in Indian Party System' in W.H. Morris Jones, *Politics Mainly Indian*, (Orient Longman, Madras, 1978), p.894

However, the post 1967 elections witnessed a steady decline of the Congress party with the exception of the 1971 and 1984 elections.[16] The 1977 elections were held in the aftermath of the Emergency. During the Emergency, leaders of the opposition were arrested, press was censored and a series of undemocratic measures were undertaken. The excesses of the emergency led to a unity in the ranks of the opposition under the banner of Janata party (JP). The JP entered into alliance with Jagjivan Ram's Congress For democracy and CPM. The CPI and the DMK were the only non Congress parties that were left outside of the Janata Party. The unity in the ranks of non Congress parties contributed to the defeat of the Congress and formation of first non Congress government in post independent India. The Janata Party won 295 seats in this Lok Sabha. The Congress became the principal opposition party in the Sixth Lok Sabha. Thus, an all inclusive party won against Congress party, which was not as fragmented as earlier oppositions were.

In 1980 too, the Congress won nearly two-thirds seats following the failure of the Janata government to last a full term and its subsequent disintegration. In 1984 elections, the sympathy wave that followed the assassination of the then PM Indira Gandhi once again contributed to a Congress victory with three fourth majority. The Congress got maximum votes (48.1%) in this election and won 415 seats.

From 1989 onwards there was a significant shift in the nature of Indian politics. In the 1989 elections, the National Front consisting of the Janata Dal and regional political parties organized a one to one contest with the Congress. This led to gradual displacement of the Congress party as the dominant party. A second feature of the post 1989 politics was the emergence of the BJP. The BJP, the successor of the BJS contested the elections for the first time in 1984. Its predecessor BJS had never managed to gain more than 10 percent of votes or 35 Lok Sabha seats. The BJP steadily rose in strength; from two seats in the 1984 House to 86 seats in 1989, and 120 seats in 1991 when it emerged as the second largest party and the principal opposition. In 1996, it emerged as the single largest party with 161 seats. It formed

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[16]It may be mentioned here that the 1971 elections saw the restoration of the of two thirds majority for the Congress Party in the Lok Sabha. It gained 43 percent of votes in this General Election. The emergence of Indira Gandhi as new leader of the Congress party contributed to this.

the opposition party after the failure of 13 day government led by Atal Behari Vajpayee to prove its majority in the House.

This period was also characterized by the emergence numerous state and regional political parties organized along the lines of caste/class/language. These political parties steadily rose in strength in the Lok Sabha. The national political parties gradually came to rely on these parties for the purpose of government formation. Thus, for instance, the Congress formed government in 1991 with the support of 11 member AIADMK and smaller allies. Similarly, in the absence of the support from these parties, the BJP government in 1996 lasted for only 13 days.

The period since 1989 has also witnessed the emergence of coalition politics . Thus, in 1998, the BJP forged alliances with a range of state parties and formed the government. Similarly, the Congress led UPA government is also a coalition government. National political parties recognized the need to form pre electoral alliances with state parties. In 1999, the National Democratic Front government (NDA) – a coalition of 24 parties consisting of Shiv Sena, Akali Dal, National Conference, Lok Shakti, Janata Dal, Telugu Desam, DMK, MDMK, PMK, PRC, BJD, Trinamool Congress, etc was formed. Neither the Congress, nor the BJP was able to form either majority or minority governments on their own. Alliances with these parties critically helped the Congress and the BJP. It is in the light of these developments that the nature of the opposition in the 2004 House needs to be examined

## 2.4 Opposition in Fourteenth Lok Sabha (2004-2009)

The 14th Lok Sabha election was held in four phases between April 20 and May 10, 2004. Over 670 million people were eligible to vote, electing 543 members of the 14th Lok Sabha. 230 political parties including six national parties participated in these elections. The ruling NDA under the leadership of Atal Behari Vajpayee conceded defeat to the United Progressive Alliance (UPA). The UPA was able to put together a comfortable majority of more than 335 members with the help of its allies under the direction of Indian National Congress. The 335 members included both the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance, the governing coalition formed after the election, as

well as Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Samajwadi Party (SP), Kerala Congress (KC) and the Left Front who provided external support.

Table 2.5 indicates the performance of different national and state parties in the 14th Lok Sabha.

**Table 2.5**

**Performance of Candidates of National and State Parties in 14th Lok Sabha**

| Sl. No. | Party | Contested | Won | % Won | Votes Polled | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **National Parties** | | | | | |
| 1 | Bharatiya Janata Party | 364 | 138 | 37.91 | 86371561 | 22.16 |
| 2 | Bahujan Samaj Party | 435 | 19 | 4.37 | 20765229 | 5.33 |
| 3 | Communist Party of India | 34 | 10 | 29.41 | 5484111 | 1.41 |
| 4 | Communist Party of India (Marxist) | 69 | 43 | 62.32 | 22070614 | 5.66 |
| 5 | Indian National Congress | 417 | 145 | 34.77 | 103408949 | 26.53 |
| 6 | Nationalist Congress Party | 32 | 9 | 28.12 | 7023175 | 1.8 |
| | **National Parties Total** | **1351** | **364** | **26.94** | **245123639** | **62.89** |
| | **State Parties** | | | | | |
| 1 | Arunachal Congress | 1 | 0 | 0 | 76527 | 0.02 |
| 2 | All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam | 33 | 0 | 0 | 8547014 | 2.19 |
| 3 | Asom Gana Parishad | 12 | 2 | 16.67 | 2069600 | 0.53 |
| 4 | All India Forward Bloc | 10 | 3 | 30 | 1365055 | 0.35 |
| 5 | All India Trinamool Congress | 33 | 2 | 6.06 | 8071867 | 2.07 |
| 6 | Biju Janata Dal | 12 | 11 | 91.67 | 5082849 | 1.3 |
| 7 | Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (Liberation) | 65 | 0 | 0 | 1281688 | 0.33 |
| 8 | Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam | 16 | 16 | 100 | 7064393 | 1.81 |
| 9 | Federal Party of Manipur | 1 | 0 | 0 | 88179 | 0.02 |
| 10 | Indian National Lok Dal | 20 | 0 | 0 | 1936703 | 0.5 |
| 11 | Janata Dal (Secular) | 43 | 3 | 6.98 | 5732296 | 1.47 |
| 12 | Janata Dal (United) | 73 | 8 | 10.96 | 9144963 | 2.35 |
| 13 | Jammu & Kashmir National Conference | 6 | 2 | 33.33 | 493067 | 0.13 |
| 14 | Jammu & Kashmir National Panthers Party | 7 | 0 | 0 | 70078 | 0.02 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15 | Jammu & Kashmir Peoples Democratic Party | 3 | 1 | 33.33 | 267457 | 0.07 |
| 16 | Jharkhand Mukti Morcha | 9 | 5 | 55.56 | 1846843 | 0.47 |
| 17 | Kerala Congress | 1 | 1 | 100 | 353905 | 0.09 |
| 18 | Kerala Congress (M) | 1 | 0 | 0 | 209880 | 0.05 |
| 19 | Maharashtrawadi Gomantak | 2 | 0 | 0 | 7584 | 0 |
| 20 | Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam | 4 | 4 | 100 | 1679870 | 0.43 |
| 21 | Mizo National Front | 1 | 1 | 100 | 182864 | 0.05 |
| 22 | Manipur People's Party | 1 | 0 | 0 | 77055 | 0.02 |
| 23 | Muslim League Kerala State Committee | 10 | 1 | 10 | 770098 | 0.2 |
| 24 | Nagaland Peoples Front | 3 | 1 | 33.33 | 715366 | 0.18 |
| 25 | Pattali Makkal Katchi | 6 | 6 | 100 | 2169020 | 0.56 |
| 26 | Rashtriya Janata Dal | 42 | 24 | 57.14 | 9384147 | 2.41 |
| 27 | Rashtriya Lok Dal | 32 | 3 | 9.38 | 2463607 | 0.63 |
| 28 | Revolutionary Socialist Party | 6 | 3 | 50 | 1689794 | 0.43 |
| 29 | Shiromani Akali Dal | 10 | 8 | 80 | 3506681 | 0.9 |
| 30 | Shiromani Akali Dal (Simranjit Singh Mann) | 6 | 0 | 0 | 387682 | 0.1 |
| 31 | Sikkim Democratic Front | 1 | 1 | 100 | 153409 | 0.04 |
| 32 | Shivsena | 56 | 12 | 21.43 | 7056255 | 1.81 |
| 33 | Samajwadi Party | 237 | 36 | 15.19 | 16824072 | 4.32 |
| 34 | Telugu Desam | 33 | 5 | 15.15 | 11844811 | 3.04 |
| 35 | United Goans Democratic Party | 1 | 0 | 0 | 5881 | 0 |
| 36 | Uttarakhand Kranti Dal | 4 | 0 | 0 | 43899 | 0.01 |
| | **State Parties Total** | **801** | **159** | **19.85** | **112664459** | **28.9** |
| | **REGISTERED (Unrecognised) PARTIES** | 898 | 15 | 1.67 | 15441786 | 3.96 |
| | **INDEPENDENTS** | 2385 | 5 | 0.21 | 16549900 | 4.25 |
| | **Total** | **5435** | **543** | **9.99** | **389779784** | |

Source: Election Commission of India, *Statistical Report on the General Elections to the Lok Sabha,* Fourteenth Lok Sabha, (2004, New Delhi), Website: www.eci.gov.in retrieved on 30th December, 2010.

As per the records of the Lok Sabha the following parties were recognized as opposition parties

**Table 2.6**

**Vote Share, Seat Share, and Number of States from which Opposition parties Contested of the Opposition**

| Party | Vote Share | Seats Contested | No of states in which contested | Seat Won |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| BJP | 22.16 | 364 | 18 | 138 |
| Shiv Sena (SS) | 1.81 | 56 | 1 | 12 |
| Biju Janata Dal (BJD) | 1.3 | 12 | 1 | 11 |
| Janata Dal (United) (JDU) | 2.35 | 73 | 3 | 8 |
| Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) | 0.9 | 10 | 1 | 8 |
| Telugu Desam Party (TDP) | 3.04 | 33 | 1 | 5 |
| All India Trinamool Congress | 2.07 | 33 | 1 | 2 |
| Indian Federal democratic Party | 0.01 | 1 | 1 | 0 |

Source: Election Commission of India, *Statistical Report on the General Elections to the Lok Sabha*, Fourteenth Lok Sabha, (2004, New Delhi), Website: www.eci.gov.in retrieved on 30th December, 2010

The data above indicates that, of the eight parties that were categorized as opposition parties in the 14th Lok Sabha, only one namely, the BJP was a national party, while all others were state parties. Most of these state parties were confined to one state except Janata Dal (U), which contested from three states. However, these state parties were powerful players in the state. Thus, the TDP was principal opposition party in Andhra Pradesh and had held power in the state for two consecutive terms from 1994 onwards. The Shiv Sena was a powerful player in Maharashtra politics. Similarly, the SAD and JD(U) were important parties in Punjab and Bihar (see Table 2.7).

Secondly, the BJP which was the principal opposition party in the 14th Lok Sabha, and the senior partner in the NDA was often a junior partner with these parties at the state level. The BJP was dependent on the coalition partners for support at the national level, while it provided the necessary support at the state level. This arrangement had gradually been worked out by both the major national parties namely; the Congress and the BJP

**Table 2.7**

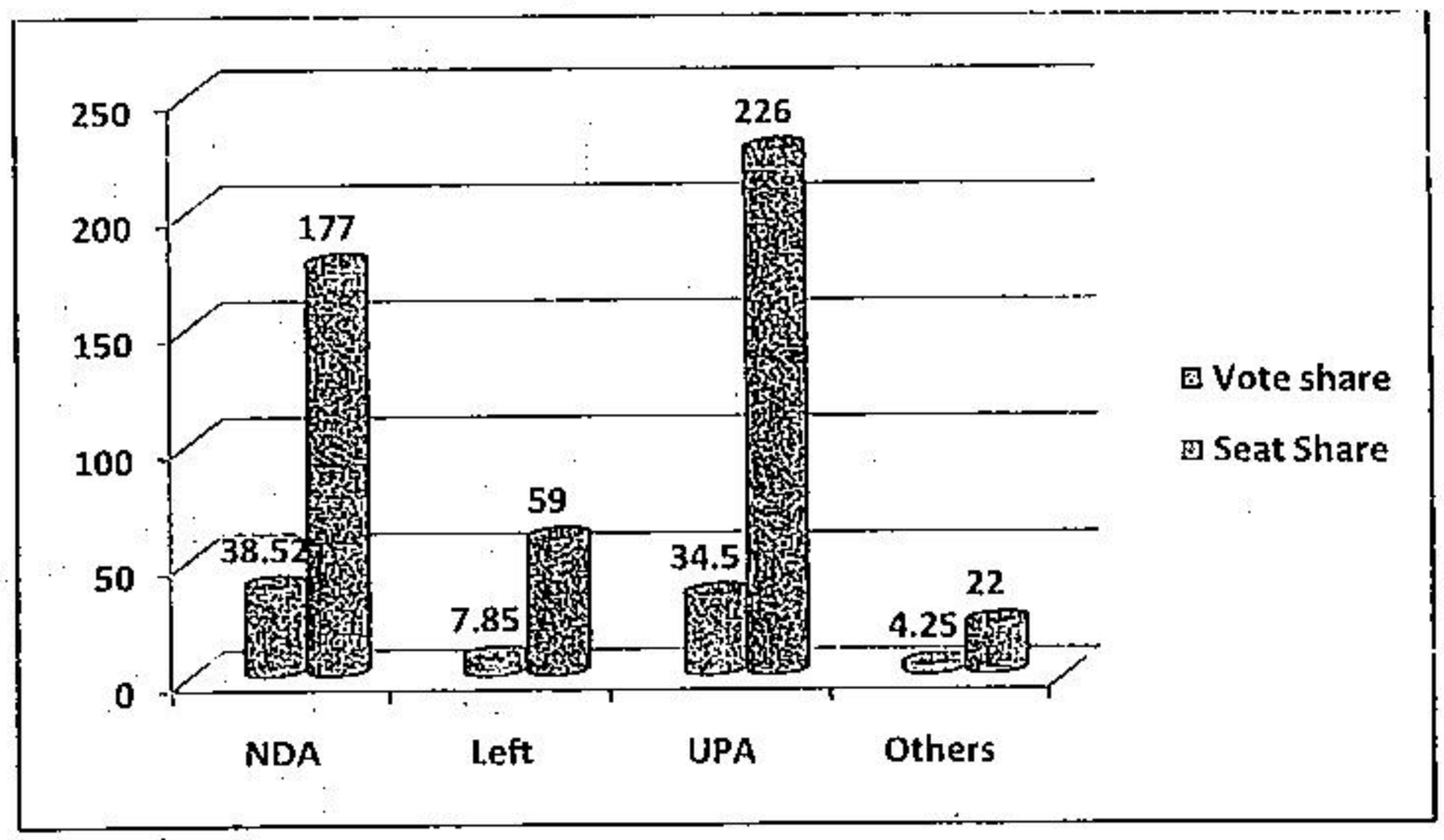
**Opposition and Ruling Parties in Some States**

| Sl. No | State | Government |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Maharashtra | Government: Congress,<br>Opposition: SS and BJP |
| 2 | Orissa | Government: BJD (61 Seatsand BJP (32 seats, Total Membership of the House 142)<br>CM: Naveen Patnaik<br>Opposition: Congress |
| 3 | Punjab | Government : Congress<br>CM:Capt. Amrinder Singh<br>Opposition: SAD, BJP |
| 4 | Andhra Pradesh | Government :Congress<br>CM: Rajsekhar Reddy<br>Opposition: TDP (45 seats, Bjp :2 seats)) |
| 5 | West Bengal | Left Front Government led by CPI<br>Opposition: AITMC |

Thirdly, both the ruling and the principal opposition parties were equally matched in terms of seat share and vote share. What distinguished them from each other was the number of parties with which they had entered into alliance. Thus, while the Congress formed a pre-poll alliance with 12 parties, (RJD, DMK, NCP, PMK, JMM, LJP, MDMK, AMIM, PDP, RPI, SDF, IUML) which together won 226 seats, the BJP had such alliance only with five parties which together won 169 seats.

Figure 2.4

**Vote Share and Seat Share of UPA, NDA and Others**




Fourthly, both the government and the opposition were a coalition. While the Congress led UPA formed the government, the BJP led NDA formed the opposition. Both the ruling and the opposition coalition were dependent on the support of regional political parties. They determined the ability of the national parties to form the government or remain in opposition.

It may be surmised that the opposition in the 14th Lok Sabha was sufficiently strong in terms of its vote strength and seat strength. However, the ruling party enjoyed a comfortable majority in House in view of the support that it received from left political parties as well as other regional political parties such as SP and BSP with which it had not entered into pre election alliances.

The opposition's ability to perform its functions effectively was limited by its ability to forge alliances with other political parties both within and outside the legislature, and its ability to co ordinate with its allies within the Parliament. However, given the fact that almost all the coalition partners of the BJP were right to the centre parties and had been in alliance with the BJP for a long time, this was not likely to be difficult. Yet another factor that determined the efficacy of the opposition was the role of its leaders.

## 2.5 Conclusion

A comparative study of the two Lok Sabhas is indicative of the changes in the nature of the India's parliamentary opposition. For nearly one and half decade after independence, the Congress remained the dominant party of the country. It won a landslide victory in the second and later, even in the third General Elections.

The opposition political parties were disadvantaged right from its inception on account of lack of long history, powerful organization and an all India support base. Most of these opposition political parties were of recent origin (outside the Congress framework), compared to the Congress. They were unable to establish durable relationship with groups whose interests they appeared to represent. Behind the facade of organizational activity, membership drives, large plenary sessions, that gave the impression of vitality of the party organization, the party structures of opposition lacked substance. There was the absence of both the penetration and leadership that was needed to challenge the dominance of the Congress party. As mentioned earlier, national parties failed to expand their base while state parties confined themselves to consolidating their positions in the regions of their strength.

Parliamentary opposition in the second Lok Sabha was diffused and varied in its nature. The splintered nature of the opposition comprising of many different parties, prevented the growth of a *enblock* parliamentary opposition. The Communists, the Socialists and the right wing political groups were not only ideologically different, but also drew support from different geographical regions. Further, they failed to build effective coalition strategies. This severely affected the consolidation of the opposition.

Hence, the opposition in the early years played a distinctive role in that it pressurized factions within the Congress. As James Manor points out, "they oppose by making the congressmen oppose."[17] And the groups within the Congress party assumed the role of opposition reflecting the concerns, the issues and ideologies of the opposition political parties.

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[17] James Manor, 'Party and Party System' in Zoya Hasan (ed) Parties *and Party Politics in India*, (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000); p434.

There was a most important openness in the relations between the congress and other parties.. a positive communication and interaction between them. This meant that the main hope that the opposition leaders had of exercising political influence was to address themselves... to like minded groups in the dominant party. Those efforts by opposition groups generated ideas and pressure within the ruling party's organization, which was sophisticated enough to detect them and communicate them to the leaders who could respond t them.[18]

However, by 1967 the Congress party began to decline. A new type of party system began to emerge, the contours of which were evident by early years of this century.[19] With this, the nature of parliamentary oppositions also began to transform. By 2004, neither the ruling party nor the opposition was a single party. The UPA, which formed the government in the 14th Lok Sabha was opposed by the NDA, a coalition of 11 parties led by the BJP. The BJP was the dominant partner in the oppositional coalition. However, it failed to achieve the past pre-eminence of the Congress, in terms of seats and spatial distribution. The BJP remains a strong party in northern and central India, but it is weak in southern and eastern India.

The coalition building strategy of the opposition parties were not based on ideological considerations but rather on exigencies of national politics.[20] Coalitions were built with the purpose of vote maximization. As Bidyut Chakrabarty argues, 'what seems crucial

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[18] James Manor,n.17, p.434.

[19] For more on party system in India see:
Ajay K. Mehra; D.D. Khanna; Gert W. Kueck (eds.), *Political Parties and Party Systems*, New Delhi, Sage);Arun K. Jana & Bhupen Sarmah (eds.),*Class, Ideology and Political Parties in India*, (New Delhi: South Asian Publisher, 2002);Harold A. Gould & Sumit Ganguly (eds.), *India Votes: Alliance Politics and Minority Governments in the Ninth and Tenth General Elections*, Boulder (Colorado): Westview.
Balveer Arora & Douglas V. Verney (eds.),*Multiple Identities in a Single State: Indian Federalism in Comparative Perspective*, (New Delhi: Konark Publishers, 2003) ;Pai, Sudha, 'Indian Party System under Transformation: Lok Sabha 1998', *Asian Survey*, vol 38, no.9, University of California, Berkeley,1998) pp. 83-852;Nagindas Sanghavi, Usha Thakkar,) 'Regionalisation of Indian Politics', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 12 February, 2000 (Mumbai ), pp. 514-518

[20] For more on coalition building see: Suhas Palshikar, 'Tentative Emergence of a New and Tentative Coalition?', *Economic and Political Weekly*, (Mumbai) 23 May, 2009, pp. 8-10.. Palshikar, Suhas 'The Regional Parties and Democracy. Romantic Rendez-vous or Localized Legitimation?', in Ajay K. Mehra; D.D. Khanna; Gert W. Kueck (eds.), *Political Parties and Party Systems*, (Sage, New Delhi, 2003) pp. 306-335. Laver, Michael 'Party Competition and Party System Change: The Interaction of Coalition Bargaining and Election Competition', *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, vol.1, no.3, (Sage Publications, 1989), pp. 301-324. Chakrabarty, Bidyut (*Forging Power: Coalition Politics in India*, OUP, New Delhi, 2006); Sridharan, E. (2004) 'Electoral Coalitions in 2004 General Elections. Theory and Evidence', *Economic and Political Weekly*, ( Mumbai), *18 December,2004 pp. 5418-5425*

in this process [of coalition formation] is not 'ideological purity' but 'the exigency of the situation' where the former seems to be a liability rather than an asset.' [21]

However, what remained constant in the 14th Lok Sabha was that the opposition was formed of parties with different geographical bases in terms of party, representatives, and voters – with a direct consequence on the national level. While both the BJP and the Congress were at par with each other in terms of their vote strength and seat strength, the BJP has not succeeded in emerging as a single national alternative. The Congress party remained a potent force in most states. The Congress still remained the only pan India party.

The BJP aspired to expand its geographical base in the 14th General elections. It contested elections on its own at the expense of its state partners. However, this strategy proved to be counterproductive. The Congress on the other hand was more pragmatic and responded with better pre election alliances. This brought home the importance of coalition building for both the ruling and opposition parties.

The formation of the Bharatiya Janata Party-led NDA, that was in opposition in 2004, after serving in government for five years, led India towards a healthy parliamentary system, where the ruling and opposition parties alternate. It represents a landmark as the party system moved decisively towards stable coalitions composed of national and state(s)-based parties. The NDA represents a new phenomenon 'in the sense that it has strengthened the federal character of national polity'. [22] Previous coalitions (in 1977 and 1989) represented the opposition between the Congress and all the other parties and did not have the federal character of the NDA (and later UPA).

Further, the growing importance of regional parties was not altogether a new phenomenon in Indian politics. The second Lok Sabha too had a number of state parties. However, their importance increased several fold by 1990s. In 2004, 56 parliamentary seats were won by the non BJP opposition parties, each of which was a state party. In 1998, three state(s) parties won 95 seats, and 65 in 1984. However, the

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[21] Chakrabarty, Bidyut *Forging Power: Coalition Politics in India*, (Oxford University Press, New Delhi 2006), p.1

[22] Chakrabarty, n. 20, p.171

rise of these parties on the national stage has been much more important than these figures suggest.

The emergence and success of these parties indicated the plural nature of Indian polity. A large and diverse population that had been recently mobilized could not be unified for long by any calls of nationalism and rhetoric of development. They would find avenues to represent their diverse interest within the existing institutional framework, and at different levels. In terms of Robert Dahl's analysis, in the second Lok Sabha the site of the encounter between the government and opposition was not so much the parliament but the Congress party itself. In the 14th Lok Sabha as Suhas Palshikar observes, 'the theatre for defining the boundaries of political contestation often turned out to be the state. Whether a party will be only anti-Congress or also anti-BJP depended upon the state-level configuration of forces rather than on national-level exigencies or ideological positions'.[23]

The changes in the electoral outcomes and resulting political composition of political institutions (including the parliament, party system and opposition) sheds some light on the changes in the quality of the parliamentary opposition. A more sophisticated understanding these changes may be arrived through a thorough examination of the socio-economic composition of political elite from the opposition parties. The subsequent chapter attempts to this.

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[23] Suhas Palshikar, 'The Regional Parties and Democracy; Romantic Rendez-vous or Localized Legitimation?', in Ajay K. Mehra; D.D. Khanna; Gert W. Kueck (eds.), *Political Parties and Party Systems*,(Sage, New Delhi 2003) pp. 306-335.

## Chapter 3

## Socio-Economic Composition of the Opposition

3.1 A representative opposition may be regarded as an important determinant of parliamentary efficiency. In a parliamentary democracy, the government is at all times supported by a majority party, since the failure to do may result in the collapse of the government and bring forth the possibility of re- election. Hence, the responsibility of curbing the arbitrariness of the government lies, almost wholly with the opposition. The opposition must therefore, be in a position to continuously challenge the government. In large measure, the success of the opposition in discharging its responsibility would depend on its representative character; both qualitative and quantitative.[1] The quantitative character of opposition in terms of its numerical strength in the Parliament has been discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter aims to examine the representative charcter of the second and the 14th Lok Sabha in qualitative terms.

An analysis of the character and composition of opposition must be based on certain scientific and quantitative indices. This will ensure an accurate analysis and assessment of changes in the first quarter century of its existence. The indices of comparison that are used in the present study include:

- **Social indices:** The examination of social indices like age and experience of the opposition would indicate the social base of its members.
- **Economic indices** (education and occupation): Economic indices have the potential to indicate the changing class character of the opposition. Pre independence politics was dominated by the upper and middle elite, who were educated and had considerable economic resources. This may have undergone significant changes in more recent times. The income of the Members of the Lok Sabha (MPs) would be the best indicator of the economic composition of the Lok

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[1] For details on theory of representation see ...
Hannah Pitkins, *"Hobbes Concept of Representation", American Political science Review* (APSR), (Washington), June – December, 1964; J.F.S.Ross, *Parliamentary Representation* (New Haven, Yale, 1964); Alfred De Grazia, *Public and Republic* (A Knopf Inc, New York, 1951);Simon Sterne, *Representative Government and personal Representation* (Lipponcolt Co., Philadelphia, 1871); Farlie John, The Nature of Political Representation, *American Political Science Review*,(Washington) April-June, 1940.

Sabha. However, neither official nor non-official sources provide any data relating to income of members. Until the Supreme Court verdict of 2004, which made it mandatory for members to declare their assets to the Election Commission at the time of contesting election, there was no direct evidence of the financial status of the MPs. Collection of data was also not possible because many members of the earlier Lok Sabhas had expired. Thus, occupation and education of the members have been used as economic indices in the present study.

The choice of the four criteria; age, education, occupation and experience was deliberate. The age of members is often used as an important measure of assessing the nature of an institution. An analysis of the age of members helps in determining the extent to which the MPs voice the ideas of different groups. A balance of older, experienced members and younger members is ideal. This chapter will assess whether the opposition in the second and 14th Lok Sabha consisted this ideal. Has there been a change in the sociological representativeness of the Lok Sabha in the study period?

An assessment of the educational qualification of the MPs is important to understand the ability of the members to oversee the process of lawmaking and administration. Any nation with recently established political institutions requires a certain degree of education among its lawmakers. The very survival of democracy, the maintenance of decorum and discipline, and the smooth conduct of parliamentary affairs necessitates thorough debates and decisions through majority vote. This, in turn, requires tolerance and accommodation. Common wisdom dictates that such virtues may be acquired through education, which also inculcates moral values and principles. The qualitative assessment of the educational qualification of MPs demands two things: 1) assessment of the educational qualification of the members, and 2) an assessment of the quality of education. Since the latter is beyond the preview of the research, a thorough analysis of the former will be made.

The level of education of the members would indirectly indicate the financial status of members of the opposition. Acquisition of higher education over a number of years involves considerable expenditure. Moreover, higher education, even when it is subsidized, was/is still beyond the reach of masses. Thus, the presence of large number of highly educated members would indicate the class character of the Lok Sabha. Since,

the maximum members of the opposition belonged to Communist and Socialist parties in earlier Lok Sabha, it would be interesting to look into the economic background of the members of second Lok Sabha and compare them with the opposition MPs of the 14th Lok Sabha.

Occupation constitutes yet another vital basis for assessment. Efficacy of the Parliament requires that the members of opposition should consist of both generalists and specialists; the former to adopt a holistic approach to exercise check over the government, and the latter to ensure that technical and specialized issues are adequately dealt with. Secondly, the opposition in the Lok Sabha (being a popularly elected body) should consist of representatives from all sections of society, that is, ideally it should include all occupational and vocational groups. This alone can establish the representative character of the law- making body and the laws being made.

In order to function efficiently, the opposition should include new leadership as well as old and experienced leaders. In this context, it is important to assess the character of opposition in terms of experience. Democracy has been regarded as one of the best forms of government due to its ability to introduce change through consensus and peaceful means.[2] Change in the context of politics implies not merely structural or institutional change but, also change in leadership and policies

### 3.2 Social Indices of Assessment of Composition of the Opposition: Age

**Table 3.1**

**Age of the Opposition Members of Second and Fourteenth Lok Sabha**

| | Second Lok Sabha | | 14th Lok Sabha | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Age** | **No of Members** | **%** | **No of Members** | **%** |
| 25-35 | 18 | 17.1 | 9 | 4.8 |
| 36-45 | 40 | 38.0 | 32 | 17.4 |
| 46-55 | 22 | 20.9 | 73 | 39.7 |
| 56-65 | 12 | 11.4 | 38 | 20.6 |

[2] For a discussion on goals, ideals and merits of democracy see...
Robert Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1989); Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics For New Age* (University of California, Berkeley, 1984).

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 65 and Above | 5 | 4.8 | 43 | 21.7 |
| NA | 8 | 7.6 | 7 | 3.8 |

In terms of age, the character of opposition in the 1957 House was similar to the Lok Sabha in general.[3] As seen from Table 3.1, the opposition in the second Lok Sabha consisted mainly of middle-aged members. Most members (59 per cent) of the opposition were in the age group of 36 to 55 years. The average age of a member of opposition in the second Lok Sabha was nearly 45 years. Party wise disaggregation of data reveals that two thirds of the MP's of the opposition belonging to state parties and nearly half of the members of national parties were in the age group of 36 to 55 years. However, the while maximum concentration of members in national parties was in the age group of 46-55 years, the state parties had a greater concentration of members in 36-45 age bracket. Interestingly, only 14 members in this age group had some experience at national or state level legislatures.

The second Lok Sabha also had a significant presence of young, first time entrants. However, when compared to the 1952 House there was a one percent decline in the percentage of young and first time entrants. This may be attributed to the continued dominance of the Congress on the one hand and the high seat retention of the members of the First Lok Sabha.[4] Significantly, party wise disaggregation of data indicates that state parties had a greater proportion of younger MPs. 65 per cent of the young entrants were from regional parties.

The youthfulness of the Lok Sabha is further revealed by the fact that only five members' constituting less than five per cent of the non-congress membership was above the age of 65 and three fifths of these members were from national parties. Only one MP of the non-Congress opposition, in this category was from regional party. However, even the older members of the opposition were not experienced, though most were highly educated political workers.

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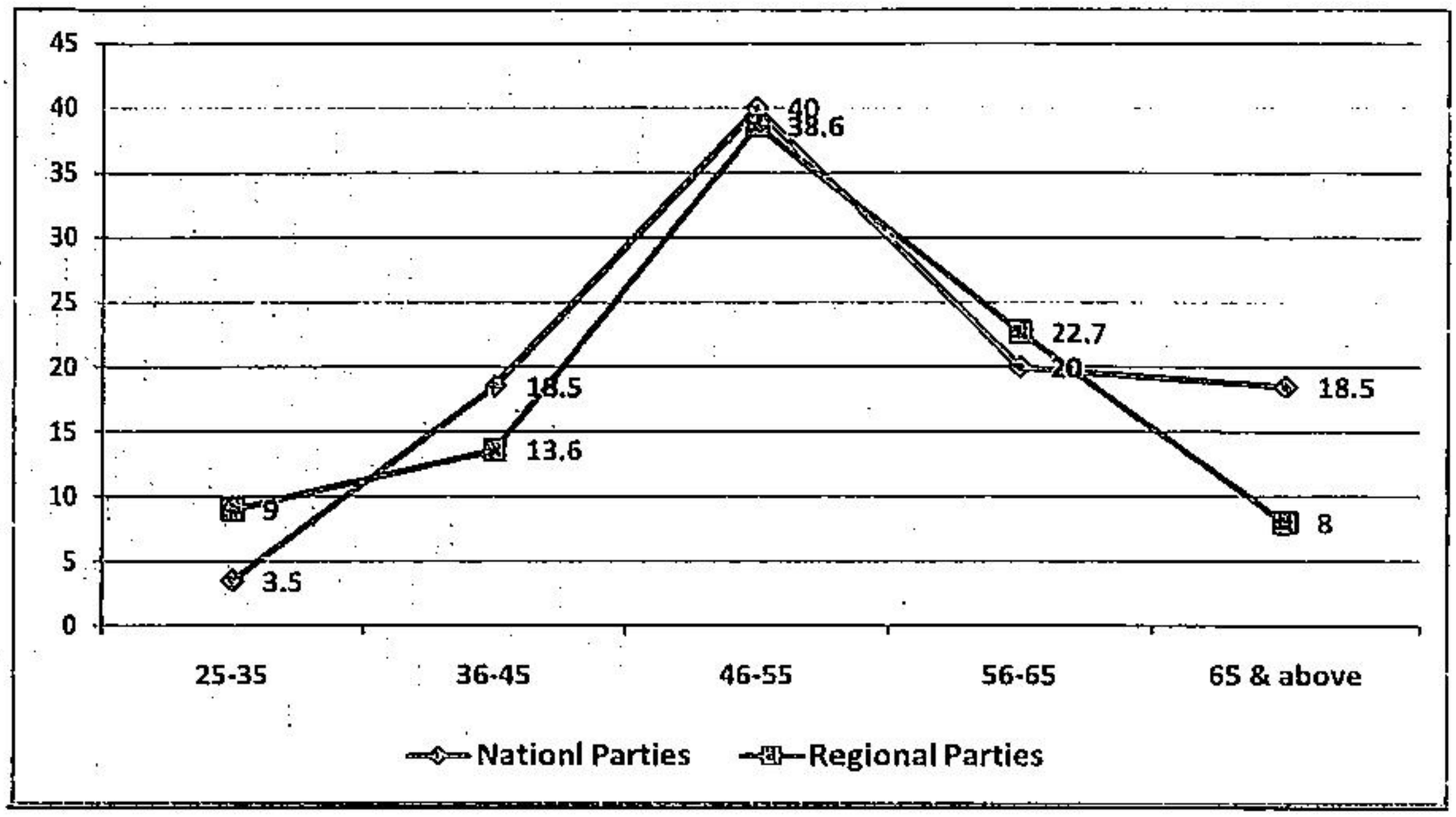
[3] In the second Lok Sabha, the nearly 60 percent members were in the age group 36-55 years, 15 % in the age group 25-35 and 22 percent above 56 years. ( Data Source: Lok Sabha Secretarlat, New Delhl)

[4] The Congress party had 371 seats in the Second Lok Sabha, seven more than the First Lok Sabha.

Figure 3.1

**Members of Regional and National Parties in Opposition in Different Age Groups in 14th the Lok Sabha**




The 14th Lok Sabha was far more mature in terms of age of MPs when compared to the second Lok Sabha. The average age of an opposition MP in the 14th Lok Sabha was 51 years, nearly seven years more than that of second Lok Sabha.

As is evident from the Table 3.1, the percentage of younger MPs in the 14th Lok Sabha was a third of that of second Lok Sabha. Like in the second Lok Sabha, in the 14th Lok Sabha too, the younger MPs came largely from regional parties. Thus, for instance, three of the nine MPs of opposition in the age group of 25 to 35 years belonged to Shiv Sena, which had 12 members in the Lok Sabha.

Majority of the members in the 14th Lok Sabha belonged to the middle age group of 35 to 55 years. However, unlike in the second Lok Sabha the maximum concentration of members was in the higher bracket of this age group. Nearly 60 percent of the MPs of the opposition were in the age group of 45 to 65 years (See table 3.1). In this respect, there was no marked difference between regional and national parties.

The 14th Lok Sabha also had a larger presence of older members. Their percentage in the Lok Sabha increased by nearly four times in the period 1957-2004. Once again, like in the second Lok Sabha in the 14th too, national parties contributed more to the presence of older members. In the 14th House, the BJP had the largest number of members in this age group both in terms of absolute numbers and in terms of percentage. Interestingly, there were only five members from regional political parties above the age of 65 years compared to 26 of the BJP. Moreover, no member of regional political party in the opposition was above the age of 75. The TDP appeared to be the oldest, if age were to be the criterion for assessment. Two out of the five members of the TDP parliamentary party in the Lok Sabha were 65 or above.

It appears from the discussion of the above data that that the members of opposition parties, reflect the Lok Sabha itself. Within this broad trend, two sub trends become evident. First, the MPs of the opposition parties have gradually become older in terms of the age of the members. This may be on account of both maturing of Indian democracy and increase in longevity and productive life span of an individual.[5]

Second, national political parties contribute to older, more experienced when compared to state parties. This may be because of longer historical background, better organizational network and more elaborate propaganda machinery of these parties that ensured greater popular support for their candidates.

## 3.3 Social Indices of Assessment of Composition of the Opposition: Education

**Table 3.2**

**Education of the Opposition Members of Second and Fourteenth Lok Sabha**

| | 2nd Lok Sabha | | 14th Lok Sabha | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Educational Qualification** | **Members** | **Percentage** | **Members** | **Percentage** |
| Under Matric | 3 | 2.8 | 3 | 1.6 |
| Under Graduate | 19 | 18.0 | 35 | 19 |

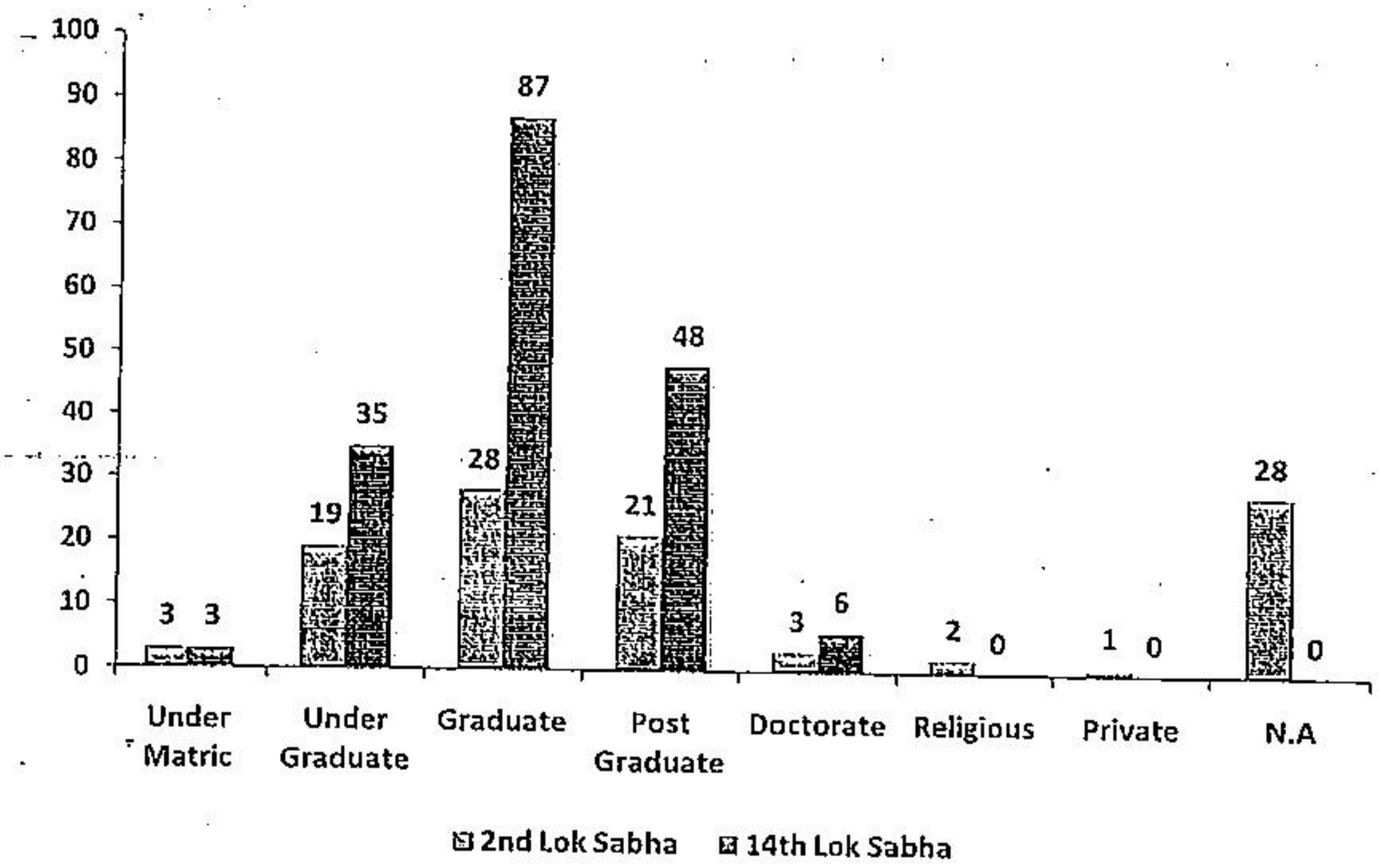
[5] The average life expectancy at birth in 1951-61 period was 42.3 years for females and 39 years for males.. It increased to 61 years for males and 6e years for females in 2004. ( Source: World Health Statistics, 2006, http://www.who.int/whosis/mort/profiles/mort_searo_ind_india.pdf retrieved on 8th June 2006)

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Graduate | 28 | 26.6 | 86 | 47 |
| Post Graduate | 21 | 20 | 48 | 26 |
| Doctorate | 3 | 0.2 | 6 | 0.3 |
| Private | 1 | 0.1 | 0 | 0 |
| N.A | 28 | 26.6 | 5 | 0 |
| Religious Education | 2 | 0.2 | 0 | 0 |

Source: Who's Who of Lok Sabha (Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, 1957), http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/members/lokprelist.aspx?lsno=2, Source: Who's Who of Lok Sabha (Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, 1957), http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/members/lokprelist.aspx?lsno=2

**Figure 3.2**

**Education of the Opposition Members of Second and Fourteenth Lok Sabha**




The data in Table 3.2 and Figure 3.2 indicates a significant improvement in the educational qualification of the members of the opposition. The percentage of graduates and postgraduates increased from 47 percent to 75 percent, while that of under matriculates has declined from nearly three percent to 1.6 percent. This is in keeping

with the general increase in the educational qualification of the House as a whole.[6] The members of the opposition do not show a separate trend.

Within this larger trend, some sub trends are noticeable. The members of regional political parties were more qualified than members of the national parties in the opposition. This was true of both the second and the 14th Lok Sabha. In the second Lok Sabha, nearly 58.5 percent of members national parties and 62.5 percent of state parties were graduates or above. In the 14th Lok Sabha, this trend became more prominent. 71 percent of national party members and 75 percent of state parties were similarly educated. Thus, all the members of AITMC, 90 percent of BJD members, 85 percent of SAD members, and 66 percent of TDP members were graduates or postgraduates. (The only exception was the Shiv Sena, which had 58.3 percent graduates and postgraduates). This was higher than that of national parties such as the left front (59 percent), Congress (71 percent) and BJP (75 percent).

Equally significant is the fact that both the second and 14th Lok Sabha consisted of nearly 20 percent members who were under graduates. It was not the small and regional parties that contributed to the larger presence of less qualified members, but the national parties, particularly the BJP. The presence of large number of opposition members with intermediary levels of education particularly in the 14th Lok Sabha is striking. This trend was first evident in the tenth Lok Sabha in 1991.[7]

On the basis of the above discussion it is possible to arrive at three conclusions:

- There has been a significant increase in educational qualification of opposition MPs
- There has been a marginal improvement in representation of members with intermediary level of education
- State/Regional political parties have contributed to increased presence of educated members

The rise in educated members is probably because of societal and political reasons. The increasing availability and access to higher education, due to establishment of large number of schools and college as well as improvement in living standard which may

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[6] The educational qualification of members of Lok Sabha increased from  in the second Lok Sabha to  in the 14th Lok Sabha.

[7] Undergraduates constituted almost 19.5 per cent in the Ninth Lok Sabha (1989) membership compared to 22.2 per cent in the Tenth Lok Sabha. The number of matriculates remained more or less stagnant in the Eleventh Lok Sabha.

have led to higher level of education.[8] Large sections of the society aspired and acquired higher education. Moreover, availability of subsidized higher education made education accessible to the populace[9]. Education and formal degrees have become an important means for social, economic and political upliftment.[10] The Lok Sabha membership reflected this societal change.

In the immediate post independence period, privileged members of the political elite, who were educated, dominated the schools, colleges and universities, apart from the Civil Services and higher ranks in the military and police. These were the key institutions which shaped political power, social status and economic privileges.[11] Thus, access to higher formal education acquired an aspirational value, especially among the intermediary castes, backwards classes, and Dalits. With the improvement in the standard of living due to economic growth, democratic politics, and affirmative action achieved through a policy of reservations, a large section of underprivileged groups who gained political awareness acquired higher degrees. It must also be noted that education was regarded as an important tool for social upliftment and status enhancement by such groups in a status ridden, hierarchical society.[12] From the Ninth Lok Sabha onwards this class gained greater representation in the Lok Sabha, increasing the presence of members with high and intermediate levels of education

The membership of Lok Sabha also indicates a desire among the younger political parties to nominate educated and even erudite candidates for elections, even if their support base was not that of highly educated. D.L Sheth, an eminent political scientist,

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[8] There were 6963 Colleges in India in 1981 (including institutions for post - matric courses), 5,748 in 1991, 9256 in 1997-1998. Source: Indian Planning Experience a Statistical Profile, (Planning Commission of India, New Delhi, 2001); and http//www.plannigcommission.nic.in.

[9] Higher education has been highly subsidized in India.The expenditure in education was 1,91,65.85 crores or 3.84 per cent of GDP in 1990-1991. In 2000-01, it was 8,24,86 crores (4.02 per cent of GDP. Of this the expenditure on elementary education was 1.78% to the GDP in 1990-91. It rose to 2.02% in 2001-02. The percentage expenditure to GDP on secondary/higher secondary shows an irregular rise and fall and it has remained between 1.13 to 1.44 per cent during 1997- 98 to 1999-2000. The percentage expenditure to GDP on Adult Education was 0.05% during 1990-91 showing a gradual decrease to 0.01 per cent in 2000-2001. It improved slightly to 0.02 per cent during 2001-2002. The percentage expenditure on University and Higher Education to GDP, which was 0.77 per cent in 1990-91 shows a gradual decrease to 0.62 per cent during 1997-98 and rises to 0.88% in 2000-2001. (Source: Ministry of Education, Government of India Website: http://www.education.nic.in/htmlweb/edusta.htm#Expenditure%20By%20Level%20of%20Education, retrived on 9 June, 2006.

[10] Manoranjan Mohanty, *Caste Class and Gender* (Sage, New Delhi, 2004), p. 31.

[11] Myron Weiner, in Atul Kohli (ed), n.3, p.196.

[12] Satish Despande, *Contemporary India, A Sociological View* (Viking, new Delhi, 2003), p.140

points out that despite tardy implementation, the policies of affirmative action created a significant section of individuals in almost every lower caste group, who had acquired modern education and entered bureaucracy and other non traditional occupations.[13] A new leadership thus emerged, in different regions and among different groups. They constituted themselves into their own separate political parties. By the 1970s, the Congress party that was presided only by an upper caste, English educated, elite was dislodged[14] and replaced by parties with new leadership. This group competed intensely for political power and found representation either has members of ruling or opposition parties and bargained independently as distinct interest groups. Political parties may have shown a preference for recruiting the educated elite of the politically aware, numerically preponderant and organized, underprivileged communities. Thus, those who entered politics were equipped with higher education, irrespective of their economic status or social background.

The presence of moderately educated members, particularly since 1991, indicates a desire on the part of the lesser educated to participate not merely in the voting process but also in contestation for office. Together, the increase in the participation and representation of the marginalized sections of society (The participation of SCs, STs was almost equivalent to the general population) [15] particularly in the northern states and Hindi heartland, and the increase in representation of matriculates, indicates a widening of the democratic process. It is also indicative of a strong democratic upsurge that mobilized the hitherto under privileged and provided them with institutional access. To that extent, the marginal improvement in the representation of the less educated may be regarded as symbolic of larger changes that Indian polity was witnessing, such as the emergence of regional and community based parties, a competitive party

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[13] D.L Sheth, "Caste and Class: Social Reality and Political Representation" in Shah (ed),_In V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ashis Nandy, eds., Contemporary India,, (Tata-McGraw Hill, New Delhi 1999), p.220.

[14] D.L Sheth , n.13, p.220.

[15] Electoral turnout in different types of Constituencies ,1977-1991

| Year | All India | General | SC | ST |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1971 | 55.3 | 57 | 51.4 | 43.4 |
| 1977 | 60.4 | 61.5 | 59.5 | 48.6 |
| 1980 | 57.2 | 58.2 | 55.6 | 48.2 |
| 1984 | 64.1 | 65.2 | 62.6 | 54.1 |
| 1989 | 61.9 | 62.7 | 61.8 | 53.2 |
| 1991 | 55.9 | 56.6 | 55.4 | 48.8 |

Source : Yogendra Yadav, '"Understanding the Second Democratic Upsurge: Trends of Bahujan participation in Electoral Politics in 1990s", in Francine Frankel, Zoya Hasan, Rajeev Bhargav, Balveer Arora (eds), *Transforming India: Social and Political Dynamics of Democracy*, (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2001), p.129.

system,[16] lack of stable majorities and an increased demand for reservation of seats in employment and education.[17]

The education of representatives from the opposition may also indicate the economic character of the Lok Sabha. As seen from the above analysis, a large number of members who entered the electoral fray and occupied legislative seats were highly qualified. At the same time, India's expenditure on education was lower than that of many developing countries and a disproportionate share of the education budget was devoted to higher education.

> The country's elite sent their children to private schools and virtually tuition- free colleges and universities, while primary public schools were given few resources, schooling was not made compulsory, and dropout rates were so high that half the children in state funded schools failed to complete five standards. [18]

The majority of the members of the Lok Sabha who were erudite appeared to belong to what has been referred to as the 'middle class'.[19] Economic prosperity, improved educational levels, protective discrimination, urbanization and diversification of occupation, had resulted in the creation of a small middle class elite, especially in the service sector.[20] This class possessed higher levels of education.[21] It appears that a

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[16] For a detailed study on causes for the rise of regional political parties see...
Gopa Kumar, *Regional Political Parties and State Politics* (Deep and Deep Publication, New Delhi, 1986); James Manor, "Regional Parities and Federal System: India in a Comparative Perspective", in Balveer Arora and Doughlas Verney (eds), *Multiple Identities in a Single State: Indian Federalism in a Comparitive Perspective* (Konark Publishers, New Delhi, 1996), pp. 107-135; S. Bhatnagar and Pradeep Kumar, *Regional Political Parties in India* (Ess Ess Publications, New Delhi, 1988); Suhas Palshikar; "Revisiting State Level Parties", *Economic and Political Weekly* (Mumbai), vol .39, no. 14 and 15, 4-10 April, 2004, pp. 1497- 1508; Kanchan Chandra, *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed: Patronage and Ethnic Head Counts in India* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004).

[17] See...
Sudha Pai, *Dalit Assertion and Unfinished Revolution: The BSP in Uttar Pradesh* (Sage, New Delhi, 2002); Gail Ombvet, *Dalits and Democratic Revolution* (Sage, New Delhi, 1994).
Myron Weiner, "The Struggle for Equality, Caste in Indian Politics", in Atul Kohli (ed), *The Success of India's Democracy* (Cambridge University Press, Delhi, 2001).

[18] Myron Weiner, in Atul Kohli (ed), n.17, pp. 214-215.

[19] The concept of middle class dominance in politics has been a subject of much scholarly writing and discussion. Some important works that discuss the definition and importance of middle class in India's Electoral Politics include...
Satish Deshpande, *Contemporary India- A Sociological View* (Viking, New Delhi, 2003), pp. 125-150; D. L. Sheth,"Crisis of Representation", in Peter Ronald de Souza (ed), *Contemporary India- A Transition* (Sage, New Delhi, 2004); Atul Kohli, n.17; Manoranjan Mohanty, n. 10; Pranab Bardhan, *Political Economy of Development*, (OUP, New Delhi, 1984); Francine Frankel, *Political Economy of India, 1947-1977; The Gradual Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1978); Achin Vanaik, *A Painful Transition; Bourgeosie Democracyin Transition* ( Verso, London,1987); Ashok Rudra, "The Emergence of the Intelligentsia as a Ruling Class", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 24 , n. 3, January, 21st, 1989.

[20] Pushpendra, "Dalit Assertion Through Politics", in Ghansyam Shah (ed), *Caste and Democratic Politics in India* (Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2002), p. 360-372.

[21] Amartya Sen, John Dreze, *India: Development and Participation* (OUP, New Delhi, 2002)

large number of the opposition members were drawn from this group: the educated elite from urban or rural areas and of small towns.

### 3.4 Social Indices of Assessment of Composition of the Opposition: Educational Specialization

The educational specialization of the opposition MPs indicates the preponderance of generalists. This is true of both the second and the 14th Lok Sabha

Apart from Humanities graduates, lawyers were present in large numbers. In fact, the percentage of lawyers in the ranks of the opposition in the 14th Lok Sabha was significantly (4 percent) more than that of second Lok Sabha. This is in variance with the general trend of Lok Sabha membership, where the presence of lawyers was on decline.[22] A majority (81%) of such members in the 14th Lok Sabha belonged to BJP. In the second Lok Sabha, the majority of the legal specialists belonged to the Socialist and left parties on account of their strength in the House.

**Table 3.3**

**Specialization of the Opposition Members of Second and Fourteenth Lok Sabha**

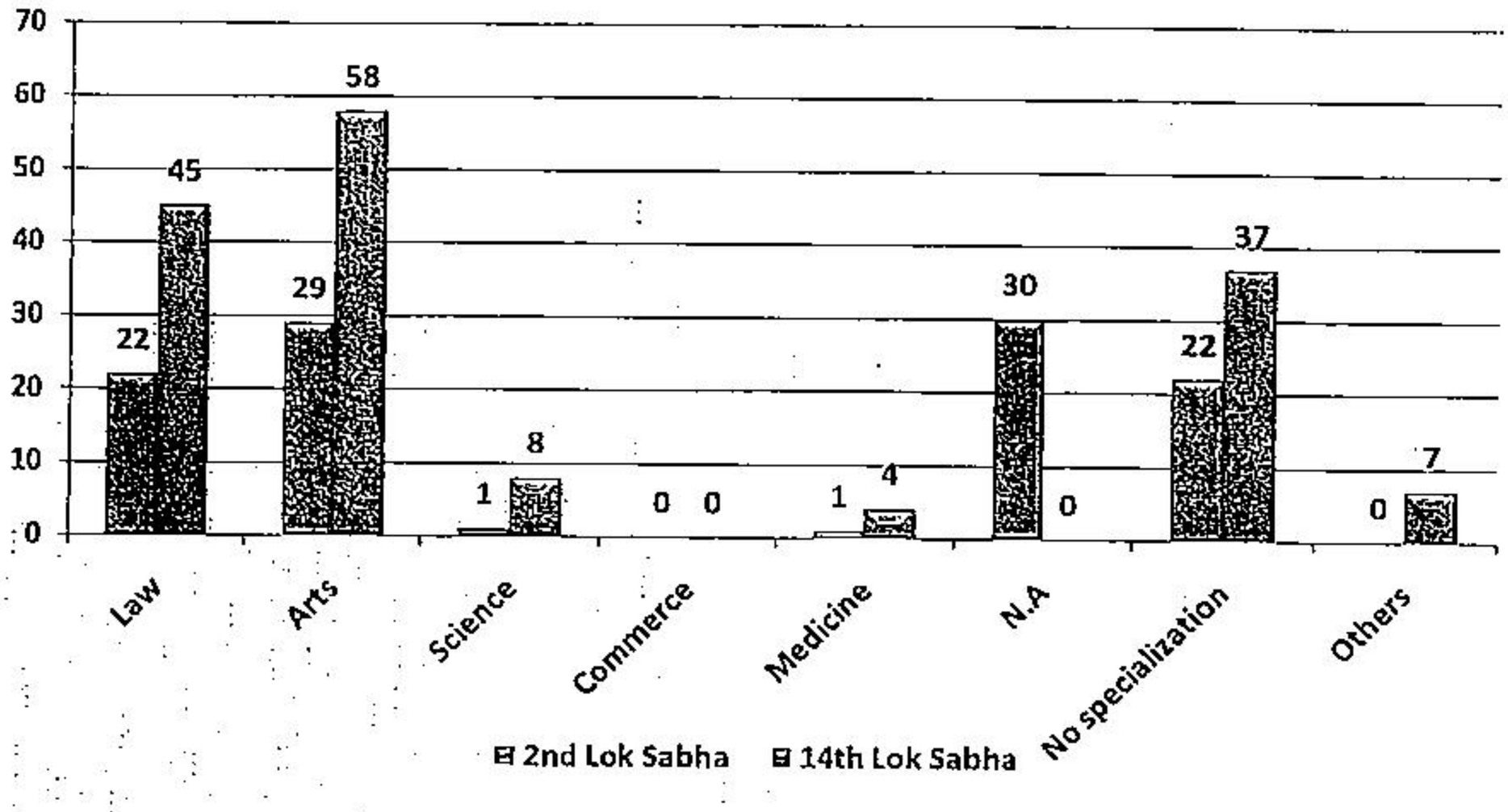
| Educational Qualification | 2nd Lok Sabha | Percentage | 14th Lok Sabha | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Law | 22 | 20.1 | 45 | 23.7 |
| Arts | 29 | 27.6 | 58 | 31.3 |
| Science | 1 | 1 | 8 | 4.3 |
| Commerce | 0 | 0 | 11 | 5.9 |
| Medicine | 1 | 0 | 4 | 2.1 |
| N.A | 30 | 28.5 | 15 | 8.1 |
| No specialization | 22 | 20.9 | 37 | 20.0 |
| Others | 0 | 0 | 7 | 3.7 |

Source: Who's Who of Lok Sabha (Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, 1957), http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/members/lokprelist.aspx?lsno=2

[22] In the 11th Lok Sabha the percentage of Members who had specialized in law was 25 percent. In the 13th Lok Sabha, they were only 12.9 percent.

**Figure 3.3**

**Specialization of the Opposition Members of Second and Fourteenth Lok Sabha**




Another significant feature of the opposition membership in the 14th Lok Sabha was the presence of those members who had specialized in Commerce and Finance. Such member were completely absent in the second Lok Sabha. Also, while the general trend was towards the increasing presence of members with specialization in natural sciences (7% in the 11th Lok Sabha), the opposition parties consisted less number of such members.

Finally, the 14th Lok Sabha was characterized by the presence of members with varied specialization such as Engineers, Architects and the like. This may be on account of development of higher education in the country and the large number of courses being offered by Universities and colleges. The members from the opposition reflected this development in Indian education.

Equally significant is the fact that large percentages of the educationally privileged MPs are members of state and regional parties, which have been successful in mobilizing the socially underprivileged sections of society. Scholars like D.L Sheth, Myron Weiner and Pranab Bardhan opine that there has been a gradual expansion in the ranks of the 'new

middle class' that had benefited from the spread of education, governmental policies, urbanization and 'de- ritualization of the caste system'.[23] An elite group emerged within the ranks of the socially backward classes that had secured the benefits of higher education and superior economic position. This new elite has sought to improve its social status by asserting itself in the political sphere mainly through state and regional parties. It may be assumed that with the increased presence of regional parties, this 'new elite' found representation in the legislative body and added to the educational qualification of Lok Sabha.

### 3.5 Social Indices of Assessment of Composition of the Opposition: Occupation

Table 3.4

Occupation of the Opposition Members of Second and Fourteenth Lok Sabha

| Occupation | 2nd Lok Sabha | | 14th Lok Sabha | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| Advocate | 19 | 18.0 | 21 | 11.3 |
| Agriculture | 18 | 17.1 | 82 | 44.3 |
| Social and Political Worker | 35 | 33.3 | 31 | 16.7 |
| Business | 5 | 4.8 | 18 | 9.7 |
| Education | 8 | 7.6 | 5 | 2.7 |
| Medicine | 2 | 1.9 | 4 | 2.4 |
| Journalist | 5 | 4.8 | 5 | 2.7 |
| Landlord | 2 | 1.9 | - | |
| Rulers & Ministers | 4 | 3.8 | - | |
| Writer | 1 | 0.9 | 1 | 0 |
| N.A | | | 0 | |
| Engineer | - | | 3 | 1.6 |
| Others | - | | 11 | 5.9 |
| NA | 6 | 5.7 | 4 | 2.1 |

Source: Who's Who of Lok Sabha (Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, 1957 and 2004), http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/members/lokprelist.aspx?lsno=2

The occupational status of the opposition MPs reveals certain significant trends. In the first place, agriculturists came to dominate the oppositional membership of the Lok

[23] D.L. Sheth, "Secularization of Caste and the Making of a New Middle Class", *Economic and Political Weekly*,( Mumbai), Vol. 34., no. 34 &35, 2-28 August, 1999, pp. 2502-2510; Myron Weiner, 'The Struggle for Equality, Caste in Indian Politics', in Atul Kohli (ed),n.17; Pranab Bardhan *Political Economy of Development*, (OUP, New Delhi, 1984)

Sabha. Neraly 45 percent of the MPs of the opposition parties in the 14th Lok Sabha were agriculturists. This is in contrast to the second Lok Sabha, which had only 17 percent members in the same category. Majority of the agriculurists of the opposition belonged to the BJP (47 percent) in the 14th Lok Sabha. In the second Lok sabha, the agriculturits of the opposition came more from the regional parties than the national parties. The regional parties too, had a sizeable presence of agriculturists. Interestingly, agriculturists of the opposition parties in the 14th Lok Sabha were highly qualified and nearly 39 percent of them had the benefit of college education.

The increase in members who were involved in agriculture makes the opposition more representatives in its character. However, in the absence of further categorized data, it is not clear as to whether these members were absentee landlords, upper or middle peasants or, from the ranks of agricultural labourers. On the basis of the high level of education and specialization (noted above) and the caste status of the members of the Lok Sabha[24], it possible to surmise that were prosperous and belonged to the class of middle or upper peasantry. Research by scholars like Cornelia Lennenberg and Zoya Hasan has led to the conclusion that it is the middle peasantry or the 'bullock capitalist' which has emerged as the dominant group both in terms of its numerical strength and the areas it controlled.[25]

The data above indicates a proportionate decline of lawyer members in the opposition. They constituted nearly 11 percent of the opposition membership in the 14th Lok Sabha as against 17 percent in the second. This is significant, in view of the fact that lawyers and career politicians dominate legislative bodies the world over.[26]The skill of the legal

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[24] OBC representation has improved by 0.5 per cent every term between 1977-1998. In the period 1989 -1998, the increase was 2.5 percent every term. Together, OBCs, SCs and STs constituted 26.2 percent of the Lok Sabha membership in 1998. See:
M.Manisha, *Lok Sabha and Democratic Politics: A Critical Study of India's Parliamentary Democracy; 1977-1998*, Unpublished Thesis, Jadavpur University, (Kolkata), 2007)

[25] See...
Cornelia Lenneberg, "Sharad Joshi and Farmers: the Peasant Lives", *Pacific Affairs* (Vancouver), Vol. 70, no. 5, Fall, 1988; Zoya Hasan, Zoya Hasan. *Class, Caste Hegemony: Patterns of Domination and Dynamics in Uttar Pradesh* (OUP, Delhi, 1987), p.47, Lloyd Rudolph and S.H Rudolph, 'Determinants and Varieties of Agrarian Mobilization' in Megnad Desai, S.H Rudolph, Ashok Rudra (ed), *Agrarian Powers and Agricultural Productivity in South Asia* (OUP, Delhi, 1984), p.336; Paul Brass, The Politicization of Peasantry in North Indian States, Part I &II, *Journal of Peasant Studies* (London), Vol. 11, no. 4, July-September, 1980.

[26] The American Senate consisted of mainly lawyers, businessmen and career politicians. This is evident from the data regarding the occupational status of members of Senate. "From 1780 to 1930,

professionals, the knowledge of the political system that the course imparts and the historical legacy that is associated with legal studies, all contribute to a logical transition from law to politics. Lawyer members give an edge to the functioning of the parliament. In fact, aspiring politicians prefer a course in legal studies to familiarize themselves with the working of the constitutional system in India.[27]

The decline in the number of lawyer MPs in the ranks of the opposition may be indicative of a decline in interest among them, in joining legislative politics. In pre and immediate post independence periods, politics was a natural career choice for lawyers. The in-depth knowledge of the constitution, the working of the political system and the technicalities associated with the law making process with which legal specialists were well versed, gave them a distinct advantage in the field of politics. Their oratorical and public speaking skills helped in the process. However, with the gradual entry of full time politicians, businessmen and traders, the character of the legislature and the style of its functioning underwent a change. The Lok Sabha was no longer a body of urban, elite and upper caste, professionals. The character of debates in the Lok Sabha, and the nature of proceedings within the House underwent a drastic change.[28]Lawyers may have found the present legislature less appealing as a career option. In the second place, the decline in the number of lawyers is indicative of the desire of other specialists or even generalists, to participate in electoral politics. This may have negatively impacted the participation of lawyers in electoral politics.

Moreover, it may be argued that in the era of competitive politics, legal education does not confer special benefit. Education and experience are only some of the factors that determines any political party's decision to field a candidate in the electoral fray.[29]

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two thirds of the senators and about half of the House of Representatives were lawyers; the percentage seems to have stayed fairly stable" Miller, Mark C., "Lawyers in Congress: What difference does it make?", *Congress and the Presidency,* (Washington), Vol. 20 Issue 1, Spring 93, p.1, in http//www. http://www.legalreform-now.org/menu1_5.htm, retrieved on 15 January, 2001

[27] Interview with Prof. Valerian Rodrigues in New Delhi on 5 April, 2005.

[28] Several leaders have commented on the declining standards of debates and decorum in the House. See...
Krishna Kant, "Decorum and Discipline in Legislature and Ethics in Public Life", in G.C. Malhotra (ed), *Fifty Years of Parliament* (Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, 2001), p.10; K.R.Nararyan "Imperative for Discipline and Decorum", in G.C.Malhotra (ed), n. 26, pp. 1-8.

[29], Devesh Kapur , Pratap Bhanu Mehta, *The Indian Parliament as an Institution of Accountability*, Paper 23, UNSRID, Geneva, 2006, p.10

Parliamentary work requires expertise that can be attained either through specialized knowledge of its intricacies (which legal courses do not offer), or through experience.[30]

Yet another siginificant feature of the 14th Lok sabha, was the increased presence of businessmen, industrialisits and traders. Once again, in terms of absolute numbers, the majority of them belonged to the BJP in view of it being the principal opposition party. However, nearly 14 percent of the MPs of regional parties of the opposition were industrialists compared 8.6 percent of the BJP. Thus, there appears to be a sizeable presence of business class both within the regional and national parties. Most of the opposition MPs of this category were highly educated (graduates and above). A large number of businessmen also contested as independents

It may be pointed out that together with the professional classes, the industrial capitalists and big traders constituted the dominant force in the ruling coalition.[31] Policies of industrialization that independent India adopted had contributed significantly, to the prosperity of the capitalist class. Large capitalists faced with a decline in the 1990s, looked for expansion abroad in the global market. The renewed interest of the business class in legislative politics since 1989, mostly as a part of regional parties, is indicative of their desire to directly influence the political process. It is therefore, not surprising that it was during the life span of the Tenth Lok Sabha that the government unveiled its policies of liberalization.[32] They too, supported the government policies of liberalization.[33] The continuation of economic reforms despite changes in the political dispensation indicates the influence of the capitalist class over the political process. Moreover, as Pranab Bardhan points out, despite the process of economic reforms,

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[30] Interview with Rajnath Singh on .10.2010 in New Delhi

[31] Rudolph and Rudolph, n.23.
Pranab Bardhan in Atul Kohli (ed), *India's Democracy-An Analysis of Changing State Society Relationship* (Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1991), pp. 214-224

[32] The significant measures adopted by the Tenth Lok Sabha included devaluation of the Rupee, a New Fiscal Policy cutting down on government expenditure and subsidies and a new Industrial Policy that deregulated a number of industries, amendment of Monopolies and Restriction of Trade Practices, removal of governmental control and encouraged Foreign Direct Investments. For details see...
Kaushik Basu, Prasanth Patnaik, 'India's Economic Reforms of 1990s: Genesis and Prospects', *Journal of International Trade and Economic Development*, (London) Vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 123-133; Y.V. Reddy, *Lectures on Economic and Financial Reforms in India* (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002); Mohan Rakesh, 'A Decade After 1991: New Challenges facing Indian Economy' in *Reserve Bank of India Bulletin*, (Mumbai), n.56, 1991.

[33] Prabhat Patnaik and Jayanti Ghosh, 'The Political Economy of Economic Reforms: the Role of Indian Capitalist Class' in Manoranjan Mohanty (ed), n.10, p.89-105.

> ....the proliferation of government handouts, both at the central and state level continues unabated in the name of interest group equity. Large industrialists clamour for a "level playing field" or relief from competition that is always described as unfair as "unfair dumping" or predatory multinational takeover; small industrial firms are protected against competition from larger domestic factories.[34]

their presence, in terms of numbers, is not an accurate reflection of their influence. They have tried to influence the political process indirectly though interest groups, lobbying, etc., rather than through direct participation in electoral politics.[35] They are contributors of electoral funds to various political parties.

A large section of MPs are categorized as "Social and Political Workers". It refers to those members who are engaged in full time political activity. A section of members who categorize themselves as full time Social and Political Workers have no other source of income and are fully dependent on political activity for their existence, while others may have other sources of income such as family business, agriculture, etc. they may also be retired service holders. However, given the rigors of legislative work and the accompanying political activity, most members have to devote almost their entire time to political activity. In that sense, all members of the Lok Sabha may be categorized as full time political activists.

Social and Political Workers were less in the opposition parties in the 14th Lok Sabha when compared to the second Lok Sabha. This may be explained in terms of larger presence of members of Communist party in the opposition in the second Lok Sabha, which has a tradition of involving full time political workers. Seventeen of the 35 members who were social workers were from the Communist party, (which had a total

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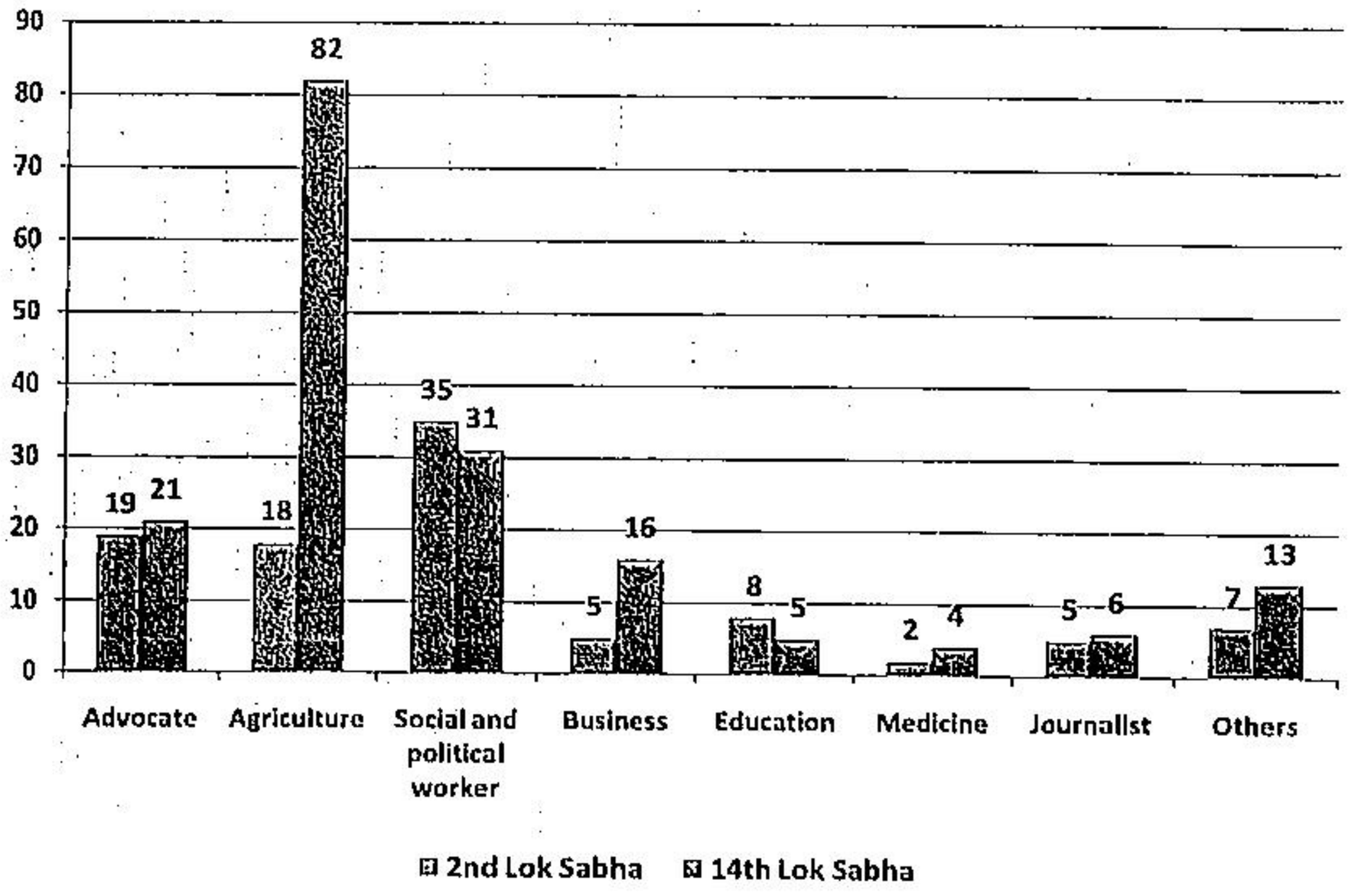
[34] Pranab Bardhan, 'Sharing the Spoils: Group Equity, Development and Democracy', in Atul Kohli (ed), n.17, p.231.

[35] Pranab Bardhan in an earlier work has argued that the rich farmers, industrial capitalists, large traders organized labour and the professional classes together constitute the dominant classes of Indian society. The dominant class lacks homogeneity, in some contrast to class alignment in most advanced capitalist countries. Moreover, none of them is substantially more powerful than the other. At the national level, the leadership enjoys a degree of autonomy as it arbitrates over this plurality of interest groups. Francine Frankel argues that the middle classes consisting of educated professional and businesses class usually belonging to forward castes dominate India's political, economic, administrative and educational institutions, though they are increasingly being challenged by new entrants to this category, i.e, members belonging to Backward castes and agriculturist. See... Pranab Bardhan, *Political Economy of Development*, (OUP, New Delhi, 1984); Francine Frankel, *Political Economy of India, 1947-1977; The Gradual Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1978); pp. 225-261; Francine Frankel, "Middle Classes and Castes in India's Politics: Prospects for Political Accommodation", in Atul Kohli (ed), n.31, pp. 225-261

membership of 27 members) in the second Lok Sabha. Further, a larger presence of non Congress parties has always contributed to decline of Social and political workers.[36]

**Figure 3.4**

**Occupation of the Opposition Members of Second and Fourteenth Lok Sabha**




The Second Lok Sabha had rulers, MInisters and Zamindars in its midst's, while the 14th Lok Sabha Included people from a cross section of professions including, Diplomats, Civil Servants, Chartered Accountants, Actors and Artists. This may be interpreted as a consequence of growing inclusiveness of India's democracy in the last 63 years. It may

[36] Social and Political Workers constituted 17. 3percent of Lok Sabha membership in 1977, 19.5 per cent in 1996, 18.1 in 1998 and 20 per cent in 1999 each of which was led by non Congress party. In contrast to this, they constituted 17 per cent of Lok Sabha membership in 16.0 per cent in 1979, 15.6 per cent in 1984, 18 percent in 1991 when the Congress emerged as the dominant party in the Lok Sabha. ( Source The Changing Profile of Lok Sabha: A Socio Economic Study of Members (1952-2002), ( Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, January 2003)

also be explained in terms of greater socio economic development and expansion of economic activity that found refection in the representative organ.

### 3.6 Social Indices of Assessment of Composition of the Opposition: Experience

**Table 3.6**

**Experience of Member of Opposition of Second Lok Sabha**

| Legislative Body | No. Of Members |
|---|---|
| Lok Sabha | 12 |
| Rajya Sabha | 1 |
| State Legislature | 11 |
| Local Government | 4 |
| State Legislature & Lok Sabha | 1 |
| No Experience | 60 |
| NA | 17 |

Source: Who's Who of Lok Sabha (Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, 1957), http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/members/lokprelist.aspx?lsno=2

It is difficult to compare the experience of the opposition MPs of second and 14th Lok Sabha. The members of second Lok Sabha had little opportunity of gaining experience, given the short duration for which it had been in existence. Pre independent legislative institutions of India had been elected on the basis of restricted franchise. Moreover, the final authority rested with British rulers. Hence, such experience was of limited value. Since Indian republic was only seven years old in 1957, and the Lok Sabha had had a life of only five years, the maximum legislative experience of a member could not be more than five years. Hence, any such comparison between the second and 14th Lok Sabha would be inaccurate. However, it would be possible to identify certain trends from the data relating to the experience of opposition MPs.

As seen from Table 3.6, the opposition in the second Lok Sabha consisted of largely inexperienced members. (Only 28 percent members of the opposition had some experience either at the state, or at the national level.) Majority of the experienced members were from national parties; particularly the CPI. The state parties' mostly had first time entrants. This may be due to better organization and penetration of national parties. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, national parties, such as CPI had a longer history though they existed within the Congress party. Movement of political elite from state level politics to national level politics was not significant during this period. Of the experienced members, the percentage of MPs who had parliamentary experience was almost equal to those who had state level experience. Thirdly, it appears from the data above that members did not usually favour a transition from upper to lower chamber. Thus, only two MPs had made a transition from state or national level upper chambers.

This data, together with the data relating to age of the members indicates that while opposition members of national parties were older and more experienced, state parties consisted of younger and relatively inexperienced members. This reaffirms the conclusion relating to nature of the parties and their historicity.

Table 3.7

**Experience of Member of the Opposition in 14th Lok Sabha**

| Lok Sabha | No. | State Legislature | No. |
|---|---|---|---|
| One | 14 | One | 9 |
| Two | 25 | Two | 8 |
| Three or more | 26 | Three or more | 5 |
| **Lok Sabha and State Legislature** | | **State Legislature and Lok Sabha** | |
| | | One SL & 1 LS | 5 |
| One LS & 2SL | 2 | One SL & 2 LS | 6 |
| One LS &3 or more SL | 4 | One SL & 3 or more LS | 7 |
| Two LS & 2 or more | 33 | Two Or more Sl & 2 or more Ls | 16 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| SL | | | |
| No Experience | 34 | | |

Source: Who's Who of Lok Sabha (Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, 2004), http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/members/lokprelist.aspx?lsno=2

As seen from Table 3.7, majority of the opposition members of the 14th Lok Sabha (nearly 90 percent) had some previous experience, either at the state level, or at the national level, or at both. However, it appears that the electorate preffered those members who had previous experience at the national level than at the state level. Only about ten percent of the members did not have any experience at the national level. Most of the experienced members (120 of 185) members had experience both at the national and state level. Since, the ruling NDA had lost power and assumed the responsibility of the principal opposition party, most of the opposition party members in the 14th Lok Sabha was actually established figures at the national and state level who had managed to retain their seat. Apart from the BJD, none of the regional constituents of the NDA was in power in the states. Since, the anti incumbency factor was at work for both the BJP and most of the regional parties of the opposition, their seat retention ability was low and very few new entrants found their way into the Lok Sabha through the opposition parties.

## 3.6 Conclusion

The opposition in Indian democracy has undergone some changes in the post independence period. A statistical analysis of the composition of the Lok Sabha in the study period reflects the nature of the changes.

The data presented and discussed above indicate that the opposition in India has evolved from being a middle aged, educated body consisting of professionals from of left and left to the centre, national parties, to a body consisting of educated, possibly affluent, and agriculturist –intermediary classes belonging to regional/state political parties. Within this broader trend, it is possible to identify certain sub trend that may have an impact of India's parliamentary democracy and its functioning.

It appears that a large majority of the opposition MPs were middle aged and possessed high academic qualifications with specializations, right since the immediate post

independence period. By 2004, nearly three quarters of the opposition MPs were either graduates or postgraduates. This kind of high educational standards may be indicative of the continuing desire of the educated elite to influence the political process, directly. A significant presence of educated, middle aged, experienced, members, in both the Lok Sabhas being compared indicates that there has been no significant change in the profile of the political elite. Moreover, if educational qualification and specializations are indicative, (even partially) of the economic status of members, then it would appear that the opposition members belong to economically prosperous sections of society, both educationally and economically.

Equally significant is the fact that large percentages of the educationally privileged opposition MPs are members of state and regional parties. The beginning of this trend was visible in the second Lok Sabha itself and accentuated over a period of time. Thus, members of state parties like BJD and TDP are not only as qualified as members of the Congress or the BJP, but are often more so. This may be indicative of the desire of the 'new political elite' to influence the political process through state politics and regional political parties. state politics has become epicentre of political contestation in India. The performance of the elite at the state level determines their fate at the national level. This indicates the establishment of a truly federal polity, notwithstanding the centralized federation that the constitution establishes. Further, this development may also be indicative of the fact that regional political parties provide greater opportunities for political recruitment for the emerging political elite. Whether this is due to the domination of the established parties by the traditional elite or due to their organizational or mobilization inabilities requires further research.

Thirdly, unlike the members of earlier Lok Sabha the members of the opposition in the later period had great deal of legislative experience, mostly at national level. These members were well acquainted with the procedural formalities and rules of parliamentary conduct. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, a large number of them had moved from state level politics to national level politics.

Within the larger picture, there appear sub trends, which though not pronounced may still be noteworthy. The first among these is the improved presence of members in the opposition with an intermediate level of education. The Lok Sabha in general, indicated

this trend from 1990s onwards.[37] The opposition too, reflected these changes. This indicates a desire on the part of the less privileged in terms of education to make inroads into the democratic decision making process. Also, it shows the permeability of representative institutions to political assertions from the underprivileged sections.

The occupational status of members indicates that though the economically and educationally privileged are preponderant, there has been a change in the character of the political elite. The earlier opposition in the Lok Sabhas (1952-1967) were dominated by middle class professionals. A large majority of them were practicing lawyers, journalists, writers, doctors and the like. The affluent peasant proprietor class, though present were marginal players, at the national level. The later opposition has been characterized by the presence of an agriculturist leadership. There has also been a direct entry of business classes into active politics. Though agriculturists still constitute two-fifths of the Lok Sabha membership, and is the dominant group in the House, the marginal increase in the presence of urban white collared professionals within the ranks of the opposition may indicate an greater interest of both English speaking, middle class professional elite and the emerging rural or small town educated, intermediary and backward caste, agricultural elite.

The socio economic background of the opposition leadership together with their political affiliation (Members of the opposition were mostly from national parties, though regional political parties had a sizeable presence) in the earlier Lok Sabhas gave the parliament a national character, that was likely to debate on issues that were pan-India in character. The presence of large number of educated members from the Communist and Socialist parties gave the Parliament a secular character, despite the fact that majority of the members of the opposition were Hindus, in view of the leftist nature of the opposition.

As discused in the previous chapter, it appears that by 2004 the opposition consisted of older, but more experienced local level leaders who were the products of democratic political process in the country. A large majority of them were involved in agriculture. They were economically affluent, as is evident from their educational qualification. A

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[37] The percentage of undergraduates in Lok Sabha were as follows:

| 6th | 7th | 8th | 9th | 10th | 11th | 12th |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 33.7 | 31.4 | 37.7 | 19.5 | 22.2 | 21.6 | 21.8 |

Source: Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi

sizeable section of these opposition MPs were from regional political parties, whose clout extended beyond the state from which they orginated and extended to national level. It may be assumed that these parties and their members would perhaps be more interested in representing the demand of their electorate, namely, rural- semi urban middle classes belonging to the class of intermidiate peasants and properitory classes. This would challange the ability of Parliament to represent national interest but, pave the way for better representation of local interest.

In the light of these developments it would be be interesting to examine the change in the functioning of Parliament and the role of the opposition members in bridging the gap between their regional/ local support base and responsibility as a national representaive body.

## Chapter 4

## Parliamentary Efficiency and Role of the Opposition

4.1 In a parliamentary democracy, the executive is drawn from the legislature and is continuously accountable to it. The legislature holds the government accountable for every action of omission and commission. Theoretically, the legislature possesses the ability to overthrow the government. In actual practice, the ability of the Parliament to dislodge the executive or to hold it continuously accountable is severely restricted. The government, enjoying the support of a disciplined majority is rarely threatened by the Parliament. The Cabinet has a firm grip over day-to-day administration and policy formulation.

The Legislative Assembly's importance arises out of its deliberative and supervisory role. In usual phrasing, the legislature's supervisory role consists of questioning, reviewing, assessing, modifying, remodeling and rejecting the policies of the administration. In purely constitutional terms, the legislature's lawmaking power is as important today as ever in the past. Experience however shows that much of the initiative and vigor for the lawmaking process come from the executive. Executive leadership is accepted as inevitable in an increasingly complex and technical world.[1] Moreover, scarce resources, including time and power require prudent handling. Hence, many legislators and many scholars have come to see legislative surveillance of the administration as a means of increasing the effectiveness of the legislature.[2] Legislative oversight as it is called, serves as an instrument whereby the legislature can resist executive domination and strengthen its overall position in the constitutional system.[3]

As mentioned in chapter 1, the legislature's functions are largely performed by the opposition particularly in a parliamentary system, where the government has complete support of a disciplined majority. The onus of supervising executive action therefore, rests with the opposition. It may be mentioned that the right to deliberate and

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[1] William. J. Keefe, Morris S. Ogul, *The American Legislative Process- Congress and the States* (Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1993), p .23.
[2] For development of this position see...
Samuel Huntington, "Congressional Responses to the Twentieth Century", in David. B. Truman (ed), *The Congress and America's Future* (Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1965), pp 5-31.
[3] Morris S. Ogul, *Congress Oversees Bureaucracy* (University of Pittsburg Press, Pittsburg, 1976).

pervise is not an exclusive function of the opposition. It may be exercised in equal sure by MPs of the ruling party/parties. However, the opposition MPs are more on using them as it gives them an opportunity to challenge the government and its strength on the floor of the House.

procedures of Parliament afford ample opportunities to Members of Parliament s) for a daily and periodic assessment of ministerial responsibility, as well as to lence the policies of the government such as, debates at various stages of the ssage of a bill, discussions within the committees, proposals for amendments of bills, . Legislation itself is an obvious technique of supervision: new laws can be enacted old laws can be revised with a view to changing administrative behaviour or licies.[4] The deliberations in the course of lawmaking give opportunity to the opposition MPs to exercise supervision through cross-questioning. In addition, countability is exercised by the Lok Sabha, both occasionally, such as through a no nfidence motion and continuously through the Question Hour, Calling Attention Motion, Adjournment Motion, Short Duration Discussion, Half an Hour Discussions and Discussion under Rule 377. Each of these procedures also allows members to perform epresentative functions.

Table 4.1

**Sittings Held and Time Spent by Lok Sabha (1952-2009)**

| Lok Sabha | Sittings held | Time spent (in hours) | Average time spent in hours (annually)[5] |
|---|---|---|---|
| First | 677 | 3784 | 926 |
| Second | 567 | 3652 | 894 |
| Third | 578 | 3733 | 914 |
| Fourth | 469 | 3029 | 932 |
| Fifth | 613 | 4071 | 698 |
| Sixth | 267 | 1753 | 725 |
| Seventh | 464 | 3324 | 688 |
| Eighth | 485 | 3224 | 667 |
| Ninth | 109 | 754 | 603 |
| Tenth | 423 | 2527 | 514 |
| Eleventh | 125 | 814 | 528 |
| Twelfth | 88 | 575 | 531 |

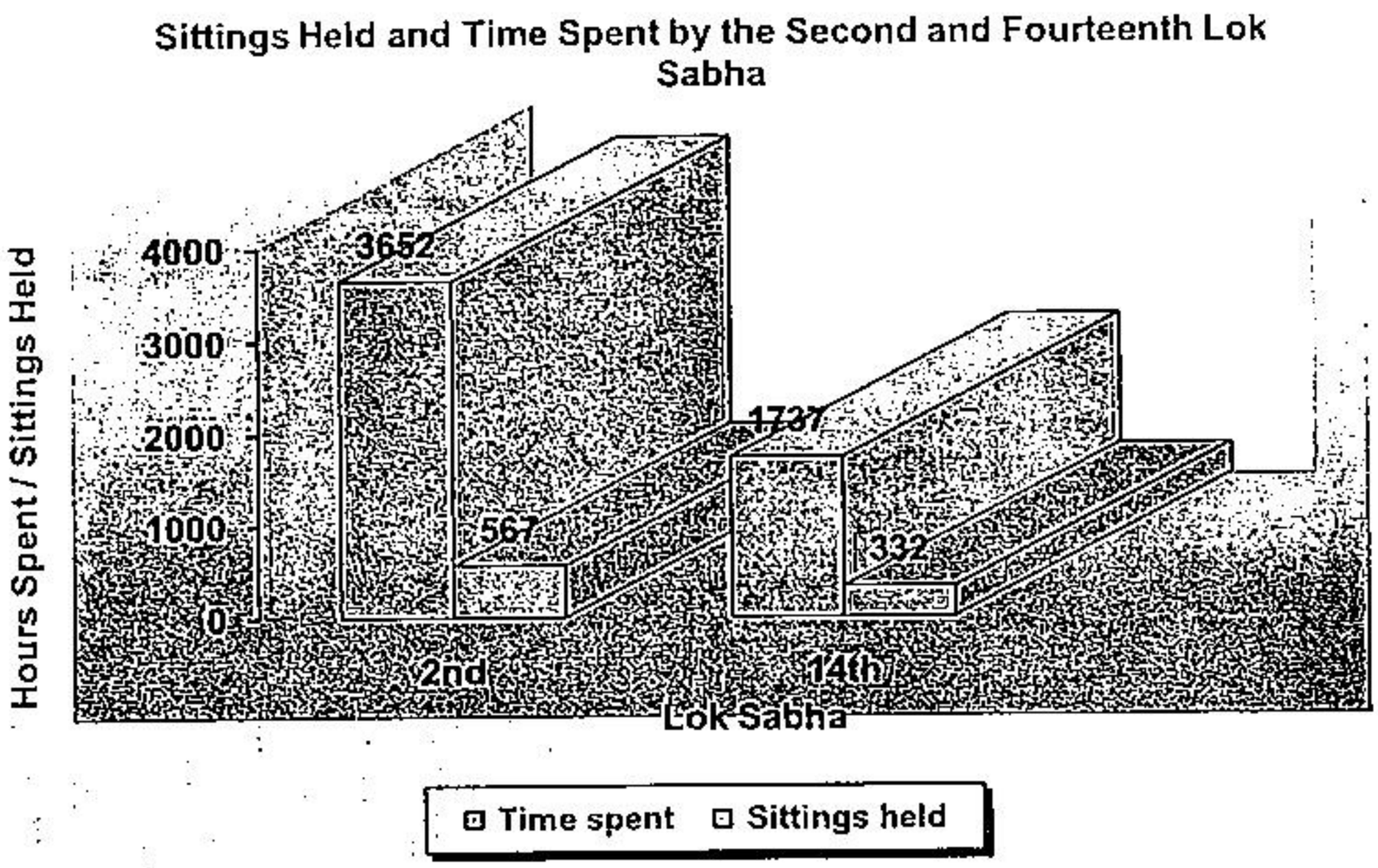
[4] William. J. Keefe, Morris S. Ogul, n.1, p. 23

[5] Average time spent by each Lok Sabha is calculated by dividing the total time spent, divided by the life span of the Lok Sabha, in years. For instance the Sixth Lok Sabha spent 1753 business hours in its entire life span of 29 months. The average time spent by the Sixth Lok Sabha (annually) in discussing legislations was 1753 hours divided by 29 and them multiplied by 12, that is, 725 hours.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Thirteenth** | 356 | 1946 | 445 |
| **Fourteenth** | 313 | 1737 | 353 |

Source: Parliament of India: The Twelfth Lok Sabha, A Study, 1998-2009 (Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, 2009)

**Figure 4.1**




The data in Table 4.1 and Figure 41 indicate that there has been a gradual decline in the sittings as well as the time spent by the Lok Sabha. Further, as Table 4.2 and 4.3 indicate the time spent on legislations and budgetary discussion has declined by nearly half. The number of legislations enacted has declined from 316 to 248 respectively in the second and 14th Lok Sabha, of which 205 and 173 legislations respectively were of financial nature. The time spent on questions has also declined from fifteen percent of total legislative time to ten per cent. This indicates a decline in efficiency of the Lok Sabha as a legislative body.

Table 4.2

Time Spent by the Second Lok Sabha on Different Types of Business

| Business | Time taken | | Percentage of the total time taken |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Hours | Minutes | |
| | | | |
| Government Bills<br>Private Members' Bill | 1031 | 28.20 | 28.20 |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| General Budget | 764 | 09 | 20.9 |
| Railway Budget | 129 | 55 | 3.60 |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Short Duration Discussions (Rule 193) | NA | NA | NA |
| | | | |
| Matters of urgent public importance raised after the question hour | NA | NA | NA |
| | | | |
| Matters under rule 377 | NA | NA | NA |
| | | | |
| Questions | 552 | 22 | 15.0 |
| | | | |
| Resolutions-- | 199 | 34 | 5.50 |

Source: Fifty Years of Lok Sabha( 1952-2002): A Statistical Profile, (Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, 2003) and Resume of Work Done by Lok Sabha, First to Fifteenth Session, (Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi)

However, the time spent on resolutions and discussions under rule 377, which is an innovation of the Lok Sabha has increased. These procedures allow members to air constituency concerns and therefore, perform representative functions.

Table 4.3

Time Spent by the Fourteenth Lok Sabha on Different Types of Business

| Business | Time taken | | Percentage of the total time taken |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Hours | Minutes | |
| | | | |
| Government Bills<br>Private Members' Bill | 374 (40 hrs for pvt members | 49 | 21.63 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | bills) | | |
| | | | |
| General Budget | 212 | 51 | 11.57 |
| Railway Budget | 129 | 16 | 6.87 |
| | | | |
| | 67 | 330 | 36.97 |
| | | | |
| Short Duration Discussions (Rule 193) | 246 | 35 | 15.2 |
| | | | |
| Matters of Urgent Public Importance raised after the Question Hour | 145 | 4 | 8.52 |
| | | | |
| Matters under Rule 377 | 21 | 1.32 | 12.44 |
| | | | |
| Questions | 191 | 16 | 11.2 |
| | | | |
| Private Members' Resolutions | 40 | 2 | 21.21 |

Source: Resume of Work Done by Lok Sabha, Fourteenth Lok Sabha, First to Fifteenth Session, 2004-2009, Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi.

However, it is important to take note of two important facts before arriving at any conclusion. In the first place, a decline in the time spent by Lok Sabha may not be construed as a sufficient proof of ineffectiveness of the opposition. The functioning of the Parliament depends in equal measure on both the government and the opposition. An obstructive opposition and intransigent government can both contribute to the inefficiency of the House.

Secondly, while rules of procedure of the Lok Sabha allow participation of MPs in all the proceedings in their individual capacity, some of these procedures are used more frequently by members of the opposition to perform their function of seeking information, supervising the government, holding it accountable and censuring it. Thus for instance, the Questions Hour, Short Duration Discussions, etc allows members of the opposition to elicit information from the government. The No Confidence Motion, Adjournment Motion and Private Members Resolutions enable it to censure the government. Private Members Bills allows members to initiate legislations. Hence, they are of interest to members of the opposition as well as the ruling party

A detailed analysis of the opposition's participation in each of these procedural mechanisms may provide a better understanding of their contribution in exercising collective control over the administration. The opposition's contribution to the efficiency of Lok Sabha may be assessed in terms of

- Participation of the opposition MPs in
  a) Question Hour
  b) Calling Attention Motion
  c) Short Duration Discussion
  d) Private Members Resolution
  e) Discussions on Matters of Urgent Public Importance
  f) Discussions under Rule 377

- Extent of participation of the opposition in each of the above mentioned procedures

4.2 Methodology

The Lok Sabha Secretariat does not provide party wise data relating to participation of member's in each of the above-mentioned proceedings. Hence, in order to arrive at a qualitative understanding, a detailed analysis of 28-30 business days of each of the Lok Sabha (Second and 14th) has been undertaken. The following were the sessions of the Second Lok Sabha that were studied:

- Budget Session of Parliament, (23rd to 29th May, 1957)
- Monsoon Session of Parliament, (25th to 28th August & 1st September, 1958)
- Winter Session of Parliament, (30th November to 4th December, 1959)
- Monsoon Session of Parliament, (8th August to 12th August, 1960)
- Winter Session of Parliament, ( 2nd December to 7th December 1961)
- Budget Session of Parliament, (12th to 15th March 1962)

From the Fourteenth Lok Sabha, the following sessions were examined:

- Monsoon Session of Parliament, (23rd August to 12th September, 2004)
- Winter Session of Parliament, (30th November to 12th December, 2005)
- Budget Session of Parliament, (28th February to 12th March 2006)

- Monsoon Session of Parliament, (14th August to 6th September, 2007)
- Budget Session of Parliament, (29th February to 24th April, 2008)
- Budget Session of Parliament, (18th February to 26th February 2009)

The proceedings of five days of each of the above mentioned Lok Sabhas was undertaken for an in-depth content analysis of Question Hour, Calling Attention Notices, Discussion on Matters of Urgent Public importance under Rule 193 and Discussions under Rule 377, in each of the above mentioned session. The selection for the sample study was random to cover the entire study period. However, it was done in such a way as to ensure that different sessions of the Lok Sabha, i.e. Monsoon Session, Winter Session and the Budget Sessions, were all covered. In addition, days on which the Prime Minister was present in the Lok Sabha were also selected to ascertain whether his presence made any difference. This analysis is, at best, illustrative and gives an impression of the participation of the opposition members in the proceeding of the Lok Sabha

Each of these sessions was analyzed statistically based on data provided by Lok Sabha debates. The following criterions used for quantitative analysis were as follows:

- **Time spent:** The time spent on a particular proceeding may indicate the preference of the MPs to particular procedure vis-à-vis others. However, this may not accurately indicate the level of interest of the members because, the time devoted to certain proceedings such as Question Hour, Short Duration Discussions and Matters of Urgent Public importance is limited by Rules of Procedure of the House
- **Number of Questions/ Issues Discussed:** The number of issue/questions discussed may more accurately indicate the interest of the opposition in transacting the business of the House efficiently. It may also indicate role of the opposition in ensuring accountability of the government and eliciting authentic information from government sources.
- **Number of Opposition MPs who Participated:** The extent of participation of the opposition members vis-a vis that of ruling party in the debates of the House may indicate their interest in proceedings of the House and the seriousness of the members in ensuring accountability.

- **Party Affiliation of Participating Members:** As mentioned earlier, a study of the party affiliation of the MPs in the proceeding of the House may indicate the correlation between participation and party affiliation. As mentioned earlier, majority of the opposition MPs in the second Lok Sabha were from National Parties. The Fourteenth Lok Sabha on the other hand had the presence of large number of state and regional political parties. The examination of party affiliation of participants from the opposition may indicate the interest of members from different political background.

It may be stated here that statistical analysis alone may not provide a correct picture of the role of opposition in ensuring legislative efficiency. Hence, content analysis on a small scale was attempted. The following parameters were used in the process of qualitative analysis:

**Nature of Questions Asked/Issue discussed:** A brief analysis of the nature of questions asked would reveal whether the questions aimed at eliciting information from the government to exercise control over it or whether they represented popular concerns. Questions that were worded in the following manner, "what steps have been taken by the government..." or "...Will the government furnish details regarding...?" "Will the minister concerned let the House know.....?"- aim at seeking information from the government. Such information elicited is important for its authenticity and accuracy. The members may use the information so gained to track the implementation of legislative initiatives, formulate, and suggest alternatives, criticize the government, or merely plan further changes in legislative initiatives.

**Nature and Extent of Deliberations and Interest of the Government and The opposition the Discussions:** An examination of the nature of the debate can be achieved by content analysis. Though subjective in its character, it is nonetheless important because the extent of discussion on a matter is indicative of both the interest of the members, and the importance of the matter itself. Frequent discussions on particular issues, participation by a large number of MPs, the length of the discussion and the eagerness of members to express their opinion, would be indicative of the interest of the members.

**Language of Discussion:** The language in which the discussion is carried out is of utmost importance. It would indicate whether there has been a changing in the character of the membership of the House. Also a correlation between the language of the debate, the subject matter of the discussion and the background the members would help in answering the vital question: who represents whose interest? It would help in assessing whether members of the Lok Sabha represent national, state, local or class/ community concerns.

**The Seriousness of the Discussion:** A detailed analysis of the Question Hour would also indicate the nature of issues that are accorded utmost priority by the MPs. This would be indicative of the changing concerns of the Lok Sabha in the study period and a change in the public perception of issues as interpreted by the representatives.

## 4.3 Question Hour

Any assessment of role of opposition in achieving parliamentary effectiveness must begin with an in-depth study of what is referred to as the 'Question Hour'. The first hour of parliamentary sitting in every session is devoted to questions raised by the members. The questions may relate to any aspect of administration, policy decision, or policy implementation. The Question Hour is of special significance. It ensures not just accountability of the government to the legislature and thereby ensures legislative control over the executive but also enables the public (through the legislature) to seek authentic information from the government on any or all aspects of administration. In addition, it allows members to participate in policy initiatives through suggestions for legislation and ventilation of public grievances.

Questions may be asked by members for two purposes. Firstly, they may be asked specifically to elicit information from the minister about a particular public policy or implementation of a public policy. These questions aim at exercising control over the executive by eliciting information. Secondly, questions may also take the form of a statement attempting to ventilate public grievances. Such questions are essentially representative in nature. A member of the Lok Sabha raises such a question to draw attention to the problems of a particular geographical territory, or sectional group which he seeks to represent. These questions do not seek specific answers from the ministers

nor do they always demand policy initiatives, but are merely attempts to draw attention to the problems of a constituency.

Questions asked by members of the opposition assume special significance in view of the vital representative functions that it enables the members to perform. Given the fact that MPs are elected for a fixed term, and have to return to the electorate for re election, it is important for them to give their constituency ample proof of their efficiency. The opposition MPs seeks not just re election, but also return to power. Hence, Question Hour assumes special significance for MPs of the opposition parties. They therefore, take keen interest in the Question Hour of the Lok Sabha. In addition, since these debates are televised and widely covered by the print media, the opposition is keen on making their presence felt during the Question Hour. It is, therefore, not surprising that maximum attendance of members from both ruling and the opposition parties in the Lok Sabha is during the Question Hour.[6] Moreover, the maximum reporting in the newspapers with regard to legislative proceedings also relates to questions raised by members on the floor of the House. Hence, a close analysis of the Question Hour is vital both in quantitative and qualitative terms.

## Quantitative Analysis of Performance of the Opposition during Question Hour, 1957-62 & 2004-09

### Table 4.4

### Participation of Opposition Members during Question Hour, 1957-1962

| Dates(day/month) | Session | No of days | Questions | Total No of Participants | Opposition Participants | Party Affiliation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 23/5, 24/5,27/5, 28/5, 29/5 | Budget Session, 1957 | 5 | 96 | 305 | 63 | 45 CPI,17 PSP, 1BJS, 17 IND, 225 INC |
| 25/8,26/8,27/8, 28/8,1/9 | Monsoon Session, 1958 | 5 | 115 | 211 | 55 | 31 CPI,9 GP,10 PSP, 2BJS,5MLSS,2fFB, 140 INC |

[6] This conclusion has been arrived on the basis of interview with Manavendra Singh (BJP) MP on 21 March, 2005, Basudev Acharya (CPM), 2 April, 2005, Sukh Dev Singh Dhidsa (Akali Dal), 24 March, 2005 all in New Delhi.

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30/11, 1/12, 2/12, 3/12, 4/12 | Winter Session, 1959 | 5 | 191 | 230 | 54 | 27 CPI, 4 MLSS, 10 PSP,4 GP, 2 BJS,156 INC |
| 8/8,9/8,10/8, 11/8, | Monsoon Session 1960 | 4 | 49 | 213 | 63 | 24 CPI,10 PSP, 4 BJS, 8 GP, 4 SCF, 4 MLSS,140 INC |
| 2/12, 4/12, 5/12, 5/12, 6/12, 7/12 | Winter Session, 1961 | 5 | 71 | 210 | 45 | 24 CPI, 8 PSP, 6 GP, 1BJS, 1FBM |
| 12/3,13/3,14/3, 15/3,[7] | Budget Session, 1962 | 4 | 48 | 116 | 24 | 14 CPI, 5 PSP, 3 GP, 2BJS, 82 INC, 9 IND |

Source: Lok Sabha Debates, 1957-1962, (Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962)

## Participation of Opposition Members during Question Hour, 2004-2009

| Dates(day/mon) | Session | No of days | Questions | Total No. of Participants | Opposition Participants | Party Affiliation of all Participants |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 23/8, 18/8, 17/8, 21/7, 12/7 | Monsoon Session, 2004 | 5 | 12 | 20 | 8 | 2 BJP, 1 BJD,1 TDP, 2 SS,1 JDU, 1 SDF , INC 1 AIMIM, 5SP |
| 22/12, 15/12, 9/12, 7/12, 30/11 | Winter Session, 2005 | 5 | 24 | 20 | 7 | 6 BJP, 1JDU, 8 INC, 2 CPI, 1 AGP, 2 BSP |
| 17/3, 14/3, 10/3, 6/3, 28/2 | Budget Session, 2006 | 5 | 22 | 21 | 12 | 9 BJP, 2 SS, 1 JDU |
| 6/9, 24/8, 20/8, 16/8, 14/8 | Monsoon Session, 2007 | 5 | 14 | 15 | 7 | 6 BJP, 1SS, 4 INC,2 SP,1 AGP,1JKN, |
| 24/4, 22/4, 21/4,13/3, 29/2 | Budget Session, 2008 | 5 | 17 | 19 | 8 | 7 BJP,1 TDP, 3 INC,1NCP,2, BJD 2 CPM, 1CPI |
| 26/2, 25/2, 20/2, 19/2, 18/2 | Winter Session, 2009 | 5 | 18 | 43 | 12 | 8 BJP,3 BJD,1 TDP, CPI 3, PMK 2,RJD 1,INC 9,DMK 3 |

Source: Lok Sabha Debates, 2004-2009, (Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, 2004, 2005, 2006,2007, 2008, 2009)

[7] Question Hour was not held on 13th March 1962 as it was the first day of the Session of the Parliament wherein the President addressed members of Parliament

**Time Spent & Numbers of Questions Discussed:** A statistical analysis of the Question Hour in the Second Lok Sabha shows that it was held regularly. In the sample study of 30 working days, the Question Hour was not suspended even on a single day. Nearly 20 questions were answered each day, by the concerned Ministers, or Secretaries. In the Fourteenth Lok Sabha too, the Question Hour was held regularly, and only on two days that were studied it was not held. The concerned Ministers orally answered an average of three to four questions every day.

**Extent of Participation and Party affiliation of Participants:** Nearly 28-30 MPs of the opposition parties participated in the Question Hour every day in the 1957 House. Almost all the members of the opposition parties participated actively. Of the total membership of the House, 112 members did not ask any questions and 27 members asked more than 1000 questions.[8] However, the maximum participation came from the Communist Party members. Prominent amongst the CPI members were Hiren Mukherjee, A.K Gopalan, Renu Chakravarty, T.B. Vittal Rao, K. Tangamani, V.P Nayar, Kodiyan. The members of PSP and BJS also participated actively, and its prominent parliamentarians were J.B. Kriplani, Hem Barua and A.B Vajpayee. Independent members of the second Lok Sabha were as active as members of established parties. S.M. Banerjee was the most prominent participant from amongst this category of members. Interestingly, the participation of members of the ruling party was far greater than that of the opposition parties. In each of the sessions examined, nearly three fourths of the participants were from the Congress party.

Participation in the Question Hour in the 14th Lok Sabha was thin and only about three to four Lok Sabha members participated in the discussions of the Question Hour each day. Nearly half of the total participants in the Question Hour were from the opposition. It appears from the data above that the overall participation of MPs in the Question Hour declined drastically. However, amongst those who participated, members of the opposition parties were active during Question Hour. Only 17 of the 184 of the opposition members did not raise any questions in the House, in its entire life span while 21 opposition members participated more than 500 times. The maximum participation came from the members of BJP. On an average, members of the BJP

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[8] Subhash Kashyap; The Ten Lok Sabhas, (Shipra Publications, New Delhi, 1992), p.44

participated 189 times during the Question Hour. Among the regional political parties both the JD(U) and Shiv Sena MPs participated actively and their average participation was better than that of the National parties in the opposition.

The interest of the members of the ruling coalition was however, much less than that of their counterparts in the second Lok Sabha. Thus, for instance 40 members of the ruling coalition raised no questions in the House and 26 raised more than 500 questions. Within the ruling coalition, the members of the Left were more active than that of the Congress, while that of UPA MPs participated 85 time (average) and the left 168 times (average) during the entire life span of the 14th Lok Sabha.

**Interruptions and Walkouts:** In the 14th Lok Sabha, the Question Hour was frequently interrupted and the Lok Sabha debates record nearly 40 interruptions on an average during a single day. The members of the opposition staged walkout twice in the study period of thirty days. The Speaker had to adjourn the House on more than one occasion owing to unruly behavior of the members.

Interruptions in the House during the Question Hour took place due to one or more of the following reasons

- Dissatisfactory or inadequate response by the concerned Minister
- Absence of the concerned Minister during the debate on the issue in the House
- Failure of a member to raise questions effectively
- Attempts of a member to shower accolade on his/ her party and criticize the other
- Extraneous factors, such as weakness of the government, doubts regarding its continuance.
- Decision of the Speaker to disallow a member from speaking.

In contrast, there was far greater discipline in the second Lok Sabha. There were virtually no interruptions and only once did the members of the opposition stage a walkout to express their dismay over the expulsion of an MP from the House for a period of one week.

## 4.4 Qualitative Analysis of Performance of the Opposition during Question Hour, 1957-62 & 2004-09

**Nature of Questions Asked:** In Second Lok Sabha the opposition MPs raised question mainly relating to Industry, Commerce, Food and Agriculture, and Health. Within this broad category, the issue of price rise, prices of agricultural commodities, establishment of public sector enterprises in different regions of the country, spread of epidemics such as cholera, malaria etc, availability of electricity, and water in the national capital concerned the members of the opposition.

The questions raised by the opposition on the floor of the House during the study period of the Fourteenth Lok Sabha covered a far wider gamut of subjects. While some issues such as price rise (raised twice) and atrocities on minorities and backward classes, rural development (including agricultural credit, use of agricultural land for non agricultural purposes, subsidy on fertilizers) were old, others dealt with newer issues such as water pollution, environmental degradation, viable of renewable energy resources, functioning of private airlines, etc.

It is possible to identify two broad categories of questions raised by the opposition members in the second Lok Sabha. Firstly, there were certain questions that aimed at eliciting authentic information from the government. Majority of the questions raised by members of the opposition in the sample study were of this type. Secondly, there were certain questions that aimed at performing supervisory function while eliciting information. Thus, for instance, members wanted to know about the steps taken by the government to control the spread of cholera.

In the 14th House, some questions raised by the opposition in every session analyzed, aimed at eliciting information from the government. The majority of the questions however, aimed at criticizing the policies of the government, while holding it accountable for the lacunae in governance and policy implementation. Thus, for instance, in the Winter Session of Lok Sabha in 2005 members wanted to know about losses incurred by airports. Similarly, in the same session a member of the opposition wanted to how the government would protect human rights during riots. In the Budget session of the Lok Sabha in 2006, the opposition members brought the attention of the government to the malfunctioning within the telecom department. However, instances

of controlling the executive by criticizing its policies were not limited to one session of the Lok Sabha or only those studied in detail. Almost all the sessions studied had some deliberations of a similar type. Earlier studies show that since the tenth Lok Sabha, there has been a significant increase in the questions of this nature.[9] Even where the members have sought to correct imbalances in policy decisions with a view of to extracting concessions for their respective constituencies, their speeches have been laced with scathing criticism of the government. The tendency seemed to have increased in 11th and the 12th Lok Sabhas.[10]

Apart from questions that explicitly aimed at ensuring governmental accountability the members of the Lok Sabha also used the Question Hour to perform representative functions. The questions that aimed at representation assumed one or all of the three forms:

- Airing the Grievances of the constituency
- Securing concessions for the constituents
- Correcting imbalances in the distribution of resources that may have occurred on account of party politics

Usually, the members sought to achieve all three ends in single questions. In addition, they also criticized the executive policies, while justifying their demand for concessions.

**Nature and Extent of Deliberations:** A study of selected debates revealed that members of second Lok Sabha frequently represented national concerns and national issues. Matters of foreign policy, relations with neighboring countries (often in the presence of the Prime Ministers) led to larger number of questions. The opposition members represented their territorial constituencies. Thus, members of CPI from Kerela raised concerns regarding mining activities in the state. However, they could not frequently be associated with their territorial constituencies. National issues and pan India approach dominated their approach while raising questions.

In the 14th Lok Sabha too, the opposition members represented either their territorial constituency or their occupational constituency. The opposition MPs raised issues

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[9] M.Manisha; Unpublished Thesis, Lok Sabha and Democratic Governance; A Critical Study of Parliamentary Democracy; 1977-1998 ( Jadavpur University, Kolkata, 2007)
[10] M.Manisha, n.9

relating to the state from which they were elected. Similarly, occupation of the members also influenced the nature of questions asked. Most members who proposed agriculture-related questions represented the concerns of the agriculturalists of their constituencies. Women members usually spoke on issues relating to health, family planning, education etc, in the sample chosen for study. Party lines were rather blurred in such discussions and members made an attempt to portray themselves as their representatives. This is because members were encouraged to ask questions in the area of their expertise and as Sushma Swaraj, leader of the opposition in the 15th Lok Sabha points out, the party plays no role in the choice of questions asked by members[11]

**Language of Discussion**: The predominant language used during the Question Hour was English, though there was use of Hindi also, both in the second and 14th Lok Sabha. In the second Lok Sabha, whenever a minister replied in Hindi, there were demands by members of the opposition to provide for an English translation. This was not the case in the 14th Lok Sabha. In both the Houses being compared, the opposition members of the "Hindi Belt" spoke in Hindi, those from the east, west or south of the country spoke mostly in English.

**Seriousness of Discussions**: In the second Lok Sabha, the deliberations during the Question Hour were basic. Members of both the opposition and ruling party placed the questions in a proper written format. The Ministers, in turn answered these questions precisely, and to the point. Ministers often furnished inforrnation even when the speaker gave them time to do so later. The opposition was also accommodative and gave the concerned Ministers ample leeway. The answers to questions were immediately followed by supplementary questions, which were direct and to the point. There were no arguments or counter arguments. It is possible to categorize such questions as **basic and informative**. This was the case for discussions on all matters. The presence of Prime Minister seemed to enthuse the opposition MPs and larger numbers of questions were answered during his presence.

In the 14th Lok Sabha however, the seriousness of the debates varied with the issues discussed. Debates on financial issues, or during the presence of the Prime Minister

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[11] Interview with Sushma Swaraj (BJP) on 26 September, 2010 in New Delhi

appeared to be serious deliberations on policy matters. Members seemed to attempt to seek clarification from the Minister, criticized government policies, and demanded to know policy choices and implications with respect to their constituencies. The questions were usually precise and the answers were to the point. Discussions on agriculture, irrigation, etc appeared to be carried out in emotionally charged atmosphere. Such discussions appeared to lack precision. Most of the opposition members gave long speeches relating to the background of the question before asking the question as such. Many interruptions were because of the impatience of the ruling party MPs with such long speeches. Debates on issues relating to health and family planning were not given due seriousness. The debates on domestic issues were characterized by greater criticism of government policies. On matters of foreign policy there appeared to be greater consensus among members.

## 4.5 Conclusion

The statistical analysis indicates that although all the members of the opposition parties participated in the proceeding of the Question Hour, the attendance of the members during the Question Hour was thin. Only the proposers of the questions and the ministers who responded to the questions were present. Since very few questions were orally answered every day, the opposition succeeded in eliciting information through the medium of Question Hour, but did not succeeded in initiating discussions. This was especially true of the earlier Houses. As the opposition increased in strength and experience, the issues raised during the Question Hour led to greater deliberations. These debates were not merely confined to eliciting information but launched a more serious attack on government policy and its implementation. In such cases, the opposition used the Question Hour not merely to address the government, but the larger audience, namely the electorate. Members of Parliament conceded that televised coverage of Question Hour enabled them to reach the electorate directly. However, frequent interruptions prevented serious conduct of Question Hour in the later Lok Sabha. Some commentators are of the opinion that the opposition strategy of stalling House proceedings was to gain both media coverage and public attention.

## 4.6 No Confidence Motion

The foremost mechanism of accountability is the availability of a no-confidence motion (Laver and Shepsle 1999). Legislators can introduce a motion of no-confidence in the government, which, if sustained, would result in the fall of the government. But the effectiveness of no-confidence motions as a disciplining device depends upon the alternatives available to replace a sitting government. In a very simple sense, a government with a substantial majority in Parliament is unlikely to be much deterred by the introduction of no-confidence motions.

No-confidence motions can be successful only in a very limited scenario where governments have a small majority, and a small part of that constituent majority has some reason to defect to another coalition or seek a general election that would result from the dissolution of government. In the case of coalition governments, where no single party dominates Parliament, some coalition partners in question would have to prefer an alternative set of arrangements—essentially a different coalition—rather than face elections.

The use of no-confidence motions as a sanctioning device in coalition governments is mixed.[12] On the one hand, narrowly divided Parliaments with coalition governments give small parties a good deal of sanctioning power. They can hold the government accountable by threatening to withdraw and ensure the success of a no-confidence motion. On the other hand, this leverage can also be used to attract substantially greater resources for particular parties. Thus, in principle because of the threat of no-confidence motions, a government could respond to the pressure of particular groups within Parliament, even as it became less accountable to Parliament as a whole. Although the net effect depends upon the particular ends for which these parties exercise their bargaining power, the copycat and competitive effects of extracting greater resources as the price for staying in the coalition can be quite high.

Given the stable nature of the government in the second Lok Sabha and the large margin of support that the government enjoyed no confidence motion was not used by the opposition. It is almost agreed that the no confidence motions increase the

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[12] Devesh Kapur and Pratap Bhanu Mehta, *The Indian Parliament as an Institution of Accountability, UNSRID, Geneva, 2006, p.10*

bargaining powers of small parties in a coalition politics. In the 14th Lok Sabha, the Congress with the support of the Left parties has a sustainable strength in the House. The smaller parties were deprived of their bargaining positions. As a result, no confidence motions were ineffective from the perspective of the opposition's ability to ensure executive accountability.

## 4.7 Calling Attention Motion

The Calling Attention Motion is an innovation of Indian origin in modern parliamentary procedure. The Calling Attention Motion allows a member of the Lok Sabha to draw the attention of a minister to any matter of public importance. The Minister is bound to reply to such a motion either immediately, or within a short duration of time prescribed by the Speaker. The Motion does not allow for any debate on the issue. It allows a member to draw attention to a matter of urgent importance. In fact, the urgency of the matter determines the inclusion of the matter in the procedure of Calling Attention Motion. The Calling Attention Motion has emerged as one of the most popular device censuring the government, while representing constituency concerns. Over the years there has been a gradual increase in the interest of the members in this procedural devise (see Table 4.5)

Table 4.5

Calling Attention Motion in the Lok Sabha, 1962-1999

| Lok Sabha | No of notices recvd | No Accepted | Time spent | Statements made by the Minister | Percent of total Time Spent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | |
| Third | NA | NA | 111.00 | NA | 3.00 |
| Fourth | NA | NA | 146.46 | NA | 4.83 |
| Fifth Lok Sabha | 28983 | 4343 | 215.37 | 315 | 5.29 |
| Sixth Lok Sabha | 12049 | 1481 | 87.54 | 165 | 0.06 |
| Seventh Lok Sabha | 44627 | 4390 | 318.20 | 301 | 9.58 |
| Eighth Lok Sabha | 24037 | 1252 | 123.58 | 110 | 3.75 |
| Ninth Lok Sabha | 3897 | 175 | 21.01 | 24 | 2.79 |
| Tenth Lok Sabha | 3320 | 144 | 10.27 | 12 | 0.37 |
| Eleventh Lok Sabha | 764 | 63 | 6.51 | 8 | 0.80 |
| Twelfth Lok Sabha | 424 | 33 | 5.36 | 8 | 1.08 |

Source: *Parliament of India, Sixth to Twelfth Lok Sabha: A Study*, (Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi,1971, 1977, 1979, 1985, 1991, 1992, 1997, 2000).

The Lok Sabha Secretariat does not provide data relating to time spent on Calling Attention Motion in the 1957 House. Rule of Procedures and Conduct of Business indicate that not more than one Calling Attention Motion could be taken up on a day. However, if at the end of the session there were more than one notice of matters of great importance, the Speaker could give permission for their discussion. Accordingly, a very small fraction of legislative time was spent for the purpose. In the sample study undertaken, only 10 notices were discussed. Eleven opposition members of different political parties participated (See Table) in the deliberation.

**Table 4.6**

**Participation of Opposition Members in Calling Attention Motion, 1957-1962 & 2004-2009**

**Second Lok Sabha**

| Dates(day/month) | Session | No of days | No of matters discussed under 197 | No Of participants | N0 Of The opposition Members who participates | Party affiliation of Participants |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 23/5, 24/5,27/5,28/5, 29/5, 31/5 | Budget Session, 1957 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 3 | All independents |
| 25/8,26/8,27/8,28/8,1/9 | Monsoon Session, 1958 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | NIL |
| 30/11,1/12,2/12,3/12,4/ 12 | Winter Session, 1959 | 5 | 1 | 7 | 3 | 1 BJS,2 CPI, 2 INC, 2 IND |
| 8/8,9/8,10/8,11/8, | Monsoon Session, 1960 | 4 | 5 | 12 | 7 | 5 CPI,2 BJS, 4 INC |
| 2/12, 4/12, 5/12, 5/12, 6/12, 7/12 | Winter Session, 1961 | 5 | 3 | 12 | 7 | 6 CPI,1 PSP, |
| 12/3,13/3,14/3,15/3, | Budget Session, 1962 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | NIL |

**Fourteenth Lok Sabha**

| Dates(day/month) | Session | No of days | No of matters discussed under 197 | No. Of participants | No of Participants from Opposition | Party affiliation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 23/8, 18/8, 17/8, 21/7, 12/7 | Monsoon Session , 2004 | 5 | 4 | 29 | 8 | 8 (7 BJP,1 BJD, ), 13 LF, |
| 22/12, 15/12, 9/12, 7/12, 30/11 | Winter Session , 2005 | 5 | 7 | 55 | 18 | 18 (12 BJP, 4BJD, 1 SAD, 1IFDP), 12 LF,7INC |
| 17/3, 14/3, 10/3, 6/3, 28/2 | Budget Session , 2006 | 5 | 2 | 7 | 2 | 2 BJP |
| 6/9, 24/8, 20/8, 16/8, 14/8 | Monsoon Session , 2007 | 5 | 4 | 23 | 7 | 7 (6BJP, 1BJD), 6 LF, 3INC |
| 24/4, 22/4, 21/4,13/3, 29/2 | Budget Session , 2008 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 1 INC, ICPM, 1 santosh Bagrodia |
| 26/2, 25/2, 20/2, 19/2, 18/2 | Winter Session , 2009 | 5 | 3 | 21 | 2 | 2 (1BJP, 1BJD),9LF,7 INC |

Source: Lok Sabha Debates, (Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, 1957-1962, 2004-2009)

Majority of the movers of the motion were from the opposition parties, given the nature of this procedural device. Some independent MPs also used this device. The members preferred to draw government attention to urgent matters, mostly of economic nature. Some of the matters that came up for discussion in the second Lok Sabha were:

1. Low income group housing scheme
2. Closing of jute and cotton Mills in Gujarat
3. Non acceptance of salary by Indian Air Force station Workers ( 3 participants, all independents,
4. Train Derailment,
5. Circulation of counterfeit notes ( 5 participants, 3 CPI and 2 INC)

There was not much discussion during these Calling Attention Motions. The Motion was followed by a statement by the Minister, taking cognizance of the matter and enumerating measures taken by the government to alleviate the situation. The opposition was almost always satisfied with such explanation and no disruption of the proceedings took place.

In the 14th Lok Sabha 113 Calling Attention Motions were admitted and discussed by the House. 139 members participated during the Calling Attention Motion of which only a third (40 members) were from the opposition parties. Most of the participants from the opposition were movers of the Motion. Further, BJP, the principal the opposition party was the foremost in moving Calling Attention Motion from amongst the opposition members. Interestingly, left members were also critical of the government and 25 members of the Left parties participated in this proceeding, though they were a part of the ruling coalition.

Like in the second Lok Sabha in the 14th Lok Sabha too, the opposition members raised mainly economic and financial issues, especially those relating to the working classes. Some of the issues that were brought to government notice were as follows:

1. Situation arising out of fall in the prices of rubber and steps taken by the government in regard thereto
2. Situation arising out of the move to curb right to strike by employees and placing other restriction on working classes and steps taken by the government in regard thereto
3. Reported reduction in interest rate of Employees Provident Fund
4. Reported closure of a number of tea gardens in West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu and Kerala resulting in unemployment of thousands of workers and steps taken by the government in regard thereto
5. The need to formulate a master plan for development of backward areas of the country
6. Situation arising out of reduction in the Employees' Provident Fund.
7. Situation arising out of the continued treatment of Punjab as a 'Disturbed Area' The situation arising out of damage caused by Floods due to heavy rains in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka
8. Situation arising out of shortage of LPG in the country
9. Spread of encephalitis in the country and steps taken by the government
10. The situation arising out of the inaction on the part of government to solve the problems being faced by the residents of Delhi due to massive demolition drive
11. Need to strengthen the panchayat's financially
12. The situation arising out of continued rise in the prices of essential commodities (After hearing the members, the Speaker converted the Calling Attention Motion into Short Duration Discussion under Rule 193 and announced that the same would be taken up on 29th August, 2007).
13. Situation arising out of the proposed formation of Salem Railway Division by bifurcating Palghat Railway Division and steps taken by the Government in this regard.
14. Sale of spurious drugs in the country causing serious health hazards
15. Situation arising out of subsidence of land in entire coal belt in Asansol, Jharia and Raniganj

16. Re-examine the Employees Provident Fund Scheme implemented from 16.11.1995 in the light of recommendations of the 6th Pay Commission.
17. Situation arising out of the management of IDBI against their employees by changing service conditions and suspending and transferring employees, thereby violating the RBI Act and steps taken in this regard.
18. Situation arising out of large scale retrenchment, lay-offs, wage cuts and withdrawal of statutory benefits of workers in organized and unorganized sectors in the country.

The debates during the Calling Attention Motion in the 14th Lok Sabha were acrimonious and there was frequent exchange of arguments between the ruling and the opposition parties. Party lines were amply evident and the opposition used the opportunity to criticize government policies and actions. There were frequent interruption during this time and the Speaker had to adjourn the House due unruly behavior of the members.

### 4.8 Discussions under Rule 377

Discussion under Rule 377 of the Rules of Procedure provides members of the Lok Sabha an opportunity to debate on those issues which cannot be raised either under the Question Hour, Calling Attention Motion, Resolution or Short Duration Discussion. These Discussions allow members, with the permission of the Speaker, to raise and debate unlisted matters. There is no written procedural requirement. Discussions under Rule 377 are of recent origin and began to be used regularly from the sixth Lok Sabha onwards. Since then they have gained in popularity (see Table )

Interestingly, the sample study indicates that this procedural mechanism has been used more frequently by members of ruling party than that of the opposition. Only a third of the participants who raised an issue under Rule 377 were that of the opposition. Further, the study has revealed that majority of the issues raised under 377 are financial in nature demanding allocation of resources to special interest groups or constituents that the MP represents. MPs of smaller state and regional political parties make greater use this device than larger national parties.

There are two reasons for the growing popularity of this mechanism, both amongst the ruling and the opposition Party MPs. First, it allows members, particularly those of the opposition, to speak to a crisis or an issue with immediate repercussions. Second, it

allows members to represent their constituencies and gain some media coverage in age of live telecast of parliamentary proceedings. Thirdly, the free-floating format has made it popular amongst MPs.

Table 4.7

**Matters Raised Under Rule 377**

| Lok Sabha | No of matters raised | Time Hrs- ins | per cent of time |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fifth Lok Sabha | N.A | N.A | N.A |
| Sixth Lok Sabha | 829 | 43.56 | 2.51 |
| Seventh Lok Sabha | 3134 | 103.22 | 3.19 |
| Eighth Lok Sabha | 3205 | 79.32 | 2.46 |
| Ninth Lok Sabha | - | 16.15 | 2.14 |
| Tenth Lok Sabha | 2063 | 46.17 | 1.83 |
| Eleventh Lok Sabha | 628 | 16.09 | 1.98 |
| Twelfth Lok Sabha | 667 | 11.12 | 2.06 |
| Thirteenth Lok Sabha | 2944 | NA | NA |
| Fourteenth Lok Sabha | 3485 | 21.39 | 1.19 |

Source: *Parliament of India, Sixth to Twelfth Lok Sabha: A Study*, (Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, 1971 1977, 1979, 1985, 1991, 1992, 1997, 2000, 2004, 2009).

Table 4.8

**Participation of Opposition Members in Discussions under Rule 377**

| Dates(day/month) | Session | No of days | No of matters discussed under 377 | No. Of participants | No of Participants from the Opposition | Party Affiliation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 23/8, 18/8, 17/8, 21/7, 12/7 | Monsoon Session, 2004 | 5 | 66 | 66 | 20 | 15 BJP, 2 SS, 2 BJD, 1 JDU, 13 INC, 7 LF |
| 22/12, 15/12, 9/12, 7/12, 30/11 | Winter Session, 2005 | 5 | 47 | 47 | 9 | 7 BJP, 1SS, 1 BJD, 15 INC, 6 LF |
| 17/3, 14/3, 10/3, 6/3, 28/2 | Budget Session, | 5 | 76 | 76 | 23 | 19 BJP,2 SHS,2 BJD, 1 SAD,19 INC ,8LF |

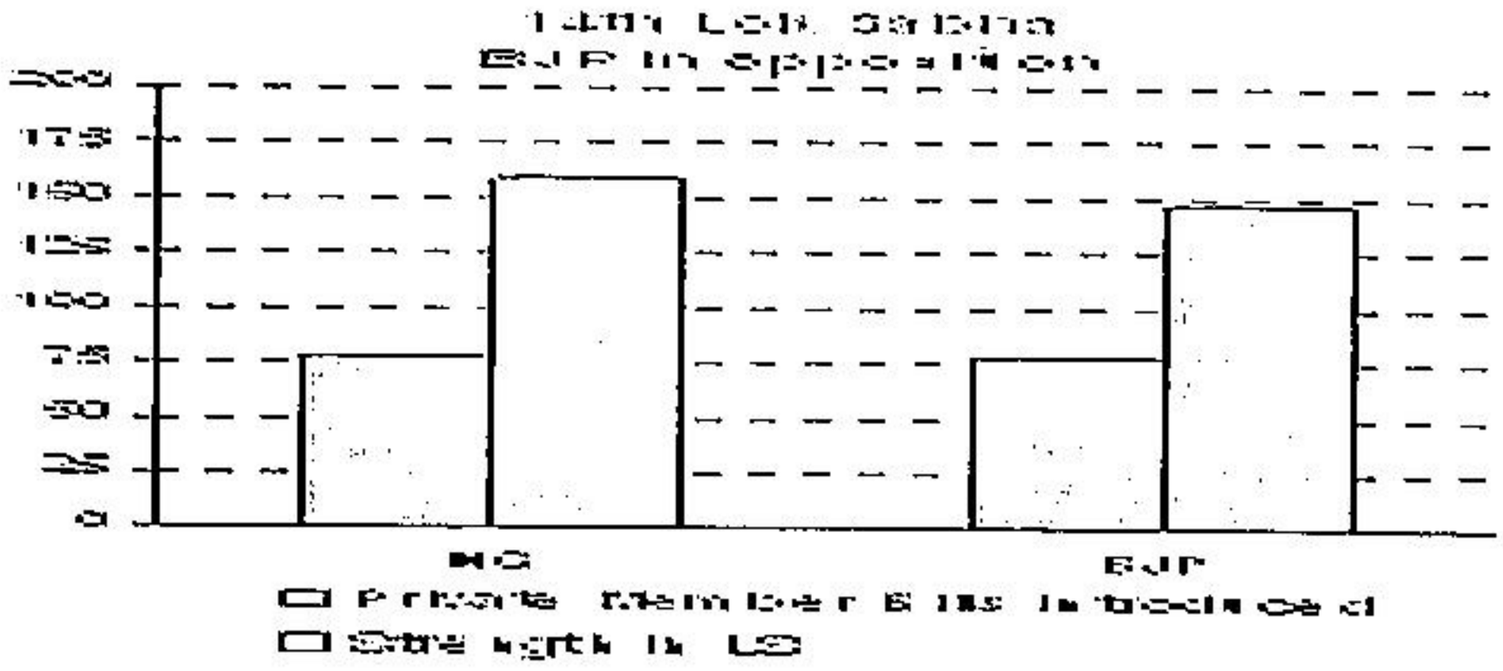
| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2006 | | | | | |
| 6/9, 24/8, 20/8, 16/8, 14/8 | Monsoon Session, 2007 | 5 | 57 | 57 | 24 | 18 BJP, 2 JDU, 1 TDP, 1BJD, 1SS, |
| 24/4, 22/4, 21/4,13/3, 29/2 | Budget Session, 2008 | 5 | 49 | 49 | 22 | 15BJP,2 BJD 1JDU,1IFDP, 2 SHS,1TDP,8INC, 4LF |
| 26/2, 25/2, 20/2, 19/2, 18/2 | Winter Session, 2009 | 5 | 40 | 40 | 10 | 10 BJP, 3 LF,1 INC |

Source: Lok Sabha Debates, (Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, 2004-2009)

The growing popularity of discussions under 377 highlights the importance of the opposition as negotiator between the constituents and the government. However, they have robbed the opposition the opportunity to exercise its accountability function

## 4.9 Private Members Bills and Resolutions

Although the government initiates most of the legislation, private members can introduce bills. During the second Lok Sabha, 194 Private Members Bills were introduced, and only two were passed. In the 14th Lok Sabha as many as 308 Private Members Bills were initiated. Only 14 of these were discussed and none was recommended to any parliamentary committee or passed. About 15 hours were spent in the discussion of Private Members Bills. 93 of these bills were introduced by the MPs of the opposition, while the BJP alone introduced 76 of these 93 bills. Interestingly, only 14 members of the BJP participated in the Private Members business, while five members of Shiv Sena participated in the same. However, the BJP while in the opposition introduced far fewer number of bills than that of the Congress when it was in the opposition. In the thirteenth Lok Sabha, 342 bills were introduced and 17 were discussed. Nearly 30 per cent of these bills in the 14th Lok Sabha sought to bring about constitutional amendments which cannot be accomplished without a special majority.




The paradox is that despite no hope of being passed, the opposition members have shown growing keenness to introduce. This indicates an interest amongst the opposition members to participate in the legislative process. However, private members bills have been non starters in Indian parliament. Only 14 private members bills have been passed to date and the government has not shown interest in accepting these legislative initiatives. Thus, there is very little encouragement to take initiatives in Parliament that are independent of party approval. Some have argued that procedural impediments are the principal obstacle to Private Members' Bills. Only two and a half hours are set aside each week that Parliament is in session to discuss Private Members' Bills. it appears that the institution of private members' bills is being used by the opposition for making symbolic statements.

Resolutions

Discussion of Resolutions forms an integral and important part of Lok Sabha proceedings. Resolutions, introduced both by the government and private members of the Lok Sabha enable the House to perform three broad functions. In the first place, it enables MPs to give recommendations and suggestions to the government. Important policy initiatives may, therefore, emerge out of such resolutions. Second, it allows a member to express his opinion, convey a message or request action on a matter of public importance. Herein, a resolution introduced and discussed in the Lok Sabha allows members of the House to approve or disapprove of governmental policies. In

this capacity, the House exercises control over government activities and enforces accountability. At the same time, resolutions also enable members to represent the opinion of various groups that have ensured their election to the House. As a device that facilitates deliberations, by which the Lok Sabha makes definite views known on specific issues and makes formal recommendations, resolutions occupy a prominent place in the deliberations of the House. It is vital to note that the government is not bound by a resolution and they cannot be passed unless they are supported by the government, like any other bill. However, a resolution withdrawn after getting an assurance from the government is almost as effective as those passed.

In the second Lok Sabha as many as 132 Private Members Resolutions were moved of which 35 were discussed. They included subjects such as formation of linguistic states, introduction of military training, appointment of committees for family planning, abolition of second chamber, monopoly of foreign trade, nationalization of banks, improvement of sports, issue of Tibetan refugees, etc.

In the 14th Lok Sabha, 21 such motions were discussed either fully or partly. Of these five of them were of BJP, 4 of CPI and three each of AGP and RJD. Nearly 33 hours constituting 2 percent of the floor time was spent in discussing private members resolution. The issues discussed ranged from food security, compulsory education children, correcting regional imbalances occurring due to political differences, reserving seats for women members in parliament, providing financial assistance, etc.

**Table 4.9**

**Private Members Resolution in the Lok Sabha**

| Lok Sabha | Private Members Resolution | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | A | N | W | DN |
| 1st | 48 | 9 | 24 | 11 | 4 |
| 2nd | 66 | 1 | 35 | 29 | 1 |
| 3rd | 78 | 8 | 28 | 23 | 19 |
| 4th | 46 | 5 | 23 | 7 | 11 |
| 5th | 55 | 4 | 18 | 15 | 18 |
| 6th | 25 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 8 |
| 7th | 39 | 1 | 16 | 8 | 14 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8th | 29 | 0 | 7 | 7 | 15 |
| 9th | 8 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| 10th | 30 | 0 | 6 | 8 | 16 |
| 11th | 7 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 4 |
| 12th | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| 13th | 18 | 0 | 1 | 11 | 6 |
| 14th | 20 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 12 |

Key-M-Moved, A- Adopted, DN-Discussion Not concluded, N-Negativated, W- Withdrawn
Source: *Parliament of India, Fifth to Twelfth Lok Sabha: A Study*, (Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, 1971, 1977, 1979, 1985, 1991, 1992, 1997,1999, 2000, 2004).

During the debates on all such matters, the opposition was united and tried to force the government to accept it. Both in the Second and 14th Lok Sabha, majority of these resolutions were of public interest and there was no party bias evident. However, Private Members Bills and Resolutions have been a non starter. The government's attitude towards them has been unfavorable. The government is unwilling to support a Private Member's Resolution, notwithstanding its merit. Whenever they have been adopted it has been with substantial alterations to it. Moreover, Ministers did not take part in debates in Private Members Resolution and many times the opposition has had to address empty treasury benches and on some occasions, the House has had to be adjourned for lack of quorum. Secondly, the lack of time has proved to a significant dampeners and has prevented the opposition from introducing bills and resolution. Only two and half Hours every week is set aside for private members business. The opposition members too have lost interest in it due to government apathy.

## 4.10 Adjournment Motion

An important mechanism of ensuring administrative accountability is the Adjournment Motion. A popular device, the Adjournment Motion is used by MPs with considerable frequency. The main objective of the Adjournment Motion is to draw the attention of the government to a matter of urgent public importance. It relates to the conduct of the government and is in the nature of a criticism of governmental action, whether of a ministry as a whole or the action of an individual minister who has misused the discretionary power vested upon him by a statute. It aims at ensuring conduct of governmental duties in accordance with laws as laid down in the Constitution.

By its very nature, the Adjournment Motion is in the nature of an interruption in the normal proceedings of the House. It is not a mechanism for exercising day to day control and may be utilized by the opposition to raise a discussion on matters of urgent public importance at a short notice. If allowed, a debate takes place on the matter immediately. It gives the opposition an opportunity to bring out instances of governmental acts of omission. It is therefore, regarded as one of the most potent devices for ensuring governmental accountability. The debates on the motion are often very heated with accusation and counter accusations by members of both ruling and the opposition parties.

The Speakers of the House have been very strict in allowing a discussion under this mechanism. In the second Lok Sabha, nearly 502 notices of adjournment motion were sought to be introduced of which only six were admitted. The Lok Sabha Secretariat does not provide data with regard to time spent on Adjournment motions in the second Lok Sabha. During the period of random sample study, 11 adjournment motions were sought to be introduced. However, only one was admitted. Following are some of the Adjournment Motions that were sought to be admitted in the House:

1. Satyagraha campaign in Chandigarh in protest against the failure of Union Government to solve language problem in Punjab
2. Outbreak of Gastroenteritis in Delhi
3. Lay off of workers
4. Breakdown of Constitutional machinery in Pondicherry
5. Explosion in Asansol
6. Incident in Chinese Consulate in Bombay
7. Bomb Explosion in Jama Masjid in Delhi
8. Essential Service Maintenance Act
9. Spread of Tetanus

Most of these Adjournment Motions were on serious law and order issues. In all on an average six members participated in the discussions. Nearly three to four MPs of the opposition parties participated in the discussion on the Adjournment Motion. The minister concerned or even the Prime Minister participated in the discussion. The debates were short, precise and to the point. In some cases there were heated exchanges between the members of ruling and the opposition parties and in some cases interruption too.

In the 14th Lok Sabha, seven notices of Adjournment Motion were admitted and discussed by the House. These motions dealt with substantive issues

1. Dismissal of elected government Shri Manohar Parikkar, Chief Minister of Goa by the Governor of the State
2. Failure of the government to protect the eastern borders of our country against massive illegal immigration from Bangladesh, described by the Supreme Court of India, in a Judgment, as nothing short of external aggression.
3. The central government's failure to take action against and individuals allegedly Involved as non-contractual beneficiaries of the United Nations 'Oil for Food Programme' in Iraq, as reported in the report of the United Nations' Independent Inquiry Committee (Volcker Committee) and its efforts to cover up these serious flaws
4. Failure of Indian government to take adequate security measures to protect the lives of citizens in the border areas as evident by the recent killing of 32 persons in Doda and Udhampur districts on May 1, 2006 and killing of two persons by grenade attack on a political dharna in Doda on May 13, 2006
5. Failure of the government to maintain internal security and in particular deal with maintain of terrorist menace in the country.
6. Failure of the government to deal with terrorist violence, especially in the wake of bomb blast in Hyderabad.

About 37 hours was spent in discussing these motions. All these Adjournment Motions were introduced by L.K. Advani, the leader of the opposition and the principal opposition party in the Lok Sabha. In one instance, when Mr. Braj Kishore Tripathi was named as the first mover of the motion, he requested the Speaker to let L.K Advani move the motion, as the latter had also given notice for similar motion.

As can be seen from the list, most of the adjournment motion dealt with issues of threat to national security and law and order problems. A study of the Adjournment Motions reveals that the opposition members severely criticized the government for its inability to perform its primary duty, namely protection of life and liberty of the citizens. The debate was held along party lines and the members of the opposition were scathing in their criticism of the government. The government led by the senior Ministers defended its position. However, the opposition failed of providing any concrete constructive suggestion on any of the issues being discussed.

A comparative estimate of the Adjournment Motions in the second and the 14th Lok Sabha reveals that there has been no significant change in the oppositions desire to use

this procedural mechanism. However, given the precedent, the Speakers have granted permission to use this devise only in rare instances. In the earlier Houses, the opposition MPs sought to raise matters of economic and financial interest. However, in the later parliaments, the opposition regarded security related issues as a major area of governmental attention. Lesser number of MPs participated in these proceedings in the second Lok Sabha. Party lines were clearly evident during Adjournment Motions in both the Houses, but while the second House debated issues intensely, in the 14th House an element of animosity could not be ruled out. There was much grandstanding, frequent interruption, unruly behavior, and lack of discipline during such discussions in the 14th Lok Sabha, which was completely absent earlier.

## 4.11 Attendance

The regularity with which the opposition members attend the sessions of Parliament is indication, at least in some measure of the seriousness that they accord to their parliamentary work. Regular attendance of members alone can enable them to perform their duties and contributes to both the efficiency of the Parliament and efficacy of the opposition. There are no data available with regard to attendance of members of second Lok Sabha. However, similar records of the 14th Lok Sabha members are available on the public domain (see Table 4.10).

Table 4.10

| Attendence | Opposition Members | Party Affiliation |
|---|---|---|
| 0-25% | 4 | 3 BJP, 1 AITC |
| 25-50 Percent | 23 | 20, BJP, 1BJD, 2SS |
| 50-75 Percent | 81 | 66 BJP, 2 JD(U), 8 SS,5BJD |
| 75 Percent and above | 54 | 41BJP, 5BJD,6JD(U), 2SS |

Source: PRS Legislative Research, New Delhi.

These records indicate that majority of the opposition members had attendance of fifty percent or more. This indicates that members of the opposition were serious about their parliamentary work. MPs often complained that they were expected to be in their constituency even during the sessions of the parliament by their constituents and

balancing between parliamentary work and constituency work was a difficult task. Despite this, the opposition members were regular in attending the Parliament. However, it may be pointed out that these statistics are derived from parliamentary attendance registers, and it is not uncommon for MPs to leave the House after attending the first hour of Parliamentary work. This argument finds further credence from the fact that Speakers have adjourned the House for lack of quorum (25 percent of the House membership) or have overlooked the quorum requirements.

## 4.12 Conclusion

The opposition is the constituent part of the Parliament and has the maximum incentive to use the statutory powers of Parliament to keep the government under check. As mentioned earlier, political commentators opine that the functions of the Parliament are in effect performed by the opposition. In a parliamentary democracy, this becomes even more important as the opportunities of ensuring accountability are limited. While elections offer a direct opportunity of ensuring governmental accountability, parliament and public opinion aired through the media are indirect instrumentalities of ensuring governmental accountability. Elections, is a direct means of choosing candidates rather than that of exercising accountability. The media lacks sanctioning powers and, a free market economy is governed more by private than public interest. Hence, the Parliament provides the best means of governmental accountability. Hence, it is logical to expect the opposition to use the statutory powers of Parliament to further its ends.

The opposition's action within and outside the Parliament is guided by the consideration that it can provide a credible alternative in the next general election. But our study indicates that the opposition in the early post independence days harbored little hope of replacing the party in power. Hence, as mentioned in Chapter 2, they were concerned with pressurizing the government to concede to their demands either through use of statutory powers of the parliament or through influencing members of ruling party outside the parliament.

It appears that the opposition MPs recognized the Parliament as a democratic space to negotiate with the government. They participated in parliamentary proceedings in large numbers and with great enthusiasm. The government too appeared to be keen on

accommodating opposition concerns. This resulted in better parliamentary efficiency reflected in better utilization of parliamentary time (more sessions and sittings, larger number of bills passed), greater extraction of information (Question Hour) and better participation in legislative work (Private members Bills).

Recognized parliamentary opposition, as it emerged, used the Parliament more to question the credibility of governments rather than to exercise control for the sake of good governance. They were more interested in exposing the omissions in governmental actions with a view to discredit it. This explains the increased interest of members of the opposition of later Lok Sabha to rely on procedural devices such as Calling Attention Motion and Adjournment Motion. Even Private Members Resolutions and Question Hour are used more to criticize governmental policies and action rather than to make suggestions. This trend has accentuated in recent times (since Ninth Lok Sabha), as governments are coalitional in nature.

Yet another significant feature of oppositional participation in parliamentary proceedings was the desire of the members to raise matters of local importance. Though this trend existed even in the second Lok Sabha, the MPs of the opposition adopted a more national approach even while dealing with local issues. In later Parliaments however, even members of national political parties were keen on representing local issues and local perspectives. This may be explained in terms of democratization of the polity, which among other factors such as rise of regional political parties, decline of accommodative nature of Congress and change of leadership contributed in the emergence of large number of political parties. As a result, there was intense competition between parties and the success of the candidates is proportionate to his/her ability to represent popular concerns. This has had an impact on the nature of the Lok Sabha. The Lok Sabha has emerged as a representative body rather than a supervisory or deliberative body.

The increased participation of members in the representative function of the Lok Sabha may be attributed to several factors. Perhaps the most influential factor has been the broadening of Indian democracy. There has been a significant increase in electoral participation since 1960s. Each representative represents a larger and a wider cross-section of people. In addition, the responsibility of representing minority opinion rests solely on the opposition members. It is imperative upon the opposition MPs legislator to

represent the interests of the largest cross section to ensure re election and return to power. Thus, the legislator, out of political compulsions, is forced to give greater importance to representative functions.

Second, the performance of representative functions ensures immediate results. Widespread coverage of parliamentary proceedings, both by the print media and by the audiovisual media has meant that individual legislators of opposition, raise important public issues to gain immediate public exposure. In an intensely competitive polity, such publicity is important in seeking re election.

The emphasis on representative function by all political parties within the Lok Sabha, however, has jeopardized the functioning of the parliament as a national legislative body and as a body that exercises uncompromising scrutiny over the activities of the government.

The changing composition of the opposition in later Lok Sabhas (which today consists mainly of generalists as mentioned earlier) has also contributed to this kind of prioritizing. Opposition MPs lack the expertise that is needed to deal with complicated law making process. Political parties too, do not train their members to discuss or deliberate on important national or international issues. Members develop expertise on the basis of their experience and interests. Moreover, the government too is not open to accepting opposition suggestions as this may give an edge to opposition parties in an intensely competitive environment.

The Lok Sabha has therefore emerged as a body that provides the political elite of the country a theatrical space that allows active contestation and competitive bargaining. Unlike its precedents, it is no longer an urban body consisting of enlightened elite, discussing national issues with a limited and audience. Each individual MP in the Lok Sabha today attempts to maximize his gains. In the process, the Lok Sabha has becomes a national stage opposition MPs in particular attempt to showcase their political acumen. The media coverage given to the proceedings of the Lok Sabha only add to the drama.[13]

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[13] Interview with Prof. Yadav Yogendra on 22 March, 2005 in New Delhi.

Finally, coalition governments faced with imminent collapse have also contributed to the emphasis on controlling the executive through representation. Members of the opposition, faced with impending dissolutions, attempt to be electorally prepared. Thus, they try to be in public memory constantly. This can best be done by representing local issues, exposing the government and seeking concessions for respective constituencies.

In sum, parliamentary democracy has undergone significant changes. The opposition, showcases these changes. The opposition has become more representative and the Lok Sabha provides them the political space and its procedures political mechanisms to achieve their ends. In the process, the political efficiency of the Lok Sabha has suffered. However, the first phase of development has converted the Lok Sabha from being the elite, urban and efficient machinery that was superimposed on the Indian political scenario to a truly representative body. The demand to efficiently administer all its function can only make the opposition more effective and Lok Sabha more efficient. This hopefully will be the second phase of the maturing of Indian parliamentary democracy.

The effectiveness of the opposition within the parliament depends upon the party composition of Parliament. Where governments have a comfortable majority, there is not much that the opposition can do to censure government. In this sense, both the Nehru led Congress government in 1957-62 period and Manmohan Singh led UPA government (2004 -09) enjoyed comfortable majorities. The opposition in both these Houses did not have a real chance of censuring the government.

# Chapter 5

# Summary and Conclusion

5.1 Democracy, by its very definition, presupposes the existence of multiplicity of views and opinions, freedom of association and the right to choice through proper institutional mechanism. The opposition, in a democracy provides the most important institutional means to accommodate dissenting opinions through peaceful methods. This makes the opposition an integral part of democratic political system. In fact, a democratic political system is inconceivable in the absence of an effective and legal opposition.

In a parliamentary democracy, the parliament, which is at the centre of legislative process, is controlled by the executive that has the unquestioned support of the majority party/parties in the legislature. In such a system, the opposition provides the most effective check on the arbitrariness of the executive. It is also a mechanism for ensuring the accountability of the executive and representing minority opinion, which the government may ignore. The efficacy of opposition within the parliament determines the effectiveness of the legislature as a supervisory and representative body. The study of the opposition within the parliament is therefore, both important and interesting.

The present research was an attempt to look into the role of parliamentary opposition in India by comparing the opposition in the second and 14$^{th}$ Lok Sabha in terms three important dimensions:

- Changes in the strength of the opposition
- Changes in the socio- economic composition of opposition MPs
- Changes in the utilization of parliamentary procedures by MPs of opposition parties

The research was carried out on the basis of the hypothesis that an examination of changes in these three areas would help in understanding the contribution of opposition to parliamentary efficiency. It may be pointed out here that the term efficiency does not refer to the output of the legislature in terms of number and quality of enactments. Nor

does efficacy imply a study of effectiveness of the legislative enactments and its outcome in terms of public goods delivered. Efficiency, in the context of the present research refers to the extent to which the MPs of opposition have utilized the procedures of parliament to perform functions that are traditionally attributed to the legislature namely, legislation, supervision, oversight, representation, and accountability.

## 5.2 Growth of Parliamentary Opposition in India

A brief overview of the development of the opposition may provide us with the historical basis for the study of the role of parliamentary opposition. As discussed in Chapter 1, the British rule gradually introduced institutions of modern governance such as elected legislature, independent judiciary, responsible government, etc, through a series of administrative reforms. Though these institutions remained grossly undemocratic during the period of British rule in India and the ultimate powers on Indian affairs resided with the British government, it laid the foundation for a modern system of institutional governance.

India became a sovereign republic in 1950 and adopted a parliamentary system of government, inspired by the British. The Constitution of independent India converted a large, heterogeneous mass of people from subjects of the Empire to citizens of independent India and enfranchised them.[1] A hierarchically divided society that shared relations of superiority and subordination was transformed into an egalitarian political community. Equally important was the fact that the project of democracy introduced the principle of equality for the first time in modern history in a feudal socio- economic system. Thus, the Indian Constitution created the basis for an inclusive political system. At the same time, it made room for an interventionist state, which was conceived as an instrument of ensuring political equality and social justice by a visionary and charismatic leadership.

The parliament occupies a position of eminence in India's constitutional structure in view of the fact that it is directly elected by the people through a system of universal

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[1] W.H. Morris Jones, *Government and Politics of India* (B.I Publications, Delhi, 1974), pp. 246-247.

adult suffrage. It has the power to hold the government accountable occasionally as well as on a day-to-day basis though a series of parliamentary procedures. Further, it is the only forum that provides an opportunity for exhaustive discussion of proposed enactments, governmental policies, and actions, issues - local, regional, national, and international. Above all, it provides the government and opposition an opportunity to communicate with electorate on a regular basis. Political parties constituted an important part of this system of governance, though they found no direct reference in the Constitution of India. [2]

For nearly two decades after independence, state power was concentrated in the Indian National Congress (INC) led by the charismatic leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru. The Congress party, made a gradual transition from a movement to a political party. It carried forward the advantages of both public support and governmental experience from the pre independence period into the post independence era. Apart from the INC, the Socialist Party (SP), the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party (KMPP), the Communist Party of India (CPI), and the Bharatiya Jan Sangh (BJS) were other important parties that contested the first General Elections in 1952. Both the Socialists and Communists had functioned within the Congress party prior to independence and had their network in almost all the states. However, non-Congress parties were a divided force and failed to provide any significant challenge to the INC. This was evident from the verdict of the elections in which INC won nearly three quarters of seats (364 out of 489 seats) with 44 percent of vote share. Universal adult franchise, single ballot system, and simple majority system worked to the disadvantage of these parties. Further, they failed to make electoral alignment to improve their electoral prospects. Thus, despite a significant share of votes (32 percent), the seat share of these parties remained low and that confined them to the fringes of the political process.

In the second and the third general election too, the Congress continued to poll over 45 percent of votes and win over 350 seats (371 and 361 in the second and third Lok Sabha). Though there was a marginal improvement in both the number of candidates put up by the opposition parties and seats won, the overall picture was one of Congress

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[2]Independent India had a well-established network of parties ranging from extreme left to extreme. In the first General elections held in 1952, 1874 candidates belonging to 53 political parties contested for 489 Lok Sabha seats. (Source: Election Commission of India, *key Highlights of General Elections, 1951 The First Lok Sabha*, (New Delhi, 1951), pp. 1-3, 6-7

dominance. The INC enjoyed exclusive control over governmental power. Such was the dominance of the Congress that there was no recognized the opposition party in the Lok Sabha until 1970.

This 'one party dominant system' that was different from any of the established democracies of the world had multiple advantages.[3] First, the organizational framework of the Congress party helped the process of rapid political mobilization through its network of Pradesh Congress *Samiti's* and District Congress. Second, it created a system of accommodation of both the established traditional elite and emerging modern elite.[4] While the modern educated, English speaking professional classes dominated the political process at the national level, the regional elite belonging to the intermediary castes dominated state level politics. The accommodative nature of the Congress provided room for the opposition and dissent within the party itself. Therefore, despite the absence of a strong and viable alternative to Congress, the political system did not suffer from lack of opposing views. Third, it provided stability to the political process within the framework of liberal democracy. Finally, it allowed a newly independent country to grapple with the problems of development and integration.[5]

Single party dominance however, made the task of the opposition both more important and more challenging. The opposition parties in the early post independence period had to carry out a twofold struggle. First, they were entrusted with the onerous responsibility of controlling the arbitrariness of the government, which had almost complete control of enormous powers of an interventionist state. Second, the non-Congress parties had to fight for their own survival in light of Congress dominance of legislative bodies both at the Centre and at the state. It is in the light of this that the changing role of opposition needs to be understood.

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[3] Sanjukta Banerji Bhattacharya, 'The Nature of the Opposition in India's Parliamentary Democracy" in M.Manisha and Sharmila Mitra Deb (ed) *Indian Democracy Problems and Prospect*, (Anthem, New Delhi, 2009), p.117

[4] For details see:
Rajni Kothari, *Form and Substance in Indian Politics*, EPW, vol 13, no.22, ( Bombay)3rd June 1961
Rajni Kothari, *The Congress System in India*, Asian Survey, Vol 4, no 12 December, 1964
W. H. Morris Jones, *Dominance and Dissent* in Rodney Barker (ed); Studies in the Opposition; (Macmillan, London, 1977) ; p.280-295,James Manor ; *Party and Party System in* India; Zoya Hasan ( ed) Parties and Party Politics in India; (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000); p434.

[5] Banerji Bhattacharya, n. 3, p.

The emergence of parliamentary opposition in Independent India may be traced to the group formed by K.T. Shah, which consisted of 14 members. It was mainly a corrective group, as it did not have basic difference with the Congress. During the first three years of the first Parliament, attempts were made by the members of the opposition such as A. K Gopalan of the CPI, S.P Mukherjee of the BJS, Acharya J.B Kriplani of the SP, Kalidas Nag and Jaipal Singh to form a united leadership. They failed in their primary task, but succeeded in bringing heterogeneous groups together. The speaker allowed A.K. Gopalan of the Communist Party to occupy the chair of the leaders of the opposition, which he did till the split of the Communist party in 1967.

It was only after the demise of Nehru that parliamentary opposition began to gain strength in India. By 1967, when the elections to the fourth Lok Sabha was held, Indian democracy had passed its stage of nascence. Nearly two decades of practicing democracy had increased political mobilization, especially amongst the under privileged and hitherto disenfranchised.[6] The euphoria of independence was replaced by the economics of development. It had generated new expectations, which the Congress had failed to fulfill.

The 1967 elections were important not just because of the diminution of the Congress but also because it increased the strength of the non-Congress parties nearly two fold (from 81 to 202). Non-Congress national parties such as the BJS (35 seats), the Swantantra Party (44 seats) the CPI (23 seats), CPM (19 seats) SSP (23 seats) and PSP (13 seats) together polled as much votes (35.5 per cent) as the Congress (40.5 percent). The index of the opposition unity also increased.[7] It was during the fourth Lok Sabha that India got its first recognized opposition party.[8] Interestingly, it was the Congress party in

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[6]Yogendra Yadav, "Understanding the Second Democratic Upsurge : Trends of Bahujan Participation in Electoral Politics of 1990s" in Francine Frankel, Zoya Hasan, Rajeev Bhargav, Balveer Arora (eds), *Transforming India: Social and Political Dynamics of Democracy* (OUP, New Delhi, 2001), p. 121.
Also see...
Aditya Nigam, Yogendra Yadav, "Electoral Politics in Indian States, 1989-1999", *Economic and Political Weekly*, (Bombay), vol. 34, nos. 34 and 35, August 21-28, pp. 2391-2392.
[7]The index of the opposition Unity in 1967 was 67 per cent. It was 71 per cent in 1971. (Source: Pronoy Roy, Ashok Lahiri, David Butler (eds) India Decides (Books and Things, New Delhi, 1996)
[8]This was in accordance with the principle that 3 qualifications were necessary for a group to be recognized as party in the parliament.1) A party should be in a position to keep the House i.e. the number of members should not be less than the quorum of 10% fixed to constitute the sittings of the House. 2) It should have unity of ideology and programme and, 3) It should have an organization both within and outside the House. (Source Notes on Parliamentary uses, Customs and Convention; (Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, 1951); p.59

Parliament (Organization) that had split from the Congress as a reaction against the appointment of Indira Gandhi as the Prime Minister following the death of Lal Bahadur Shastri that was recognized as the official opposition.[9] The Congress (O) tried to unite all the parties in the opposition under a joint front. Both within and outside the Parliament, the opposition parties carried out vigorous campaigns putting the government of Indira Gandhi to severe test. However, it was not ideology or programmatic policies that gave rise to the opposition politics. Rather, it was anti Congressism that brought them together.

The opposition tried to build further on this unity in the 1971 election. A joint front consisting of Congress (O), Jan Sangh, Swatantra Party, and SSP was forged to resist Congress (I). This was perhaps the first attempt by the opposition parties to forge a pre poll alliance. However, the alliance was incomplete as the four constituent elements of the alliance put up separate candidates in many constituencies, thereby cutting into each other's support base. In the 1971 elections, the Congress polled nearly 46 percent votes and won 352, while the parties of the grand alliance polled 34 percent votes but won only 36 seats (BJS won 22, PSP 2, SSP 3 and Swatantra (8 seats). Each of these parties contested the others at least in 76 constituencies. Despite their poor performance, the opposition parties continued with their vigorous campaigns both within and outside the parliament.

Several attempts were made to unseat Mrs. Gandhi. Jayprakash Narayan, an eminent Gandhian and sarvodaya leader, who was leading a movement by students in Bihar against corruption, threatened to start a nationwide agitation if Mrs. Gandhi did not follow the orders of the Judiciary.[10] He was supported by the entire Parliamentary opposition. Faced with growing economic crisis, a strident opposition and nation wide

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[9] In the year 1967, the Indian National Congress (INC) split into two parties; Congress (I) and Congress (O), on account of the differences between Indira Gandhi, the then Information and Broadcasting Minister and a significant second generation leadership of the INC and the older members of the Congress like K. Kamaraj, Devraj Urs. For a detailed discussion of the Congress party from 1947-1968 and succession problems within it see...
Stanley Kochanek, *The Congress Party in India* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1968).
Michael Brecher, *Nehru's Mantle: the Politics of Succession in India* (Frederick . A . Praeger, New York, 1966); A. M. Zaidi, *The Great Upheaval, 69-72 (*Oriental, New Delhi, 1972*); Michael Brecher,* "Succession in India: 'The Routinization of Political Change', *Asian Survey*, (Berkeley, July 1967), vol. 7, pp. 423-43; Mahendra Pratap Singh, *The Split in a Predominant Party: The Indian National Congress in 1969* (Abhinav, New Delhi, 1981); *Times of India* (Bombay), 18 September, 1971.
[10] The Allahabad High court declared Indira Gandhi's election in 1971 as void due to use of corrupt practices during campaigning.

agitations and strikes, Mrs. Gandhi declared emergencey on 25th June 1975.[11] The opposition failed to prevent the imposition of the emergency. A Large number of the opposition leaders were arrested or under threat of arrest. Jayaprakash Narayan, Morarji Deasi and other the opposition leaders numbering around 676 were imprisoned.[12] Parliamentary proceedings took place in the absence of a meaningful opposition since many of them did not particpate in its proceedings. The opposition strength in Parliament was reduced because of the arrest of several of their members. In a list of parliamentarians in jail in 14 countries, compiled by Amnesty International on April 6 1976, India had the highest number (59) behind bars.[13] Many were kept under surveillance.[14] All political parties and individuals opposed to the government were put under severe constraints.

In the 1977 elections, that followed the revoking of emergency, the non Congress parties (BJS, Congress (O), BLD and SP) came together under the banner of Janata Party.They won 298 of the 542 seats. The first non Congress party government was formed in 1977; 30 years after India's emergence. The Congress for the first time became the opposition in Parliament and Y.B. Chavan became the leader of the the opposition. However, as mentioned earlier, Jananta Party lacked a coherent ideology or programme. It was bound together by a single factor, namely opposition to Congress. The Janata party split with Morarji Desai as the leader of one group and Charan Singh as the leader of another. The Morarji Desai government lost the confidence of the Lok Sabha and Charan Singh formed

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[11] *Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), 13 June 1975, *Indian Express* (Delhi), 16 June 1975. *Amrit Bazar Patrika* (Calcutta), 16 June 1975; Norman.D.Palmer "The Crisis of Emergency in India", *Orbis* (Philadelphia) Vol. 19. Summer 1975; Richard Park, "Political Crisis In India", *Asian Survey* (University of California, Berkeley),vol. 115, no. 1, 1975; Sudipta Kaviraj, "Indira Gandhi and Indian Politics", *Economic and Political Weekly* (Bombay), Vol. 21, no. 38 and 39, 1986; Rajni Kothari, "Year of Turmoil", *Seminar* ( New Delhi), Vol. 185, , January, 1975; Bipin Chandra, Mridula Mukherjee, and Aditya Mukherjee (eds.), "The JP Movement and the Emergency: Indian Democracy Tested", in *India after Independence* (Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1999), pp. 246-260; Kuldeep Nayar, 1977, *The Judgement: Inside Story of the Emergency in India* (Oxford University Press , 1977, New Delhi) B. Puri, 1995 "*Fuller Views of Emergency*", in "Economic and Political Weekly", ( Bombay), vol. 28, no. , 15 July, 1995, pp. 1736-44; David Selbourne, *An Eye to India: The Unmasking of a Tyranny* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1977)

[12] Granville Austin, *Working A Democratic Constitution- A History of Indian Experience* (Oxford University Press (OUP), New Delhi, 1999), p.309

[13] *Asia Media, The Indian Emergency Experience of 1975-1977,* http://venus.unive.it/aslamed/eventi/schede/Emergency.html retrieved on 13th April, 2006

[14] Shah Commission Report, vol. 1, p.30 cited in Venkat Iyer, *The Indian Experience* (Butterworths, New Delhi, 2000). pp. 150-155

the government with the support of the Congress Party. The lines of distinction between the ruling party and the opposition got blurred during this period with neither a stable government nor a permanent opposition.

In the election that followed (1979) the Congress returned to power with a thumping majoriry and the Janata Party which was for a brief period India's ruling party returned to its former position as parliamentary opposition. Non Congress parties together could not win more tha 167 seats, of which the left parties won 53 seats. In the 1984 elections, too the Congress won a thumping majority riding on the wave of sympathy factor following the assaination of Indira Gandhi. This was the weakest opposition (105 seats) second only to the the opposition in the first Lok Sabha.

The period of Congress domination ended by 1989. In the period between 1989-2009 no single party has won a clear majority in the Parliament. What has emerged most clearly during this period is the rise of parties with regional base. The Telegu Desam Partry (TDP), The Asam Gana Parishad (AGP), the DMK, Samajwadi Party (SP), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Lok Jan Shakti Party, Biju Janata Dal (BJD), Trinamool Congress (TMC), were some of the parties with regional support base that became prominent at different points of time in this period. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Congress and the Left parties have formed three major blocks and the regional political parties have coalesed around these to form all successive government.

More significantly, the Congress or the BJP have formed the principal party in opposition in the enitre period starting from 1989. In the ninth Lok Sabha, some of these regional parties together with Janata Dal formed the National Front government with outside support from the BJP and Left parties. In the eleventh Lok Sabha too, non Congress, non BJP parties came together under the banner of United Front and formed the government following the failure of BJP led by Atal Behari Vajpayee to prove his majority in the Lok Sabha. While the Congress party led a minority government in Tenth Lok Sabha, it led United Progressive Allaince (UPA) government with the support of the left parties in the 14th Lok Sabha. The BJP was the principal opposition party with 120 and 138 seats respectively. The 12th and 13th Lok Sabha were both dominated by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) led by the BJP. The Congress with 141 and 114 seats respectively was the leading the opposition party in Parliament.

## 5.3 Characterstics of Parliamentary Opposition in India

The broad overview of the growth of the opposition indicates certain trends in the development of the opposition in India. In the first place, the emergence of a parliamentary opposition was a late development in India. Although, a number of other political parties came into existence they lacked the historical background, the organizational structure and the leadership that the Congress had. This made the Congress, the party of great symbolic importance. [15] It was recognized as the chief party, representing historical consensus and enjoying continual basis of support and trust.[16] Moreover, the accomodative nature of the Congress party – a legacy of the nationalist movement that required unity against British imperialism- together with the charismatic leadership of the Nehru created conditions that were not favourable to the emergence of a strong opposition.[17] In addition, the Congress undermined the opposition by taking over its policies programmes and issues. Thus for instance in 1955, it undermined the left parties by resolving to establish a socialist pattern of society.

Secondly, despite the dominace of the Congress party the political system did not suffer due to lack of opposition. The absence of a strong opposition was made good by functional equivalent - plurality and factionalism within the ruling party. As Clemen Spiess, a political analyist points out, the factions within the dominant party performed the watchdog role of keeping the executive accountable.[18] These factions existed at all levels of the Congress party- the village, district and nation. They interacted in a continuous process of "pressure adjustment and accomodation" to provide a "bulit in opposition." [19] The existance of a large number of factions within the Congress served the purpose of counter acting each other, as each faction held the other at check. This meant that the opposition to the government came from within the organization of the

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[15] Morris Jones, n. 1,p.217
[16] Rajni Kothari, The Congress System in India, *Asian survey*, vol.4 No.12, December 1964 (University of California, Berkeley) , pp. 116-117
[17] Banerjee Bhattacharya,n.3, p.118
[18] Clemens Spiess, *Democracy and Party System in Developing Countries; A Comparative Study of India and South Africa*, (Routledge, Oxon, 2009), p.217
[19] Robert Hardgrave, Stanley Kocheneck, *India- Government and Politics in a Developing Nation*, (Thompson Wadsworth, Boston, 2000), p.271

party itself. Conflict between the government and organizational wing of party virtually constituted a two party system.[20]

Thirdly, parliamentary opposition as it emerged in India was organized but dispersed. It was not confined to two major parties, but a series of parties that covered a wide variety of ideology and orientations. In the second Lok Sabha, the opposition consisted primarily of two types of groups:

1. Regional groups/parties whose special interest assumed greater significance once the larger goal of independence was achieved.
2. Splinter groups of the Congress party which could not be accommodated within the Congress fold on account of variety of reasons ranging from ideological differences to personality clashes.
3. Apart from these, there was the existence of factions within the Congress party that formed powerful opposition. Though these could not be categorized as parliamentary opposition, the primary opposition to the government came from these factions

Parliamentary opposition continues to be dispersed even today. However, nature of diffusion is different. The opposition now comprises mainly of:

1. National parties: The BJP and Congress that have been principal opposition party or leading ruling party, alternatively since 1999
2. Regional parties: Regional political parties that are centered around a particular local/regional issue (language, identity, interest) or a personality who has assumed the status of cult figure. Regional political parties have emerged as dominat players offering support to national parties to form government or the opposition at the Centre. The national parties, in turn have collaborated with the regional parties at state level where they are junior partners
3. Coalition partners: The dynamics of coalition politics has meant that the opposition to the government, also comes from coalition partners. In the 14th Lok Sabha for instance, left parties that were part of the UPA coalition till 2008, criticized the government on almost all major issues and finally withdrew support from the

[20] Hardgrave, n. 19, p.217

government in 2008 on account of disagreement on Indo- US nuclear deal. Similarly, the Dravida Munetra Kazagham (DMK) and Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) that were a part of ruling coalition have also been critical of gevernment from time to time.

4. Finally, as in the pre 1989 period in the era of coalition politics too factions within the Political parties (ruling) also formed a part of unofficial opposition.

Parliamentary opposition in India emerged out of the desire to break the Congress dominance. Anti Congressism served a glue that bound together opposition parties. Thus for instance, the SP, the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party (KMPP) and the Forward Block (FB) came together in 1955 to form the Praja Socialist Party (PSP), which was the largest, opposition group within the Parliament, until it split in 1955. With increasing strength of non-Congress parties and emergence of BJP as a significant alternative to the Congress party, the anti Congress rhetoric has been on the wane. However, for a short time it was replaced by anti-BJP sentiment. This led to the emergence of non BJP, non Congress, United Front government in 1998. Four sub-trends may be deduced from this

a) Parliamentary opposition in India lacked an independent philosophy. The differences between the opposition parties were shaped around the Congress party- its ability to implement policies and programmes. Whenever there existed independent ideas/policies, the Congress undermined them by accomodating them within its fold.
b) The opposition seem to be rooted in negative sentiments that oppose the dominance of a particular party or person. Positive philosophy and ideology based on alternative policies and programmes that constitutes the basis of what is traditionally refered to as 'constructive opposition' was conspicuosly absent.
c) The opposition has not been able to offer concrete choice to the electorate. Hence, local and sometimes divisive issues have become basis of electoral choice, even at the national level
d) Perhaps as a consequence of the above factors, the non-Congress parties have not been able to extend their influence and have remained constricted in geographical expanse. Thus, BJS and its successor, the BJP continue to be dominant largely in Hindi heartland, the left wins most of its seats from West

Bengal, Tripura and Kerela and regional political parties have confined bases that extends to only a few states.

It is also evident that the small size of the early opposition, which in many ways recognized Nehru as the most important figure of Indian politics was unable to percieve itself as an alternative government or government in waiting. While both a right wing and a left wing existed, neither were able to provide a viable alternative to the Congress. Nor were they able to unite together in any competition against the Congress party, atleast at the national level. W.H.Morris Jones, an eminent scholar of Indian politics, has described the Indian political system as "dominance coexisting with competition but without a trace of alternation because the opposition political parties had little hope of preventing the Congress from obtaining sizeable majorities in the legislature."[21] This situation, however, has undergone significant transformation.

By the 1990s, the challenges to the functioning of the opposition arose not on account of its inferior strength but, from the fractitious nature of Indian polity. A plurality of parties along regional, lingustic and caste lines has resulted in fragmentaion of votes amonst parties in a first past the post system. As mentioned earlier, since 1989 none of the political parties, have gained a majority in the Parliament. Moreover, national political parties have lost ground to regional parties. The vote share of national parties has declined by 13 percent from 1952-2004, while that of state parties has increased by 20 percent in the same period. The number of state parties stands at 44 in 2004 as compared to four in 1957. Thus, apart from the Congress and the BJP none of the political parties of the 14th Lok Sabha for instance, can truly claim to be national. Even the left political parties have managed to secure seats mainly from West Bengal, Kerela and Tripura. The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) has a significant presence in Maharastra and BSP and SP in Uttar Pradesh. Other parties such as the BJD, the DMK and AIADMK,the TDP, the AGP, the SAD and Shiv Sena (SS) are dominant in the states from which they contest elections. As a result, both the government and the opposition have been coalitional in nature with a lack of permanency in either side. There is intense political competition among national parties to secure the support of regional

[21] Morris Jones in Rodney Barker (ed), n.4, p.287

allies. At the same time, there is serious contest amongst the regional parties themselves to be a part of the winning coalition.

The growing importance of state parties in national politics has meant that each party, whether in government or opposition has adopted policies of collaboration or competition or both depending on the time and circumstances. Thus, for instance, the left political parties supported the Congress at the national level, but were opposed to it in West Bengal. Similarly, the BJP, which was the principal opposition party has serious differences with the JD(U) yet, they continue to be the part of the same the opposition coalition. Futher, smaller regional parties may be on either side of the political dispensation depending on circumstances. Thus for instance, the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (JKNC) was a part of NDA in 1999 and UPA government from 2004. When the Samajwadi Party thereatened to walkout of the UPA coalition, the BSP readily replaced it.

Irrespective of their position in government-opposition continuum, smaller national and state parties have often criticized the government to maintain their distict identity.Thus to cite an example, while supporting the Congress led UPA government in 2004, the left parties criticized its policies both inside and outside the Parliament, till they withdrew support to the government in 2008. The problem becomes even more acute in the absence of ideological or even programmatic distiction between parties. Neither the NDA, nor the UPA government pursued policies in domestic and international sphere that were substantially different from each other.

Finally, there have emerged multiple sites of contest between government and opposition; public opinion, the parliament, the government and above all the units of the federation have all become vital sites of competition. The latter in paticular have assumed immense significance and the dynamics of state politics determined the source and the nature of the opposition, irrespective party position within the Lok Sabha.

## 5.4 Early Opposition Leadership & its Understanding of Parliament

The ability of the opposition to function as an independent mechanism of accountability is a product of drive energy and political imagination and worldview of political leadership. The nature of political leadership in turn, depends on a number of factors

such as the process of political recruitment, permeability of political institutions, political culture and level of political mobilization.

Our study of the second and 14th Lok Sabha indicates a change in the socio-economic composition of political elite. It is important to arrive at a contextual understanding of the socio- economic complexion of opposition leadership.

Though a democratic constitution that guaranteed universal suffrage had been adopted in 1950, electoral particpation in the second General Elections held in 1957 was low. The national electoral turnout was as low as 46 percent. The participation of marginalized groups such as women, Schedule Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) was lower than the national average on account of low levels of literacy and political mobilization amongst them. Further, the number of political parties that contested the elections was also small. Thus, only four political parties that had polled three percent of votes in the first General Elections of 1952 elections were recognized as national political parties. In all, 1519 candidates belonging to 15 state and national parties contested the elections. (See Table 5.1). Majority of the candiates belonged to the Congress. The non Congress parties (national and state) together fielded almost as many candidates as the Congress, of which a large number forfeited their deposits. [22]Other than the INC, the CPI was the only political party to field candidates from almost all the states. The PSP and BJS which were the other national parties fielded candiates only from the northern and western states. State partes such as Gantantra Parishad and Scheduled Castes Federation (SCF) were confined to a few states. Thus, the parliamentary leadership of the opposition parties was drawn from a small pool of nationalist elite belonging to an array of national and state parties. A study of the composition of opposition leadership in Lok Sabha in terms of age, experience, education, and occupation undertaken Chapter 3 reflects its narrow base.

A majority of the opposition MPs were middle aged, though not old, i.e in the age group of 35 to 45 years and a very small percentage of these members had some legislative experience at the national, provincial or local level. Most of the MPs, whether of Congress or non-Congress parties, were recent entrants to competitive politics. This was inevitable

[22] Out of the 919 candidates who contested the 1957 elections, 419 belonged to the INC and 528 belonged to non Congress state and national parties, while 428 contested as independents. 168 candidates (32 percent) belonging to non Congress parties forfeited their deposit. (Source: Statistical Report (1957) of on General Elections to the Second Lok Sabha, (Election Commission of India, New Delhi,1957)

in view recent origin of Indian republic, which accorded limited possibility of gaining legislative experince. However, large number of the members of both ruling and opposition parties had been part of the nationalist struggle or active politics for some time.

Table 5. 1

Number and Types of Parties in Elections, 1957 and 2004

| Year | Type of party | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | National parties | State parties | Red unrecognized parties |
| 1957 | 4 | 11 | - |
| 2004 | 6 | 50 | 173 |

Source: Statistical Report of on General Elections to Lok Sabha; Second and Fourteenth, (Election Commission of India, New Delhi, 1957,2004)

Figure 5. 1

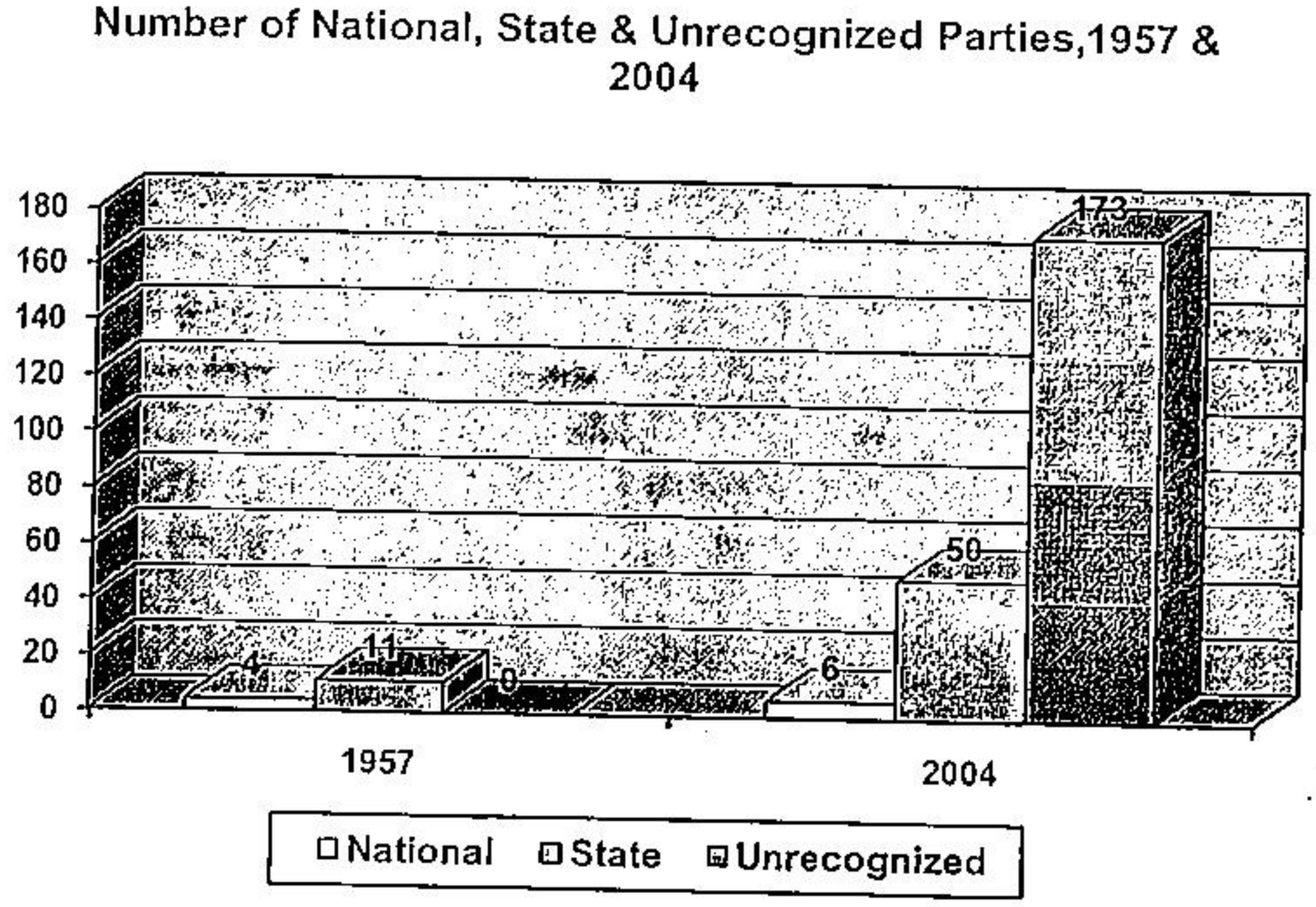

Table 5.2

Contestants in Lok Sabha Elections According to Types of Parties; 1957 & 2004

| Year | Type of party | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | National party Candidates | State Party Candidates | Registered unrecognized parties Candidates | Indps |
| 1957 | 919 | 119 | - | 481 |
| 2004 | 1351 | 801 | 898 | 2385 |

Source: Election Commission of India, Statistical Report of on General Elections to Lok Sabha; Second and Fourteenth Lok Sabha, (1957, 2004, New Delhi)

A distinctive feature of the composition of parliamentary opposition during this period was the preponderance of urban, educated, professional, members. Most of the MPs who represented the opposition in the Lok Sabha and participated on its behalf in parliamentary proceedings on a regular basis were urban, educated, practicing professionals such as, lawyers, journalists, or writers belonging mainly to left or left to the centre parties. Members such as Aurobindo Ghosal (FB), Hem Barua (PSP), Sadhan Gupta (CPI), K.T. Tangamani (CPI), T.B. Vittal Rao (CPI), A.B. Vajpayee (BJS) were all practicing lawyers or journalists. These members gave the small opposition a distinctive niche owing to their personal charisma, oratory skills, and legislative acumen within the Parliament. This made parliamentary opposition conspicuous, notwithstanding its size. Further, the national outlook and perspective of the major non-Congress parties such as the CPI, the FB, and the PSP gave the opposition a national character and a secular orientation.

Members of state parties and independents in the second Lok Sabha who participated in questioning government policies and actions such as, Jaipal Singh, (Jharkhand Party), D.A Katti (SCF), Braj Raj Singh (independent), too were highly educated, urban professionals. Majority of them were English speaking and only a few spoke in Hindi. This indicates, at least partially the dominance of educated, upper classes in the second Lok Sabha.

Given their small size, fragmented nature, and limted support base, the opposition in the second Lok Sabha acted more like pressure groups trying to influence "like minded groups within the ruling party" to perform their parliamentary functions. The opposition perceived the Parliament as

- democratic space of influencing and pressurizing the government to concede to their demands
- an important forum of communication between the government and opposition on the one hand, and between the Congress and non Congress parties on the other hand.
- An effective mechanism of seeking information from the government

Members of the opposition accorded importance to the parliamentary institution and utlized it to criticize government policies and action, supervise the executive, question the leadership and ocasionally participate in the decision making process through constructive suggestion. This gave a sense of efficacy to the opposition and efficiency to the parliamentary institution. Further, it accorded the opposition a significance that was disproprtionate to its size.[23]

The democratic disposition of Nehru also contributed to the 'perceived efficacy' of the opposition. Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of the country recognized the importance of a vigorous opposition in a democracy. He wrote in one of the letters to a Congress Chief Minister

> Indeed an effective opposition is desirable from many points of view. It may, and does, delay the disposal of matters... But, nevertheless, it tends to keeps the government and the majority party wide awake and help in the political education of the country[24]

Nehru, himself gave serious importance to parliamentary work, attended its sessions regularly, heard the opposing views, and occasionally conceded to their demands. On many occasions he influenced (and even reprimanded) his cabinet colleagues to share information, which was sought by opposition members, with the House.[25] This gave the

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[23]*Rajni Kothari*, 'India: Oppositions in a *Consensual Polity*', in Robert A. Dahl (ed.) *Regimes and Oppositions*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973),p.326

[24] S.H. Rudolph and I. Rudolph,, 'Congress Learns to Lose: From one Party Dominant System to Multi Party system' *Political Transition in Dominant Party System-Learning to Lose*, (Routeledge, New York, 2008), p.24

[25] Sankar Ghose, *Jawaharlal Nehru-A Biography*, (Allied Publishers, 1993, New Delhi), p.224

small and splintered opposition a sense of efficacy. [26]Interestingly, Jayaprakash Narayan, a prominent Gandhian and socialist appealed to Nehru before the 1957 elections to help in building a strong opposition.[27]

Together, the eagerness of the opposition members to participate in the political process through the medium of parliamentary work and the democratic disposition of the ruling party and its leadership lent an impression of effecectiveness to the early Indian parliament nothwitstanding its small size, splintered nature and limited influence.

## 5.5 New Leadership: Redefining Traditional Roles and Functions?

The 1990s, ushered significant changes in Indian polity. Three of these changes may be identified. First, the Indian economy was 'opened up' as the state began to limit its role in economy giving way to the operation of market forces. Second, there was significant increase in political participation brought about large number of regional political parties that mobilized people on the lines of caste, ethnicity, religion and region.[28]Thirdly, this period was marked by the emergence of coalition politics at the national level. These developments had far reaching impact on political institutions.

In the fourteenth Lok Sabha election held in 2004, voter turnout was as high as 62 percent. Participation amongst the hitherto marginalized (SC, ST, women) was also as high as that of the national average.[29] This increase in political participation brought about a plurality in the political process manifested in the form of a larger number of candidates and political parties contesting elections (See table 5.1 and 5.2). Consequently, there has also been an increase in the number of parties represented in the Lok Sabha. (See Table 5.1 and 5.2) The most obvious feature of the 14th Lok Sabha when compared to the second was the presence of large number of MPs from opposition parties. Their presence increased to 184 members of which the BJP alone had 140 members.

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[26] Ghose, n. 23, p.224
[27] Ghose, n. 23, p.224
[28] For details see, Yadav, n.6
[29] Suhas Palhikar, Sanjay Kumar, 'Participatory Norms: How Broad Based is it?' in *Economic and Political Weekly* ( Mumbai) Vol. 39, No. 51, Dec. 18-24, 2.004, pp. 5412-5425

The increase in numerical strength of the opposition was accompanied by improvement in representative character of the opposition, at least in existential terms. The opposition in the 14th Lok Sabha consisted of older, more experienced, local level leaders who were from diverse professions- the products of democratization of Indian polity. As seen Chapter 3, majority of the members were in the upper-middle age group of 46-55. Nearly three-fourths of the members of opposition had some experience of legislative politics, and a large number of them had made a transition from state legislature to national legislature.

Further, elite and the urban composition of the opposition has undergone a change. The presence of urban, professional classes declined from 28 percent in 1957, to nearly 20 per cent in 2004. A large majority of members (60 percent) were involved in agriculture or were full time social political workers. They were, however, economically affluent, as is evident from their high educational qualification and assets.

An important outcome of the change in the socio-economic composition of the Lok Sabha was the emergence to a new leadership of both the government and the opposition. A large number of these members of the new political elite had made gradual progress from grass root level politics to national politics through the democratic process. Many of them belonged to state parties, or have considerable legislative experience at state level. It may therefore be assumed reasonably that they brought the influence of state politics to national level. Their view of politics and political institutions is fundamentally different from their predecessors, who were imbued with political idealism inspired by the west and nationalist spirit.

According to one political analyst, "the growth in the number of such leaders has meant that the agenda of politics is being rewritten since these are mainly political entrepreneurs who see politics as the new economic opportunity."[30] Some scholars

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[30] Peter Ronal De Souza, "Election, Parties and Democracy in India", in Peter Ronal De Souza (ed), *Contemporary India-Transition* ( Sage publications, New Delhi, 2001), p. 215

opine that they have brought a new level of cynicism to politics.[31] This new political leadership has reinterpreted the functions of the Parliament and role of representatives. They have brought about changes in the goals, techniques and strategies of the opposition within the parliament.

In the first place, the new political leadership construed the role opposition in essentially negative terms, as being necessarily combative and adversarial. It may be pointed out here that the ideology of parties does not provide the political leadership with a guide to formulation of policies and programmes for governance. Thus, the Congress ideology is a mix of secularism, liberalism, democracy and equality, which may be described as ways of thinking rather than an ideology; the BJP espouse the cause of Hindu Nationalism, but when in power did little to implement its Hindu nationalist ideology.[32]The left parties have a definite ideology, but their functioning in the state reveals considerable dilution of their ideology. The ideology of regional political parties is either negative or too limited to provide any considerable basis of governance. In the absence of a strong ideological underpinning or alternative programmes - the leadership of opposition party/parties have confined themselves to questioning credibility of the government with a view to bring it down. The Parliament is construed as the adversarial space for the above-mentioned purpose rather than that of deliberative clarity.

Accordingly, the new parliamentary opposition has redefined the functions of the Parliament to include not mere law making, deliberation, executive oversight and accountability, but also to

a. Provide necessary numbers that are needed for government formation
b. Correct imbalances born out of the functioning of competitive politics
c. Provide the theatrical space for adversarial combat rather than of deliberative clarity
d. Launch an attack on government policy and its implementation.
e. Represent local interest and constituency concerns and
f. Communicate with the electorate

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[31] Pratap Bhanu Mehta quoted in M.Manisha, The Lok Sabha and Democratic Governance: A Critical study of Parliamentary Democracy in India; 1977-1998, Unpublished Thesis, (Jadavpur University, Kolkata, 2007)
[32] Banerji Bhattacharya, n.3, p.123

Thirdly, while its known that the MPs of regional parties oriented themselves towards local issues and constituency concerns owing to the insular nature of such parties and their limited support base,[33] the present research indicates that even members of national parties emphasized on raising mostly matters of local importance. Discussion on national issues have also been interpreted from local standponts and parliamentary proceedures of all types are used to achieve this end. This development indicates the intensity of political competition not only in the electoral arena but also within the Parliament. Political parties and their leadership are involved in a constant struggle to maximise their political gains. Their distinctive identity is essential to them for the purpose of political bargaining within the coalition. It also helps in representing their constituency that returns them to office. Thus,each representative whether of national or of state party; ruling or opposition has desires to 'act as representative.' The parliament provides the political space to raise the 'rhetoric of opposition' for twin purposes of political manouveouting and representation. As a result, the opposition has become rhetorical in charcter and national legislature has been localized in terms of its oulook, perspective and performance.

The excessive emphasis on local concerns has other repurcursions too. It has meant that neither the ruling party nor the opposition parties have been able to focus on dynamic national policies at home or abroad. Even when the opposition did focus on national issues, particularly those relating to foreign affairs, defense, communication, etc, it has done so with a view to 'impugn the credibility of the government rather than to provide a alternative to them'.[34] This has jeopardized the process of consesus building.

Fourthly, the new political elite has brought about a qualitative change in the manner in which parliamentary functions, particularly those of seeking information and demanding better allocation of resources, are performed. The study of the parliamentary functioning in Chapter 4 shows that the opposition leadership in the 14th Lok Sabha was far more aggressive/ authoritative than its counterpart in the second Lok Sabha. This may be a product of greater confidence born out of superior strength of the opposition, or change in the socio-economic composition of members of the opposition or changes in legislative

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[33] Banerji Bhattacharya, n.3, pp.123-125

[34] Devesh Kapur, Pratap Bhanu Mehta, *The Indian Parliament as an Institution of Accountability*, Paper Number 23(UNRISD, Geneva, January 2006), p.10

skills and efficiency of the opposition MPs, or all of them. In the absence of strong ideological underpinnings, both the ruling and opposition parties claim credit for any progress made. The intense competition between political parties, where small margin can make a difference between victory and defeat has meant that the spirit of accommodation between the government and opposition that existed in the second Lok Sabha has been jeopardized. Hence, while the members of opposition have insisted on instant fulfillment of their demands, the government has been slow in conceding to them. This has often led to parliamentary impasse, unparliamentarily behavior and disruptive activities.

Finally, the new opposition leadership has evolved new techniques and modes of address in order to maximize political gains. More recently parliamentary opposition has relied on two main methods to achieve its ends:

- Discussions and arguments during debates, and
- Interruptions of parliamentary proceedings

The former is used by the opposition to put forth its demands. The intent however, is to create pressure on the government to conceed to such demands, almost instantly.The accepatnce or rejection of such demands are determined not by the merit of the issue, but by political compulsions of either side.

A second technique-disruption of parliamentary proceeding- is strategically planned by individual parliamentarians or political parties to discredit the government and to expose its failures in full public view. It may be pointed out the MPs use legislative time and proceedings not merely to address the government, but the larger audience, namely the electorate. Members of Parliament conceded that such disruptions had two advantages. First it gave instant recognition and recall value to a member parliament. Second, it created a façade of active participation and representation. At the institutional level, it created an impression of active and vigorous opposition. This explains the increase in time lost due to adjournment, disruptions, etc.

## 5.6 Changing Nature of Oppositions Parliamentary Discourse: Its Impact on Legislative Efficiency

There have been significant changes in both socio-political composition of opposition and they style of functiong in the period since independence. This, in turn has had an impact

on the efficiency of the Parliament as a national political institution and the nature of political discourse within the Parliament.

As mentioned in the previous sections MPs of opposition in early post independent parlaiment utilized parliamentary time to seek information,pressurize the government to grant concessions for their constituencies and to retain their independent existence. Hence, the opposition in the parliament showed great interest in parliamentary procedures such as Question Hour, Legislative Discussions, Financial Discussions, etc. Thus, as many as 20 questions, on an average, were answered during Question Hour in the second Lok Sabha. Nearly 50 MPs particpated in such discussions and a large majority of them were from opposition parties. The number of partipants in discussions under other parliamentary proceedures was also high.

Such discussions were mainly on economic and developmental issues such as setting up public sector enterprises, development of infrastructure, public spending, and the like. The tone and tenor of the debates were serious and to the point, with both the government and opposition paying serious attention to it. The language of discussion was almost always English and the humour, when used was 'urbane' indicating the urban bias of the opposition members.

Further, the opposition leadership was keen on discussing issues of that interesed eduacted, upper middle classes such as higher eduaction, employment, infrastructure development, foreign affairs, and the like. Thus for instance, large number of questions related to the establishment or functioning of public sector units and railways. Local issues were also couched in language of national discourse. This gave a distictly national character to the political discourse within the parliament nd even outside.

However, although large number of issues were discussed these debates could not be categorized as exhaustive in their nature. The opposition sought information, but did not initiate serious discussions on issues once the information was received. This was especially true of Question Hour. The opposition's criticism of government policies lacked conviction, though not content. Moreover, they almost always ended in consensus between the two. This may be attributed to both the lack of experience on the part of members and lack of numerical strength of opposition parties to challenge the government.

Parliamentary opposition, as it has evolved used the Parliament more to impugn the credibility of governments and to demand concessions for constituencies rather than to exercise accountability. This explains the increased interest of the opposition to rely on procedural devices such as Calling Attention Motion, Adjournment Motion and Discussions under Rule 377. Nearly half of the matters raised during Zero Hour were related to constituency matters. Even Private Members, Resolutions and Question Hour which offers opposition an opportunity to suggest alternative were used more to criticize governmental policies and action rather than to make suggestions. This trend has accentuated in recent times (since Ninth Lok Sabha).

Moreover, like in the second Lok Sabha, in the 14th Lok Sabha too, the debates were not exhaustive. A study of the legislative proceedings indicates that discussions on economic issues were technical, precise and to the point. The language used was almost always English. The discussions on most non-economic issues and those of a general nature were adversarial, animated and resembled electoral speeches. These discussions elicited maximum participation from the members. They were mostly in Hindi and party lines were clearly drawn in such discussions. The language of such debates was usually Hindi. There were two main purposes of such discussions. Firstly, they aimed at criticizing the government policies and actions. Secondly, they were directed towards achieving public attention through media. Thus, disruptions of parliamentary proceedings during discussions on such issues were not only more frequent but appeared to have been strategically planned to gain media attention.

In sum, the nature of discussions-the number and variety of issues raised, the language and idioms used, the modes of address - all indicate a desire amongst the members to 'act as representatives'. Interestingly, members of national parties make a more conscious effort in this direction than that of regional parties in view of the intense political competition.

A significant development of parliamentary functioning in recent years has been the general lack of interest of members in parliamentary work. This is evident from the declining sittings, increased wastage of time etc. This lack of interest in day to day accountability function of parliament may be understood in the context of the changing perception about the role of parliament, which has been discussed above. In addition this lack of interest may also be atrributed to a number of structural reasons. First,

legislative work does not have any direct electoral pay-off. In the early post independence years, when parliament was dominated by lawyer- politicians, the parliamentary leadership of the parties valued legislative acumen and oratorical skills which served as a mechanism to work up through party ranks. As the composition of the Lok Sabha changed and full time political workers and agriculturists assumed prominence, parties seemed to have placed lesser premium on legislative skills. Most political party representatives agreed that legislative acumen was only one of the factors that determined the choice of party candidate during elections. There are two reasons for this. One is the fact that some of the most technically sophisticated parliamentarians are not necessarily electable as they do not enjoy popular support.[35] Second, legislative skills are not an important factor, even in the distribution of tickets to the Rajya Sabha the upper house of Parliament, which was considered a home to skilled and eminent professionals who might otherwise not be electable.

Second, the opposition parties are uninterested /unable to generate new information about government activities, through parliamentary procedures that could allow them to take the executive to task. This trend was in existence even in the immediate post independence period also. However, it has accentuated in more recent times. The lack of legislative time to elicit information through cumbersome parliamentary procedures may have contributed to this. In addition, the information generated through devices such as Question Hour may be technical in nature that prevents their usage in a manner that it may increase the political pay offs of the concerned parties. Thus, later Parliaments have been less interested in this format of information generation.

Third, as the opposition parties began to gain strength in the Lok Sabha and the chances of returning to power increased they tended to focus on issues judged to have significant immediate and visible political impact rather than on the day-to-day functioning of government. Thus, the opposition parties have focused more of their attention on political scandals such as financial scams, corruption cases and lapses in security. Within the ambit of Parliament, representing constituency concerns, or a demand for correcting imbalances that may have emerged due to the functioning of the political process, and the like provide a better possibility of maximizing political gains. The opposition has also relied on the use of unparliamentarily and obstructionist

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[35] Pratap Bhanu Mehta, Devesh Kapur, n.33,p.10

methods such as disrupting parliamentary work while demanding concessions for special interest groups, walkouts, walking to the well of the House, high decibel sloganeering, etc.

This in turn has had two major fallouts. First, parliamentary space meant for reasoned debates and discussion, scrutiny and accountability has not been utilized adequately. This has given an opportunity to other institutions, such as the media, that are not as democratic to usurp the space occupied by the Parliament. Second, the public perception of Parliament and the opposition has been construed in negative terms. Both these developments need greater understanding.

## 5.7 Parliamentary Efficiency and Role of Media

In a democracy, the media, (both audiovisual and print) creates public spaces by generating and circulating information relating to public interest. Conventionally, the media has been described as the 'watchdog' of democracy; its eyes and ears. It forms and sustains public agenda by generating information and informing the public. In the process, it nurtures critical rational reflection, debate and discussion on issues of public importance thereby contributing to the process of deepening democracy. But the critique of media is equally pervasive. Neil Postman, an eminent scholar, points out that media in general and television in particular stunts the critical faculty of thinking individuals.[36] Further, in formulating the "public agenda" the media is not completely independent. It is constrained by commercial interests. As a result, the agenda that it creates invariably becomes the media agenda and is preoccupied with either its own interest or its indoctrination. [37] Moreover, in a developing country, with low to medium level of literacy, the media often assumes the responsibility of rational thinking on the behalf of the citizenry. In the process, it shrinks public spaces and creates an "enactment of democracy."[38]

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[36] For details See: Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business,* (Heinman, London, 1986)
[37] Dipankar Sinha, 'Restyling Democracy: Main Stream Media And Public Space, Vis-à-vis Indian Television' in M.Manisha & Sharmila Mitra Deb (ed), *Indian Democracy: Problems and Prospect,* (Anthem Publishers, New Delhi, 2009), pp.129-137
[38] Sinha , n.36, pp. 129-130

Notwithstanding these drawbacks, the evolution of Indian media has had important repercussions on the functioning of Parliamentary opposition in India. The media may broadly be categorized as the print, the audiovisual media and the internet.

Print Media

In the early post independence period the print media (audiovisual media was absent) sourced its news from parliamentary proceedings. Several news items in almost all newspapers centered on speeches made by Members of Parliament in the House. The English language newspapers carried columns that encapsulated the major issues discussed in the House. These included not only speeches made by ministers but also discussions during Question Hour and short duration discussions. The argument put forth by both the government and the opposition was adequately covered. Further, editorials on policy decisions of the government analyzed the Government often providing much needed support to the opposition. The media therefore functioned as an extension of the parliament- a forum for rational debate.

However, since 1990s particularly since 2000 the print media has substantially reduced the coverage of the Parliamentary proceedings. While, policy announcements made by the government both inside and outside the parliament are widely reported by newspapers, speeches made by parliamentarians, especially those belonging to the opposition and "backbenchers" seldom find any mention. Moreover, much of the reporting about parliamentary proceedings relates to disruption of parliamentary work, loss of time and cost to the exchequer, etc.

It may also be pointed out that members of the opposition rely frequently on the media to raise questions during the Question Hour and Short Duration Discussion. While this was not altogether absent in the second Lok Sabha, its frequency has significantly increased in the later Lok Sabhas.

Audiovisual Media

The post 1990s has witnessed a significant proliferation of audiovisual media with the emergence of satellite television, 24 hour news channels as well as live proceedings of parliamentary proceedings and establishment of Lok Sabha TV.The audio visual media can broadly be divided into two categories:

a) State owned run Television Channels which include Doordarshan (DD) and Lok Sabha TV &

b) Private news Channels.

The state owned television channels began their broadcast with the aim of educating, informing and entertaining. They were conceived as an agent of an interventionist state imbued with developmental goals.[39] Their objectives of informing and educating coincided with the official version of the necessary precondition of nation building.[40]

The Lok Sabha TV, which began its telecast first on a weekly basis and then on a daily basis provides live coverage of proceeding within the parliament. The state owned media enjoyed two main advantages. First, their immense reach. Second, they enjoyed the advantage of being the first movers in their respective field. Both these factors made state owned television an important factor in the strategy formation of political parties and individual politicians. Live coverage of parliamentary proceedings brought the parliamentarians into direct contact of their constituents on a day-to-day basis. It may however be mentioned, that such a contact was virtual and involved only one way flow of communication through visual imagery.

The 1990s brought about significant changes in the Indian economy that came to be referred to as liberalization. In July 1991, Star TV, the first private satellite channel, made its entry into India. In the years that followed a large number of television channels began to broadcast their programmes. A large number of these were 24 hour news Channels. The proliferation of news channels offered ample to scope to discuss debate, rationalize, and supplement discussions on parliamentary proceedings and public issues that find resonance in the House.

However, both state owned DD and Lok Sabha TV as well as private satellite channels suffer from certain deficiencies in their coverage of parliamentary proceedings. Firstly, the state owned TV channels have adopted a top down approach whereby development is a one-way flow of information and expert opinion. In case of Lok Sabha TV it is in the form of live coverage of Lok Sabha proceeding. Such coverage is unmediated and continuous. The DD, through its news bulletins and news channels encapsulates the

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[39] Sinha, n.36, p.133
[40] Sinha, n.36, p.134; Also See:
P.C. Chatterjee, '*Braodcasting in India* ( Sage Publication, New Delhi, 1991)
Britta Ohm, Doordarshan, 'Representing a Nation State' in Brosius Christiane, Melissa Butcher (ed) *Image Journeys: Audio Visual Media and Cultural Change in India* (sage, New Delhi, 1999)

proceedings of the House during its sessions and follows it up with expert comments and panel discussions by eminent political leaders and party spokespersons. Both the Lok Sabha TV and DD do not provide any significant means of participation by the people or representatives of the people. Nor do they seek their contribution in formulating the agenda for discussion. The "publicness" of their agenda is therefore difficult to establish.

The private channels on the other hand are intermittent in their coverage of public issues, without much follow up action. Their choice of issues and method of discussion is governed by commercial interest. Hence, brevity, immediacy and action govern their programming content. Swaraj, leader of the opposition of the Fifteenth Lok Sabha pointed out that it was impossible for television channel to have discussions/ debates similar to one in the parliament on account of the lack of time and frequent interruptions.[41] They have also been criticized for reducing complex and multi layered issues to simplistic proportions. Further, they are targeted towards urban audiences and which is evident in their language, idioms and mode of address. They do not assist the critical thinking faculty of the individual but become judgmental in their approach. Fourthly, they generalize on public spaces and institutions. Thus, for instance, news coverage relating to the parliament is often related to the walkouts, disruptions and unparliamentarily behaviors within the House. In addition, politics is often personalized as an activity of select individuals and personalities.

The expansion of media (both state owned and private) in the post liberalization period has significantly affected the functioning of the opposition within the parliament. With expanded reach, the media in general and television in particular has usurped the space for discussion of national issues that had traditionally belonged to the parliament. It appears that while in the early post independence period, the parliament provided the primary site of discussion of public issues. The media supplemented such discussions by reporting on it and initiating subsequent interest on the matter. Since the 1990s, the site for contest has shifted from the parliament to media in general and television in particular with the parliament reinforcing the debate that the media has brought in the public domain. This may be explained in terms of two sets of factors

1) Changing character of the opposition in the Lok Sabha

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[41] Interview with Sushma Swaraj, September 26th , 2011 in New Delhi

2) The nature of information generated by the parliament and media

In the period 1952-1967 the opposition within the Lok Sabha consisted of mainly the English speaking, urban and professional elite with limited legislative experience. Majority of these members belonged to INC, while most of the opposition came from Communist parties. The opposition perceived the parliament as an essential medium of communication with the government. The socio- economic composition of the Lok Sabha and its national outlook made it suitable forum to discuss national issues.

By 1980s the composition of the Lok Sabha underwent significant changes. The new democratic membership of Lok Sabha began to show greater interest in representation of local interests and constituency level concerns. Thus, the Parliament did not generate substantial information that may be used by the media catering to the urban viewers. The government too, has been slow in sharing information with the Parliament. Often the media has been privy to information prior to it being shared by the government with the House. Thus, for instance, the media had information on the 2G spectrum two days prior to the CAG report being submitted in the parliament.[42] Moreover, the advent of internet has meant that almost all the bills and proposals that the government seeks to introduce is available on the public domain much before the parliamentary discussion on it begins. Political parties and their leadership articulate their views on all issues of national importance either through their website or though social networking sites. Hence, the dependency of media on Parliament for information has gradually declined

Political parties have responded to these developments with new strategies. Hence, on any discussion on foreign affairs, external relations, financial debates and legislative enactments, etc they have fielded their national leadership. Sushma Swaraj, currently leader of opposition points out that on important debates the political parties play significant role in the choice of participants to put forth the party position.[43] This however, is not the case with Question Hour or Short Duration Discussions. The articulate top level leadership of political parties including the party spokespersons and national level leaders of the party then discuss the same issues in Television studios.

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[42] Times of India (Mumbai) 26th November, 2010
[43] Sushma Swaraj,n.41

The middle level leadership of parties who constitute what may be referred to as "backbenchers' tried to benefit from live coverage of parliamentary proceedings brought by the Lok Sabha TV and news of DD and private channels during non prime time slots. They raise, mainly issues of regional and local importance that may have important repercussions on their electoral prospects. More importantly, they try to attract necessary media attention through disruption of parliamentary proceedings as a part of a well thought out strategy to remain in public memory.[44] As Rajnath Singh, a member of Parliament of BJP, points out that members of parliament disrupt the proceedings to send a message to their voters that their concerns are being addressed.[45] However, the use of protest in form of disruption of parliamentary proceedings is not limited to the 'backbenchers' alone. The party elite too uses them to grab necessary public attention thorough the media. Sushma Swaraj observes that protests are logical when the government refuses to respond to the opposition demands.[46]

Two conclusions may be drawn from the above discussion. First, live coverage of parliamentary proceedings and emergence of private 24 hour news channels have shifted the site for political discussions on national issues from the parliament to the media, particularly the English language audio visual media. By the same token, the parliament has become a forum for raising local issues. As a result, the media has often supplanted the Parliament instead of supplementing it. Together the inability of the opposition to utilize the Parliament and inadequacies of the media (it is guided by commercial consideration) has resulted in a situation where rational discussion on substantive national and international issues has become a major casualty.

Secondly, the opposition's dependence on the media as a source of information and as a medium of communication between the representative and the electorate has increased disproportionately. The media on the other hand has created sources of information independent of Parliament and political parties.

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[44] Several scholars have pointed out that Parliamentary disruption are often a part of well thought out political strategy of the opposition
[45] Interview with Rajnath Sigh on 28th September, 2010, New Delhi
[46] Swaraj, n. 41

## 5.8 Conclusion

Parliamentary democracy in India has made vast strides in the last 63 years of existence. India has evolved its own model of parliamentary democracy which though inspired by the British and superimposed by an enlightened intelligentsia has developed indigenous roots that are unique.

The Indian constitution introduced the principle of political egalitarianisms in society that was characterized by plurality of region, religion, languages, caste and ethnicity resulted in democratization of polity and gradual transformation of almost all political institution. Each institution responded to these changes in the polity in a unique manner. The comparison of the role of parliamentary opposition in the second and the 14th Lok Sabha undertaken by the present study indicates the contour of these changes.

In the first place, parliamentary opposition has become numerically stronger. Unlike in the early post independence period, when the non-Congress parties merely provided a semblance of opposition since 1967, and more so, in the 1990s, the increase in the parliamentary strength of the opposition has given rise to substantive opposition. The opposition has effectively emerged as 'a government in waiting' and offers the possibility of an alternative government. In fact, non-Congress parties have formed government more than once in the post 1989 period. Thus, it appears that India is moving towards a two block system, one led by BJP and the other by the Congress, each of which is a coalition. These may be favourable developments in the context of Indian democracy and indicates a movement towards healthy democracy where there is alteration of power between parties.

However, the opposition in India has evolved certain distinctive features. Some of these may have a positive impact on the function of parliamentary democracy in India, while others may be of negative consequence. In the first place, the opposition in India is fragmented and diffused in nature. The roots of this may be traced to historical factors. First - the catch-all nature of the INC which accommodated almost every ideology from socialism, communism, secularism, nationalism and regionalism within its fold. This left very little maneuvering space for non-Congress political groups. Though the Communist

parties did have a distinct ideology, they were opposed to parliamentary democracy in the early post independence period. Later, however, they reconciled to parliamentary democracy and ideals of egalitarianism within the system of parliamentary democracy. However, the essential point of departure between Congress and non-Congress parties was based on either programmatic content of the party or personality of the individual who led the party. As the accommodative character of the Congress organizational machinery began to decline, non-Congress parties began to gain strength. However, personality rather than programs became the basis of party formation and political mobilization.

The plurality of Indian society contributed to the process of political fragmentation. Political parties that espoused local issues and grievance of a heterogeneous society gradually began to gain strength. This process gained momentum as more and more groups started making demands on the limited resources of the state, and the state failed to meet the expectations of newly enfranchised masses. While these parties contributed to the process of political democratization through mobilization of their distinct support base, they continued to be undemocratic in their organizational structure and insular in their nature. Often, they were centered around a particular person or issue and failed to sustain themselves once the personality or the issue ceased to exist.

The existence of large number of political parties- local, regional and national- intensified political competition. In the absence of ideological underpinnings negative philosophy such as anti- Congressism, anti-Hindu nationalism, casteism, linguism, regionalism became the basis of political mobilization. This found reflection in the nature and functioning of parliamentary opposition too. It gave rise to what may be referred to as 'adversarial politics'. Certain features of adversarial politics may be identified

- There exists no hard line of distinction between major political parties. The lines of distinction between government and opposition are also rather blurred.
- Opposition is based on procedural issues, matters of policy implementation and action rather than substantive problems
- Political circumstances and opportunism determines coalition between parties and groups

- Coalitions and Alliances are impermanent
- Each political party or grouping tries to undermine its competitors not through distinctive ideology or constructive programmes, but through a negative philosophy
- Criticisms of the opponent is done with a view to address a larger audience, namely electorate
- Larger issues of national and international significance are subsumed to local issues
- Representation is given importance over deliberation and decision making

Adversarial politics has been the defining characteristics of Indian opposition especially since 1990 s. A major casualty of adversarial politics has been the lack of co-operation between the government and opposition While the opposition is unwilling to give up on its demands, the government is unwilling to concede to them. Even on issues of foreign policy, defense, and finance which usually brought out collaboration between the government and opposition there have been instances of non-cooperation. Adversarial politics has also affected the efficiency of parliamentary institution. Members have resorted to methods that are unparliamentary and disruptive. Television coverage of parliamentary proceedings has added to the conflicting relationship between government and opposition.

A positive fallout of adversarial politics has been the desire of each representative, whether of national or state party, ruling or opposition coalition, to focus on representing local issues. However, here too, members are more interested in fulfilling constituency needs, acting as liaison or local development officers, acting as representative rather than representing, which offers the prospect of electoral gains.

It would however, be incorrect to conclude that earlier opposition was more effective due to their national orientation and secular character. Our study of the functioning of the opposition within the Lok Sabha shows that earlier parliament functioned as model parliament in the absence of both substantive democracy and substantive opposition. The limited participation of electorate and the small pool of political elite from which parliamentary leadership was drawn made the democracy limited in its character, while the numerical inferiority of the opposition made it inconsequential. A few charismatic

leaders in the ruling and opposition parties tried to make up for the weakness of the opposition by their parliamentary skills and democratic disposition. The opposition was not in a position to challenge the INC. The lack of experience of MPs of opposition also meant that the opposition's criticism of government policies or leadership was weak.

In this respect, the opposition in the later period was stronger. Its attack on government policies and actions has been more vociferous. However, the opposition has relied on media to provide it with information that may enable it to oppose government policies. Moreover, much of this has taken place outside the parliament, leaving the parliamentary space underutilized. This has contributed to the general perception that parliament as an institution has restricted utility and opposition within the parliament has limited utility.

Further, there the opposition sufferers from certain structural weaknesses. This has also led to declining efficiency of parliament. These weaknesses may be identified as

- The opposition in India does not have a shadow cabinet or a set of designated experts on the various subjects they handle. The individual members of the opposition have gained expertise through experience and personal interest, which political parties utilize during deliberations that require strict party positioning.
- There was neither any incentive for participation in legislative work nor any disincentive for non-performance. This has prevented the opposition from holding the government accountable on a day-to-day basis and for a sustained period of time.
- Little attention is paid towards formulating alternative proposals and legislations that would give the electorate a clear choice.
- Political parties have played limited role in educating its representatives about the national character of the parliament and the need to raise national issues within it. Nor have they devised programmes to train members on the use of parliamentary time and proceedings. Though parliament offers orientation programmes to MPs that inform them of parliamentary procedures, parties have to play a more proactive role in training its members on the nature of issues that it wishes to highlight in the legislature.

- Parliamentary leaders have not played a role in motivating membership to utilize parliamentary space. Parliamentary leaders (who are themselves eminent parliamentarians and attribute special significance to legislative skills) may be able to motivate party members towards better parliamentary performance. This, in turn may contribute to both parliamentary efficiency and party efficacy within the parliament
- Innovative methods such as annual and half-yearly appraisal of implementation of parliament-approved programme, greater use of accounting powers, etc, have not been devised

It is important to address these structural deficiencies in the interest of a strong and effective opposition. These are, however, a part of a larger process of parliamentary and party reforms, which will enable a movement towards a more substantive and effective democracy.

In a heterogeneous, multicultural society like India, opposition to the government comes from a variety of sources; political parties, coalition partners, media, civil society, secessionist and extremist groups. The responsibility of reconciling and representing their demands within the institutional fold rests with the parliamentary opposition. For this the opposition has to be both strong and responsible. The emergence of a strong and vociferous opposition was the first step in the direction of development of substantive democracy. It may be hoped the compulsions of democratic politics may lead to the emergence of a responsible opposition. This would be the next stage of evolution of substantive democracy in India.

# Appendix : I

## Questionnaire: 1

1. What according to you is the most important function of the opposition in India?
   a) Criticize the government for its acts of omission and commission
   b) Replace the existing government
   c) Represent class/ geographic interest
   d) Ventilate public grievances
   e) Demand resources
   f) Forge consensus on domestic and international matters
   g) All the above

2. If the answer to the first question is (g) the state the order of your preference with 1 being most important and 6 being least

3. Do Parliamentary procedures provide adequate mechanisms for performing this/these functions? If answer is 'No', please state the reasons for your answer

   a) Yes  b) No

4. Which according to you is the most important procedure available to members of opposition to perform their function effectively? In case of choosing more than one option, please state the order of your preference

   a) Zero Hour
   b) Question Hour
   c) Short Duration Discussion
   d) Calling Attention Motion
   e) No Confidence Motion
   f) Any other ( Please state)

5. Why do you think this procedure is more effective than others?

6. What is your party's stand on individual MP's participation in parliamentary proceeding

   a) Penalizes members for non participation
   b) Encourages attendances and participation
   c) Is neutral/ ambivalent towards participation in parliamentary proceedings
   d) Gives greater importance to electoral party related work
   e) Discourages participation
   f) None of the above

7. Since non-participation in parliamentary proceedings does not invite action from the House why do you think Opposition party MP's attend it? In case of choosing more than one option, please state the order of your preference

a) Provides them with an opportunity to criticize the policies of government
b) Provides them opportunity to articulate party concerns/stand
c) Provides them opportunity to raise constituency concerns
d) Provides them opportunity to gain publicity
e) Provides them opportunity to arrive at a consensus on important matters
f) Any other (Please State)

8. A) What kind of issues would you **most** prefer to raise on the floor of the House? In case of choosing more than one option, please state the order of your preference
a) National
b) State Level
c) Constituency/ Local Level

9. What kind of **matters** do you **prefer** to raise on the floor of the House? In case of choosing more than one option, please state the order of your preference

a) Defense and External Affairs
b) Finance
c) Administrative
d) Social & Political
e) Agricultural
f) Any other (Please State)

10. What determines your decision to raise the above mentioned matter/ issues on the floor of the House? In case of choosing more than one option, please state the order of your preference

a) Familiarity/ understanding of the subject
b) Previous experience of raising such issues
c) Party decision
d) Urgency of the issue
e) Possibility of gaining attention of government/ mass media
f) Possible Impact on electoral outcome

11. Does your occupational or educational background determine your choice of matters to be raised on the floor of the House?

a) Always
b) Some times
c) Rarely
d) No

12. Has your formal education helped you in better performance of parliamentary work?

13. Do you think that members with higher education and professional qualification are able to handle parliamentary work better?
    a) Yes
    b) No

14. Has the increase in the number of members in the ranks of opposition helped in making the opposition more effective? If Yes How?
15. What is the reason for unparliamentary behaviour of the Opposition? Do you think it should be condoned?

16. In the last few decades there has been a steady decline in number of sessions and sittings of the Lok Sabha. What do you think is the main reason behind it?

17. It is perceived that opposition MP's are not keen on participating in reasoned debates. What do you think is the main reason behind it?

    a) Failure to wrest concessions from the government
    b) The credit from gains arising out of parliamentary work of the opposition party/ parties will be shared by Centre, State and Local level government
    c) Parliamentary performance has little consequence on electoral outcome
    d) Lack of time
    e) Lack of interest

18. What is the **most important** reason for stand off between Members of Opposition and Government on the floor of the House?
    a) Rigidity of the Government
    b) Refusal of the Speaker to recognize a member/ admit a matter
    c) Emotional attitude of opposition party Members
    d) Rigidity of Opposition
    e) Desire to seek public attention.

19. What according to you is the most important problem faced by you, as an Opposition party MP?
    a) Lack of Resources
    b) Lack of governmental experience
    c) Inadequate presence (numerical) of your party in the House
    d) Competition with MP's of other opposition parties
    e) Attitude of the Speaker

20. Given an opportunity, where would you like to debate on an issue of national importance?
    a) Parliament
    b) Television channel
    c) News paper
    d) Social Networking Sites
    e) Any other

21. What has been the most important achievement of the opposition in the Lok Sabha?

22. Do you think that the concept of constructive opposition is a misnomer in India?

# Appendix II

## Questionnaire : 2

1. What according to you is the role of opposition in India?

2. In the last two decades, how has the opposition evolved? What changes have you seen in the opposition in terms of it function within and outside the parliament?

3. What have been the achievements of opposition in the last two decades?

4. It is often perceived that the opposition in India mainly interested in dislodging the government or at best criticizing it. What is your comment on this?

5. What is the cause for growing lack of interest in parliamentary proceedings amongst the members of the opposition?

6. What are the incentives that motivate members of opposition to participate in parliamentary proceedings?

7. Are there any disincentives? Does party discourage non participation or absenteeism? If so, How?

8. What is the cause for increasing unparliamentarily behavior within the House? Do you think this can be explained?

9. What is the most important challenges facing the opposition today?

10. National parties are still dependent on state/ regional parties. How has this impacted the parliamentary strategy of a national party which is in the opposition?

11. Has it forced national parties to adopt a more inward looking/ local approach within the national

12. Do you think that the lack of unity and demonstrative behavior amongst the opposition parties is due to lack of ideological underpinnings amongst the members/opposition?

13. What is the main reason for standoff between the government and opposition?

14. Have you noticed any changes in the nature of parliamentary participation with the changes in socio- economic and political composition of the

15. Do you think that media has replaced the parliament as a forum for debate on national issues?

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