

CHAPTER - I V

THE CONCEPT OF NONALIGNMENT DURING THE JANATA PERIOD

(1977 to 1979)

I INTRODUCTION

The Congress party of India played a vital role in the Indian political activities, both before and after independence. The congress party dominated Indian politics for a long time, and provided strong, effective and stable government to the country and, proved to the world that India could retain and manage her democratic institutions. Since the beginning of the freedom struggle, the congress party provided certain important principles to the foreign policy such as non violence, peace and friendship. After independence these principles became the objectives of Indian foreign policy of non-alignment.

The Congress party governed the country for almost 30 years but due to the declaration of emergency of 1975 Indira Gandhi became unpopular and consequently, she lost the election to the Janata party, led by her one time Congress rival Morarji Desai. The Janata party chose Morarji Desai to lead the new government, as he was the most experienced politician in the party.

II THE JANATA'S CONCEPT OF NON-ALIGNMENT

The former critics of India's foreign policy like



Vajpayee, Desai, J.B. Kripalani, Piloo Mody and Minoo, Masani, dominated the ideology of the new government, therefore, suspicions arose in the minds of the people about the continuation of India's foreign policy of non-alignment. But as soon as the government assumed the charge, Desai declared that the Janata Government would continue the non-aligned foreign policy, but they made it clear that it would be the policy of genuine Non-alignment. On 26th March 1977, Desai emphatically declared at the press conference in New Delhi " the foreign policy of non-alignment is there for India."⁽¹⁾ Similarly Janata's foreign minister also said " India will follow the path of ' Genuine non-alignment'."⁽²⁾ But Mr. Vajapayee while addressing the meeting of coordinating Bureau of Non-aligned countries held at New Delhi said that "if policy came in contradiction with the national interest, India would not hesitate to change it. The Janata's approach in understanding of international relations was Gandhian, in nature even though it looked Nehru-evan. Mr. Desai said that " adherence to non-alignment is an offshoot of the principle which he has always followed of not being a party to groups. (3)

The Janata government also believed in 'Panchaseela' Principles expounded by Nehru, It viewed that these five principles like peace, territorial integrity and respect to the sovereignty, non-interference in each other's domestic

affairs and co-operation must be the guiding principles in the inter-state relations. Mr. Vajpayee Janata's foreign minister said " Janata Government stands for peace, non-alignment and friendship with all countries. The policies always represented India's national conscience and tradition. Non-alignment is a projection of national sovereignty in the international relations and its essence is not neutrality but freedom which is the natural consequences for the struggle for the liberation of the human spirit from subjugation and oppression. We believe in the true independence of nation states and their freedom to pursue policies in their best national interests and judge every issue on merit". (4)

He was of the view that India would determine every issue on merit and in conformity with the national conscience. India hated war and adhered to peace since many ages. He said that cold war ideologies which had given birth to unwanted arm race, was an unhealthy international act, and efforts must be made for total désarmament to preserve peace and reduce tension amongst nations. He viewed that national as well as interenational policies must be constantly permeated with thought of man, his happiness and well-being and his essential unity with fellow beings". He argued " The primary task of our foreign policy is to take into account the fact of this constant interation and to respond to the challenges as well as opportunities thrown up by it.

The manner of responses, which is itself determined by the basic principles guiding our foreign policy and by our unique national experience, must determine in turn the extent to which we are able to promote our national purpose and interests and at the same time make a modest contribution to the promotion of peace and understanding in the world." (5)

Like Nehru, Mr. Vajpayee was also aware of cold war and military blocs, and how ruthlessly they were imposing their view points upon each other. " The conflict of ideologies which brought about this ominous transformation in the world scene soon turned into postures of hostile confrontation. The fifties were tormented by this phenomenon, powerful military blocs were set up and alliances forged in search of security and ironically in the name of peace. On the one hand there was chorus, though ineffectives, doctrine of containment of communism and on the other was the insipid and ridiculous slogan of " We will bury capitalism. " (6)

He also realised that the real power or security resulted from the socio-economic and political development, and not by aligning with military blocs. The good neighbourliness and co-operation between the states and peaceful co existence could strengthen the world peace and security. He viewed " Survival, not in the barbarious sense of evolutionary theory, but of the proud creations and creativity

of man, was at stake, If sanity were to prevail, ideological obstinacy had to give way to relaxed co-existence" (7)

Thus ideologically foreign policy of the Janata Government was not different from Nehru's conception on non-alignment. Mr. Vajapayee praised Nehru and said that it was the right path on which India was put in the international relations as non-alignment appeared as a moral force. He maintained " For the first time in a generation the super mutual vulnerability, a fact that had been obvious to the rest of the world for a long time. For the first time they realised that the game of war, direct or proxy, was evil because it could wipe out their own undoubtedly glorious achievements in science, culture and economy". Further he was of the opinion " Though we were sarcastically ridiculed as ' day dreamers' and denounced as 'immoral' the world could not dismiss this idea with its strong moral persuasions and inherent altruism. " (8)

He said " today non-alignment is greatly respected by a large number of states, and emerged as a hope for them. " He continued, " To resume, from this point our story of change, the world in the sixties came slowly and recognised the wisdom of this approach, though ourselves had to pass through many vicissitudes, many conflicts, they only survived to underline the basic correctness of the non-alignment, the concept not only survived, but gathered in its embrace ever more adherents and became stronger" (9)

The Janata Government was interested in establishing harmonious relations with India's immediate neighbours like Pakistan, China, and Cylone etc. and tried to create trust amongst neighbours by over coming previous differences. Mr. Vajpayee argued that the regional peace and co-operation was essential for all round development of the states in the region. Expressing the need of regional co-operation, he said " there is a great diversity amongst us, but there is great deal more that unites us, We are all developing countries with similar problem of socio-economic development. We have : vast resources of skilled professional man-powe-r and the infrastructure to sustain steady advance on the road of progress. Let us then infuse or respective national will with the spirit of fraternal co-operation and make our region safe for diversity " (10)

Thus the primary aim of the Janata Party was to follow the path of genuine non-alignment. The Janata government declared that India was not under anybody's dominance, or pressure, nor was she, pro, or anti, but her relations with all the countries of the world were friendly. As it was declared earlier by Mr. Desai, the Janata Government aimed to maintain healthy relations with both U.S. as well as USSR and her other allies.

III. THE CONCEPT OF GENUINE NON-ALIGNMENT :

Foreign policy of Janata government, Desai argued was that of genuine and not tactical non-alignment. In fact

India should not only remain-non-aligned but must also appeared to be so, because, if anything India did, gave rise to the feeling that she had leaned towards a particular bloc, and surrendered her sovereign right of judging issues on the basis of merit, it would be the different path of non-alignment. The Janata Government would ~~not~~ never allow this to happen. In the view of Mr. Vajpayee, it was not the policy of one man or a party but was a policy based on national consensus. He maintained that the Policy of Non-alignment was rooted in India's political tradition and her policy was accepted by a large number of people.

He made it clear that India stood for international justice, peaceful co-existence and disarmament and She would not produce nuclear arms.

The Janata government decided to follow the policy of genuine Non-alignment as it was thought that during Mrs. Gandhi's rule, the policy was not genuine, as it was tilted towards Soviet Union. The Janata Government wanted to correct the tilt by maintaining equi-distance between the two super powers. Second important aspect of the policy of Genuine Non-alignment was that India sought to improve relations with her neighbours, - especially with China and Pakistan. It was thought by the Janata government that it was impression among India's small neighbours that India was acting as a big brother in the Indian sub-continent, hence the emphasis should be laid on this fact.

Following were the basic objectives of the Janata government's foreign policy :-

- 1) Maintenance of international peace and security
- 2) Regional Co-operation and peaceful co-existence.
- 3) General and complete disarmament.
- 4) Establishment of new economic order.
- 5) Opposition to imperialism colonialism and racism.

Thus, Mr. Vajpayee viewed the nature of India's foreign policy in the following manner " In the realm of foreign policy, we stand for friendship with all our neighbours and other nations of the world on the basis of equality and reciprocity and we will follow the path of genuine non-alignment, we give special attention for strengthening of ties and economic and technical co-operation with non-aligned and developing countries." (11)

OTHER OBJECTIVES : OF JANATA'S NON-ALIGNMENT.

- 1) Respecting U.N. Charter and assisting it in its peace keeping functions.
- 2) Use of Science and Technology for peaceful purpose.
- 3) Search for self-reliance and progress.
- 4) Establishment of friendly, healthy relations with all states.

- 5) To keep Indian ocean as a zone of peace by avoiding super power competition in the ocean.

RESPONSE OF AMERICA TO JANATA'S NON-ALIGNMENT :

One of the objectives of the Janata government was to establish friendly relations with super power U.S. The Janata Government was interested in improving the Indo-American relations which were disturbed due to previous differences, such as massive military assistance to Pakistan, which disturbed the regional balance, her open hostility and opposition to India during the Bangladesh liberation in 1972, repudiation of Tarapur nuclear energy treaty and India's close friendship with U.S.S.R.

It was thought that the formation of the new government at New Delhi had provided opportunity for the U.S.A. to reconsider policies towards India. (12) The role of U.S.A. in India declined from the middle 1960's while that of U.S.S.R. had increased substantially and Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendships and Co-operation of 1971 was concluded and relations became more intimate. But when Janata Government came in the power, P.M. Desai had stated 'India's foreign policy will not be altered in any major way, but non-alignment will be more strictly observed, with no special stress

to be given to one country over another!" (13)

This statement implied the reduction of Russian importance but by no means a break.

It was expected by the Janata Government that the relations between the two countries would develop as Morarji Desai showed warmth and friendliness to President Carter. It was thought by the Janata leaders that U.S. would support the cause of democracy.

Carter sought to improve the relations, but in the overall international perception of U.S.A. India occupied a very low position. Thus despite Janata's willingness there were obvious limitations, and the supply of heavy water to Tarapore plant, became the major irritant, as Morarji was not willing to sign NPT, as U.S. could not go out of her way to please India. The ties faced the major set back when Soviet Union sent in her forces in Afghanistan in 1949 and Pakistan became important for U.S.A. as a front line state. Pakistan's importance naturally created problems in the Indo-U.S. relations. Meanwhile the Janata Government had to resign in July 1979.

Mr. Vajpayee expressing friendship between two countries said " We truly rejoice in the fact that the relation between our two countries are so open and so inspired by the same ideals. In both countries, we understand and draw our strength from democratic pluralism. We have no need to conceal ourselves from the critical scrutiny of each other. We are secure in the essential conviction

that it is democracy which has made us what we are, blemishes notwithstanding. It is as peoples committed to democratic values that India and U.S. must uphold dignity of man ".⁽¹⁴⁾

INDO-SOVIET RELATIONS DURING JANATA PERIOD :

When the Janata party came to the power in March 1977, Americans expected a significant shift in India's foreign policy. The New York Times editorial said " All indications from the victorious alliance known as the Janata are that a friendly attitude can be expected towards the united states with a noticeable cooling of feelings for Soviet Union "⁽¹⁵⁾

The reasons for these all expectations were Mrs. Gandhi's close association with Soviet Unions and her deep respect to socialism, since the 1969 split in the Congress party, the Soviet press often said that Mrs. Gandhi represented the offices of progress in this country and her commitment to socialism was firm and deep, secondly, since 1969 to 1977 Soviet Union supported Mrs. Gandhi in all her actions including emergency measures of 1975 and called Jayprakash Narayan as 'notorious reactionary ".⁽¹⁶⁾

But Soviet government tried to overcome these difference within the few weeks after election as they

sent Foreign minister A.A.Graomyko to mend their fences with India" During his stay (April 26-27) in New Delhi, two countries signed three agreements one for a Rs.225 crore a long term credit, another for a Rs. 160 crores. implimenting trade plan for 1977 and thrid for Soviet technical assistance for the Tashkant-Srinagar transmitter link to improve telecommunications between two countries."(17)

At the luncheon in the honour of the visiting delegation Foreign Minister Vajpayee assured Gromyko ' That the bonds of friendship between our two countries are strong enough to survive the demands of divergent systems and the fate of an individual as the future of a political party," (18)

On October 21,26,1977 Morarji Desai visited U.S.S.R., which saw the improvement between Indo-Soviet relations. In his speech Desai said Indo-Soviet."relations were not based on personalities or idelogies but on equality, national interest and common purpose." (19)

It can be said that Soviet Union and India came together during the Janata period due to following reasons, firstly " In all probability the Chinese are not likely to accept their existing frontiers with the U.S.S.R. nor are they going to vacate the Indian territories they occupied in late 1950s; Thus New Delhi and Mascow felt need of each other support on these issues." (20) Secondly, to reduce U.S. influence in Pakistan U.S.S.R. decided to assist India in both economic and defence fields. Thirdly, Indo-Soviet relations

were developed on solid economic and political grounds and it was extremely difficult for any new government to destroy the ground as India was critically dependent on Soviet Union as far as military supplies were concerned. Also, the trade relations grew in such a volume that it could not have been reversed.

The India's relations with Soviet Union have been traditionally dominated by Indian security needs as the American military aid to Pakistan played an important role in the establishment of cordial relations with Soviet Union. Desai's talk of genuine non-alignment did please Washington but it did not lead to the appreciable improvement in Indo-American relations because compulsions and realities of international politics, did not warrant such a prospect.

VI. INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH HER NEIGHBOURS DURING 1977.

Foreign policy of genuine non-alignment of the Janata Government had the primary task of converting the region into the region of peace and stability. Therefore its prime objective was to improve the relations with India's immediate neighbours. In this respect Mr. Vajpa-yee said " We all are under developed countries with massive socio-economic and nation building problems; so peace is essential condition for our economic development and progress" Foreign Minister Vajpayee visited China, Pakistan and Burma and asked them help India establish the region of peace in south Asia.

Thus the visit was quite successful and helped in improving relations with India's neighbours. Mr. Vajpayee explained his policy of genuine friendship with India's immediate neighbours. In Rajyasabha on Apr. 4, 1977 he said "As house is aware, India has to normalise its relation with Pakistan and seeks to explore the possibilities of increasing beneficial co-operation between the countries of this region in order to make our subcontinent free from tensions and region of stability. Thus, we believe in, the wider interest of peace in Asia and it should be welcome both super powers by positive encouragement and restraints who have expressed their satisfaction at these trends." {21}

VII. THE THEORY OF GENUINE NON-ALIGNMENT

Thus, the Janata Government sought to implement its theory of genuine non-alignment in India's relations with U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. it was often said by Desai that he wanted to correct the tilt and he tried to do so by getting closer to U.S.A. but as often, U.S. response was calculating as president Carter asked India to sign N P T. and the Cambodia and Afgan problems severely limited the American options. Desai did not realise that in the U.S. foreign policy perspective, India did not have major role. Knowing this fact, the U.S.S.R. continued to have close relations with India as the word 'genuine' did not alter the diplomatic reality. Desai's attempts to improve the relations with China failed as China was not ready to leave her earlier position.

Thus, the theory of genuine non-alignment did not take off, though India continued to play an important role in international affairs. The Janata party's theory of Non-alignment was not basically different from the earlier one, as it had to accept the basic principles of Non-Alignment for third world countries. Vajpayee continued to repeat Nehru's phrases as the policy of Non-Alignment was an accepted foreign policy. The word genuine did not make much of a difference because, the international political situation did not allow the doctrinaire attempts to succeed.

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