

CHAPTER - II :

PROGRAMME AND POLICIES OF
INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

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CHAPTER - II

PROGRAMME AND POLICIES OF INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS :

1) THE MAIN FEATURES OF CONGRESS MANIFESTO-1967 :

The Indian National Congress played a very important role in the modern Indian history and it had undergone two succession crisis in 1964 and 1966. Moreover, some important political events occurred between the third and fourth - general elections. In the words of Kashyap, "The period between the third and fourth general elections was - particularly marked out by political instability restlessness and resentment associated with events like the chinese aggression in 1962, the passing away of Jawaharlal Nehru in 1964, the Pakistan aggression in 1965, and sudden death of Lal Bahadur Shastri in 1966. In the economic sphere also,

these years had seen many dismal failure, widespread distress and discontentment, large droughts, sharp decline in exports and the forced devaluation of the rupee"¹. Because of these factors the Congress party's position was weak. The regional parties forged alliances to ~~gi~~ fight against Congress. Non-Congress forces came to-gather to contest election . "on the eve of the fourth general elections there was thus a wave of general unrest and dissatisfaction with the Government's economic and other policies".²

The Congress party took into account the political situation and framed its election ~~manif~~ manifesto which had the following main features.

A) VITAL ROLE PLAYED BY INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS :

At the outset the manifesto noted down the role played by Indian National Congress and its achievements during the last twenty years. It stated, " it has been the proud privilage of the Indian National Congress to serve the country for over eighty years"³. India adopted democratic pattern under the leadership of Congress. The people voted the programme and policies of theCongress and elected it for earlier three general elections. These policies of the Congress were included in three five year plans which were meant to lead the country towards establishment of socialist society. Moreover, the Congress establishment Panchyati Raj institution to promote people's parti&ipation in the -

administration ^{at} it the village level. In brief, it directed its energy to build up democratic socialist society.

B) ECONOMY :

Another notable features of the Congress manifesto of 1967 is that the economy of the country is described in detail. It proved statistically what the Congress party has achieved during twenty years. It is because the economy was not sound. It was completely collapsed as the country was invaded twice. The drought gave another setback to the - economy. It stated that "while recognizing that during the initial stage of economic development external assistance plays an important role, it is essential to reduce the ~~pr~~ period to the minimum and to diminish speedily the amount and range of external assistance".⁴

So, whatever foreign aid we may obtain should be utilised for sectors that will lead towards self-reliance . More attention will be given to science and technology as it is essential for building modern society. The manifesto also noted the dominant role played by public sector in the national economy. Similarly, it has taken note of the work done by co-operative movement. It hoped that the network of co-operative institutions will check the rising prices of essential commodities. To curb the prices the measures such as discipline in the monetary and fiscal field, increased production will be adopted.

C) SOCIAL ASPECT :

The Congress manifesto noted the wide gulf between the rich and the poor, the problem of unemployment, the problem of agricultural labour. It confessed that the land reform policy has not been implemented properly. It stated that "scheduled caste, scheduled tribes and other economically under-privileged classes have always been a source of special concern to the Congress".⁵ Apart from the special provisions meant for their development, the party would attempt to give more attention to them so that these backward classes will be benefitted by general schemes of development also.

D) EDUCATION :

The election manifesto promised that efforts would be made to give adult education and wipe out illiteracy. Moreover, it would be job-oriented. "A comprehensive plan should be drawn up to link education, employment opportunities with educational facilities."⁶

E) ADMINISTRATION :

Inefficiency in the administration is the hindrance in economic progress. The manifesto stated, "the Government have appointed an 'Administrative' Reforms Commission' to go into the whole question of administration, both central and state and to make recommendation for more efficient and more economical administrative set up."⁷

Perpetual efforts will be made to raise the standard of administration resulting integrity and efficiency in the administration.

F) FOREIGN POLICY :

The manifesto stated that the party stood for peaceful co-existence, non-alignment, friendship with neighbour - the tenets of our foreign policy. "The policy includes abstention from the use or threat of use of force for the settlement of inter-state disputes or against the territorial integrity and political independence of other states."⁸ The Congress support the efforts against racial discrimination and continues to extend the co-operation to UNO for maintainance of peace in the world.

G) APPEAL TO VOTERS :

The manifesto stated that the country is passing through the difficult times. The Congress has the legacy of serving the people for last twenty years. Again it seeks the fresh mandate to serve the people. "With - humility and confidence the Indian National Congress seeks the mandate of the nation to work for a social order based on freedom and justice which will ensure that every individual has the means and opportunities for full life and is enabled to make his maximum contribution to the nation."⁹

2) THE CONGRESS MANIFESTO - 1971 :

In the fourth general election Congress party lost its majority in ⁿmay states. However, the party was able to retain its powers at the centre as it has secured 283 out of 520 seats in Lok Sabha . It failed to secure majority in eight states and its performance was particularly dismal in states like Kerala, Orissa and Tamilnadu. Different - opposition parties adopted the policy of non-congression^{ism} and came to-gather to form co-alition Governments in different states. In West Bengal, Kerala, Orissa, Bihar, Tamilnadu and Punjab the non-congress Government were formed. It was the era of weak congress Government at the centre and instable co-alition Government in as many as 9 states in the middle of 1967.

The politics of defection added to the instability of the Government. Prof. Kashyap rightly pointed out that "it was obvious that, as a consequence of the 1967 election results, the general contours of the political power structure were undergoing basic changes. The otherwise highly fragmented opposition saw in the situation an - opportunity to seize power at least in some of the extreme right and the extreme left - shedding ideological edges and coming forward to-gather to share power on the basis of what were called the agreed minimum common programmes".¹⁰

The great split of in 1969 in the Indian National

Congress because of presidential election made the party's position very weak . The congress(0) - the rightist faction known as syndicate was led by Morarji Desai and Nijalingappa and the another known as Indicate was led by Indira Gandhi and Jag Jive~~n~~^gram. The rightist forces opposed the progressive measures such as Bank Nationalisation and Privy purses Bill. The adverse decision of the judiciary in such cases blocked the Government to implement these progressive measures. There was no way left out except to seek fresh mandate from the electrorate . The Lok Sabha was dissloved and mid-term-poll was ordered. Mrs. Gandhi said," there comes a time in the life of every nation when the Government of the day has to take an usual step to cut through difficulties in order to solve pressing problems with which the country is beset. The present is such a time. It is because we are concerned not merely with remaining in power, but with using that power to ensure a better life for the vast majority of our people and to satisfy their aspirations for a just social order. In the present situation we feel we cannot go ahead with our proclaimed programme and keep our pledges to our people.¹¹

After 1969, Indira Government tried to implement some radical programs and there was leftist trend though Nexalite volence was unabatted. The industries were showing some signs of improvement and on the agricultural scene picture was quite rasy.

This was the situation on the eve of mid-term-poll of 1971. The congress party placed its programme and policies which had the following main ~~features~~ features.

a) THE SITUATION THAT PREVAILED ON
THE EVE OF ELECTION :

In the beginning of the Congress manifesto of 1971. We come across the situation that prevailed during this period. The fourth Lok Sabha was dissolved as Congress wanted to seek fresh mandate from the people to implement its radical economic and social programme that was opposed by the rightist and reactionary forces in the country. The reactionary forces ---- syndicate, Jan Sangh, the Swatantra party, SSP are coming to-gather to fight the progressive programme, of the Congress. Apart from these reactionary forces, the left extremist forces wanted to undermine the democratic process by adopting the path of violance. These reactionary and anarchic forces can only be defeated by implementing economic and social programme framed in accordance with the Directive Principles of state policy enshriend in the constitution. The manifesto pointed out that " the Congress is firmly convinced that the challenges posed by the present critical situation can be met only by the proper and effective implementation of a social and economic programme through democratic processes."12

b) ECONOMY :

The second notable feature of 1971 manifesto is that the congress made its position clear on the private property. The manifesto stated that the party is of the view that - property should not be concentrated in a few hands as it is inconsistent with the concept of democracy and social justice. What is the need of the hour is that the economic and social justice should be delivered to the people. It declared that that "what has to be recognised in India to-day is that goals of economic growth and social justice are largely complementary and not competitive."¹³. Moreover the congress is of the view that public sector must have a dominant role in any programme of industrial development. The private sector should work with a view of social justice. The manifesto also touches the problem of unemployment. The priority has been given to unemployment problem in planning. In addition to it, education must be linked with employment. The congress manifesto has ~~been~~ taken into account the role of science and technology in transforming the rural economy. Urbanization has created the problem of housing. So, in the programme of providing housing slum-dwellers will be given priority.

c) MINORITY :

The third striking point is light thrown by the manifesto on the problem of minorities. It has clearly

mentioned that evil and rightist forces want to destroy the democratic socialist objectives of our polity by exploiting the emotions of the people in the name of religion . The party wanted to maintain the secular character of our polity, autonomy of educational institutions of minorities and to prevent discrimination against minorities in the recruitment of services. The manifesto stated that " the congress is pledged to promote with special case the educational, employment and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people particularly the scheduled caste, the scheduled tribes, and the Backward classes. Urgent attention must also be given to the socio-economic problems faced by - Muslims, Christians and Other religious and linguistic minorities who do not have equal opportunities." 14

d) FOREIGN POLICY :

We find no fundamental change is made in foreign policy in 1971 manifesto also. Since last twenty four years the congress stood for promoting peace in the world, to maintain good relations with neighbours, to fight against racial discrimination. The manifesto mentioned that " the congress pledges itself to remain faithful to the vision of Jawaharlal Nehru who gave inspiration, and direction to our foreign policy which is in India's own national interest and has helped to uphold the principles of non-alignment and freedom from military blocks." 15

It wanted to normalise relations with Pakistan.

e) STRONG AND STABLE GOVERNMENT :

The manifesto emphasised that to carry out the entire programme, the strong and stable Government - supported by majority is essential. It made clear, " to carry out the entire programme a strong and stable - Government committed to radical policies backed by a decisive majority in Parliament is absolutely essential."¹⁶

f) APPEAL TO VOTORS :

At the end, manifesto appealed to the voters to give fresh mandate to the congress to carry out the above mentioned programme efficiently. Moreover, it has brought to the notice of voters that congress is the only party that can bring social revolution through peaceful and democratic means . People are to choose the programme and party that can serve them in a proper way. Therefore, to end poverty, discrimination, injustice the people should give fresh mandate to the congress.

3) THE CONGRESS MANIFESTO - 1977 :

In the mid-term poll of 1971. The congress was elected with overwhelming majority and Mrs. Gandhi - established her dominance over the Government and the party. She was the undisputed leader of India as it was

her personal victory. The party could secure thumping -- majority because of the proclamation of the radical programme - Garibi Hatao (eradicate poverty) and Anyaya Hatao (remove injustice). The party also achieved victory in the assembly elections because of its role in the liberation of Bangla Desh. But the popularity did not last long. In 1972-73 the country faced several problems like drought, energy inflation and smuggling. Sethi has rightly said " the electoral - victories of 1971 and the political stability there were supposed to usher in have disappeared like a flash."¹⁷ The Congress could not execute its radical programme effectively. The year 1974 witnessed worst economic crisis. Aiyar and Raju rightly pointed that "the congress had lost the capacity to govern and had been transformed into a machine for the perpetuation of one party rule by the use of the power of Government for institutionalized corruption."¹⁸

The Allahabad High Court in June 1975 declared that Mrs. Gandhi's election to Lok-Sabha was invalid. There was a great Railway strike in 1974 and other strikes of working classes. The agitation started under the leadership of Jay Prakash Narayan received popular support in Gujrat and Bihar. Thus, there was chaos and instability in the country. Mrs. Gandhi was caught in a difficult situation she declared internal emergency to check the internal forces in June 1975. The top leaders of the opposition parties were imprisoned under MISA, 42nd amendment was made to the

constitution to make Prime Minister's Office Supreme and the powers of judiciary were curtailed. In this period of emergency the Indian political system acted in dictatorial way. There was the rise of extra-constitutional agency which forced the Government to sterilise the poor and bulldoze the slums to beautify the ~~citizens~~. After passing Mrs. Gandhi declared the sixth general election. All the non-Communist opposition party leaders - the congress(O), the Jan Sangh, the Lok Dal and the Socialist merged together to form the Janata Party. The significant aspect in the sixth general election was the choice between democracy and dictatorship. In such a political situation the Congress party declared its programme and policies which had the undermentioned characteristics.

a) LEGACY AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF CONGRESS :

The very first line of the manifesto suggests - that there is crisis in the country. The Congress has been facing every crisis by the help of inspiring galaxy of - leaders. The manifesto stated that "the Indian National Congress has always been a party of the masses, a party of the people, a party of in the vanguard of progress, wedded to the cause of the poor."¹⁹

The manifesto placed before the electorate the record of services and achievements of Congress during thirty years, in various aspects of the country such as Social, economic

and external affairs.

Having described the legacy and achievements the manifesto appealed to the voters to elect Congress for doing the following activities.

- b) 1) To uphold the ideals of secularism, to protect the interest of minorities.
- 2) To preserve and consolidate democracy and to put an end to all kinds of violence so that people can live in peace and harmony.
- 3) To build a modern, prosperous egalitarian and Socialist Society.
- 4) To abolish all kinds of discrimination between one human being and another and to end all forms of exploitation.
- 5) To develop and modernise agriculture and bring about total rural regeneration.
- 6) To promote the interests of the working class, marginal farmers, agricultural workers, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and Backward classes and Communities.
- 7) To enlarge the role of public sector and to give scope to the private sector without allowing concentration of economic wealth.

- 8) To take up massive programme to expand -- opportunities for productive employment.
- 9) To protect the interests of the working class.
- 10) To curb prices and ensure essential commodities of at reasonable rates.
- 11) To promote primary education to all children and improve the standard of secondary and higher education.
- 12) To expand health and medical facilities and welfare programme for the people.

c) APPEAL TO VOTERS :

At the end, the manifesto once again appealed to the voters to elect congress to wipe out poverty, disparity, and injustice. It wanted to establish a society based on the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru. The manifesto - stated that " the Indian National Congress alone has the dynamism, the policy, the programme, the leadership and the achievement displayed through ninety one years of sustained and devoted service to the people of India. Congress is the people . Vote for Congress."²⁰

4) COMPARATIVE STUDY :

There is no doubt that the congress played a very important role in our national life and after the death of Nehru, his daughter Mrs. Gandhi continued to lead the country

as well as the Congress party. There is no doubt that during three elections - i.e. 1967, 71 and 77 much water was flown in Ganges as wide-spread anarchy, disorder and anti-congressism was the background of 1967 elections, clash between the right and left and growing hope of the people in the leadership of Mrs. Gandhi was the background of 1971 elections and - democracy or freedom and bread was the main issue in 1977 elections. It is but natural that the Congress responses and percáptions were different as in every manifesto, the party highlighted the main issue of the time. A comparative study of these three menifestos reveal some interesting facts. For our covenience, we divide our discussion in four points.

- a) Political issues .
- b) Social issues.
- c) Economic issues.
- d) Foreign Policy.

a) POLITICAL ISSUES :

As far as the congress responses to changing - political situation were concerned, we can say that there were two types of responses, firstly the Congress continued to believe in principles of secularism, democracy nationalism and socialism as the basic ideas and secondly, it tried to give new political slogans to meet the changing situation for example in 1967 the party stressed the importance of unity

and stability, in 1971 supremacy of parliament and greater need of Governmental intervention and in 1977, political change as well as unity of the country. The Congress was under the influence of rightist forces in 1967 but it was under the influence of leftlist forces in 1971 and one can see the influence of both in the respective manifestos.

In 1971 manifesto the Congress pleaded for establishment of parliamentary supremacy against the supremacy of constitution advocated by Supreme Court of India in Golaknath Case of 1967. In 1971, the Congress established a link between the successful implementation of progressive economic policies and democratic process. It also emphasised the need of strong and stable Government. In 1977 the party again emphasised strong and stable Government to preserve and consolidate democracy and to put an end to all kinds of violence. Thus, in 1971, strong Government is necessary for implementation of progressive economic program but in 1977. It was necessary to maintain law and order.

b) SOCIAL ISSUES :

The Congress manifesto of 1967 noted the wide disparity that exists between the rich and the poor and confessed that the land reforms policy has not been executed properly. It has also stated the party would attempt to safeguard the interests of minorities, especially the

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes by implementing the constitutional provisions meant for them and by other schemes also. Similarly, the other backward classes would be benefitted by general schemes of development. The Congress manifesto of 1971 deplored the activities of rightist and communal forces that are destroying the democratic socialist objectives of our polity by exploiting the religious feelings of the people. Therefore, it wanted to safeguard the secular character of polity. It has also promised to protect the interests of backward classes and minorities.

The manifesto of 1977 of the Congress party repeated whatever has been declared in the earlier two elections in different words. It stated that it would promote the interests of workingclass, marginal farmers, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Similarly, it wanted to abolish all forms of exploitation. Moreover, in 1977 manifesto, the party highlighted the important role played by 20 points program.

c) ECONOMIC ISSUES :

As far as economic issues are concerned the 1967 manifesto tried to prove statically that economy is sound. In fact, economy was in a bad shape ^{because of} expense over defence and drought. The manifesto made it clear that during the initial stage of economic development foreign aid plays a vital role.

Therefore, foreign aid would be utilised for the sectors that would lead towards self-reliance. It also emphasised the role of co-operative sector. The Congress manifesto of 1971 is clearer on economic issues than 1967 manifesto. It declared that private property should not be concentrated in a few ~~hands~~ hands as it is inconsistent to the concept of democracy and social justice. It stated that private sector should work with a view of social justice. Moreover, public sector must have a dominant role in any programme of industrial development whereas the Congress manifesto of 1977 declared that the party wanted to enlarge public sectors but also give scope to private sector without allowing concentration of economic wealth. It would undertake massive programme to expand opportunities for productive employment.

d) FOREIGN POLICY :

As far as the Congress manifestos of 1967, 71 and 77 are concerned, there is no shift in the Congress stand as it stood for non-alignment, peaceful co-existence and world peace. Moreover these manifestos stated that the Congress supported and would continue to support to UNO for maintaining peace. It would continue to oppose the policy of discrimination. The 1971 manifesto clearly mentioned that it would uphold the principle of non-alignment.

CONCLUSION :

There does not seem to be basic change in the ideology of the Congress party since last three elections, though the emphasis differed as in 1971 the party gave more importance to public sector and gave the slogan of Garibi Hatao and in 1977, it advocated the cause of stable - Government and National security.

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FOOTNOTES :

- 1) Kashyap Subhash C., The Politics of Defection.
P. 31
- 2) IBid P. 31
- 3) Pattabhiram M. General Election in India 1967.
P. 169.
- 4) IBid P. 172.
- 5) Ibid P. 176.
- 6) Ibid P. 174.
- 7) Ibid P. 177.
- 8) Ibid P. 177.
- 9) Ibid P. 178.
- 10) Johari J.C., Indian Government and Politics .
P. 724.
- 11) Ibid P. 725.
- 12) Shiv Lal, The Election Archives (Quarter Ending
June 1971) P. 50.
- 13) Ibid P. 51
- 14) Ibid P. 55

- 15) Ibid P. 55.
- 16) Ibid P. 55.
- 17) Sethi J.D., India in Crisis,
P. 25.
- 18) Aiyar and Raju, India's Ballot Box Revolution.
P. 49.
- 19) Shakhder S.L., The Sixth General Election (Ed.)
P. 56.
- 20) Ibid P. 67.

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