

## Role of opposition party in India

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The role of opposition party in a democracy is very important. Parliamentary type of government operates on political parties. In India Multi-Party System exists. In the past there has been a dominance of single political party, i.e., Congress party. In recent years, opposition party has been playing decisive role in democratic polity in our country. Gradually it has increased its size and significance. Also its role has changed in subsequent years.

Since independence Indian National Congress has been the single largest dominant party influencing the policies of nation. Though various other parties existed but their role was insignificant. Since 1967, opposition parties have been playing significant role in Indian politics. Congress was on decline which gave space to other political parties. In 1977, Janata Party formed the government with Congress as opposition party. For recognition of opposition party in a house, political party needs to secure 10% of seats in that house.

Prior to 1967, in the absence of strong opposition party, dissent or factions within the Congress could play role of opposition indirectly because factions are as old as Congress Party. In fact, factions and dissent is present in every political party. Moreover most of the opposition parties later on formed were part of the Congress Party. Factions or dissents were able to influence the policies of the government from within.

When Congress was rejected in 1977 due to imposition of emergency in 1975, Congress was still the second largest party which enjoyed the status of opposition party. The role of opposition party is not only to oppose the policies of the government but also to give constructive support to the policies of government. Also its role is to educate the masses on various policies and programs critically. Opposition party acts as a bridge between electorate and the ruling party. Congress did that role in 1977.

From two main parties in 70's, Indian politics went under tremendous transformation in 80's on political party front. It began to be ideologically differentiated. Congress on decline remained as the centrist party along with Janata Dal and its allies. On the right side to it was the emergence of BJP, on Hindutva plans and on left to it was Communists with the leftist policies. In 1989 election, Congress again became the opposition party due to the government of Janata Dal supported by BJP and left parties. Congress opposed the Mandal Commission Report implementation in 1990. It played its role of opposition. At the same time BJP too was on its path to propagate and expand its base by

taking the help of Ayodhya issue. It gained in 1991 election. BJP became the opposition party in 1991 due to formation of government by Congress. BJP played the role of opposition party very successfully by criticising the government and making the public opinion in its favour. In three states also it formed the government and in two states, it was the opposition party.

But the real change in role can be seen after 1996 general election. BJP was the single largest political party. Janata Dal formed the government along with National Front constituents and CPI. Congress supported the government from outside. It was a government of 13 parties. A new trend can be seen with this coalition. It is a bundle of contradictions all pursuing different programs and policies. The only uniting factor was to keep BJP away from power. As the government became older, differences kept on cropping. Sometimes Communists criticize the government for economic reforms, sometimes members of Janata Dal themselves stop the PM from introducing important Bill, often Congress dictate terms and hence able to pursue its own policies. It even withdrew support to change H.D. Devegowda. Congress is also behaving like opposition party.

This is a new trend in which while participating in a government and criticising also when the situation demands. So the line between part of government and opposition is blurring in this coalition government of today. Of course, unified and articulate opposition in terms of BJP is already there. Today more of opposition can be seen hence decisions are either postponed or not taken in time which is hampering the administration of the country. That is why we can witness shortcomings on governance and important bills get deadlocked. PM becomes helpless because he is not able to manage the conflicting interests of various political parties. Also all the political parties are in a position to assert to threaten the government to pull out of the government.

The situation is such that the role of opposition has increased in this type of political uncertainty. It is very difficult to reach on a consensus. Even the common programmes are not being able to be implemented due to differing and irreconcilable perceptions. One needs to lessen specific interests and should go for common problems like hunger, education, security and welfare of the people. Mere opposition is not going to solve the problem. It will delay the vital decisions. Let a line be drawn between government and opposition.