

**NATIONAL COMMISSION TO REVIEW THE
WORKING OF THE CONSTITUTION**

A
Consultation Paper*
on

***REVIEW OF THE WORKING OF POLITICAL PARTIES
SPECIALLY IN RELATION TO
ELECTIONS AND REFORM OPTIONS***

* The views expressed and the suggestions contained in this paper are intended for the sole purpose of generating public debate and eliciting public response.

January 8, 2001

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This Consultation Paper on 'Review of the Working of Political Parties specially the relation to Elections and Reform Options' was prepared by the Advisory Panel on Electoral Reforms; Standards in Political Life. It is based on a paper prepared by the Institute of Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies (ICPS). The ICPS appointed its own Committee of experts with Shri R.N. Mirdha in the chair. The drafting was entrusted to Dr. R.B. Jain, former Professor and Head of the Department of Political Science, University of Delhi.

The Commission places on record its profound appreciation of and gratitude to the ICPS and all others involved for their contribution.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Political parties are indispensable to any democratic system and play the most crucial role in the electoral process – in setting up candidates and conducting election campaigns. In recent years, we have witnessed a succession of unstable governments, and the reason for such a recurring phenomenon is said to be the archaic and chaotic functioning of political parties. Alliances and coalitions are made, broken and changed at whim, and the balance of power seems to be held not by those at the Union level, but by minor parties on the fringes. There is no doubt that Indian political parties have fragmented over the years. Frequent party splits, mergers and counter splits have dramatically increased the number of parties that now contest elections. In 1952, 74 parties contested elections, whilst in recent years this number has swollen to more than 177, and has been consistently increasing since 1989. Can the instability at the Union level or in the States be attributed solely to the growing number of parties, or the malaise with which the political system suffers today lies in the functioning and the dynamics of the party system in India, apart of course, from the other causes in the working of the political system as a whole?

1.2 Political parties and the party system in India have been greatly influenced by cultural diversity, social, ethnic, caste, community and religious pluralism, traditions of the nationalist movement, contrasting style of party leadership, and clashing ideological perspectives. The two major categories of political parties in India are National and State, and are so recognized by the Election Commission of India on the basis of certain specified criteria. As of today, there are six national parties (seven after the split in the Janata Dal in August 1999) and 38 regional parties recognized as such by the Election Commission of India.

1.3 The National parties are Indian National Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party, Communist Party of India, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Bahujan Samaj Party, and Janata Dal. As per the latest notification (June 29, 2000) the Election Commission has decided to de-recognize seven regional parties in some States based on their poll performance. These are Haryana Vikas Party, NTR-TDP (Lakshmi Parvati), Rashtriya Janata Dal in Manipur, Shiv Sena in Dadar, Nagar and Haveli, United Minority Party in Assam, Samajwadi Janata Party in Chandigarh and Samta Party in Haryana. Meanwhile, the CPI (M) and the Republican Party of India have been served notices of de-recognition.

2. Constitutional and Legal Position

2.1 The legal and constitutional position of political parties varies from country to country. In most democratic countries, however, there is neither any direct

constitutional provision regulating the functioning of political parties, nor any legal sanction establishing political parties as a necessary governmental institution, although there are some governmental systems which try to prescribe some conditions for the operation of party system. A very good example is furnished by the Constitution of the Fifth French Republic, which prescribes that Parliament (The French National Assembly) cannot make a law that may abridge the right of the political parties to carry on their activities freely. This is perhaps a tacit recognition of the existence of political parties as a *sine qua non* of a democratic system. Similarly, the basic law of Germany's Constitution includes political parties in its purview. Art. 21 of the Law guarantees the legitimacy of parties and their right to exist, if they accept the principle of democratic government. The Federal Government of Germany has thoroughly institutionalized the structure of political parties, by introducing the 5% clause, which makes it extremely difficult for minority or splinter parties to form and flourish.

2.2 The Canadian practice of Registration of Party or Party foundation is very comprehensive. Parties are registered on certain conditions and party leaders are selected through a national leadership convention composed of provincial party delegates voting as individuals rather than as a bloc. (See para 7.3.8)

2.3 Closer home, Nepalese Constitution (Art.12) provides freedom to form union and association, which has been enshrined as a fundamental right, and Art. 112 deals specifically with the prohibition to ban political parties. Any law, arrangement or decision which allows for participation or involvement of only a single political organization or party or persons having a single political ideology in the elections or in the political system of the country shall be inconsistent with the Constitution. And there are conditions for registration of political parties for contesting elections; (a) they should adhere to the norms of democracy within the party (b) there must be provisions for election of the office bearers in the Constitution of the party at least once every five years (c) political parties must field at least 5% women candidates for election. (d) those parties which get at least three per cent of total votes cast in elections are qualified for registration as political parties. A member of parliament cannot change his party loyalty or abandon the party of which he was a candidate at the election. If he does so, he loses his seat in the House [Art. 49, Clause (1) (f)]. However, all the parliamentarians from a party which received less than three percent of the cast votes in the election to the House of Representatives are treated as Independents.

2.4 Political parties do not as such find any direct mention in the Constitution of India. However, there is one provision in the Constitution which is directly relevant to the functioning of political parties: the Tenth Schedule. The Tenth Schedule of the Constitution was added by the Constitution (Fifty-second Amendment) Act, 1985. It deals with the disqualification of a person for being a member of either

House of Parliament [Art. 102(2)] or the Legislative Assembly or Legislative Council of a State [Art.191(2)], on ground of defection.

2.5 In the absence of a sufficiently detailed constitutional provisions, the major onus of framing and administering the rules and regulations governing political parties in India has fallen on the Election Commission, a constitutional body responsible for conduct of elections. The Election Commission of India has the ultimate power to accord recognition and status of political parties to "the association or body of citizens of India". The Election Commission has the power to decide whether or not to register an association or body of individuals as a political party.

2.6 According to Article 29A (1) and (2) of the R. P. Act, 1951 it is mandatory for any association or body of individuals of India calling itself a political party to make an application to the Election Commission for its registration as a political party, within thirty days following the date of its formation. Article 29A (5) requires that the application shall be accompanied by a copy of the memorandum or rules and regulations of the association or body, by whatever name called, and such memorandum or rules and regulations shall contain a specific provision that the association or body shall bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India, and to the principles of socialism, secularism and democracy and would uphold the sovereignty, unity and integrity and unity of India. And proviso to Sub-section (7) of Section 29A provides that no association or body shall be registered as a political party under this Section unless the memorandum or rules and regulations of such association or body conform to these provisions, i.e. the provisions of Sub-section (5) of Section 29A. The decision of the Commission in this matter is final.

2.7 The recognized political parties are accorded the status of a National or State political party in accordance with the provisions of Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968 as amended from time to time. These provisions are discussed in para 3 below. The number of National parties has been varying from 14 to 4 owing to continuous review of the status based on the performance of the parties. In 1951 there were 14 National parties while presently there are 7 National political parties. The number of National parties was: in 1957 (4), 1971(8), 1977 (5), 1980 (6), 1984(7), 1989 (8), 1991 (9), 1996 (8), 1998 and 1999 (7). There were no National parties in 1962 and 1967. [These were at that time called multi-State parties]

2.8 It may be noted that political parties in India are also sometimes categorized by observers, academics and political analysts on the basis of their territorial or geographical representation, such as: All India parties, Regional parties and Local parties. This is done by them only as a matter of convenience to argue a particular point, or identify them in a particular way, and does not in any way reflect either any official party classification recognized by the Government or by the Election Commission. Similarly any identification of a party on the basis of its ideological orientation as a party of the left, right, center, socialist, communist, communalist or leader- centered etc. bears no official recognition.

3. Provisions for Recognition

3.1 According to Para 2 (h) of the Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) order 1968, Political party means an association or body of individual citizens of India registered with the Election Commission of India as a political party under Section 29A of the R. P. Act of 1951.

3.2 As per para 6A of the Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968, as recently amended, a political party shall be treated as a recognized National party, if, and only if, -

either (A)(i) the candidates set up by it, in any four or more States, at the last general election to the House of the People, or to the Legislative Assembly of the State concerned, have secured not less than six percent of the total valid votes polled in their respective States at that general election; and (ii) in addition, it has returned at least four members to the House of the People at the aforesaid last general election from any State or States;

or (B)(i) its candidates have been elected to the House of the People, at the last general election to that House, from at least two percent of the total number of parliamentary constituencies in India, any fraction exceeding one-half being counted as one; and (ii) the said candidates have been elected to that House from not less than three States.

3.3 According to para 6B of the aforesaid Order, a political party, other than a National party, shall be treated as a recognized State party in a State or States, if, and only if, -

either (A)(i) the candidates set up by it, at the last general election to the House of the People, or to the Legislative Assembly of the State concerned, have secured not less than six percent of the total valid votes polled in that State at that general election; and (ii) in addition, it has returned at least two members to the Legislative Assembly of the State at the last general election to that Assembly;

or (B) it wins at least three percent of the total number of seats in the Legislative Assembly of the State, (any fraction exceeding one-half being counted as one), or at least three seats in the Assembly, whichever is more, at the aforesaid general election.

3.4 According to para 6C of the said Order if a political party is recognized as a National party under paragraph 6A, or as a State party under paragraph 6B, the question whether it shall continue to be so recognized after any subsequent general election to the House of the People or, as the case may be, to the Legislative Assembly of the State concerned, shall be dependent upon the fulfillment by it of the conditions specified in the said paragraphs on the results of that general election.

4. De-recognition of Parties

4.1 Section 29A of R. P. Act, 1951 makes it mandatory for the political parties to provide specifically in their constitutions that they bear true faith and allegiance to the principles of secularism, socialism, and democracy besides to the Constitution of India, to gain registration by the Election Commission. However, the sanctity of the provision is diluted by the fact that the parties who do not subscribe to secularism, socialism and democracy would be denied registration but they can contest election. Also the Election Commission has held that a political party duly registered under the R. P. Act, 1951 cannot be de-registered by the Commission on the allegation that the party had violated the law or has ceased to function in accordance with the undertaking that it would abide by the principles of secularism. The only case where the Commission could de-register a party was when it was found later that a party had obtained, through fraudulent means its registration, or it was declared by the Government as unlawful. It could also be de-registered if the party itself intimated the Commission that it had ceased to function or had changed its party constitution, or that it would not function in accordance with the provisions of the law.

5. Recent Trends in the Growth of Parties

5.1 The history of origin and growth of political parties in India can be traced to the days of India's struggle for freedom. The Indian National Congress was perhaps our first political party; it came into existence in the year 1885. There were some groups formed by patriotic Indians before that, but they did not converge into becoming a political party. The Indian National Congress was the natural and inevitable outcome of a national awakening. The evolution of the party system after Independence presents a study of transformation from one-party dominant system to a complex of multi-party configuration, in which presently strong trends of fragmentation, factionalism, and regionalism, coupled with the desire to form alliances for seeking a share in the pie of power (irrespective of any strong ideological or programmatic commitments) are being increasingly witnessed.

5.2 Elections held for the tenth Lok Sabha held in May-June 1991 produced a 'hung' house. The Congress (I) occupied the position of the single largest party with 220 seats followed by BJP and the Janata Dal. A minority government under the leadership of the Congress (I) President Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao, who succeeded the assassinated leader Rajiv Gandhi was installed. The fractured verdict of the Eleventh Lok Sabha elections also produced a hung parliament. The BJP formed a minority government under the leadership of A. B. Vajpayee. But the Prime Minister had to relinquish office only after thirteen days. When he was not sure of proving his majority in the House, he resigned. The fall of the BJP government paved the way for installation of the UF government first under H. D. Deve Gowda and then I. K. Gujral on 1 June 1996 and 21 April 1997 respectively. Even then the Lok Sabha could not complete its full tenure of five years.

5.3 In 1998, the BJP changed its strategy of fighting alone and entered into alliances with a number of regional parties. This strategy helped the BJP to improve its own

score and also that of the alliance. The contest was mainly between two major pre-poll alliances. One was led by BJP and consisted of Samata Party, Harayana Vikas Party, Lok Shakti, Shiv Sena, Biju Janata Dal, Akali Dal, AIADMK, MDMK, Janata Party, PMK, Tamil Nadu Rajiv Congress, Loktantrik Congress, Jantantrik BSP, Janata Party (Rajaram), Trinamul Congress etc. The other alliance was led by the Congress Party and was composed of RJD, Samajavadi Party, Republican Party of India, BSP, TUPS, TNP, BKPP, Muslim Majlis etc.

5.4 The results of the 1998 elections gave the message that electorate of India had endorsed a two-party or two national alliances system to dominate the country's political scene. On the basis of the voting pattern, it could be said that the voters in almost every State hinted that they did not want their preferences to be divided only between the two major poles of alliances. They identified the two major contenders and confined their preferences to this either-or option. Both BJP and Congress could do well only in those States where they had struck alliance with some parties. This was an interesting phenomenon which was likely to continue and usher in the country an era of polarization between two parties/alliances. The defeat of the BJP led alliance government by a single vote in the Lok Sabha in May 1999 when the AIADMK suddenly withdrew support paved the way for the 13th General Elections, which were held in August/September 1999. The election results again went in favour of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA), consisting of 24 [rbj1] partners led by Atal Behari Vajpayee who comfortably formed the new Government in October 1999.

Comment [rbj1]: Check 22 or 24

5.5 The present phase in the evolution of the party system is noted for two features. One, the general trend amongst both the national and regional parties to move away from the strict ideological framework of the party of the left or the right. Although in general, they do profess to stick to their party ideology or at least are known by certain ideological labels. But in their actual programmatic support they seem to be more pragmatic inasmuch as they are not reluctant to give up their ideological instance or put it on back burner, if that helps gain them a share of political power. Such trend has been witnessed both at the national as well as at the State level and parties are less inhibited to share power or coalesce in government formation with the groups, who till the other day were their bitter political opponents.

Secondly, since the resultant coalition alliances are neither 'ideological' nor have any common objective to cement them together, they are merely short term tactical arrangements established by ambitious politicians that are rooted in the exchange of mutual benefits and compulsions of power, the mobilization of electorate is done through a strategy of support to regional cum segmental or ethnic issues without giving overriding support either to national or primarily local issues.

5.6 The last decade of the 20th century saw a sharp rise in political mobilization on the basis of social cleavages based on ascriptive identities, in particular of religion and caste. Casteism, communalism and personality domination have been the main planks around which the fragmentation of political parties has taken place, which has resulted in more caste and class-based political violence in the society. Political parties have invariably exploited these sentiments for gaining electoral support and political mobilisation of the voters.

5.7 There was another significant development after the 1989 elections affecting the party system. The coalition politics gained a new trend: Parties' tended to lend support to Government from outside without formally joining it, thus ostensibly sharing power without assuming any responsibility. Article 75 (3) only says that the Council of 'Ministers shall be' collectively responsible to the House of the People. The manner in which this condition is met from coalition partners or from those outside it, is of no constitutional significance. However, the experience of government formation with outside support both at the national and state level has invariably created instability in Indian politics. A corollary to these developments has been emergence of an environment of 'blackmail' within the party alliances, where not only a minority government or an alliance of parties felt insecure to implement its minimum election program or policies but also faced considerable hindrances in taking hard executive or routine administrative decisions in matters of appointments to council of ministers or representing a particular interest, constituency or any party's viewpoint in any policy move.

6. Problems in the Working of Parties

6.1 *Absence of Inner Party Democracy:* Over the last fifty years of Independence, no political party has been able to observe the basic norms of inner party democracy. The authority in organizational matters has always been from the top to the bottom through successive layers of party structures. Leaders of political parties in Independent India have not always emerged through a process of democratic elections and promotion from the lower levels to the higher and the top. Thus leadership in most political parties in India may be democratic in appearance but highly oligarchic in reality. Frequent rifts between the National and State party organizations in almost all national parties suggest that highly integrated party structures may soon no longer be appropriate and we may be led to the realisation that a national party should not be over-centralized, still less personalized. Fear of party disintegration has led many political leaders to worry about preventing it from being reduced to the status of a State or regional party. Strong

leaders with support from their States have been by-passed in favour of loyalists. Instances are galore when the party presidents have appointed party chiefs in the States just before the organizational elections were to take place despite the protests of the central election authority chairmen. Even when the elections to State party chiefs were to take place after a gap of almost two decades, the President of the party was "authorized" to nominate a majority of the State party chiefs. These trends are likely to boomerang on the party's strength and capability. A modern party is a public institution, not a personal fief. Without intra-party elections, without ministers who enjoy strong regional support, and without the encouragement of a variety of opinions, political parties are like to wither away.

Undemocratic parties cannot contribute to constitutional and democratic government. It is suggested by some scholars that enforcement of party constitution through legal and judicial action may be necessary. Regular organizational elections should be mandatory. In order to control bossism in parties, many analysts have suggested the introduction of a more democratic process of nominating party candidates by a primary election by the party membership. An alternative suggestion is to authorize each local party unit to have a significant say in nominating the party candidates in that area for legislative offices.

6.2 *Representation of Women:* Political parties cannot remain indifferent towards women who constitute nearly 50% of the electorate. Although almost all parties have attempted to build women organizations to secure their support and make their organization more broad-based, but in practice they have fielded much less proportion of women candidates in the elections giving them proportionately much less representation in the legislative bodies than their actual population strength. In recent times this has been a matter of crucial concern in view of the controversy over reservation of 30% or so of the seats in these bodies.

6.3 *Training of Members:* Training and orientation of new members is one of the important functions of political parties. The parties which are organized on the model of cadre party systematically develop appropriate agencies of training for members. But most Indian parties, except for the Communist parties and the BJP have not followed this model. Parties in India do not have a permanent system of training of their members, and whatever arrangements for training are done are done on ad-hoc basis by national or state level organization.

6.4 *Need for Funds:* To perform various functions and contest elections in an effective manner, every political party requires huge funds. Apart from expenditure of office establishment, full time-workers, agitations, propaganda and travel, parties have

to organize election campaigns. But the financial matters of party are kept secret while other aspects of organization are known to people. Very little is known about finances of political parties. In fact, secrecy is maintained even within a party. Only a few leaders at the higher level know the truth about the total funds and expenditure. Parties do not publish statements of accounts, income and expenditure, though financial matters are discussed at conventions and conferences or in meetings of higher bodies like working committee or the executive committee. Many political parties and candidates have been found to be using dubious methods in raising funds, like kickbacks, funds from foreign countries and even from donations by mafia gangs and other non-desirable elements. How to let the parties get honest funding from legitimate sources for their basic and continuing political activities has emerged as one of the most crucial contemporary concerns of the reform agenda in respect of the functioning of political parties in India.

Most observers of political scene have stressed the need to ensure accounting and auditing of party finances at various levels of party organization. Transparent sources of party finances are a must.

6.5 *Lack of Ideology and Values in Politics:* There has been a very sharp erosion in the ideological orientation of political parties. Party dynamics in India has led to the emergence of valueless politics much against the ideals of the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi, who suggested that the Congress party should be disbanded after the achievement of Independence and its members should engage themselves in the service of the people. While Gandhiji taught us tremendous selflessness, self sacrifice and service to the people, such inspirational values, the democratic norms and institutions have been destroyed systematically over the last fifty years of the working of the Constitution. In the process, both the politicians and political parties have lost their credibility, the ultimate value that should bind them with the masses. There seems to be a crisis of character amongst the politicians, as the system does not encourage the honest leader. Because of the falling moral standards both in the public and among the leaders, criminalisation of politics and politicization of criminals has become the norm. Due to degeneration of leadership, parties have been entangled in power struggle for the sake of personal ends.

In amoral pursuit of power politics, every major player seems to be playing a no holds barred game. Astronomical sums of tainted money have come to play an important role both in the pre and post-election scenario. The entry of criminal elements within the folds of political parties and later their elevation to the portals of peoples representative chambers and the executive positions of ministers have resulted in an environment of declining moral standards of public life and the emergence of value-less politics for personal gains. Unfortunately this trend has penetrated to all walks of public life and no political leader or political party seems to care for value-based politics and upholding of moral standards. The Gandhian value of the spirit of service to the nation has become completely extinct from

the present day politics. So untrammelled by moral values has politics become that there are instances of the importance and claim to high office of a politician being measured not in terms of what he can contribute to the state or public weal, but the size of the funds he can covertly raise and the necessary 'criminal' power to win elections he can provide.

6.6 *Leadership Quality:* The older political leadership had risen from the ranks. The rise was neither sudden nor irrational, and their adherence and commitment to party ideals and ideology was unflinching. They respected party discipline. The present day political leadership seems to be in a tremendous hurry to reach upto the top, and is not averse to use short cuts, dubious methods, money or muscle power to achieve their objective. The entry of the toughs and persons with criminal background to the portals of the legislature is a very serious consequence of these trends.

Such incumbents thrive on the use of their lung power or aggressive instance to disrupt or withhold the proceedings of the legislature for days on thereby causing a tremendous drain on the public exchequer and the valuable time of the House. The result is that the more important issues facing the nation do not get discussed or passed and policy making and the process of good governance suffer.

6.7 *Campaign methods:* The campaign methods used by parties in the days of electronic media, high-tech advertisement, projecting images through the glamour of models and the film / TV idols have taken away the element of serenity and the spirit of public service from the political leadership. The election campaigns both at the regional and national levels these days have become kinds of stage shows in which the matinee idols are paraded to attract voters in support of their candidates by the rival parties without seriously discussing or educating the electorate about the issues at stake in the election.

6.8 *Regionalisation:* The regionalisation of political parties has compelled many of the parties to orient their highly centralized organization and decision-making structure to suit the new demands of party at the state level, thus adopting a confederation like approach for the party organization. This has resulted in a lesser assertion of national control over state units.

Secondly, regionalism and regional parties have made 'ethnicity' acquire a growing respectability at home and abroad.

Thirdly, as national politics has now entered a coalition phase, regional parties are being grouped together to provide a working majority at the center. At the same time, differences in the economic, educational and social interests of regional middle classes, intermediate castes and the new classes are bound to overwhelm the unifying capacity of regional pride. Moreover, as concerns of the national polity move away from egalitarian restructuring, the regional parties too are likely to fall prey to the new economic forces represented by liberalisation, globalization and the NRIs.

Fourthly, India in strict legal terms is a union of states, rather than a constitutional federation. In practice, it has some characteristics of federalism, and the states do enjoy a certain amount of autonomy, but the popular perception is one of a centrally governed country. If India has entered a plural-polity situation, in which several parties govern the country, one or more at the center and others in the states, a question is raised time and again whether a stable regime at the center can cope with a plurality of regimes in the states, some of them basically unstable. And, if the regime at the Center is itself unstable, what would happen to the process of governance, and the popular perception of India as one of a centrally governed country. This is perhaps the greatest dilemma facing the growth of political parties today, and needs some serious consideration for devising strategies towards harmonizing the regional with national interests.

6.9 **Casteism:** Although there is hardly any instance in India of a political party being totally identified with any particular caste group, yet there are cases of certain castes lending strong support to particular political parties. Thus while political parties struggle among themselves to win different caste groups in their favour by making offers to them, caste groups too try to pressurize parties to choose its members for candidature in elections. If the caste group is dominant and the political party is an important one, this interaction is all the more prominent. In many political parties, in place of ideological polarization there occur the determination of policies and programmes as well as the nomination of electoral candidates and the extension of support to them on caste consideration. Caste exercises its impact in the political field by specific caste groups coming together to vote *en bloc* for a candidate of their own caste, without considering the merits and demerits of the candidate, by appointing the members of influential caste or caste group or groups in the party as well as in the constituency and to offices of profits. A caste, wishing to exercise political power must have a considerable number of its members elected. This involves putting pressure on some particular party and different castes struggling against each other in a bid to have a majority of their caste candidates elected. The electoral field witnesses both competition as well as alliances between various caste groups in order to get a substantial number of their caste-men elected. Caste, therefore dominates the political field, especially at the lower level.

The emergence of regional parties and the 'withering away of national outlook and spirit' thus sets off another crisis. Candidates come to be selected not in terms of accomplishments, ability and merit but on the appendages of caste, creed and community. Ultimately caste becomes the deciding factor on selection. When 'disparate' political groups with caste-based ideologies compete for space in governance, national goals take a back seat. The more serious repercussion of this development is the political violence that has resulted in many parts of the country, particularly in Bihar, where dominating caste groups openly clash with minority groups

resulting in a spate of caste-wars and massacres of innocent people. One caste, in its attempt to obtain political power is committing aggression on the other. The talk of minority interests (especially of a community only) by regional parties is only a smoke-screen to hide caste and regional interests. Caste based politics and casteism are eroding the 'unity' principle in the name of regional autonomy.

6.10 *Communalism*: The partition of the former united India in 1947 in two independent nations had its origin in the forces of communalism that swept the sub-continent during the first half of the last century. Despite the emergence of India as a 'secular' state, the politics of communalism and religious fundamentalism in the post independence period has led to a number of separate movements in various states and regions of the country. Communal polarization, rather multi-polarization, has posed a threat to the Indian political ethos of pluralism, parliamentarianism and federalism. Despite the adoption of the principle of 'secularism' as a constitutional creed, which ironically allows communal parties to compete, the trend towards communalism and fundamentalism in Indian politics have been growing day by day. The spirit of tolerance that is essential for a 'secular' society seems to have completely vanished from the body politic of India. The covert communalism practiced by every political party, in pursuit of electoral politics and vote banks has earned it the epitaph of 'pseudo-secularism' or 'minorityism'. The dynamics of national and state politics of the last decade is a mute witness of the clashes and conflicts between the so-called 'secularist' and the 'communist'. Although a comprehensive constitutional amendment Bill (80th Amendment Bill) and Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill 1993 were introduced to de-link politics from communalism, casteism, and linguism etc. by the minority Government, these could not pass through the Parliament.

Caste and religion have in recent years emerged as rallying points to gain electoral support. Unfortunately there is a tendency to play upon caste and religious sentiments and field candidates in elections with an eagle eye on the caste equations and communal configurations. (See S.K. Jha in Politics India, Oct. 1998). Exploiting caste sentiments and playing off one caste combination against the other with a political axe to grind, perhaps even more than religious bigotry is the very anti-thesis of rationalism, but the monster of casteism has all of a sudden mysteriously gained wide respectability as a means of empowerment of the subaltern India! Some politicians, well known for their 'communally sensitive' disposition, taking a cue from communalism have gone to the extent of demanding a 'fair' representation of the minorities in the bureaucracy, police and para military forces. (Jha, op. cit.)

6.11 *Criminalisation*: Although the influence of muscle power in Indian politics has long been a fact of political life since the First General Elections of 1952, when some feeble allegations were made about the use of outlaws by the politicians to further their electoral prospects, the intensity and frequency of such

allegations, have increased in more recent times, and the criminalisation of politics and the persons known to have criminal past becoming legislators and ministers has not only become very common but is being openly defended by the party leaders. A stage has now reached when the politicians openly boast of their criminal connections. A Bihar minister's statement in the Assembly that he patronized and would continue to patronize gangsters to fight and win elections is a pointer to the growing phenomena where criminal background has become an invisible requisite to win elections. Despite the country-wide debate that was generated by the Vohra Committee Report on criminalisation of politics, the system has changed only to the worse. Earlier in the 1960s, the criminal was only content to playing second fiddle to the politician to enable him win the election and in turn to get protection from him. The roles have now reversed. It is the politician now, who seeks protection from the criminals. The latter seek direct access to power and become legislators and ministers. The Election Commission's observations that nearly 40 members of the 11th Lok Sabha and 700 members of the state assemblies had a criminal past proves this. The Election Commission's requirement that prospective candidates file an affidavit listing the criminal charges that they face had hardly made any dent on the growing criminalisation of politics. Some radical reform in the existing structure of law needs to be taken urgently. Until this is done, political parties could have taken certain initiative in curbing this trend, that is by refusing tickets to politicians with a criminal background. Far from it, the party leaders invariably seek out those candidates for party tickets, who can, not only win elections themselves, but can also help other party candidates to win, irrespective of their past criminal history or background. The Election Commission is powerless in preventing criminals from contesting the elections. The Representation of People Act allows it to debar candidates convicted of certain crimes, but it cannot stop those under trial, or whose appeals from their earlier convictions are pending for disposal before the higher judiciary for multiple murders or rape, or corruption or theft from the public exchequer, from sitting in the country's highest legislative forums. There have been a number of cases where persons under trial have contested elections, while being lodged in jail, and have won. Unfortunately no political party has taken any concrete steps to curb this menace.

6.12 *Growing Violence:* The growth of political parties and emergence of various political groups in India has brought into focus a very disturbing and serious phenomena in the body politic of India. There are some sections of the population and highly organized political groups and parties, who do not like to remain within the orbit of the Indian Constitution and work outside the existing political apparatus and party norms, and in the process have taken to political violence and terrorism in a big way, as the only method for political participation. This has not only spread panic amongst the general population in some areas of the country, but people seem to have lost confidence in the efficacy of government in ensuring security for the general populace. Criminals now call the shots. They dictate and the Governments obey. Whether it is the hijackers of a plane or kidnapers of a film star, their writ runs supreme.

6.13 *Fractionalization and coalitions:* A spate of minority and coalition governments at the Center due to the fragmentation of the party system has laid bare the vulnerability of the process of governance due to political uncertainty and instability of governments. Efforts were made by the coalition partners or allying parties to establish some sort of institutional mechanism to evolve a consensus on the minimum governmental programme for action and to affect coordination between the different constituents of the government both vertically as well as horizontally by instituting multi-layered coalitional structures and a variety of steering and coordinating committees both for inter-party and party-government consultations and/or to resolve major differences through personal emissaries of the Prime Minister. At best, however, these efforts remained merely *ad hoc* in nature and did not quite result in the establishment of some effective permanent institutional devices to bring about a rapprochement amongst the coalescing partners. The efforts were not quite successful.

A significant impact of the trend towards coalition governments in India has been its effect on the policy outcomes. A generic characteristic of the public policies adopted in India over the last decade is the short time horizons embodied in them as most coalitions of party system are committed to providing short term benefits to their constituents. One important facet of this is the well known crisis of public finance plaguing most state governments in India, in particular the larger states., which has been aided by the short-term mismanagement of the exchequer. Examples include writing off loans, sometime even the full amount of the original loans.

The present phase of the evolution of parties in India has revealed a number of grey areas of party functioning having serious repercussions for the political system, policy issues and process of governance. The party manifestos, which are supposed to provide an indication of the direction of policy perspectives have in most cases become a set of promises, something for everybody so that more votes can be garnered. Most party manifestoes have ignored the burning policy issues like population growth, pollution, rising prices, illiteracy,, unemployment , empowerment of women and the integrity and security of the nation. It is time that these deficiencies are sought to be overcome if the country is to maintain a semblance of continued economic progress with stable democratic framework of government.

In a significant study conducted by Oliver Heath in 1998, it has been demonstrated that on the whole there had been remarkable continuity between the degree of fractionalization shown at the state and constituency level. The relationship between the two is very close. Fractionalization operates on essentially two levels in India. The top level, and most fractionalized is the national level.. The dynamics of party competition at state level has shown little sign of increased fractionalization in the 1990s. This indicates that the fragmentation at the national level is not representative of the actual types of contest that exist in the direct competition between parties. Thus one cannot say that the fractionalization at the national level represents a fractured mandate, as on the whole the mandate of the people is fairly clear, it is just that the clarity only exists within the context of state rather than national politics.

The implication of these two conflicting patterns of fractionalization makes the possibility of a single party securing an overall majority in the Lok Sabha in the near future very remote. The lack of disruption that increased ineffective parties at national level has had on state contests indicates that the growth of one party has been evenly matched by the decline of another. The transformation in the composition of parties at state level has been almost seamless. In this instance, it is regional parties that have prospered and the national parties, like the Congress that have suffered.

Thus we are left in a position where politics only makes sense at the state level. A reversal of this situation is not likely to happen overnight, and any move towards fewer effective parties at national level is only likely to happen at the cost of an increased fractionalization at state level. It would therefore seem that the major issue of facing any party that hopes to form a government at the Union level, is not how to win an overall majority, but how to form strong and secure inter-state alliances.

Today, the regional political parties have come to play a very effective role in the formation and deformation of governments leading to political instability and frequent elections. However, there is a need to conceptualize the role of regional political parties in a democracy like India. The regional parties come into power because of some popular stand that they take up on some local issues. The national political parties have aligned with them for political reasons without commitment in detail to every thing that regional parties may profess. But a problem continues in the relationship between national and regional parties as a national party has to cater to national issues and causes which should naturally admit of no regional barriers; while regional parties by their very nature have to take up only local issues. Hence, the national party too tends to become 'regional' as it adopts a regional platform.

6.14 *Political Parties and Governance:* Atul Kohli defines the concept of governability as the capacity of the rulers to do three things: maintain coalitional support; initiate solution to problems perceived to be important, and resolve political conflicts without force and violence. Thus, a democratic developing country is well governed if its government can simultaneously sustain legitimacy; promote socioeconomic development, and maintain order without coercion. The growing incapacity of India to perform these tasks is what has been conceptualized by him as the manifestation of crisis of governability. According to him four major factors have influenced the nature of political change in India: (1) the de-institutionalizing role of national and regional leaders; (2) the impact of weak political parties; (3) the undisciplined political mobilization of various caste, ethnic, religious, and other types of groups; and (4) the increasing conflicts between the haves and have-nots in the civil society. If these trends continue unchecked, India's political crisis is likely to get worse.

Given the emphasis on the structural origins of the crisis in governance, the kinds of leadership actions that could halt or reverse India's erosion of authority would have to involve two major changes: (1) the need to strengthen the organizations of the major parties, and (2) the need to narrow the gap between the state's commitments and capacities. If one had to predict the most likely outcome over the next decade, it would be, policy ineffectiveness and continuing turmoil, encouraging further centralization and use of force, punctuated by occasional bursts of hope created by elections and electoral gimmicks. If one were to set out to alter the current political trends, then strengthening the party organizations would be an important area for action. The ongoing populist posturing of India's political parties, without the capacity to deliver on promises, has become a serious political problem.

Another study under the auspices of Center for Policy Research by Lok Raj Baral also supports such trends. He notes that since the national parties in India started fast loosening their grip on local institutions, and the elites were preparing grounds for regional and local organizations, problems of governance increased as a result of the lack of accord between the emerging local realities and the rigid approach of the national elites to such burgeoning trends of governance. Other issues concerning the diminished role of national parties are also related to ideological contradictions and functional gaps

between commitments and practices manifesting them in election campaigns or in their opportunistic alliances formed for political aggrandizement. India's governability has been greatly affected by the pulls and pressures of the ruling party at the Center or by positions taken by parties supporting the government. The Prime Minister's position under a loose coalitional arrangement has been perennially precarious owing either to his diminutive position in his own party or to his act of balancing of disparate groups whose incongruous motivations and tactical lines may not be in the larger interest of the government.

The manner in which political parties in India are increasingly becoming anarchical in both their behavioural norms and functions suggests that too much compromise for staying in power would result in bad governance. If members of parliament and State Assemblies themselves become rowdy in their behaviour as is demonstrated by frequent walkouts, sit ins into the well of the house, installing the proceedings of the house on filmsical grounds for days on and on without regard to the staggering financial burden that it is causing to the public exchequer, apart from the precious waste of time and energy of the political elites, breaking furniture, communication equipment, using these as weapons to beat and hurt the opponents within the precincts of the house, prompting the Speaker to frequently remark that it was "a mindless mockery of the people who have returned us to Parliament", it is shameful not only to the people of India but also to those who look upon Indian democracy for inspiration. The politics of splits, defection, violence and 'subterfuge' has taken over the governance of the country thus showing no deference to norms, rules and procedures. Such trends are likely to be routine affairs if parties continue to stoop too low for grabbing power by force or by foul means.

6.15 *Jumbo Council of Ministers:* The experience of minority and coalition governments has also resulted in the practice of creating abnormally large or what is known as jumbo size council of ministers in order to accommodate the coalition partners in the government. It has given rise to serious impediments in the process of governance. Besides the inherent problem of conflicting jurisdictions of the various ministers, both vertically and horizontally, personality clashes and egos, and the woefully inadequate physical facilities and assistance for their effective and efficient functioning, it has been observed that many of the incumbents of the offices lack the basic capabilities to govern. Most of the time they are interested in their privileges and perks as being the ministers of the government, making speeches, cutting ribbons at inauguration functions, laying foundation stones, and making trips to foreign countries on government expense. A majority of these seem to be interested in the politics of transfers and making all sorts of recommendations for their relations and favourites. The consequences are not only a tremendous drain on the meagre government exchequer, but inefficiency, delays and slackness because of the inflated governmental machinery, hence increase in malpractices and corruption.

It is thus important that political parties and legislators need to be educated, socialized, disciplined and sensitized to public welfare for becoming effective partners in the process of governance.

7. Reform Options

7.1 *Areas of Concern:* In the background of the foregoing analysis of the functioning of the party system in India, it is evident that the parties in India face a

number of challenges. Not only they have declined in terms of their ideological orientations and commitment to the welfare of the masses, but in the recent past they have shown tendencies of factionalism, doggedness in terms of opposition for opposition sake, and agitational politics. At times they have displayed behaviour, which tends to be unprincipled and unconcerned for the welfare of the masses. Many of their leaders have been affected by communalism, caste, community or religious biases and have known to have links with mafia groups, criminals, senas, and militant or fundamentalist organizations. Changing of party or group loyalty is endemic in party organizations in India, and almost everyone is willing to defect at the drop of the hat, if the grass seems to be greener on the other side. Parties make and break political alliances to maintain their influence within the party and government, and to remain in power with the aim to keep the rivals out. Most of these factional groups are non-ideological and have no vision of the good of the people nor any capability to govern or undertake party responsibilities.

The political parties in India face organizational problems in regard to discipline, defections, intra-party organizations, elections within the parties, and splits in the party. Raising of adequate funds for party organizations and activities by legitimate means and their appropriate and effective utilization during non-election and election periods is a perennial problem. criminalisation of politics and politicization of criminals and the maintenance of public ethics is another area of concern in respect of party functioning.

7.2 *Areas of Reform:* Thus in the perspective of the evolution of political parties in India during the last fifty years as described above, the following are some of the areas of reform which should be of immediate concern:

1. Institutionalization of Political Parties - Need for a Comprehensive Legislation to regulate party activities. Criteria for Registration as a National or State Party - De-recognition of Parties
2. Structural and organizational Reforms - Party organizations – National, State and local levels - Inner Party democracy - Regular Party Elections, recruitment of party cadres, socialization, development and training, research, thinking and policy planning activities of the party.
3. Problems of Party Funding -Need for a Legislation to regulate party funds - distribution and spending of party funds during non-election and election times.
4. Maintenance of Regular Accounts by the Political Parties-Auditing and publishing – making audited accounts available for open inspection.

5. Party system and Electoral system - To what extent and in what way the electoral system could be reformed so as to pave the way for the establishment of stable governments based on the concept of two party system or dual party alliance system - Do we need to change the system of single member constituencies to a mixed system or a proportional method of representation along with the simple majority system ?
6. Steps to check criminalisation of political parties .
7. Steps to curb the role of casteism and communalism.
8. Problem of proliferation of independent candidates.
9. Strengthening of Anti-Defection Measures.- Amendments in Anti- defection Law
10. Party system and governance - How to make parties as viable instruments for good governance?
11. Restoration of values and morality in public life.

7.3 Suggestions for Reform: A number of academic and research Institutions, political observers and analysts, Committees and Commissions appointed by the Government of India from time to time and concerned scholars, journalists and academicians in their individual capacities have made a number of proposals for reforms in the party system in India. Some of the most significant of these are culled here in order to provide a perspective for framing recommendations for party reforms.

7.3.1 *President K R Narayanan*

Political parties should ensure that criminals are denied tickets for elections. Entry of criminals can be prevented without passing any law. It is within the powers of the political parties to see that no criminal or people with the reputation of being in criminal activities are selected as candidates. There is no need for any amendment in People's Representation Act or in the Constitution for that.

Anti-Defection Law, under which one-third members of the total strength of a party are allowed to split it, is not working well. If anybody wants to change his party after being elected on that party's ticket, he should resign from Parliament or the Legislature and face electorate.. If there is a rule like that, may be very few defections will take place.

7.3.2 Center for Policy Research Study (Lok Raj Baral) on Party Reforms (2000):

1. Reforming the first-past-the-post system of election. The German model that accepts a preferential voting system can be examined for insuring proportionate representation of parties in parliament.
2. Since all parties work in tandem with unscrupulous business lobbies and gangsters or use state power for determining the outcome of elections, these cancerous trends need to be checked for good governance.
3. Political parties should have minimum principles for forming a coalition government rather than forge alliances only to be in government. Unprincipled political alignment should be discouraged by law urging political parties to be more homogenous in their joint endeavours of running the coalition government.
4. Support to be rendered to any government from "outside", i.e. without joining the coalition government,, should be legally barred. Only a party having at least 25 per cent seats in the Lower House of parliament or Assembly should have a chance to form the government.
5. No government should be removed from office if the opposition parties or others involved in the toppling game fail to come out with a clear alternative arrangement and programme.
6. The kind of coalitional arrangements that the parties make should be clear before forming the government. Developments so far show that the big parties themselves prefer to play second fiddle to the regional and smaller parties whose immediate interests are determined by 'regional and parochial' issues rather than long term national programmes.
7. Parties need to strengthen their managerial and crisis management capacity. If the party organizations are better managed and democratized, their efficiency would increase. More autonomy to all layers and more inner-party democracy would help circulate leaders on the basis of their qualities. The criterion of achievement rather than ascription should be accepted by all parties. Unless parties are broad based in accommodating all segments of society, they continue to become status quoist, exclusivist, regional and sectarian.
8. Parties' own code of conduct and self-initiated reforms, rather than state-imposed reforms are likely to improve the working of parties. [Lok Raj Baral, "Political Parties and Governance in South Asia" in V. A. Pai Panandikar, *Problems of Governance in South Asia* (Delhi, Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd.,2000), pp. 155-199.]

7.3.3 V. M. Tarakunde Committee (1974-75)

The Tarakunde Committee on Electoral Reforms was appointed by Jayaprakash Narayan on behalf of the Citizens of Democracy, an independent organization. An important recommendation of this committee was that there should be a law requiring all recognized political parties to keep audited accounts and sources of all income and details of expenditure, with false accounts being a punishable offence.

7.3.4 Dinesh Goswami Committee Report (1990)

The main recommendations of the Committee were as follows:

- a three-member election commission and appointment of the Chief Election commissioner in consultation with the Chief Justice of India and the leader of the opposition and the appointment of other Election commissioners in consultation with CEC;
- a fresh de-limitation of the constituencies on the basis of 1981 census and rotation of seats reserved for SCs and STs;
- issuing of multi-purpose photo identity cards to voters;
- disallowance of contesting by candidates from more than two constituencies;
- the raising of security deposits of independent candidates and forfeiture of security deposits of all candidates failing to secure at least 1/4th of the votes polled;
- a statutory status to the model code of conduct formulated by the Election Commission;
- introduction of electronic voting machine;
- legislative measures against booth-capturing, rigging and intimidation of voters;
- limited state-funding in kind to recognized political parties, to begin with;
- transportation of voters, carrying of fire arms, sale and distribution of liquor on poll day to be cognizable electoral offence in law;

- restriction of disqualification under the anti-defection law to voluntary resignation and violation of party whips only in cases of vote of confidence, money bills and vote of thanks to the President;
- a review of the electoral system by a standing Committee of the Parliament and by an expert Committee.

Chapter 5 of the Goswami Committee Report also made some recommendations relating to political parties and candidates. The main reform proposed was the deletion of Section 29(A) of the RP Act concerning registration of parties. The matter, instead should be delegated to be solely decided by the Election Commission under the Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment, 1968). The Committee did not feel the necessity for recognizing electoral alliances of political parties or changing present procedure of allotment of symbols.

7.3.5 *Justice V. R. Krishna Iyer Committee (1994)*

The Iyer Committee recommended that a law should ensure inner-party democracy in all political parties. It also reiterated a legal sanction for proper audit and accounts. Besides it proposed the institution of a Commissioner to examine and decide whether a political party was promoting communalism or in any way acting against the Constitution.

Law Commission's Report (1998)

The recommendations of the Law Commission could be summed up as follows:

- Independent candidates be barred from contesting elections to the Lok Sabha and legislative assemblies.
- Full five year term for the legislatures.
- In order to contain defections, a “pre-poll coalition” or front of political parties should be treated as a “political party”.

- Inclusion in the RPA to regulate the formation, functioning and income-expenditure accounts of political parties and to avoid their splintering and ensure internal democracy.
- Scrapping of explanation I to section 77(1) of the RPA to make the electoral system more representative, fair and transparent - making it obligatory for every candidate to declare his/her assets and of his/ her spouse and dependent relations as well as provide particulars regarding criminal cases pending against them.
- On state of funding of political parties, recommendations of the Indrajit Gupta Committee subject to certain changes, be adopted.
- In case of electoral offences and certain other serious offences, framing of a charge by the court should itself be a ground for disqualification in addition to conviction. Relevant provisions of the Criminal Procedure be amended to check false complaints.
- Only a candidate obtaining 50 percent or more votes be declared elected, holding of “run off” elections wherever necessary.
- Any party, which receives less than five percent of the total vote in elections to the Lok Sabha and Assemblies “shall not be entitled to any seat”.
- Use of electronic voting machine.
- Restriction on frequency of “no-confidence motions”
- List system on the German model for 25% or 50% additional seats and concept of negative vote.

7.3.7 *Justice Kuleep Singh Panel:*

1. To prevent criminalisation of politics, the candidates with a criminal background or those facing substantial criminal charges framed by a court be debarred from contesting elections.

2. Just as government servants facing criminal proceedings are placed under suspension until cleared by the courts, the same yardstick should be applied to politicians as well.

3. Election Commission should bring effective changes in the model code of conduct to exclude candidates from contesting elections who have criminal proceedings pending against them. And, if the Election Commission cannot do this, Parliament must do it.

4. More effective laws be created that will prevent criminals from entering the political process. The legal reforms can push criminals out of the system. New legal initiatives such as amendments in Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act 1951 could empower the Election Commission to deal with crime-tainted politicians.

5. If we cannot bar criminals from contesting elections until they are convicted by the courts, then the next best course would be to get speedy verdicts in their cases. Special courts and benches to try cases against legislators and other high profile people should be set up for speedy trials.

7.3.8 *Suggestions by Academics/ Scholars/ Journalists etc.:*

In Canada, a Royal Commission on electoral Reform and Party Financing appointed by the Government of Canada in November 1989 which sponsored a score of academic studies on the problem and held hearings, submitted its recommendations in four volumes in 1993. Some of the recommendations of this Commission as well as some Canadian practice in this regard in vogue since the early years of this century may be considered for adoption in India. Volume 3 of the Report which is presented in the form of a model legislation has some interesting ideas about political parties, constituency associations and party foundations. The proposed legislation lays down detailed legal requirements for registration of parties, their constituency association, and party foundations under this parliamentary law. Each of these organizations is registered under Section 24 of the model Act on the condition that they must have a constitution that shall:

- (a) promote democratic values and practices in a manner consistent with the spirit and intent of the Canadian Charter of rights and freedoms;

- (b) provide clear and consistent rules on the selection of candidates, leaders, delegates if any, and officers;
- (c) provide that members of the party who select the party's candidates, delegates to a leadership convention or a party leader must be voters.

The proposed legislation also provides other legal requirements to facilitate smooth functioning of these organizations and procedure for settlement of disputes. A party foundation may be registered under this Act by a recognized party as "a distinct and permanent institution":

- (a) to develop and promote public policy options,
- (b) educate party members on matters of public policy, and
- (c) provide the party with research and advise on policy.

These party foundations are to be incorporated under the Canada Corporation's Act. The Canadian Royal Commission believed in full disclosure of the size and source of contributions to parties and candidates to forestall any undue influence on elected officials by contributors of large amounts. It recommended submission of interim unaudited report of all contributions by registered parties and their ancillary organizations for the first six months of the year and a "full audited return on their financial activities for the entire year".

Indian parties should seriously consider adopting the leadership convention system. This will have the following positive results. First, it would make the leadership selection process more democratic and federal. Second, the nation would introduce a nationally aggregative mechanism in major parties and curb the tendency of regionalisation and fragmentation. If the national is found too expensive, a series of state conventions may be held by major parties with their respective slates of candidates (common for all the states in one party). This will go a long way in making parties aggregative and thus more functional in a parliamentary federal system of governance. The continued fragmentation of the party system, confederalization of all-India parties and mushrooming of regional parties, besides causing Governmental instability, also presage the sinister prospect of making any parliamentary government well nigh impossible.[M. P. Singh, Towards Greater Federalism, *The Pioneer*, 16 December 1997.]

The Joint Committee of Parliament on Amendments to Electoral Laws (1971-72) considered and rejected the proposal for changing the First –past- the- post (FPTP) system, but recommended the formation of an expert committee to review it. V. M. Tarakunde Committee argued for adopting a variant of the German system. S. L. Shakhder, the then Election Commissioner and L. P. Singh supported the view. Goswami Committee failed to reach any conclusion. No body has argued for a pure PR system but a mix of PR and plurality system. The precise composition of the mixture varies. The Tarakunde Committee recommended two alternative formulae for consideration. The first was the German formula (double vote, half of the seats by direct plurality system, ‘top-up’ on the basis of the second vote, provision for additional members) modified, if necessary, to change the mix of direct and list seats from $\frac{1}{2} : \frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{2}{3} : \frac{1}{3}$.

The second involved an innovative suggestion: single vote polling as in the present system, all candidates who secure a majority of votes to be declared elected directly, the rest of the seats to be filled from party lists according to the proportion of votes for each party (top-up procedure) with some relaxation for independents.

The measures suggested by various committees and ECs only reflect a mechanist approach. The idea that candidates who stand no chance of winning election through the electoral process and are thus a nuisance is to take a narrow view of the political process. The electoral arena is a training ground for political participation. Even if the independent candidates file the nomination and then withdraw it, or contest and then retire midway through the campaign, they have done their job. Moreover, unrestricted opportunity to contest is a virtue in itself even if it serves no purpose. As for the multiplicity of candidates, the answer would lie in strengthening the contingent arrangements of the election machinery. Steps to discourage ‘dummy’ candidates are surely in order. The recent experiment of denying facilities to those candidates who have made public declarations to support another is a useful step in that direction. It would be justified, perhaps necessary, to ban the practice of a candidate contesting simultaneously from more than one constituency of the same category.

There should be some minimal external regulation to ensure that there is a minimal level of democracy in the party. But this should not be linked to registration or eligibility to contest elections.

On the role of money in elections, the concern cannot be confined within the agenda of electoral reform, it must relate to larger questions of transforming the structure of economy, the model of development and the institutional design of democracy. At a more concrete plane, the question refers to the direct relationship between the monetary resources of a candidate/ party and capacity to win an election. Although this direct relationship exists in today's India, it is not yet a decisive factor in the electoral outcome. Those with greater monetary resources do enjoy an edge in registering their presence in the electoral campaign. More importantly, those without resources often fail to cross the minimal threshold of publicity for this reason. But we must refrain from drawing an extreme picture of a direct causal relationship, for candidates and parties with virtually unlimited resources routinely lose the elections to those who cannot match them in these terms.

The law on ceiling should be changed in one of the following ways: (a) either the statutory limit should be scrapped altogether and replaced by a selective ban on certain kinds of expenditure. Or the existing provisions should be amended to provide for: (i) much higher ceiling than what currently exists; (ii) regular revision of the ceiling before every general election; (iii) all the expenditure, irrespective of who paid for it, to be brought within the purview of this provision; (iv) mechanism for routine verification /auditing of the return of the expenditure; and (v) publicity of the returns filed by the candidate in the local press. The most effective measure and the only guarantee lies in a political culture of simplicity, so that any ostentatious expenditure can be expected to work against the candidate's electoral prospects.

On political funding, Pai Panandikar and Ramashray Roy proposals that the basic framework of state-sponsored election Fund is to be apportioned according to vote share of different parties/ candidates is sound and needs to be accepted immediately with the proviso that all state funding should be only in kind. However a principal objective is to discourage 'non-serious' parties and candidates. The suggestions made by the two scholars are:

- state funding should not be exclusive; parties and candidates should be free to raise funds from other sources subject to an overall ceiling of expenditure.
- The amount should be given to parties, which should be left free to disburse it to the candidates/party offices.
- The party must spend at least 50% of the funds during the election campaign and it should be allowed to spend the remaining amount (upto 50%) during the next five years before the subsequent general election.

- The entire amount should be accounted for and audited without any restriction on internal budgeting.
- The eligibility threshold should operate at the state level and be reduced to bare minimum (say 2% of the vote share in a state or 5% in a constituency, in the case of an independent) so as to exclude only the dummy candidates or paper organizations.
- The payment should be made conditional upon regular democratic election of the highest decision making body and office bearers of the party (the EC and the Supreme Court should have the power to adjudicate any dispute in this regard).

The basic idea is to bring nearly every serious party within the ambit of state funding, provide them with some minimum financial resources to contest election and carry out regular political work in between elections, and to link this assistance to internal democratic functioning.

Panandikar-Roy proposals on State Funding recommend (i) state funding of elections on an exclusive basis ; (ii) the creation of an election fund at Rs. 10 per vote polled throughout the country; (iii) a special funding agency or the EC to administer the fund; (iv) the fund to be apportioned on the basis of votes secured by candidates in the election, subject to a ceiling of Rs. 1 million per seat contested; (v) the amount to be released to individual candidates (and not political parties) on the basis of nominations made; (vi) 50 percent to be released as an advance, before elections, on the basis of previous performance; (vii) the minimum threshold for eligibility for state subvention to be 20 percent of national votes for national or major parties (10% for minor or new parties) and (viii) detailed account of the candidate to be audited by the EC.

[Yogendra Yadav, CSDS, in M. P. Singh and Rekha Saxena, *Ideologies and Institutions in Indian Politics pp. 416-444*]

The Government of India should identify some of the major contours of policy for curbing the incidence of political violence and terrorism:

- a. There should be a clearly enunciated set of policies on these issues--indicating 'thus far and no further', for the understanding of the militants and Naxalites as also for the democratic regimes within the States.
- b. It would be desirable to have a loose federation instead of a centralized federation of the earlier days. This would make autonomy worthwhile for the groups concerned.
- c. It would also be worthwhile to adopt a loose federal union with a decentralized political order which would mean more autonomy to the States from the Union and from the States to the local bodies within a State. This has not happened so far as the Central Government is concerned.
- d. Alternative forms of autonomous units within India, like Gorkhaland in Darjeeling district in West Bengal, should be experimented with all earnestness.
- e. It should be made clear to all and sundry that violence would not be tolerated or accepted as a basis of settlement of problems. At the same time it would be worthwhile to admit mistakes of the past, and to provide a constructive basis for lasting solution of outstanding problems. This would provide some solace to those persons who have suffered unnecessarily in the violence and a hope for the future.
- f. Military and police may be used to the least possible extent against the Naxalites or militants, thereby avoiding confrontation as also encouraging them to come to the discussion table.
- g. While taking the measures needed, the issues at stake must be currently understood and solutions sought so that eventually, they can become part and parcel of the national mainstream.

[Iqbal Narain, "The Party system", in Upendra Baxi, Alice Jacob, and Tarlok Singh, *Reconstructing the Republic* (New Delhi, Har-Anand Publications, 1999), pp. 311-318.]

The existing requirement of the four percent of the total number of valid votes polled or the recognition of political parties as contained in Clause (B) of Sub-Paragraph (2) of Paragraph 6 of the Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968 is certainly low. It should be increased to ten per cent. However, the best way to reduce the number of parties, would be to encourage and regulate through law mergers of groups in larger parties or alliances having the same or similar ideologies and/or programmes. This would eliminate duplication of effort and promote the chances of a clearer electoral verdict.

It is very necessary that political parties, especially the well organized and well established parties, such as the National Parties and the State Parties should take special care in selecting and setting up as candidates only those persons who, if elected, could be able to discharge their most responsible and onerous jobs as members of such representative institutions. They should be persons of high qualities of mind, heart, and character. They should be persons possessing intelligence, breadth of vision, warm human sympathies, receptiveness to new ideas without any inhibition, balanced judgement, capacity for hard work, mastery of detail and above all sterling character.

In order to ensure a free and fair poll it is necessary that the electoral code of conduct should be observed by all the political parties. As it is found that the code of conduct is of little practical value since no party or candidate observes the various rules and instructions laid down in such Code of Conduct, the model Code of Conduct should be given legal teeth. And in addition to legal teeth behind the code, it is education of the electorate and discouragement of selfish leaders that would help more to remove the problem.

There should be express provision for de-recognition of political parties, if there is violation of Sub-Section (5) of Section 29 A of R. P. Act 1951.9 relating to upholding of the allegiance to the Constitution of India and to the principles of socialism, secularism and democracy and the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India. It is to be noted that a recent draft Bill on electoral reform provides for de-registration of political parties. However, there is a provision for appeal in Courts. [Raisa Ali, *Representative Democracy and Concept of Free and Fair Elections* (New Delhi, Deep & Deep, 1996)]

Under the Indian system, where everyone from a poor peon to the secretary in the ministry, has to possess some minimum qualification, from a mere matriculation to a degree, the honourable members of Parliament are an exception. So are the ministers. And despite this, they are acceptable. Today, a person can be a Law Minister without even a nodding familiarity with law and an Education Minister without any formal education. During the last 50 years, there have been several such instances all over the country. Should we not lay down some qualifications: Impeccable integrity, Proven ability, Academic standards in consonance with the requirements of the job, otherwise leaders can be a liability. And surely,, rule of the majority does not mean rule by the illiterate. [Jawaharlal Gupta, While the worst are full of passion, in the *Hindustan Times*, 28 June 2000.]

Chief Election Commissioner M S Gill's proposal to make it mandatory for all political parties to nominate at least a third of women candidates for the seats contested by them deserves to be commended. If they are not prepared to accept the principle of representation within their own parties, what moral right do they have to advocate reserving parliamentary constituencies for women?

Reservations have not always benefited the disadvantaged for whom they were intended --usually, the more powerful in a particular section which has got reservation benefits from it [Times of India, 14 June 2000, p. 14]

There is need for a law to make it compulsory for every recognized political party to annually declare and publish, along with its constitution and list of duly elected office bearers, the list of its primary members and the subscriptions collected from them, among all other sources. Registration and renewal of such registration should be subject to a reasonable verification of the facts stated. The party constitution itself must be totally democratic in content and spirit, quite transparent and must provide for periodic elections by the primary members. Non-compliance of provisions in this behalf should render the party disqualified from contesting elections.

As Jha (op.cit.) puts it:

Today no political party, within its own ranks and cadres, is uniformly representative of the society. Yet, each party, for its own political compulsions, has its own readymade stand on all contentious issues concerning representations for this, that or the other section of the society.

If people want their representatives to be worthy of their trust they must choose them on their individual merit. There is an acute dearth of genuinely, public-spirited performers among the country's new rulers.

The form of nomination paper to be filed by the candidates in an election should have adequate space for mandatory enumeration of the record of voluntary and selfless

public service rendered so far by the candidate, and it should be properly authenticated, documented and publicized for the benefit of the electors.

Criminals can be effectively kept out by having the polls in two rounds. The final round should take place after a gap of two weeks in which only the two best achievers of the first round should be permitted to contest. There should be no countermanding of polls in the event of the death of a candidate unless he happens to be one of the two finalists. That will be the end of bogus, dummy, transparently fraudulent so called "non-serious" candidates and the size of the ballot paper would be never more than a small slip of paper, thus resulting in considerable economy in cost of paper and printing as well as its handling and transport throughout the election process. People know who's who in the constituency best, and no criminal can hope to get more than 50% of votes in a virtual 100% poll, nor hope to win solely on the basis of appeals in the name of caste, religion, etc.

While there is every reason to revise the ceiling on poll expenditure by candidates and their parties, the right people to finance an election are obviously those who support the candidate or his party. There can be designated accounts in specified banks in all parts of the constituency where the supporters can deposit their contributions, subject to disclosing their full identity, proof of their status as an elector of the constituency and the last income tax return filed by them. Political parties can have the arrangements over an extended area subject to reasonable conditions and could operate such accounts throughout the year whereas the individual candidate's accounts ought to be opened on filing nominations and closed on declaration of results. [Shivendra K. Sinha, "Toward a People Centered Polity: Political Parties, Legislators and Electoral Reforms" in *Politics India*, October 1998, pp. 24-28.]

8. Conclusion:

8.1 *Need for a Legislation governing political parties*

There is a need for a comprehensive legislation (may be named Political Parties (Regulation) Act) regulating the functioning of political parties in India. The legislation should provide conditions for the constitution of a political party and for recognition, registration and de-registration. Until now the recognition and registration of political parties is done only for the limited purpose of allocating symbols. The new law,

however, should prescribe not only the conditions for the establishment of the political party, but also provisions for regulating the functioning of political parties after establishment. It should be made compulsory for every political party to get registered under the proposed Act. Any party so constituted under the proposed Act should declare its allegiance to the provisions to the Constitution and the sovereignty and integrity of the nation. The legislation should also prescribe that every political party should abide by the spirit of democracy in its internal management and operation and should observe inner party democracy in its decision making process. It should provide that elections to the various levels of party organs should be held at least once in three years. It should also make it mandatory for political parties to provide for a representation of at least 30 percent of its organizational positions at every level for women. The leaders of political parties should also make sure that at least 30 percent of their party tickets are distributed amongst the women at the time of elections. The legislation should make it compulsory for the parties to maintain accounts about the receipts of funds and expenditures in a systematic and regular way. The form of accounts of receipt and expenditure and declaration about the sources of funds may be prescribed by an independent body of Accounts & Audit experts, created under this proposed Act. The accounts should also be audited by the same independent body, created under the legislation who should also prepare a report on the financial status of the political party which should be open and available to public for study and inspection. The proposed law should make it compulsory for the political parties to make their candidates declare their assets and liabilities at the time of their nomination being filed before the returning officers for elections to any office at any level of government. It should provide for limiting the expenditures of the political parties in relation to holding public rallies and large scale demonstrations and protests which hardly serve any effective purpose in these days of high tech electronic media, which is far more effective and economical and causes least inconvenience to public than the very frequent huge public rallies and large protests in capital cities. In this way the political parties would also be spared the burden of huge expenditure on all sorts of illegitimate or dubious means adopted to raise that amount of money for that kind of expenditure. [Malaysia has imposed a total ban on large scale rallies for political demonstration and/or for election purposes.] The money saved could be more fruitfully employed in other more important activities of political parties, such as educating the voters through door to door contacts and /or sensitizing their own party-men in respect of various controversial issues facing the nation.

Only those parties, which are registered under the proposed Act be allowed to contest elections.

8.2 *Criteria for Registration*

- (a) The law should define the criteria of registration of political parties. Every political party or a pre-poll alliance of political parties should be compulsorily registered under the proposed Act. The Registration authority can be the Election Commission of India.
- (b) The criteria for registration as a national party be revised to at least securing of 10% of the valid votes polled by all the candidates in at least one half of the states.
- (c) The parties be designated as State parties if they secure the required percentage of at least 10% of total votes cast in any of the states.
- (d) Only parties or a pre-poll alliance of political parties registered as National parties with the Election Commission be allowed to contest for the Lok Sabha. State parties may contest for State Legislatures and the Council of States (Rajya Sabha).

8.3 *Criteria for De-Registration*

The law should define the criteria and conditions for de-registration of political parties, and the decision of the Election Commission in this respect should be final,, subject to the judicial appeal to High Court/Supreme Court on points of law. For example, one of the criteria for de-registration could be the non-adherence to the conditions prescribed for registration or obtaining of registration in the first instance by fraudulent means or wrong declarations.

8.4 *Structural requirements*

The constitution of the parties submitted for Registration under the law should provide for:

- (a) a declaration to the adherence to the democratic values and norms of Constitution in their inner party organizations
- (b) a declaration to shun violence for political gains
- (c) a declaration not to resort to casteism and communalism for political mobilisation, but to adhere to the principles of secularism in the achievement of their objectives
- (d) provision for party conventions to nominate and select candidates for political offices at the grass root and state level
- (e) representation to the women and weaker sections of the society in party offices and candidates for contesting of polls.

8.5 *Educational Training and Developmental Activities*

Political parties should in their constitution provide for establishing some institutional mechanism for planning, thinking and research on crucial socio-economic issues facing the nation and educational cells for socializing their party cadres and preparing them for responsibilities of governance.

8.6 *Leadership conventions*

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Indian parties should seriously consider adopting the leadership convention system, as is practiced in countries like Canada, and the USA. This would have the advantage first, of making the leadership election process more open, democratic, and federal. Second, the people will know in advance of the prospective Prime Ministerial candidates. Third, it would introduce a nationally aggregative mechanism in major parties and curb the tendency of regionalisation and fragmentation. If the national convention is found too expensive, a series of staggered state conventions may be held by major parties with their respective slates of candidates (common for all the states in

one party). This will go a long way in making parties aggregative and thus more functional in a parliamentary federal system of governance.

8.7 *Stabilising the Parliamentary System*

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Following suggestions may be considered

- (a.) Rules of procedure may provide for the election of the Leader of the House by the Lok Sabha along with the election of the Speaker and in the like manner. The Second Ballot system be adopted, in case no candidate secures a majority in the first round. The Leader may then be appointed as the Prime Minister. The same procedure may be followed for the Chief Minister.
- (b.) Adoption of a system of constructive vote of no confidence. For a motion of no-confidence to be brought out against a government at least 20% of the total number of members of the House should give notice. Also, the motion should be accompanied by a proposal of alternative Leader to be voted simultaneously.
- (c.) Under the present system of "first -past -the -post", candidates can get elected on a minority of votes. No candidate should be declared elected unless he or she secures more than 50% of the votes cast. If no candidate gets 50% of votes in the first run, a second run off election be held immediately the next day of the first ballot. These days of electronic voting and counting make it possible to adopt such a system without incurring heavy expenditure or need for fresh security and administrative arrangements.
- (d.) Candidates should not be allowed to contest election simultaneously for the same office from more than one constituency.
- (e.) Candidates contesting elections should be familiar with the Constitution and should be able to read, write and understand its provisions.
- (f.) The election code of conduct which should come into operation as soon as the elections are announced, is only a guideline. It should be given the sanctity of law and its violation should attract penal action. Political parties should also evolve their own codes for fair and violence free polls.

The entry of criminals in politics is a matter of great concern. Although it can be prevented by laws, but more than that it is within the powers of political parties to see that no criminals or persons with the reputation of being in criminal activities are selected as candidates. The proposed law on political parties should provide that no political party would be able to sponsor and provide ticket to a candidate who has been convicted by any court for any criminal offences or if the courts have framed criminal charges. In case of conviction, the bar should apply for six years after the completion of the period of the sentence. If any party violates this provision, the candidate involved should be disqualified and the party deregistered forthwith.

Any person convicted for any heinous crime like rape, murder, etc. should be permanently debarred from contesting for any political office.

Criminal cases against politicians pending before Courts either for trial or in appeal must be disposed off speedily by appointing Special Courts.

Vide the Representation of People (Amendment) Act, 1996, security deposit for independent candidates was enhanced to twenty times of the earlier limit, number of proposers for independent candidates increased and it had been provided that the names of the independent candidates would be listed in the ballot paper below the names of the candidates set up by the political parties. These measures to some extent succeeded in reducing the number of non-serious independent candidates. But, more needs to be done.

In order to check the proliferation of the number of the independent candidates and the malpractices that enter into the election process because of the influx of the independent candidates, the security deposits in respect of independent candidates may be raised further.

The security deposits should be doubled progressively every year for those independent candidates who fail to win and still keep contesting every election.

If any independent candidate has failed to get at least five percent of the total number of votes cast in his constituency, he/she should not be allowed to contest as independent candidate for the same office again at least for 6 years.

Any independent candidate who loses election three times consecutively for the same office as an independent candidate should be permanently debarred to contest election to that office.

An independent candidate should be nominated at least by twenty elected members of Panchayats, Municipalities or other local bodies spread out in majority of electoral districts in his constituency.

8.10 *Problem of Party Funding*

The problem of political funding is a complex and undeniable reality, and that there are no panaceas to remedy it. In effect, the premise that there are no absolute truths or ideal solutions in electoral matters has gained even more strength with regard to funding for two main reasons. One because of the close link that exists between this issue and the specific characteristics of the political system as a whole, as well as with the characteristics of the political party system in particular. Another reason is the permanent relationship posed by this subject with the values of political culture, which may mean that any solution can be evaluated in completely different ways in different contexts. For instance, whereas in Scandinavian countries the disclosure of electoral expenses and sources of funding is perceived as a violation of the fundamental principle of the right to voter secrecy, in other countries, such as Germany and Canada, these practices are viewed as exactly the opposite, as a guarantee of transparency in political activity and of the citizens' right to be duly informed.

Two other considerations deserve attention. The first one has to do with emphasising the importance of reviewing the funding system, not only in terms of the aims of the reform effort and its desired effects on the political system and system of political

parties, but also with respect to the degree of effectiveness of regulations as well as their undesirable or immoral effects. The second expresses the need to insist that not every reform to the funding system must be analysed separately, but rather as an integral part of political/electoral reforms as a whole. This is so because the consequences of such an analysis affect very important aspects, such as competition among parties, conditions for competition, the system of political parties and, consequently, the very credibility and legitimacy of democracy itself.

Moreover, every reform on this issue must be aimed at achieving greater and improved levels of transparency with respect to party revenues and expenditures. In fact, the issue of transparency and public disclosure is crucial to the fight against political corruption. In principle, this need would seem more fitting with regard to hefty contributions than for small ones, since greater the contribution, the greater the risk of dependence and the greater the danger of corruption. Thus, there is a need for greater transparency and public disclosure in respect of party funding. This demand for transparency must be conceived, rather, as a democratic value in itself, a tool designed to avoid any wrongful influences of money in politics that might lead to corruption.

If laws are intended to be effective with regard to transparency, they should be very general in nature and be enforced with respect to everyone, and not just political parties or candidates, but also to the donors as well. Otherwise, alternate or indirect ways to evade control will be devised. In fact, while it is essential to strengthen regulation, the mechanisms and capabilities of supervision and controlling entities, this only addresses part of the problem. Quite often, funding and commitments do not reach the parties, but rather go directly to the candidate and his/her inner circle of supporters. This is truer today in the context of the image and credibility crisis that partisan organisations have been undergoing, and the emergence of regional leaders due to the decentralisation process. This usually tends to make transactions between donors and beneficiaries become even more secretive. Hence, the main leaders or party members are often not aware of private contributions (many of them dubious in origin and in quite large sums), but only the candidate and his/her inner circle, which frequently consists of private contributors and/or individuals not involved in the party.

Consequently, any proposals for reforms concerning political funding should revolve, among other things, around the following five main objectives: (i) reducing the influence of money by diminishing its impact (by shortening campaigns, establishing ceilings on expenditure and limiting individual contributions); (ii) improving the use of money by investing it on more productive activities for the sake of democracy, and not just squandering it on propaganda and negative campaigns; (iii) stopping, or at least curtailing, as much as possible, current levels of influence peddling and political corruption; (iv) strengthening public disclosure and transparency mechanisms with

respect to both the origin and the use of funds; and (v) promoting fairer requirements for elections, particularly concerning access to the media.

8.11 *Regulating political contributions*

There is a need for one comprehensive legislation regarding the regulation of political contributions to political parties and towards election expenses. The various existing provisions in different Acts need to be consolidated into a single law regulating the flow of funds to political parties both from the internal as well as external sources.

Legislation should provide for compulsory auditing of the accounts of all political parties registered with the Election Commission by an independent authority specified under the new law regulating the functioning of political parties, publishing of audited party account, and immediate de-recognition and enforcement of penalties for filing false or incorrect election returns. Accounts should be made available for public inspection.

Legislation should also contain provisions for making both donors and receivers of political funds accountable.

Individuals and corporate agency be permitted to make contributions to the political parties upto a certain ceiling higher than the present 5% of profits and an incentive be provided in terms of tax concessions.

The Government should encourage the corporate bodies and agencies to establish an electoral trust which should be able to finance political parties on an equitable basis at the time of elections.

8.12 *Controlling Electoral Expenditure*

In view of the increasing cost of the election campaigns, it is desirable that the existing ceiling on election expenses for the various legislative bodies be suitably raised to a reasonable level reflecting the increasing costs. However, this ceiling should include all the expenses by the candidate as well as by his political party or his friends and his well-wishers or any other expenses incurred in any political activity sponsored on behalf of the candidate by an individual or a corporate entity. Such a provision should be the part of a legislation regulating political funding in India.

8.13 *Monitoring Election Expenditure*

The Election Commission should devise specific format(s) for filing of election returns by the candidates as well as political parties in such a manner that the fudging of accounts be made difficult. These accounts should be monitored through a system of checking and cross-checking through the income-tax returns filed by the candidates, parties and their well-wishers.

The Election Commission should organize training-cum-orientation workshops for the candidates and party agents to enable them to manage party accounts and election expenses in the format prescribed by the Election Commission, especially on the eve of elections.

A suitable law should be enacted providing penalties against damaging or desecrating public or private property by candidates, political parties or the agents, through painting of slogans or erecting cutouts and hoarding or putting banners and buntings. The law should also provide for special courts to ensure strict compliance of these regulations, should any dispute arise in respect of the alleged violations of such regulations by any candidate, political party or his agents and well-wishers.

8.14 *Patrimony of candidates and politicians*

A useful tool in the fight against corruption would be legislation to make it possible to ascertain details about the patrimony of candidates by means of public affidavits reporting on it. Such affidavits should be audited by the Special Authority created by the proposed law on Political Parties. During their term of office, elected officials should also submit audited reports on a yearly basis, as well as a final audited statement at the end of their term of office. This type of measures would serve to keep the public fully informed about the patrimony and lifestyle of politicians before they assume power, during their term of office and at its conclusion, thereby avoiding any unlawful acquisition of wealth.

8.15 *Strengthening of Anti-Defection Measures*

In order to curb the insidious practice of defection, the law should be amended to specifically provide that all persons defecting from the party or the alliance of party, on whose tickets they had been elected must resign from their parliamentary or assembly seats and must contest fresh elections. In other words, they should lose their membership and the protection under the provision of split etc. should be scrapped. The defectors should also be debarred to hold any public office of a minister or any

other remunerative political post for at least the duration of the remaining term of the existing legislature or until, the next fresh elections whichever is shorter.

8.16 *Party System and Governance*

1. As the parties provide the necessary political leadership for governance, it is necessary that the incumbent to public offices must be chosen on the basis of their integrity and capacity to administer. If the political parties have a continuous program of grooming the potential members of their parties for different types of assignments corresponding to the ministries and departments of the government, things would become easier and a smooth transition of the government could take place. At the same time, the parties could contribute effectively to the processes of policy formulation, implementation and governance even while remaining in opposition.
2. The practice of political parties extending support to the government from the parliamentary floor from outside is an amoral exercise of power without responsibility. This inhibits the process of governance and has been the immediate cause of premature collapse of all the governments since 1989. This must be disallowed, if the coalition governments have to survive and carry on their task of governance.
3. The practice of bloating the Council of Ministers must be stopped. A ceiling on the number of Ministers in any state or the Union government be fixed at the maximum of 10% of the total strength of the lower house of the legislature.
4. The practice of creating a number of political offices equivalent to the position or privileges of a minister should also be stopped. Any new administrative organization should only be created through regular administrative procedures and only if the provisions have been made in the regular budget estimates of the government concerned.
5. The think tanks in various political parties' organizations should occasionally come out with alternative policy perspectives in the form of a "Green Paper" for want of a

better term on some of the crucial issues facing the nation at a given moment and be widely circulated amongst the public, the media, intellectuals and others to elicit alternative opinions on the subject.

6. In times of emergencies, or national calamities, the parties should not eschew taking specific responsibilities in assisting governments in their activities to tie over the crisis.

8.17 *Restoring Moral Standards in Public Life*

To the question what can be done for the restoration of moral standards and ethical values in public life, there is no simple answer. In the context of the current feeling of resignation to corruption and unethical and criminal practices in public life, and the disposition to consider them as inevitable and, therefore, acceptable, it may be well to remember Gandhiji's observation that "Life is an aspiration...the ideal must not be lowered because of our weakness and imperfections", and the fact of his life long resistance to evil in many forms - from racialism and imperialism to untouchability.

Thus, in addition to measures like the proposed legislation to effectively curb defections and operation of black money, break the nexus between electoral politics, economic resources and criminal support, and establishing the institution of Lok Pal, it is necessary that a rigorous Code of Conduct be drawn for both Ministers/Legislators and important functionaries of all political parties, which should incorporate what the Nolan Committee in the U.K. has suggested as the seven principles of public life-- viz., selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness,, honesty and leadership.

A Public Ethics Committee consisting of representatives of all Political Parties and some eminent public persons of impeccable integrity and acceptability may be constituted to oversee, monitor and enforce the adherence to this code.

QUESTIONNAIRE
ON
REVIEW OF THE WORKING OF POLITICAL PARTIES SPECIALLY IN RELATION
TO ELECTIONS AND REFORM OPTIONS

1. Are political parties necessary in a democracy?

Yes

No

2. Do you think that political parties in India have been performing their functions effectively?

Yes

No

3. Do you think that political parties should have ideological stance in their policies and programmes?

Yes

No

4. Have the political parties in India stuck to their ideological perspective?

Yes

No

5. Do you think it is good for the political parties not to be ideologically rigid but should have a pragmatic view about the programmes and policies of the government?

Yes

No

6. Do you approve of political parties following the following approach?

Pragmatic

Programmatic

Populist

7. Do you subscribe to the view that there is a need for comprehensive legislation for regulating the functioning and conduct of political parties in India as suggested in para 6.1 of the paper.

Yes

No

8. Do you think that state should continually oversee the performance of the political parties with a view to regulate their activities?

Yes

No

9. Do you think that parties should be de-registered or de-recognized if they fail to observe necessary prescription by the constituent authority as suggested in para 6.3 of the paper?

Yes

No

10. Do you think that the political parties in India are not systematically organized?

Yes

No

11. Do you think that party leadership should emerge from bottom to the top instead of being imposed from top to the bottom?

Yes

No

12. Do you think that the problems of inner democracy and party organization could be solved by devolution and delegation of powers by the top leadership?

Yes

No

13. Do you think that party cadres/members need to be regularly sensitized or given adequate training for their political education and preparation for undertaking higher responsibility?

Yes

No

14. Do you think that there should be more planning cum research centers so that the functioning of political parties may exercise their minds?

Yes

No

15. Do you think that every political party or a pre-poll alliance of political parties should be compulsorily registered under the proposed law on political parties?

Yes

No

16. The criteria for registration as a national party may be securing the following percentage of votes polled by its candidates at the preceding elections

5%

10%

15%

17. The parties to be designated as State parties should secure the following percentage

5%

10%

15%

18. Do you agree that only parties or pre-poll alliance of parties registered as national parties be allowed to contest seats to Lok Sabha with the State parties contesting for State Legislatures and the Council of States?

Yes

No

19. Do you approve of the structural requirements for registration of parties as suggested in para 6.4 of the paper?

Yes

No

20. Are you in favour of election expenses of political parties being borne by the state either partly or fully?

Yes

No

21. Do you agree that political parties should maintain their accounts, get them audited and make them open for public scrutiny?

Yes

No

22. Are you in favour of strengthening anti-defection measures as suggested in para 6.15 of the paper in order to make it more stringent in respect of providing stable government as also ensuring stability in government?

Yes

No

23. Do you agree that particularly in a situation where no single party or pre-poll alliance commands a clear majority in the House, the question as to which leader commands the support of the majority of the members of House should better be decided only on the floor of the House and, therefore, it would be best to elect the leader of the House along with the Speaker so that the same leader of the House is appointed as the Prime Minister/Chief Minister without any need for subsequent vote of confidence or the like?

Yes

No

24. Do you agree that the Prime Minister/Council of Ministers should be removable on a vote of no-confidence only if the motion of no-confidence also includes a proposal of alternative leader to head the new Government?

Yes

No

25. At present under the first-past-the-post a large number of the winning candidates are elected by minority of votes. Do you agree that no candidate should be declared elected unless he or she secures more than 50% of the votes cast and if necessary, immediately following run off elections be held among the two candidates securing the largest and the second largest number of votes?

Yes

No

26. Should candidates be allowed to contest elections simultaneously for the same office from more than one constituency?

Yes

No

27. Should qualification of the candidates include ability to read, write and understand some basic provisions of the Constitution?

Yes

No

28. Should the code of conduct be given the sanctity with its violation attracting penal action?

Yes

No

29. Should the code of conduct come into operation on:

Announcement of the Election Notification of the Election

30. Do you agree that political parties should be prevented by law from sponsoring candidates who have been convicted by any court for some specified criminal offences or against whom court may have framed such criminal charges as suggested in para 6.8 of the paper?

Yes

No

31. Do you agree that any person convicted of heinous crime like rape, murder, etc. should be permanently debarred from contesting for any political office?

Yes

No

32. Do you favour appointment of Special Courts for considering the prima facie eligibility of candidates charged with criminal offences by any court with a view to speedy decision on eligibility without affecting decision on merits by the trial court in the normal course?

Yes

No

33. In order to check the number of non-serious independent candidates should the security deposits in case of independent candidates be raised to three times that required by party candidates as per details in para 6.9 of the paper?

Yes

No

34. Should it not be necessary for an independent candidate to have either secured at least 5% of the total votes cast in an earlier election or to be nominated at least by 20 elected members of Panchayats, Municipality or other representative bodies of the concerned area?

Yes

No

35. Do you agree that there is a need for greater transparency, public disclosure in respect of party funds including details of receipts and expenditure as suggested in para 6.10 of the paper?

Yes

No

36. Do you agree that the first requirement is to reduce the expenditure on political activity and election campaigns by political parties and their candidates by shortening campaign periods to the minimum establishing enforceable ceilings on all expenditure?

Yes

No

37. Should there be a comprehensive legislation regarding regulation of political contributions to political parties and towards election expenses?

Yes

No

38. Should the proposed law provide for compulsory auditing of the accounts of all political parties by an independent authority, publishing of audited party accounts and immediate de-recognition and enforcement of penalties for filing false election returns?

Yes

No

39. Should individual and corporate agency be permitted to make contributions to the political parties upto a certain ceiling with an incentive by way of tax concessions?

Yes

No

40. Would you agree that the existing ceiling on election expenses should be suitably raised periodically to reflect the increasing costs?

Yes

No

41. Should the ceiling on election expenses cover all expenses incurred by the candidate as well as political party friends, well-wishers, etc. as suggested in para 6.12 and 6.13 of the paper?

Yes

No

42. Should it be made binding on all candidates to submit affidavits in regard to assets and liabilities at the time of filing their nomination papers?

Yes

No

43. Should it be made necessary for all elected officials including members of the legislatures, ministers, etc. to submit audited reports on a yearly basis in regard to their receipt of funds, expenditure, assets and liabilities?

Yes

No

44. Would you suggest that the practice of political parties extending support to a Government from outside should not be allowed as it encourages power without responsibility and causes instability of coalition Government?

Yes

No

45. Do you agree that the practice of having jumbo sized Council of Ministers should be prevented by law and the number of Ministers in any State or the Union Government should be limited to a maximum of 10% of the total strength of the lower house of the legislature?

Yes

No

46. The practice of creating a number of political offices equivalent to that of a Minister should be stopped. Do you agree?

Yes

No

47. It has been suggested that in addition to measures like the proposed legislation to effectively curb defections and operation of black money, we must break the nexus between electoral politics, economic resources and criminal support, and establish the institution of Lok Pal. Also, it is necessary that a rigorous and enforceable Code of Conduct be drawn for all Ministers, Legislators and party functionaries based on principles of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership norms. Do you agree?

Yes

No

48. Do you agree that an Ethics Committee consisting of representatives of Political Parties and some eminent public persons of impeccable integrity and acceptability may be constituted to monitor, oversee and enforce adherence to the Code of Conduct?

Yes

No

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