

## AAM ADMI PARTY AND RISE OF MODERN MIDDLE CLASS IN INDIA

Raja Qaiser Ahmed\*

### **P**URPOSE

*THE purpose of the research is to trace the altering patterns of political activism in India. Rise of Middle Class and its impact on the political order of India has been attempted to be explored.*

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** *Qualitative data analysis has been applied with an exhaustive literature survey of books, articles, conference papers, and newspaper reports on the said topic.*

**Findings:** *The disparities among Indian Middle Class are giving a continuous room to the political actors to assert themselves. Aam Admi Party is the representation of Indian Middle Class's disgruntlement at large in an elite dominated framework of Indian political frame of rule.*

**Research Limitations/Implications:** *Research will be a good help and a useful study for the students of politics, economics, and management sciences as the subject of the research is interdisciplinary.*

**Originality/Value:** *Paper glimpses at the thematic overview of the Indian electoral trends, and also encompasses the most recent scenario of Indian elections.*

**Key Words:** *Middle Class, Metropolitan Bourgeois, Electoralization, Political Dynamism.*

### **Introduction**

As an offshoot to liberalized economy, post 1991, India is on the path of rampant economic growth. It has drifted India towards a major transition where millions of families who were entrenched in poverty have been uplifted and are now been placed in metropolis and resulted in a new middle class. By 2025 India would achieve the status of 5th largest consumer economy and in coming two decades its household economy will get tripled. It is the illustration of the fact that India is marching in the realm of economics which is not only strengthening this new middle class but is fortifying it. Middle Class of any country is very significant as it introduces human capital, new innovation and struggle.

Consumerism has come in limelight in the aftermath of the neo-liberal policies where India emerged as a potential consumer economy and this trend is getting upward with passing time. Economic prosperity of India and neo-middle class share a two pronged promising relationship. On the one hand, it is benefiting India with improved standard of living and on the other hand, it is maturing the sense of political representation and creating a new sphere of assertion of this newly emerged Middle Class.

India has imparted a new sense of rejuvenated nation where it has become centre of attraction for the world. This sense of getting exalted is new to India as well. India's growing economy can be elucidated

---

\* Lecturer, Defence and Diplomatic Studies, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

from the fact that when world was entrenched into the catastrophic phase of worst recession, India was commemorating its continuous annual growth of 9%, though it is on a speedy decline now a days.

### **Looking at Post Colonial India**

The impact of colonialism on the recent democratic development in India cannot be shrugged off. Strong administrative structure, strengthened political elite and intermediaries were the legacies on hand for India at the time of independence (Morris-Jones, 1964). India did not opt for any specific economic mechanism in its inceptive years after independence in 1947, rather it preferred for mixed model of economy where centralized planning was borrowed from USSR.

Like idealists who primarily focus on the institutional development, Nehru also went for the consolidation of the institutions where the strengthening of electoral practice resulted in the vibrant democratic practice which in later stages made India as the most functional democracy of the world. Democratic development is directly proportional to the political stability, so much of democratic development in India owes to the political stability (Nallari and Griffith, 2011). With India's emergence as a vibrant and stable polity, the nexus of development and democracy has become very evident and viable. This nexus operates in varying levels with the transitional structure. Level of economic development and the democratic incidence are inextricably linked (Przeworski et al., 2000).

Economic advancement has not only resulted in the uplifting of socio-economic conditions but has surged the level of consciousness, concernment, and awareness among people and they have become more concerned with their frame of rule and political order. This concerned middle class aspires for a potent assertion in the political order of its polity.

### **Politics of Middle Class in India**

The movement of Anna Hazare against corruption and rise of Aam Admi Party are the best explanation of the above mentioned phenomenon where neo-middle class endeavoured for its acknowledgement. Modern Middle Class is a post 1991 development in India. It can be regarded as third phase of evolution of Indian Middle Class which has briskly changed and improved the socio-economic conditions in rural politics and has imparted a new better standard of living but this group neither comes in elite nor on bourgeois. This class of society has got tremendous economic weight but it lacks political representation on all counts.

There has been a significant shift where small cities are becoming centers. Remote and secluded areas are also getting affected with this wave of modernity. In near future this neo metropolitan bourgeoisie is likely to expand itself as more and more areas would be incorporated in it. Economy is likely to be monopolized by the big metropolitan centers but emerging cities like Chandigarh and Ludhiana with their increasing per capita incomes are likely to capture attention in coming future. There are some other cultural specters that augmented the rise of neo-metropolitan bourgeoisie as throughout the history of India, it remained aloof as an isolationist state. It was the ideational construct of Hindutva that got translated but with the economic rise of India and its growing significance across the globe, it has become a lucrative place for the world and it impels India to redraw and reorient its concepts and constructs. It has intensified the belief of India and made it confident internationally and give it a space to assert regionally which is strengthening and consolidating the structural basis of India.

Democracy in India has got its own issues and drawbacks as well, where there is immense participation but voters have been commoditized, everything comes under the capitalistic interests. Democracy has been inextricably linked with free market and those who are not member to this chain do not matter too much or have been extricated from the system. Indian political order is also facing many challenges. Most of the people who are not sponsored lose elections. The elite dominated frame of rule has captured rather tightly gripped India which offers a little to the Middle Class. On who gets maximum share in power capabilities dominates the system. It can be regarded as elite monopolized system. The dominance of single party in functional democracy is perplexing and is making Indian democracy a stagnant

democracy. Incumbency factor is also playing its role. The hurdles in legislation, corruption at large and issues of non-governance are tarnished the face of Congress and it suffered a blow in 2014 general elections.

The access to modern means of communication along with massive awareness make people think whether democracy means deliverance or just holding procedural ballots? Corruption is a shared paradox of post-colonial states and India is also facing the same predicament. Many embezzlements and scams have been reported in the recent years where corruption seems to be systemized. There are powerful individuals and groups who favour status quo in India for their interests like many other countries where state dominates over economics. The disparities among the masses propel them to assert themselves as Jan Lokpal Bill in India has become a symbol of discontentment of Indian Middle Class.

Apparently Middle Class's politics, activism and dynamism are offshoots of rapid socio-economic change where participation and concern of Indian Middle Class along with electoral dynamism has fueled this disgruntlement. Anna Hazare is merely a lexicon of this activism which does not necessarily represent the cognitive structures and constructs of Indian elite. It is a changing pattern of political dynamism in India and a symbol of involvement and politicking of Indian Middle Class. Democracy in India would remain intact as it has got deeply consolidated and having structural roots in a society where democracy is embraced as a religion. The Middle Class ostensibly projects altering pattern of political dynamism in India.

India always envisioned itself a mature and big civilization and this civilizational character of India was pleaded cogently by Nehru who wanted India to be regarded and revered. The domination of Congress from 1947-64 gave tremendous stability to India which resulted in the consolidation of electoral politics and made electorates as vibrant and viable institution. It strengthened electoral practices at centre and even local level as well. The Indian democracy in its inceptive phase can be best understood by understanding the negotiation for power and fluctuating determinants of socio-economic importance. India went for a centralized rule but did not exclude Middle Class interests within framework that was elite dominated. With a strong and powerful centre, maximum autonomy was given to states. India maintained a very thin line balance between centralization and devolution of powers where like federal democracies, India also images itself as a centralized state. Further, it is a plain fact that demands for decentralization makes sense within a centralized frame of rule, also wealth and authority need to exist for their redistribution (Kohli, 2001).

### **India's Electoralization: A Thematic Overview**

The dynamics of Indian elections have been unfolded dramatically on 16<sup>th</sup> of May with the overwhelming majority of National Democratic Alliance led by BJP. This alliance marched on securing 336 seats in Lok Sabha where alone BJP grabbed 282. The United Progressive Alliance led by Indian National Congress could hardly grab 58 seats with Congress's toll 44. Election results are right according to the anticipations, premonitions, and expectations. Narendra Modi was sworn in as Indian Prime Minister on May 26, 2014.

Things are not as simple and as convenient as apparently they look. It is not merely win of BJP over Congress but a triumph of one narrative over other narrative. Congressional narrative since its beginning has been clung to the model of liberal democracy, Indian secularism and composite culture. BJS and Janta Culture was a counter rhetoric to the Congressional overemphasized composite culture. The Janta culture whose extension is BJP has been primarily obsessed with Hindutva, Hindu nationalism and liberal democracy. Democracy is a defining parameter in India's foreign policy (Muni, 2009).

It is quite appurtenant to narrate that Hindu nationalism of BJP with extreme centrist right ideology, in its first tenure could not crank out the anticipated outcomes rather proved to be a disaster. A deliberate attempt to alter and modify the character of national identity through forced Hindutva, religious projectionism, Babri Masjid fiasco and amendments in syllabi counterfeited. Since 1991, the

*Raja Qaiser Ahmed*

Janta culture in India was on demise. The public acceptance at large and the Janta narrative were on verge of decline. This surge in two decades is something worth intriguing and raises to more up to the minute question that why Congress got defeated and orthodoxy and conventionalism triumphed?

Though, Nehruvian model of Indian democracy has been based on democracy (Muni, 2009) but Indian secularism remained and is based on majoritarianism. The will of majority dominates. Indian secularism has its double standards when it comes to the case of criminal prosecutions. It has been substantiated in case of Gujrat massacre as well. At centre, though it is secularism that operates, but at state level it is the *Hinduization*. How Modi gets ahead with this culmination of Hindu identity with the Indian secularism will be having far lasting imprints on Indian polity in coming years.

Indian democracy has achieved the status of more substantive than participative but apparently this participative frame of rule is not accommodating the neo-metropolitan bourgeoisie and that is why Indian democracy seems to stuck on a point and is not further progressing. Critics do hold a belief that Indian democracy has become more of a gerontocracy. The new blood is also not getting warm embrace. Recent setting up of Aam Admi party and its stealing the march performance is the best elucidation of the disgruntlement among the masses pertaining the political rule in India. Though the feudal lordship in India has been abolished but powerful elite has hijacked all the system and has become lord itself (Engelmeier, 2009). Issues of corruption, incompetence, and ill governance are smacking Indian masses where resentment is rife. Nothing much damaged Congress but the swindles, scams, and embezzlements. Congress in India received more or less the same response as recently Pakistan Peoples Party was discredited in the general elections of Pakistan in May 2013.

### **Middle Class and Political Transition in India**

The Middle Class in India is seeking new avenues of participation, representation, and accommodation in a frame of political rule which is elite monopolized. This monopolistic system offers a little to the Middle Class that is why results of Indian elections are quite as they were conjectured. BJP and Congress are elite doministic political parties. Candidacy of elections and their criterion for selection to run for election speaks volume of the monstrosity of power and influence in Indian political structure.

The political parties in India themselves are unsure and obscure over the future of this system. Internal hustle in parties has constricted their vision. If the Middle Class would not be accommodated then in future these mainstream parties might face some dire consequences. It may carve out sphere for new political parties like AamAdmi party has been established. The dynamism of Anna Hazare, and Kejriwal have long rattled the Indian polity. Jai Lalitha, Mamta Banerjee, and Naveen Patnaik have become significant, considerable, and robust political forces in India.

The most haunting challenge for Modi would be accommodating the dissenting voices. India is ready to tolerate internal factionalism up to considerable level. Through pluralistic solutions, issues pertaining to the linguistic reorganization were settled, but regional issues have increased the level of bitterness. It is noteworthy to mention that India failed to establish homogenous nationalism. India lived up to a commitment that Central government would not reorganize groups with secessionist demands and no regional demand would be accepted on religious basis. For making a separate state, predominantly spoken language would not be considered. The concern of only one group will not be entertained. Related to this, some issues are irking Indian political elite even today like Mao rebels, Jai Maashtara, Khalistan, Aassam, and Kashmir. India regards Realism and culture in its foreign policy making to large extent (Engelmeir, 2009).

Congressional rule has suffered a blow back in long run but problematic question is the level of expectations from the Janta culture. Apparently, it is Middle Class activism and dynamism that poses tremendous pressure on government in centre for better governance, accountability, and something like shining India. It is an offshoot of rapid socio-economic change where participation and concern of Indian Middle Class along with electoral dynamism has fueled this disgruntlement. These political figures merely are lexicons of this activism which does not necessarily represent the cognitive structures and constructs

of Indian elite. It is a changing pattern of political dynamism in India and a symbol of involvement and politicking of Indian Middle Class. Democracy in India would remain intact as it has got deeply consolidated and having structural roots in a society where democracy is embraced as a religion. The selection of Modi as Prime Minister would definitely bring some substantive changes in India's apparent frame of political rule (Ahmed, 2014).

### **Aam Admi Party and Rise of Modern Class**

Hamza Alavi was the first one who deliberated this concept of metropolitan bourgeoisie. His focus was on dialectical Marxist notion but this neo metropolitan bourgeoisie is somehow different as it is an offshoot of neo liberal economic policies and an aftermath of public private entrepreneurship. It has resulted in the formation and consolidation of a strengthened, aware, educated and grounded Middle Class. India throughout his history has remained populously rural country but this neo metropolitan bourgeoisie is largely settled in cities and metropolis. India in its past was considered less urbanized but this trend is also getting reversed. This neo metropolitan bourgeoisie is essentially urbanite class, and trends of ruralization are getting reverted. Awareness and consciousness are not only socializing the masses but making them more concerned and active participants of the system.

India remained attached to the ideals of planned economy and democracy despite tremendous differences, conflicts, and diversity. In its inception years the ruling political elite was poles apart from the traditional notions of Mahatma Gandhi who proposed for self reliance and decentralized village republics and this elite was more inclined towards the socialist model of centralized planning. India maneuvered smartly and made a mixture of both where centralized planning borrowed from socialist model was implemented at center's level and states were given a sort of free hand. The tremendous participation in the electoral processes and its continuation sustained and dignified the democracy in India's framework. The six decades' continuation of electoral practices has made democracy a culture of India rather than just a procedural act. With the advent of liberalized economic policy and functioning institutions a new sphere of Middle Class has come into scene that is cognizant, educated, and well aware and is mostly settled in urban centers. Migration from rural areas to these centers is also taking place due to their attraction and consequence of development. This newly emerged class has been termed as neo-metropolitan bourgeoisie.

Democracy in India has got its own issues and drawbacks as well where there is immense participation but voters have been commoditized, everything comes under the capitalistic interests. Democracy has been inextricably linked with free market, and those who are not member to this chain do not matter too much or have been extricated from the system. Indian political order is also facing many challenges. Most of the people who are not sponsored lose elections. The elite dominated frame of rule has captured, rather tightly gripped India which offers a little to the Middle Class. On who gets maximum share in power capabilities dominates the system. It can be regarded as elite monopolized system. The dominance of single party in functional democracy is perplexing and is making Indian democracy a stagnant democracy. Incumbency factor is also playing its role.

The economics of a country if exceeds and undermines the political demands, the system will not persist long, even if politics monopolizes brushing economics aside. The economic system and Political system must coincide with one another to run system in balance. The political order within transitional countries is typified with expectation from government, demands, and agitation from public as an aftermath to non deliverance. The system that does not respond to the genuine concerns of the masses in long run loses its worth and significance and turns irrelevant and inappropriate. In India, still there is miserable poverty, human development index is still poor and a significant difference between those who possess and those who do not. In India, the 300 million live in a pathetic situation. 250,000 debt-ridden farmers who committed suicide and 800 million are deprived and earn less than 20 rupees a day.

### **Conclusion**

The access to modern means of communication along with massive awareness make people think cogitate whether democracy means deliverance or just holding procedural ballots? Corruption is a

Raja Qaiser Ahmed

shared paradox of post-colonial states where India is also facing the same predicament. Many embezzlements and scams have been reported in recent days where corruption seems to be systemized. There are powerful individuals and groups who favour status quo in India for their interests like many other countries where state dominates over economics. The disparities among the masses propel them to assert themselves as Arvind Kejriwal and Aam Admi Party in India has become a symbol of discontentment of Indian Middle Class.

## Questions

1. Critically analyze the altering patterns of political activism in India?
2. Discuss the rise of middle class and its impact on the political order of India?

## References

- Ahmed, R.Q. (2014). Abki Bar Modi Sarkar: Implications for Indian Political Frame of Rule, *Weekly Pulse*, Retrieved from [http://weeklypulse.org/authors\\_stories.aspx?contentID=67](http://weeklypulse.org/authors_stories.aspx?contentID=67), Accessed on May 30, 2014.
- Engelmeier, T.F. (2009). *Nation-building and foreign policy in India: An identity-strategy conflict*. New Delhi, India: Cambridge University Press India Pvt. Ltd.
- Kohli, A. (2001). Introduction. In A. Kohli (Eds.), *The Success of India's Democracy* (pp.1-20). Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.
- Morris-Jones, W.H. (1964). *The government and politics in India*. Hutchison University Library, London, U.K.: The Eothen Press
- Muni, S.D. (2009). *India's foreign policy the democracy dimension*. New Delhi, India: Cambridge University Press India Pvt. Ltd.
- Nallari, R., & Griffith, B. (2011). *Understanding growth and poverty: Theory, policy, and empirics*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- Przeworski, A., Alvarez, M.E., Cheibub, J.A., & Limongi, F. (2000). *Democracy and development: Political institutions and well-being in the World, 1950-1990*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

## Bibliography

- Anderson, R.C., Mansi, S.A., and Reeb, D.M. (2004). Board characteristics, accounting report integrity and the cost of debt, *Journal of Accounting and Economics*, 37(3), 315-442.
- Baumol, W.J. (1959). *Business behavior, value, and growth*. New York, NY: Macmillan.