

Gandhi and Nehru are castigated for their Hinduism. Michael objects to Gandhi's opinion that Dalits could "maintain a Hindu identity without the stigma of being untouchables" as "untouchability was not an essential part of Hinduism" (p.106). The supposedly "secular" Nehru is also criticised for his *Discovery of India* which expounded "a view of history which saw Vedic culture as the core within which 'non-Aryan' and other elements were assimilated, and with the caste system functioning as a basically harmonising system for this absorption" (Omvedt, *EPW*). Thus, Hinduism is the commonly painted villain of the piece. However, as John Webster points out, persons do "not automatically cease to be Dalits upon conversion to Christianity . . . instead, the evidence points to the conclusion that, at least for Dalits, the stigma of untouchability . . . (is) an Indian, rather than exclusively, a Hindu phenomenon. A communal view of caste imposes a framework . . . which seriously distorts the empirical realities

of the Dalit situation and Dalit movement."

As Nadkarni, in a well argued article has said, the truth of the matter is that Hindu society is not amenable to easy generalisations: "The most celebrated among the Sanskrit writers—Valmiki, Vyasa and Kalidasa—were not brahmins but came from the most deprived classes. Similarly, Satyakaam Jabaala, an eminent philosopher who wrote Aranyakas in Sanskrit, came from a low stratum of the society." And the most striking feature of the Bhakti movement was that it enveloped all the castes, including the untouchables. Ramanujan, Basaveshwara, Sant Jnaneshwar and Eknath, all inspired transcendence of caste and Hinduism ceased to be mere brahmanism, thanks to the Bhakti movement. Zelliott (1966) has listed several bhakti saint-poets from among the untouchables—Nandanar, Tiruppan Alvar, Ravidas, Chokhamela, Mahar Gopal Baba, and Santbai, a Chamar woman saint.

The fluidity of caste in modern times

has, in any case, been demonstrated by Narayan Guru Swamy's movement in the early 20th century which transformed the formerly untouchable caste of Ezhavas into an honoured part of Hindu society. The reorganisation of whole castes and their upward mobility has been encapsulated in the scholarly work of M.N. Srinivas through his concept of 'Sanskritisation'. One of the spectacular success stories of transformation of an almost untouchable caste into a powerful community is that of the Nadars in Tamilnadu (Nadkarni, *EPW*, August 16-23, 1997). Of course, the backward classes since independence have shown little interest in the plight of Dalits (who themselves are not averse to hierarchical divisions) and of late have shown great violence in their relations with the latter. The final battle for social justice cannot be fought with simplistic slogans but by understanding and using the logic of the Indian pattern.

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Development and Decay of Parliament in India

History of Parliament in India, Vol. 6
by Subhash C. Kashyap
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Although the Constitution makers had established parliamentary system in India, it got converted into an executive centric or a primeministerial system of government as a corollary of the persistence of one party dominance namely Congress for more than four decades (from 1947 to 1989) with brief interludes from 1969 to 1971 and from 1977 to 1980. This explains the dearth of studies on the Indian Parliament. Another reason for this could be the impact of American behaviouralism on the Indian and foreign political scientists engaged in the study of politics in India. It directed their attention towards the study of political behaviour and made them neglect that of the institutions. The seminal studies of W.H. Morris-Jones, *Parliament in India*

(Longman, Green and Company, London, 1957) and Subhash C. Kashyap, *Parliament in the Indian Polity* (Manager, Government of India Press, New, 1980) are the only notable exceptions in this context.

But the regionalisation of Indian politics as a result of the cumulative impact of the processes of modernisation, politicisation and economic development or maldevelopment on the one hand and disappearance of the national leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Jai Parkash Narayan and Rajiv Gandhi on the other, has culminated in the conversion of one party dominant system into a multi-party system. This has led to the decline of the executive and enhanced the importance

of Parliament since 1989 despite the dissolution of the Lok Sabha and the consequent mid-term elections in 1991. As a result the importance of the study of the Indian Parliament has been recognised. The degeneration that has set in over the years in the behaviour of the parliamentarians has made the study of this institution all the more necessary.

The book under review is the concluding volume of a highly ambitious but much needed six-volume research project on the history of the Indian Parliament executed for the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi by Dr. Subhash C. Kashyap, former secretary General of Lok Sabha.

In the first volume, Dr. Kashyap gave an account of the evolution of the

representative institutions from the ancient times to the framing of the Indian Constitution by the Constituent Assembly during the period 1946 to 1949. The second volume dealt with the era in the history of Indian Parliament in which its foundation was laid down and its infrastructure was created. The author covered in it the provisional parliament (1950-1952), the First Lok Sabha (1952-1957) and the second Lok Sabha (1957-1962). Dr. Kashyap has aptly described the working of parliamentary democracy under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru as the golden era of our polity. He reviewed the working of the Indian Parliament during the periods of the Third Lok Sabha (1962-1967) and the Fourth Lok Sabha (1967-1970) in the third volume. While terming it as a period of turbulence and transition, the author tried to explore the reasons for the political decay during the leadership of Indira Gandhi from 1964 to 1971. In the fourth volume covering the Fifth Lok Sabha (1971-1977) and the Sixth Lok Sabha (1977-1979), Dr. Kashyap analysed the causes for the end of the era of parliamentary democracy during the emergency (1975-1977) and the Sixth Lok Sabha (1977-1979), Dr. Kashyap analysed the causes for the end of the era of parliamentary democracy during the emergency (1975-1977) as well as underlined the factors that helped its restoration in the 1977 parliamentary elections. He also listed in this chapter the reasons for the failure of the Janata experiment and revival of the one party dominance of the Congress. The fifth volume pertained to the periods of the Seventh Lok Sabha (1980-1984) and the Eighth Lok Sabha (1985-1989). The author herein has made an objective assessment of the performance of the governments of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi. He has also described and analysed the reasons that led to the rise and fall of the Congress dominance during the period 1980-1989.

Vol. 6 is comprised of four chapters. The first and second chapters present a detailed analysis of the structural and operational dimensions of the Ninth Lok

Sabha (1989-1991) and the Tenth Lok Sabha (1991-1996) respectively. The third chapter provides an overview of the first, second, third, fourth and fifth volumes as well as a summary of the first and second chapters of the sixth volume. In other words, this chapter provides a panorama of the history of the five decades of the Indian Parliament.

In the fourth chapter, the author has minutely examined the reasons for the erosion of the authority and pristine glory of the institution of Parliament. He rightly stresses the need for reviewing and refurbishing its structural and functional requirements from time to time. He highlights the need for parliamentary reforms and gives concrete suggestions for renewing parliamentary institutions and procedures. He is hopeful that something could still be done to bring back the prestige of the institution of Parliament and for regaining the confidence of the people in the parliamentarians. This according to Dr. Kashyap would usher in a renaissance, a restoration of the ideals of parliamentary system that the founding fathers of the constitution had visualised. The implementation of the valuable suggestions made by the author for revitalising the Parliament can go a long way in invigorating this institution which is the cornerstone of Indian polity.

I have no hesitation in calling this work an encyclopedia of the history of Indian Parliament. It not only includes a large number of tables, annexures and graphs that contain rich data on the structural and operational dimensions of the Ninth and the Tenth Lok Sabhas but also a comprehensive index for guiding the readers. It would not be an exaggeration to state that this volume is so comprehensive that it encompasses information on all the significant aspects of the Indian Parliament. This publication is, undoubtedly, a ready reckoner, so to say, for those interested in the study and research in the institution of Parliament.

A perusal of this monumental work is, however, bound to raise many

questions in the minds of articulate readers. Some of them are: Why was the B.J.P., which could get only 4 seats in the Eighth Lok Sabha (1984-1989), was able to capture 86 in the Ninth Lok Sabha (1989-1991) and 117 in the Tenth Lok Sabha (1991-1996)? How far can this quantum jump be attributed to the decision of the National Front to have an alliance with the B.J.P. in the 1989 parliamentary elections for ousting the Congress from power? How far was the shortsightedness of the Leftist Front caused by its anti-Congressism responsible for the emergence of the B.J.P. as a powerful force in those elections? How far was the *Mandalisation* and the *Mandirisation* of Indian politics responsible for the decline of the Congress and the Third Front on the one hand and the ascendance of the B.J.P. on the other? What were the factors that led to the rise of the ideology of Hindutava and casteism on the one hand, and the weakening of the forces of secularism on the other? This volume does not raise these questions; nor, perhaps did Dr. Kashyap mean to discuss these.

Be that as it may, the Centre for Policy Research must be complimented for launching this gigantic research project on the history of the Indian Parliament. Dr. Kashyap deserves to be applauded for having completed it in a record time. In fact, he single-handedly accomplished in a short span what even a team of scholars would have found difficult to complete in such a short period. The publisher too merits commendation for bringing out these elegant volumes on scheduled time. All the volumes, particularly the sixth volume, richly deserve a place on the shelves of the libraries of the national and the state legislatures, research institutes and the colleges. These are of immense value for the parliamentarians, administrators, media persons, social scientists and all those intellectuals who are seriously concerned about the survival of parliamentary democracy in India.

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