

# The Role of Opposition Parties in India: A study in the context of recent political developments

<sup>1</sup>Dr. R V R Murthy

Associate Professor  
PG Deptt. Of Political Science  
JNRM, Port Blair

**Abstract:** India is passing through stiff challenge in recent times and threats emanates within India in the manner of protest movements and anti-nationalistic slogans at its worst phase of propaganda against democratic set-up. Protests play an important part in the civil and political life of democratic societies like India. Our liberal democratic setup is being challenged by some political ideologist and left oriented movements to advance democratic right to resist and put forth the unreasonable demands. Recent spur in communal incidents calls immediate attention that India needs to introspect the working of democracy and find a new way to criticize the government in the name of opposition the call of government. At this juncture our prime concern would strengthen to create a non-violent society in India in which all peoples irrespective of their differences and un-commonalities co-exist together and march towards for common good and development. Safeguarding the Democratic institutions and values are utmost concern of the Government and it also accountable for protection liberty and expression of individuals. In spite of strong provisions in the constitution, some anti-national elements pose threat to established system of governance by way of sabotage and unrest. This paper outlines how Opposition parties disrespect the mandate of the elected government.

## Introduction

The Constitution of India guarantees protection of life and personal liberty to one and all. It provides adequate safeguards to fundamental rights against arbitrary decisions. The issues of rule of law and access to justice are very essential ingredients of the justice delivery system and they go hand in hand to ensure its aura reaches the contours of the entire population of a country. The role of the three organs, i.e. the Legislature, Executive and Judiciary are significant in ensuring that the same is upheld and proper mechanisms are implemented for easier and efficient access to justice. The Judiciary in particular, as the Guardian of the Constitution and the people, plays an important role in overseeing the same.

In recent times our country witnessing unprecedented public protests which attained international attention to advance the demands in the form of protest movement that the government rethinks of its decisions taken in the larger interest of the country. The right to protest is essential in a democratic set-up like us. Such protests are the sign and hallmark of liberal democratic society, whose logic demands that the voice of the people be heard by those in power. It means people have rights to express dissatisfaction with current situations and assert demands for social, political and economic change. Protests may change in due course of history; it has taken over long per cerebral policies and the lives of people. Therefore, protest is fundamental right periods of time to bring about substantive change in government as reiterated by the courts in India. Now the question is that in the name of fundamental right whether the citizens can take law of its own and destroy the property of the state? One must be careful while drawing limits of public protests. Article 19 of Indian constitution gives us right to free speech and expression may be taken to mean that everyone has a right to express their personal opinion including on the conduct of government. Infact, this is the basis of our multi-party system where opposition parties are valuable adversaries, not enemies and compete healthy for political power. But the trend considerable changing due to incompetence's and lack of strong political commitments. Further it seems that the opposition political leaderships carrying sick mentality and they are in hurry for immediate results, which is premature act of intolerance in democracy.

Currently, India passing through era of political intolerance and perhaps this has happened just because of Shri. Narendra Modi, who emerged as strong and unparallel leader with commitment to take India to greater heights. Under Shri. Modi, India has witnessed a great deal of activities, whether it is *Jandhan Yojana*, *Swatch Bharat*, *De-monetization* and *scrapping Article 370*. He has been instrumental in taking some of the strong decisions ever any Prime Minister of India had taken in the larger interest of the country, which are required to remove the taboos associated with it. The PM Shri Modi has achieved more fame and name than any other PM in the history of independent India. First time our generation looked up at the dynamic side of political leadership with respect and felt a nationalist fervor.

The most important role of the opposition parties in India is that of a 'watchdog'. Infact it holds the government accountable through close oversight of its functioning and making all shortcomings to public. It is for the opposition to expose misuse of powers and all acts of omission and commission must be highlighted. Criticism must always be well-informed and all the allegations duly substantiated. An active and constructive opposition is the best guarantee of a functional and healthy democracy.

An ideological difference does not mean harming the national interest. The opposition has every legal right to question the policies /bills that the government proposes and being passed through Parliament. Shri. Modi had taken over as Prime Minister of India on the basis of mandate given in 2014 General elections. Since then some party leaders did not respect the mandate of the people of India and now in hindsight, realize the viciousness and since we see a pattern in the intolerance campaign- unrest in Jawaharlal Nehru University, CAA and Tripple Talaq and 3 Farm laws. All these movements are sponsored by the opposition with the help of foreign aid. In a democracy, the relationship between the electorate and the elected leaders is of reciprocal trust. It is based on solemn commitments. Leaders seek support on the basis of certain promises; people trust them and vote them to power.

Since elected leaders are expected to deliver on the promises made, people demand accountability at the end of their tenure in power. The opposition must not act an impediment and stall the progressive measures.

It is extremely crucial for the opposition parties to understand that its political role in a robust democracy like India demands it to be more vigilant, active, public-spirited and courageous never before. The present situation the opposition's moral as well as political responsibility to relentlessly offer informed criticism of the government's conduct in handling the crisis. Apart from that, it is also opposition's duty to effectively pressurize the government to plug the loopholes in its policies and offer credible and better alternatives to skillfully deal with the crisis. For the same, the opposition political forces in India should embrace clearly, their role as an institutional watch dog as well as a credible platform with a plausible vision and capacity to offer assistance in terms of policy alternatives as well as assurances to the vulnerable sections of hapless citizenry.

It is not to suggest that the active and vigilant demeanor of the opposition would invariably ensure unfettered accountability from the ruling party, especially when it enjoys stable parliamentary majority and adequate popular support. Nor is the proposition being endorsed that a credible opposition can compensate for governmental inefficiency or flaws. However, a responsible opposition can undoubtedly keep an elected government constantly on its toes in its management of a crisis of this magnitude, both for the interest of the nation and its people as well as for its own political revival. Hence, space for oppositional politics in a democracy must further expand and not shrink in the face of a severe crisis.

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has come under pressure from opposition parties that have demanded that there should be detailed statement of the Union government on the stand-off between India-China in Ladakh. Opposition parties have demanded a detailed statement and details of the steps taken by the union government since April 2020 when the border problems with China first started. The opposition parties want to know what happened in Galwan, how many Indian soldiers were martyred, how many Chinese soldiers died in the clash and what are the steps taken by the government both diplomatically and otherwise to safeguard the interest of the country. Keeping in view of national and strategic importance government has failed to take into confidence of opposition parties. Further the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is also under pressure from key opposition parties which are demanding that four of the 11 legislations listed in the Parliament session to replace ordinances, should be sent for further parliamentary scrutiny. The four legislations include three related to farm sector and one on amendments to banking regulation.

Among the ordinances that have created difference with opposition are Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Ordinance, 2020, The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Ordinance, 2020 and The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020 which got passed in Lok Sabha on later. The is also problematic for the BJP because one of its oldest alliance partner, Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) has openly come out against the ordinances related to farmers. SAD leadership has made it clear to BJP leaders that it would be difficult for the party to support these ordinances since the party believes they would not benefit farmers. "Before introducing these bills, the Central government atleast have consulted the parties that are essentially farmers' parties and their allies. The political tussle over the farm ordinances, legislations for which have been brought in the differences, has escalated between NDA alliances. On the other hand Government made it very clear that the farm bills were far-sighted' as it will boost agricultural production. But some farmer based parties had expressed reservations when the matter was taken up during a cabinet meeting and opposition parties are opposed to the Bill and that the center must find ways to address concerns of farmers.

### **Conclusion**

The Right to Protest is essential in a democracy like us. It means for people to express dissatisfaction with current situation and assert demands for social, political and economic change. Protests may bring change happen and throughout. It has taken sustained periods over long periods of time to bring about substantive change in governmental policies and the lives of people. In a democracy, the rights of peaceful protest must be encouraged and respected. However, these rights are also subject to reasonable restrictions mentioned under Article 19 (2), imposed in the interest of sovereignty, integrity and public order with the help of rules. Fundamental rights do not live in isolation. The right of the protester has to be balanced with the right of the commuter and has to co-exist in mutual respect. The Opposition's main role is to question the government and hold them accountable to the public by way of organizing mass dharnas, protests and rallies. This also helps to fix the mistakes of the Ruling Party and therefore the role of the opposition parties are basically to check the excesses of the ruling or dominant party, and not to be totally antagonistic. In recent times, India witnesses a legitimate absence of strong opposition leader especially in the House of parliament to provide practical criticism of the ruling party. Therefore in the absence of an opposition will weaken our democracy in the case of no strong contender to question ruling government. Moreover the leader of the opposition has a defined role to play, but if no such leadership exists, it will fail to check the power of the ruling party as dissent is extremely important for mature democracies to function properly. Mere disruptions and protest will not bring desired pressure on government, unless there is strong opposition in the parliament, it cannot hold executive hold of the government. Hence in short theoretically at least the opposition should have powerful base to question government and needs for a strong opposition with a resolute allegiance to the people. A weak opposition like current one, far more perilous than a weak government, therefore it is necessary to have a strong opposition for smooth function of the democratic set-up.

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