

Populist Politics in India: Comparing Indira Gandhi with Narendra Modi

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ABSTRACT

Indira Gandhi's tenure is marked by her centralisation of power, particularly during the Emergency period (1975-1977), and her policies aimed at poverty alleviation and social justice. Narendra Modi's brand of populism combines economic development with cultural nationalism. His centralisation of power, coupled with policies such as demonetisation and the implementation of Goods and Service Tax, has been known for their profound impact on the economical and social development of India.

This research report explores the phenomenon of populism in India, with the particular focus on the two prominent populist leaders, Indira Gandhi and Narendra Damodar Das Modi. The report aims to define and contextualise populism within the Indian context, by comparing the populist approach of, Modi and Gandhi, and by also evaluating their respective impact on the political system of India. Populism, characterised by its appeal to the common appeal against the elite and its use of charismatic leadership, has significantly shaped India's political landscape.

Indira Gandhi era, particularly during 1970s marked a significant shift towards populism in Indian politics. She aimed to make India out of the poverty, her slogan to remove poverty and initiatives such as nationalisation of banks and land reforms. The Emergency period witness severe dark side of populism, fostering a legacy of caution against centralised power and authoritarianism. Modi's populism is also deeply intertwined with Hindu nationalism, appealing to a broad base of Hindu voters, and fostering a narrative of cultural resurgence. This has led to the emergence of polarization and heightened communal tensions, challenging India's secular fabric.

This report contributes to the academic discourse on populism and offers policy recommendations format managing its impact on Democratic Governance and Society development in India. Through comprehensive analysis of media representation policies. public opinion, this report evaluates the broader implications off pop of populism for Indian democracy and social dynamics.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Populism is one of the growing ideologies across the globe. India being the largest democratic nation of the world is no less. Populism is basically a political approach that makes an appeal to ordinary people about their demands and how the established elite group is not able to fulfil the same. India has seen populist government policies and governance, firstly being the Jawaharlal Nehru. He was the popular as well as wise leader appointed as first Prime Minister of India after the independence of 1947, after him Indira Gandhi appeared as a popular member for Indian democracy. During her reign India and its democracy saw drastic changes which were later even criticised by various scholars but none the less the early period of her rule and government was indeed a good turn in the history of Indian democracy. Indira

Gandhi was the third Prime Minister of India after Lal Bahadur Shastri. Congress made its government in 1966 to 1977 and again in 1980 till her assassination in 1984. Indira Gandhi was known for her pro poor policies and her support towards the leftist, which made her admirable and popular during the elections. Populism or the leader that follows ‘populist strategies’ usually include the whole society into one common cause and based on that category it tries to be the popular candidate to have an effect on the elections. In this way they focus on the ‘the people’ dividing them on the line of socio economic or cultural issues. In various instances they even try to show that how elite is not able to work in favour of the nation. There are certain characteristics and pattern that are followed by the leaders of populist government, these are as follows.

- Economic and Social Reforms – The main agenda followed in populist strategies is that of development into the economical and social structure of the society, they try to follow a pattern where they promise to uplift the standards and living if the society.
- Charismatic Leadership- The skills and techniques opted by the leader is also an essential element to the populist politics in India. Indira Gandhi cultivated a strong connection with the electorate. The most recent Prime Minister Narendra Modi is nonetheless known for his great populist strategies. Narendra Modi, when, first chose as the prime minister of India in 2014, from then on, he is known for his ultimate strategies to popularise and gain support on the basis of socio-economic issues. Populism in India is not only an embark to the democracy but also an impactful procedure for a large democratic diverse country like India.
- Appeal to the common man- Indian leaders often target towards the marginalised section of the society and form their strategies and agendas on the basis of their demands, this ensures the Leader The commitment of the people for the upcoming elections.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Populism in India has its roots back from the British colonialism era (1858-1947), it is so because before the colonialism in India, our country was rich in resources and a prominent nation around the world especially during Mughal period. After the end of Mughal rule and beginning of colonialism India saw emergence of disparities amongst the people of the country. The exploitation done by Britishers and marginalisation of the population in terms of socio-economic status created a sense of collective grievance. The then popular leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Subhash Chandra Bose emerged as an important leader for making and provoking Indians to be self-reliant. After the colonialism came the era of Independence movement (From late 19th century to 1947). From this moment two major things came into being one was that the Indian national Congress was formed with the principles of using collective power of all Indians from all the social groups against the British Colonialism. The second thing that came into being was the emphasis over the Gandhi ‘s approach on nonviolence and civil disobedience. Gandhi and his ideology made path towards the social polarisation movements.

The most important part for the populism in India started in the post independence period that is after the 1947. In the early period Jawaharlal Nehru emerged as a brilliant and inspiring leader. He adopted the vision of not only independent democratic nation but also, he adopted a socialist and secular vision, focusing upon modernisation, industrialisation, and planned economic development. One thing that influenced Nehru’s ideology was Fabian socialism. Nehru promoted mixed economy model that is basically a model where the large industries are within the control of the state and with a fair share of

industries in private hand. During his reign five-year plan also came into being which aimed to improve the living standards of the masses and to reduce poverty.

Jawaharlal Nehru is also known for his mass mobilisation, this characteristic of him also makes him a hallmark and charismatic leader. His thoughts and words inspired not only the constitution makers but also the people of India, particularly the youth and underprivileged. He was even often criticised for his insufficient policies; it was pointed out that the policies started by him were somehow time taking and not to the point for the fast growth of development.

Though the first Prime Minister of India has certain criticisms from some of the critics, but his legacy is inevitable. His institution was meant to serve to balance the socioeconomic development and reduce the disparities among the people of India. Nehru's tenure is seen as a balancing act between the populist policies and the social uplift in terms of development, urbanisation, modernisation and so on.

Indira Gandhi was the first and only Prime Minister of India, she was known for her brace decisions and powerful strategies to run the government and fulfil the demands and aspirations of the people of India. She was the daughter of the first Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Indira Gandhi served as Prime Minister from the year 1966 to 1977 and then again, she was chosen in 1980. She is noted for making significant changes in the economic and social structure of India, it included many new reforms and also coming up of new changes for uplifting India in better governance. The most important reforms included nationalisation of banks, and most importantly The Green Revolution, it is regarded as a major turning point in the agricultural sector of India. The green revolution included not only better yields production but also better irrigation, fertiliser, seeds, harvesting methods and much more. Indira Gandhi did not only work on the packing sectors but also, she was known for her authoritative decision. The Emergency of 1975 is notably a black day to the Indian democracy. This period from 1975 to 1977 did not only emerged as a loophole to Indian democratic structure but also included suspension of civil liberties and imprisonment of opposition leaders. Thus, Indira Gandhi and her leadership style is characterised by centralisation of power, authoritative decisions and populist measures that appeal to masses. The popular you known slogan of her governance was 'Garibi Hatao' that meant to eradicate poverty and get the attention of the poor Indians to help and secure their living standards. She did work for poor people and the marginalised section but due to some of the controversial decisions taken by her are still criticised as a loophole to the democracy. After Indira Gandhi, populism tactics did not play significant role in Indian democratic elections, but in 2014 with emergence of Narendra Modi and his party leaders, populism again came into play.

Narendra Damodar Das Modi is the current Prime Minister of India, having assumed office since 2014, he served as the Chief Minister of Gujarat from 2000 to 2014. Narendra Modi is known for his influence over the people of India, he not only conveys his message and promises clearly but also, he is an influential leader. Narendra Modi's tenure is significant for economic reforms, digital initiatives and obviously he focused on making India a globally sensational country. Narendra Modi is a charismatic leader, he is a member of Bhartiya Janta Party and Rastriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a Hindu nationalist organisation. The government policies include the "Make in India" initiative that not only gave employment to many people but also boosted the manufacturing industry of India. Another important scheme imitated by him included demonetisation of 2016, that banned certain currency notes and also the coming up of Goods and Service Tax (GST) moved the aim to combat the black money. Narendra Modi is a strong leader, as he has been elected as Prime Minister for the third time in recent Lok Sabha elections.

The main root to his political success is the positive use of social of his election campaigns and also the public rallies have been a helping tool for him and his party BJP.

CHAPTER-2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

INDIRA GANDHI AND HER GOVERNANCE

Indira Gandhi the third Prime minister of Indira, she served for two non-consecutive terms that is from 1966 to 1977 and then she was re-elected in 1980 and served the country till her assassination in 1984. Policies and strategies, during her governance period is known for socio-political and economic structures. The strategies formulated by her not only centralised power in a manner that had lasting effects on the democratic system of India. Indira Gandhi was born on November 19,1917 into prominent family of Nehru. Jawaharlal Nehru, her father was her mentor during her developing age, and he was also a central figure in the war of independence. Indira Gandhi was exposed to political environment all through her life, that is one of the major reasons for her to an excellent leader during her initial years of Prime Ministership. She pursued her education both from India and abroad giving her best knowledge for her political career, the major changes in her career came in when she was appointed as the minister of Information and broadcasting in Lal Bahadur Shastri's cabinet. Her brave working towards her designation and dedication towards democracy of India made everyone believe that Nehru's daughter could effectively handle the ministry as her public image demonstrated her best for the position of Prime Minister.

Indira Gandhi's populist policies and strategies as a Prime Minister of India were mainly to address the needs and aspirations of the poor and marginalised section of Indian society. She took certain initiatives through several strategies like Garibi Hatao Campaign, Nationalisation of Banks, Green Revolution, Twenty points programme and much more.

Indira Gandhi had been awarded with many achievements throughout her life, she won Bharat Ratna award in 1972. She was also awarded with Yale University's Howland Memorial Award, for two years in a row in 1967 and 1968, for being the most admired women of France, according to the polls of French agency. Gandhi also received 1953 mother's award for her incredible performance in diplomacy. Indira Gandhi was an incredible admiring woman that made her famous not only in India but worldwide, these all achievements made her a popular leader. Now, let us see the strategies and policies formulated by Gandhi to initiate populism among the marginalised sections of our country.

GREEN REVOLUTION

The Green Revolution was a turning point in the history of Indian agricultural sector. The introduction of hybrid, high yielding variety of seeds for rice, wheat and other crops frantically increased the production especially in the region of Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. Not only this along with the seeds, the subsidies for state, the provision of electrical power, what are, fertilisers and credit to farmers was given. The agriculture sector was exemplars from any kind of tax, these all initiatives boom the overall agricultural development.

TWENTY POINT PROGRAM:

The twenty-point program was launched in the year 1975 by the government of Indira Gandhi with the aim of providing improvement in the standard of living of the weaker section of the society and to eradicate poverty. It can not be denied that after the independence, India was suffering from the poverty, more than

half of the population was below the poverty line, barely eating to even eat. There entry point program initiated by Indira Gandhi was a package of program to alleviate poverty, generate employment and to develop health and education department. This program was important to her social image as it projected her as a leader committed to social justice and social inequality. Even housing sector for the poor classes was improved under this program. The program was made to reduce inflation, improve agricultural productivity and overall to enhance the standard of living of the poor

GARIBI HATAO (REMOVE POVERTY) CAMPAIGN:

One of the most notable campaigns to eradicate poverty started by the Indira Gandhi was the Garibi Hatao campaign. The aim of the campaign was to alleviate poverty and to increase the awareness regarding the same. This slogan encapsulated her focus on poverty alleviation and social development in economical sector. Various programs were launched under this campaign aiming for the land reformation, rural development and redistribution of wealth. Nationalisation of notable bank was one such scheme in this campaign. Banks that were nationalised during this time period includes Punjab National Bank, Allahabad Bank, Canara Bank, Bank of Baroda and others. Integrated Rural development program was also intended to empower the poor and improve their financial condition.

Nationalisation of banks was done to make sure that all the banking services could be available to rural and underprivileged section of the society. This step did not only facilitated the betterment of sectors like agriculture and small industries but it was also significant in asserting state control over the economy and to reduce the concentration of wealth only at the central level.

ABOLITION OF PRIVY PURSE

The 26th amendment in the Indian Constitution was made in the year 1971 to abolish 'Privy Purse'. This was made to remove the title of 'special status' that was in practice since the British rule. The idea behind abolition of privy purse was to keep equality enshrined in Preamble and Part 3 of the Indian Constitution. It was also said that privy purse was a sort of burden over the newly born independent nation, that was ridden with poverty, hunger, and external and internal security threats. Therefore, the then Prime Minister of India Indira Gandhi argued the case for the abolition of the privy purse. The article 291 and 362 were omitted under this act. The principles and concepts of privy purse were against the democratic structure of the nation and was incompatible to the social justice thus it was a positive step towards the egalitarian society.

FOREIGN POLICY AND DEFENCE

The significance of Indira Gandhi's braveness about foreign policy can be traced back from the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971. The move was not only a victory for India as a defensive country, but it also portrayed Indira Gandhi as a decisive and strategic leader, worldwide. Bangladesh was the east region of Pakistan, that did not want to continue under the same constitution that of Pakistan. The major problem was of minorities that were ignored by the Central government. Thus, due to this instability inside Pakistan, india faced immigration crisis in the region of Bengal. All these factors led to the war between India and Pakistan in 1971, which led to a swift victory and the creation of Bangladesh.

THE EMERGENCY OF 1975

On the June 25, 1975 Emergency was announced leading to the the one of the most controversial events in

the democratic history of India. It was declared by the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. The emergency period saw various abuses of power and the loopholes in the constitution of India. The declaration of emergency the suspension of civil liberties, censorship of the press, arrest of opposition leaders, forceful sterilisation, demolition and much more. Due to these many unfortunate circumstances, emergency of 1975 is one of the most debatable events. The declaration of Emergency was an immediate reaction to the Indian political climate as an assertion of authoritarian control, fundamentally altering the political landscape of India. The emergency was 21-month period, that came after the period of political instability, economic issues, and social unrest.

BACKGROUND AND CAUSES;

The roots of the emergency can be traced back from the 1970s. Social unrest, economic instability, rampant inflation, widespread unemployment, and many other social issues were growing in the various section of the society. The political turbulence led to the increase in corruption which made Indira Gandhi's government inefficient.

The immediate cause to the emergency was the Judicial Verdict given by Allahabad Court. The Allahabad Court found Indira Gandhi guilty of electoral malpractice during the 1971 parliamentary elections. The Court ordered invalidating Indira Gandhi's victory and barred her from holding any elected office for the next 6 years. This statement by the court threatened her political career. In response to this, Gandhi decided to take a drastic step. On the night of 25th June, facing mounting pressure both from within her party and the opposition, Gandhi announced the emergency saying that the action is because of "internal disturbances".

DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi announced emergency by citing internal and external threats to our country. Emergency is a situation that refer to legal measure that enable government to swiftly respond to extraordinary situations, such as war, or any other crisis. The Article 352 to Article 360 of the Indian Constitution gives the executive branch temporary authority to regulate and bypass standard legislative procedures.

Prime Minister did not consult the cabinet or the parliament before deciding on the issue. She recommended the event to the President, and it was accepted. The next morning, fundamental rights enshrined in the constitution were suspended. The government imposed strict censorship on the media, and the press. The opposition leaders were kept in detention. The right to freedom of speech, assembly, and the press, all were suspended. Publications had to get approval before printing any material, from the government, effectively stifling the free flow of information.

Prominent leaders from opposition parties, including the Janta Party, Bhartiya Jan Sangh (which was later known as Bhartiya Janta Party), the communist party, the ratriya swayamsevak sangh (RSS) were detained under the maintenance of internal security (MISA) Act without trial. Important leaders like Jayprakash Narayan, Morarji Desai, I.k. Advani, Atal Bihari Vajpayee were among the those imprisoned. During Emergency, government imposed unexpected initiatives. One of such initiative was forceful sterilisation campaign. Sanjay Gandhi, the son of Indira Gandhi started this program to control the over growing population. Coercive methods were employed to sterilise millions of women and men, particularly those among the marginalised section of the society. The led to anger and dissatisfaction among the people of India. Additionally, slum clearance was snorter problem. This demolition by the

government was conducted in major cities like Delhi, leading to displacement of thousands of families, this all led to widespread of resentment and anger. Government defended this demolition by justifying it for the urban development and beautification, but the reality was away from it.

In result to this in the next Lok Sabha elections of 1977, congress party was defeated. Morarji Desai became the first non-congress prime minister of India. The janta party, the coalition of the opposition parties came together and challenged Indira Gandhi and secured a decisive victory. The emergency highlighted the authoritarian personality of Indira Gandhi and left a profound impact on the politics of India.

NARENDRA MODI AND HIS GOVERNANCE

Narendra Damodar Das Modi was elected as the prime minister of India in 2014 for the first time. He is known for his brand of governance often associated with populism. His political tactics are associated with blend of economic reforms, centralised governance, string and focused leadership. Narendra Modi claims that he is the leader of poor people and highlighted congress led government as an inefficient and corrupt party. Narendra Modi when came to power, became popular because of his early life struggles. According to the sources, he was a tea seller, that makes him resonate to connect with the common people. He was humble being and promised “Aache din” (good days) with a broad swath of the Indian electorate. Modi’s populism strategies are associated with social polarisation. He is more resonate towards Hindu community which has led to the emergence of feeling of alienation among minority communities especially Muslim population. His governance in relation to population in India is a complex phenomenon. Although his tenure is regarded as a successful political system because of policies like Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhyaan, Jal Jeevan mission, PM Matsya Sampada Yojana, and others. Apart from all these good initiatives, his governance is also regarded as complicated as it led to increase in polarisation, challenges to democratic institutions, and mixed economic outcomes. India’s culture and history has been central to the politics of Modi, Hindu culture and and heritage have been used for promotion of symbols like celebrating Diwali in Varanasi and projects like construction of ram temple in Ayodhya. Article 370 was also abolished taking a hardline stance. The article was abolished as it granted special autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir. Citizenship amendment act (CAA) is another act that triggers the polarisation in India.

Modi has also made welfare schemes for the marginalised population of India, like Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (financial inclusion), Swacch Bharat Abhyan (cleanliness drive), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (housing facility), all these initiatives have been used for popularisation of Modi as a charismatic politician who works for the poor. The schemes initiated by Modi aim to address the basic needs of the poorer sections of the society and to improve the living standards of the economically backward people. Modi’s governance has focused to reform and boost India’s development.

The Modi government has also taken various initiatives focusing on the development of digital sector of India. Initiatives like make in India, digital India and startup India seek to promote industrial growth, technological advancement, and entrepreneurship. Goods and service tax (GST) was implemented to create a unified national market.

Populist leaders like narendra Modi and Indira have often relied on welfare schemes to garner support from masses. Modi have been able to communicate to the people of India through social media platforms. “Mann ki baat” is a radio program that aims to promote free speech of narendra Modi with the people of our country. Social media has played significant role in the populist politics of the prime minister.

Traditional media channels along with the social media has portrayed him as a decisive and strong leader. Modi's tenure has been pronounced to invoke national pride and India's historical and cultural heritage. The significance of Prime minister office (PMO) has been marked by the strong centralisation of power. The extreme authority to PMO has raised concerns about undermining the federal structure of our country and the autonomy of state governments. Institutional reform has been other such concern. Modi government has made, many institutional reforms including judicial functions, bureaucracy departments and regulatory agencies. Critics argue that reform of these important institutions have sometimes eroded the independence and legitimacy of these institutions.

Social media's effective use and appeals to nationalism and development have been central to the electoral strategy to Modi and his party. The BJP's landslide victory in 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections underscores the success of this approach. His leadership is characterised by strong leadership in the central government and assertive nationalism. One of the hallmarks of his governance is his direct engagement with citizens through social media platforms such as Facebook, twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. His frequent updates and personal branding on social media have cultivated his humble beginnings, his dedication to public service, and his vision for India's future. He has also used social media for constantly emphasising on India's rich cultural heritage and historical achievements, fostering unity and pride. Events such as Ram Mandir Inauguration was celebrated like festival due to the reach of social media to every corner of our country.

Narendra Modi's ability to directly engage with people of India shaped political narratives, and mobility factor has been key factor in his political success.

POPULIST LEADERS AND PARTIES

Populist leader often portrays themselves as the voice of "common people." They try to keep complex issues in simple terms, often with sharp vision and strategies. The simplicity makes it easier for the voters to grasp and support populist messages. They use emotional phrases and charge language and imagery to create a sense of unity and urgency. They tap into feelings of anger, hope, fear which can be more rational argument for the voters. The direct connection established with the citizens of the country makes them feel marginalised or ignored by the already existing political system. The populist leader's main strategy is that they portray themselves as an outsider who is not part of the corrupt or ineffective political establishment. They assure people to bring assertive change in the slow or inefficient government.

IMPACT ON PUBLIC OPINION

- **POLARISATION:** Although it becomes hard to bring consensus in polarised society but for populist leaders it is a strategic move. The societal divides and the emergence of feeling of being ignored helps leader to gain support from the specific group.
- **POLICY IMPLEMENTATION:** Leaders following populist system offences prioritise short term plans over the long terms strategies as it helps to bring immediate benefits to their supporters as well as to the leader. These policies can be beneficial only for short span of time, but it can lead to unsustainable and negative consequences in the long run.
- **PUBLIC PERCEPTION:** Leader can sometime be perceived as genuine and caring about the people on delivering on promises, but if they feel to do so then it can lead to political instability. For example, Indira Gandhi when came to power was chosen for her generosity towards the poor Indians but later

on harsh policies implication like sterilisation and demolition of slums, portrayed her as unstable Prime Minister.

Populist leaders and their party's success in elections as they target towards the emotional sentiments of the people. Their success affects public opinions and governance by increasing polarisation, challenging democratic norms, and influencing policy implementation. Let us discuss about other state populist leaders and their strategies.

ARVIND KEJRIWAL

Kejriwal is the present Chief Minister of Delhi, the national capital of India. His party Aam Aadmi Part (AAP) position itself as the clean party against the corruption, the clean alternative party resonated with voters tired of corruption scandals. Kejriwal has inevitably emphasised on the improvement of local governance in Delhi and also marked on development of the NCR. His governance model is unique as he assumes office in 2013 and again in 2015 and then again for the third time in 2020. His anti corruption measures invoke Jan Lokpal Bill, Anti corruption help.ind and others, these initiatives aimed to empower citizens to act against corruption directly.

Locally he has introduced various subsidies for the citizens of Delhi, these includes water and electricity subsidies, providing 20,000 litres of water per month and reducing electricity bills by subsidising up to 400 units. Mohalla clinics is other initiative by the AAP government, it provides free primary healthcare services including medicines, consultation, diagnostic services etc. Implementation of public transport facilities has been other initiative, they provide free bus rides for women, reserved space for women in Delhi metro, expansion of the bus fleet and other such services.

Public participation and transparency in governance has made efforts to increase functioning of Kejriwal and his ministry. Although in present time, he is in custody of CBI but the fact that he has developed and made government subsidies publicly accessible, cannot be ignored.

MAMTA BANERJEE

Mamta Banerjee is the current Chief Minister of West Bengal, from her party All India Trinamool Congress (TMC). Her tenure began in 2011, sine then she has been dominant chief minister of the state. Her governance has been characterised by a focus on social welfare programmes, infrastructure de, and regional pride. She has initiated several social programs like Kanyashree Prakalpa scheme that provide financial incentives to girls to continue with their education and delay marriage. Under the scheme of Sabuj Sathi, the students of class IX to XII are provided with bicycle so that they get their accessibility to school at their convenience. Khadyasathi scheme ensures subsidised food grains to 90% of state's population. These schemes have ensured citizens of West Bengal to have faith on Banerjee and TMC party. Mamta Banerjee has also developed the state in infrastructure and healthcare, she has improved road connectivity and public transportation. Projects such as the expansion of highways, development of urban and rural roads have been prioritised. Upgrading infrastructure of major cities like Kolkata and increasing tourism in Darjeeling, improving drainage are Kasparov the developing green spaces. Initiatives like Bangla Gramin Sadak Yojana aim to enhance rural road infrastructure.

Apart from infrastructure development she has also worked in the healthcare and education sector. Scheme like Swasthya Sathi, Fair Price Medicine Shop, Mother and Child Hubs have been assertive initiatives in the field of healthcare. This comprehensive health insurance schemes provides basic health coverage for all residents of West Bengal. The shops and medical in government medical colleges and hospitals

provides white medicines and medical equipments at significantly reduced price, making healthcare more affordable for the public. Mother and child healthcare have been set up across the state to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates. Education schemes have also been made in West Bengal by significantly investing in infrastructure of government schools and colleges. Scholarship and financial aid programs have been started to improve education for the students of West Bengal.

TMC has been challenging party for BJP and Narendra Modi. Modi, during the latest state election in Bengal, carried out many rallies and advertisements against Mamta Banerjee but could not win the election. Thus, her contribution to her state is remarkable and she is the most popular candidate in West Bengal.

Other populist leaders include Nitish Kumar from Bihar, Yogi Adityanath from Uttar Pradesh, K. Chandrasekar Rao from Telangana. These all leaders foster a sense of identity and pride among their states. Their focus stays on public opinion, regional identity, direct public engagement, charismatic leadership skills, opposition to perceived elites or external threats as the key element to their political agenda and their political ambitions. These populism strategies have proven to be effective in gaining and it also keeps political support from the citizens themselves. Although they might often come with challenges related to political stability and political governance in general.

CHAPTER-3

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- What impact has their populism had on Indian politics and society?

Discussing the impact of Narendra Modi's and Indira Gandhi's populism on Indian political structure and society has been multifaceted.

Politically, Indira Gandhi's tenure saw a significant centralisation of power in the Prime Minister's office. She was an authoritarian leader who imposed Emergency in 1975, that curtailed democratic functioning, leading to authoritarian control. She also redefined Congress party approach that appeal directly to the poor and marginalised section of the society. Indira's leadership style led to internal party conflicts and the eventual split of Congress in 1969, weakening its traditional power and creation of syndicate.

On the other hand, Narendra Modi's populism impact over politics of India has also led to the rise of conflicts and discussion. His tenure has also seen strong centralisation of power within the Prime Minister's office, often sideline traditional party structures and state leadership. One major thing that happens during Modi's tenure is the polarisation. This has impacted the social fabric and led to tension between different communities.

Socially, Indira Gandhi and Narendra Modi, both the leaders have worked upon economic policies, social justice initiatives and others. Indira Gandhi emphasised on imposing land reforms, aimed at reducing poverty and inequality and also nationalised the banks for providing banking facilities to every citizen of the country. Narendra Modi has also initiated economic reforms, welfare schemes, cultural and social identity to promote and develop our country.

- How do the populist strategies of Narendra Modi and Indira Gandhi, compare?

Analysing key factors that make Indira Gandhi and Narendra Modi similar, in their political strategy and political analysis of their respective campaigns. Electoral strategies of both the leaders and their direct appeal to masses, their personalities comparison.

OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH REPORT:

- Analysis of the populist strategies of Indira Gandhi and Narendra Modi: Examining the specific populist strategies including their policies, programs, rhetoric and political measures.
- Comparison and contrast of the two leaders: Investigating the populist approach focusing on third electoral strategies, governance style and public communication.
- Contextualising populism: Providing a clear and comprehensive definition of populism, including variations.
- Assessing the societal impact: To assess the effectiveness of their social justice and welfare policies in addressing issues of inequality and marginalisation.
- Understanding public belief and response: Exploring the impact of their populism on cultural and social identity including issues related to secularism, nationalism, and communal harmony.

By achieving these objectives, with the particular focus on the influential figures Indira Gandhi and Narendra Modi, the research report aims to provide a comprehensive and insightful analysis of populism in India that contribute to the broader understanding of populist politics and democratic societies.

DATA COLLECTION:**Primary Sources-**

- Reviewing official documents by the respective political parties and election manifestos by the parties as well as the data uploaded by the Election Commission of India.
- Collecting and analysing speeches, public statements, interviews, opposition statements, made by Indira Gandhi and Narendra Modi in their respective tenures.

Secondary Sources-

- analysing opinion pieces, media reports an editorial to understand public belief and media portrayal next point new line
- Gathering books research papers journal articles that discuss Indian politics and populism in the tenure of these two prominent leaders.
- Analysing biographies and historical accounts for contextual information during the tenure of Indira Gandhi and Narendra Modi.

In conclusion, the objectives, data collection and analysis of the data aims to understand the impact of Indira Gandhi and narendra modi lasting impact on the Indian politics and society, shaping electoral strategies, governance models, economic policies, and social dynamics. Their legacies reflect the complexities and consequences of populist leadership in a diverse and democratic country like India.

CHAPTER-4**RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS****POPULISM IMPACT ON ECONOMY**

- Populism can have effect both in positive and negative way upon the economy of the country. Populism strategies and leaders gives more importance to the short-term plans rather than long term initiatives, this can have profound consequences on the long run economy of the country. Let us discuss both the positive and negative impact on the economy.

POSITIVE IMPACT

- **INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT:** Populist leaders invest on long term infrastructure projects such as building expressways, highways, roads, bridges and public transportation system. This infrastructural project creates employment, stimulate economic development in the long term, it also helps to increase productivity of the government.
- **BOOSTING DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION:** Populist leaders often provide with subsidies to the poor and middle-class people. This increases domestic goods consumption which can in turn provide with boost in the economic development of the region. This increase in consumption lead to higher demand for goods and services, potentially contributing to economic growth.
- **INCREASING LOCAL INDUSTRIES:** Measures are undertaken to protect and promote local industries, such as tariffs on imported products or incentives for domestic products. This leads to overall growth of the moralist industry and thus contributing to the economic development of the country or state.

NEGATIVE IMPACT

- **INFLATION:** Government spend excessively on the subsidies that can lead to inflationary pressures. It leads to increase in taxes and also increment of money supply or demands for goods or services that outpaces the economy's productive ability and can lead to increase in price of commodities.
- **SHORT TERM INVESTMENT:** Populist leaders prioritise short term goals over long term goals because it comes at less expense. This short-term expense yields immediate benefits but comes with ignorance of important long-term implications such as education, healthcare, innovation, and infrastructure management.
- **INSTITUTIONAL EROSION:** Populist parties and leaders may undermine important economic policies and institutions that are more critical for economic growth, such as central banks, judicial systems, and its ability to regulate, stable economic environment, deterring investment and economic activity.

These fiscal sustainability economic measures can have significant impacts over the economy of our country. The impact of populism on the economy is multifaceted. Fiscal deficits, inflation, market distortions, and erosion of institutional integrity are common issues associated with populist economic policies.

Populism had significant influence under the leadership of Narendra Modi and Indira Gandhi. Both leaders have given and implemented policies that would benefit the needs and aspirations of the general populace. Indira Gandhi key populist policies include **Nationalisation of Banks** in 1969, that ensured banking service reaches poor and rural areas of the country. **Abolition of Privy Purse** was another such policy that aimed to reduce feudal privileges and addressing income inequality and reduce disparity among the population. **Garibi Hatao Campaign** was a promising measure to alleviate poverty. But the overall impact of this campaign was unsuccessful due to poor implementation and corruption. This campaign aimed to provide better standards of life and to give employment to the poor people. **Economic Control and License Raj** increased state control over the economy, this scheme is often blamed for the slow economic growth and industrial stagnation of 1970s and 1980s. Been the **Emergency of 1975** had economic consequences, it led to inflation of price and hardship schemes like sterilisation and slums demolition, that lead to social unrest and political backlash.

Narendra Modi has also started some economic policies like Demonetisation of 2016 to combat black money and counterfeit currency. Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana that aims to provide bank facilities to every region of the country. Goods and Service Tax (GST) is another scheme that contribute to a more integrated national market. It aims to unify India's fragmented tax system into a single national tax. Atmanirbhar Bharat 2020 is a scheme that aims to make India Self Reliant. It aims to strengthen local industries, but critics argue that it has raised concerns about protectionism and potential negative impacts on trade and economic relations between countries.

SOCIAL POLARISATION AND COMMUNAL TENSION

Social polarisation and communal tension are byproducts of populist politics. Leaders following populism strategy follows an appealing support base to a particular social, ethnic, cultural, or religious group. Social Polarisation and community tension in India, albeit in different contexts and manners. Both Indira Gandhi and Narendra Modi have use strategies that have resulted into polarisation. Let us investigate tenure of both the leaders to understand how populism plays significant role in polarising and increasing communal tension among the society of India.

INDIRA GANDHI

During Indira Gandhi's tenure social polarisation came to its peak particularly in 1970s and 1980s. Her ca, Paige to eradicate poverty (Garibi Hatao) led to social disintegration in perceived elite and lower masses. The campaign was to prevent poverty but along with the main motive it also created a political climate charged with class tension.

EMERGENCY PERIOD: Emergency was announced in 1975, this political event led to widespread of polarisation by suspending civil liberties, censorship of the press, press had to take permission from the government before publishing any article, detention of opposition leaders and other such activities led to political repression and societal divides. The emergency period also saw unification of opposition against Indira Gandhi because she took drastic measures to stay in power and sustain her government. Forceful schemes such as sterilisation campaign and slum demolition further alienated large sections of the population, particularly the poor. To fill the government records single men was sterilised twice or thrice, hygiene was also the other concerns. Slum areas were demolished leading to anger and frustration among the poor people.

OPERATION BLUE STAR: This operation blue star was carried out in the year 1984 to flush out militants from the Golden Temple, famed site of Punjab. The insurgency led to civil wars in different cities around the country. Thousands of people lost their life. The most highlighted name was Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. Akal Takht was damaged. This situation in Punjab led to communal violence between Hindus and Sikhs. Central government had significant impact of this operation.

The operation resulted in considerable loss of life and damage of the holy shrine of Sikh community. The anger among Sikh community got worse contributing to assassination of Indira Gandhi. Her bodyguard were also of Sikh religion, who assassinated her on 31st October 1984. The next day, bloodthirsty rioters burned housed, cars. Overall, this operation led to massacre of Sikh as well as Hindu community.

NARENDRA DAMODAR DAS MODI

Narendra Modi and his populist polices is a controversial topic that has been widely debated by the citizens in India. Modi's rise to national prominence has been greeted by his association with Hindu nationalist

rhetoric, which looks to promote Hindu culture, mythologies, and cultural values. This has been perceived as exclusionary by the minorities, particularly Muslims. He has promoted traditions and symbols, along with controversial legislation that would have long term consequences on society and political stability of the country.

RAM MANDIR CONTROVERSY: Ram mandir was controversial topic since decade, it was in Modi's tenure that Supreme Court gave verdict about Ram Mandir case. This case was completely under investigation of Supreme Court but as Modi promotes Hindu religion, he advertised it widely which brainwashed Hindu youth leading to emergence of feeling of hatred towards the other communities. This political move has deepened division of people of communities and of India.

2019 CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT ACT PROTEST: The CAA has been perceived as an act targeting directly to the Muslims by critics. Under this act, it provides pathway to citizenship for non-Muslim refugees from neighbouring countries. This act has attracted critics from all around the world. Its passage led to widespread criticism and communal tension through protests and violence notably in areas of Delhi in February 2020, where clashes erupted led to loss of life and property.

SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCE: Modi has used social media as a powerful weapon for political mobilisation. The propagation of fake news and incendiary content targeting specific community has led to widespread of communal tension. The community has to face social division but in online and offline manner.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Indira Gandhi's tenure saw mixed economic performance, with significant challenges in the form of slow growth rates, high inflation, imbalances in payments and other such crisis. The economic growth was stifled by the scheme of Licence Raj as well. The economic dynamism was unstable during her period.

Indira Gandhi's period saw Cold War, economic challenges like famine, social issues like poverty leading to political instability. Her approach often involved centralising power to implement her vision. Her policies like Garibi Hatao resonated with masses and it became cornerstone of her populist appeal, focusing on alleviating poverty. Gandhi centralised power, often bypassing traditional party structure that made her authoritarian and decisive leader. Key sectors like banking and insurance were nationalised to ensure the support from the rural arena of the country.

Though Indira Gandhi did work on ground level on developing agricultural sector of our country but by taking measures to eradicate poverty but harsh moves like Emergency led to erosion of institutional structure. Centralisation of power weakened and so did the political institutions that led to long-term impact on political culture.

Her economic policies were rooted in socialism but later on her political movement in Punjab led to widespread of communal tension which later resulted into her assassination. Gandhi's populism was deeply rooted in socialist ideals and centralism, leading to significant though often controversial, intervention in the economy and political system of the country.

Narendra Modi has been Prime Minister since 2014, he rose from humble background of Rastriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a Hindu nationalist organisation. He is known for his emphasis on Hindu community, transforming India digitally and other such developments. His political ideology has been associated with Hindu traditions and cultures. This has solidified his support base from Hindu voters. He has also emphasised on slogans like "Sabha Sath, Sabha Vikas" that promises of inclusive growth and

development of everyone. But his political agenda that has more relevance to Hindu has also led to increased communal tension and concerns about the marginalised section of the society.

Modi has used technology to streamline welfare through his schemes like “Digital India”, “Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana”, and others. These schemes have improved efficiency and transparency in welfare delivery, gaining widespread approval from beneficiaries.

Although Modi has been credited with reducing corruption by policies such as demonetisation and GST, but he has been also questioned on certain frauds of political corruption. Electoral Bond scam is the recent controversy, electoral bond was introduced in 2018 but critics claim that the scheme promotes opacity as donor’s name are not disclosed to the public. Other such frauds include demonetisation and bank fraud, where Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi were alleged to have defrauded Punjab National Bank of approximately ₹13,000 crores through fraudulent letters of undertaking, Jay Shah’s company turnover grew 16,000 times in one year, raising questions about potential conflicts of interest.

This all resulted in loss of majority in the recent elections of 2024. BJP did win with majority in the previous two elections of 2014 and 2017 but could not make government without alliances in the 2024 Lok Sabha election. BJP lost its seat from the most expected constituency of Ayodhya, because people their lost their houses for the construction of Ram Mandir. BJP made this case, propaganda of their speeches and rallies but the reality was other than that. Anger over unemployment and the fear of Dalits and Muslims also work against the BJP, in this election. The Bhartiya Janta party received 37.36% of the vote in 2019 elections but could hold only 240 seats in the recent election.

Narendra Modi saw robust economic growth in the initial years of his tenure b, though he has faced many challenges like COVID-19 and internal factors like demonetisation and GST. Recent years have seen slower growth and rising of unemployment. While Narendra Modi’s government has taken several steps to reduce corruption and for increasing transparency but allegations and accusations around the swindles and irregularities persist.

Modi’s tenure has seen increase in communal tension and polarisation, but his leadership has also been transformative in many ways, by bringing significant policies and schemes for the development of our country, India.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Narendra Modi and Indira Gandhi, both have been influential leader in the history of India. One quality that is common to both the leaders is that both the leaders are decisive and authoritarian. Both leaders have faced significant backlash and controversy, they have used centralised authority and power as central to their leadership. Gandhi’s populist strategy was rooted in socialist politics and policies. Gandhi’s era is marked for centralisation of power and significant state control over the economy while Modi’s era is marked for liberalisation, technological advancement, and market-oriented reforms.

Modi’s use of social media and technology to communicate directions to the citizens of our country has been a cornerstone to his political structure and also to his populism strategy. Modi has used technology in a significant way by delivering his message directly to the people. Youth has been his main target as they are more active on the social media. On the other hand, Indira Gandhi propagated her ideology in the favour of marginalised section of the society that gave her support from those sections.

Both leaders have used populism to centralise power and to implement their vision, as a strong strategic move. Gandhi’s authoritarian approach was damaged after the emergency, even though she came to power

again in 1977 but could not sustain as she was assassinated. While Modi's tenure has raised concerns about the erosion of institutional independence and press freedom.

Thus it can be concluded that populist leader show same approach in ruling the country, their policies and agenda might differ but the main characteristic is the centralisation of power. Indira Gandhi and Narendra Modi exemplify how populism can be wielded to consolidate power and drive transformative agendas in India.

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