

4 Bharatiya Janata Party

The successor of Jana Sangh, the party drawing its central ideas and symbols from Hindu traditions and culture, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has established itself through three successive elections since 1989, as an alternative to the Congress. After 11th Lok Sabha elections it has become the single largest party in Parliament. As a successful incarnation of Hindu revivalism, the party of *Hindu Jagaran*, the party of Ayodhya, it is placed on the Right of the three point scale of the political spectrum. Its ideology of *Hindutva*, the belief that the Indian Union ought to be made over into a Hindu state, is regarded by its opponents as the great challenge to Indian secularism. It is dubbed as anti-secular and communal. However, the BJP leaders argue that they are opposed not to secularism but to Congress's "pseudo-secularism", in favour of Muslims practiced to get Muslim votes. The BJP stands for positive secularism. It rejects

any appeasement towards any community and aims at "establishing a democratic state which guarantees to all citizens irrespective of caste, creed or sex, political, social and economic justice, equality of opportunity and liberty of faith and expression" (Article II of the BJP Constitution). The party Constitution expresses its commitment to five ideals—nationalism and integration, democracy, positive secularism, Gandhian socialism and value-based politics.)

In the manifesto issued on the eve of 1996 general elections the BJP declares itself as a "party of change", which seeks to "launch a new social and political order so as to transform the existing system of governance, to make it responsive and answerable to the concerns" of the citizens of the country and set out a comprehensive programme covering constitutional, social, economic and other spheres. These are briefly the following :

1. Implementation of the Sarkaria Commission Report in respect of restructuring Centre-State relations so as to restore the balance of resources in favour of the States, ending the misuse of Article 356 of the Constitution, appointment of Governors after consultation with the Chief Ministers, deleting Article 370 of the Constitution which gives special status to Jammu and Kashmir, enforcement of uniform civil code as per Art. 44 of the Constitution, creation of the States of Uttarkhand, Vidharba, Chattisgarh and some other small States as per the recommendations of the SRC and granting full statehood to Delhi.

2. Adoption of the recommendation of the Dinesh Goswami Committee Report on electoral reforms, granting statutory status to the code of conduct drawn up by the Election Commission, introduction of state funding of elections, mandatory audit of accounts of political parties and their publication, issue of identity cards to all voters, ensure speedy and exemplary punishment to persons involved in booth-capturing or rigging of polls, amendment of the anti-defection law to prevent horse-trading, etc.

3. To promote clean public life by appointment of an Ombudsman (Lok Pal) who will entertain public complaints against politicians including ministers and the prime minister.

4. Protection of rights and interests of all minorities.

5. Enforcement of laws against untouchability, eradication of the evils of bonded and child labour, strict implementation of welfare programmes for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as well as for the old and disabled people, provision of reservation for OBCs making a uniform criteria for the identification of "creamy layer", disbanding of the Minorities Commission and entrusting its work to the Human Rights Commission.

6. To promote economic growth through "swadeshi" (the use of home-made goods and economic self-reliance) and protect the nation's economic sovereignty, foreign investments should be allowed only for world-class technology, the country should be freed from debts to World Bank and the IMF.

7. Speedy development of agriculture and rural economy, as the key to India's prosperity.

8. Industry to be made more productive, more innovative and modernised. Public sector to be confined to only security-sensitive areas and to play the role of moderating the ill-effects of the private sector. The private sector to be freed from government interference.

9. Encouraging consumer movement and effective enforcement of the Consumers' Protection Act, 1986.

10. To pursue a policy of peace, friendship and cooperation on the basis of sovereign equality of nations, strengthening SAARC and establishing a regional common market, optimum defence preparedness, bettering relations with the USA, Russia and China on the basis of mutual respect and congruence of interests.