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“COALITION POLITICS IN INDIA: A BIRD EYE VIEW”



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ABSTRACT

The present research paper attempts at the understanding of the system of coalition and an evaluation of its implications for society with an Indian experience. Coalition politics is based on a system of governance by a group of political parties or by several political parties. When several political parties collaborate to form a government and exercise the political power on the basis of a common agrees programme/ agenda we can describe such a system as coalition politics or coalition government. Such a government is usually organized when no party is in a position to get a

majority in the parliament and some parties form a coalition group or an alliance and thus form a government. A coalition government is a collaborative or cooperative effort in which several political parties or some political parties in association with some independent representatives form a government. The system of forming a collective government and running such a government is usually described as a coalition government or a system of coalition rule or more simply coalition government or a stem of coalition rule or more simple coalition politics. On the basis of facts and research we can say that the era of coalition politics in India has finally arrived.

KEYWORDS :System, coalition, Government, Forming, Party,

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that Indian political parties have fragmented over the years. Frequent party

splits mergers and counter splits have dramatically increased the number of parties that now contest elections. In 1952, 74 parties contested elections whilst in recent years this number has swollen to more than 177, and has been consistently increasing since 1989. Can the instability at the union level or in the states be attributed solely? To the growing number of parties or the malaise with which the political system suffers today lies in the functioning and the dynamics of the party system in India apart of course from the other causes in the working of the political system as a whole.¹

Political parties and the party system in India have been greatly influenced by cultural diversity social ethnic casts community and religious pluralism traditions of the national list movement contrasting style of party leadership and clashing ideological perspectives. The two major categories of political parties in India are national and state, and are so recognized by the election commission of India on the basis of certain specified criteria. As of today there are seven national parties seven after the split in the Janata Dal in August 1999 and more than 50 parties recognized as such by the election commission of India. The national parties are Indian National congress Bharatiya Janata Party Communist party of India communist party of India (Marxist) Bahujan Samaj Party, Nationalist congress party and Rashtriya Janata Dal.²

COALITION POLITICS IN INDIA

Contemporary India has today undergone a complex and tortuous political transition. The demise of the one party dominance system has given birth to an era of coalition with the decline of the congress and in the absence of a national alternative having a countrywide spread it was logical for the people to repose faith in different parties and groups some confined to region. For the last couple of decades the Indian political landscape has been dominated by coalition politics.

Unlike general perception coalition in politics is not a new concept for Indian politics coalitionism as a form of government is common and widely practiced in Europe. Indian too has accumulated not inconsiderable amount of experience in the form of governing arrangement. Undivided India got its first experience of coalition government in 1937 when the government of India act, 1935 became operative. At the time Jinnah asked for a collation consisting of congress and Muslim league in UP but congress the party holding majority did not entertain this demand. Mohd Ali Jinnah at that time argued that in India coalition was the only respectable device to give to the Muslim a fair a share in governance in other states like NWFP and Punjab congress formed coalitions with other regional parties.³

In 1947, the interim governme4nt under the prime minister ship of Nerhru was the first formal coalition consisting the congress, the Muslim league, the Hindu Mahasabah etc. the electoral history of India and the records of union government since in dependence can be divided into two phases first up to 1989 a period of eight elections resulting in electoral majority for one party and relatively stable union governments except for a period of 1967-72 and the second the decade since 1989 marked by fractured verdicts in 1989, 1991,19896,1998 and 1999 and 2004 resulting in the formation of minority or coalition government.

Coalition politics in India for is very volatile and one again pre poll alliance is buzzing everywhere with scrambling for seats and allies. Alliance is subjected to last minute changes any time. However amidst these the prime ministerial candidates have been announced by the existing coalition parties. In the 2009 General elections the prime minister candidates for NDA led coalition was the present leader of the opposition party Shri. L.k.Advanie and UPA coalition prime minister candidate was Dr. Monmohan Singh while the third front was seen scuttling for suitable person amongst them.⁴

The NDA party comprises of BJP, Janta Dal (united) Shiva Shena Shirominal Akali Dal, ASom Gana

Parishad Rastriya LOK Dal Indian National Lok and Mizo National front. The third front alliance I, also known as United Front was in power 1996-98. Presently third front is alliance between united national progressive alliance and left front. Constituent parties are communist party of india. Telugo Desam party, Biju Janatal Dal secular revolutionary party. However, in a political set up

REASONS FOR CHANGE IN PARTY SYSTEM.

Political parties in India emerged during the British rule in the course of freedom struggle. Congress founded in 1885 spearheaded the freedom struggle and naturally therefore after independence it emerged as a pre eminent and a natural party of governance. Congress not only dominated parliament and state legislative assemblies in terms of seats but also outside the legislature in terms of organizational strength. Congress dominance over the Indian politics continued till 1967.⁵

However, there was gradual shift from the pattern of one dominant party rule. The growing political social economic and regional tensions gave rise to emergence of different parties which wielded varying influences in state. Within the course of time an uneven politics pattern was evolved In those states where non congress parties mustered enough combined strength to have the working majority in state legislature coalition government were formed in Punjab, Bihar, UP etc. The year 1967 turned out to be watershed in Indian politics ridding on the crest of mounting non congressism non congress coalition in the form of Samyukta vidayak Dal (SVD) governments were formed in several states. They had ideological heterogeneity. The exception was coalition in west Bengal and Kerala. The coalition in West Bengal was an alliance of left parties where as in Kerala there was a coalition government of left and Democratic front. The SVD coalitions in states collapsed in course of time as a result of their inner contradictions in the realm of ideology and political orientations of the constituents. Because of relative ideological political and programmatic homogeneity, the coalition mainly of the left parties in west Bengal and left and Democratic forces in Kerala had a greater degree of stability and as such they could survive and revive congress continued to be the dominant party in the centre government till 1977 when congress lost its power giving room to the government of the Janata party a conglomeration of five erstwhile opposition parties for consolidating the anti congress votes. The Janata government committed to a common progressive election manifesto. Bread with freedom had caught the imagination of the people and had risen their hopes and aspirations.⁶

So the Indian party system has changed from single dominant party to multi party system strongly marked by regional parties. Since 1989 the Indian party system has changed from one in which one dominate all Indian party the Indian national congress governed at the centre and in most states to one in which weakened al Indian parties let coalition government at the centre while regional parties share power at the centre and growing in many states in would be in perfect order to make to survey of coalition governments centre and state.

Since 1980 we have seen emerged of many regionalist parties as reflected by the growing size of ballot papers. These parties try to build their vote bank on basis of regionalism religious caste language etc. they try to showcase themselves as representative or rather protectors of interest of one communities like Muslim (RJDSP) some go as protectors of dalits (BSP) some are formed on the basis of hindutva (Jana Sangh Shiv Sena) some try to bring out linguistic or caste appeal (MNS, ALADMK, DMK, TDP). List is endless worrying factor for Indian stability. When these parties go into election they showcase then selves as fighters against so called non secular parties like BJP. This may seem to be the biggest communities and on other side they distance themselves away from non secular parties.⁷

What most Indians need to ask is. Is the dominance of regional parties holding back India's emergence as a global power in terms of foreign economic and social policies this question needs to be

asked again and again , not just because the left have vetoed the nuclear deal but also because small regional parties have a potentially dangerous control over government policies of all kinds. And regional parties and leaders are on the march all across india. Mulayam Singh Yadav, Mayawati , Lalu Prasad, Bal Thackeray , Chandra Babu Naidu, Jaylalitha, M.Karunanidhi, Naveen Patnaik, MUmta Bannerjee, Nitish Kumar , Om Prakash Chuthelal, prafulla Mahanta, Prakash Singh Badal, and Mufti MOhd Sayeed, Farooq Abdullah are just names who will play a decisive role in the formation of next govt. we all know they will expect their pound of flesh in terms of more state funds for their regions, more trains to and from their state and more schemes that benefit their vote banks. But will they pause and think it is about future.

This has been one of the more unfortunate development of Indian democracy since 1967 when they monopoly of the congress started slipping over the country the process was accelerated in 1989 when the congress lost the lok sabha election. Since then so called allies have been dictating terms to successive govt. sure the rise of the regional parties also reflects the health of Indian democracy in a way they have replaced national parties who could not full fill local and regional aspirations. Because the people of Andhara Pradesh felt insulted, NT Rama Roa could form the Telugu Desam and right to power.⁸

Since regional parties claim that they have better understanding what voters want in contrast to lumbering national parties surely they can announce that they will support any policy that promotes excess to education health sanitation and employment opportunities for the poor and the deprived. Literally from Kashmir to Kanya Kumari these are issues that engage the voters who are desperate to share the benefits of globalization the regional parties also know that the biggest obstacle to delivering benefits of development and even decent policies is the corrupt and incompetent bureaucracy, cannot they all come together and promote a character which say that bureaucracy and red tape will be number one enemy they all will vote in the lok sabha to abolish. India now stands cross roads being a democracy elections are inevitable and so is political insatiability. Equally unstoppable for the time being is the rise and rise of regional political parties, perhaps for the first time India's regional parties have an opportunity to create history.⁹

COALITION POLITICS AT THE CENTRE AND THE STATE

India experienced its first coalition government even before the transfer of power when after refusing to share power with the congress; the Muslim league joined the interim government a month later. The function of this 14 member coalition government formed on Oct. 25, 1946 lasting nine months highlighted the travails of a coalition of unlike minded parties giving a good lesson in what a coalition should not do. Naturally this coalition between a party opposing partition of the country and the other bent upon the partition lacked political homogeneity.

After the split of congress in 1969 some members of the congress party withdrew their support from the government thereby reducing it into minority. However the minority congress government of Mrs. Indira Gandhi continued to rule with the tacit support of communist party of India and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). In this minority government neither communist party of india nor dravida munnetra kazhagam (DEMK) was represented in the government, after the election of 1971

Mrs. Indira Gandhi's party was returned to power with an overwhelming majority and provided a strong government till 1977 when it was voted out of power and was succeeded by the Janata government since 1977 India has been experienced various coalition governments at the centre¹⁰.

In the electoral history of independent India 1967, 1977 and 1989 are the turning points in the nature of the party system. The fourth General Elections of 1967 can be considered one of the most

important events in Indian politics. Ridding on the crest of mounting non congressism, non congress coalitions in the form of Samyukta Vidayak Dal (SVD) government were formed in several states,. The 1967 election had created a situation in which congress dominance was strikingly diminished because its performance in the art of governance was subjected to harsh judgment by supporters and opposition alike. The public image of the congress had been tarnished owing to the charges of corruption against some of its leaders and also on account of growing economic crises in the country. Intra-party factionalism and conflicts resulted in massive defections and splinter groups in the form of Janta Congress in West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Jana Kranti Dal in Bihar, Jan Pakasha in Mysore, and the Janta party in Rajasthan . Emergence of splinter groups and their reconciliation with opposition parties created a situation conducive to coalition and competitive multiparty system. The 1967 elections put the congress system on trail and marked and of one party dominances system in India.Despite the weakening of the congress party during 1967 to 1971, it continued be a single dominant party and the centre till the ninth general elections with the short interval of 1977-1979 when the coalition ruled at the centre.¹¹

CONCLUSION

The above analysis of coalition governments at the centre clearly reflects that the hung parliaments became the norm of the India because of fragmentation in political parties political parties have demonstrated a shocking lack of ability to create enduring coalitions. Indian democratic politics so far has been lacking in the talent and culture of coalition making and coalition maintaining however, NDA and UPA experience in coalition governance with two major national parties BJP and congress leading it alternatively has gradually helped in building up a coalition culture. However coalitions have still a long way to go in as far as India is concerned. Since there is a coalition pattern at all India level and state level increasing role of regional parties and social groups gave birth to coalition governments in India.

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