
Indian Democracy And Coalition Governments At National Level-Till 2014

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Introduction

On August 15,1947, India got freedom from the British rule and adopted the parliamentary model of democracy. Democracy, where the sovereign power rests with the hands of common people and it is practiced through their elected representatives. The success of a democracy depends upon free and fair elections. The periodic elections are essential for the affirmation of popular sovereignty in a democracy (Ruparelia, 2005,p.2407).

In democratic countries, people enjoy the right to vote. Voting comprises as the most important forms of political participation, can be secret or open, direct or indirect, compulsory or optional, in person or by post. Indian constitution has made statutory provisions for the free and fair exercise of Right to Vote. An elected government is not only responsible for preserving and protecting their rights but also to create a healthy environment for their overall development. Therefore, voting is of much importance, as it provides some signs of the political trends emerging in the society and the general view-point of the people for the socio-economic changes started by government.

Political parties are the lifeline of a democratic system. These are not only the important agents of political socialization but also their growth and functioning is rather a bench-mark of political modernization. In a democracy, political parties mobilize the masses in the political process and this discharge a significant function. The competition and struggle among parties to outclass the other in elections promote not only a meaningful participation of the people, but also different ideas of policy and leadership(Prasad,2004,pp.103- 104).

However, the pattern of party system is different in all countries, because it is

largely shaped by the socio-economic status of a particular society. Socio-economic changes like as freedom to the mass media, education spreading, establishment of adult suffrage and the creation of new political institutions greatly affect the patterns of social relationships. These changes in the social relations, affect political behavior of the people.

In this context, the role of political parties cannot be ignored in a democracy. Political parties articulate the demands of people and act as important agencies of public opinion. Apart from this, political parties provide political leadership to govern the state and maintain the link between people and the Government. Any change in the party system affects the functioning of the political system (Brar,1988,pp.399-412).

Indian party system and elections are based on a single-member constituencies, the candidate receiving most votes will win and be a part of a bi-cameral legislature in the form of parliament, at the Centre. The leader of the winning party is invited by the President to form the government in the Lok Sabha. The President normally plays a ceremonial role as a nominal head of the state. With minor differences, the rules resemble the British system of parliamentary democracy (Singh,2006,p.8).

India has a large number of regional parties because of various factors containing geography, culture, language and so on. The notable Indian regional political parties are Telugu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh, the DravidaMunnetraKazhagam and the All India DravidaMunnetraKazhagam in Tamil Nadu, the Shiromani Akali Dal in Punjab, the National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir, the Shiv Sena and the Nationalist Congress Party in Maharashtra, the Biju Janata Dal in Orissa, Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh etc. (Thankurtra And Raghuraman,2007.p.29). In fact, the presence of a large number of political parties along with regional parties provided an environment for the emergence of coalition government and politics in India.

Coalition Government:

Coalition governments are a world-wide phenomenon now days. Countries which repeatedly have the coalition governments include the Nordic Countries, the Benelux countries, Australia, Austria, Germany, Italy, Japan, Turkey, Israel, New Zealand, Kosovo, Pakistan, Kenya, India, Trinidad, Tobago, Thailand, and Ukraine. Switzerland has been governed by a coalition of the four strongest parties in parliament from 1959 to 2008. The United Kingdom also operates a formal coalition cabinet between the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties, but this is unusual because the UK normally has a majority government.

Coalitions have become an essential part of politics due to instability among political parties. But, it varies in the developed and developing countries. Coalition governments have been successful in the developed nations like Australia, Japan, and Canada because of uniform class and similar needs and interests. While in developing countries, it is surrounded by difficulties. In the developing society, the coalition is experiencing dilemmas like political instability, crisis due to the clash of ideas, consensus problem, heterogeneous societies and which in turn, mostly results in the very intricate functioning of the state (Limaye,1982,p.35).

Coalition politics is a phenomenon of a multi-party system where some parties join hands to run the government as no major party gets the required number to form the government. A coalition is formed when many small groups agree to join hands on a common platform by dropping their differences to form a majority. The coalition government is mainly a product of politics in a parliamentary form of democracy. It is due to the presence of a multi-party system in a democratic set-up. It is a type of government constituted when no single party can get a majority on its own. A coalition of parties may take the form either before the elections or after elections.

Meaning of Coalition:

The word 'coalition' has been defined in Dictionary as, "uniting or union of political parties for a specific purpose." The Oxford Dictionary of Politics has explained 'coalition' as "any combination of separate players such as political parties to win a voting game." So, the Coalition means that when some political parties get united on some issues. The word coalition was firstly used in 1604. It is derived from the Latin word `COALESCERE` (Mclear,1996,p.78) which means moving forward collectively or united in groups. So, it means that a coalition is based on the point, unite to win (Singh,1996,p.18-19).Generally, coalition means the group of people in which they come together temporarily for one or some common issues to win or govern. In Politics, coalition shows the collectiveness of various political parties, interest groups or other groups to affect the decision- making or acquire the power. In coalition government many political parties co-operate, reducing the dominance of any one party within that coalition. The usual reason for this arrangement is that no party on its own can achieve a majority in the legislature. According to the Oxford Dictionary `Alliance is in the process of getting together or meeting in an organization, becoming individuals or their organizations`.

The coalitions are shaped for gaining power. It is also relevant here that the nature and pace of restriction in coalition government contrasts from one parliamentary election to form the government. In coalition government there are a large number

of groupings on the administration side and a single national parliamentary elections with little groupings in resistance though in a sole parliamentary elections government, just a single parliamentary elections has control. A Coalition Government needs to confront not just the parliamentary resistance, the endeavor of decision coalition attempting to appeal the restriction by offering some compelling post positions (Sahni,1971,p.17).

Phases of Coalition:A coalition can take place in phases as follows:-

- 1. Pre-election-** When political parties formulate an alliance with other political parties to defeat the dominant party before elections.
- 2. Post-election-** This type of coalition has the real approach of ministry. If some parties are not able to formulate government due to the lack of majority required for the formation of government, then these parties look forward to inviting cooperation from other parties to form a common government.
- 3. Ideological-** This type of coalition governments are formed when political parties share common thinking or ideologies.
- 4. Without participating in government-**When a political party supports the coalition government from outside, means they will not take any ministry or will not be part of the government.
- 5. Tacit Coalition-**It means implied, secret or internal coalition. In this sense, a tacit coalition is a mere understanding with some group without really mixing with it.
- 6. An Express Coalition-**It means a legal or legitimate coalition. It is a legitimate alliance of some group with clear understanding of give and take policy.
- 7. Positive Coalition-**It is formed with the object of not pulling down political party in power but by providing an alternative government. It can be called as positive and constructive coalition.
- 8. Negative Coalition-**When the political parties come together just with an object of pulling down the government already in power, and they neither take the burden of forming a new government nor do they provide better alternative. Such a coalition can be called destructive or negative coalition.

Coalition: An Indian Scenario

In Indian politics, coalitions reflect an opportunistic power-driven mentality of various political groups. India, being a country of many diversities and pluralities through united, continues to be motivated by conservative ideologies (Livingston,1956,p.2). Moreover, it is because of this character of Indian culture that

coalitions are to a greater degree important to the nation. So a coalition is not just the meeting up of different political parties to gain control of the administration; it is additionally a significant feature to address social interests at the grass-root level. In places where there are minorities in the manner of standing, dialect, culture, and religion, neither solitary parliamentary elections are in a position to decide the fate of the whole country, nor is there a steady blend of minorities that can hold its apparent part over a drawn-out period (Chakrabarty,2008,p.153). The investigation of coalition governmental issues has attained incredible significance in India in light of the change of overwhelming one dominant party elections framework, i.e., into a multi-party framework. The way of life of coalition-building is not new for the Indian legislature. However, it is identified with the formal institutional parts of the legislature.

The thought demonstrates instrumentality of accord working as a regarded incentive in the nation set apart with the majority and differing qualities. It is, in this manner, not amazing that standard national reaction to the British pilgrim oppression was acquired in the Gandhian thought of Swarajya which in itself was made out of the soul of a coalition working in governmental issues, financial aspects and the general public on the loose(Austin,1999,p.10).

The development and supporting of vote based foundations, for example, free press, Right to vote, Rule of law and soon etc. have helped the possibility of the coalition to additionally develop in the new majority rule set-up of the nation. After independence, the Indian National Congress was the main National Party which got fame and regard of the general people. Simultaneously, the parliamentary elections had a mass base and grassroots in India. It stayed in power both in the Centre and in the state's ideal from 1947 to 1967 and had a solid character.

The guideline of a coalition structure remains on the effortless reality of temporary coincidence of particular interests. It is not static but dynamic undertaking as coalition partners or gatherings more often broke up and frame new ones. In making political rightness, standards are put aside and in this procedure ideology is the primary loss. The motivation behind a coalition modification is to take control. No coalition accomplice has lasting companions, however just changeless interests.

A study of coalition Politics in India is the part of defection politics, which is the result of fragmentation and polarization of power against the one party dominant system. Coalition is product of the political realities as they emerge in a parliamentary democracy (Singh & Raj,2012, pp.259-261).

In June 1975, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi imposed an internal emergency,

suspending civil liberties, after she was indicted for electoral malpractice. After the election, India's first-ever coalition government was formed at the Centre under the Prime Minister-ship of Morarji Desai(24 March 1977 to 15 July 1979).This was also the first non-Congress government at Centre, headed by the Janata Party. As the popularity of Janata Party declined, Morarji Desai had to resign and Chowdhary Charan Singh became the 5th Prime Minister of India. However, due to lack of support, this coalition government did not complete its full term. However, the government couldn't last long, internal pressures proved disastrous and in July 1979, government fell down. As a result Congress came in to power again in 1980. Six months later, a victorious Mrs. Gandhi, largely responsible for having engineered the Janata party's split and portraying herself as a woman unjustly persecuted by government, was voted back into the office of Prime Minister.

After this, Indira Gandhi was assassinated in 1984 and Rajiv Gandhi succeeded her as Prime Minister, he completed his full term from 1984 to 1989. In the 1989's elections, once again India got a coalition government under National Front, till 1991, with two Prime Ministers V.P.Singh and Chander Shekhar, the latter was being supported by Congress. During the election campaign Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated on 21 May 1991. The 1991 election resulted in a Congress-led stable minority Government for five years. P.V. Narasimha Rao lasted nearly five years, because the opposition parties could not unite to pull down the Rao government and a number of opposition members joined the congress government through party splits and mergers (Ramakrishnan, 2008,p.124).In the election of 1996, Bharatiya Janta Party emerged as the single major party because no party had the absolute majority. Atal Bihari Vajpayee was selected as the PM on the condition to prove the confidence in Lok Sabha. However, surprisingly Atal Bihari Vajpayee submitted his resignation on the confidence motion voting day. Then the 14party,JantaDal-ledcoalitionemergedtoformagovernmentknownastheUnitedFront, under the Prime minister-ship of H.D. Deve Gowda with the outside support of Congress Party. The Congress party withdrew its support in March 1997 and the government fell down. Deve Gowda was replaced by Inder Kumar Gujral as the Prime Minister again with the support of Congress. But the Congress again withdrew support from the United Front in November 1997. However the 1998 elections produced another divided mandate and a Hung Parliament came into the force, the BJP made an alliance with 13 regional political parties to form the government. Now Bharatiya Janta Party having better strength and many more allies to support. In the election of 1999 BJP again formed a pre-election coalition of with 24 parties under the NDA. The NDA won an absolute majority in the Parliament and became the first non-Congress coalition government in post-independence India to govern for a full term from

1999 to 2004.

Similarly another coalition government was formed i.e. the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) led by Congress, consisting of 15 different parties. For the first time in the post-independence history of India, Congress Allies more than a dozen different political parties, regional and national, were coalescing to form the government (Ram, 2007, p. 226). United Progressive Alliance ruled India for two terms from 2004 to 2009 and 2009 to 2014 with Manmohan Singh as Prime Minister. The General elections of 2004 mark a moment of closure (Sridharan, 1996, p. 54).

Main Features of Coalition Governments in India:

- In those days no single National level party was in the position to get a majority in Lok Sabha elections to form the government, at the center. The national parties had become fully conscious about the need to have coalitions with regional parties.
- According to the situations, pre-poll alliances were made and after the election results only limited political changes take place in this manner.
- Because a coalition government was formed by a mutually agreed common programme and it sustains itself through consent in decision making. It strengthens the Indian politics.
- It is quite clear that in coalition government, the leadership role was in the hands of the single largest party of the coalition.
- Three distinct alliance groups have appeared in Indian politics: the BJP led alliance NDA, the Congress led alliance UPA and left-front alliance.

The trend of Coalition politics has generally tended to make the working of the Indian political system and particularly the parliamentary system of governance, more complex and problematic.

The United Progressive Alliance (UPA) was formed soon after the general elections of 2004 when it had become clear that no party had won an absolute majority. Congress framed this alliance with different regional parties, including the Nationalist Congress Party and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). The party's campaign focused on social inclusion and the welfare of all the common people. The Congress-led United Progressive Alliance won 222 seats in the Lok Sabha. Congress led UPA formed the government with the support of the communist front and some others. Sonia Gandhi declined the prime minister ship, and thereby appointed Manmohan Singh as the Prime Minister instead. She remained as party president and headed the National Advisory Council (NAC).

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) had won 181 seats in the 543-member 14th Lok Sabha, as opposed the UPA's total of 218 seats. The Left front with 59 MPs (excluding the speaker of the Lok Sabha), the Samajwadi Party with 39 MPs and the BahujanSamaj Party with 19 MPs were other significant blocks that opted to support UPA. The UPA did not have a simple majority in the parliament rather it relied on the external support to ensure that it enjoyed the confidence of the Lok Sabha as the formula adopted by the previous minority governments.

An informal alliance had existed prior to the elections as several of the current constituent parties had developed seat-sharing agreements in many states. However, it was only after the election that the results of negotiations between parties were announced. The UPA government's policies were initially guided by a `common minimum programme`. The UPA thus had at least 335 MPs out of 543, supporting it at the time of its formation. The Left parties, despite ideological differences with the Congress, supported the UPA to ensure a secular government. Its working under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh`s leadership was praised worldwide.

Thus Coalition politics has further consolidated the ethnification of political parties and the party system in the country. It has also reinforced relationship between such parties & voters in which parties channel patronage towards their ethnically defined social bases in what has been called India`s `Patronage Democracy` (Singh& Mishra,2004,p.338). Although UPA Government worked well in many fields like Education, NREGA and Right to Information etc. under the leadership of great visionary and scholar Manmohan Singh, severe allegations (especially corruption) have also been labelled on this government. These allegations affected its popularity and became the reason of its defeat in 2014 elections. One of the most prominent among these allegations was the never-ending list of scams, corruption and bribery cases. Due to some self-sufficing members scams became an integral part of the Congress-led UPA government, as the stature of the party was also spoiled.

India's political system has undergone notable changes over the last some decades. After a long period of one-party dominance system, the formation of the coalition government reflects the transition in Indian politics. Although, some studies reveal that there are two poles of Indian politics, one is led by Congress, and the second one is led by BJP. But in the present scenario, the voting behavior of the people has changed completely. During the election, people critically analyses every political party, manifesto and performance then cast their vote. No doubt, it is right to say that our political system is still influenced by caste, religion, region, and community, but now the choice of a political party is largely based upon the development, welfare,

and up-liftment of society.

The Constitutional framers of India never expected of the hung parliament and the politics of opportunism. But the coalition government was the demand of time. Thus continuous changes in the politics (Centre and state levels) would determine the nature of the Indian political system in the coming years.

So, the coalition governments were the need of that era because of the political instability, increasing number & importance of regional parties etc. As it has been seen from the historical background, Congress was the only party which influenced on large scale the Freedom movement. After Independence it shaped the New India by enjoying the power. As time passed the popularity of congress declined and a large number of other parties appeared in India and started affecting the Indian Politics. Although the UPA Government has worked well but it faced many hurdles in working because of some allied parties or their corrupted nature.

Suggestions-The Indian coalition governments should take care of some points if they want to succeed properly-

- Decision making should be taken clearly by the Prime Minister not under the pressure of alliance members or Party Supermo. It not only minimized the PM's status but also weakens the government.
- We can say that the Prime minister must be from the Lok Sabha as it strengthens his status. An elected Prime Minister wins the natural respect of other elected politicians that they do not give to the selected Rajya Sabha member. The Indian bureaucrats also respect elected Prime Minister more.
- Pre-poll alliance is superior to post-election arrangements because political partners who face the election with a robust common minimum programme have obviously a better chance to provide a good government. Alliance should be serious on ideological bases not on opportunity based.
- The gap between rules adopted in the constitution of the parties and its implementation should be minimised. Every rule of the party-constitution should be strictly executed.
- It could not be denied that a strong opposition could have taken the responsibility to give attention to the continuous development of policies and to keep these in view before parliament and the people. The opposition could also have been an effective partner in the nation building process in the crucial period following the independence of the country.

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