



Party Politics and Coalition Governance in India

* Dr. B. M. Ratnakar

* Asst Professor, Department of Political Science Karnatak University Dharwad.

ABSTRACT

Coalitions have become an inevitable and indispensable part of the national and regional politics in the present scenario in India. India has been experimenting with various coalitions at the national level since the last two decades. With the decline of the Congress party and one-party dominant system and with the emergence of various new political parties at various levels, the coalitions have gradually assumed a lot of significance in Indian political system. Coalitions have been constructed for the purpose of forming government and also to oppose and depose the existing governments. Coalitions have been formed before the elections and also after the elections depending on the demands of the circumstances. With the coalition many national and regional political parties are indulged in party politics. Every political party wants have its say in the policy making and implementation. The large scale bargaining power is realized in coalition politics.

Keywords : Coalition, Party Politics, Elections, Formation of Governments

Immediately after independence coalition was to emerge in view of India's diversity in terms of history, culture and geography etc. However, the Congress party continued its dominance in Indian politics with the illusion of one party government. There was coalition within the Congress. It was able to manage the affairs of the country because of the moral authority it has acquired as a party which brought freedom to India. This moral authority was further strengthened by the presence of the great leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Kripalani and others. However, with the decline of the Congress, especially in the northern Indian states in 1967, this position of the Congress began to disappear and the Congress party revived its domination in Indian politics for quite some time in the post-Nehru era. The factional conflicts and systematic breakup of the party were a clear indication that India would have to be a country with a politically fragmented culture. It took some time for coalition to become a fact of political life. The breakdown of the 'dominant party system' beginning slowly from 1957 onwards, lowered the ability of the Congress party to absorb and assimilate various small groups and movements. These groups then began to form political organizations of their own. This process led to the failure of the congress to gain a majority in many States in 1967. The question is not whether India should have coalition or not, the real question is how India should manage the political capacity to organize and operate coalition systematically. Already the BJP which was supposed to be ideologically the most rigid party has begun to understand the culture of coalition politics. The future of the Indian party system will be more and more in the direction of two centers of coalition – one built around the Congress party and the other around the BJP. Therefore, we will be moving towards the two party systems through the coalition system. This is nothing unnatural in a country like India. We have to compare this with the practice in the USA and not with small European countries like France and UK. Therefore, Indian Political Science has a theoretical obligation to examine the nature of the party politics and coalition governance and the future of such politics. It also has an obligation to analyse the situational dynamics as well as the political consequences of the coalition system. After 1999, now the national political parties have realized their capabilities in order to strengthen their base they have come forward to accept the political realities and have entered into the concrete efforts to form the coalitions. Now before the elections the different political parties are coming to understandings to

have pre poll alliances to fight a common enemy. In fact the earlier coalitions were not sound in the sense of stability as they were formed without any preparations and most of them were post election alliances or coalitions. Now looking to the political realities the national political parties are entering into the pre poll alliances. They are devising common strategies to combat the most powerful national party. The common manifesto is being published to gain the support of the people. Thus the recently formed coalitions look more matured than the earlier ones. It is very surprising to note that the age old rivals and the traditional opponents are joining hands to fight a newly emerged force forgetting their differences. Now they are saying that they have arrived at a compromise to keep away a common enemy who is more dangerous. They also say that for them the national interest is more than anything. The analysis brings out the fact that, in the emerging political environment the regional parties and the coalition governments are playing a definite positive role

It is also to be noted here that the present coalitions have come out of the fear of instability and this is found by the various studies taken up by the various scholars in this area. The studies reveal coalition governments are more stable. The coalition government headed by Atal Bihari Vajapaye and the present government under the leadership of Dr. Manmohan Singh have shown remarkable maturity in the coalition activity as they have successfully completed the terms. Very significantly, when we compare and review the development conditions, which prevailed in the nation during pre coalition and the post coalition days one gets surprised to know that a great transformation has been brought about. The coalitions have proved their might by taking dynamic steps. Governments which had short stay have made long term progress in terms of socio, economic and political aspects. As a matter of fact, in a coalition there is a high scope for political bargaining, which means the various political parties can extract any sort of development package exerting pressure upon the government. The major political parties have learnt good lessons from the past experiences and they reduced their differences. In case of any such un to ward incident then the major seats holding political party intervenes and resolves the deadlock. Very significantly, when we compare and review the development conditions, which prevailed in the nation during pre coalition and the post coalition days one gets surprised to know that a great transformation has been brought about. The coalitions

have proved their might by taking dynamic steps. Governments which had short stay have made long term progress in terms of socio, economic and political aspects. As a matter of fact, in a coalition there is a high scope for political bargaining, which means the various political parties can extract any sort of development package exerting pressure upon the government. It may include road construction, dam projects, extension and conversion of railway lines, economic reforms like this there are many more.

Pressure and Pulls in Coalition : Critics of coalition say that coalitions do not stay for long and exhibit instability. To some extent it is found as true due to past experiences, in the past the various political parties were indulged in fighting, non

cooperation, non coordination, beyond anything they lacked understanding on various issues. The experiences of the past have shown that the coalition governments suffered from numerous problems, such as mutual differences among the constituent leaders, ego clashes of the leaders will weaken the coordination and it has led to the fragmentations, respect to the alliance parties leaders also play a significant role in the sustenance or collapse of any government at any time. Now once again the attempts to form alliances to fight the forth coming Lok Sabha elections have begin. The like minded political parties are holding discussions to come to power. India has entered a phase of coalition politics. It appears that coalition governments will be natural phenomenon in India in the years to come.

REFERENCES

1. Dodd, Lawrence, C., *Coalitions in Parliamentary Government*, Princeton University Press, United Kingdom, 1976. | 2. Kothari, Rajani, *Politics in India*, Longman, New Delhi, 1970 | 3. Pandey, Jawaharial, *State Politics in India: A Study in Coalition Politics in an Indian State*, Uppal Publishing House, NewDelhi, 1982. | 4. Sahni, N.C., *Coalition Politics in India*, New Academic Publishing Company, Jullunder, 1971. | 5. Ricker William, H., *The Theory of Political Coalition*, Oxford and IBH Publishing Co., Calcutta, 1962. | 6. Ganguly, Sumit, "India in 1997: Another Year of Turmoil", *Asian Survey*, Vol.38, No.2, February, 1998. | 7. Khan, Arshi, "Regional Political Parties and the Coalition", *The Radical Humanist*, June, 1998. | 8. Khare, Harish, "Coalition Politics", *Seminar*, 377, January, 1990. |