CONCLUSION

The effort of this work is to project the reality of Indian politics as it has fashioned itself since independence, and especially in the last decades, within the broad framework of coalition. The work involved highlighting the presence of coalitionalism, both overt and covert, manifest and subdud, informal and formal, intra-party and inter-party - in short in all its manifestations as it has existed in our sub-continent and continues to be a force-majeure of the political process.

In Chapter 1 we surveyed the broad canvas of coalitional theory. Most of the theory has been formulated in contexts and locales of the West (since very little work has been done in India on the theory of coalitions). Further, there is a lot of confusing and vexacious game theoretic models and heurism which are not helpful for the purpose of a political study of coalitions. Coalition politics has been both an object of empirical analyses and the foundation for elaborate superstructure of theory. It has been approached from the ‘European politics’ tradition and the ‘game-theoretic’ tradition - these have evolved in different directions quite independent of each other. Most of the game-theoretic work is America centred, expressing itself in dense

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1 In French, force-majeure means a ‘superior force’ one that is preferred over other types of force.
mathematical models and notation mostly incomprehensible. Most of it is irrelevant for European as also for Indian contexts.

Keeping in view the focus of this work,(which was to analyse the coalition experiments undertaken in India) we dealt with that class of coalition theory which was relevant to study coalitions in democratic contexts. We concentrated on some broad themes out of the broad canvas of coalitional theory namely, the power maximisation theories and the policy-based theories apart from a few separate ones. By doing so, we skipped over a lot of mathematical constructs and hypothetical bargaining exercises to provide propositions of theoretical linkages to actual parliamentary party systems. It has been found that the classical theories as projected by William Riker and later modified by Lawrence Dodd still stand the test of time and are relevant for studying the Indian experience. In brief, the Riker-Dodd theory of coalition formation posits that the coalitional status of the cabinet that forms after a parliamentary election is determined by the nature of the bargaining conditions that prevail within the parliament. The major stimulus in the bargaining process is the generalized a-priori willingness of parties to bargain inter-se. In conditions of low a-priori constraints, majority coalitions should form. In situations of higher a-priori constraints, the greater would be the possibility of minority coalitions forming.

In Chapter 2 the experience of various European countries where democratic systems having coalitional systems was looked at and evaluated. Broadly, it serves as important examples to emphasize that coalitional politics is the trend in modern politics and it crosses across cultures. It was in Europe where the coalitions
first emerged and there is a regular history and past experience in dealing with them. European countries have had regular interaction with coalitions from 1945 onwards. Some interesting highlights have emerged, namely that about one-third of all governments are minority coalition governments in Europe, while another quarter have surplus majorities. Secondly, it is found that, in 40 percent of cases coalition governments form when there is no single party control or majority and these are found to be minimal winning coalitions. Thirdly, it is seen that there is incidence of both minority and surplus majority governments in them, though the frequency found varies from country to country and there are considerable differences among them. We also find, fourthly, that there are countries that almost always have minority governments, for e.g., Denmark. On the contrary, there are countries like Luxembourg and Germany that never have such minority governments. Fifth, we also observe that three political systems namely Germany, Italy and Austria are cases where majority parties have on occasion formed coalitions with others to create surplus majority governments. There are still others, like Finland and Italy, in which surplus majority governments are very common. Out of the 218 coalition cabinets that have occurred in this period of 1945-1987, we find a very different spread of minority-majority coalition situations in the twelve countries studied for this purpose. Interestingly, there were 73 Minority governments in it, i.e., roughly 33%.

Theorists have tried to account for this phenomenon broadly in two ways. Some empirical theorists have tried to modify the office seeking approach to governmental formation in order to explain the European case trying to view majority
In Chapters 3 and 4 we have discovered that coalitions lead to an important facet of Indian factional coexistence or power-sharing. Though coalitions almost universally are responsible for the emergence of power-sharing models, they have come into pre-eminence in India as a formal imprimatur only a few decades earlier. At the centre, coalitions, as we know, came about only after it surfaced in the states of the Indian federal union. At the central level, there were important reasons why it emerged later, of which the role of the Congress hegemonic umbrella or the ‘Congress system’ as it is now well-known was perhaps the most significant. We have visualized in Chapter 3 that this was an informal coalition aggrandizing model in which one single party, having nationalist aspirations and a political history that successfully could manage this to near perfection. Indeed, the Congress party was quite important, and arguably more important than all of the formal institutions of the state put together.¹

Manor is of the view that the survival of the Congress dominance was sustained by the efficient party organisation. "...its effectiveness in distributing the resources, which it acquired from its control of state power, among existing and

¹ J.Manor op.cit. p.434.
trophy clients in exchange for their political support. This management of resources at which many within the Congress organisation excelled, was essential to the proper functioning of the 'conciliation machinery within the Congress, at various levels and for different tasks, which (was) almost constantly in operation, mediating in factional disputes, influencing political decisions in the States and districts. It was also noted that the impact of regional parties have been both negative and positive in the process of democratic majoritarianism. There have been apprehensions regarding the role of the regional parties at the centre. However, as events have shown, this fear has now lifted and the fact that they have become crucial participants in the operation of national governing coalitions after a series of hung Parliaments at the centre overtaking the umbrella Congress system. It may be viewed as a gradualist form of transition within the Indian democracy.

Consociationalism

As noted earlier in the Introduction, India has been considered by many Western scholars as unfit for consociationalism. Yet others have opined that the survival of India despite widespread poverty and illiteracy, is in itself nothing short of a paradox. This challenges the notion that there is usually an inescapable link between the level of socio-economic development and stable democracy in any country. This is also perspicacious in the political reality in several other Third world established stable democracies such as Costa Rica, Jamaica, Malta, Mauritius
Myron Weiner has talked about an Indian paradox that is incongruous because of 'the far more puzzling contradiction between India’s high level of political violence and its success at sustaining a democratic political system'.

It has also confounded Selig S. Harrison’s prediction made in 1960 which is in line with John Stuart Mill’s argument of India’s democratic failure and/or territorial disintegration: ‘The odds are almost wholly against the survival of freedom and ... the issue is, in fact, whether any Indian state can survive at all.’

The Indian puzzle is even more troublesome for consociational (power-sharing) theory. It contrasts with Mill’s and Harrison’s thinking, power-sharing theory holds that democracy is possible in deeply divided societies but only if their type of democracy is consociational, that is characterized by (i) grand coalition governments that include representatives of all major linguistic and religious groups, (ii) cultural autonomy for these groups, (iii) proportionality in political representation and civil service appointments, and (iv) a minority veto with regard to vital minority rights and autonomy. In contrast, under majoritarian winner-take-all democracy characterized by the concentration of power in bare-majority one-party governments, centralized power, a disproportional electoral system, and absolute majority rule—consociational theory regards stable democracy in deeply divided societies as highly unlikely.

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other words, consociational theory maintains that power sharing is an necessary (although not a sufficient) condition for democracy in deeply divided countries and that this does not obtain in India.

The consociational theory has deeply influenced comparative politics and has an extensive literature. Among its adherents are Hans Daalder and G.Bingham Powell who have hailed that it is a theory among the most influential contributions to comparative politics. A. Lijphart has stated that it has become a widely accepted "paradigm for the analysis of democracies than can be regarded as the prototypes of power sharing such as the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, Lebanon and Colombia. And it has been used for the interpretation of many other political systems, from tiny Liechtenstein to the European Union; in all parts of the world, for instance, Canada, Venezuela, Suriname, Italy, Nigeria Gambia, Kenya and Sri Lanka; and not only democracies but also such non democratic states as the former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union. Furthermore, consociational democracy has been proposed as a normative model for many ethnically divided countries, and it had a decisive influence in the shaping of South Africa's 1994 power-sharing constitution. However, it is opined that consociational theory has remained weak on one major factor namely, the glaring inapplicability to its unblemished empirical validity.

It has been observed by Paul R Brass that "the consociationalists ... consistently ignore the experience of India, the largest, most culturally diverse society
in the world that has... functioned with a highly competitive and distinctly adversarial system of politics". It is to be noted that serious attempts to come to terms with the Indian exception have been made only a few times and consociational scholars concede that India's democracy is, in line with the usual interpretation, mainly authoritarian because of the frequency of one-party majority cabinets, the highly centralized federal system that K C Wheare considers only 'quasi-federal' and a highly disproportional electoral system that has helped the Congress to win parliamentary majorities without ever winning a majority of the popular vote. Yet they have claimed that India is not completely majoritarian, citing Rajni Kothari's famous description of the Indian political system as a 'coalitional arena' akin to a grand coalition, and the autonomy for the major linguistic and state boundaries of India's federal design, and they have equivocated between calling India consociational and semi-consociational. Thus it was argued that while India remained a deviant case, its negative significance for consociational theory was relatively mild.

Lijphart believes that this argument can be logically extended and evidence shows that India has always had a power-sharing system of democracy,
especially from 1947 to 1967, but this in the later period was in a diminutive form.

"As Indian democracy has become less firmly consociational, intergroup tensions and violence have increased. If this reinterpretation is correct, ... then India is no longer a deviant case for consociational theory and in fact, becomes an impressive confirming case". He identifies some four elements of consociationalism in India.

THE ELEMENTS OF POWER SHARING IN INDIA

It has been opined by Lijphart that Indian democracy has exhibited all the characteristics of power sharing that also are found in other important consociational systems viz, in Canada (from 1840 to 1867), Netherlands (from 1917 to 1967), Lebanon (from 1943 to 1975) and again after the 1989 Taif accord, Switzerland since 1943, Austria from 1945-1966, Malaysia since 1955 with a temporary breakdown from 1969 to 1971, Colombia from 1958 to 1974, Cyprus from 1960 to 1963, Belgium since 1970, Czechoslovakia from 1989 until the 1993 partition of the country, and South Africa according to its 1994 interim constitution. In this work we have concentrated on the major criteria of power sharing — namely the partaking of power and sharing at the level of politics.

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never winning a majority of the popular vote in parliamentary elections, the Congress party has been balanced in the political centre and has encompassed 'all the major sections and interests of society'. Even before the independence the Congress was "already an internally federal organization with a high degree of intra-party democracy and a strong penchant for consensus. This 'historical consensus' Kothari writes was successfully transformed into a 'consensus of the present', and he comes close to using consociational terminology in describing Indian democracy as a 'consensus system which operates through the institution of a party of consensus'. namely, the Congress party". 9

Crawford Young makes a similar point. He says that "Lijphart's theory of consociational democracy has application to the Indian pattern of integration .... At the summit is a national political elite who are committed to reconciling differences through bargaining amongst themselves." 10 Indeed the Congress party's policy of inclusion and its political dominance has generated grand coalition cabinets with ministers belonging to all the main religious, linguistic, caste and sub-caste and regional groups.

However Lijphart's work does'nt go any further. He stops at the 'Congress system' merely. As we have noted in earlier chapters especially in Chapter 3 after the demise of the 'Congress system' a different version of bargaining model emerged with the beginning of minority coalition systems. The V P Singh's

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9 R.Kothari - Politics and the People: In Search of a Humane India Ajanta, ,Delhi(1989) p21
National Front government was the first such to be followed by a series of such minority coalitions. They introduced new and changed system of alliance-formation as also reconciling patterns and bargaining amongst themselves. Though not perfect (they have contributed to the demise of a lot of minority coalitions) they have tried to evolve a new lingo, a new political attempt to arrive at mutual reconcilement of differences at the political level, in the process, giving space to multiple heterogeneities, representative groups, conflicting interests of the emerging new class in politics, in place of the omnibus Congress system that spoke for them earlier. The grand coalitions that have now come about are in a sense, a historical progression over the Congress and are evolving newer criteria for an emerging new force in Indian politics which is restive and assertive, articulate and impatient to be part of the national politics. The succession of minority or coalition governments reflect the intense democratic churning in the states, were also indicative of lack of faith in the ability of the old system's internal coalition arrangement (namely the 'Congress system') and its incapacity to generate confidence in their governance capabilities in the minds of the minorities and other groups which were not direct participants in power.

*The other criteria of power-sharing*

Our work assumes the presence of some other criteria of power sharing that are structurally inbuilt in our Constitution and polity and are part of the power sharing model, namely proportionality, cultural autonomy and minority veto system. We have therefore not made special diagnoses of them.
the principle of proportionality is central to the modern electoral
system as they apply to democracies. Proportional representation is followed
universally and constitutes an essential basis of consociationalism. The plurality (first past the post) and other majoritarian methods have the tendency to over­represent majorities and larger political parties and they tend to discriminate against smaller minority parties as well as the corollary tendency to create artificial parliamentary majorities for parties that fall considerably short of winning popular vote majorities. "For instance, despite Malaysia's plurality elections, the interethnic coalition has succeeded in guaranteeing a nearly proportional share of parliamentary seats to the minority Chinese and Indian parties by giving them the coalition's exclusive nomination in a number of districts. In India, too, power sharing has managed to coexist with the plurality electoral system inherited from the British. One reason is that plurality does not disfavour geographically concentrated minorities, and India's linguistic minorities are regionally based. Another is that the Congress Party's repeated manufactured majorities have not come at the expense of India's many minorities due to its special status as the 'party of consensus', which has been deliberately protective of the various religious and linguistic minorities. Indian cabinets, which have been mainly Congress cabinets, also have accorded shares of minister ships remarkably close to proportional, especially given the constraint of only about twenty positions usually available, to the Muslim minority of about 12% and even the much smaller Sikh minority (roughly 2%), as well as to the different linguistic groups, states and regions of the country. In addition, a special feature of
the electoral law guarantees the so called Scheduled Castes (untouchables) and Scheduled Tribes (aboriginals) proportional shares of parliamentary representation by means of 'reserved' seats, that is, seats for which only members of these groups are allowed to be candidates. Finally, these scheduled groups and the so-called Other Backward Classes have benefited from other quotas—so-called reservations—with regard to public service employment and university admissions.”

The other two aspects of power sharing in multi-cultural societies such as India are cultural autonomy among the various groups in the country enforced by constitution and executive fiats and minority veto which means that by an informal understanding minorities can effectively protect their autonomy by blocking any attempts to eliminate or reduce it. These two have not been included as focus of our study in depth.

In multi-ethnic societies like India, the need to provide cultural autonomy for the various diverse groups divided on the ground of religion, linguism etc, takes broadly three forms. (a) either by a federal arrangement in which the state and linguistic boundaries largely coincide, like in Belgium, Czechoslovakia and Switzerland. (b) the right of religious and linguistic minorities to establish and administer their own autonomous educational institutions, aided by

11 A. Lijphart op. cit. p335.
the State as in the Netherlands, Belgium; and (c) by having separate personal laws regarding marriage, divorces, adoption of children, inheritance for religious minorities as in Lebanon and Cyprus.

Indian democracy has all these three forms of cultural autonomy and linguistic federalism has been in operation since the 1950s. Though it is true that linguistic federalism has not fully satisfied the desire of the multifarious minorities that exist. The fact that the balance of power in the federal system in India is not in favour of the states and the Centre has, quite in the spirit of the erstwhile Govt. of India Act of 1935, retained with it the maximum of centralized power, has given rise to fissiparous tendencies in the Indian setting. Yet, there are provisions (such as the one contained in Article 30 of the Indian constitution) that give the minorities, whether religious or linguistic, the right to establish and administer educational institutions freely. In India, we also have the practice of having separate sets of personal laws for majority communities such as the Hindus, Muslims and for smaller religious minorities such as the Christians, a practice carried over from the colonial masters. The Constituent Assembly in its deliberations believed that the State shall not undertake any legislation or pass any law which are applicable to a particular community and not to others. Yet, it made a concession in the matter of personal laws, and the stated provision was made because the Constitution treated the different communities existing in India differently and by allowing different treatment, nobody could charge the Government with practicing discrimination. Under this provision, the 1955 Hindu marriages Act, the 1956 Hindu Succession Act
, the 1937 Muslim Personal law (Shariat) Application Act, the 1939 Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act and the 1872 Indian Christian Marriage Act, the post Shah Bano Supreme Court directive (regarding the divorced Muslim women’s right to get financial support) the new Muslim Women Act of 1986 and the 1993 Christian Marriage Act have been included and they considerably expand the domain of cultural autonomy in India.

POWER SHARING – THE EMERGING POLITICAL REALITY

Lijphart’s consociational model has a basic drawback in the sense that consociationalism is suggestive of an accepted exemplar of power sharing that is constitutionally ordained. It is reflective of provisions that have to be incorporated in the organic law of any country. We, in this work, are not concerned with this point of view. Our concerns relate to how in the political arena, power sharing is being organized, with all its manifestations, weaknesses, contestations and limitations.

Indeed the major change brought about by power sharing politics is that India has transformed itself a lot since the formative period of Indian democracy. We may recapitulate them in brief, here. The fifties’ and the sixties’ was characterized by many well integrated features such as the ideological legacy of the freedom movement, emphasis on social unity (even though it went against the
of the landholding kulak lobby, upper caste intelligentsia and the trading/business community and these helped maintain the clientelistic arrangement of the 'Congress system' and a systematic attempt at weakening the organizational base of the lower castes, especially the dalits by not allowing to have their separatist identities and claims or by co-opting their leaders into the fold of the Congress. But in course of time the disintegration of the Congress system occurred due to a variety of reasons and concurrently a social transformation wave was raging which brought forward the assertion of the marginalized sections, the minorities and the dispossessed groupings. The ethnic resurgence, if it can be coined as such, was not only keen to form a new social bloc but was also keen in its quest for power. In South India a similar trend had begun in the early part of the twentieth century and was quite successful in emancipating the lower Dravidian castes and their co-optation into political power was also feasible.

In the North, however the attempts of the marginalized groups at ethnicising caste were hindered by the pervasive ethos of Sanskritisation. The thrust to the agenda of the marginalized groups got a shot in the arm with the electoral victory of the Janata party and the implementation of the Mandal Report by the National front government of VPSingh. Jaffrelot comments that "This move showed that 'quota politics' had taken over from 'kisan politics'. The jats left the coalition whereas the lower castes mobilized in North India where they were still marginal to all the centres of power. They formed a front against the upper castes' vocal hostility to
the new reservations. So the affirmative action programmes (such as the Mandal report's implementation) had at last prompted them to fight united as one group, the 'Other Backward Classes'. Thereafter the OBC representatives and leaders who participated in elections were returned to Parliament as MPs in larger numbers. New caste based parties especially of the backward community came up — such as the Bahujan Samaj Party, the Rastriya Janata Dal, the Samajwadi Party, Samata Dal etc. The upper caste domination was given a tough fight by these sections and parties. The lower caste soon got a new found voice and identity. Christophe Jaffrelot has termed this new phenomenon as the 'silent revolution' in India. He says "Power is being transferred, on the whole peacefully, from the upper caste elites to various subaltern groups. While riots did take place during the Mandal affair such transfers of power are generally accompanied by larger scale violence. The relative calm of the Indian experience is primarily due to the fact that the whole process is incremental: the upper castes are still in command, with OBCs forming a second line of leadership, a new generation is waiting."

All over India such a process is on and though the social churning is more noticeable in the North, in parts of the South-east and Eastern belts of India such a similar social revival is currently being waged on. There are various imponderables connected herein. The phenomenon though, in a way is currently on and may be said to be giving the hitherto excluded sections a taste of power for the first time, yet it cannot be said that the backwards have come into higher echelons of

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12 Jaffrelot C. op.cit. p494.
13 Jaffrelot C. op.cit. p.494.
leadership — they still occupy the second ranks of leadership and upper castes are still in command. Further, it is not possible that the lower castes can dislodge the entrenched upper caste domination of the elites for a long time, however close they may have come to it. Largely because of their cultural, educational and economic status and also because the rise to power of the lower castes is very uneven and their spread on an all-India basis is not uniform (for e.g., they may have become formidable forces in Bihar, but they remain in a subordinate position in Rajasthan or in Orissa, for example). There are still innumerable hardships and handicaps that the lower castes have to face in a country where for many millennia they have had to face structural and hierarchical subjugation and atrocities besides the worst form of exploitation.

Moreover the rise to power of the lower castes also hinges on increasingly on the "... response of the upper castes to their new assertiveness and ambitions. Old strategies are still implemented successfully. The traditional Gandhian discourse on the organic unity of society is still articulated by the RSS in order to defuse Dalit militancy and the Congress has also resorted to its techniques of co-optation and the 'coalition of extremes'. The BJP has followed suit to a certain extent but it has accommodated the OBCs in a more significant manner." The BJP's strategy has not been one of direct Mandalisation. It is on the contrary, one of indirect Mandalisation — the party has not promoted low caste persons in large numbers either.

14 Jaffrelot C op.cit. p.495.
as electiona candidates or as office bearers (Bangaru Laxman as President, Venkaiah Naidu as Spokesperson do not a summer make) but made alliances with parties which have a base among the backwards. Later the BJP extended its strategy to ally with regional parties which had a strong presence in their location - largely because the BJP does not have the presence nor the confidence of having a base in those regions.

Thus the new coalition headed by the BJP ever since 1998 (and the earlier ones ever since the National Front’s minority coalition in 1989) represent a cross section of the Indian urban as well as rural elite who have or are experiencing some social mobility. The components of the NDA hail from non-elitist sections, for whom the BJP had to adjust itself as part of its strategy for power sharing. Not only this, the BJP has over the years and especially in the last five elections encountered a steady erosion in its share of the upper caste vote among its MPs returned to the Parliament. Jaffrelot has estimated that its share has declined from 53.13% in 1989 to about 43% in 1998 and 37.96% in 1999. This is paradoxical because the traditional elitist profile of the party continues as the party has not undergone any significant change in real terms. The rapid erosion of upper caste MPs in its fold confirms that the BJP leadership has admitted the need to nominate many candidates from the periphery or the non-elitist groups.

However, it needs to be pointed out here that coalition experiment has failed in the broad area of protection of minority rights as were to be given to

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15 See Jaffrelot C India’s Silent... op.cit. p.468.
individuals and communities under the constitution. The specific provisions of the constitution regarding their all round welfare as contained in Art. 14, 21 etc., for e.g., have remained a dead letter. The process of inclusion of the minorities especially some which are now being the target of BJP’s Hindutva. Their coming into the mainstream, participation, well-being is the democratic obligation of a civic society and a constitutional government, which may be in the form of a coalition. On this front there is a need to reassess coalitions as coalition hasn’t succeeded. Eventually, coalition is a democratic exercise and the legitimate expectations of the excluded sections of the Indian society remain unfulfilled.

Besides this, it is also evident from the above that coalitions are a way for power sharing in the Indian context. In a populated country of multitudinous diversity, it is not possible to make everybody a participant in the political process. It has been seen in our study that Alliances and coalitions formed in India which were purely for the sake of some particular enterprise have met with some success but when it has come to forming alliances or adjustments for fighting elections or bringing about widespread welfare and attention to all groups in the society these have notoriously been short lived and ephemeral, besides ranking up rancour. Further when coalitions have been formed for partaking of power there has been notable fragility – in the sense that they have been unstable. This is perhaps largely due to the fact that there were very little ideological give and take between political parties and groups in the political arena. But then, this has occurred and continues to occur in
democracies of the West. In Chapter 2 we have noted that about one-third of all
governments in Europe are minority governments, while another quarter have surplus
majorities. Only 40 percent of governments which form there is due to the fact that
no single party control or majority exists and these are not found to be minimal
winning coalitions. We also saw that in the twelve political systems there is
incidence of both minority and surplus majority governments in them, though the
frequency found varies from country to country and there are considerable differences
among them. We also find, that in these countries (sporting coalition minority
governments) durability and longer tenure of the government to be a major problem.
Of necessity, political practice across countries and cultures show that stability of
minority coalition cabinets is not merely a problem we come across in India. It affects
the best of countries which have different political and social traditions, such as for
example the countries of Europe we surveyed in Chapter 2.

The lack of durability should not be a reason for denouncing coalitions.
They may be seen as a political contrivance for accommodating the multitudinous
cultural and regional diversities, the characteristic nature of our polity, the type of
political parties and the political process that we have. Interestingly, the experience
of having had a succession of coalition governments over the last few years seems to
have diminished the electorate's antagonism towards coalitions. There is now wider
acceptance of coalitions, with an increase in the number of those who say that there is
nothing wrong with them and a decrease in the number of those who think that they
should not occur under any circumstances. This is good news for the BJP-led alliance
and bad news for the Congress(I). Congress(I) voters are the most opposed to coalitions; 29 per cent of them said that there should be no coalitions under any circumstances. About 30 to 32 per cent of voters of parties with a history of coalition culture, such as the Left parties and the BJP, favoured coalitions. Somewhat surprisingly, more BJP voters said that there should be no coalitions. Those who were the most undecided on coalitions were Congress(I) and BSP voters, 42 and 46 per cent respectively.  

Despite widespread media reports of a dismal voter turnout owing to 'election fatigue', the overall polling figure for the 1999 Lok Sabha elections was higher than in many previous years. It was higher than not only the 1991 and 1996 elections, but seven previous elections. Mid-term elections are generally likely to produce lower turnouts than elections held after a government's full term in office. Despite a slight drop in the overall participation compared to the previous election, there were in fact many States in which the turnout increased. As is to be expected, the States that had simultaneous Assembly elections were amongst those that registered an upturn. With the exception of Andhra Pradesh, where the figure fell a little from 1998, Arunchal Pradesh, Sikkim, Karnataka and Maharashtra all surpassed their previous marks in the 1990s.

However, we should realize that India faces the unknown future with the present coalition government at the centre and most likely, future coalitions are in

the office should this one demit office. Coalition governance has had certain advantages. As Granville Austin notes, "The advantages have been stable government under an able Prime minister. The presence in office in Delhi of so-called 'regional parties' is evidence of solidifying national unity. The stresses within society, predictable as classes, castes, groups (including the Sangh parivar) strive for a bigger piece of the national pie, will force coalition members to act in concert or be driven from office." Hence coalitions have to respond to the demands of time and the requirements of the people who are its sovereign masters.

Last, but not least, coalition power sharing faces a new challenge from the emerging entelechy of Neo-liberalism. The Indian sovereign state as also coalitional governance that is increasingly its leit motif are seriously facing a threat from globalization. In India, Globalisation's encircling advance has been experienced for a decade. We have found that within a decade of its operation the New Economic Policies have posited serious and inescapable challenges for the future of federal nation state. State governments have been economically paralysed by it. Their economic freedom has been curtailed in infrastructure areas with the Union increasingly deciding for them what is best for them. They face unending pauperisation in the bleak emerging scenarios of falling production, unemployment, mounting indebtedness and deficit budgets. No wonder today there is greater talk of autonomy and fiscal independence by the states! from the Centre. There is a real

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danger that secessionism may take place in future if these problems remain intractable and are not solved.

The future of coalitions hinges on the spirit of accommodation and toleration, which comes out of a stable organizational base and favourable economic and federal structure. Surely, new challenges are probably emanating potentially and are going to materialise soon enough. How these would be tackled would prove the success of coalitions or otherwise.


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