

CHAPTER IX

C O N C L U S I O N

This study is closely directed to examine the impact of the political parties on federalism in India. This attempt has involved a brief study of the Indian party system and the range of federalism demonstrated by different (both national and regional) political parties. The study has also endeavoured to go beyond a descriptive account of party politics and to conceptualise models of party system. The nature of Indian Constitution and the Organization and approach of ruling party is also dealt with to a certain extent.

The findings of the study have a bearing on the working of the Indian party system as well as on the structure, process and contents of Indian federal process. It is true that this study has laid a specific focus on the attitudes of political parties towards Indian federalism. However, in the following paragraphs, the summary of the study is provided.

From the foregoing survey¹ of the party system and the federal process in India since 1968, the major conclusion that emerges is that the demand for greater State autonomy has often become a cover for ideological strategies against the Centre, notably by the Communist-dominated United Front Governments in Kerala and West Bengal after the Fourth General

Election or an expression of aggressive cultural separatism as in the case of DMK in Tamil Nadu and Akali Dal in Punjab.

In formulating the blue-print of 'normative' federalism for India, the framers of the Indian Constitution did not "reduce the autonomy of States to a farce".² However, they conceded that under the balance of power established by the Constitution, the States cannot claim to be co-ordinate and co-equal with the Centre. They intentionally, taking into consideration the peculiar conditions of the country, prevalent at that time and also to ward off the future fissiparous tendencies, provided for a strong Centre. This, however, is by no means a peculiar feature only of the Indian federal system. What actually the founding fathers did was to formally provide for a pattern of Centre-State relations which has, in fact, emerged over the years in the so-called 'pure and traditional federations' like the U.S.A. and Australia. Thus, as discussed earlier³ in this study, the Indian Constitution qualifies itself for a federal status.

It is a matter of common observation that no federal system works strictly in accordance with the Constitution on which it is based. Various social, cultural, religious, political and economic forces emerge and as a consequence of these forces the working Constitution becomes different from the written one. Although the forms of the Constitution

remain unchanged, the spirit and substance of it undergo a big change. All this is found to be true about the working of Indian federalism during the last forty years.⁴

A further conclusion emerges that the nature of the federal system in India changes according to the changes in the party system. In fact, the factors responsible for the tension in the Centre-State relations are politically motivated. In the first instance, the Constitution of India has provided for a federal system of government with an exceptionally strong centre. This has naturally made the states apprehensive and suspicious of the policies of the Central government. Secondly, the partisan attitude adopted by the Central government towards various States has also been responsible for Centre-State tension. Thirdly, the difference in the ideology of the party in power at the Centre and the parties at the State level has also been responsible for tension in the Centre-State relations. The negative role which some of the political parties have played has also been responsible for strained relations.

The nature of the federal system depends to a certain extent on the nature of the party organisation. The nature of the party organisation oscillates between the pattern of a loose federal form. Greater the incidence of factionalism in the party, greater will be the tendency towards



a loose federal form of the party organisation. At other times when there is unity at the Centre (unity within the organisation and unity between the organisation and the government leadership) there is bound to be a pattern of a tight federal form in which the Central leadership will be able to play its vital role as a mediator or as an umpire depending upon the circumstances of the case in which it is called upon to act.

Furthermore, almost all the political parties have enjoyed power at one level of government or the other in the Indian federation and they have helped the Centre-State relations in gaining the status of an important issue in the Indian political system. Their views on the subject have also considerably changed in the process, and, broadly speaking three points of view have emerged on the subject among the political parties. First, the Congress (I) holds that the present position is in the best interests of the country and need not be changed. Secondly, the Janata party was interested in eradicating the evils of emergency; and the BJP and other parties are thinking of the decline of the Central rule. Meanwhile they would like to have the entire gamut of Central-State relations institutionalised. Thirdly, the CPI, the NC, the TDP, the Akali Dal, the DMK, the AIADMK and the CPI(M) desire radical changes in the federal structure and favour more autonomy for the States to provide

for an ideal federal system of government.

The political parties in India have, however, failed in liquidating the contradictions inherent in a federal structure between the centripetal and centrifugal tendencies; they could not impart legitimacy to the system so very essential for its successful working. The successive Congress governments have never attempted to institutionalise Centre-State relations for their healthy growth and development and the opposition though successful in establishing itself as the "focus of the discontent of the people", failed to become a real "alternative to the government." There are parties like the Janata at the Centre (1977-79) which seemed to threaten the very existence of our democratic institutions due to its instability.

There is a general recognition of the need for a strong Centre to preserve the unity of the nation. In this context most appropriate and often quoted example is of Congress (I). But when we speak of the establishment of a 'balance' in which the rights of the Central and the State governments are not periodically questioned; the relations between the Centre and the States have to be reasonably stable. Under such circumstances a party like Congress (I) may not do well.

The Indian Constitution provides for a federal system of government with a Strong Centre. The survey made in the earlier chapters of this study clearly shows that the strong Centre became paramount Centre under the influence of a variety of factors. At this juncture, the need was felt for reversing this trend to maintain the autonomy of the States. As such, despite the wide array of powers with which the Centre is empowered under the Constitution, there has been a growing trend towards an assertion of autonomy on the part of the states. But, the growing vitality of the states implies no erosion of the power of the Centre or security and unity of the country. Every demand for autonomy is not a divisive but most probably a complementary force: it would not lead to balkanisation but to the restructuring of national identity; it is not a fissiparous tendency, but a normal centrifugal tendency in a federation; it is not a call for disintegration but a re-integration.⁵

The monolithic and overarchic tendencies adopted by the Congress Party has resulted in the erosion of state autonomy. In order to maintain a proper federal balance, the system of decentralised parties in which regional tendencies have opportunities to express themselves is more appropriate than a system of highly centralised parties. As such, the growing dictatorial nature of the Congress has resulted in the emergence of more regional parties. The rise of these parties

and their coming into power in the states mentioned supra (VIIIth Chapter) has created a demand for more powers to the states. This is quite a natural outcome. There is no chance whatever of their acquiring power at the Centre and naturally it would be to their advantage that the area of State autonomy is widened and more powers are granted to the states. This would virtually mean more powers for themselves, and this is the reason why these parties have been putting forward demands for the transfer of more powers to the States.

This study projects the development of the regional parties and regional politics as a powerful factor in state politics which creates tension at the social level, affecting ultimately the political level as well. It points out that regional parties are a direct reaction to the long and deep-rooted socio-economic problems. The study simultaneously reflects on the development of regional parties as the institutional framework for redressing the regional grievances and imbalance.⁶ It confirms the finding of Ram Reddy and Sharma in their study of Telangana Movement that regional loyalty submerges identities of caste and class conflicts and succeeds in uniting the people cross-cutting the differences in caste, class and community of a particular area.⁷ Thus the appeal of regional sentiment seems to be wider than any other primordial loyalties and is relatively more extensive in its appeal.

The present study also points out that while regional injustice or regional neglect may be real, it can assume mass proportions with a great change in the political process only if the political leadership is prepared to take up the cause.⁸

Regional sentiments are often used as a well - knit strategy to serve the interests of the factional groups and thus became a cloak for opportunism and ambition. The emergence and decline of regional parties have been directly related to the changing fortunes of political actors and factional groups involved in the situation.⁹

This study also reveals that the new developments like a shift towards regionalism, has made a considerable impact on India's federal structure which is bound to have long term political repercussions. The emergence of non-Congress (I) governments in the South, North and the East strengthen the case for a review of Centre-State relations. If more states come under the control of regional parties, changes in the Central set-up, particularly in its powers vis-a-vis the states, are inevitable. The effort, however, should be to strengthen the relations between the Centre and the states, and not encourage confrontation between them, for that would undermine the unity and integrity of the nation.

Lastly, it may be concluded that federalism can assume significance in Indian Polity under two conditions. Firstly, the party system should become more competitive, that is, change from one-party dominant system to multi-party system. Secondly and alternatively, the ruling party under one-party dominance, should develop a more democratic style of internal institutional functioning.

References

1. See supra, chapters I to VIII of this study.
2. Bombwall, K.R., 1916 - The Foundations of Indian Federalism, Asia, Bombay, 1967, p.330.
3. See supra, chapters III and IV of this study.
4. See for example, the factors, which contributed to Central control in Indian federal system, are: (i) tradition of a strong Centre inherited from the past; (ii) one party dominance at the Centre and in all the States; (iii) Charismatic leadership first of Nehru and then of Indira Gandhi; (iv) inadequate financial resources of the States; (v) the system of planning; and (vi) the Governor's role as an agent of the Centre.
5. Quoted in Pal Chandra, State Autonomy in Indian Federation: Emerging Trends, Deep and Deep, New Delhi, 1984, p.235.
6. Ram Reddy, G., and Sharma, B.A.V., Regionalism in India: A Study of Telangana, Concept, New Delhi, 1979, p.312.
7. Ibid., p.313.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., p.314.