CHAPTER - VI
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This study closely deals with coalition politics and federal process in India and has underscored the role of political parties, regionalism and party system in influencing the structure and dynamics of federal polity in India. The shift in the Indian party system from one-party dominant system to multi-party system after the fourth general election had a considerable bearing on the working of centre-state relations in India.

There is no doubt that the system of coalition governments has a bearing on the centre-state relations. The question relating to the relationship between the composite legislative wing and the party organizations may also arise. Such a conflict however, is not an abnormal feature of the party system, and it may be said that the prevailing view favours the superiority of the legislative over governmental wing over the party organization. But, in reality the legislative wing and the party organization are interdependent and such conflicts could perhaps be easily resolved.

As for as federalism in India is concerned, conclusion emerges that, the Indian federal system changes according to the changes in the party system and nature of the federal structure depends to a certain extent on the nature of the party organization.
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.

This study projects the development of the regional parties and regional parties as a powerful factor in state politics which creates tension at the social level, affecting ultimately the political level as well. Further it may be pointed out that regional parties are a direct reaction to the long and deprooted Socio-economic problems.

The strong orientation toward centralization in constitution itself, is counterbalanced by a number of centrifugal forces in the political system as well as by some co-operative mechanisms. States having their own ethno-linguistic and religious identity often assert autonomy and pull against national power. States enjoy limited but significant constitutional powers in domestic matters of vital importance to citizens. State political leaders have their own electoral bases that give them varying degrees of independence. Prior to 1969, the ruling Congress party was itself a somewhat federated organization of party bosses based in the states and allied with national leaders.

But in the meanwhile due to emergence of regionalism and emergence of coalitions at the state level as well as at the central level, state became more conscious about their region and conflict started between centre and state with regard to more autonomy to states in all spheres.
The question now is which of these conflicting tendencies, apparent for decades, will ultimately prevail and with what consequences. Several of the regional parties have, in the past and since the 1996 election as well, made demands for more autonomy for the states. Meeting of the demands goes very difficult for the coalition government. In fact the demands cannot be ignored since some combination of regional parties are likely to be indispensable for any future government as well as for the present one. The BJP is not in a position now, and is not likely soon, to be in a position to rule alone. It too, therefore, will ultimately have to compromise on issues of regional autonomy. That issue however is very much tied up with Kashmir, which makes such a compromise on the part of the BJP quite difficult. It is necessary now to consider these alternative tendencies in the light of the election results of the early 1990s, those for the state legislative assemblies held between 1993 and 1996.

After 1975, different coalition governments came into power in many states, but did not complete their tenure, as they were in fragile conditions on account of peculiar developments like, the misuse of Article 356 and the office of the Governor, frequent political defections, the crisis of political leadership and interference of bureaucracy.

And now, the situation is that, coalition is not a new concept in India. India now has entered a phase of coalition politics. Coalition which has been tried in many smaller countries with lesser ethnic and regional diversity than India with great success. The situation in India differs fundamentally from the conditions that spawned coalitions in Italy, Germany, France, Israel and other European democracies.
It is noticeable that from 1975-1995, seventy-four minority/coalition Governments were formed in different states. Out of these only 31 arose as a result of elections while as many as 43 arose because of party splits, or defections, an indicator of the weakness of the party identification and opportunistic politics. Among these coalition Governments, only 11 coalition Governments completed their full term.

The conclusion that emerges with regard to state relations during coalition governments is, in all coalitions at the national level the centre-state relations were smooth and healthy compared to centre-state relations during one party dominance in India. The best example that can be quoted at this juncture is minimum use of Article 356. This Article has been used by the Congress government for nearly 100 times. But infact we cannot say that this Article is not at all used by coalition governments in India, but this Article is used in rare of the rarest occasion. For instance, in 1977 (Janata party as first non-congress force in power at the centre), President's Rule was imposed on fourteen states. In 1980, it was 11 times in eleven states. Since Ninth General Elections coalition governments based on pre-poll and post-poll alliances began to take shape at the centre stage of Indian politics. After the Janata experiment (1977-79), the National Front, Left-Front Government (1989-90) stressed upon cordial centre-state relations. Similarly the 18 months long United Front Government (1996-1997) believed in federal balance. And the present coalition government also has the same attitude towards federal balance.
It has also been the conclusion of our study that the emergence of strong regional parties has been quite prominent at the national level. The regional parties have quite instrumental in the formation of the government at the Centre. As a result, the regional parties have been quite vocal in demanding state autonomy. The regional parties have been also quite decisive in their say. This trend in fact has brought a change in federal structure of India and shaped the centre-state relations in new settings. Thus in lastly we can confidently conclude that all coalition governments including the present one were formed with a view to restructure the relationship between the centre and state and to ensure greater autonomy to the states, especially in financial areas, and to make amendments to Article 356 of the constitution to prevent its misuse. So coalition governments are evolving slowly and one can safely presume that this will be the tendency of the governments at the centre in the days to come also.

But our study reveals that, coalition government is not free from criticism. There is general criticism on coalition government as, they are unstable and do not know how to live and when to die. India's experience with them is no better, because all the coalitions that were formed shortlived. In past, seven coalition governments have collapsed. Even when they were alive, they breathed precariously.

Of late, particularly after the coalition governments were formed with the support of regional parties, it is very much in vogue to argue that the diversities in India necessitate coalitions. This is a theory invented to fit the facts. It is a rationalisation of action from irrational motives. This is the doctrine
of dialectical materialism, which says political theory is not prior, but posterior, to political fact. That is why it is far from the reality.

But it also reveals that, coalition experiment in India has not totally failed. Every coin has two faces, like every theory this theory also suffers from criticism. And the fore-going analysis brings out the fact that the emerging political environment in India today is the regional political parties and the coalitions have a definite and positive role to play. Coalitions need not be looked with suspicion. Coalitions themselves are not defective but they result in schisms where alliances were entered into without a principled basis. There are several democracies in the west, which are surviving in spite of the continuous formation of coalition governments. Italy has witnessed fifty governments in as many years. The experience of France, Germany, Israel and Japan is also worth mentioning.

Thus this study projects that, coalitions may become inevitable in years to come. And in so far as the next election in India is concerned, the disintegration of the present coalition will leave only the BJP and the Congress as viable potential alternatives. The most that can be expected is that one of these parties will win enough seats to form a more stable coalition government again.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

The following are the major findings of this study. The analyses indicates that, if the constitution of India would not had provided us a federal character of government, then there would have been no issue of centre-reations to
become so controversial and perhaps we would not have given more importance to the emergence and role of regional political parties and the concept of regionalism as well.

It is the finding of this study that, the strong political leadership in the Congress led to one party dominant system and this in turn led to strained relationship between the Centre and the States. As a result Congress started declining and gave birth to different regional political parties.

It is the finding of this study that, eagerness of strong regional political parties to share their power at the national level gave birth to concept of coalition government in India at the national level.

It is the finding of this study that, the emergence of coalition governments, specially after 1967 at the national level made the President more conscious while using his discretionary powers especially with regard to Article 356, because at present situation he has to exercise his powers to extent on matters of state autonomy an political share of different regional political parties belonging to different states in making a coalition government at the centre. And at this juncture, have tended to accentuate constitutional and political controversies regarding the scope and style of President's functions.

The study has confirmed that the partisan role of the Governor has tilted the federal balance of power of our polity in favour of the central government in normal times and completely upset during the times of emergency.

Experience has amply demonstrated that, sometimes Art 356, is the only weapon of the centre to control the unconstitutional exercises of state machinery and to make a balance between centre and state.
It is also the finding of the study, that, if coalition government was not formed in India then, there was no other alternative to form a government other than coalition, because after the deline of Congress no single majority party emerged to form a government at the centre.

It is also the finding of the study, that lack of political homogeneity and diversified ideologies of different political parties, while forming an alliance have became a major cause for breakdown of coalition. Because coalitions themselves are not defective but they have to depend upon the mercy of coalition partners (alliance).

It is the finding of the study that, coalitions in India have become a bridge between the Centre and State in order to maintain a balance between centre - state relations and to enable them to exercise their powers within their own sphere.

It is also the finding of the study that politicisation of various social groups and their struggle for share in power, strong desire to retain social/regional identities by such groups, emergence of strong and independent regional leadership and other factors have made the coalition government inevitable at the federal level and this trend has weakened the centre.

SUGGESTIONS:

The present study deals with the following suggestions for the successful working of coalition government in the Indian Federal set up, which can be made by considering the past experience.
1. There should be a dominant party in the coalition government to determine the policy and programmes in consultation with its allies and partners and make inconsequential concessions to sectional interests represented by junior partners of the coalition.

2. Balanced restructuring of the relevant provisions of the constitution dealing with relationship between the two governments be made;

3. There should be both a pragmatic understanding and electoral adjustment prior to the polls among the coalition partners. They should contest the election jointly and try to obtain a mandate instead of ganging up following the results with narrow short-term objectives.

4. The expression Centre State Relation prima facie signifies a relationship between a body having the nucleus or source with other component bodies which are on the circumference. The term centre means a point of concentration or dispersion, and as such it looks awkward to have a term like this in a federation. Federation is a union of different states and is generally constituted by the states, which are autonomous and lying in geographical vicinity of one another. It is constituted in order to secure strong defence and economy. Under the US Constitution the Government exercising enumerated powers is known as federal government, under the Australian Constitution it is the commonwealth government, under the Canadian Constitution, it is the Dominion Government and under the Swiss Confederation, it is called federal powers, and as such instead centre-state relation the expression Union-State relation should be used.
5. All partners of any such electoral arrangement must participate in the government. The concept of support from outside is what render coalitions unstable as evident from the Charan Singh, V.P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar, Deve Gowda and I.K. Gujral governments experiment.

6. The modern trend and need is to make the federal government strong and this cannot be denied, but that does not mean weak states. The relationship between the two governments should revolve round co-ordination and cooperation and as such the spheres of action or activities have to be delimited with some precision.

7. If erstwhile rivals come together to forge an electoral alliance (or post electoral), they should publicly declare their historic compromise. Lack of transparency is another factor, which results in mistrust between coalition partners and brings down such a government.

8. India is a vast country with manifold diversities in matters of culture, language, religion, custom and having people of divergent physical and social order. The U.S also to some extent possessed diversity in many aspects. But inspite of many differences, certain traditions, freedom, equality, individual rights which are common to all, are taught to children in the home, in the church and in the school. There the people develop the feeling of nationality from the very beginning. In India this sort of tradition is altogether absent and as such here also it is earnestly suggested that the values of nationality, equality and individual rights with duties, may be taught to children from the very beginning at different levels of education without any prejudices.
9. In the context of India, a successful coalition needs one more qualifying clause. Given that most political parties represent certain reasonably well-defined class/caste interests, it is important that a social coalition is forged at the grassroots which eventually translates into a political arrangement. West Bengal and Kerala exemplify this experiment.

10. Stability of the coalition government will also depend upon the qualitative nature of the bargaining system. There is a need for proper assessment of the key parameters of the bargaining game. Since small changes here have the potential to generate significant changes in the set of possible coalitions resulting in instability. For coalition governments to be durable, political parties and leaders will have to be sensitive to the actual and potential bargaining powers of the coalition partners, even if a party is supporting them from outside.

11. The Indian Union being the federation of states to see that all its components are equally strong and growing. The resources necessary for the growth and development of the country should be so distributed so as to reach all the states and all the states are equally benefited.

For the last four general elections (1989, 1991, 1996 and 1998) the Indian electorate have persistently refused to give an absolute majority to any single party highlighting the indispensability of coalitions and a gradual change in the popular mind-set. The country is shifting from ideology based politics to identity and interest group based politics. All India democratic governance requires two large coalitions competing with each other. The coalition of a
large, all India party with a number of regional parties will ensure that the rigidities of the all India party as well as parochialism of the regional parties will both be kept in check. As coalitions are becoming more inevitable, they are giving more acceptability both at the centre and the states. However, the fact remains at coalitions may be formed with or without ideological foundation, but a combination of parties having little in common cannot bring about the evolution of norms which would be essential for the stability of the system. The future of the coalitions depends on this important factor.

Good or bad, coalition politics, it seems, is the order of the day and if it is going to stay for a substantial period of time, new rules of the game are likely to evolve in order to reconcile the compulsions of stability with diversity. In the meantime, "consensus becomes the watchword of democratic coalitions at the centre as well as the state with the opposition on the look out for every fissure that appears in a fragile combination of power seekers.

In acceptance and implementation of the above suggestions would definitely restore credibility and may create a positive way to federal system in India.

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REFERENCES

1. The demands and the issues of centre-state relations that came up soon after the formation of the new government are summarized in *India Today*, June, 30, 1996, pp. 42-45.