The Constitution is a bond of national unity and reflects the ultimate needs, aims and aspirations of its people. When India became independent, the immediate need was to achieve unity in its inherent diversity; therefore, the founding fathers responded through a federal system of government in the country, which, because of the compulsions of history and tradition, had to be centre-oriented.

For the first time in our history, the federal structure envisaged in our constitution really came into existence after 1967. Since independence, one-party dominant system provided the stability needed for our political system. But now the Congress party has lost its unique position, and a number of other political parties have come up and have been able to get varying degree of support in different parts of the country.

Since 1967, India came to be called “a federal state in the full sense of the term”. The situation called for a first step towards the more vigorous practicing of federalism with multiple parties and coalitions in power.

India did not start as a country with commitment to Federalism as an organized principle. It did not even have the term ‘Federalism’ incorporated in the Preamble of the Constitution. However, in the Sixty Years after independence, there have been continuous developments in constitutional theory and activities in regard to functioning of federalism in India. India has shown remarkable capacity to the demands of the states for governance. This has been by and large possible due to the emergence and assertion of regional parties, coalition politics at the centre, judgments in various related cases, functioning of the institution of Inter-State Mechanism, policy of modernization, the need for liberalization and globalization processes.¹

From the above analysis, the following conclusion is derived: a unitary form of government is unsuitable for India and a federal set-up is a politico-administrative necessity. Some stresses and strains are natural, to the extent that they are built into the federal structure. If the centre-state relations are subjected to more stresses and strains, then it would be considered natural, particularly in a situation where different political factors built into which automatically operate to reduce these tensions.

Federalism is both a structure and a process. As a structure, it comprises of a set of institutions and instrumentalities under the basic law of the constitution, whereas, as a process, it includes operational relations between the centre and the states. The Indian constitution, being a ‘co-operative federalism’ with strong centre requires, with the emergence of a multi-polar competitive political system, a durable consensus as the basis for its successful operation where strains and deadlocks between the union-state relations could easily be resolved within the broad framework of national consensus.

For the adequate justification, the central action in state sphere should actually be either on the totality of the constitutional scheme or on consent of the state governments concerned. The centre’s overall role in our federal system should be as ‘friend, philosopher and guide’.

In Indian politics, we can say that it is yet a developing party system. It has come out of the age of one-party dominant system and is now developing as a real multi-party system. The existence of a large number of political parties, both national and regional, secular and communal, fairly well organized or some what organized parties, make the Indian political party scenario complex, and even confusing. The party system of a country is a political manifestation of its socio-economic, cultural system and hence it must be accepted as a natural system.

Democracy is not a gift to be acquired; it is a habit to be developed. The Indian party system is a developing system. It is bound to maintain its natural characteristics. However, awareness about its defects can help the people to move
away from these as well as to usher it towards its logical ends democratic struggle of power, liberalism, politics of consensus and secularism.

The domain of political parties in India has undergone amazing transformation since the time the country became a democratic republic. As old parties are metamorphosed and new parties have emerged, the party system has changed beyond comparison. From a time when the political scientists and commentators had worked out theories of one-party dominance, felt anxious about the conduciveness of such a party system for the democracy to blossom. We have reached a situation where too many parties stampede and jostle for space in the party domain. Some see it as a natural, if not desirable, development due to the dynamics of democracy in this vast country marked by great diversity, inequality and backwardness.

Actual functioning of any federal system in the world, or even India, does not depend on the written constitution and the framework alone, but on various factors which influence the political parties process in the country. It is important to note that, in addition to all other factors, coalition politics played an important role in Indian politics since 1967. It would therefore, be of some use to examine to what extent, and in what way, coalition politics in India has been able to influence the working of Indian Federalism.

Political parties play a major role in determining public policies. Proper formulation of public policies greatly depends upon active participation of people. People's participation is made possible through the mechanism of political parties. So, in this way political parties are open for the democratization of political process and institutions.

Party system and federal government are closely interrelated. The success of a federal system presupposes a sound functioning of the party system. The federal process takes place only if there is qualitative interaction among political parties. After Independence, India adopted a parliamentary democracy and a federal form of government. In 1950, India became a Republic after adopting its own constitution. After the First General Elections, Congress came to power both
at the centre and in all the states. This paved way for the emergence of one-party dominant system. Though not theoretically, functionally, India became a one-party dominant system.

Centre-State relations are analysed from the party perspective. It can be said that party politics has had a major bearing on centre-state relation in India. From 1951 to 1967, in the first four General Elections, India had been included into a congress system. And centre-state relations was mere a party affair for the congress. The Congress had monopolized both the centre and state governments by virtue of its huge victories.

Centre-State relations in pre-1967 period were at the mercy of congress and any issue in centre-state relations was regarded as a party issue and it was solved at the party level. The disputes of centre-state relations were intra-party in nature rather than being inter-party in nature.

After 1967, structural changes took place in the Indian political scene. Not only did the position of congress decline at the centre but also it lost power in some of the Indian States. This era saw the emergence of several regional parties like DMK in Tamil Nadu and Akali Dal in Punjab, which captured power in these respective states. We also saw the emergence of non-congress coalition government in West Bengal and Kerala. This gave a new twist to centre-state relations in India. Now, centre-state relations saw new dimensions due to greater participation of regional parties. The states now became more vocal in demanding more power and autonomy to the states. This state of affairs continues up to 1996.

Another important change, which we saw, was the emergence of non-congress coalition government at the centre for the first time in 1977. In the Janata Party regime, the centre-state relations were more or less cordial, but the Janata Party government did not last long. It lost power in 1980 India again became more centralized, and up to 1989 Indian federal system became centralized hegemonistic political system of the Congress.

It is a common observation that the actual functioning of the federal system in any country does not depend on the written constitution and the general legal
framework, but on the various factors which influence the political process in the country. Among these factors, an important place has been assigned by all writers to political parties. It would, therefore, be of some use to examine to what extent the political parties have been able to influence the working of Indian Federalism.

In this process, the emphasis should rightly be on whether political parties in the country had modified federalism either too much in favour of the centre or in favour of the states or whether the kind of balance that the framers of the constitution aimed at continues to be the balance in practice. In other words, whether the actual working parties in the country have been able to maintain the concept of a strong centre at the basis of Indian Federalism as envisaged in the constitution or whether the tendency has been towards greater autonomy to the states than was originally intended.

In answering this question, it is necessary to take into consideration the general attitude of the different parties towards the federal balance. This attitude can be discovered by going through the manifestoes issued by different parties during the general elections and the pronouncements made from time to time by those parties.

The Communist Political Parties of India have however adopted an ambivalent attitude towards federalism. They do want a strong centre but at the same-time they emphasize the need for substantial autonomy to the states. Especially after the General Elections of 1967, this emphasis received greater strength at their hands. While in power in West Bengal and Kerala for instance, they even adopted a policy of confrontation with the centre.

Political parties, through competition among themselves and by mobilizing public opinion on various issues have played an important role in the federalising process during the last few decades in our country. Policies and issues relating to centre-state relations were formulated and decided not with reference to formalised or constitutional procedures, but rather by a bargaining process which reached a conclusion only after each set of ‘decider’ had found out, through elections or agitation, what the unknown state of public reaction was likely to be.
Thus, the Indian party system and its role in centre-state relations depict the real nature of Indian Federalism.

Federalism today has to be looked at in more functional and practical terms in India so that its dynamic elements are brought into operation. The political parties, whether national or regional, have their own role in this process.

In this study, an attempt has been made to analyse the CPI and CPI (M)'s approach to centre-state relations. The Communist Political Parties are chosen for the study, because the CPI has emerged as a major unit of the Indian polity. So, this argument points to the study of centre-state relations from the perspective of the CPI and CPI (M). To facilitate the study, various issues of center-state relations, like Article 370 giving special status to Jammu and Kashmir, use of Article 356, Appointment of the Governors, Distribution of Revenues, Creation of New States are chosen.

The analysis of the CPI and the CPI (M)'s approach towards various issues of centre-state relations shows that the CPI and CPI (M) have depicted some degree of consistency in their views towards these issues as opposition party as well as ruling party. The study also found that the CPI and CPI (M)'s opinion on centre-state relations is subjected to situational compulsions and the party has tried to adjust itself to the dynamics of the Indian Polity. The Communist Political Parties of India have realized their responsibilities as ruling party and have tried to moderate their hard line views. It can be said that the CPI and CPI (M) have taken a rational stand towards some of the burning issues of centre-state relations.

An analysis of the attitude of the Communist Political Parties on various issues of centre-state relations shows that the CPI and CPI (M) have by and large, shown some consistency in their pronouncements, but due to situational compulsions they have moderated their stance on the issue of Article 370. The CPI (M) General Secretary, Mr. Harkishan Singh Surjeet says, “The Question of autonomy to Kashmir cannot be clubbed with the issue of centre-state relations and giving greater powers to the states within India’s federal constitution. The special status to Kashmir must be accepted. Any attempt to try and negate this

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will only fuel greater dissatisfaction and bolster extremist activities." The party demanded that the centre engage in wide ranging consultation on greater autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir and ensure the implementation of the provisions of Art.370. Even on the issues of Article 356 and Appointment of Governors, the CPI and CPI (M) have shown remarkable consistency. Politbureau member of the CPI (M), states that by its very nature, Article 356 of the constitution lends itself to immense misuse. Hence, Prakash Karat says, the CPI (M) is of the view that it should be replaced in a suitable manner. In most cases, the use of Article 356 has been undemocratic and unjustified. But since 1994, i.e., after the Bommai judgement, it has been made open to judicial scrutiny.

The trend of centralizing powers in the hands of the centre and encroaching on the powers of the states has continued without respite. While political interventions like use of Article 356 against state governments have declined given the fact that there are coalition governments at the centre and the ruling alliance often does not have a majority in both the Houses of Parliament, the assault on the states’ rights has gone ahead both in the financial and legislative spheres. Implementation of neo-liberal reforms is made a condition for transfer of resources and grants. Centrally-sponsored schemes are used for this purpose. The 13th Finance Commission has continued the trend of the earlier two Commissions and made more stringent conditionality. The Centre refuses to devolve 50 per cent of the share of taxes to the states. The UPA-II government has been pushing through a series of legislations which encroach on the powers of the states in areas such as education, cooperative institutions and even in the proposed legislation on food security. Though the dependence of the states on the centre has grown, there is growing resentment at the overbearing attitude of the centre. The CPI (M) has consistently stood for restructuring of centre-state relations and the party should be in the forefront in taking up the issues of protecting the rights of the states and working for the restructuring of the centre-state relations.

Presently, India has entered into the era of coalition politics. The regional parties are now playing a very significant role in the central government. Centre-State relations have now become a bargaining affair. After the decline of congress, no other party has been successful in providing an alternative to the congress. So, this has eventually led to the formation of coalition governments with the help of some important regional parties, as the regional parties are holders of power both at the centre and the states.

For any political party or coalition being in a state government continuously for 25 years would be a unique record. For a Communist Party and the Left parties to remain in office for so long in West Bengal winning a two-third majority in six successive elections is all the more remarkable. Running a state government by the Left parties under a system where real power is with the centre and where the Congress, the BJP and other bourgeois landlord parties have been in power, is no ordinary achievement. It was possible because the CPI (M) and the Left movement have a strong mass base and have struck deep roots among the people.

As for as Federalism in India is concerned, the conclusion that emerges is, the Indian federal system changes according to the change 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.

But, in the meanwhile, due to emergence of regionalism and coalitions at the state level as well as at the central level, state became more conscious of their region, and conflict started between the centre and state with regard to more autonomy to states in all spheres.

We can note that a smooth relation between the centre and state cannot be built up and maintained on rigid ideas and hot words, but centre has to be more
flexible and realistic in its attitude towards the states. The centre-state relation is two way traffic and surely the smooth centre-state relations are not altogether impossible.

What is needed in India is a concern for the problems of the people, a desire and resolve to fight corruption and poverty and a democratic spirit. Politics should be played on theoretical basis, not on the crude motive of capturing power. Political parties should play the game according to well-established norms and conventions for better relation between the centre and the states.

In fact, centre-state relationship is not an issue of centralization versus decentralization. The need is to strike a balance between the centralization and decentralization of authority.

It also concludes that, the Non-Congress political formations could not stabilize to provide an alternative party system. However, since 1989, regional outfits emerged either by way of fragmentation of nation and state parties or as an outcome of the realignment of the social forces.

After Fourth General Elections in 1967, the states have increasingly come under the rule either of the regional parties or of non-congress parties, and have demanded for more state autonomy.

The question now is which of these conflicting tendencies, apparent for decades, will ultimately prevail with what consequences several of the regional parties have, in the past and since 1996 Elections as well, made demands for more autonomy for the states. Meeting of the demands is very difficult for the coalition government. In fact, the demands cannot be ignored since some combinations of regional parties are likely to be indispensable for any future government as well as for the present one.

The CPI leader, A.B. Bardhan, said that Left Unity had to be strengthened and consolidated to face the challenge facing the country. "The CPI and CPI (M), which are the core of the Left Front and the base of Left unity, have to work in
cooperation and unity"5, he said, adding that the Congress would discuss the issue.

Mr. Surjeet asserted that to accomplish the political tasks, Left unity was paramount, and strengthening it and increasing its intervention to use the favourable opportunities available was essential.

"CPI and CPI (M), cooperation is at the heart to bringing about a higher level of Left Unity. We share a common and glorious heritage of the communist movement. We also had to separate because of political and ideological differences that affected the strategic perspective over a period of time. The Communists in India must remain true to Marxism-Leninism and apply it creatively to Indian conditions. This is the way to resolve the differences and strengthen the communist movement in the country."6 Mr. Surjeet, the CPI (M) leader, said unity should not be confused with unification.

The CPI (M) today decided against joining a Congress -led government at the centre, in a repeat of 1996 when it had scuttled Jyoti Basu's chances of becoming Prime Minister in a Third Front Coalition. The decision to extend outside support to the government came after three days of deliberations by the Party's Politbureau and the Central Committee, but rejected the participation proposal despite the Left blocks tally of more than 60 seats, its best performance since the 1952 General Elections.

As in 1996, the CPI (M) put the participation proposed to vote before the 77 member Central Committee. The proposal was rejected by overwhelming majority. "There was voting but no counting since the numbers of hands raised against participation were far too many"7 said central committee member.

"We are committed to the continuance of a Congress -led secular government to keep the BJP out. We will never allow it to fall. We will not give the BJP any opportunity to do so"8 said CPI (M) leader Prakash Karat.

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6 Ibid.
7 The Telegraph, Calcutta, 18th May, 2004, P.2.
8 Ibid.
"The CPI will not take any unilateral decision on joining the government. The whole Left will either participate together or keep out together" General Secretary A.B. Bardhan said after the national executive meeting.9

For the first time since its inception three decades ago, the CPI (M) will hold its congress, here at a time when the UPA supported by the Left Parties from outside is running a coalition government at the centre.

The 18th congress begins against the backdrop of mixed experience by the Left parties with the UPA and the position of confrontation on several economic policies pursued by the Congress-led coalition government.

Atul Kohli defines the concept of governability as the capacity of the rulers to do three things: maintain coalition support; initiate solution to problems perceived to be important, and resolve political conflicts without force and violence. Thus, a democratic developing country is well governed if its government can simultaneously sustain legitimacy: promote socio-economic development and maintain order without coercion. The growing incapacity of India to perform these tasks is what has been conceptualized by him as the manifestation of crisis of governability.

The Muslim minority has been disappointed by the failure to effectively implement and follow up the recommendations of the Sachar Committee which had made a comprehensive analysis of the socio economic status of the Muslim community. The UPA government has effused the demand raised by the CPI(M) that there should be a sub plan for the Muslim minority on the lines of the sub-plan for the Scheduled Tribes, so that it dedicated funds for the development of areas with substantial Muslim population can be allocated.

The report of the National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities headed by Justice Ranganath Mishra was tabled in Parliament by the government after a long delay. The report has recommended 10 per cent reservation in jobs at all levels under the central and state governments for

9 Ibid.
Muslim minority and 5 per cent for other minorities on the basis of their being regarded as ‘socially and educationally backward’. Amongst all the states, only the Left Front government in West Bengal implemented the granting of 10 per cent reservation for Muslims categorized as OBCs.\textsuperscript{10}

The CPI (M) supports the recommendation to provide 10 percent reservation to Muslims excluding the ‘creamy layer’ as suggested by the Ranganath Mishra Commission; the benefits of reservation enjoyed by the Scheduled Castes should be extended to their counterparts among the Muslims and the Christians. To implement these recommendations, the present quota fixed for backward classes and scheduled castes should not be disturbed. Additional allocation should be made from the open quota. To exceed the 50 per cent ceiling placed by the Supreme Court, the Constitution should be suitably amended.\textsuperscript{11}

According to him, four major factors have influenced the nature of political change in India:

1. The De-institutionalizing role of national and regional leaders.
2. The impact of weak political parties.
3. The undisciplined political mobilization of various caste, ethnic, religious and other types of groups;
4. The increasing conflicts between the have-nots in the civil society.\textsuperscript{12}

As the parties provide the necessary political leadership for governance, it is necessary that the incumbent to public offices must be chosen on the basis of their integrity and capacity to administer. If the political parties have a continuous programme of grooming the potential members of their parties for different types of assignments corresponding to the ministries and departments of the government, things would become easier and a smooth transition of the

\textsuperscript{10} "Draft Political Resolution for the 20th Congress Adopted by the Central Committee", CPI(M) Publication, 17\textsuperscript{th} -20\textsuperscript{th} January, Kolkata, 2012, P.40.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
government could take place. At the same time, the parties could contribute effectively to the processes of policy formation, implementation and governance even while remaining in opposition.

The practice of political parties extending support to the government from the parliamentary floor from outside is moral exercise of power without responsibility. This inhibits the process of governance, and has been the immediate cause of premature collapse of all the governments since 1989. This must be disallowed.

The practice of creating a number of political offices equivalent to the position or privileges of a minister should be stopped. Any new administrative organization should only be created through regular administrative procedure and only if the provisions have been made in the regular budget estimates of the government concerned.

In times of emergencies, or national calamities, the parties should not eschew taking specific responsibilities in assisting governments in their activities to tie over the crisis.  

It is unfortunate to note that there are many controversial issues that the central government will have to deal with in the near future. Some of the more important ones are referred below:

1. Devolution of more power to Indian states: this is quite necessary for two reasons; firstly, India is a multi-lingual and multi-cultural country. The second reason, which is, to some extent, implicit in the first, is that real democracy means not only ‘power for the people’ but ‘power of the people’.

2. Reference of Mandir-Masjid issue to the Supreme Court (Article 138(2) of the constitution.) In its agreed ‘Minimum Programme’ the present central government has stated that it would resort to Article 138(2) for the settlement of this issue.

\[15\] Ibid.
3. Amendment of Art. 356 of the constitution. Art. 356 enable the central
government under certain circumstances, to dismiss the government as well
as the legislature of any state and take over the executive power in its hand
and place the legislative power in the hands of the desirable to amend Art.
356, so as to make it virtually impossible to misuse it without inviting
effective interference by the judiciary.

In the present situation, the CPI (M) feels it has to play an independent role
which means criticizing and opposing such steps of the government which are
against the “People’s Interest”, or more a departure from the Common Minimum
Programme. The clear message is that the party and the left are not supporting the
government for continuing with the same “discredited policies” of the previous
BJP-led National Democratic Alliance Government.

The Politbureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has issued the
following statement: The CPI (M) considers that the Union Budget 2012-2013 is a
regressive budget which will result in pushing up prices and imposing greater
burdens on the working people. The bias towards the corporate and the rich in this
budget is seen from the fact that while the direct taxes being levied on the rich
will result in a loss of 4500 cores rupees, that from indirect taxes, that is through
the increase in across the board service and excise duties, is expected to yield a
gain of 45,940 cores. While the CPI (M) welcomes taxes on luxury items, it
strongly opposes the reliance on indirect taxes for revenue mobilization as this
will lead to a cascading impact pushing up prices across the board.14

The CPI (M) also opposes the cut in subsidies fuel to as much as 25,000
cores rupees. This would inevitably lead to further likes in fuel prices. The cut in
subsidies to fertilizers by 6000 core rupees will also lead to further price rise of
fertilizers which have already imposed unbearable burden on farmers.

The CPI firmly believes that for the progress of the nation as a whole the
most essential necessity is the preservation of the unity and integrity of the nation.
We must ensure and preserve the secular democratic structure and social justice,

provide for decentralization and grant of greater autonomy to the states of the federation.

For securing decentralization and greater autonomy for states, the CPI suggests that:

1. Centre-State relations should be remodeled in the true spirit of federalism.
2. Greater autonomy should be given to states.
3. The division of legislation, administrative and financial relations between the centre and the states should be restructured.
4. Suitable measures should be adopted for preventing misuse of powers by the president and the governors.
5. Article 356 should be deleted from constitution.
6. The fate of every state government should be determined on the floor of the Vidhan Sabha.
7. For securing decentralization more powers and resources should be transferred to the local level institutions.

The CPI (M) stands for securing the following goals in Indian Politics:

1. To strengthen the Third Front (Left/National Front), even to support the Congress with a view to keep BJP away from getting the chance to rule India.
2. To strengthen the secular forces in India.
3. To eliminate political corruption and mal-administration.
4. Formulating and implementing of policies aimed at employment generation.
5. More autonomy for the state.
6. The economic policies initiated in 1991 should be amended for protecting the interests of the poor and the weak.
7. Continued faith in Marxism-Leninism and the Chinese model of socialistic liberalization.
8. Special steps to be taken both for protecting secularism against forces of communalism as well as for securing social and economic justice.

To strengthen the Left forces who are the foremost defenders of secularism and interests of the working people, it is necessary that the CPI (M) and the Left succeed in registering victories in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura where the main contest is between the Left led forces and the Congress/Trinamool Congress. For the future of secular democracy, national unity and to advance the struggle for social and economic justice, it is essential that the CPI (M) and the Left parties come back with increased strength in the Lok Sabha. It is the effective intervention of the Left which will enable all the democratic and secular forces to work for an effective third alternative.

Much is being written these days, especially in the context of West Bengal, about what is wrong with the CPI (M). For a Party that has been in power in the state for more than three decades, this is hardly surprising. But if a party has been in power in a state for more than three decades, then something must also be right with it. Besides, no matter what the outcome of the forthcoming Assembly Elections is, it would still be the case that almost half of the electorate in the two most intellectually-advanced states in India, West Bengal and Kerala, would have voted in them for CPI (M)-led formations. What explains this, and also the fact that, notwithstanding all its omissions and commissions, the CPI (M) still continues to attract some of the finest young minds of the country?15

The answer is three-fold (and everything I say about the CPI (M) holds generally for the organized Left as a whole): first, it is the only modern force in Indian politics; second, it is the only consistently democratic force in Indian politics; and third, it is the only consistently anti-imperialist force in Indian politics.

Of the two main non-Left political formations in the country, one appeals to Hindutva, and the other appeals to the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. Both thrive on the essentially feudal features of our society. The CPI (M) by contrast does not

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owe its being to the identity of Prakash Karat's grandfather, or of Sitaram Yechury's father-in-law. It represents in that sense the only residual link to the modernity of the anti-colonial struggle. The Congress Party, which retained the leadership of the anti-colonial struggle throughout its course, was largely a modern force during that struggle and for a while even after independence; the leaders were more or less equal, debate was free, and sycophancy, let alone dynastic politics, conspicuous by its absence; dynastic politics entered the Congress party at a later date. The Hindutva group, by contrast, never had anything to do with the anti-colonial struggle; its political formation always was, and still remains, a front for an organization that is fundamentally pre-modern in its orientation and appeal. But while modernity was absent from the one and was abandoned by the other, it still characterizes the CPI (M) as a political force.  

Both the non-Left formations have also at different times sought to abrogate the democratic nature of our polity. The Congress Party imposed upon this country the infamous Emergency which ended only because of a miscalculation on its part and not because of any change of heart (indeed to this day it still has not expressed any contrition on this score). And the Hindutva formation toyed for long with the idea of altering the constitution of the country and even set up a commission to suggest recommendations for doing so, until President K.R. Narayanan stepped in to end that effort. The CPI (M) was in the forefront of opposition on both these occasions (though the CPI transgressed on the earlier occasion, for which it later made a self-criticism). The CPI (M)'s systematic defense of the democratic rights of the people has paradoxically been somewhat belied by its own reticence to theories about the nature of democracy in societies like ours, and by the pervasive association, derived from historical experience, but lacking any theoretical justification, of communism with one-party rule; but this defense has been as steadfast as it has been forceful. By contrast, on the issue of secularism, where the Party, free of any historical baggage, has been more forthright in theorising its praxis, its role in defending secularism has been more widely acknowledged.  

16 Ibid.
The central question of the last hundred years has been the nature of the modernity brought by imperialism to the periphery. The national movement was fought on this issue. The progressive elements of the national movement who split off to form the Communist Party believed that authentic modernity could come only by an alternative route - socialism. While the promise of socialism has been belied for the moment, and many (including perhaps even Amartya Sen) have seen in neo-liberalism the promise of a progressive modernity, the CPI (M) has never given up its perspective on imperialism, has seen in neo-liberalism the form that imperialism takes in the current epoch, and has continued (notwithstanding a passing phase of naïve "developmentalism" in West Bengal for which it has been self-critical) to hold up a vision of an alternative anti-imperialist modernity. Anti-imperialism, it believes, is not a "fundamentalist", but a modernist position. And that, in my view, is what is right about the CPI (M).

For preserving the unity and integrity of the nation, the CPI (M) wants the mobilization of the people for opposing the force of separatism, communalism and secessionism, and for maintaining a strict vigilance over the forces of imperialism which are trying to weaken our nation.

The CPI (M) stands for17:

1. A reconstruction of the whole system of centre-state relations in India.
2. The grant of more powers and autonomy to the states.
4. Support for the progressive policies of the Leftist governments.

Regarding the use/abuse of Article 356, there can be a few suggestions for sincere consideration in the present political climate of the country.

1. Art. 356 should not be looked merely from the point of view of a majority and minority government of a state, because the breakdown of constitutional machinery, is a much wider term, which needs a fresh interpretation for the use of this Article 356 on an objective basis.

2. The majority-minority issue of a government of a state should not be tested only on the floor of the house but also to avoid the error of judgment and to prevent misuse of Article 356.

3. The President, apart from the Governor's assessment of the situation, may send an independent team of experts headed by a retired judge of the Apex Court to the troubled state to look into all aspects of the situation. Before forming his own opinion about the use of Art. 356.

4. Apart from this, the recommendation of the Sarkaria Commission in regard to the appointment of Governors may be seriously looked into, which would result in appointing non-controversial person as Governor.

However, the debate on Article 356, in purely legal terms is flawed. At the end of the day, it is a political issue. Abuse of this provision can take place when political parties nurture the belief that the means to power is less important than power itself. Unless democracy imbibes ethical norms, politicians will remain in constant search for short-cut.

The last General Elections in 2004 were held in the backdrop of intensified attacks on the minorities by the communal forces. Safeguarding the unity and integrity of our country, ensuring the security of religious minorities, adopting pro-people economic measures and protecting our secular ethos were issues of vital importance. In 2004, the Left parties gave a call to defeat the BJP-led NDA, form a secular government at the centre and strengthen the Left in the parliament. In the context of the aggressive Hindutva agenda and the hijacking of the Indian constitution by the Hindutva forces under the BJP-led rule, the Left parties had to ensure that they could not utilize the fractured mandate of the 2004 elections to grab power. Thus the Left parties decided to extend support to the Congress led-UPA government provided that they could commit themselves to a programme to defend secularism, bring relief to the people through policies for food and job security, and protection of livelihoods. Under pressure from the Left the Congress-led government had to prepare a Common Minimum Programme which formed the basis for the support of the Left Parties.
As we move towards elections to the 15th Lok Sabha, the CPI (M) reiterates that the fight against the BJP and Hindutva communalism and the defense of minorities remains a cornerstone of its national policies. The Muslim community continues to be the target of Hindu communalists led by the RSS. The spate of attacks on Christians in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa demonstrates the further spread of the BJP-RSS’s hate campaign. Attempts to communalize the fight against terrorism and the recent incidents in Karnataka exemplify the BJP’s continued agenda of the politics of hate. The double standards of the BJP on terrorism stand fully exposed. While it has no compunction in ascribing all terrorist activities to the Muslim community, it has sought to protect the Hindutva extremists accused in the Malegaon blast case by branding the ATS investigation as prosecution of “Hindu religious figures”.

According to A.B.Bardhan, General Secretary, CPI “To meet the challenges facing the country, Left unity has to be further strengthened and consolidated. The CPI and the CPI (M), which are the core of the Left Front and the base of Left unity, have to work in close cooperation and unity. The 19th congress of the party will address all these issues and I am sure all delegates, alternate delegates will contribute their best in arriving at the correct decisions. From this congress, the CPI will emerge a stronger party, ideologically firm and committed, closely linked with the masses, and militant in action.”18

According to Harkishan Singh Surjeet, CPI(M), “The new turn in the political situation after the Lok Sabha elections has led to the CPI(M), CPI, the Forward Bloc and the RSP working together closely. From the Common Minimum Programme and in defining our attitude to the policies adopted by the Government, the Left parties have strengthened their coordination and are working together”.19

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19 Ibid., P.23.
To accomplish these tasks successfully, Left unity is of paramount importance. Strengthening the Left and increasing its intervention is essential to utilize the favourable opportunities available at the present juncture.

CPI (M) -CPI cooperation is at the heart of bringing about a higher level of Left unity. Our two parties share the common and glorious heritage of the communist movement which was born in the midst of the anti-imperialist struggle. We also had to separate because of the political and ideological differences which affected the strategic perspective over a period of time.

Left Unity has to be the pivot of any attempt at building a Left and democratic alternative based on an alternative programme. For the Left to play its role effectively, Left Unity has to be further consolidated, and as far as possible, extended.

Consolidated and unified Left will remain weak and unstable without Communist Unity. The two are complementary. The role played by the CPI and CPI (M) in defeating the communal forces in the elections, and in evolving a Common Minimum Programme, has generated a new enthusiasm among the sympathizers and supporters of the communist movement.

The Political Resolution adopted by the 17th Congress of our party has addressed the question of Communist Unity as under: “This means that the issue of Communist Unity will acquire an urgency and new content in the coming days. In recent years there has been growing close cooperation especially between the CPI and CPI (M). They share common views on political and other issues”20

There is today more or less similarity of views on national and international situation and the political tactical line flowing from this situation. There are however differences on certain ideological and programmatic issues between the CPI and the CPI (M). The differences are not static. They can be discussed and narrowed down. In the process, the ideological level of the communist ranks has to be raised.

20 Ibid., P.106.
Above all, to go forward towards that objective, the CPI has to become stronger, ideologically firmer, politically more active, and must have a broader mass base.\textsuperscript{21}

The Central government is steadily encroaching on the existing powers of the states. Through neo-liberal measures and privatization, the centre is squeezing out the state's role in various spheres and making them more dependent on the centre. Centrally sponsored schemes are also used for this purpose. The 13\textsuperscript{th} Finance Commissions made more stringent conditional ties. The centre refuses to devolve 50\% of the share of Taxes to the states. In the sphere of education, the centre is pushing a series of legislations which undermine the role of the states in education.\textsuperscript{22}

The CPI (M) has prepared a comprehensive document for restructuring centre-state relations. The party should take up the task of mobilizing support for restructuring centre-state relations and protecting the rights of the states.

The regional parties by and large represent the interests of the regional bourgeoisie and the rural rich. With the advent of coalition politics at the centre, these parties do not aim only to form state governments but also strive to have a share in the central government. The politics of many of these parties are marked by opportunism in their attitude to the BJP. The regional parties, with opportunism in their main opposition in their state, will not join hands with the Congress, but they have shown themselves capable of joining hands with the BJP to strengthen their position.\textsuperscript{23}

As stated in the 18\textsuperscript{th} Congress of the party, both the Congress and the BJP are trying to rally such parties behind their combinations-UPA and the NDA. It is not in the interests of the people and the left and democratic forces to have a two-party system headed by the two big bourgeoisie parties. We should strive to cooperate and develop relations with those regional parties that are not with either

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid, P.107.
\textsuperscript{22} “Political Resolution and Review Report adopted at meeting of the Central Committee”, CPI(M) Publication, August, Vijayawada, 2010, P.17.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., P.23.
the congress or the BJP. Such co-operation is possible for joint actions on people's issues, centre-state relations etc.

In the present situation, when the CPI (M) is under attack and the left is sought to be isolated, it is necessary to continue the efforts to draw these parties for a joint stand on issues, both inside and outside parliament. A third alternative in terms of the emergence of a joint platform on policies or a programme will take time. What is possible and may be required are electoral understandings with some of these parties in the state.24

Independent Role: key to advance

1. Except in pockets, the party is yet to expand its base and influence outside the three strong states. In the present situation where the strongest base of the party, West Bengal is under attack. It becomes all the more necessary to expand the influence and base of the party in other states. The key to advancing the party and its growth is the independent role of the party.

2. One of the main activities of the party should be the taking up of local issues and conducting sustained struggles to achieve the demands. This is necessary to give a struggle orientation to the organization.25

The extended meeting of the central committee of the CPI (M) calls upon the entire party to untidily take up these tasks and endeavor to fulfill them. We must be at the forefront in championing the interests of the people and democratic rights, leading their struggles for land, employment, education and health. We have to defend national sovereignty against imperialist depredations. Those who seek to weaken the CPI (M) and the left will be thwarted.26

When in 1996, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) did not allow Jyoti Basu, then the Chief Minister of West Bengal, to accept the United Front government’s offer of Prime Ministership, one of its staunchest supporters was the Samajawadi Party leader, Mulayam Singh Yadav. In the recently concluded mini-

24 Ibid., P.24.
26 Ibid., P.33.
general election in five states, neither the CPI (M) nor the CPI was able to win a single seat. Incidentally, the general secretary of the CPI (M), Mr Prakash Karat, has been in charge of Uttar Pradesh for more than 20 years. Yet he misread the political situation totally; he never perceived that the Samajwadi Party would single-handedly wrest power from Mayawati. It had seemed almost certain that in UP there would be a coalition government between the Samajwadi Party and the Congress.27

In such a situation, the CPI (M) was expected to win at least one or two seats in the state. Had that happened the Left would have gained tremendously, and would have indirectly put the United Progressive Alliance at ease. This would have marginalised Mamata Banerjee’s Trinamool Congress and the Left would have also received a renewed fillip in West Bengal.

It would also have enabled the Congress to distance itself from the Trinamool. However, this seemingly perfect situation did not come about for the CPI(M). Its arch rival bagged seven seats in Manipur whereas the CPI (M) has not been able to open its account and became the most important Opposition party and a force for the Congress to reckon with.

In Punjab, in the hope of making a dent in the prevailing two-party system, the CPI (M) and the CPI entered into an alliance with Manpreet Badal’s People’s Party. The CPI (M) fielded candidates in nine seats and lost all. Here also, Mr Karat had predicted a Congress victory and had even thought of a post-poll alliance with the Congress.

In the midst of this total defeat in Uttar Pradesh, the question arises as to why no effort was made to forge an alliance with Mayawati or with Mulayam Singh Yadav. There was an alliance with the BSP leader in the 2009 Lok Sabha election. It is interesting to note that in Uttar Pradesh, the CPI (M) did not enter into an alliance even with the CPI.28

28 Ibid.
The very basis of this 'goes it alone' policy was rooted in the conviction that no party would get a clear majority in the state. The CPI (M) could never perceive the emergence of two regional parties as dominant forces and the marginalization of the two national parties. It seemed to have formulated its strategy on the basis of electoral history. It did not occur to the Marxists that in a polarised political situation, a shift in the vote-share by three to four per cent would be enough to bring a single party to power in the state as in 2007. Indeed, the CPI has already questioned the CPI (M)'s policy of going it alone.

In 2005, after Mr. Karat became the general secretary, five states went to polls ~ Assam, Bihar, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha. The CPI (M) does not exist in any of these legislative assemblies and another five have now been added to this list. Inevitably, the consequence of this massive defeat will denude the importance of the CPI (M) in national politics. It is not only that the CPI (M) failed to win a single seat; even the other Left parties have drawn a blank.

The Left plank of corruption, price rise and bad governance was very similar to that of other parties. But whereas the other Opposition parties benefited, the CPI (M) lost badly.

The reason for this is that regional parties have earned the confidence of the electorate whereas the Left has totally failed to create any confidence in the people. There are two primary reasons for this ~ (a) the Left's plank of a third alternative at the Centre; and (b) its own track record in the two states where it is strong but has failed to enthuse voters.29

The net result of this debacle is that a new third front can evolve without the participation of the Left. In the emerging scenario, Mamata Banerjee, Jayalalitha, Nitish Kumar, Naveen Patnaik and Mulayam Singh Yadav could join hands in future with the likely inclusion of Chandrababu Naidu and Deve Gowda. This will ensure a formidable group in which the Left will have no place.

29 Ibid.
After the split in the Communist Party, the CPI (M) shifted its headquarters from Kolkata to New Delhi in the hope of spreading its wings in North India and becoming an All-India political outfit in the fullness of time. However, instead of making any dent, it has become irrelevant in practically all the major and larger states of India. At this rate, both the CPI and CPI (M) may lose their status as national parties in the years to come.

Clearly, the Left faces a gloomy situation of its own creation. The spectacular rise of the BJP and the relative decline of the Congress made it clear that the party system had become less ideological and was moving towards a model where each grouping aimed to be a catch-all party.

At the national level there is no reasonable prospect for the emergence of a viable third front that maintains equal distance from the BJP and the Congress.

The Left continued with its economic policies and anti-Congress stance at a time when India has moved away from those simplistic planks. Both the major players in Uttar Pradesh — the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Samajwadi Party — have worked out their own support bases transcending the coalitions that the Congress once led. But the Left could not undertake such an exercise as it knew very well that its essential strength lies in three states where its main rival is the Congress. And the only way it could continue to be relevant is through an anti-Congress political philosophy.

This led the CPI (M) to withdraw its support to the first UPA government on the nuclear deal while the BSP and SP supported the deal enabling the UPA-I to survive.

This projection of a larger-than-life image that the Left had indulged in has become irrelevant in this world of quick change. The regional parties have outsmarted the Left.

*Biman Basu, CPI (M) State Secretary on some Contemporary Issues:*

West Bengal is facing a very difficult political situation today. The entire period of the Left Front Government never witnessed this kind of anarchy, chaos
and terroristic type of attack on the common people of the state. As a result of this meticulously planned anarchy, the developmental programmes of the state government have been facing serious problem. In short, the anti-development forces are moving against the interests of the people of our state. This anti-democratic forces are doing havoc to democratic methods and practices.30

The opposition parties of West Bengal legislative assembly are behaving in an irresponsible manner. They do not adhere to any democratic principle. They are involving themselves in different types of anti-democratic activities. For example, about two years back this irresponsible opposition attacked the assembly house, destroyed the record room and damaged valuables including rare furniture and antique. This opposition of the assembly never responds to any all-party meeting conducted by the ministers or administration. Actually the democracy and its principles are jeopardized by the Bengal opposition.

We all know that we are working in a decadent society. The communists have not descended from any other planet; communists are also products of this society. An unhealthy contest and rat race prevails in the society. This has accentuated with the implementation of liberalized economic policies in our country. Since we are coming out of this society we just cannot ignore the ugly reflections on us. Therefore, we have to keep vigil in our day to day life, and run the party activities. We sometime make mistakes and we want to identify the mistakes to rectify us. The rectification campaign is a continuous process, which cannot be halted nor can be declared as time bound. To do work in a better manner for the well-being of the people continuously, we practice rectification campaign in our party.

All CPI (M) members have to take up his or her work very seriously in the present political situation. CPI (M) members cannot wait only for spontaneous reactions from people. Shameless, slanderous campaign against communists and left parties has to be countered effectively. Terror tactics are to be exposed in all possible manners and if necessary, have to be resisted by the mobilizing poorer

sections of the society. In the present situation, larger and larger mobilization of the people is the key to effectively answering the fictitious campaign and attack on democracy. Comrade Jyoti Basu used to say "It is the people who create history, not the conspirators." Left activists should always remember this.31

The crushing defeat suffered by the CPI (M)-led Left Front after an uninterrupted reign of 34 years in power in West Bengal has triggered renewed debates and considerable churning within Left circles in the country. The ruling classes and almost all major non-Left trends in Indian politics would love to treat this defeat as a veritable beginning of the end of the Left in India. Most voices within and around the Left have, however, rightly rejected this cry of bourgeois triumphalism. They have pointed out that the debacle suffered by the CPI (M) in West Bengal has been of the CPI (M)'s own making. The party and its government in West Bengal have been duly punished for their anti-people blunders, unmitigated arrogance and growing rightwing tendencies. There is a need for all genuine forces of the Left to learn from this experience and rejuvenate the Left movement.32

The CPI (M) itself is yet to come out with any serious review of the West Bengal debacle. It remains to be seen how the next congress of the party scheduled early next year, deals with this critical juncture. Outwardly, CPI (M) leaders continue to downplay the Bengal debacle as just one electoral defeat coming after seven successive victories. But those aware of the ground reality in West Bengal know it very well that the situation facing the CPI (M) in the state today is anything but 'normal'. Against this backdrop, Prabhat Patnaik's recent piece in Economic and Political Weekly, placing the crisis of the CPI (M)) in a theoretical perspective marks a welcome departure.

Compared to the situation at the time of the 19th congress, there has been a big change as far as the position of the CPI (M) and the Left are concerned. When the 19th congress was held in 2008, the Left had emerged stronger after the

victories in the West Bengal and Kerala assembly elections in 2006. In Tripura too the Left Front won for the fourth consecutive time in 2008. However, in the Lok Sabha elections in May 2009, the Party fared badly, getting the lowest number of seats sever. In the assembly elections in 2011, the Left Front was defeated in West Bengal for the first time since 1977. In Kerala, the LDF lost the elections, albeit narrowly.\(^3\)

These electoral reverses, and the fact that the Party has made no substantial advance in any other state, have weakened the position of the Party and the Left at the national level. It is in such a situation, that the ruling classes are going ahead with the neo-liberal policies, and the communal forces are trying to gain ground. Hence, the strengthening of the CPI (M) and the recovering of the ground lost by the Left assume importance.

The four Left parties, the CPI (M), CPI, AIFB and RSP, have been working untidily at the national level in the past two decades. During the period of the UPA-I government, this cooperation became more intense as many policy matters and people’s issues had to be dealt with.

In the recent period, on a few issues, such as the formation of Telengana state, the CPI (M) and the CPI have had different stands. This has created some difficulties in Andhra Pradesh. However, at the national level, overall, the Left parties have been taking a united stand and initiating joint actions. In the current situation when the Left has suffered reverses in the elections, and where there has been a setback in West Bengal, it is all the more important to preserve and strengthen Left unity. There may be different views on the course of events and the problems of the Left Front government in West Bengal. But these have to be addressed in a critical and fraternal manner so that it does not weaken the Left Front. The ferocious attack on the Left should be met with a collective resolve and by going to the people in a united way.\(^3\)

\(^3\) "Draft Political Resolution for the 20\(^{th}\) Congress Adopted by the Central Committee", CPI (M) Publication, 17\(^{th}\) - 20\(^{th}\) January, Kolkata, 2012, P.52.

\(^3\) Ibid., P.55.
There are a number of Left-minded groups and individuals outside the Left parties who should be brought together on a platform on issues which the Left advocates. For this, the Party should take the initiative.

It may be observed that the inter-state council, after its formation in 1990, remained quite active till the United Front Government decided to reactivate it in 1996. Immediately after its reactivation the council decided to set up a panel to examine in depth the contentions in the centre-state relations to promote greater co-ordination and co-operation among the states, and between the states and the centre. The formation of coalition governments at the centre since 1996 (in which several regional political parties are active partner) has provided a new orientation to the Indian federal system. Since then, there has been greater consultation and cooperation between the centre and the states, and there is a likelihood of greater devolution of power from the centre to the states. This is likely to help in the evolution of a true federal polity in the country.

The relation between centre and states continued to be quite smooth till 1967, when Congress was in power, both at the centre and most of the states. However, after 1967, strains and stresses appeared in the centre-state relations because the Congress lost power in nine states where Coalition Government was formed by the opposition parties. In 1977, the Congress lost power at the centre and the Janata Party formed a government. Soon after assumption of power the Janata government dismissed Congress Ministers in nine states. But 1980 Congress again returned to power at the centre and dismissed Janata Ministries in nine states. In view of the above developments the demand for greater autonomy for the states became more vociferous. A lead in this direction was taken by West Bengal, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh etc.

A number of Committees were appointed to examine how far the centre had encroached upon the field of the states and to suggest how the state could be granted autonomy. These committees made several recommendations. Thus Rajamannar Committee recommended a curb on the use of Article 356 of the
Constitution and suggested that Article 356 should be used only in the event of complete breakdown of law and order in a state. Setalvad study team recommended the constitution of an inter-state council and made several suggestions to rationalize relations between the Finance Commission and Planning Commission. Likewise the Administrative Reforms Commission also recommended withdraws of centre from the area reserved for the states. It also recommended formulation of certain guidelines for the exercise of discretionary powers by the Governor.

**The Findings of the Study:**

The following are the major findings of this study:

1. The analysis indicates that if the constitution of India had not provided us a federal character of government, then there would have been no issue of centre-state relations 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.

2. The study reveals that unlike any other political party, the CPI and CPI (M) have been consistent in their policies on various issues of centre-state relations.

3. In this study, it is found that by and large centre-state relations figure prominently, in the policies and programmes of the CPI and CPI (M). Communist political parties of India have always pleaded for more autonomy to the States. The Communist Parties have however adopted an ambivalent attitude towards federalism. They do want a strong centre but at the same time, they emphasize the need for substantial autonomy to the states. So, the hypothesis adopted in this study can be said to be proved.

4. This study has found that the CPI and CPI (M) has shown remarkable sense of accommodation and coalition culture. By forming a very harmonious relation with its coalition partners, majority of who are regional parties. This has lubricated the centre-state relations.
5. This study has found that the CPI firmly believes that, for the progress of the nation as a whole, the most essential necessity is the preservation of the unity and integrity of the nation. We must ensure and preserve the secular democratic structure and social justice, provide for decentralization and grant of greater autonomy to the states of the federation.

6. It is the finding of this study that, unlike the CPI, the CPI (M) has more respect for federal principles in India. Though CPI wanted to convert the Indian polity into a unitary model, the CPI (M) embarked upon strengthening the state governments and bringing a balance of power between the centre and states. It wanted to give more autonomy to the states. To help the socio-economic development it did not want to make the centre dominant, as the balance would tilt towards the centre. The party hoped to preserve the principle of unity in diversity for maintaining peace and prosperity of India.

7. In this study, an attempt has been made to analyse the CPI and CPI (M)'s approach towards centre-state relation. To facilitate the study various issues of centre-state relations like Art. 356, Appointment of Governor, Art. 370, Creation of New States, Deployment of CRPF and Distribution of Revenue are chosen.

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

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

10. Experience has amply demonstrated that, sometimes Art. 356 is the only weapon of the centre to control the unconstitutional exercise of state machinery and to make a balance between centre and state.
11. This study indicates that qualitative change has occurred in the 1990's regarding centre-state relations. The Indian Federal system had become more or less a Unitarian system, due to the hegemony of the Congress. But the Communist Political Parties in India have been successful to retrieve the spirit of co-operative federalism, by giving ample scope for the regional parties in the government. It has facilitated the state governments to express their opinion regarding centre-state relations which led to solution of some of the problems of centre-state relations.

Political parties are the main instruments of articulations and aggregation of interests in a political system. Some of their demand may have on ideological orientation but most of them concern power relationships in the system. Party attitudes on specific issues are shaped by their general approach to various aspects of the social, economic and political realities. However, more often, party attitudes on particular issues are determined by the experience, perceptions and perspectives of the parties and their prominent leaders.35

Since political parties are public agencies and the discussion on the major issues takes place in public forums, one has access to many forces for identification of party attitudes on specific issues. More prominent among these sources are the election manifestoes, statements by party leaders, party resolutions, parliamentary and legislative debates, constituent assembly debates, memoranda and record of actions of government. Of these sources, party's election manifestoes are important from the view point of elections in that they set out objectives and goals for the parties. Political Parties act as a major force in the federalising process. Their attitudes help us to understand their impact on the federal polity.

This Study reveals that:

Till 1967, the demand for state autonomy could not be seen because as long as the states were under the Congress Party umbrella, conflict between centre

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and states, among states and within states could be accommodated within the party. But after 1967, the manipulative capacities of the Indian Political system gave rise to several regional, political parties with their demand for greater autonomy for the states. Today regionalism increasingly manifests itself through opposition to Congress in regional parties and demands by opposition parties across the ideological spectrum from autonomy to the states.

The demand for greater autonomy for states is based on a genuine feeling and a desire on the part of the states to play an effective role in the developmental process of the nation and also to promote national unity and integration, with states having grown in experience and having developed new aspirations.

This study also highlights the fact that the demand for greater autonomy for the states within the existing constitutional frame is neither extravagant, nor destructive. The demand could be accommodated within the existing frame and provisions of the Indian constitution.

Suggestions:

There should be decentralization of the powers from central to state governments which will check the evil influence of bureaucracy, and would give more power at local and block level. The process of devolution of powers never ends at provincial level and it goes down at the block level. It is in this way that the demand for autonomy would encourage participation among the people.

The constitution should be partly amended so that states could get more autonomous power and this will be neither destructive nor anti-national. However, there is a need to examine the demands made by different states for greater autonomy. So, it is necessary to examine the feasibility of such demands in Indian Federal system from different perspectives. Thus, the Hypothesis that Communist Political Parties of India have always pleaded for more autonomy to the states has been proved.