Indian Experiment with coalition Governments

Abstract

India has had the experience of coalition governments in the States as well as at the Centre in recent times. The term coalition means an act of coalescing or uniting in to one body or whole. In politics the coalition is the marriage for convenience of different and some-times ideologically opposed political parties to form the next government. The coalition governments in India have become a regular occurrence. It is imperative to understand the causes of fractured mandate along with the latitude of choices available with the political players. The causes of alliances and the question of stability post coalition formation are also the important issues to be discussed and analyzed in this paper. I have tried to search the patterns of coalition- formation in India. The coalition experiments are global phenomena; therefore the present paper has also adopted the comparative mode of understanding the coalition government. The fate and features of Indian party-system and its impacts are also the parts and parcels of this research paper. The mismatch between the aspirational and young-society and the old style of political culture speaking the obsolete language have discussed in the paper.

Although the coalition governments made its advent in India earlier but a definite pattern was discernable only late 1990s. With the assumption of power by NDA at the centre in 1999 for second time in a row and its successful completion of the term proved decisive. The next coalition to form the government at the centre was UPA under the leadership of Mrs. Sonia Gandhi with Dr. Manmohan Singh as Prime Minister. This coalition not only completed its first term but made a resounding come-back with even more number of seats. The instability and defections became a thing of past.

Now the performance and that too in the socio-economic field has become a new benchmark. The young and aspirational India has started awarding the performers and punishing the venal and corrupts.

Chandra Mohan Upadhyay
Assistant Prof.
Deptt. of Political Science
Kisan P.G. College
Bahraich

Keywords: Coalition, Congress-system, Casus-foederie, NDA, UPA, Globalization, Mandal-Mandir Politics, Majoritarian system, Voting-behavior, Universal-Adult Franchise.

Introduction

The coalition governments in India have become a regular occurrence. It is imperative to understand the causes of fractured mandate along with the latitude of choices available with the political players. The casus-foederie and the question of stability post coalition formation are also the important issues to be discussed and analyzed. I have tried to search the patterns of coalition- formation in India. The coalition experiments are global phenomena; therefore the present paper has also adopted the comparative mode of understanding the coalition government. The fate and features of Indian party-system and its impact are also the parts and parcels of this research paper. The mismatch between the as pirational a young-society and the old style of political culture speaking the obsolete language have discussed in the paper.

Hypothesis

The understanding of the working of Indian experiment with coalition government is essential for three reasons

1. To have an authentic understanding of the formation and functioning of coalitions.
2. To find out the causes of instability of coalitions and also the reasons behind the stability.
3. Apart from India the coalition governments are formed world over, therefore it is essential to have a comparative view of the phenomena. The comparative study imparts us several new- dimensions and enrich our understanding. It also enables us to find-out the presence of new trend if any.

Methodology

I have adopted the time-tested comparative-analysis method, the empirical method and inductive method to the large extent.

India has had the experience of coalition governments in the States as well as at the Centre in recent times. The term coalition is derived from Latin word '*coalitus*' meaning to go or to grow together. Thus interpreted the term coalition means an act of coalescing or uniting in to one body or whole. In politics the coalition is the marriage for convenience of different and some-times ideologically opposed political parties to form the next government. This is an alliance or temporary union between political groups for the exercise or control of political power. Prof. Ogg defines coalitions as "a co-operative arrangement under which distinct political parties, or at all events members of such parties unite to form a government or ministry"*[01].

As we analyze the coalition in India, let us look at some other coalition experiments in different part of the world. While in countries like France in the past and in Italy and Japan even now there have been unstable coalitions. Thus, all coalition experiments have not displayed a uniform pattern. From 1952 to 1967 the Congress party dominated the national and provincial seats of power. This was mainly because the moral leadership congress inherited as legacy of freedom struggle and people of India repeatedly gave mandate to it and by and large it lived up to the expectations of the people. The Congress party entrusted itself with the tasks of nation building. It was more than an electoral organization seeking the election or re-election of members to run the various offices of the government. The Congress party devoted it to the task of nation-building and social transformation, apart from the development of a healthy "political-culture" capable of withstanding the tests of the time. There was however a gradual shift from this pattern and the year 1967 proved to be the fateful year for Indian polity as it witnessed the coalition experiments in some of the states like Punjab, UP, MP, Odessa, Bihar, West-Bengal, and Kerala. The ideological and inner contradictions led to the early demise of these coalitions though Kerala and West-Bengal proved exception owing to ideological affinities and homogeneity of programs of the coalition partners. The central government continued under Congress till 1975. The one misstep by the then Prime-minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi cost the Congress and nation dearly. The declaration of infamous National Emergency in1975, the stifling of Democracy and other related atrocities, caused unprecedented anti-Congress wave and for the first time Congress lost the power at center. And also the first coalition at the center saw the light of the day. The temperamental incompatibility of some leaders and fierce inner controversy over the dual loyalty of the Jan Sangh activists to Janata party and RSS wrecked the boat of Janata party government. The first coalition experiment came to an end. The conclaves organized by the national opposition parties during 1980s to link the regional parties to counter the congress hegemony failed to take off. The rise of Hindu nationalism as a reaction to the stated Muslim appeasement policies of Congress particularly post infamous "Shahbano" episode was tactically supported or at best ignored by the national political parties. This was all condoned in the name of anti-congress-ism. The second experiment began with the rise of late V.P.Singh as Mr. clean a crusader against the corruption epitomized by his opposition to Bofors Gun deal. There were allegation of corruption against the then Rajiv Gandhi government and V.P.Singh emerged as the voice of Middle-classes in India.

A great kind of socio-political upheaval made its forced entry to the stage of unfolding 'drama' of Indian system. But this drama was not limited to India alone. Nationally and internationally the decade of 90s is historic decade for more than one reason. At International level it marked the end of cold war, unification of Germany, disintegration of Soviet Union and the beginning of uni-polar world. The escalation of terrorist-violence, the first Gulf-war and above all onset of Globalization. At national level this decade will be remembered as the real beginning and strengthening of 'coalition governments' in India, the departure of Congress-system and end of the era of one-party dominance. The 1977 coalition comes close to equal the manner but it not only got failed but could not replicate itself. Parliamentary form of the government is the most popular mode today and the accepted exemplar of political- sovereignty, is uniquely dependent on the consent of people. Central to its theme is the coalition which is collation of congeries of hopes, aspirations, desires and wishes of the people in a majoritarian electoral system. Touching the 'Rubicon' of majority is not always easy. It is complicated exercise in all those countries having diverse socio-cultural and economic groups, each conscious of it unique identity. Over the years it has come to mean a negotiation process whereby it has clearly become a game of bargaining and maneuvering by politically active groups, parties and vested interests.

The winds of change were blowing in India too but the history repeated again in this coalition experiment also. Basically it was a strange coalition comprising the left and right of the day. Both the BJP and the Communist parties and some independents supported this government on the sole agenda of keeping the Congress party out of the power, although the Congress emerged as the single largest party post general elections, but sensing the mood of the people it did not form the government. This time new kind of issues-Mandal and Kamandal(Mandir) emerged on the national scene, set to dominate the politics of coming decades. The Congress was waiting in the wings to settle the score with Mr. V.P.Singh and BJP was eager to in cash the popularity wave unleashed in its favor due to Mandir issue. Both parties played their games without fail and this coalition government could not even complete its first year in the office. The next in the line was a minority government led by Mr. Chandra Shekhar, who was supported by Congress from out-side. This government could hardly survive for four months. From 1991 to 1996 Congress ruled again at Centre.

This was basically a minority government led by P.V. Narasimha Rao. Though his critics are legion

and his confessed admirers few, Mr. Rao continues to be invoked and to make a powerful appeal on the policy makers and academics together. After 1996 Lok Sabha polls Atal Bihari Bajpayee was invited by the President of India being the leader of single largest party to form the government but he could not manage the numbers. The next government was a 13 party coalition government led by Deve Gowda supported by Congress party from outside. The government of Deve Gowda could not complete even two years and Congress withdrew the support without citing any specific reason. Later it became clear that the then Congress President Mr. Sita Ram Kesari himself wanted to be the Prime Minister. Finding no support from any quarter ultimately he again settled for a government led by anyone other than Deve Gowda. The United Front proposed the name of Indra Kumar Gujaral widely respected but politically light-weight. He could barely run the coalition for Eight-months and the Congress under Kesari pulled the rug. The country underwent another round of general election and no single party or combination could win the majority. The BJP under Bajpayee emerged as the single largest party again and this time he successfully forged the coalition which proved a landmark in the coalition history of India. In India we are not quite familiar with coalitions. In the West, especially in many European countries like Switzerland, Italy, and Germany there is a regularity of coalition politics. This regularity has not only given it the requisite credibility but also the known standards and theories of coalition which are quintessential for the success of any kind of experience. In these Western countries the coalition has become a neat answer in the face of extreme disparities, heterogeneities, fractured polities and divisive and partisan identities.

India's serious experiment with coalition government began with the formation of N.D.A.(national democratic alliance) government in 1998 and 1999 under the 'able' leadership of Atal Bihari Bajpayee. The word 'able' is deliberately used here to underline the role of his acceptability and his being more than first among equals. In fact it was the power of his personality which proved the main *casus foederie*, despite the declared un-touchability of his party BJP. One thing which needs to be debated more elaborately is the role of personality in the formation and success of coalition governments. When we gleam in to the history of successful coalition formations, then it becomes quite clear that in both the successive and successful coalition experiments of NDA and UPA, the role of the personality proved decisive. For UPA it was Mrs. Sonia Gandhi who did what Bajpayee had done for NDA earlier.

The formation of United Progressive Alliance (UPA) is reflection of realignment of political forces in India but it also highlights the importance of alliance formation that proponents of coalition theory such as William Riker and Lawrence Dodd have accorded great importance. Riker and Lawrence Dodd have suggested that in democracies, "increasingly complexities in consensual framework have led almost universally to situations where it is multiparty majoritarianism and conflicting coalition endgames

that result in spawning the politics of possible".[02]. The last century can truly be credited with introducing multiparty governments and coalitions. Almost every European state has been governed by coalition for at least sometimes in the last century. Coalition in Third World democracies are no longer a misnomer now as there has been quite many experiments with this form. It is also being recognized now, that the politics of coalition is more pervasive than its occurrence as actual coalition government- and this applies as much to the West as in our part of the world. This theory holds quite categorically that the "coalition status of the cabinet that is formed after the Parliamentary election is determined by the nature of the bargaining conditions that prevail within the parliament and outside of it"[*03]

One interesting fact emerged out of these coalition-experiments that 'the party' which accommodates the regional allies in the seat sharing arrangement more, benefits the most. In 1999, Congress party has a vote share of 28.40 percent and it secured only 115 seats, while the BJP has the vote of only 23.70 percent but was able to get 182 seats. This trend continues in the next general election of 2004, when Congress got 26.70 percent of votes but its seat tally increased to 145 from 115 while BJP had a vote share of 22.20% but its tally dropped to 138, down from the 182 seats. I have tried to present these phenomena in the following table

Party	Election year	vote percentage	number of seats
Congress	1999	28.40	115
BJP	1999	23.70	182
Congress	2004	26.70	145
BJP	2004	22.20	115
Congress	2009	28.60	206
BJP	2009	18.82	116

Table :01

Of course, why this has happened can be explained by many factors but the most plausible explanation would be the art and craft of alliance making. The party which cleverly forged it benefited the most, vote percentage notwithstanding.

The voting behavior

There is a new trend quite visible in the voting behavior in this coalition era. The social constituencies are now making the political choices of their own. There are several factors dictating this choice but most important of them all is the socio-economic necessities of the groups, though identities are still determining the nature of the group but not its scope, and various group are weaving social coalition on the basis of commonality of interests and their social position. This aspect of political consciousness on the part of these newly resurgent but hitherto dormant social groups is giving the sleepless nights to the political parties, as they are being forced to redefine and relocate their social base. From the stage of formal universal suffrage where people usually learn to develop a kind of political culture which could at least sustain the nascent and fragile political system, Indian electoral journey begins. Now we have reached a stage where 'the vote' is not only an agent of political-change but also the social

change. Even at the same time we are slowly but definitely moving towards the next stage of voting behavior where the vote is used to realize the aspirations of the masses. This shift from the politics of grievances to the politics of aspirations is welcome and reassuring. The huge voters turn out and the way the people gathered during Anna Hazare's Jan-Lokpal agitations in Delhi and in various other parts of the country shows the level and maturity of we the people of India.

The best example of this strategic relocation, is the politics of Janata-Dal(U) in Bihar, where it has successfully persuaded the extremely backward classes(EBCs) to forge a new alliance as their interests are not in consonance with 'the OBCs' the common plank motivated post Mandal to take the centre-stage of power. This experiment with EBCs proved successful for JD(U) and also the nemesis for RJD of Mr. Lalu Prasad Yadav. Like matured democracies of West, the vote in India is being used not only as an agent of governmental change but also social change. It is has been taken for granted that voting pattern is almost and usually anti-incumbent. But the 2009 national election defied this logic: it returned the main ruling party, the Congress party, to power with a larger victory margin and with a larger number of seats. Around this time it notably also voted to return the incumbent state governments in many states including in Delhi and Gujarat (where the incumbent party was returned to power for the third time) and in Haryana, and Orissa. In the recent elections to five states in the months of November 2013- Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Mizoram and Delhi, all except incumbents at Delhi, return to power defying the logic of anti-incumbency Thus clearly incumbency disadvantage cannot by itself be the sole or the most important explanation of election outcomes in India.

What could be the factors affecting the outcomes of the national elections? Besides the incumbency does economic performance matter? My analysis in the paper focuses on the latest 2009 parliamentary election. The 2009 election is of interest in its own right as well since, like the 2004 election, it too carried a large element of surprise. Given the general disarray in both the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA), which ruled during 2004-09, and the BJP, the main opposition party, predictions of the election results varied widely from marginal victories for the UPA and NDA to the emergence of a "Third Front" consisting of a group of the left-of-center parties. Yet, defying all forecasts, the Congress greatly increased its tally from 145 to 206 seats and comfortably formed government with a group of smaller parties. On average, candidates of the incumbent party in a state have a better chance of scoring a victory if that state exhibits higher growth than the median state. Symmetrically, on average, the candidates of the incumbent party in a state growing slower than the median state are punished. "The larger the deviation from the median growth rate, the larger is this effect in either direction. Second, on average, incumbency at all levels was helpful in winning the 2009 election. That is to say, on average, an incumbent candidate and the candidates of the

ruling parties at the center and states had better chances of victory than other candidates."*[04] This incumbency effect could be due to a variety of reasons such as the incumbent candidates and parties having more resources to spend on election campaigns, having better name recognition or even being more charismatic. Finally one finding surprises the eager reader "that on average, more educated and wealthier candidates have a better chance of victory. These advantages turn out to be far more important in the states exhibiting low growth and indeed have a tendency to become statistically insignificant in states exhibiting high growth rates."[05] Commenting on the trend that shows that anti incumbency seems to have become more dominant in Indian elections since 1991, Bhagwati and Panagaria "propose that in more recent years voters have started taking into account the economic performance to decide whether to vote in favor of or against the incumbents. Whereas in earlier years during the 1950s through the mid 1980s when the overall economic performance in general was not impressive, people saw no perceptible change in their lives, which led them to turn extremely pessimistic in so far as their economic fortunes were concerned."*[06] Resigned that a significant change was impossible their voting decision was perhaps based on other factors, which often resulted in the incumbent Congress Party being voted back to power. Thus Bhagwati and Panagariya propose that in more recent years economic performance has become an important determinant of the way voters behave, and it perhaps explains why anti incumbency has become a more prominent feature of election outcomes. Krishnamurthy and Prasanna Tantri maintain that there is a direct co-relation between good economics and good politics "To establish whether good economics makes for good politics in general in India, one need to examine the evidence across several electoral cycles that span high and low growth periods. Moreover, with a voting population that contains a significant proportion of illiterate voters, a related question that arises is: Does the positive effect of growth on re-election prospects hold only in states where the population of literate voters is high? Since literate voters are more likely to be aware of the state of the economy, the effect of good economics on good politics needs to be viewed through this prism."*[07] in this paper the scholars have given their observations which needs to be reproduced here in detail- "First, high economic growth generated by the incumbent government significantly enhances the chances of ruling party candidates getting re-elected. Careful empirical analysis requires controlling for the effects of various other determinants of the incumbents' success. Factors that are peculiar to a particular state, such as the leftist leanings of the electorate in states such West Bengal and Kerala, can influence the incumbent's ability to get re-elected in that particular state. Moreover, a wave that sweeps the entire nation, such as the sympathy wave generated in the 1984 national elections after Indira Gandhi's death, can affect all incumbents' ability to get re-elected. In arriving at our results, we control for such state-level

determinants as well as general time trends. Since a higher turnout ratio is considered bad news for the incumbent, we also control for the effect of voter turnout on the likelihood of ruling party candidates getting re-elected. After controlling for all such determinants, we find that a 1% increase in growth achieved during the entire tenure increases the chances of re-election of every ruling party candidate by 0.6%. Such an increase for every ruling party candidate translates into a significant difference, particularly given three-pronged contests in most constituencies, which include candidates from the two main national parties and from the main regional party in a state. Second, we find that creating a mirage of economic growth by pushing up growth in the election year can't mask an incumbent's incompetence over the entire tenure[*08]

Poonam Gupta in her brilliant paper along with much reputed economist Arvind Panagaria clearly demonstrates that the economic performance is the most reliable indicator to analyze the electoral out-comes "Armed with this classification of the states and the definition of the incumbent party, we can ask the following key question: what proportion of the candidates fielded by the state incumbent party in the Lok Sabha constituencies located in that state won the national election? The outcome is depicted in Figure 1. Remarkably, incumbent parties in the high-growth states won 80 percent of the seats they contested. In contrast, those in medium and low growth states could win only about 50 and 30 percent of the seats contested, respectively[*9]

The Proportion of the Candidates of the Incumbent Party in the State Winning the National Election According to Growth Performance
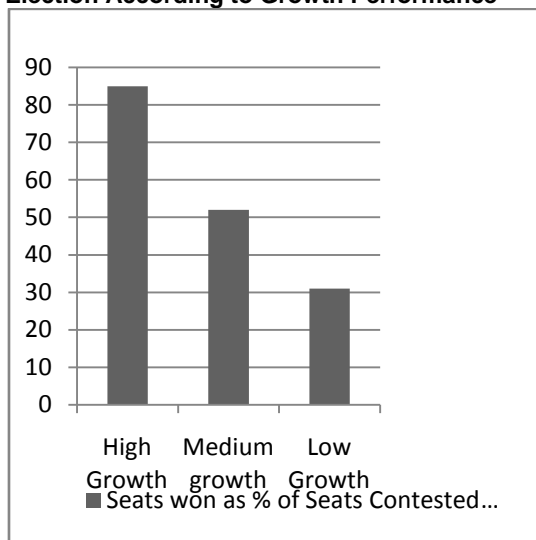

Table:02[*10]

In the Indian context, the literature on the incumbency advantage or disadvantage is relatively new. Linden (2004) uses the regression discontinuity approach and finds that prior to 1991; incumbents had enjoyed an advantage over non-incumbents. But beginning in 1991, this relationship reversed with incumbents suffering a disadvantage.

The Multiplication of Parties and the Crisis for 'The System'

Political parties are life-blood of any political system. Modern representative democracy has brought about party system as an indispensible factor in every political society. "It may be laid down that political party in one form or the other is omnipresent"[11]. Political parties are seen both by the members and by others as agencies for forging links between citizens and policy- makers. This aspect was known to Pt.Nehru, that is why he refused the proposal of Mahatma Gandhi to disband the Congress party, fearing large scale corruption which was slowly gripping the members of this widely respected party and to convert it to a voluntary organization. In course of national movement Congress successfully created a well-knit federal organization which proved a blessing in disguise both for the party and country. The congress provided the much needed linkage, facilitating a series of connections or a chain of relationships and alignments between leaders or workers and voters and also it insured the supply of local leadership to the party and their subsequent elevation at national level. Congress party or the 'Congress-system' the word coined by Dr. Rajani Kothari, assiduously fostered a healthy political culture amongst the electorate and performed the herculean task of nation-building. The merits of 'Congress-system' as pointed out by Rajni Kothari in his *Politics in India* are that- (1). Congress enjoyed the unique ability of being an 'umbrella party', (2). The role of dissent was permitted and enacted within the congress system, and (3). This paved the way for shaping the pluralistic character within the dominant party in a non-authoritarian style.

It has been rightly highlighted by Prof. Ashutosh Varshney in his book 'Battles Half Won' that "India by practicing universal franchise at a low level of income, has become a great historical exception, surprising theorists with its democratic longevity. At its level of income, no polity has remained democratic for so long. But the quality of democracy often plummets between elections. An ordinary citizen feels empowered at the time of elections and powerless otherwise. On the whole, neither the politician nor the bureaucrat shows the signs of routine accountability."[*12] .The Congress party played the pivotal role during this period and consciously adopted the federal structure for its internal functioning. Prior to the split in 1969, the regional leaders and chief-ministers played significant part in decision-making even at national level and the oft-quoted 'circulation of elites' was a regular feature in the Congress system. The fateful split of congress party in 1969 changed the whole discourse and the party became overtly dependent on the charisma and personality of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. The rise of many regional parties as a protest against the over-centralization has been highlighted by many scholars. The party system in any country is the product of socio-economic and cultural milieu. The parties try to adopt and adapt the system and in this way the parties influence and change the system though mostly in piece-meal and sometimes in a revolutionary manner. So no party system could be

static or stagnant. The emergence of Congress party in India as single dominant party and later on the emergence of many regional parties as a response to this or that factor cannot be merely co-incidence.

In 2009 Lok Sabha elections, 363 political parties including seven national parties, 34 state parties, and 242 registered and unrecognized parties participated along with 3831 independent candidates. Thirty-eight political parties and nine independents are currently represented in lokSabha. Twelve parties have only one member, seven are represented by two members and another ten have three to ten members in Lok Sabha. Only the Congress and the BJP have more than five percent seats in the house. With the emergence of new players on the political map-like Arvind Kejariwal's APP, P.A.Sangama's NNP, Y.S.SYeddurappa's KJP Jaganmohan Reddy's YSR Congress, and many others in different parts of the country there could be many more parties trying their luck in 2014 general elections. At last count, there were more than 1400 political parties registered with the Election Commission of India.

There are different reasons and theories are forwarded to explain the stupendous rise in the numbers of political parties in India. The most interesting and logical views have been forwarded by Pradeep Chhibber and Rahul Verma of University of California at Berkeley, US. Refuting the most popular arguments linking the participatory upsurge among hitherto marginalized sections of society post Mandal and social and religious cleavages post Mandir as possible reasons for the explosion in the numbers of political parties, the duo highlights the increasing interference of central government(especially the Congress High Command) in state politics in the 1980s after Indira Gandhi returned to power as the most potent factor for this rise. According to both the Authors During 1950s and 1960s the state party bosses presided over the *Congress-System* and ran the traditional party machines. These state party bosses were at loggerheads with Indira Gandhi. Consequently between 1967 and 1975, she did almost everything possible to prevent new, independent centers of power in states from rising again. She split the Congress party in 1969, delinked state and national elections in 1971, and deinstitutionalized the Congress party. Since many congress leaders deserted her during and after the Emergency, Indira Gandhi restructured the party by centralizing the Congress ever more after coming to power in 1980. State leaders, including the chief ministers, were no longer allowed to build an independent base and were appointed (or dismissed) by the high command. The authors cite many examples from almost all the then Congress ruled states and the appointments and dismissals of chief ministers to buttress their claim, then they pose the Socratic question before themselves to unravel the 'truth' "how did this making or unmaking of chief ministers lead to an increase in the number of parties in the states? If the decision about who gets access to position within a party or holds executive office on behalf of the party is arbitrary, and is frequently made by one leader, then others within the party are unsure of their career paths. Therefore, a politician would

likely desert his parent party and join another party to enhance his career prospects. However lateral entry to a similar position in another party is not always easy. Therefore powerful politician find it easier to form a new party to contest elections…it also changes the incentives of politicians. As the winning differential at the constituency level declined, it provided greater incentive to a politician to form a political party and contest the elections."*13. The way the some scholars ignore or overlook the post 'Mandal' effect is not entirely justified. We have seen a huge increase in the number of political parties post Mandal. The real reason behind this sudden spurt in the numbers is not hard to find. Post Mandal a war-cry of 'social-engineering' was made both by the avowed champion-politicians and some social scientists together and it became a fashionable phrase to be used and misused alike. Like prophesies of the Communist Manifesto, a well defined roadmap was prepared and soon the ultimate rule of social forces (by 'social-forces' the great federation of all the OBCs, Dalits, SCs and STs was taken as a given fact.) was promised. One thing which the proponents forgot or refused to define or divulge was the leadership issue. What they thought that the way SP and BSP have aligned in UP for the first time, would ultimately become the role-model or at least pave the way like Load-Star. Unfortunately soon another war-cry was heard and this was now dedicated to espouse the cause of more backwards, extremely backwards and more exploited people who were not getting the adequate space on the social justice plank. This so called concern gave rise to many other "soft-hearted but hard-minded" politicians to espouse the cause of sub-castes and sub-sub castes. This has given a new lease of life to the hitherto frightened upper castes and they too have realized the potential force of their votes as banks and they too have suddenly become the source wooing by this or that political party. Like able illustrious leaders of social justice plank, they also have started forming their own political parties as the there is very little or no space left in the traditional political parties. That is why caste and its so many sub-castes are making their own political parties. Recently a Brahman Samaj Party has been formed. Before its formation there was a Sawarn Samaj Party(SSP) which is operated from Lucknow. To prove the point some political parties are mentioned here, who came to existence post Mandal – SP led by Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav, RLD by Chaudhary Ajit Singh, Apna Dal by Ms.Anupriya Patel, RKP by Kalyan Singh(first he merges and then walks out from BJP, now again he has decide to throw his lot with BJP, this has been exactly the case with UmaBharti and her party in MP), SJP led by late Chandra Shekhar now merged with SP, Peace Party by Dr.Ayub, in Haryana INLD by OP Chautala, HVP by kuldip Bisnoi, Haryana Janahit Congress(BL), Telangan Rashtra Samiti in Andhra, All India United Democratic Front, Bodoland Peoples Front, AIUDF in Assam, Lok Jan Sakti Party, RJD, JD(U) in Bihar, PDP in J&K, AJSUParty, JMM,JVM in Jharkhand, KJP and JD(S) in Karnataka, Kerala Congress(M), Maharashtra Navnirman Sena, BJD in Orissa, in

Tamil Nadu DMDNK, PMK, Uttarakhand Kranti Dal and in West Bengal the TMC.*[14]

As I have already mentioned that there are about 1400 political parties registered with Election Commission of India. These numbers are sufficient to buttress the claim. The main emphasis here is to underline that post Mandal sudden spurt in the number of political parties, is there in order to meet the excessive hype in the identity politics market. The ego-centric politics produced many political parties just to satiate their bruised egos. Whenever the central leadership of the national political parties refuses to succumb to the black-mailing of regional politicians many of them form the regional political parties many times aping the name of Parent Party with some pre or post fixes. This is the main reason but there are other equally important reasons as well, like it is better to an important leader of caste or sub-caste than simply a leader in any major political party. Because by winning two or three seats, the leader insures a cabinet berth in the government in case of hung Parliament or Assembly. Even it is better to be a prominent caste or sub-caste leader and insure the en masse transfer of votes to certain political party as a bargain for the position of power. In recently formed government in UP the ruling Samajvadi Party led by chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav got the comfortable majority on its own but it has to accommodate a single independent MLA as cabinet minister to balance the caste arithmetic. The examples can be multiplied. It makes amply clear that there are plurality of factors influencing the genesis and the growth in numbers of political parties. And this plurality, in positive mode gives the representation to variety and in negative mode it abets the fractured mandate and confuses the voters. The divided verdict and inability of any single party to reach the simple majority mark promotes the possibility of coalitions, which have been a regular feature of Indian political system.

As this is clear to the meanest that the margin of victory decline with the increase in the number of competing political parties within the *first past the post system*. As we have successfully shown in table 01, that there is no direct linkage between the percentage and the seats, so even small percentage of votes could fetch some seats to bargain in the era of coalitions at Center as well as in States. We have already seen the bargaining power of Devegowda with twenty odd MPs and Madhu Koda a lone MLA himself, at different levels.

The inability of various political parties to effectively fill the gap left by the decline of congress system and still nascent art of coalitions leaves the political analysts bewildered. The changing patterns of party-system in India have shown the trend towards a continuous decline in support base of the national parties. While the Congress party's share of votes has plummeted below 30 per cent, the share of BJP has still not gone beyond 26 per cent. The many regions have thrown strong regional parties to the stage but it would be still too early to predict any trend in the voting preferences of the electorates.

The changing Nature of Indian Coalition and polity

With the decline of congress, the large vacuum left by the congress was sought to be filled by regional parties, apart from BJP, Janata Dal and left. Before the formation of NDA, the earlier attempt at coalition formation proved short lived, based as they all were on political expediency rather than principled alliances. The formation of UPA and its two successive tenures at centre has given at least some indication towards the possible course of events. There is some hope that Indian polity may witness the bi-polar rivalry of UPA and NDA. Prof. G.Gopakumar opines the contrary "the complexities of Indian society hamper the emergence of a competitive bi-polar coalition model. The presence and activism of parties and social forces with conflicting nature of extreme right, centre and left plus the regional, sub-regional, communal and casteist formations at macro and micro levels in the country constrains trends in political polarization. The vacuum created by the decline of 'One Party Dominance' is more apparent today."*[15]. The doubts raised by Prof. Gopakumar are quite misplaced. The various forces of which he talks about have been searching their respective places in this say NDA, or that say UPA, coalition. The certain hangovers of 'Third or Fourth Front' are still there but by and large a definite bi-polarity has already emerged. Prof. Kumar is absolutely right when he asserts "Although this turbulent phase may create deep crises, in the long run it would be beneficial for creating a new trend in federalism which empower the rural masses and strengthen the force of decentralization"*[16]

The coalition experiment in India has almost reached a matured stage, where uncertainties are minimal and stability of the government is a foregone conclusion. In our coalition experiments the gradual decline of PMO and the erosion in the authority of Prime Minister is also quite discernible and PM has been reduced to the *primus inter pares* in the strict sense of the term and even some members of the cabinet are more equal than him. The argument most invoked to oppose the once proposed Presidential system for India to stem the tide of instability of the governments, was that 'honorable framers of our constitution chose the parliamentary system to insure the accountability over stability. Unlike the periodic assessment of Presidential system, the Parliamentary system provides for daily assessment of the government. Now one thing is conspicuous by its absence and that is the question of accountability from our polity. Our clever politicians are more concerned with the question of stability not only to secure their terms but also the related perks and pensions. They know well their precarious chances of making come back after re-elections that is why there is an undeclared unity and unanimity among politicians across the divide to forge and sustain the alliance at any cost. The flood of scams and scandals and the tremors of corruption allegations are unable to shake the unholy but strong foundation of alliance of different political parties. Their *summum-bonum* is to stay in the office at any cost. They have developed a queer distaste and contemptuous attitude towards accountability and probity in public life. It will be no surprise that such a callous attitude and apathy towards accountability of the present UPA dispensation may prove its possible *nemesis*. Indian

electorates have time and again shown their maturity at the polling booths but our politicians are not able to comprehend that. They continue to speak the same staler and obsolete languages of ad hock-palliatives, cronyism corruption and patronage, long discarded by the people of India. The aspirational India disdains these dodges. It is continually a marvel that Shakespeare's drama contains such an astute analysis of the way men with a taste of power behave; the egoism that blinds Caesar to even the possibility of his losing power, let alone being assassinated; the unctuous words with which the politicians attempt to cover their nefarious deeds (see Brutus's speech to the public to explain the motivation for the killing of Caesar), the still more unctuous words with which politicians praise their foes even as the subtext of their words indicate just the opposite (see Mark Antony's famous oration following Brutus' in which he appears to laud Brutus for his participation in the killing as, with each lofty phrase, he implies the opposite). Perhaps the most unsettling theme in the Julius Caesar, seen through the prism of today's politics is the danger that threatens when the public perceives a void of power at the seat of government. What we see today is the exact replica of confusion that flooded the then Rome. The language of electoral politics has changed profoundly since the onset of the first decade of 21st century; however the political parties and their 'think-tanks' seem to be caught in a time warp and are using 1980s yardsticks to comprehend the present. It is no surprise that there is a great disconnect between real issues on the ground and those championed by political parties. Writing in Indian express Editor Shekhar Gupta maintains "people had moved on from seeing development as fulfillment of basic needs to development as fulfillment of their aspirations...an aspirational society is by definition, an impatient society, particularly when it is so young and getting younger"[17]. Aspirations are more complex than basic needs. It involves the fairness and inclusion. In Singapore, a party that has produced a remarkable improvement of the living conditions of the people but the party has to face the huge decline in the support base in the recent elections. This is precisely because the people of Singapore have moved from grievances to aspiration but parties are still embedded to the old style of politics. People just not want the government for the people, which Singapore has and the other States are also delivering. They want a government genuinely of and by the people. Growth is necessary but there must be a proper balance between governance and growth. Mr. Arun Maira is right when he says that "India can conduct free and fair elections on a scale that no other country can. It has developed the vertical threads of democracy for the upward representation of people. However, to be strong, the fabric of democracy needs lateral threads too. These are processes of deliberation to reconcile interests of stakeholders, and for their participation in governance between elections. Such processes transform the government for the people into the government by and of the people.[18]

Indian political parties instead of establishing any permanent rapport with the social groups or nurturing them, political parties love to work on different kind of reductionism which we may call "singular affiliation". The intricacies of plural groups and their multiple identities are obliterated by seeing each person as firmly embedded in exactly one affiliation. Parties in India basically work overnight to widen the social-cleavages, which they are expected to fill. Such ideas of caste and community no longer have the power that they once had, and caste and community are no longer as significant as an ideology that legitimates real differences of power and wealth, but it continues to be significant. We must not over-estimate the significance factor to the extent of pitting one caste or community against the other, which is a fashion with our politicians. The Patron-politicians neither question these established fake facts nor they develop any research network to squire with the facts but instead they rely exclusively on their clientele at regional or local level. These client-politicians actually work as middlemen or brokers and usually block the direct access to voters of their so called patrons. As a result, Indian politics still relies on the arithmetic of
caste, community, religion and region. Politics is about the people and people are about relationship and this direct relationship which is the need of the hour is conspicuous by its absence. Many analysts use the concept of 'sectionalism' to explain a tendency in current Indian politics to divide and appeal to voters on the basis of various cleavages: caste or community, gender, local, territorial, and interest groups. The reference is to initiatives and movements attempting to operate on a 'sectional' if not 'sectarian' basis, thereby tending to divide and mobilize 'against' targets whose selection is justified by reference to alleged negatives – corruption, unfair cornering of privileges or patronage. Unsurprisingly, these initiatives fail to construct real political unity; more disturbing, they often become part of the government or state agendas. This similar experience in both the East and West points to a need for continuing engagement, debate and dialogue, both to better understand ongoing developments as also help and empower all those who value cultural pluralism, tolerance, coexistence, cooperation, dialogue and a coming together across cultural differences. The politics of citizenship is the best remedy and what we are witnessing today in India is the politics of citizenship. This is basically an indictment of the way we practice representative democracy. India's polity comes remarkable close to its citizens at the time of elections, but a seemingly unbridgeable gulf appears between the elections.

Two strong trends have been quite visible. The first is decentralization in the national politics, post 1989, when it became impossible for any single party to gain a Lok Sabha majority. Massive powers have flown away from the once dominant Prime Minister's Office to other institutions in New Delhi, and to governments and parties at the state level. So power has been greatly decentralized, and new processes have emerged that often enabled those at the state level to get their way. The trend number two which has largely been unnoticed, is the over centralization of power at state level in the hands of chief-ministers, who have radically centralized power and seldom

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discuss many matters of policy with their cabinet colleagues. Some of the chief-ministers even do not deem it fit to offer the chair to the elected legislators of their own party during party meet. All the legislators and cabinet ministers are made to sit on the floor while on the single Sofa the paramount leader or chief minister sits. One lady chief-minister, who is known for her extravagant style of living and flamboyant behavior, tends to communicate with her ministers through police officers and one female aide. The other one communicates through the secretaries and the ministers discover their policies when their secretaries pass them the news from chief minister's office. The cabinet reshuffles take place, not to engage the most suitable or to get rid of the recalcitrant elements but to down-size or to send the message of one's unquestioned authority. Prof. James Manor, University of London has rightly called such chief-ministers 'cantankerous narcissists' or 'arch narcissists'. Amidst all these factionalism, sectionalism and divergences and divisions, the mature voters are sending very positive and optimistic signals. Voters are rewarding performers and punishing the populists and pessimist-nonperformers. We may hope that year 2014 will pronounce its verdict in the favor of politics of aspirations. Josh Billings once said-there is nothing so easy to learn as experience and nothing so hard to apply.

Conclusion

Initially Indian coalition experiments be it at the Center or at the provincial levels appeared to be shaky and unpredictable. The factional feuds and defections were the common features and coalition governments in India became another name of instability. With the advent of NDA at the center and the emergence of Atal Bihari Bajpayee as strong Prime-Minister proved a decisive departure from the previous experience of meek and weak Prime Ministers. The 'personality' factor made its foray in the realm of coalition politics in a new way. It became starkly clear that the presence of a strong, mass based leader could make a lot of difference in the nature and functioning of coalition governments. The passes of strong anti-defection law (91st Amendment to the Indian Constitution) also acted as deterrent. Gradually we also witness the growing tendency among electorates to reward the performer and reject the venal and corrupt governments. The mismatch between the aspirations and the mode of delivery could prove fatal for any ruling coalition.

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