

# Coalition Politics in Indian Democracy

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**Abstract:** In 21<sup>st</sup> century coalition politics plays vital role in the parliamentary form of Government. In India, Constitution has provided the multi political party system. To form the Government, no party was in a position to win majority in the parliament; then some political parties had a formal agreement to co-operate with a view in achieving a majority in the parliament and a Government can be formed on the basis of it. Simply, coalition is a group consisting of people from different political or social group who extend co-operation to achieve a particular goal. The coalitions are of two categories i.e. Post poll and Pre-poll. A Pre-Poll Coalition is a group contests in elections on the basis of a common manifesto and policies behind which all the coalition partners are united through a consensus. On the other hand the Post-Poll Coalition government is usually organized when no party is in a position to get a majority in the Parliament or State Legislative Assembly. The Coalition politics is not a new concept in Indian politics. It was started after the fourth general election (1967), thereafter formed several coalition government in some states of India. But it has been development at the National level since 1977. After that, Coalition politics is one of the pivotal features of Indian political system. This paper is an attempt to examine the coalition politics in Indian Democracy since 1977 and also analyses the advantages and disadvantage of the Government.

**Keywords:** Coalition Government, co-operating, majority, parliamentary, political parties, Post- poll and Pre-poll coalition.

## Introduction:

India is the largest democratic sub-continent in the world where political parties have to play prominent role in national development. The constitution of India provided multi-party system where despite the presence of several political parties but the India National Congress dominated Indian political system since independence and later on due to various reasons the leading national parties were divided and sub-divided; as a result many small parties were come up in the political scenario of the country. Now, there are 2293 political parties including seven national and 59 regional political parties in India (Economic Times -2019). However, India as a vast country there are about 121 Crores of population with different ethnic, linguistic and religious communities. It also has diverse ideologies; every individual cannot be expressed their views in the Government, some people may not be fit also to express their views in political issues. Hence, the political parties mould public opinions and create an order out of the chaos of individual opinions.

Party system has become an indispensable factor in the working of the democratic form of Government. The successful working of the democracy requires the presence at least two political parties. One act as the ruling party and other is the as the wash dog. Without a strong opposition political party, democracy can be degenerate in totalitarianism. In general a democratic form of Government is controlled by the political parties. According to Gilchrist, political party as a group of citizens who prefers to share some political views and who by acting as a political unit try to control the Government (Paul K. C.1991). Lord Bryce observes that parties are inevitable; no free country has been without them. No one has shown

how representative government could be worked without them. They bring order out of a chaos or multitude of voters. If parties cause some evils, they avert and mitigate others.

The term coalition is derived from the Latin word *coalitio* meaning to grow together. Thus it means an act of coalescing in to one body or alliance. Thus, it is used to indicate an alliance between various political groups for the control of political power. Generally coalition government is formed jointly by more than two to more political parties. Parties may be decide to form a coalition government if there is no any political party can absolute majority in the parliament.

Coalition Governments are usually formed as no party can individually achieve absolute majority in the Parliament. The term coalition as it generally used in political Science is a direct descendant of the exigencies of a multi Party System in democratic set-up. According to dictionary meaning, Coalition means an act of coalescing or uniting into one body, a union of persons, states or an alliance (Pathak G. 2011)..

According to Gamson a coalition effort can take place only within the context of mixed motives in which both conflicts and common interests are simultaneously, present and past govern the sources of action chosen (Sachdeva & Gupta 2004). F. A. Ogg defines coalitions as a temporary alliance or a combination of states for joint action, the term coalition meant to employ a co-operative arrangement under which district members of such parties going to form a government or ministry (Sachdeva & Gupta-2004). When several political parties collaborate to form a government and exercise the political power on the basis of a common agreed program or agenda ( Ghai K.2001) is a situation of coalition Government in general.

In general, the term coalition means temporary combination of groups or individuals' form to pursue specific objectives through joint actions. The term Coalition is most often is used in connection with political parties. Coalition Government which is frequently found in multi party countries like India, France, Italy, Switzerland and many other countries proved that no single party is strong enough to obtain an electoral majority.

### **Features of the Coalition Politics:**

Some major features of the coalition politics are as-

- Coalition Politics is a collaboration of some political parties to form the Government reducing the dominance of any one single party.
- A Coalition Government is organized by two or more political parties.
- Coalition Government is always based on a compromise or agreement. In decision making process, all the coalition partners took part in discussion and decisions are obtained by consensus.
- Coalition government is formed when no single party is able to achieve a required majority in the parliament.
- Coalition may be of pre-poll or post-poll.
- Each coalition partner has to accommodate the wishes, desires and policies of other coalition partners.
- A Coalition Government has generally a large sized Council of Minister.

- Generally, Coalition Government is a temporary alliance, being formed and competing parties instead negotiate to work together.

## Objectives of the Study

The major objectives of the study are:

- To study the historical background of coalition politics in free India.
- To investigate problems and prospects of coalition government in India.

## Methodology

The study is based on Secondary data. The secondary data are collected from the printed books, journals, magazines, and news papers, circulars, file materials, official record and documents. General information has been collected with the help of e-journal and internet. The collected data are analyzed by using experimental, historical and analytical method.

## Significance of the Study

The Coalition Government is one of the pivotal features of Indian political system. In the year 1967 has been considered as a significant year as the trend of Coalition Government started in the history of Post independent Indian politics. The fourth general elections held in 1967, the Coalition governments were formed in 9 states viz. Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, Kerala, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. The United Front was formed after the election in this year. The concept of Coalition government has become a regular feature in Indian political system since 1989. A Pre-Poll Coalition is a group contests in elections on the basis of a common manifesto or programme and policies behind which all the coalition partners are united through a consensus. On the other hand the Post-Poll Coalition is usually organized when no party is in a position to get a majority in the Parliament or State Legislative Assembly. In such a situation, some political parties initiate to form a coalition or Alliance for forming the Government.

## Coalition Politics in India:

The concept of coalition Government is not a new phenomenon in India. India had coalition Government at the center as well as in the states since the last two decades. Since 1967, Coalition Government has been functional in Indian polity. In the wake of the decline congress dominance, the fragmentation of the National Party System and the emergence of party system at the regional level have turned India in to a coalition government in some of the Indian states.

But, the coalition Politics has been development at the National level since 1977. The Sixth General election held in 1977 was gigantic in several respects. The electorate was alert and discriminating too. The ruling Congress political party was not able to get majority in this election and won only in 153 seats whereas Janata Party and its alliance secured 272 seats. Congress party was defeated for the first time. After the election of 1977 coalition Government was formed at the Centre. In January 1977, 4 political parties i.e. Jana Sangha, Congress (O), Bharatiya Lok Dal, Socialist party and Rebel Congressmen formed Janata party. The party got absolute majority in this election and for the first time non-congress political party government was formed at the centre. Morarji Desai had become Prime Minister in March, 1977 (Agarwal A.C 1986). Mr. Charan Singh along with his followers had left the Janata Party on 15 July, 1979. This had been conserved as a significant event in the history of Indian politics as it led to minority of the Government in the Lok Sabha. The Congress (S) leader Y.B. Chavan and the leader of the opposition too had tabled the no confidence motion

against Mr. Desai on 10 July, 1979. Morarji Desai unable to face the no confidence motion due to loss of majority and resigned on 15 July, 1979. The then President Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy invited Charan Singh to form the Government on 26 July, 1979; but he had failed to establish the confidence of the Lok Sabha and hence decided to resign. The President accepted his resignation and dissolved the Lok Sabha. In 1980, Lok Sabha election was held and in this election the congress political party got absolute majority in the parliament and thereby ended the first coalition government in India.

The next coalition government was started in the 9th general election to the Lok Sabha, which was held in 1989. In this election the Indian National Congress had secured only 193 seats out of total 510 seats. Although, India National Congress became the single largest party in the lower house. Another important aspect of the Ninth General election was that no political party could secure absolute majority in the Parliament. This was the first time that the General election in India failed to produce majority by any political party contested in the General election. The Janata Dal altogether could secure 143 seats. In this election, no party was in a position to win majority in the Lok Sabha therefore the National Front was emerged under the leadership of N.T. Rama Rao with the support of the Janata Dal, Telugu Desam, Asom Gana Parishad, Dravida Munetra Kazagam and Congress(S); the Left parties and BJP so supported from the outside of the Government. V.P.Singh had become the Prime Minister of India. The National Front Government worked as a coalition government for 18 months only. But Chandra Shekhar did not support V. P. Singh as Prime Minister and withdrawn support to the Government at the Center. Later, Chandra Shekhar formed the Government with support of Congress (I), but the government could work for only six months. The Congress political party withdrawn their support from the government on 15 March, 1990 (Pylee M.V 2006). The second coalition government was also a failure in Indian politics.

The next coalition Government was started in the Tenth General election, which was held in May, 1991 and by Congress emerged as the largest single majority party but failed to capture absolute majority in the Lok Sabha. In 544 members of Lok Sabha following are the party position in this election i.e. Congress(I)-231, BJP- 119, Janata Dal- 156, CPI(M)-35, TDP -13, IADM-11, JMM-6, SJP-5, RSP-4, Shiv Sena-4, AIFB-2, ML-2, BSP-2, Congress(S)-5, (Hindustan Times-1991) To avoid immediate fresh election the congress leader Mr. P. V. Narashima Rao came to form the Government. Hence it formed a coalition government with AIADMK and Muslim League. The minority government of the congress party could successfully complete its full tenure of five years.

The next coalition Government was started in the eleventh general elections, which was held in April-May 1996, in this elections result in frictional mandate, the BJP emerged as the single largest party with 161 seats and the congress came to second position with 136 seats. The president first invited the BJP to form a government under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee but this government could last for 13 days only. Thereafter, the Janata Dal leader Mr. H.D. Deve Gowda had formed the coalition government on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1996 but the congress political party revoked its support to H.D. Deve Gowda government dissolved on 21<sup>st</sup> April 1997, it had to be replaced under the Prime Minister-ship of Mr. I. K. Gujral. This government could work only six months because once again the congress political party withdrawn support from the Gujral government in Nov.1998. The I. K. Gujral government dismissed by the president of India and the 12<sup>th</sup> General election was held in 1998. In the 12<sup>th</sup> General Election the BJP got 182 seats as a single largest party and form the coalition government with the support of several political parties i.e. Samata Party, DP, BJD, Akali Dal, Trinamul Congress, Shiv Sena, PMK, AIADMK, Lok Shakti, National Conference, Arunachal Congress, and some independent MPs. The coalition government could not last longer after thirteen month as AIADMK

withdrawn its support. Consequently, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee led coalition government became minority. The coalition government failed to secure the confidence vote in April, 1999. Therefore, The President of India dissolved the Lok Sabha on April 26, 1999.

The 13<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha election was held in October 1999, in this election the B.J.P. formed an Alliance known as National Democratic Alliance (NDA) with 23 others political parties and adopted a common election manifesto. In this election the BJP led Alliances was in a position to secure a simple majority i.e. 296 Seats and latter on the national Conference and some others elected M.Ps decided to join it and its majority improved to 303 seats. Under the Leadership of A. B. Vajpayee the BJP-led NDA form the government. The strength of the political parties were as under the BJP & Alliances parties i.e. the BJP-182 the BGD-10, the DMK-12 the HVC-I, INDL-5, JD(U)-20, LC-1 MDMK-4, MGDK-1, MSEP-1, PMK-5, SAD-2, JHS-15, TC-8, TDP-28. The Congress and Alliances parties shared the seats as the Congress-112, AIDMK-10, KECH-1, MUL-2, RJD-7, RLD-2 and others parties and Left parties- 43, Independent and others- 67. The 13<sup>th</sup> Lok sabha was dissolved the six months earlier by the President of India on February 6, 2004.

The 14<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha election held in 3 phases from April 20 to May 10, 2004. This election has not been keen to give a clear verdict for majority of either the BJP -led or the Congress-led alliance. The Congress party had made a Pre-Poll alliance with RJD in Bihar PDF in Kerala, NCP in Maharastra, DMK in Tamilnadu and TRS in Andhra Pradesh. The alliance is known as United Progressive Alliance (UPA). On the other hand, the BJP made Pre-Poll alliance with Samata Party in Bihar, TDP in Andhra Prodesh, Shiv-Sena in Maharashtra, BJD in Odisha, SAD in Punjab AIADMK in Tamilnadu and Trinamul Congress in West Bengal, North East Peoples Forum in the North East. The Congress- led alliance severed 217 seats out of 539 and the BJP led alliance severed 185 and Others 136 seats won in this election. The UPA coalition supported total 326 MPs and the Congress led UPA formed the Government under the leadership of Dr. Monmohan Singh on May 22, 2004. The left parties and MDMK extended their support from outside (India Today, 2004). On May 27, 2004, the UPA Government committed itself to repeal the controversies of POTA, prevent privatizing of profit-making Public sector units go to 33 percent reservation of seats for women in Lok sabha and State Legislative Assemblies and intake a national dialogue on job reservation for SC and ST people in Private sector.

The Left parties opposed the Indo-US Nuclear deal. The CPI (M) leader Mr. Prokash Karat said that this agreement is against the interest of the Nation, therefore, the government of India should not be signed the nuclear deal. But the UPA Chairman Mrs. Sonia Gandhi strongly defended the Indo-US nuclear deal and said that elements opposed to the country's progress not only the Government but also the national development. Mrs. Gandhi said supply of power has to keep pace with that of development for which there is a high requirement of power i.e. every part of the country (Assam Tribune, 2007). The UPA Government successfully worked quite smoothly and completed its tenure of five years.

The 15<sup>th</sup> General election was held in April-May 2009, in this election UPA won 262 Seats and NDA got 159 seats. The Third Front form with the Communist party of India (M), Communist Party of India, Revolutionary Socialist Party, All India Forward Block, Bahujan Smajwade party, Biju Janta Dal, AIADMK, Telegu- Desum Party, Janata Dal(Secular) MMK, Hariyana Janata Congress, Pattali Mukkat Kafchi, The Front won the total 109 seats only. On the other hand, Fourth Front were formed i.e. Samajwadi Party, Rashtriya Jaata Dal, Lok Janashakti Party, this front got total 27 seats in the election.

In this election congress-led UPA was again in a position to get an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha. Dr. Mon Mohan Singh became the Prime Minister of India and formed the Government for the second

consecutive time. Trinamul congress as partner of the congress-led UPA coalition but the party withdrawal their support from the government. The withdrawal support by TMC brought the strength of UPA allies was 254, 19 short of the half way mark of 273 in the Lok Sabha that is required for a simple majority. However, the backing of 23 MPs belonging to outside alliance like SP (22) and BSP (1) takes the coalition support to over 300 (Assam Tribune -2012). The government could successfully complete its full tenure of five years.

The 16<sup>th</sup> General election was held in April-May 2014. In the election the BJP-led alliance –the NDA was successful in securing a clear majority of seats i.e. 282 out of 543. NDA was in a position to capture as many as 336 Lok Sabha seats. Therefore, the NDA formed the government under the leadership of Mr. Narendra Modi. The coalition Government to completed its full term of five years. The Government was working under the strong leadership of BJP. It has given a new dimension to coalition politics in India (Ghai K.K.).

The 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha election was held on April-May 2019. In this election BJP- led NDA got 353 seats, this coalition government continued in power at the centre. But congress-led UPA won 91 seats only. On the other hand, other parties and their alliance got 98 seats. In this election the NDA was in a position to secure a clear majority in the parliament. Therefore, in May 2019 BJP- led NDA, coalition government was formed under the Prime Minister- ship of Narendra Modi for the second consecutive term. The Prime Minister can now freely act and lead the NDA Government as a stable, strong and dynamic.

### **Advantage of Coalition Government:**

Nowadays Coalition government has become more popular due to its some merits like --

- I. The Coalition government is more democratic and fairer because it represents a much broader spectrum of public opinion than government by one party alone.
- II. This type of government creates a more honest and dynamic political system, allowing voters a clear choice at election time.
- III. Coalition government provides more continuity in administration. Such government functions on principle of politics of consensus, besides, states are given more power and the base for concept of federalism is strengthened.
- IV. Coalition provides good government because their decision is made in the interest of a majority of the people.
- V. The coalition Government consensus based decisions can be taken considering views of political parties.
- VI. The coalition Government have to compromise with all the principles to accommodate the others, government will be more consensus based, resulting policies will be broadly approve for the benefit of the country.
- VII. Some political philosopher viewed that Coalition Government is more responsible, accountable, transparent Government.
- VIII. The Coalition government provides better quality of policy, enhanced scrutiny and increased attention paid to each policy.
- IX. This type of government has been effective in enhancing democratic legitimacy, representativeness and national unity (Panday A.K.-2010).

## Disadvantage of coalition government

Coalition Government is not free from its drawbacks. The main weak points of such type of Government are as follows ----

- I. The coalition government is actually less democratic as balance of power is invariably held by the small parties who can better their support for concessions from the main groups within the coalition.
- II. The coalition Government means that a party in the little popular support is able to impose its policies upon the majority by a process of political back-mail.
- III. The coalition government is less transparent, because a party has no role chance of forming a government also.
- IV. Another disadvantage of the coalition governments is as it takes time for decision making process.
- V. Many time reveals that some political parties,' national interest is kept aside for accomplishing regional interest.
- VI. The coalition governments are definitely fearless effective not durable, and non dependable as compared to the government forced by any one party with a definite ideology and principle.
- VII. Generally the coalition governments are considered appeasement policies rather than development policies of the country.
- VIII. Coalition government is unstable as well as model of weak government.
- IX. Most of the time coalition government is failed to give the good government to the people.

## Conclusion

The coalition government plays a significant role in the democratic country like India. India is a diverse country with different ethnic, linguistic, religious and communities. It also has diverse ideology. Due to this benefit that coalition has led to more consensus based politics and reflects the popular opinion of the elector. It is necessary that political parties should be moderate their ideologies and programme or manifesto. They should be more open to take others point of view as well. They must accommodate each other's interest and concerns in India political parties do not always agree on the correct path for government policy. Different parties have different interest and issues when disagreement arises, however this is not to say that we have never hissed successful coalitions.

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