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Appearance of Coalition Politics after a Decade at the Centre: A Political Expediency

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Abstract:

After emergency and decline of congress party laid the foundation of coalition politics in 1977 with the formation of Janata Government at the centre under the leadership of Morarji Desai. Since then, people of India in the most of 1980's, 90's and first decade of this century have delivering fragmented mandates to form coalition politics has been the norm. This norm was broken by Narendra Modi in 2014 and 2019 with brute majority. After a decade break the coalition norm in the Indian politics has now returned once again as a result in the recent Lok Sabha general elections. The allies of the coalition may use the pressure techniques to the central executive to act on their lines and they could also play blame games for the administrative responsibilities of its failure and lapses. Moreover, this government has to accommodate diverse interests in the functioning of the government to stabilize it and to protect the interest of the nation.

Keywords: Alliance, Coalition Politics, Election, Government, Political Parties.

Introduction: Politically, coalition implies an alliance of distinct political parties. It denotes a co-operative arrangement under which distinct political parties from various backgrounds or at all events members of such parties, unite to form a government or ministry (Ogg, 1957:600). Coalitions usually occur in modern multiparty democratic parliamentary systems when no single political party gets the majority to form the government. Hence two or more political parties having enough elected representatives between them to form a majority, may then be able to agree on a common minimum programme, can proceed to form a government (Robertson, 1993:73). It does not require too many drastic compromises with their individual policies. In other words, coalition is a phenomenon of a multi-party Government where a number of minority political parties join hands for the purpose of running the government (Sahani, ed., 1971:18). It is not ideology but pragmatism is the hallmark of coalition politics where principles may be set aside for the sake of making political adjustments to seize power. In India coalitions have been coming up either before the election or after the elections (Laxmikanth, 2022).

Nevertheless, the pre poll alliance is considered to be the best for the political stability of the country as because it provides a common platform to the political parties in order to seek the favor of the electorate on the basis of joint manifesto.

Background of alliance at the centre: After emergency and decline of congress party laid the foundation of coalition politics in 1977 with the formation of Janata Government under the leadership of Morarji Desai. Since then, there have been a number of coalition governments at the Centre. The background of alliance politics of the Indian electoral system at the centre is backed by a crisis developed in Indian parliamentary democracy in June, 1975 when Justice Jagmohan Lal Sinha of the Allahabad High Court gave a judgment on Mrs. Indira Gandhi's election from Rai Bareilly Lok Sabha Constituency in 1971 as declared void. It also stated that Mrs. Gandhi was found guilty of using electoral malpractices and ruled her ineligible for contesting elections to the parliament and state legislatures for a period of 6 (six) years (Ghai, 2012). As a consequence almost all the opposition political parties demanded her resignation from the Prime Ministership and launched a country wide agitation. It was also agreed to refuse obedience to the dictates of the government. This alarmed Mrs. Gandhi and decided to issue a presidential proclamation imposing a constitutional emergency in the whole country under article 5 to overcome the shock she had received. She was continuously tried to justifying this declaration on the ground that a serious threat to internal peace and security of the nation had arisen due to internal disturbance and agitations. As a result, in the next elections, congress (I) suffered a defeat and Janata Government came into power at the center as non-congress government for the first time in Indian political system in 1977. Though, there was a crisis over the issue of prime ministership among the three aspirants viz, Morarji Desai, Saran Singh and Gjjivan Ram but the senior leaders like Jayprakash Narayan favored the 81 year old Morarji Desai to become prime minister of India in the name of Janata Government in 1977. Nevertheless, this government could last only for two years and Desai tendered his resignation due to internal struggle for power within the government. Thereafter, Charan Singh formed the government a week later in alliance with the Janata (S) and Congress (U) and with the outside support of the Congress (I). But Charan Singh had to advice the President of India to dissolve the Loksabha in 1980 when Indira Gandhi withdrew her support from the government and the nation went for the mid-term elections.

In the second phase of Indian coalition history, especially the elections of 1989 marked the end of Congress dominance where congress party could hardly managed as the single largest party but did not have a clear majority to form the government and decided to sit in the opposition and the National Front formed a coalition government in alliance with the Janata Dal and some other regional political parties and Congress (Socialist) where BJP and left parties supported from the outside. As a result, V.P. Singh sworn in as prime minister on December, 1989 in this alliance but due to the most controversial decision over 'Mandal' issue, he could not continue the government anymore. Henceforth, the second attempt at running a non-congress alliance government was made under the leadership of Chandra Shekhar with the support of Janata Dal (S) and Janata Party where Congress (I) supported

from the outside of the government. Eventually, on some pretexts, the Congress decided to go for elections and withdrew its support from the government on March 1991.

The trend of coalition politics is also followed by the 1990's and the initial decade of this century where BJP emerged as a strong political force at the center. In 1996 Loksabha elections, BJP Government lasted from 16th May to 1st June, 1996, but failed to get majority support at the floor of the House of the parliament. Thereafter, the united front government under the prime ministership of H.D. Deve Gowda formed the government with the support of Janata Dal, CPI and other regional political forces and outside support of the Congress and CPM. Congress withdrew support on March, 1997 but again supported the united Front Government when H.D. Deve Gowda replaced by I.K. Gujral as the next prime minister. Finally, it withdrew support once again and fresh elections held in February 1998 which resulted in the formation of BJP-led coalition and A.B. Vajpayee sworn in as Prime Minister with the large number of allies. Ultimately, the experiment of this coalition government was also failed to continue due to the withdrawal support of the Jayalalithaa's AIADMK from the coalition. In 1999 parliamentary elections, BJP improved its tally and the alliance was named as National Democratic Alliance (NDA) under the Prime Ministership of A.B. Vajpayee which is the first coalition government in the independent Indian political history lasted for full 5 years term successfully. This coalition government was followed by the congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) for two successive terms from 2004 to 2014 under Manmohan Singh as the Prime Minister.

This trend of coalition government was broken by Narendra Modi and BJP in 2014 and 2019 with brute majority though it accommodated the alliance partners of NDA. After a decade break the trend of coalition government in the Indian politics has now been returned once again as a fragmented result in the recent Loksabha general elections.

Appearance of coalition politics after a decade: In 71 years of Indian electoral politics, the country has seen 32 years coalition politics. After a decade break the "*coalition dharma*" as coined by former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has now returned. In other meaning, the trend of coalition politics has now appeared at the center. No political party has achieved an absolute majority in the recent Loksabha general elections. It is a kind of huge blow in fact it is a political earthquake for Narendra Modi and BJP who expected to form the government comfortably at the center. Consequently, Indian stock also dumped 8% at one time. Well short of 272 seats was needed for a single party majority something they successfully managed to do in the last elections but hardly managed to win 240 seats this time (India Today, June 4, 2024). The BJP lost most of the seats in the Hindi heartland state of Uttar Pradesh and the so called '*Modi Magic*' did not work as expected by them before and during the elections. The consecration of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya before a few months ago of the general elections could not draw the religious sentiments of the people which put the laboratory of Hindutva politics in big question for the BJP in the Hindi heartland though it bagged good result in Orissa and few seats in the southern part of India. Apart from that, the BJP's opponents skillfully attempted at social and caste engineering in the northern states creating an uneasy and fragile kind of situation that breaks the BJP's

Hindutva into caste identities (Jha, 2024). Essentially, Modi and BJP have bound to tap its allies to retain power for the next five years. It's now time for Modi, the inheritor of A.B. Vajpayee will have to follow and accept this coalition norm after two terms of his majority Government. Former prime minister and BJP leader, A.B. Vajpayee successfully completed five years term of a coalition government from 1999 to 2004 making history in the Indian politics for the first time with the diverse coalition partners and also became the first Prime Minister to run the non-congress government. Since the current BJP led NDA coalition is a pre-poll coalition which may be considered better for the stability of the government taking advantage from their past experiences of the A.B. Vajpayee NDA government.

It will be more inclusive in nature as because BJP, the leading party has to go forward hand to hand with the partners in the Alliance. They can respond now in an effective way to the remarks of the opposition. All the partners will have to respond in a party line which will strengthen the decisions of the government than before. Policies like Uniform Civil Code (UCC), one nation one election, population act are at the top core agendas for the BJP. Some of the partners in the alliance like JDU are already in the remarks to review the previous policies of the Modi government like *Agnibeer* which may create hurdles in coming days in the alliance for which BJP has to more cautious.

Coalition Politics; a political expediency: This government comprises different political parties having their own ideologies and agendas. Since this government is not based on common minimum programmes like all other previous coalitions, has to require the concurrence of all the coalition partners for governmental policy making. The politics in this alliance has to consensus based politics to stabilize the government as well as strengthening the federal fabric of the Indian political system.

TDP and JDU in its alliance are now in the Modi way but they could also decide to join forces with the opposition. Because, both the party has a history of flip flopping in terms of its allegiance. In fact, the two parties join Modis alliance just several months ago putting in question whether or not Modi will secure that trust of their vote and seats. In this circumstance, the whole position for the BJP is in question along with Modi's position himself. Modi came to power ten years ago with a strong majority but this time he is heading a fragmented mandate of the Indian electorate.

Some smaller regional political parties especially TDP, JDU have come out to play as a role of 'King Maker'. They will keep demanding more than strength in the parliament as before. Since this government is highly diversified than previous two terms especially on the ground of regional issues, caste, and culture, it will be more sensitive and responsive to their demands and concerns. They will bring in the regional facts in the national decision making. They will also use the pressure techniques to the central executive to act on their lines. Apart from that the members of the coalition could play blame games for the administrative responsibilities of its failure and lapses and thereby escape from collective and individual responsibilities. The BJP and Narendra Modi have to cautiously handle these

issues to strengthen their position to prepare for future polls and to protect the national interest.

Conclusion: The nature of this coalition government might be different on the ground that this government is not based on common minimum programmes like all other previous coalition governments as stated earlier. The positivity of the coalition is more consensus based for which the BJP can demand for more democratic flavor into their functioning to attract the public opinion as an strategy for future consolidation. They can effectively use this coalition to reflect the popular opinion of the electorate within the country to keep them convinced and intact.

This government has to accommodate diverse interests in the functioning of the government to stabilize it and to protect the interest of the nation. Since number of parties from different interests, this government has to agree as a channel to meet the expectations and will have to work out to redress the grievances of stakeholders. The caste factor in the last parliamentary election played a major role in the election campaign and it was also reflected in the result. This means the government has to keep these factors in mind.

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