Coalition governments in India: The way forward

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ABSTRACT

Indian federal system says clearly the ‘distribution of power ‘has been assured by the constitution for the ‘effective administration’ and it is reflected in Indian parliamentary democracy. India has a multi party system where there is a number of national and regional political party because of which there is an emergence of coalition governments in India. The governments have been formed at the centre or at the state based on the ‘First –past- the-post-electoral system’ in the Indian political system. Electoral politics of India before independence and after independence witnessed major changes in forming government, its running and completing of its tenure. Elections in India will be held once in five years to choose the leader and peoples’ representatives, wherein the election commission and delimitation commission play significant roles. Indian democratically elected government is chosen by its large population of different sectors such as, region, religion, caste, language etc, but the uneven development of regions and non performance of national parties resulted in rise of regional political parties in India. Regional political parties are the pillars of the coalitions today in making or breaking but capturing the power is the ultimate goal of any of the party.

Keywords: Democracy, Political Parties, Coalitions, Politics, Stability, regions, First-Past-The -Post, Governments

Indian political system takes place within the framework of a constitution. India is declared as a federal, parliamentary, multi-party, representative-democratic, republic modelled after the British West Minister system. According to its constitution, India is “sovereign socialist, secular, democratic and republic”. It has a democratically elected government chosen by its largest population. As like any other democracy, political party represent different sections among the Indian society and regions, and their core value place a major role in the politics of India. India has a multi party system where there is number of national and regional political parties existing in India because of which there is an emergence of coalition governments in India.

A coalition government is a cabinet of a parliamentary government in which several political parties cooperates to reduce or to avoid the dominance of any one party within that coalition.
The usual reason given for this arrangement is that no party on its own can achieve a majority in the parliament. Coalition might also be created in a time of national difficulty or economic crisis. (During the war time to give a government a high degree of perceived political legitimacy)

Dictionary of encyclopaedia defines; it’s an alliance for combined action especially a temporary alliance of political parties forming a government or of a state”.

Coalition cabinets are common in countries in whose parliament is elected by proportional representation, with several organized political represented. It’s usually does not appear in countries in which the cabinet is chosen by the executive rather than by a lower house such as US. While in India, the government is formed by the party, which wins the majority votes in Lok sabha Elections. Countries which often operate with coalition government include The Nordic countries, Benelux countries, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Turkey, Israel, Newzeland, Pakistan and India.

Dr. Dasarathi Bhuyan; Dr.Simanchar Muni in the Book Dynamics of Coalition Politics says, “In the historical past, during war many states formed coalitions and they had also experienced Coalitional politics. In ancient India during the Mahabharatha war (3100 B.C. or 1400 B.C. or 900 B.C.), a number of Janapadas were siding with themselves either with Kauravas or with the Pandavas.”

**ERA OF COALITION POLITICS**

Federal system is the important feature in Indian political system. In a federal system, the states are affected and in turn affect the national system. We come across number of regional political parties today in India. The rise of regional political parties might be because of lost of trust in National parties in fulfilling people’s demand or in solving the local issues in the regions. After 1967 in states and 1977 at centre Indian political system had seen tremendous changes in its political system that is from the Single-party dominance to Multi-party coalitions. We have seen three coalitions so far in India in each coalition two prime ministers and coalitions lost in Instability. After 1999 till 2014 all the coalitions were stable coalitions. Even 2014 are a coalition government which has got the majority it is yet to complete its term.
The most crucial problem that Indian Parliamentary Democracy faces today is the Political instability at Central level and also state levels. Politics in India has been going through a dramatic transformation.

India’s electoral politics is pack of full surprises. Alliances either pre-alliances or post-alliances is the feature of electoral politics. Alliance means to go or grow together. According to the dictionary, Coalition means an act of coalescing, or unity in to one body, a union of persons, states or an alliance. In the strict political sense, the word coalition is used for an alliance of temporary union for joint action of various powers or states. According to F.A.Ogg, “The term Coalitions employed in political parties or at all events members such parties unite are to form a government or ministry.”

In the opinion of William H.Riker “The word Coalition has long been used on ordinary English to refer to a group of people who come together to attain some end.”

Unlike general perception, Coalition in politics is not a new concept for Indian politics. Undivided India got its first experience of coalition government in 1937, when the Government of India Act, 1935 became operate. At that time, Jinnah asked for a coalition consisting of congress and Muslim league in UP. However, Congress, the party-holding majority did not entertain this demand. Mohammed Ali Jinnah at that time argued that in India, Coalition was the only respectable device to give to the Muslims a fair share in governance, in other states like North west frontier province (NWFP) and Punjab congress formed coalitions with other regional parties.(Indian constitution by M V PYLEE).

In 1937 the Interim Government under the Prime Minister ship Nehru was the first formal coalition consisting the congress, the Muslim league, the Hindu Mahasabha etc.

The Electoral history of India and the record of Union Government since independence can be divided in to three phases:

First up to 1989, a period of eight elections resulting in electoral majority for one party and relatively stable Union Governments except for a period of 1967-72 and

Third phase is stable coalitions in the year 1999, 2004, 2009 and 2014 resulting in the formation of minority or coalition governments.

Politics in state have been dominated by several national parties including the INC, BJP, CPI (M) and various regional parties. From 1950 to 1990, barring two brief periods, the INC enjoyed the parliamentary majority. The INC out of power between 1977 and 1980, when the Janatha Party won the election owing to public discontent with the corruption of the then prime minister Indira Gandhi. The first non-congress party came in to power with the Prime minister ship of Morarji Desai which was welcomed by all over the country. Due to lack of confidence he has to resign. In 1979 Charan Singh sworn in as the Prime minister of the nation, stayed in a power for a shorter term and had to resign. He is the very unfortunate Prime Minister of India who sat on the Prime minister’s seat in Lok sabha after submitting his resignation to President.

The emergency what was declared by Indira Gandhi, during 1975-77, led the foundations for the coalitions in India. This was the first coalition formed informally gathering in one place to avoid Congress party from capturing the power. The only agenda of Morarji Desai and other parties were to capture and form non – congress government at centre.

In 1989, the Janatha Dal – led national Front coalition in alliance with the Left Front Coalition, won the election led by V.P. Singh as Prime minister. It was the first time minority government was formed, but managed to stay in power for only Two years. In the year 1990 there was change in leadership of the coalition government whereas Chandra shekar from Janata dal sworn in as the Prime minister of the nation. The third force is not merely an accumulation of parties, but a platform invented by the disappointed leaders of the nation to show their unhappiness through third force. Third force has got a challenging structure, especially in view of its well-directed-effort at organizing the marginalised socio-economic groups. Some of the political parties were united together with ideological back-up as anti-congress and anti-BJP alliances.
As the 1991 election gave no political party a majority, the INC formed the minority government under prime minister P V Narasimha Rao and was able to complete its five years.

In the year 1996 A.B.Vapayee failed to prove majority. The years 1996-1998 were a period of disorder in the federal government with several short – lived alliance holding sways. This phase distinguished as the era of Coalition of empirical appearances of coalition government in India. The BJP formed a government briefly in 1996, followed by United Front coalition that excluded both BJP and INC. (INC refused to form the government). H.D.Deve Gowda sworn in as the Prime Minister of the third coalitions with the Congress supported United Front from outside, but H.D.Deve Gowda was in powers as long as P.V. Narasimha Rao was the president of the Congress and once Sita Ram Kesari had become the president he withdrew the support and insisted for change of Leadership to continue the support of congress party.

In 1998, the BJP formed the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) with several other parties and assumed power which was the Third coalition government in three years. This government had lost power because of the regional political party support withdrawn.

In 1999 the alliance what is led in 1998 continued in 1999 too, it had 24 partners. BJP led coalition won a decisive victory, winning 299 seats and became the first non - congress government to complete full five year term under the leadership of A.B.Vajpayee.

In the 14th Lok sabha elections held in 2004, it was immediately apparent that the ruling coalition – the National Democratic Alliance(NDA) – had been voted out of power and its place taken by another coalition of political parties, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), 2004-2009.

In the 2009 Lok sabha elections, UPA won again with a surprising majority, the INC self – winning more than 200 seats. Manmohan Singh continued as the Prime minister of the nation. In the 2014, 16th Lok sabha Elections, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), led by the BJP, won a sweeping victory, taking 336 seats, the BJP self winning 282 seats. It is the first time since the 1984 Indian general elections that party has won enough seats to govern without the support of other parties.
State governments are also witnessing the coalition governments today, either through Pre-alliances or post-alliances. E.g. Kerala, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Jammu Kashmir, Jharkhand and other states also witness the coalition governments and very recently in Bihar too we see the Coalition governments.

CONCLUSION
The coalitions play a significant role today in the democratic nation like India. In the first three coalitions of India were unstable coalitions. The support had been withdrawn by the ally partners on their demands, either it is Change of leader or local govt dismissal or might be some other. In 1996 we could see the term had seen Three Prime Ministers still not completed the term.

Though this time BJP has been able to win on its own still it has Coalition Partners.Telugu Desam, Shivasena YSR Congress, AIDMK….etc…as it had made pre-alliances.
Analysing the past successful, stable coalition governments in India, I conclude stating Coalition Government does definitely provide a good and prosperous option at centre to form a government in India. Formation of Coalition governments reflects the transition in Indian politics away from the national parties towards smaller i.e., regional parties. India now looks forward to a stable future of coalition Governments, as Single - party majority seem to be a thing of the past now. The successful completion of coalition governments NDA 1, UPA 1 and 2 and today NDA 2 guarantees not only the decline of one party rule and rise of regional political parties.

Coalition governments are inevitable today in India. Through which it is reflecting the Indian democracy as well as the federal character of the nation. It must be the responsibility of each and every political party irrespective of National or regional to think towards not only the power but also National security and development. Instead of taking the situation as an opportunity if parties think about development in the spheres there is a success of democracy. Many a times there is a fall of governments that to till 1999 we are able to see only unsuccessful coalitions. But later period till today is the stable coalitions. Though Single party is winning the majority number because of pre-alliances it will be remained as the Coalitional government.
Both the Coalitions have faced the ups and downs in completion of terms due to different manifestos. For the development of the nation and as a largest democratic nation coalitions are complementary to democratic process. Today coalitions are Stable and unavoidable and it is the way forward.

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