

## **Changing Scenarios of Indian Federalism: Role of Political Parties**

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**Abstract:**-In India, democratic participation of constituent units in decision-making process and policy formulation within the party have been ensured the necessary conditions for effective development of political system at the state level. It has been seen that party members operating the governmental structure at the Central level are co-partisans of those operating the structure at the regional level. As a sequence, an inter-party relationship has gotten importance for the development and smooth functioning of the federal system. This type of federal coordination can possible only with the concurrence and cooperation of the respective Chief Minister. The long term stability of the federal system requires therefore the building up of a competent and dedicated leadership of both levels.

**Key words:** *Communalism, Corruption, Fragmentation, globalization, Socialism.*

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The process of the federal system depends on various factors which influence the political process in the country. In this context, the political parties play a vital role. In fact, the relationships between the centre and state levels of the federal system are largely dependent on the relationships that the members of the parties at both levels establish with each other. It has been seen that party members operating the governmental structure at the federal level are co-partisans of those operating the structure at the regional level. As a sequence, an inter-party relationship has gotten importance for the development and smooth functioning of the federal system.

### **I. ONE PARTY DOMINANCE SYSTEM**

There were significant variations in the pattern of Centre-State relations that evolved during this period. One-party dominance was initially hailed as a valuable extra-constitutional prop for fragile democratic institutions, particularly in the context of increasing awareness of regional identities.<sup>i</sup> Some-states were enjoyed more autonomy than others, and party discipline ensured that states did not voice their matters too openly. Policies formulated at the national level about different aspects of state politics, and the reliance on financial aid by the Centre (especially non-statutory grants) eroded the political will to formulate effective federal institutions at apex level. In State level politics differences which had existed earlier among Congressmen in U.P. that changed in the form of internal political crisis. The defection of a group of socialist leaders from the Congress in 1948 was one. Most of the leaders of the nationalist movement from U.P. joined the opposition. Authoritative political leadership was replaced by faction leadership after the departure of G.B. Pant from Central Cabinet. Since 1955, the Congress Party has revolved around a struggle to gain or control the office of Chief Minister by dominating the party organisation in the internal politics of U.P. A political conflict over the passage of a land tax bill in U.P. was dominated the political life of the state during the year in 1962. Every level in the Congress Party, organisation and the government in U.P. and Delhi was divided because the matter of this Bill. Congressmen from U.P. in New Delhi supplied another source of opposition to the state government. KeshavDeoMalaviya, a Central Minister at the time and MahavirTyagi, a prominent M.P, both of them jointly provided the leadership from New Delhi for U.P. and they had quarrels with Chief Minister Gupta. A significant campaign was carried on among Congress members of Parliament from U.P. against the state government's tax proposals. 'Thirty M.P.s signed the letter which was sent to the Chief Minister urging him to withdraw the Land Tax Bill'<sup>ii</sup>. In that period the Chief Minister of U.P, was under great pressure from his own party members. During that period the Congress government in U.P. faced ineffectiveness due to internal factionalism.

The CPI believed that the government could not possibly be brought down with in Constitutional method, it simply shattered by bringing it down and if necessary they used anti-constitutional way. During this period they decided to contest the elections to central and state legislatures. Main purpose was to oppose the government in view of its futility of direct action. The CPI announced that it was not for the establishment of socialism in this country under prevalent conditions at the beginning of election. The party declared: "The party now aims at the replacement of the present anti-democratic and anti-popular government of people's democracy created on the basis of a coalition of democratic and anti-feudal and anti-imperialist forces in the country."<sup>iii</sup> In

1947 the Congress came to power but failed to give a stable government to the state. During the period between 1947-57 five Congress ministries came into being but none of them could not completed their full term. The personal group and communal rivalries within the Congress was brought about Political instability in the State. The Congress regime had earned notoriety for corruption, bribery and nepotism. During this period President's rule was imposed twice as Constitutional machinery in the State had broken down.

In the State Communist Party stood out in politics with regard to unity, discipline, leadership and popularity and resources. The party changed its policies from orthodox revolution and armed struggle to a policy as become itself an opposition party in parliamentary framework and it gained much popularity for the party. The party complained that the Union Government are denied power, resources and authority but the Union of States should have under the federal set up. The Communist Party said that the Indian Union should empower to States more power particularly in financial and economic matters. The party also upheld that the doctrine of democratic centralism should take up the cause to increase of the powers of the states and the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution must be revised and amended to ensure greater power for States. The Communists was able to pull the first mandate of people of newly formed Kerala State in 1957 but the Indian National Congress could reverse the trend in 1960. It did not last long because the Congress, P.S.P. and Muslim League coalition was cracked. Finally the C.P.I. (M) led coalition defeated the Congress in 1967.

## **II. ALLEVIATION OF CONGRESS DOMINANCE**

During the period between 1967 and 1971, the Union Government was repeatedly urged, from different quarters, to form non-party federal co-ordination mechanisms, so that it increased participation of the States in national policy formulation. So many Inter-State Councils were proposed, such as the A.R.C., the Rajamannar Committee and many eminent scholars. The centre steadfastly resisted all such proposals and indicated its clear preference for all necessary arrangements such as the various official and ministerial level conferences. It was true that Congress had been reduced to a minority in 1967, in U.P. it was still the largest party in the Assembly and out of 425 seats the Congress Party won 195 seats in the 1967 elections. As no party got majority, there was no option but to form a coalition government. To form a United Front government the opposition parties joined together and elected Ram Chandra Vikal as their leader. But with the support of a few defectors C.B. Gupta formed a Congress Government. The government was toppled when Charan Singh and his faction defected to the opposition after only 18 days. Charan Singh became the Chief Minister. The President rule was imposed when he resigned in 1968. The mid-term elections held in February 1969 and none of the parties obtained a clear majority. With the help of independents and Swatantra members the Congress formed the ministry and C.B. Gupta once again became as Chief Minister. In 1969, he quitted after the split in Congress and again in 1970 coalition government was formed. In 1970 the Charan Singh ministry again dismissed because some differences developed between the B.K.D. and the Congress. During this period the Indian political process was witnessed that most of the political party began to think of entering election with alliance or making adjustments with like-minded parties instead of willing to enter the alone. In 1967, the break-down of the Congress monolith led to increase the powers of individual legislators. Due to this power enhancement many of them to sell their party label for money and other purpose. In this period political defection was increased too much. The reduction in the strength of the Congress Party was created the power vacuum after 1967 and there was intense political activity of political parties as each of them tried to capture the power vacuum.

Political parties such as P.S.P. and C.P.I. gained prominence after the fall of the Congress. In spite of the common minimum programmes, the Samyukta Vidhayak Dal (S.V.D.) suffered from inner pressure and strains arising out of inter-party clash and different opinions. But in the Earlier the politics revolved round the factional rivalry of upper level Congress Party leader. In Kerala the climate on the eve of Fourth General Elections was not favourable for the Congress. A.K. Gopalan in a statement at Delhi said that C.P.I.(M) was ready to form an alliance with any party to end Congress monopoly.<sup>iv</sup> In Kerala a United Front government was forged. "E.M.S. Namboodiripad became the Chief Minister of the seven party United Front."<sup>v</sup> The Marxists leaders of the United Front were trying to focus public attention on the alleged neglect by the Centre of the development of the State. They exert pressure on the Central Government to redefine Centre-State relationship in the changed situation.

Namboodiripad said that his party wanted to use power to give the maximum trouble to the Centre because of the negligence by the Centre of the development of the State. In the Assembly he stated that "his government was determined to deal with the Centre in the same way as the Centre was dealing with the State".<sup>vi</sup> In Delhi on 11th April 1967 at a reception arranged by the Malayalee Association, E.M.S. Namboodiripad pointed out that the development of the States depended on the mercy of the Centre and the post of the Chief Minister of a State was like an office without power. "We have our office in the state capital, but New Delhi has the power".<sup>vii</sup> Approx after 31 months the United Front government was hanged due to the resignation of 7 of the 12 parties from the coalition government and Namboodiripad resigned in October 1969. C. Achyutha Menon, a C.P.I. Member of Parliament, said that the party collapse mainly because of the disruptive behaviour and

sectarian policies and big party bossism of the C.P.M. A new coalition ministry was formed under the leadership of C. AchyuthaMenon (C.P.I.) by the support of Congress in November 1969 but in 1970 the government also dissolved because of contradictions with Congress. Finally in October 1970, AchyuthaMenon formed a coalition government and that government enjoyed full five years term. On the basis of ideology, the C.P.I. (M) has emerged as a more homogenous party compared to the other parties. Political defection in Kerala has not been much as in U.P. politics. During this period showed much political instability and only the C.P.I. (M) and the Congress have usually exercised power.

The formation of the coalition ministries led by Congress as well as non-Congress parties was the main issue of this phase. Primary objective of non-Congress parties was to oust the Congress from power by any way. This phase was characterised by the period of fragmentation and instability in which political parties and groups united or deviated frequently. The primary aim of this period was attaining or retaining political power. The non-Congress parties either succeeded in keeping the Congress away from power or made a pre-electoral alliance and on the basis of the existing pre-election alliance they formed the coalition governments. But in U.P. coalition governments were formed due to large scale defections and the leaders of the Congress broke groups. During this period Regional Parties did articulate the local issues to mobilise the people of their own regions. Even earlier D.M.K. in Tamil Nadu, Muslim Conference in Jammu and Kashmir, AkaliDal in Punjab etc. became active.

### **III. PERIOD OF CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP**

From 1971 Mrs. Indira Gandhi started concentrating power in her hands and her victory in 1971 strengthened her faith in personal charisma and brought into play the authoritarian nature of rule. She reduced the power of Congress State committee and it had little freedom to take decisions of their own matter. State committee was nominating candidates for election to state assemblies, but final decisions were taken by Central Parliamentary Board on the matter. Actually it was a policy to control over the congress members in the Assemblies. The leader of the Congress Legislature Party in states was selected by the Central Parliamentary Board (C.P.B.) of Congress. In some cases C.P.B. appointed the Chief Minister who was belongs from outside of State though he or she may not be desirable candidates of Congress legislatures of that state. For example, in 1972 H.N. Bahuguna appointed as Chief Minister of U .P. by Indira Gandhi. H.N. Bahuguna faced constant trouble from the dissident party members but he got the support of the Party High Command and he continued the office. The High Command apparently wished him to step down on 29 November 1975 and the same day he resigned. On January 21, 1976 Congress Party elected its leader and the President's rule was revoked. In Mrs. Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi era, the position of a Congress Chief Minister depended largely on the kind of relations that he had with the High Command and their support on him. Actually, during that period the status of the Congress Chief Minister like as chief messengers of the party. During the Emergency, imposed in June 1975, Mrs. Gandhi centralised monopoly of power at the top of the pyramid and she modified the federal character of the party by strengthening unitary features that contributed to the gradual decline of the Congress base in U.P.<sup>viii</sup> This was characterised by central intervention in U.P. politics as it led to transfer of power from State party members to the national party leadership and started the era of unprecedented centralisation of power. After 1972 Mrs. Gandhi started selection of personnel at every level of the party in place of principle of representation. Since 1977 there have been no elections of the party's 8,000 cooperative societies which was an important factor in State Politics in U.P.

In 1970, the AchyuthaMenon Ministry of Kerala provided a stable administration the state politics. The ministry enjoyed the largest tenure in the State's history due to the imposition of emergency in 1975 and its term was extended thrice. Mrs. Gandhi interfered less in the politics of the state in Kerala though there was personalisation of power in her hands. In 1980, Kerala did not able to form a Congress government whereas most other states voted for Congress party. During the Assembly Elections in 1982, people of the State choose in favour of a non-Marxist-led coalition government. The ministry under the leadership of Karunakaran (1982-1987) was accused by issues of communalism and venality. In 1984 Lok Sabha Elections, the people of Kerala opted in favour of the Congress-led coalition, but in the bye-elections of Assembly seats people went to reverses in all seats. Though the C.P.M. continues to harp on reducing the powers of the Centre, there is no demand of autonomy in Kerala. Rajni Kothari remarked "Congress party in its centenary year has been close to being scrapped as an institution".<sup>ix</sup>

The Janata Party and the Congress (I) were allies in Kerala though at the national level they were being enemies. In this situation politics at the national level had irrelevance to the Kerala scene. After 1982 election, certain developments were taken place in the State politics of Kerala. Political fragmentation in the form of split in political parties mark the culmination during that period. Janata Party collapsed after two years as it could not maintain itself for a long time. The leader of the party and the constituent groups had different political background and diverse social perspectives. They were less interested to integrate the party rather they were involved in making alliances and coalitions to dominate the party. Congress Party achieved success again in

1980 and 1984 and once again dominance of charismatic personality of Mrs. Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi started. During this era of one party-one leader, Rajiv Gandhi ran the States like his personal office, within a span of five years 20 Chief Ministers were changed. To Chandra Shekhar, the Janata Party President said about Indira Gandhi during the 1969 split, "there was no possibility of expressing a dissenting voice in the Congress"<sup>x</sup> and Indira Gandhi has destroyed the Congress Party as a political entity. As an individual she was more powerful but dominated a system which was less politically viable.

#### **IV. EMERGENCE OF JANATA PARTY**

In 1989 JanataDal emerged as major component of the anti-Congressism. In U.P. it also formed the government. It was emerged as an alternative to the Congress. During the 1989-90 the V.P. Singh government was intolerant towards the Congress ruled state governments and his government quit the order of appointment of all the Governors by Rajiv Gandhi. Then during his brief tenure, Chandra Shekhar government dismissed the state governments of Assam and Tamil Nadu. The 1989 polls left the V.P. Congress badly fractured. Actually this type of antagonism had no exceptional reason. These activities of Central Government were weakening our political federalism. In Kerala politics it was seen that that only two political parties, the C.P.I. (M) and the Congress have usually exercised power. Ideologically the C.P.I.(M) has emerged as a more homogenous party. Political defection has not been as rampant as in U.P. though there was in multi party system in Kerala. The conflict between Communist and Congress has become a confrontation between the Centre and the States in the matter of dominance. In Kerala Congress (I) and Communists both were strong and political forces tend to gather around them. In fact, in Kerala's politics political forces tend to gather around the Communists or Congress (I). No third force is possible. This had led frequent imposition of President's rule and political instability. In India there was no other state which had such a picture of political turmoil.

In U.P. the government leaders and the functioning of local administration were affected by factional structure of the U.P. Congress party. Most state ministers to be concerned primarily with the question of patronage and party support rather than policy because of constant struggle for power within the Congress. During that period the Chief Ministers wanted to keep as much power and patronage as possible and his dependable associates while giving as little as possible to less reliable members, he tried to ensure a prestigious portfolio must be given to a political rival. To make the position less dangerous politically, the patronage power is taken away. It made fragmentation of authority and responsibility and misunderstanding in administration. The aggressiveness of opposition parties and inter group clash in the Congress both created it difficult for the government to pass any desired legislation and to administer efficiently programmes designed to economic development of the State. In U.P. Congress has been very strong from the very beginning and Communist party is among the weakest state units. It has made no considerable development. The Congress Party in Kerala enjoyed low level of support because it had become one of the most disgruntled states in respect of economic development. Actually profits from plantations were seldom ploughed back. During that period the cashew industry has been in a state of crisis. Unemployment is also increasing continuously because Industrialisation is also less developed. In Kerala the Congress Party was basically the party of the landlords, industrialists and white collar workers. The C.P.I. had struggled within the nationalist movement against colonialism in Malabar and they also played active role against feudalism in the states of Travancore and Cochin. In the leadership point of view the real enemy of C.P.I. (M) was the centre than the anti-Communist partners in the U.L.F. coalition. ULF represented a clear challenge to the central leadership and they wanted to met either with refusal to allow the coalition to take power in the state or by straggling U.L.F. government of resources that such an extent as to make it unviable. E.M.S. Namboodiripad said about the vindictive attitude of the Central Government towards an U.L.F. government in Kerala.

In Kerala the multi party system brought its emergence to the caste and communal forces. In Kerala politics the role of caste has received a major setback and it created the confrontation of the Hindus with the Christians on the west coast and between the Hindus and Muslims in the northern part of the State. In 1956, Kerala became a bigger Malayali state because of the merger of Travancore-Cochin states. In Kerala the Hindu population divided into many castes like Brahmins (mainly Namboodiripads), Ezhavas, Nairs etc. State politics in Kerala politics is dominated more by religion than caste though the sociological make up of the Hindus was strong. When the Christians observed that the state government wanted to control educational institutions managed by Christian missionaries, there was rifts within the Congress between Hindus and Christians. For that reasons Christian members of Congress supported and voted a Christian candidate against the official Hindu nominee and in the same way Hindu Congress members did likewise for the interests of Hindu independents against official Christian nominees. In Kerala politics of religion created a negative impact on the politics of caste. There was an exceptional picture in the State where mutually antagonistic caste, communal and regional groups "have been concentrated in separate political parties unable to cooperate for long under any condition for fear that one particular group may gain disproportionately and the result has been continuous instability".<sup>xi</sup> People are divided on the basis of religion and caste. The fortunes of political parties in the state depended on

religion and caste. Actually impact of these two pillars showed their voting pattern. Here Castes within the religions like to be called communities. In Kerala C.P.I. (M) has emerged as a more homogeneous party ideologically and ideology was the dominating factor. In U.P. political system depends for its functioning on religion and caste and ideology cannot come into prominence. Caste and religion created social divisions strictly. The religion dominates politics deeply. Religion used here as a means of social and political mobilisation. One of the important examples of religion and political controversy is Ram Janambhoomi - BabriMasjid controversy. In this state very recently controversy and tension considerably increased on the issue of 'Hindu-Muslim riots'. This issue some time becomes violent and resulting many deaths. In U.P. politics this issue continued to be an important element which developed between Hindu and Muslim communities. The working of the Constitution was deeply altered by Changes in the party system. Party system transformed the functioning of state institutions. There is a profound impact of political organisation on political parties in the form of their mobilization strategies. It is well known fact that political parties a powerful instrument of constitutional change. The operation of the party system moulded regional identities and implication of federalism that have taken root in contemporary political life. It is the opportunity of the ruling party at the central level and its distribution in the states, the quality of leadership, and the ability of these ruling parties to mobilise public opinion that affected dynamics of federalism. Since the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984 there has been a lack of a clear single party majority and the end of Congress party dominance brought an era of coalition politics. In the working of the federal system the growth of regional parties introduced a new element. It has undergone a considerable change from a one party dominant system. Which was termed the Congress system and that become multi-party based regionalised system. The growth and increased prominence of backward caste based and regional parties were the evident of this realignment. There was the tendency of regionalisation that has been apparent since the 1989 elections. It propelled the National Front coalition government of V.P. Singh to power. Since late 1980s in political life minority and multiparty coalitions replaced Congress dominance and the states based parties played vital role in national politics.

## **V. ERA OF COALITION GOVERNMENTS**

During the emergency (1975-77), certain opposition parties frustrated by the centralism of the Congress, decided to fight the next general elections under a common banner to form an alternative to the Congress. Jayaprakash Narayan who gave moral support and leadership to Indian politics at that time initiated to form new political outfit as 'Janata Party' by, the Congress (O), the Jan Sangh, the Socialist Party and the Bharatiya Lok Dal took the challenge against Congress. After the Janata Government the National Front under the leadership of V.P. Singh, the Defence Minister in Rajiv Gandhi's Cabinet took an attempt to form a non-Congress government at the centre in 1988. Singh's National Front government was a coalition among disparate individuals and parties to remain the Congress (I) out of power. The alliance started to fall apart because of the partisan interests and personality squabbles. Under the leadership of Prime Minister, P. V. N Simha Rao, minority government was formed at the Centre in June 1991. On the one hand, the Rao government was successful in initiating economic reforms, it pursued liberalization and globalization much to the satisfaction of the World Bank- International Monetary Fund (IMP) combine, and side by side it failed to promote value-based politics.<sup>xiii</sup> The next Lok Sabha election held in April-May 1996 and it was witnessed a severely fractured verdict that no one party or coalition being able to come anywhere near an absolute majority. It is a miracle that there was a government at the centre after the general election as the situation with the party system in disarray and the political leadership in a worst ever crisis of credibility. The 13th Lok Sabha election held on October 1999 (somewhat delayed because of Kargil war) and the BJP-led omnibus alliance of 24 parties [the National Democratic Alliance (NDA)] got a comfortable working majority. The electoral verdict was still fractured but the NDA did well; it got a majority of about 30 seats which enlivened its hope for a long stint in government under the leadership of Atal Behari Vajpayee who was sworn in as prime minister (third time around) on 13th October 1999.<sup>xiii</sup> The fourteenth Lok Sabha elections (April/May 2004) brought a change in the Centre, the BJP-led NDA government was replaced by the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government. One of the most important matter of Manmohan Singh-led UPA is that in many state parties and groups which agreed to participate in the government, supported from outside by the Communist block of MPs. The 15th Lok Sabha held in 2009 (between 16 April 2009 and 13 May 2009), the tenth coalition was also formed by UPA 2nd headed by Dr. Manmohansingh as prime minister for 2nd term. The tenth coalition was able to get 262 seats — just short of 10 seats for a majority. The UPA 2nd was gotten unconditional supports from Samajwadi party with 23 MPs, Bahujan Samaj party with 21 MPs, Rashtriya Janta Dal with 4mps, Janta Dal secular with 3 mps, and the others. The 16th Lok Sabha held in 2014 and the National Democratic Alliance got a sweeping victory, taking 336 seats and the BJP itself won 282 seats. After 1984, this is the first time in Indian General Election that a party has won enough seats to form the government without the support of other parties.

## VI. CONCLUSION

It is true that a highly centralised unitary party normally transfers its pattern of internal functioning to federal system when placed in power at both levels of government. But democratic participation of constituent units in decision-making process and policy formulation within the party have been ensured the necessary conditions for effective development of political system at the state level. This type of federal coordination can possible only with the concurrence and cooperation of the respective Chief Minister. Its effectiveness as a remedy for failure of leadership at the state level is questionable. This development is necessary for federal functioning since it further obscure the line of demarcation between central and state Government. Weak state level leadership cannot provide a stable base for effective governance at the Central level. The long term stability of the federal system requires therefore the building up of a competent and dedicated leadership of both levels.

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- [1] Cf. Kochanek, Stanley, *The Congress Party of India, Dynamics of One Party Democracy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1968.
  - [2] *The Statesman*, December 20, 1962.
  - [3] *The Statement of Policy of C.P.I.*, Bombay, November, 1950.
  - [4] *Kerala Kaumudi*, 4 May, 1966.
  - [5] Seven parties were- C.P.M., C.P.I., S.S.P., R.S.P., K.T.P., K.S.P., and the Muslim League.
  - [6] *Indian Express*, January 10, 1969.
  - [7] *Janayugam*, April 13, 1967.
  - [8] Stanley A. Kochanek in *Indira Gandhi's India: A Political System Reappraised* (ed.) H.C. Hart, (Boulder, Colorado: West View Press), 1976, pp. 93-125.  
Rajni Kothari, "The Next Generation", Seminar, New Delhi, December 1985.
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  - [10] xi Stanley A. Kochanek, *The Congress Party of India*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1968. pp. 443-44.
  - [11] *The Statesman Weekly*, 4th February 1995, p. 4.
  - [12] *Overseas Hindu Weekly*, 16th October 1999, p. 1.