



Federalism And Coalition Governments in India: Experiences of Competition and Contradiction

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1. Introduction

India is a vast, complex and plural country with different ethnic groups struggling to coexist and achieve a measure of harmony and national integration. We can imagine the vastness of the country. The large district in India is bigger than various States of the world. Most of the states in India are bigger than many nations of the world. Even the Uttar Pradesh (UP) may become one of the biggest nation in the world, if it declares independent from Indian Union. Besides these features there are linguistic diversity, political fragmentation of society. One can find uneasy coexistence of several layers of India and the enormous immobility of the bulk of the Indian population. In spite of fact that there is no other nation on earth that can really be compared to modern India. According to Livingstone the essence of federalism lies not in the institutional structure but in the society itself. Federal Government is a suitable form by which the federal qualities of the society are articulated and protected.

The complexity and requirement of India gave our constitution a federal appearance, though with a pronounced strong unitary character. The political role of the constituent states in shaping their own governing structure is important in a truly federal state. The uniformity prescribed by the constitution, various laws and executive orders, the rich diversity of the Indian union is reflected in the design of the political structure of the constituent states of India, although some differences exist.

2. Globalization and Indian States

The various discourses on Globalization and the Indian state has become one of the major concerns among the policy makers, intellectuals and social activists not only in India but also across the World. Since 1990s, the debates have been taking place within the broader framework of the impact of Globalization on Indian state at different levels. These debates reflect diverse positions by the concerned groups, strengthening their positions with the help of facts and issues. These debates are revolving around the pros and cons of the impact of Globalization on Indian State. This is essentially rooted with the fact that Globalization is an unending process and various issues and factors are coming to play their respective roles at various points of time in the process of the interaction between the forces of Globalization and the Indian state. However, different views that are emerging out of the debate can be broadly divided into two groups: proponents and opponents of the process of Globalization. Now the critical question that needs to address whether the Indian state under globalization gets captured by capital or is it able to use capital to promote their competitiveness, growth and human development. Many thinkers and lots of literatures on Asia and Africa suggested that the state needs to play an autonomous role and guide capital and labour rather than get captured by it.

3. Federal Structure in India

India is a parliamentary democratic republic consisting of 29 states and seven union territories. This is the Country who looks like a continent in terms of size of area and population. Millions of Indians speaks more than one language. The Indian census lists 114 languages that are further categorized into 216 dialects spoken by Millions of Millions. There is significant cultural diversity within the nation, as about the vast population belongs to those groups which are either untouched or do not get advantage of fruits of happiness. An estimated 850 languages are in daily use, and the Indian Government officially

lists 1,652 dialects. Several new states have been created out of existing states since 1956 for making vibrant administration and for achieving goal of democracy. In this sense a federal structure, especially in and underdeveloped country is based on the concept of maintaining unity in diversity. The very ardent question before India is how to preserve unity by recognizing diversity. The Unity should be respected in the manner and extent to which diversity can be allowed to express itself without affecting stability. The principle is to allow and encourage the federal unit to do how they are capable of doing without harming the interest of the other states and units.”¹

If we go through the Indian constitution in fact we can find that the expression federal has not been said in the constitution but rather the working of Indian majority rule government is basically federal in structure. The framers of the Constitution and statesman appeared to have been virtually unanimous on the need for a strong central government. Article 1 of the Indian constitution says that the nation is a Union of states, and it imagined that India has a strong Centre. Dr. B. R Ambedkar, the architect and chairman of Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution has said that the use of the word “Union” was deliberate. The drafting committee wanted to make it clear that India was to be a federation. it was not the result of an agreement initiated by the constituent states like USA. The Indian federal system, unlike other major federations, is focused towards the Union, because of the fact that primacy and supremacy was vested in the Union. This led to the statement by few commentators that there is "Unionized Federation" in India. The distribution of powers between the Union and States are done as the Union is given more weight in the scheme of distribution of power. In this situation we can feel that why Granville Austin wishes to use the term Indian federalism as co-operative federalism which produces a strong central Government, it does not necessarily result in weak provincial governments that are largely administrative agencies for central policies.”² The Central order is more visible than the State image. Indian federalism is the simultaneity of two processes – the unionization process and the regionalization process. The basic essence of federalism is the concept of two or more orders of government combining the elements of 'shared rule' for some purpose and regional 'self-rule' for others. It is based on the objective of combining unity and diversity. This means accommodating, preserving and promoting distinct identities within a larger political union.

India Got independence in 1947. After Independence Indian National congress as political party ruled over the country. At the time of one party domination in India the concept of Cooperative federalism came up which reflects the relationship between Centre and state where they both come together and resolve the common problems with each other’s help and cooperation. With the collaborative efforts and cooperation, different level of governments in an amicable manner, contributes towards the growth of the country. It was something a horizontal relationship between union and states. To ensure this relationship between Centre and state, Indian constitution has incorporated certain instruments like inter-state council, Zonal council, 7th schedule etc. After cooperative federalism the concept of competitive federalism came up. Then there was competitiveness among the states and centre and states. A new force began to appear between center and states which is known as in form of Dialogue, Debate and Discussion. In place of majority-minority disorder, a new sense of equal Partnership emerged 'which led Rajni Kothari' to remark "issue of federalism is gaining importance after a long period of ups and downs in the Indian politics the reality of growing regionalization in politics could be seen. 3

The concept of competitive federalism is driving the Indian states to rush in for reforms to make an easy way for doing business in their state and expediting the pending project clearances. They started autonomous project off course with the help of Centre. Many states have also boosted themselves to streamline the procedures to attract more investment for development of their state directly. For example the Gujarat Vibrant Submit was also completely focused on attracting investments from different developing countries for the development. And in recent days we have seen that how Andhra Pradesh is also trying to acquire as much as foreign investment by liberalizing its investment policies. Hence under competitive federalism each state have autonomy to work for their own development by

competing with other states.

4. Coalition Era: An Overview

In any democracy political parties are integral components. In Indian democracy it is the strength, dynamism, vibrancy and openness of political parties that sustains institutions and safeguards public interest. The past parliamentary elections from 1984 onwards and the fractured electoral verdicts in several states during the past few years have demonstrated that the country is already set for a coalition order of Government in years to come. The course of Indian Politics underwent substantial changes after the Fourth General Elections in 1967 when the congress got challenge from non-Congress parties. The first time some non- congress governments were formed in some states. This was the mark of beginning of coalition politics in India. After independence it may be noted that in the first two decades, it was the Indian National Congress which was in power both at the Centre and state levels. It was essentially one-party dominance over the country. It is equally interesting to note that the Congress as a unit of political power was also a combination of many interests, aspiration and issues. So structurally it looked a one-party affair, but inwardly it was a coalition of many interests' issues, and objectives. So, it may not be incorrect to say that coalition of political interests was there in Indian politics right from the beginning with fulfilling of inner voices from various interests' groups.

The one-party dominant era could consume the Central dominance and as result with the idea of Cooperative Federalism came up. The electoral dynamics of the country and the new political compulsions like regional power appeared after the fourth general elections of 1967 exposed the tension areas of the Indian federal system. The DMK government in Tamilnadu, Left Front in West Bengal and other non-Congress raised their eyebrow regarding 'Fiscal imbalance', 'central misrule', 'politics of planning', 'impartial Governor' and 'fair deal to the States' etc. These could not disturb the political balance till the Congress had majority and there was lack of understanding among the non-Congress Opposition Parties. The first non-Congress government at New Delhi attempted to have a re-look and readjusted at the Federal system but it could not achieve more success. During the Janata Party rule at the Centre the rise of new regional parties and the existing tirade against central dominance could experience the demand for autonomy by the States like Tamilnadu, West Bengal, Punjab, J & K etc. The political scenario in the country was changed in 1989 again and this helped in the Coalition era in the Indian politics. The political map of the country was drastically changed and Congress had a symbolic presence with decline of percentage of the country under its political control. The beginning of 1990s could experience the Constitution of Inter-state Council under Article-263 for the first time. Some of the political allegations of use of electronic media and Election Commission also found a positive climate for discussion at the national level. This could see in the Prasar Bharti Act and multi-member election commission constituted. The overall impact of coalition politics on the nature of India's political party structure has been correctly assessed by Baldev Raj Nayer. As he considering the. Social diversity and the method of mass mobilization pattern of the national political parties. As he observed and submitted that India's Immense social diversity and the considerable institutionalization of its democratic political framework have had a significant impact' on the party system.

5. Globalized World: Coalition politics and Federal Government in India

The federal Government's new economic reforms of the nineties have also given another sling shot to the federalization thrust. As these reforms focused on the realignment of Indian economy to global markets have serious implications for states' economies and electoral fortunes. The regional leaders came in to forefronts into the mode of demanding partnership in the federal policy-making processes that concern multilateral arrangements with international organizations like IMF, World Bank & the WTO. At same time inter-regional competition has come to mark the behavior of State-Governments in their endeavor to attract more foreign direct Investment. Notwithstanding this, Globalisation does provide opportunities for acceleration of economic development leading to enhancement in the quality of life, access to new technologies besides promotion of greater democratic decentralization.

The tension between the forces of Globalization and democratic Governance is well captured by David Held when he submitted that the idea of democracy as a nationally-bounded political system is under threat today when many parts of the world are raising hard voices of demand for the rule of the people at a national level. This rising tension raises question with this notion that a nation-state can have determination of its own fate which is at the crux of the notion of democratic Governance. David Held concedes that the impact of Globalisation has not uniformity and varies according to different factors and variables. It is showing that not all states are equally integrated into the world economy. The fruits of globalization have been divided in the capable states. He also provides a pertinent distinction between sovereignty and state autonomy. Whereas sovereignty involves 'the entitlement to rule over a bounded territory, state autonomy refers to 'the actual power the nation-state possesses to articulate and achieve policy goals independently'.

After 1989 till 2014 all the Coalition Government was stable coalitions with jolting nature. Even the formation of coalition government in 2014 with majority is yet to complete its term. The most crucial problem that Indian Parliamentary Democracy faces in this day is the Political instability at Central level and also state levels. Politics in India has been going through a dramatic transformation. 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 Government dismissal or might be some other. In 1996 we could see the term had seen Three Prime Ministers not completed the full term and many states are witness of presidential rule several times.

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