

## Coalition Politics in India

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Today's era is of Coalition Politics. Indian politics is trying its best to adjust to the coalition politics. In the last nine years we have seen six Prime Ministers and four general elections. In the last two years three Prime Ministers assumed office. Prior to 1989 there used to be single party majority with stable governments. But now-a-days it is very uncertain to say that who will become the PM and when the general election will be held. Indian politics, is going under transitory phase and moving towards coalition government.

In the parliamentary form of government like ours, a party to form the government has to prove a simple majority in the Lok Sabha, Lower House of Parliament. A coalition government is formed when no party is in position to prove its majority. In the earlier general elections, Congress party was in a position to form the government with stable majority. But due to its decline and inability of other parties to replace it, politics of Fronts, Morchas, Allies have come into prominence with lot of instability and uncertainty.

An experiment was made in 1989 when no party got an absolute majority and Congress choose to sit in the opposition under the leadership of Late Rajiv Gandhi. Janata Dal with V.P. Singh as PM formed the government with outside support of Left parties and BJP. It could not work for more than eleven months when BJP withdrew support on the Ayodhya issue over the arrest of L.K. Advani. Later Chandrasekhar formed the government with the outside support of Congress which again withdrew after three months. Outside support is the most instable step. It has been proved on various occasions. Similar thing happened when Congress withdrew support from H.D. Devegowda government and Gujral government over Jain Commission report and led to another general election in 1998.

Novel feature of today's Indian politics is that every time general election is held, a hung parliament with no party having majority emerges. A Hung parliament represents fractured mandate focusing on the rich diversity of India. Major reason is the decline of Congress party comprising of all sections of society. It lost its base of Weaker Sections, Muslims and OBC's due to emergency of Dalit parties, Samajwadi party and Rashtriya Janata Dal taking away the Muslim and OBC's vote banks. Regional parties like TDP, AIADMK, DMK, NC, AGP etc. are well capable enough to hold their regional vote banks. National parties are now localized in only few States. Regional leaders like Mulayam Singh, Laloo Yadav, Jayalalitha are exercising greater influence in their respective areas in comparison to National parties.

The other trend is equally important of rise of BJP in the last two general elections. It is continuously growing due to decline of Congress and well planned strategy to take the educated middle class, Dalits, Backwards, Upper castes in its fold. But it is also localized in West, North and missing in South and East. It is trying to become all India party but regional parties have foiled its attempts and the last minute entry of Sonia Gandhi in the election campaign also made a lot of difference to its success.

Coalition politics has given way to political untouchability which was practiced after 1996 general election, when all the secular parties joined to keep the BJP out of power. This was basically Post Poll arrangements which did not last long because initially hostile parties joined hands, to keep one party out of power. Their manifestos were at loggerheads and were not natural allies or of same ideology. In order to overcome the problems of Post Poll alliance Pre Poll alliances were experimented in 1998 elections. 1998 election was fought among three major allies namely BJP and its allies (Shiv Sena, Samta, AIADMK, BJD, Trianamul Congress), Congress and its allies (RJD), United Front (Janata Dal, DMK, TDP, AGP). Regional parties constitute one-third of seats. Their expectations are rising. New problems with Pre-Poll allies are emerging as they are coming out with Post Poll demands. Example of AIADMK is case in point. For a coalition to succeed unreasonable demands should be kept aside. The journey from Common Minimum Programme (CMP) to National Agenda of present government has not solved the stability problems. This government is as unstable as any other in the past.

Many experiments have been conducted in the past and will be done in the future to make the coalition mature and stable. In order to make coalition functioning the regional parties will have to give up regional outlook. They have to think beyond their states and come out of the narrow outlook. The centre at the same time has to give more autonomy to States and avoid using article 356. The National Agenda or Common Minimum Programme is above all the parties and the concern of the nation. It should be taken in that spirit and all efforts should be driven towards its implantation and not to weaken the government which will ultimately hamper the needs and concerns of people.