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COALITION CULTURE IN INDIAN POLITICS: THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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1. INTRODUCTION

India, geographically the seventh largest country in the world have the population of above 1.5 billion is a complex multitude of races, castes, religions, languages and cultures. Different regions and sub-regions of India that we see today as politico-linguistic units are different in their cultural traits, folk songs and literature, making it truly a land of diversities and its society is a coalition of coalitions¹.

The coalition is a temporary combination of groups and individuals formed to pursue specific objectives. In political science the term is used for a temporary alliance of political parties who come together to share power or to keep the other political party out of the power. Coalition governments are often found in the countries having multi-party parliamentary democracies. In such system a temporary alliance of political parties are being formed when no single party or alliance is in a position to come to power on its own and negotiate with each other to work together. It is therefore a temporary alliance of different political parties, forced under the exigencies of situation and circumstances. Sometime coalition can be formed even if there is total clash of interests between or among the political parties even than the leaders of the parties forged ideological

¹ Chopra, P N. : A Social, Cultural and Economic History of India, Macmillan India, 1974, pp. 4-5 and 17-39.

compromises, pre-poll alliance or post-alliance to govern effectively.

India is a typical example of social, ethnic and religious diversities which heavily reflect in the formation of political parties and coalition governments at the Centre and in the states. In its historical perspective, the trends of coalition politics can be traced back from the history of Indian politics before and after the independence. After independence, the polity of the country was dominated by Congress party till 1977. But after the 1967 general elections and emergency (1975-77) the rise of other national and regional political parties challenged Congress' supremacy. Quest for empowerment among different marginalized social groups, and social engineering the country underwent change & gave way to multi-party coalitions in the country.

After 1989 general elections, coalition politics has become the norm and after 1996 no single political party has been able to claim power at the Centre. Now coalition governments have become the regular feature both at the national and state level

1.1 Pre- Independence Era (1st Phase)

India witnessed its first coalition governments after the 1937 elections when the Indian National Congress got a clear majority in the states of Madras, Uttar Pradesh, Central Province, Bihar and Orissa². It managed to lead coalition governments in Bombay and North West Frontier Province (NWFP) as it lacked requisite numbers. In Sindh and Assam, Congress became part of the ruling coalitions. Thus directly or indirectly, Congress was in power in nine out of eleven provinces³. The Unionist Party of Sir Fazl-i-Hussain and Praja Krishak Party of Maulvi Fazl-i-Haq were able to form coalition governments in Punjab and West Bengal

² Ghose, Sankar: Mahatma Gandhi, Allied Publishers, Bombay, 1991; Chatterji, Joya: Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932-1947, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp, 103-11

³ AbidaShakooret. al: Congress-Muslim League Tussle 1937-40: A Critical Analysis, Aakar Books, New Delhi, 2003, pp. 7-29

respectively, without the interference of Congress⁴. These coalitions were different in nature as they were formed in the context of a competition between the Congress and Muslim League to outwit each other. Muslim League failed to form a government or become part of coalition in any of the states. All the governments formed after the 1937 elections however survived till 1939 only.

Similarly, on 2nd September, 1946, first coalition government was formed at the Centre as an Interim Government under the leadership of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru. It consisted of 14 ministers including 6 from the Congress, 5 from Muslim League, 1 each from Indian Christians, Parsi, and Sikhs. This coalition was formed after initial refusal and reluctance by the Muslim League to join the government. However, the Muslim League Ministers under the leadership of Liaqat Ali Khan (who became Finance Minister in the interim government) joined with a design to make the functioning of the government difficult. After a short time the situation inside the interim government and the rising violence and communal tensions outside, convinced the Congress leadership to accept the creation of Pakistan as the only solution to the communal problem⁵. The failure of this coalition experience convinced even the British that the partition of India was the only viable solution to the rising Hindu-Muslim tensions and violence. The experiment of joint Congress-Muslim League government came to an end with the creation of Pakistan and migration of Muslim League ministers to form a new government for Pakistan at Karachi.

After country's independence, the Congress party under leadership of Pt Nehru established a secular government. Pt Nehru also led the Congress party against class-based injustice by attacking the rigid social stratification of the caste system.

⁴ Talbat, Ian: *KhizrTiwana, the Punjab Unionist Party and the Partition of India*, Routledge, London, 1996.

⁵ Mansergh, Nicholas (ed.): *Transfer of Power 1942-47*, H M S O , London, 1979.

Appealing to a broad cross section of religious and class groups, Congress party greatly expanded its base of popular support. Acceptance of Congress as a natural party of governance provided no scope or occasion for the formation of a coalition government at the Centre. Other political parties were either fledgling or far behind the Congress in terms of strength and popularity. The party like Bhartiya Jan Sangh projected itself as a representative of Hindu ethos and culture, while some others remained stuck to parochial or regional demands⁶. The Jan Sangh, known as an upper-caste, Hindu nationalist organization, failed to widen its national base or public support, but became a powerful political organization in north India. This regional support made Jan Sangh a powerful player in India's parliamentary politics.

1.2 Post- Independent Era (1967-1977)-2nd Phase

Congress party suffered its first electoral setback in the parliamentary elections of 1967 when it lost much of its once-unassailable parliamentary majority in Lok Sabha. On the other hand, in late 1960s, various coalition governments were formed in several states in the form of 'United Front' governments. The coalitions in these states faced uncertainty at the hands of opportunistic maneuvers by the political parties and politicians as they defected to bring down successive governments often lured by the promise of ministerial berths or other benefits. To restore its dominance, Congress banked upon the newly gained self-sufficiency in food grains in the wake of Green Revolution, as well as India's triumphant handling of Pakistan crises in 1971 (from which had emerged the independent country of Bangladesh)⁷.

In 1967 elections seat share of Congress in Lok Sabha declined from 73 to 54 percent and vote share from 45 to 41 percent. To retain power, Indira Gandhi had to make some compromises with

⁶ Jhangiani, Motilal A: Jana Sangh and Swatantra: A Profile of the Rightist Parties in India, Manaktala, Bombay, 1967, pp. 44-105

⁷ Dixit, J N: India-Pakistan in War & Peace, Routledge, London, 2002, pp. 87-88.

Morarji Desai to retain power. However she forced a show down with the old guard of Congress at a convenient time on the issue of nationalization of major private banks⁸. In the Presidential election of 1969, Indira Gandhi quietly engineered the victory of V V Giri (an independent Congress member) as President of India defeating Neelam Sanjiva Reddy the official Congress nominee supported by the old guard. Miffed by this overbearing attitude, the stalwarts in the Congress --known as Syndicate (favouring Gandhian style of development)-- expelled her out of the Congress, named their faction as Congress (O) and withdrew their support to her government. Then on, Indira Gandhi headed a minority government supported by other parties⁹.

This government cannot be called a coalition as the Communist Party of India (CPI) supported it from outside without actually sharing the responsibilities. After India defeated Pakistan in December 1971 War, Indira Gandhi unexpectedly declared a mid-term elections which she won decisively. She also dismantled the old party structure and made it a top-down organization where state leaders were chosen because of their ideological compatibility with, and more crucially, personal loyalty towards Indira Gandhi. A series of events including rising inflation, mass mobilization by Jaya Parkash Narayan, decision of Allahabad High court declaring her 1971 election to Lok Sabha (from Rai Brelly in Uttar Pradesh) as void, forced her to impose National Emergency, in June 1975.¹⁰

The 1977 Lok Sabha elections proved to be a turning point in the electoral history of the country initiating an era of coalitions and the minority governments at the centre. After the elections Morarji Desai headed the first non-Congress coalition government at the centre. Janata Party coalition was built upon

⁸ Chatterjee, Basant: *The Congress Splits*, S. Chand, New Delhi, 1973, pp. 118-120

⁹ Rao, R P: *The Congress Split*, Lalwani Publishing House, Bombay, 1971, pp.148-149

¹⁰ Chakrabarty, Bidyut: *Forging Power: Coalition Politics in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 100-109

the premise of the opposition to the Congress though all its leading members, including the Prime Minister were the former Congressmen. Structurally, the Janata Party could never succeed in becoming anything other than a loosely knit coalition of ambitious political leaders and political parties. The Party was constituted by the parties having a strong regional base and after the merger they tried to retain their previous organizational structure and social support. The experiment was an attempt to provide the people an alternative to the Indian National Congress and an ideological forum seeking a distinct political profile, different from the Congress under Indira Gandhi. But the parties that merged to form Janata Party did not carry the process of integration further and it remained, for all intents and purposes, a *de facto* coalition.¹¹ In July 1979, the coalition broke down due to internal dissensions within the government. After the 1980 General Elections, people voted the Congress back to power with a comfortable two-third majority. It was during this tenure Blue Star Operation took place to flush out terrorists from the Golden Temple at Amritsar and as revenge Indira Gandhi was killed on October 31, 1984. She was succeeded by her son Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister of the Country. Congress rule continued till 1989, when coalition governments again began to set-in but as a regular feature of Indian politics.

1.3 Post Emergency Era (3rd Phase)

The 1989 elections marked another turning point in the Indian politics. Rocked by charges of corruption in Bofors Howitzer gun deal and inefficiency, the Congress headed by Rajiv Gandhi could not win a majority in the Parliament. It was a hung parliament and no political party was nearer to the majority. V P Singh after quitting congress had made a serious attempt to build an alternative to the Congress at the national level and formed Jan Morcha in 1989. Later on Jan Morcha merged with Lok Dal to form Janta Dal and seek the support of other political parties and

¹¹ Singh, M P and Saxena, Rekha: India at the Polls, Parliamentary Elections in the Federal Phase, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 2003, p.3

formed a common national platform called the National Front. After the election V. P. Singh and N. T. Rama Raosought support from the left parties as well as the BJP. But the ideological non-compatibility between the Communist parties and the BJP stood in the way of opposition unity. The rhetoric of anti-Congressism, however, was brought in to provide a common ground to unite all these parties. Meanwhile by exploiting the Ramjanam Bhoomi issue and the growing popularity of BJP forced Janta Dal and other National Front partners to negotiate power sharing arrangement with it. To make the V P Singh government possible, the CPI, CPI (M) and the BJP decided to support the National Front from outside. This coalition was supported by two extreme wings --the CPI, CPM, and Bharatiya Janata party-- basically antipathetic to each other. The National Front coalition was a weak government from the day one as the main outside supporting parties did not join it. In a bid to save the coalition, VP Singh announced the implementation of the Mandal Commission in August 1990 but faced a strong criticism from the upper castes. On the other hand to earn political mileage in this melee, L K Advani started a Rath Yatra and decided to withdraw its support to government in October 1990¹². As a result this coalition government fell on 7th Nov 1990 and the Janata Dal split into many factions.

Congress was waiting for opportunity and decided to extended support it to Chandra Shekhar of Samajwadi Janata Dal. This combination meant the return of Congress rule through the back door. It was an unstable alliance because Devi Lal and a section of the Janata Dal (S) could not cooperate with the Congress for long and lasted only for four months –10th November 1990 till 6th March 1991-- and had to go as Congress withdrew its support.

¹² Janata Dal Chief Minister of Bihar, Lalu Prashad Yadav ordered arrest of L K Advani on 23rd October, 1990. BJP withdrew the support to the government and V P Singh lost the 'vote of confidence' on 7th November, 1990. See, *The Telegraph*, (Calcutta), 8th April, 2009.

While the coalition of National Front was formed out of a common anti-Congress position and Chander Shekhar government was purely an opportunistic formation. Both were an outcome of power sharing arrangements in which the parties supporting the coalitions lacked ideological compatibility or a common programme. The BJP used the opportunity to widen its base and V P Singh used the coalition to downgrade Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress. This became however clear that both these governments were failed and sheer opportunism and power sharing became the hallmark of these coalitions.

When election took place in 1991, Congress accused the opposition for providing unstable governments in which there was no common ideology, outlook or programme between the National Front and its coalition partners. It was an era of “endless intrigues, devious deals, marriages of convenience. In 1991 elections, no party could get absolute majority in Lok Sabha and Congress (I) emerged as the single largest party and formed a minority government which was later transformed into a majority. The government took charge at a time when country was facing intense economic crises. To come out of the crises the party had to initiate economic reforms in the country. Economic liberalization and integration into the world economy became the hallmarks of the government policy. This government under the leadership of P V Narsimha Rao successfully completed its five year term.

2. THE UNITED FRONT COALITION GOVERNMENT

Elections to 11th Lok Sabha were held in April–May 1996 and it brought a fractured verdict for the third time successively. No political party or alliance was able to secure an absolute majority. Congress fought this election alone, the National Front and Left Front, also contested it separately. The BJP alone gave the semblance of an alliance with Shiv Sena, Samata Party, and Haryana Vikas Party. On the other hand United Front was a replication of the National Front. The BJP with 161 seats emerged as the single largest party for the first time. Congress party’s strength was reduced to 140 seats in the Lok Sabha, the combine

National/ Left Front secured a third position with 215 seats. Being the single largest party, BJP was invited by the President to form the government on 15th May, 1996 under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee. However, this government failed to secure the required support and lost the confidence motion on 28th May, 1996. The Prime Minister had to resign after just 13 days. On the collapse of Vajpayee government the National Front, Left Front and some regional parties tried to forge a unity --calling themselves the 'third front'- to form a government in a bid to keep the Congress as well as BJP out of power. On 13th May, 1996, National Front-Left Front combine elected H D Deve Gowda, the Janata Dal Chief Minister of Karnataka, as the leader of the third front and was sworn in as the Prime Minister on 1st June 1996¹³. He proved his majority in Lok Sabha on 12th June with the support of Congress. Most of the constituent parties of the United Front were the regional parties and opposed Congress in their respective states. The Left parties also supported the United Front government. This coalition was a minority government consisting of 13 political parties committed to a Common Minimum Programme. In March 1997, Congress Party withdrew the support from Deve Gowda government and he had to resign. To avoid a mid-term poll, Congress again offered support to the United Front with a pre-condition that the United Front will dispense with Deve Gowda as the Prime Minister. On 19th April 1997, Inder Kumar Gujral was elected as the leader of United Front and was sworn in as Prime Minister on 21st April, 1997.

On August 28th 1997, Justice Jain (who was investigating the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi) submitted his report and it was placed before the Parliament on 20th November 1997. The report revealed that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE) was linked to and supported by the DMK a constituent of the

¹³ United Front included Janata Dal, TDP, DMK, TMC, AGP, SP, KCP, MPVC, Cong-T and Left Fronts Parties like CPI, CPI (M), FB, and RSP. Deve Gowda was sworn in on 1st June, 1996 along with 21 Ministers..

coalition. Congress immediately demanded that United Front must drop DMK ministers from the Cabinet which the Prime Minister refused. On 28th November, 1997 Congress decided to withdraw its support to the government and the same day I K Gujral resigned. This showed that with the replacement of the dominant party system in India, coalition governments became the order of the day.

2.1 First BJP led Coalition Government of 1998

In 1996, the BJP had come to power for the first time and could remain in office just for thirteen days. Before 1998 elections the BJP acknowledged the importance of regional political parties and changed its strategy and won more allies in order to gain power at the centre. To become acceptable to them, it decided to shelve the contentious issues like the construction of Ram Mandir at Ayodhya, scrapping of Article 370 giving special status to Jammu and Kashmir and enacting a Uniform Civil Code. The BJP and the regional political parties for the first time entered into a pre-poll alliance.¹⁴ In the 1998 Lok Sabha elections no political party or coalition of parties could get a majority. In this fragmented mandate the BJP, being the single largest group (182 Seats) formed a coalition government. Atal Bihari Vajpayee of the BJP was once more sworn in as the Prime Minister on 19th March 1998. It was a coalition supported by 24 regional parties with different ideologies, policies, programmes and aspirations¹⁵.

Many a times the coalition was in crises and the AIADMK President Jaya Lalitha and Mamta Banerjee of TMC gave sleepless nights to the BJP. Om Prakash Chautala of Haryana Lok Dal also had problems in functioning with the BJP. Cut in food subsidy

¹⁴ Jaffrelot, Christophe, "The BJP at the Centre: A Central and Centrist Party. In, Zavos, John et. al (ed.): Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2004, pp. 314-369

¹⁵ Mac, Millan, "The BJP Coalition: Partisanship and Power-sharing in Government", in, Adeney Katharine, Sáez, Lawrence (ed.): Coalition Politics and Hindu Nationalism, Routledge, London, 2005, p. 20.

and resultant increase in prices of fertilizers and cooking gas added to the criticism of the government and Om Prakash Chautala suddenly announced withdrawal of its support to the coalition on 19th February, 1999. Meetings between AIADMK leader Jaya Lalita and BSP President Kanshi Ram and between some coalition partners with the Congress leaders created an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust between the BJP and its coalition partners day by day. Jaya Lalita dramatically withdrew her party's support from the coalition on 14th April, 1999. On 17th April 1999 government lost vote of confidence by a margin of just one vote (269 to 270 votes) and Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee resigned on 21st April, 1999. The first BJP led coalition government ruled only for 13 months.

2.2 The Second BJP led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Coalition Government of 1999

The BJP led coalition of 1998 was an effort of its kind to run a coalition government at the Centre. Such a coalition culture was alien to Indian party system and could not go a smooth and long way. Coalition governments had proved to be unstable and short lived so far. Yet, a more reformed and refined attempt was made by the BJP before the 1999 mid-term elections and BJP found the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), which contested the elections together with a common minimum programme and common manifesto.¹⁶

Realizing the growing clout, and importance of the regional parties and that without their support it cannot come to power, BJP skillfully classified the parties to attract their support in four categories: the Hindutva parties in the north and west, the parties of Tamil linguistic regionalism in the south, Janta Dal and Congress splinter groups. On the other hand Congress (I) decided

¹⁶ National Democratic Alliance consisting of BJP, BJD, DMK, HVC, INLD, Loktantrik Congress, MDMK, MSCP, PMK, SAD, Shiv Sena, TDP, TRC, National Conference, Samata Party, J D (Sharad Yadev), Trinamool Congress, MGDK, MGR-Kazhagam, Sikkim Democratic Front, Arunachal Congress, Manipur State Congress Party, Janatantrik BSP, Democratic Bahujan Samaj Morcha.

to go alone bound by its Panchmarhi Resolution of 4th September 1999. It refused to read the changing political scenario that indicated towards the growing importance of regional parties and decided to bid for power on its own. To make goodwill BJP again kept out the contentious issues from the Common Minimum Programme. Not only it admitted JD (U) into NDA fold but also tried to shed its anti-minority character by reaching out to the Muslims and other minority communities for support. Prospects of NDA were more bolstered by the facts that Vajpayee had tried to normalize Indo-Pakistan relations through 'Bus Diplomacy' in February 1999, and was riding high on the victory of Kargil conflict (May-July 1999).

The election for 13th Lok Sabha was held in September-October 1999. The BJP alone secured 182 seats and along with its allies (NDA and Others) got 305 seats and obtained a clear majority and marking a significant break from the successive hung parliaments. Atal Bahari Vajpayee was again sworn in on 13th October 1999 as Prime Minister for the third time. This was a coalition government of 16 political parties most of them were regional and every alliance partner in NDA had its wish-list of ministerial births, allotment of portfolios and the post of Speaker. To accommodate them a jumbo Council of Ministers was formed. It was more representative coalition both territorially as well as demographically. The Telgu Desam with 29 MPs decided to support the coalition from outside.

As the new government took charge, the squabbling among the constituent parties began to crop up. There was sharp difference of opinion among the coalition partners on the issues like hike in petroleum products, construction of Ram Temple in Ayodhya, attack on Christian Missionaries in Orissa and accusation by the allies that BJP was implementing its 'hidden Agenda'. The Trinmool Congress, Samata Party and AIDMK pressed for the dismissal of West Bengal, Bihar, and Tamil Nadu governments while other coalition partners including BJP did not find these demands tenable. These inbuilt contradictions consumed a lot of time to manage, weakened the government and told heavily on its

functioning. These pressures were somehow managed and one or the other leader was pressed into service to stem them. The coalition could also withstand the Tehelka exposure, the Samata Party's alleged irregularities in telecom policy, privatization of public sector undertakings, CAG report on procurement of coffins during Kargil conflict on high rates, stock market scandal etc. As this government accelerated the pace of privatization and foreign direct investment, the RSS mounted attack on its economic policies especially on permission of entry to multinational companies in Indian market. Atal Bihari Vajpayee had a tough time managing these contradictions but carried out the government up to February 2004.

Unlike the earlier coalitions, it was relatively a stable government and was successful in many ways. The government remained in office for four years and four months. Riding on its success and confidence the BJP decided to pre-pone the elections. It launched a 'Shining India' campaign and based its achievements on the 'feel good factor' to convince the people and its allies that it was a safe time to seek fresh mandate. This coalition government was significant for more than one reason: it ushered in an era of successful coalition government in the country and it showed that a coalition was possible in a multi-dimensional and partisan society such as India. From 1989 to 2004, no other party could form a 'nucleus' of an alternative coalition as no single party could get requisite numbers to form a government. During this period the BJP spread its base to the east, west and south and its commitment to National Agenda for Governance, cutting across the regional issues, like caste, religion, language and political affiliations was important in fostering unity and provide strength to the coalition. The BJP being a major partner also kept its 'core Hindutva agenda' in the self-declared moratorium.¹⁷ Some of its

¹⁷ Sharma, Jyotirmaya: *Hindutva: Exploring the Idea of Hindu Nationalism*, Penguin, 2004; Banerjee, Partha: *In the Belly of the Beast: The Hindu Supremacist RSS and BJP of India*, Ajanta, Delhi, 1998; ParvathyAppaiah: *Hindutva Ideology & Politics*, Deep & Deep Publications, New Delhi, 200

policies like strengthening infrastructure in rural areas, generation of rural employment, introduction of Kisan Credit Card, national highway scheme etc. were appreciated by the people at large. The checks and balances within the coalition also did not allow BJP to deviate too far from the agreed agenda which was prepared keeping in view the ideological goals and declared policies of the constituent political parties. Issues of the regional political parties were taken care of as far as possible setting a new and healthy trend in Indian politics. The regional parties, without whom the NDA coalition was not possible, also realized their political importance and potential at the national level.

3 UNITED PROGRESSIVE ALLIANCE (UPA- I & II) LED COALITION GOVERNMENT OF 2004-14.

The 2004 Lok Sabha election further confirmed that no political party shall be able to secure an absolute majority in Lok Sabha, and coalition governments will remain inevitable in such an eventuality. The 2004 elections were exciting not because the range of possible outcome was very wide, but precisely because the narrow range of possible outcomes allowed more than one kind of government formation. Learning from the BJP's success of 1999, Congress put back its Panchmarhi Resolution and devised method of seat sharing and adjustment with regional parties like DMK in Tamil Nadu, Telengana Rashtriya Sangharsh Samiti in Andhra Pradesh, Nationalist Congress Party and Republican Party of India (A) in Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh, RJD in Bihar and People Democratic Party (PDP) in Jammu and Kashmir as its allies¹⁸. The general elections of May 2004 saw a

¹⁸ The AICC met at Shimla and adopted 'Shimla Sankalp', wherein it invited "all progressive-thinking men and women, institutions and political movements who share our understanding of India's past, our concerns with India's present and our vision of India's future to join us in this historic endeavour". Congress thus agreed to make alliances with other parties to contest the next elections. See, Rangarajan, Mahesh, "Polity in Transition: India after the 2004 General Elections", *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. xl, no. 32, 6th -12th August, 2002, pp. 3598-3605;

new set of emerging power equations which had no clear precedent in country's political history. From 2004-14 UPA remained in power. The UPA-I was built soon after the elections with the support of left-leaning political parties around the opposition to communalism and unity of secular forces. The results of 2004 elections indicated towards the growing importance of these contending combinations. Called as bi-nodal mode of power, this paradigm had begun to take shape in 1999 with BJP taking the lead in this regard. The Congress led UPA combination which eventually formed the coalition government under the Prime Ministrship of Manmohan Singh had 12 political parties as partners with the Left parties extending support from outside. The policies of UPA were guided by a Common Minimum Programme and with consultations with Jyoti Basu and Harkrishan Surjit.

This coalition faced certain problems like- in July 2008 when the UPA survived a "Vote of Confidence" brought by Left Front and decided to withdraw their support in protest at India-US Civil Nuclear Agreement". The Congress party and its leaders along with Samajwadi Party leader Amar Singh were accused of a "cash for vote" scam. But at the same time saw a lot of economic growth although it was also marked by inflation from rising fuel prices. Next general elections were held in April- May 2009 and UPA-II won 262 seats, of which the Congress won 206 seats. During second tenure UPA witnessed a significant decline in popularity due to factors as slipping growth, inflation, high rate of interest, corruption, and allegations of scams that impacted the image of UPA nationwide and distasteful to the voters. DMK and other coalition partners left the UPA alliance. In 2014 general elections UPA suffered a defeat.

4. THE BJP LED NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE (NDA) COALITION GOVERNMENTS OF 2014, 2019 AND 2024

In 2014 BJP entered pre-poll alliance with 25 political parties under the NDA umbrella. In north east regional political front (Manipur People's Party and Naga People's Party and Mizo

National Front were contested in one seat each while the Front's other members supported NDA candidates. This alliance was good enough to give a psychological boost to the once "untouchable" BJP.¹⁹ Interestingly BJP played an emotional card and asked the people for vote in Modi's name. In Gujarati newspapers and radio advertisements in local language it claimed that "as Gujarati felt proud when Gandhi and Sardar Patel led the struggle for Swaraj, let us feel proud again as Modi another Gujarati wanted to lead the struggle for Su-raj means 'good governance'. It shows the depth and expense of hard work that Modi's team had tried to create an impression all over India and Modi's acceptability by all coalitional partners specially the regional parties. BJP won 282 seats alone and its allies combine secured 336 seats in parliament and returned to power under the leadership of Narindera Modi as a Prime Minister on 26 May 2014. He acknowledged the fact that he was going to be the first Prime minster of India to be born after independence and it would be natural to expect a shift in world view his predecessors. During 2014-19 his government focused on 'Make in India', empowering women, liberalization of India's foreign direct investment policies, allowing more foreign investment in defence and railway were few one.

The general elections of 2019 were held in seven phases to elect the members of 17th Lok Sabha and three main national pre-poll alliances NDA, UPA and Left Front were in fray. Narendera Modi and his ruling BJP have swept back to power for the second consecutive term on back of several initiatives which created to different sections of the society to implement its "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' slogan. BJP alone got 303 seats and the NDA alliance further increased its tally to 353. The Congress party won only 52 seats and Congress-led UPA alliance won 91 seats. During 2019-24 many initiatives were taken by his government like -'Izzat Ghar', Swachh Bharat Mission', Ujjwala Scheme' for

¹⁹ Misra ,U (2016), Victory For Identity Politics, not Hindutav, Economic Political Weekly

women,' Bijli Har GharYoana (Saubhagya), housing etc. which helped his victory again in 2024 general elections. The result of 18th Lok Sabha 2024 marked the return of coalition politics again in India with no political party have a clear cut majority in house. 'Viksit Bharat" with the vision to create "Making India Developed by 2047" where Nari Shakti was an equal partner and stakeholder in development was major poll pitch during elections manifesto of BJP. The BJP led NDA alliance again retained power at Centre and registered its third straight victory in Lok Sabha polls. The alliance lost 60 seats in the 2024 general elections but retained enough numbers of members in Lok Sabha (BJP 240 seats and alliance combine 292 seats) to form a coalition government a first in over 10 years. Congress-led alliance INDIA (India National Developmental Inclusive Alliance) emerged as a strong opposition. This marked Modi's third term as Prime Minister. For the first time BJP negotiated with key coalition partners TDP of Andhra Pradesh headed by Chander Babu Naidu and Janata Dal (United) headed by Bihar Chief Miister Nitish Yadav in distribution of the ministry portfolios, but retained all the important portfolios like-Defence, Home, Foreign etc. This shows that BJP's long term approach especially in this area.

5. CONCLUSION

The power sharing at the Centre has set precarious parameters ever since the coalition governments have become an inevitable feature. These alliances or coalitions are not necessarily based on ideological considerations but governed by the exigencies of circumstances. It is also depiction of the growing fragmentation of Indian polity. These coalitions began to take shape after 1989 and became a permanent feature especially after 1996 elections. This turnover was natural in any plural society where different type of social engineering becomes inevitable. In India quest for power among various caste and caste based combinations, bid for power by hitherto marginalized sections of society, religious and regional issues paved the way for conception of new parties and formation of alliances. This had to reflect in the political

processes as outreach of these issues was all pervasive in the country's socio-political fabric.

As the importance of regionalism and regional political parties grew stupendously at the national level, the national political parties became dependent on them to attain or retain power. Not only that they meekly conceded their subordinate role to them in different states. There emerged three visible trends in Indian politics, viz., the decline of Congress dominance; rise of BJP as an alternative to Congress; and growing importance of regional political parties. The rising coalition culture in the country at the Centre and states has emboldened the regional political parties as never before.