

COALITION POLITICS IN INDIA

PRESENTED BY:
THOMAS GM
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
DEPT. OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
POMPEI COLLEGE AIKALA

MEANING OF COALITIONS:

- ◉ The term coalition derived from the Latin word **“coalition” means to grow together.**
- ◉ Etymologically coalition means a combination of bodies or parts into one body.
- ◉ In political system it means that **some political parties or groups will come together and form alliance in order to exercise control over political power.**
- ◉ According to prof. Ogg “coalition is cooperative arrangement under which distinct political parties or at all events members of such parties unite to form a government or ministry.”
- ◉ Thus, coalition is an activity of growing together on the principle of cooperation & coordination.
- ◉ It is an alliance on a temporary basis for a joint action.
- ◉ Coalition politics centers around political parties to play the game of politics to capture power which results in the formation of a coalition government.

MEANING CONTINUED-

- ◉ Today, in India coalition system has become an essential feature of our polity.
- ◉ In a parliamentary government which is based on majority principle & the party or parties that secure majority forms the government.
- ◉ **A coalition government is formed when no single party is able to reach a position of majority to form a government.**
- ◉ Coalitions or party alliances may be formed before or after the general elections.

COALITION GOVERNMENTS IN INDIA:

- ◉ From the **past two decades** India is experiencing with various coalition governments at the national & state levels.
- ◉ **The first coalition experiment** at the central level began with the congress under Indira Gandhi (1967-71) with the support of the communists.
- ◉ **The second experiment** at the central level was under Morarji Desai in 1977.
- ◉ **All other governments** formed at the central level after 1989 were coalition governments except that of PVN's govt.(1991-96).
- ◉ In A.P. one such govt formed in 1955, in Orissa 1957, in W. Bengal in 1967 & also in Kerala.

REASONS FOR THE FORMATION OF COALITION GOVERNMENTS:

- ◉ **1. Failure to obtain Majority:**
- ◉ When no single party wins majority.
- ◉ Then in order to form a government combination of some political parties are essential.
- ◉ But these parties do not lose their identity.
- ◉ They agree to a common minimum programmes.
- ◉ When differences arise any group or party is free to withdraw its support.

2. PLURALISM:

- ◉ India is a subcontinent with multi-cultural & multi-national state.
- ◉ India is known for its diversity of language, religion, culture, etc.,.
- ◉ So coalition system is a natural corollary of a pluralist society.
- ◉ Multiplicity of PPs along with pluralistic society & individualistic bent of mind of our leaders led to a coalition system.

3. DOMINANCE OF THE CONGRESS PARTY:

- ◉ The dominant role played by the congress party.
- ◉ The dictatorial style of functioning of the congress, the rebellious attitude against it by the regional units or leaders within it.
- ◉ These regional parties have facilitated the emergence of coalition system in India.
- ◉ **The coalition system is best suited to accommodate the regional aspirations of the regional parties.**

4. ELECTORAL SYSTEM:

- ◉ **The electoral system in India encourages small political parties to contest elections and get represented in the legislatures & ministries.**
- ◉ **Minority communities are also able to get represented through a coalition system.**
- ◉ **For the time being the coalition system is the only viable political system for India.**

IMPACT OF COALITION ON INDIAN POLITICS:

- ◉ Coalition has become a common feature of Indian politics.
- ◉ Coalition Governments are minority governments which have been unstable due to opportunistic politics.
- ◉ Most of them suffered from internal contradictions due to the pressure of coalition politics.
- ◉ Coalition system has had a great impact on Indian politics in a number of ways-

1. INSTABILITY:

- ◉ **coalition governments will not last long for the full term.**
- ◉ **if any of the coalition partner withdraws support the government will collapse.**
- ◉ **the average life of the coalition governments in India is 20 months (Shridharan, 1999).**
- ◉ **Coalition government failed to provide a stable government.**

2. WEAK AND INEFFECTIVE:

- ◉ **To secure a consensus within the parties is a very difficult task.**
- ◉ Each coalition partner tends to suspect the other.
- ◉ If the government is efficient, the coalition partner is worried that the other will get credit for it.
- ◉ Thus, the coalition has had the impact of creating a weak & ineffective governments.

3. SUBORDINATION OF PARTY IDEOLOGY TO POWER:

- ◉ In Indian context there is a single party which is dominant in a coalition of several parties.
- ◉ **The identity, agenda & the ideology of that party has to be merged with the remaining small partners.**
- ◉ For example, BJP has to subdue its distinct identity & ideology for the sake of maintaining the coalition.

4. NARROW OUTLOOK OF PARTIES:

- ⦿ The political parties have the desire to maintain its political power at any cost.
- ⦿ Coalition partners like regional parties do not give up their narrow minded approach.
- ⦿ **They have their stronger state agendas and the national agendas are totally neglected.**
- ⦿ As a result, the states tends to become strong & center becomes weak.

5. LEADERSHIP OF THE PM UNDERMINED:

- ◉ In a coalition government the PM cannot take a strong decision.
- ◉ Even the smallest partner in the coalition can hold the PM to ransom.
- ◉ The pm cannot choose his own cabinet, he has to consider the demands of so many parties.
- ◉ He has no free hand in the distribution of portfolios.
- ◉ **He has to depend frequently on the consent of the constituent parties to carry on the business of the govt, which makes his position weak & pitiable.**
- ◉ This has an impact on Indian politics as the national & foreign policy tends to be weak.

6. POWER HAS SHIFTED FROM THE CABINET TO THE COORDINATION COMMITTEE:

- ◉ In a coalition, we see power has shifted from the cabinet to that of an extra-constitutional authority like the coordination committee.
- ◉ A coordination/steering committee is formed in order to arrive at a consensus among the coalition partners with different ideologies & with different agendas.
- ◉ Sometimes, the PM finds it very difficult to carry the entire cabinet as one body due to these differences.
- ◉ Sometimes the PM has to give important positions to the fence sitters even though they are insignificant.

7. REGIONAL PARTIES DECIDING THE FATE OF NATIONAL PARTIES:

- ◉ Regional parties are increasingly playing an important role in deciding the national players.
- ◉ **The smaller parties tend to exercise more power, authority in deciding the fate of national parties- hence, critics regard coalition system as undemocratic.**

8. FEDERAL SYSTEM MORE FEDERAL & REAL:

- Centralisation of authority & misuse of Article 356 are today rarely takes place.
- Due to coalition system federal system has been made more federal & real.
- Our federalism today has become truly a cooperative and bargaining federalism.
- Governance through consensual approach is also adopted.
- **Today the center-state relations has become quite harmonious due to coalition system.**

CONCLUSION:

- ⦿ **Thus, coalition in India has both positive and negative impact on Indian Politics.**
- ⦿ Even though there is the common minimum programmes which binds its constituents there is often fighting regarding its implementation.
- ⦿ In fact, coalitions has provided a feasible and a reliable alternative in parliamentary democracy against the collapse of the democratic set up.
- ⦿ It makes democracy more participative as every small faction gets represented and heard in the legislature.
- ⦿ It also ends one party dominance and gives chance to regional parties to participate in national politics.