

## **CHAPTER-V**

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## 5.1. INTRODUCTION

In the 1996 general Elections and thereafter no party has been able to get clear majority at the Centre, and different parties have been forced to form some sort of political alliance to form the Government. Such alliances have also undergone many changes due to political compulsions. 'Coalition' has suddenly become the most talked about term in Indian politics. The results of the few last Lok Sabha Elections clearly show that Coalition Government has come to stay. Under the recent political conditions there has been a compelling importance about the subject of coalitions. The number of Coalition Governments and the rapidity with which they have inculcated in the States has been identified, on the one hand, as an indication of the outset of instability, and, on the other, as an illustration of a dynamic democracy. It is felt that our political system is becoming more realistic, regional forces operating at the state level, bringing politics close to the people and thus becoming more responsive to the divisions and nuances of public opinion.

The past political history of minority Governments at the Center makes the question even more pressing. Is hung Parliament and coalition and/or minority Government necessarily undesirable? Is it

not possible that Coalition Government, more accommodative in character than majoritarian Government, more suited to the management of multiple diversities of Indian society? Is not Coalition Government better suited to building consensus on economic policy issues and thereby easing their implementation without provoking a back lash? Or are these possibilities illusory? Are unstable, fractions, short-sighted and short-lived Governments the more likely possibility in the event of a hung parliament? What is coalition and what are its ingredients? When did it originate and how it has worked so far? How far we are comparable to England and other European countries? All these questions are examined in this chapter.

Theoretical work in this field in India has been extremely rudimentary. The number of articles on this subject was sparse during the 1950's when one party dominated the scene both at the Center and in the States. There was a spurt of writing during the following decade, but in general there has been a dearth of serious academic research on formation of coalition-Government in India.

Systemic theories have been largely absent, newspapers and periodicals have provided stimulating discussions but it attests to the difficulty inherent in building a body of theoretical and concomitantly empirical. Data collection, in a field of Literature is very difficult.

One reason, of course, why we lack serious academic work on coalitions is because access to decisions-makers has been difficult. How coalitions are made, and how they fall apart are questions of inside political information which is not readily and reliably available. Political actors engaged in the building and breaking of coalitions are usually continuing players in a game whereof inside information may be disadvantageous. Moreover, only a decade or more has passed since coalition started in India.

Another exceptionally difficult problem in the analysis of coalition is posed by the fact that manifest content of articulated

political intentions seldom reflects real intention. A manifest programme is but one indicator of intentions and not the most reliable at that we need much more information than a party manifesto can provide in order to measure ideological coherence. Political parties, upon entering a coalition, often appear to have modified a previous policy stance. The Minimum Programmes of several coalitions after 1967 would seem to indicate that something of this order was operative. When coalition disintegrates, we are again forced to question the extent to which formally stated reasons represent the real ones. The quality and type of ideological commitment is also highly relevant in analyzing coalition politics. A loose commitment may mean a party is a likely candidate for a Coalition, but a concomitant inability to exercise internal discipline may bode ill for the viability of the coalition. On the other hand, parties which demand rigid adherence to ideological doctrine may display greater coherence and suffer defections; but its inflexibility may prevent its successfully joining or participating in a Coalition Government. There is also the question of the participation of parties whose ideologies are based on caste or community. Here again the degree of commitment to a particular ideology is important to note. The whole issue of "coalitionality" is a critical parameter of this particular process in politics.

There is also relevance of internal party cohesion to Coalition Government. In order to understand coalition-making, study of party system in India is already made in greater detail in chapter III-A.

## 5.2. MEANING AND FEATURES OF COALITION GOVERNMENT

Coalition politics or Coalition Government is a unique device of temporary political alliance between political parties in a parliamentary democracy. It comes into operation when electorates do not give a clear mandate to any political party to form a Government.

Political apathy of the ambivalent electorate in most cases reflects the failure of the political parties and leaders to carry conviction regarding their ability to give an efficacious Government.

Coalition signifies uniting into one body for a certain purpose. A coalition system is based on the pooling of resources to achieve the desired purpose. In a political sense, coalition signifies an alliance for joint action of various groups or organizations into a single Government of distinct parties.

Apart from its meaning as a temporary alliance or as a combination of states for joint action, the term 'coalition', commonly denotes a co-operative arrangement under which distinct political parties, or at all events members of such parties unite to form a Government.

When no political party in the polity is in a position to create a winning majority, then a political coalition has to be created for the purposes of the governance. Naturally with the decline in the capacity of one single party to get a mandate, coalition is the only option.

Generally, coalition system inheres certain features:

- (1) Coalitions are made for the sake of some definite reward. The reward must be of a material nature though, in some exceptional cases, it may be of a psychic nature as well, perhaps, inherent with the prospects of some material gain in time to come.
- (2) Coalition means a company and not a crowd; it has partners, at least two, who combine under the force of circumstances.
- (3) Coalition system depends upon the process of give and take. As a result of the tugs pulls, a point of equilibrium is arrived at where the actors agree to lay down their arms in order to have a united strength for the realization of their goal.

(4) Coalition politics is not a static, but a dynamic affair as collaboration adjustment ever pass through the process of growth and decay. There operates the coming-in and going-out of the players and groups with new names and new forms exhibiting the formation, deformation and reformation of different coalitional structures informed by the cleavages within a prevailing political system.

Naturally, a coalition system has several operational dimensions:

(1) It has general as well as particular aspects. Its general aspect means coverage of any situation of the clustering together of various groups of men having any profession or field of activity; its particular aspect is concerned with the formation of a political alliance of various groups or organisations for the specific purpose of sharing power.

(2) It has theoretical or normative and practical or descriptive aspects. While the former aspect has a national character and thus expects all partners to obtain the best possible pay-off without earning for the consideration of gain or loss, the latter is concerned with a realistic situation where the partners struggle in order to win and not to lose their game.

(3) Coalition system may operate in a tacit or implied or in an express or formal form. While a tacit coalition system implies the role of a single party in power banking on the invisible support or discernible understanding of other party or parties, the latter exhibits a formal and legitimate alliance of one party with other party or parties with a clear and open understanding for give and take.

(4) It necessarily flows from the above that tacit coalition has two variables- proto-coalition and sub-coalition. While the former means the existence of dissimilar partners under the same umbrella acting with accommodative tendencies, a situation in which one party in power maintains invisible co-operation with other parties or groups either on the basis of some understanding or on the merits of the issue in question.

(5) A coalition arrangement may have constructive as well as destructive aspects. The cooperative endeavour of two or more parties may be made for the formation of a Government; it may also be made just for the sake of pulling down a Government with or without any scheme in hand to provide an alternative Government.

In fine, coalition signifies a system where the participants pool their resources and co-ordinate their deployment for the sake of achieving the desired purpose. It stands on the principle of permanence of interest and non-permanence of friendship or enmity and as such it is based on the temporary conjunction of interest. The whole idea is to bring about a balance between cleavage and compromises. Coalition adjustment takes place only within the context of mixed motives in which both conflicts and common interests are simultaneously present and must govern the sources. It is the joint use of resources to determine the outcome of a decision in a mixed motive situation involving more than two units.

Coalition Government, a feature of parliamentary system is not formed under a normal political situation. Whether a coalition is pre-poll or post-poll phenomenon, political parties enter coalitions only when one single party is unlikely to win enough seats (pre-poll), or has not won enough seats (post-poll) to form the Government. A pre-poll coalition is a calculated move by two or more political parties, based on their assessment of the poll outcome, to jointly win enough seats in the legislature to be able to form Government. A post-poll political coalition, on the other hand, is either (and mostly) an arrangement of political convenience or of political parties.

Whether coalitions are viewed in terms of conventional theory- as options of last resort, under conditions of severe political stress, or rational choice theory – rational solutions under conditions of competition rather than conflict, coalitions are not the ideal choice of political parties.

Vernan Bagdonor <sup>1</sup>has talked of three-coalition situation

- (I) support to a minority Government
- (II) coalescing of political parties on a common programme and
- (III) defections, mergers, or fusion's from or amongst political parties.

Bagdonor treats even a minority Government supported by one or many parties as coalition. There may be disagreements on this, but since such a support is also part of a temporary alliance between or amongst political parties, it could be construed as a coalition in a broad sense. Moreover, such support, despite proclamations to the contrary, is never unconditional. The other two situations are self explanatory.

In any case, coalition politics is ' . . a living and continuous interaction between a party's natural and hence ultimate quest to come to power by itself and the expedient, perhaps essentially transitional inter-party collaboration to capture the reins of Government. Thus by its very nature coalition politics is subject to contradictory motivational pulls and pressures as the ultimate and expedient goals of parties do not merely coexist in the coalition framework but, more often than not, they are juxtaposed against each other."<sup>2</sup> Not surprisingly, if there are compromises and accommodation in coalition situations, there are competition and fragmentation / fractionalization as well. While conflict is not unknown in coalition situations, it is not a prerequisite for fragmentation; fierce competition for power maximization or resources is enough for fractionalization. In fact, **durability of coalition** would greatly depend upon the degree of accommodation and competition amongst the coalition partners.

Since political parties enter into coalition out of 'rational choice' i.e., by considering utility or otherwise of the arrangement, each one of the

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<sup>1</sup> Vide, <sup>1</sup> "coalition- making in India-Imperatives, Disincentives and Pit falls by Ajay K. Mehra in Making a Success of Coalition, Ed.- Laxmi Krishnamurthy & Others, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

partners would like sufficient influence over the decision-making process for two reasons, for maximizing its power within the coalition at that juncture as well as in future, and to manipulate the outcome of incompatible issues during the coalition. A Coalition Government strives for rational decision-making, at least in theory, in the face of incompatibilities among the participants. The resolution of these incompatibilities takes place during three stages of coalition politics: the coalition formation stage, the maintenance stage and the termination stage.

### **5.3. THEORIES OF POLITICAL COALITION**

The theories needed to determine what the composition of the Government will be after the electorate has spoken already. These are relevant for the study of collaboration and opposition in legislatures when no single party controls a majority and parliamentary groups must cooperate with each other in order to appoint and support a Government and runs it. The formation of this governing coalition is crucial in these political systems since the election as such do not indicate unambiguously which parties will be in power and what policy shall be carried out. That decision is the outcome of interaction among the leadership of the parliamentary groups.

The absence of an obvious relationship between the outcome of the election and the selection of parties for the formation of the Government confronts the theory of multi-party democracy. If different Governments, varying in party membership and policy, may result from an election outcome, if there is no "verdict of the electorate" usually, realized in multi-party systems. The coalition theory that could shed light on these questions would have great importance for democratic theory.

Parliamentary coalition formation is the subject for testing the theories because number of historical cases in which the actors may

be identified with their resources and policies, and where the composition of the majority coalition can be ascertained more or less clearly. But the subject of politics is resistant to system generalization. We will have a brief look at these theories.

<sup>3</sup>Theories of political coalition have an underlying analytical structure:

- 1) Minimal winning coalition :- by Vonnewmann & Morgenstern
- 2) Coalition of minimum size : - Riker & Gamson
- 3) The bargaining proposition : - Leiserson
- 4) Policy positions and the range of coalition
- 5) Minimal range theory : - Leirerson and Axelsod

**1. Minimal winning coalition theory** was given by Vonnewmann<sup>4</sup> and Morgenstern. According to this theory once a coalition is winning, the addition of a new member will not increase its value but the other members will have to share the same or a smaller value with the new comer. This Coalition does not contain more actors than necessary to win.

**2. Coalition of minimum size** was given by Riker and Gamson<sup>5</sup>. There has been some confusion about the meaning and derivation of the minimum size principle. For games of actors of unequal weight the coalition of smallest weight, that is the minimum size coalition, is most likely to form among all minimal winning coalition.

**3. The Bargain Proposition**-Leiserson<sup>6</sup> has made use of this property of simple games in the study of Japanese politics. When equal weight is given to every party or person, intangible factors play a role in the formation process. Number of actor increases as anyone can take part

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<sup>3</sup> Vide W.H. Riker and others –An introduction to positive political theory, 1973.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

in coalition as equal weight age is given to all. In this simple model minimal winning theory works.

#### **4. Policy position and the range of coalitions**

Actors are no longer characterized by their weight alone but also by some other expression that indicate their location in and space of policy preferences. eg.- Left, Fascist, Fundamentalists etc.

#### **5. Minimal Range theory**

Preceding theories took into account the numbers and weights of actors but ignored their mutual compatibility. In this theory ideological diversity is incorporated, in which players search for minimal satisfactory payoff which unites actors of minimal ideological diversity.

Each political participant, therefore, must know the extent to which it is willing to sacrifice its ideological or programmatic objectives when it is in coalition in order to achieve monopoly of political power in future. Conversely, short-term political and other gains will be given preference only to the extent that a party visualizes its future prospects. In other words, the emphasis on short-term gains will be conversely proportionate to the perception of future political prospects.

Power maximization theories and policy-based theories present two opposing perspectives on coalition. The first stress: the maximization of payoffs (Power), ignoring the ideological and policy compatibilities, as the key factor in coalition formation. The policy based theories, on the other hand predict coalitions that are composed of member parties adjacent on the ideological scale and at least not incompatible on major issues, thus minimizing the ideological range, and within this limiting condition the minimum number of parties needed for a majority. While it may be possible to find coalitions which conform to the purists view in each of the categories, the real truth may lie somewhere in the middle. That is even when there is stress on power maximization in a coalition, some policy agreements are

inevitable and power maximization efforts may take place in policy based coalition too.

### **5.5 SEEDS OF COALITION GOVERNMENT IN INDIA**

The experiment of coalition represented the politics of opposite extreme of opinions. In fact, both the politics of defection and the politics of coalition appeared as the product of the results of the fourth general election that made a sudden and major breakthrough in the dominance of one-party dominant system.

The experiment of coalition politics in India was a product of the circumstances created by the results of the fourth general elections. This experiment took place in the states of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar-Parades, Madhya-Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar, West-Bengal and Kerala. The non-congress Governments came into being with the wind and went away with the whirlwind leaving definite marks of the success and failure of this novel experiment. The massive defeat of the Congress party in several States in the fourth General elections coupled with the onslaught of political defections created a climate in favour of Coalition Governments in almost all northern states from Punjab to West Bengal. Not only had that, owing to the split in the Congress party, in 1969 the drama of invisible coalition system taken place at the Center as well.

### **5.5 COALITION SYSTEM IN STATES BEFORE 1972**

In the Fourth general elections of 1967, the politics of this country moved from one stage to another "to confront the problems of transferring power from the previously dominant Congress to diverse parties and party coalitions in more than half of the Indian states. Laissez faire liberalism of the Swatantra, democratic socialism of the Paraja-Socialist Party, radical socialism of the Samyukta Socialist Party, regionalism of the Bharatiya Kranti Dal, aggressive nationalism

of the Bhartiya Jana Sangh, scientific socialism of the Communist Party and anti – constitutionalism of the Marxist communist Party all joined together to reap the fruits of power in the changed political situation.

#### **5.5.1. UTTAR PRADESH:**

The coalition politics began in the biggest state of the Union – Uttar Pradesh – on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 1967, when Charan Singh – a very senior congressman of about 46 years standing – defected with a band of his followers to jump into the arms of an impatient opposition. It led to the fall of the Government led by C.B. Gupta of the Congress Party after having a precarious existence of about 18 days. Soon afterwards, the first Coalition Government under the leadership of Charan Singh (common leader of the Samyukta Vihayak Dal) came into being. However, the constituent units began to fall apart in no more time as the cracks within the fort of the SVD started developing on several controversial points like abolition of land revenue on uneconomic holding, place of Urdu as the second official language of the state and nationalization of sugar industry. Situation went on deteriorating that forced Charan Singh to tender his resignation on Feb, 17, 1968 and the state was placed under President's rule a week after. The state of affairs could not improve even after the mid-term polls of Feb, 1969 as no party could secure clear majority though the Congress emerged as the largest party and Charan Singh's BKD occupied the second position. Once again, Congress ministry under C.B. Gupta came into being as this party managed to requisition the support of the Swatantra Party and also of some Independent legislators.

The second Gupta ministry, however, failed to survive for long after the Congress split in Nov, 1968 and in the midst of fresh defections and center – defections another coalition ministry led by Charan Singh was installed in Feb, 1970. This was a BKD – led ministry supported by the time Congress® party. The process of internal

bickering still continued on the sensitive issue of BKD's merger with the ruling Congress party. Matters reached a point when the Congress Ministers tendered their resignations and the Governor had to recommend invocation of Art. 356. After a break of about two weeks, another coalition ministry led by T.N. Singh of the Congress (O) banking on the support of Jana Sangh, SSP and Swatantra came into being. This last coalition Ministry could have a life of some 6 months only. The defeat of the Chief Minister in a by election in the Maniram constituency in Jan 1971 and the land slide victory of the congress ® in the mid-term Lok Sabha election of March 1971 sealed the fate of composite Ministry. It led to counter – defections to the congress fold as a result of which a full – fledged Congress Government under Kamalapati Tripathi came into being that marked the termination of the era of Ministerial instability in the state.

#### **5.5.2. PUNJAB:**

In the state of Punjab, First Coalition Government came into being on March 8, 1967 when Sardar Gurnam Singh – a retired judge of the Punjab High Court and the prominent Jat – Sikh leader – was appointed as the Chief Minister by virtue of being the common leader of the popular United Front consisting of Akali Dal (Sant Group), Akali Dhal (Master Group), CPI, CPM, Jana Sangh, SSP and Republican Party. The Gurnam Singh Government started its career with a very ambitious programme of providing a clean and good administration. This was followed by non-stop efforts of the Congress opposition to topple the PUF ministry by inducing the Process of defection and counter – defection. The role of the Maharaja of Patiala – an independent legislator – created a big problem for the coalition ministry that now wanted to have a liaison with the Congress and then with the PUF for no other reason than to grab the Chief Ministership. It was on account of the murky role of him that the PUF

Ministry witnessed its defeat in the Assembly when a motion of thanks to the Governor was rejected.

Though the First crisis could be tided over, the process of defection and counter – defection continued unabated to give one shaking after another. While some Congress leaders like Balwant Singh, Baloo Ram, Shiv Chandra and Tikka Jagtar Singh swelled the ranks of the PUF, a rift in the Akali Dal (Sant Group) created a big problem. Har Charan Singh Hudiara and Hazara Singh Gill left the Dal and formed another group called New Akali Dal. Difference between the Chief Minister and Sant Fateh Singh reached a stage when the Pro – Sant legislators led by Lachman Singh Gill (Then Minister for Irrigation, Power and Education) left the Front. It led to the fall of first coalition ministry and its replacement by another on 25 Nov, 1967 under Gill banking upon the support of the Congress party. The minority Government of Gill was caught up in a great constitutional debate in March, 1968 when the Speaker (J.S. Mann) twice adjourned the House sine die to frustrate the efforts of the opposition to oust him by a vote of no-confidence. However, the Gill ministry continued in the midst of serious jolts coming from the side of warring Congress legislators until the state was placed under President's rule in August, 1968.

The mid-term polls held in Feb, 1969 led to the installation of another coalition ministry under Gurnam Singh consisting of only few parties – Akali Dal and Jana Sangh. A rift in the ranks of the Akali Dal, however, changed the situation. The issue was that Gurnam Singh supported Gyani Bhupinder Singh in biennial elections to the Rajya Sabha and got him elected against Jathedar Santokh Singh who was counting on the support of Sant Fateh Singh.

A new Akali – Jana Sangh Coalition Government came into being on 27 March, 1970 under Prakash Singh Badal. With the coming in of some defectors to the Akali Dal in a short course of time, the major partner no longer desired the co-operation of the Jana Sangh and a dispute on the issue of Punjabi V. Hindi languages came into the forefront. Looking at the prospects of power, Badal started

hobnobbing with the congress as a result of which the junior partner was forced to part with its share of power resulting in the existence of the purely Akali Government. The results of the mid-term Lok Sabha polls had their definite impact on the state of Punjab and counter – defection to the side of the Congress looked inevitable. In June, 1971 the Badal Ministry was out when the Governor, acting on the advice of his Chief Minister, dissolved the Assembly that signified an end of the drama of coalition Politics in a state ridden with the pressure of regionalism and communalism.

### **5.5.3. HARAYANA**

The smallest and till recently the newest state of the Indian Union created on Nov, 1, 1966 as a result of the linguistic reorganization of the old state of Punjab, Harayana came to have the most notorious place in the history of political defection coupled with the experiment in the field of coalition system. The Congress Government of Bhagwat Dayal Sharma installed after the Fourth general elections of 1967 on 10 March, 1967, with the blessing of the High Command failed to have a life of more than a week when its nominee for Speakership (Daya Kishen) was defeated by a dissident Congressman (Rao Birendra Singh) banking upon the support of the Opposition members, including 12 congressman. It led to the spate of defections. Situations went out of control when Education Minister (Hardwari Lal) left the congress to join the united Front on 22 March. The Congress Chief Minister, thereupon, submitted his resignation and then the Governor invited the Rao to form the UF ministry.

The first UF ministry led by Rao (Who formed his Harayana Congress after leaving the Congress Party) started his career with high hopes and enthusiasm. However, cracks started developing no sooner 13 July he threatened to topple the corrupt, anti- ruralite and Jana Sangh – dominated Coalition Government. Soon after, this Jat leader

was expelled from the UF who thereupon returned to Congress camp leaving his small band of followers behind. Faced with the situation of no-confidence motion coming against his Ministry, the Chief Minister in a sudden and surprising move submitted his resignation and got the opportunity of reconstituting the UF Ministry on 15 July. The only result of this political upheaval was that the Haryana Congress of Rao assumed the name of Vishal Haryana Party.

Though the Chief Minister used tool of Ministerial expansion from time to time, he failed to stem the tide created by the leaders of Congress party as a result of which counter – defections to the side of the Congress continued. Important leaders of the UF like Devi Lal, M.L. Thakur, Om Prakash, Banwari Lal Chakkar, Lachaman Das, Randhir Singh and Chand ram left it one by one. The obdurate Chief Minister still adhered to the strategy of purchasing legislators even at the price of offering cabinet posts so much so that Devi Lal openly accused him of distributing political offices freely to save his minority Government and 'making political life corrupt.

#### **5.5.4. MADHYA – PRADESH**

This state Followed the pattern of Uttar Pradesh where G.N. Singh, a very senior Congressman and Chief Whip of the Congress Legislature Party, with a large number of followers defected form the Party that led to the fall of then Congress Government under D. P. Mishra on 30 July, 1967 and its replacement by a Samyukta Vidhaya Dal Government under this arch defector. The SVD Government started its career with a very ambitious programme and, more particularly, with the blessings of the Rajmata of Gwalior, Maharani Vijaya Raje Scindia, who had defected from the Congress Party a few months back. However, the process of internal bickering upset the implementation of the 24. Point Programme. A tussle between the Jana Sangh and the Chief Minister ensued as the latter, thriving on

the patronage of the Rajmata, paid little regard to the wishes of the former. A group of SVD legislators owing allegiance to the Rajmata formed a group of their own called Lok Sevak Dal and then desired the Chief Minister to provide them Ministerial berths. This proposal was strongly resented by the Jana Sangh and the SSP members. The Jana Sangh Ministers paid no regard to the wishes of the Chief Minister when they left the state to take part in the Kutch agitation. The differences took a very acute form in April, 1968 at the time of biennial elections to the Rajya Sabha.

The obdurate attitude of the Rajmata in respect of choosing nominees for the election frustrated the Chief Minister so much so that he tendered his resignation on 25 April to the co-ordination committee that coincided with a like action of the Rajmata, who desired to quite the chairmanship of this liaison agency on account of her own grievances.

Though the moves made by both the Chief Minister and the Rajmata could not be allowed to make any headway, differences between the two took to the way of getting ever more but never less. The force of circumstances, at last, compelled the Chief Minister to resign, as a result of which a new Government under Raja Naresh Chandra Singh (Former Tribal Welfare Affairs Minister and a central figure in the politics of this state) came into being on 13 March, 1968. This Ministry failed to have a life of more than a week as the outgoing Chief Minister struggled hard to avenge his defeat. As a result of the return of G.N. Singh with his followers to the congress camp & on account of his renewed association with the camp of D.P. Mishra, this coalition Ministry had its fall leading to the return of the congress Party to power.

### **5.5.5. BIHAR:**

The coalition politics had its worst manifestation in the state of Bihar where the people had the misfortune of having Coalition Governments one after another ridden with caste loyalties and political factionalism. The First coalition Ministry under Mahamaya Prasad Sinha was installed on March 5, 1967. It was a SVD Ministry consisting of the CPI, SSP, PSP Jana Sangh and the JKD. Starting its career with wild enthusiasm, it adopted a very ambitious programme that, among others, induced enquiry against former Ministers. It afforded an occasion to the Congress leader in opposition who branded it as 'nothing short of a political vendetta.' In no time, this composite Ministry became a victim of its own crisis fomented by the SSP leader B.P. Mandal. Instead of resigning his Lok Sabha seat in deference to the wishes of his top party leaders, Mandal adhered to his claim of having a seat in the Sinha Cabinet. Feeling frustrated he formed a group of his own henchmen and named it Soshit Dal. Taking advantage of the situation, the Congress leaders had an alliance with the Mandal Faction and managed to defeat the Sinha Ministry on Jan. 25, 1968. As a result of this defeat, M.P. Sinha tendered his resignation a new Ministry of Soshit Dal banking upon the support of the Congress came into being three days after. The role of the Congress dissidents became a problem as some of them desired ouster of the Mandal Government while some other demanded seats in the ministry. The half - hearted support of the strife - ridden Congress party failed to save this ministry when a no-confidence motion tabled by Karpoori Thakur of the SSP was passed on 18 March. Once again, a United Front Ministry under the leadership of Bhola Paswan Sastri came into being on 22 March 1968. However, in no time, the second UF Ministry became unpopular owing to the 'misdeeds' of the Raja of Ramgarh - leader of Janata Party against whom civil cases were Pending in the Calcutta High Court - who was holding a Ministerial

office and asking the Chief Minister to give him political protection against judicial onslaughts. Feeling disappointed, he looked towards the Congress party that was engaged in a war to topple the UF Ministry by any possible hook or crook. A strange alliance between congress Soshit Dal and Janata Party thus brought about the fall of the Paswan Ministry on 25 June, 1968. It also led to the imposition of emergency in the state.

Situation could not improve despite mid – terms polls in Feb. 1969, for no Party could secure absolute majority. After intense Political activity, the Congress managed to requisition the support of Janata Party, BKD, Jharkand, Soshit Dal, Swatantra and 6 Independents as a result of which a coalition ministry led by sardar Harihar Singh came into being on 26 Feb. 1969. Soon after, the Congress – led coalition ministry faced a rough weather when the leaders of the Soshit Dal and Swatantra Party desired slackeinging the process of enquiry against former Ministers and also insisted on the re-allocation of portfolios, while some important Congress leaders demanded ouster of the Raja of Ramgarh. The process of internal bickering had its results sooner than later. The Harihar Ministry fell on June 19, 1969. It led to the installation of another United Front Ministry under Bhola Paswan Shastri three days after. The cracks between the major partners like Jana Sangh, SSP, CPI and PSP could not be patched up as a result of which the second Paswan Ministry fell on July 1. Once again the state was placed under President's rule that was revoked on 16 Feb, 1970 when a Congress ® - led coalition ministry under Daroga Prasad Rai came into being banking on the support of the BKD, Soshit Dal, P-SP, CPI and Jharkhand. The process of internal dissension within the Congress ® party and also within the constituents elements went on unchecked as a result of which this Government had its end on Dec. 18, 1970 after it was defeated in a trial – of strength.

Thereupon, a new SVD Ministry under the leadership of Karpuri Thakur of the SSP assumed office on 22 Dec, 1970 banking on the

support Congress (O), SSP, Swatantra, Jana Sangh, Janata Party, BKD Soshit Dal (Mandla Faction), Rebel P-SP, Hul – Jharkhand (Richard Faction) and some Independents. What gave a rude setback to this composite Ministry was the blow of the Indira – Waves as was evident in the mid – term Lok Sabha polls of March, 1971. The leaders of the Congress ® formed a new alliance called Progressive Vidhayak Dal consisting of the CPI, SSP, Sonshit Dal and Jhar Khand under the leadership of Bhola Paswan Sastri. The trend of counter – defection to the side of the congress became so quick that it portended imminent dangers to Thakur Ministry that failed to survive any longer. Ultimately the last coalition ministry went the traditional way leading to the restoration of the Congress rule in the state of Bihar.

#### **5.5.6. KERALA :**

The only state where Coalition Government could have a successful experiment and that remained in operation after 1972 is that of Kerala. The first coalition ministry came into being on March 6, 1969 under the leadership of E.M.S. Namboodripad of the CPM, leaving the Congress party to sit in opposition. The process of internal dissensions, however, came to have its open manifestation in the summer of 1969 when relations between the two major partners CPI and CPM became strained. While the CPI Ministers laid more and more stress on the need for mechanizing agriculture to improve food situation and supported the move for a collaboration with certain Japanese firms like Mitsubishi for making the industrial development of the state, the COM Ministers opposed these proposals as the former would create more unemployment in the rural areas and the latter amount to the surrender of socialism. The CPI Ministers openly accused the CPM Ministers of interfering in their departments when the Chief Ministers expressed the idea of holding judicial enquiries into charges against the two Ministers belonging to the CPI, on 16 June, 1969, the CPM submitted 7 resolutions to the co-ordination

committee of the United Front – one desiring to censure strongly the CPI for making the conspiracy a live issue again, another alleging that T.V. Thomas was protecting M. Ramakrishnan, General Manager of the Travancore Cochin Chemicals (a Public – sector enterprise) while an enquiry was in progress against him, and one more asking the UF Co-ordination Committee to ratify the action of the Chief Ministers in ordering judicial enquiries into charges against P.K. Kunju of the ISP and exonerating his own party Ministers like Krishna (Forest Ministers) and Bo Welling don (Health Minister) belonging to the K.T.P.

The ministerial crisis reached a point that six non – CPM Ministers, namely, M.N. Govindan Nair and T.V. Thomas of the CPI, Mohammed Koya and Abukader Kutty Naha of the Muslim League, T.K. Divakaran of the R.S.P. and P.R. Kurup of the ISP, jointly announced their resignation on 16 Oct 1969. They accused the Chief Minister of making a political decision on the issue of corruption charges by putting the CPI and ISP Ministers before the Inquiry Commission along with the Health Minister of the K.T.P. They demanded that the proposed judicial enquiry should be made against all the Ministers. A resolution to this effect moved by T.A. Majid of the CPI was passed by 69 votes to 60 on Oct. 24 that signified the fall of the EMS Ministry. Thus came into being the second coalition ministry under Achutha Menon of the CPI on Nov 1, 1969 banking on the support of ISP, RSP, Kerala Congress and Muslim League. The CPM was thus forced to sit in opposition while the blessings of Congress party were too obvious for the CPI –led Coalition Ministry. Yet a state of political uncertainty persisted and with a view to do away with it the Assembly was dissolved by the Governor on June 26, 1970 on the advice of the Chief Minister, mid-term polls took place on Sept. 17, 1970 in which the alliance (Consisting of the CPI, Congress, RSP, P-SP and Muslim League) emerged victorious as a result of which the third Coalition Ministry under Achutha Menon came into being on Oct. 4, 1970.

Some leaders of the Muslim League created problems by walk in out of the coalition. However, the reason for the continues existence of this non-Congress – led Coalition Government should be looked into the blessings of the Congress party that the Chief Minister (Of the CPI) had been enjoying right from the time of the fall of the first coalition ministry under E.M.S. Naboodripad of the C.P.M.

#### **5.5.7. ORISSA :**

Among all coalition experiments, during this period, Orissa alone under R.N. Singh Deo of Swatantra Party furnished the case of a stable and a quite successful Government. It came into being on account of Swatantra – Jana Congress combination. While other Governments came with the wind and went away with the whirlwind, it could well survive as its basis was premeditated and well – conceived Alliance for providing a democratic alternative to the Congress misrule. It was not constituted according to any post mortem alliance of some organizations suffering from the observation of anti-Congressism. It was a mark of the victory of its 21 – point programme place before the electorate as a positive offer of a clear-cut alternative arrangement. It is for this reason that this Government alone could achieve laudable objecting like abolition of land revenue on uneconomic holdings, separation of judiciary from the executive, substitution of redundant Zilla Parishads and Village Panchayats with advisory bodies, appointment of an Evaluation Committee for public undertaking under Prof. P.S. Loknathan and, above all, setting up the Khanna and Mudholakar Enquiry Commissions against former Chief Ministers, Biju Patanaik and Dr. Hare Krishan mahtab respectively.

The coalition experiment in Orissa had its first failure when the Chief Minister resigned on March 15, 1970. It happened owing to the wire-pulling of the leaders of the ruling Congress party that managed to secure sizeable defections. The real purpose, however, remained unserved as the second coalition ministry came into being with the

same leader as the Chief Minister. The determination of the Chief Minister to take follow – up action against Dr. Mahtab as per the recommendations of the Mudholkar Commission Reports forced the junior partner of the Coalition Government to rise in revolt. Dr. Mahtab tendered his resignation on 6 Aug, 1970 and stressed the point that the Chief Minister should advise the Governor to hold mid-term polls as the only way to restore stability in administration. The situation of stalemate continued for some time. The fall of the Deo Ministry became certain when Banamali Patnaik (Education Minister) belonging to the Jana congress resigned on Dec. 30, 1970 and Pabitra Mohan Pardhan (The Deputy Chief Minister) did the same a week after. Thus R.N. Singh Deo submitted his resignation on Jan. 9, 1971 that led to the occurrence of the mid-term polls. In March, 1971 the results of the polls astonished all. While the new Congress managed to win Lok Sabha elections by a thumping majority even in the state of Orissa, it failed to have the same results in the Vidhan Sabha elections. In a House of 140, the New Congress could secure 51 seats, while Swatantra Party got 36 and Utkal Congress of Biju Patnaik secured 32 seats. As alliance between these two parties (with Jharkand also) led to the installation of another coalition ministry under B.C. Das. The Indira wave could, however, have its blow and after a couple of months the last coalition experiment failed as a sizeable section of the Utkal Congress under Nilomany Routray defected to the Congress – fold leaving the Chief Minister in a state of minority. Thus the Congress rule was restored under the Chief Minister ship of Mrs. Nandini Satpathy.

#### **5.5.8. WEST BENGAL:**

The drama of coalition system took place in the State of West Bengal when Ajoy Kumar Mukherji of the Bangla Congress formed the United Democratic Front Government on 2 March, 1967. However, what created a set of insurmountable problems for this 14 party United

Front was the role of violent and militant activities played by the workers in the urban industrial and by the Naxalities in the backward agrarian areas. Dissensions started developing on the points as to what should be done to deal with the situation of general lawlessness. At one stages, even the Chief Minister was reported to have desired to topple his Government by defecting from the U.F. dissatisfied with the attitude of the CPM, several members of the UF defected and the Governor had to dismiss the Mukherji Ministry in Nov. 1967 when the Chief Minister refused to advice him to call an early session of the Assembly for a trail of strength. It led to the installation of a minority Government under Dr. P.C. Ghosh (who had formed his Progressive Democratic Front) banking on the support of the Congress Party. The Ghosh Government failed to survive as the speaker twice adjourned the House sine die and there by blocked the functioning of the popularly elected House on the plea that the new Ministry was illegally constituted. Though the Congress leaders had joined the Ghosh Ministry to strengthen the hands of the Chief Minister, the autocratic behaviour of the Speaker in not letting the House function created a great constitutional crisis that could be dealt with by invoking Art 356 of the Constitution. Thus, the State came under President's rule on 20 Feb., 1968.

The mid - term polls of Feb, 1969 produced the same result. Once again a Coalition Ministry under Ajoy Mukherji came into being on 25 Feb, soon after installation, this ministry packed up scuffles with the Governor on the subject of his inaugural address to the legislature. Undeterred by the hostile attitude of the CPM - dominate Coalition Ministry, the Governor read his address covering the two controversial portions given therein that had cast aspersions on the integrity of his previous conduct and also on the position of the Central Government. Though the second Mukherji Ministry succeeded in having the Vidhan Parishad abolished and Governor Dharm Vira replace by S.S. Dhawan it became a victim of its own mischievous designs committed by its most recalcitrant partner - CPM. The attitude of the then Home

Minister, Jyoti Basu, became so arrogant and unruly that even the Chief Minister had to adopt the most peculiar way of resorting to hunger strike twice in order to correct his colleagues by means of Gandhian techniques. The wide spread labour unrest brought industrial work to a stand still and violence became the order of the day. Ultimately the Mukherji Ministry had to go on 16 March, 1970 and the state was once again placed under President rule.

Mid-term polls took place in March, 1971. In spite of the blow of the Indira Wave, the Congress (R) failed to win absolute majority, though it improved its position highly. The CPM – dominated united Left Front also failed to have a clear majority. However, a tangible change took place in the formation of the third Coalition Ministry under Ajoy Mukherji. With a determined bid to keep the CPM out of power, polarization took place under the leadership of the third Mukherji Ministry banking on the support of the Congress and the CPI – dominated United Left Democratic Front. The last Coalition Ministry too failed to survive as the Chief Minister felt helpless in controlling the fast deteriorating situation caused by the heavy influx of refugees coming from the civil war – from territory of the then East Pakistan. It had its end in June, 1971. The drama of coalition politics thus ended in this State in as much as the Congress ( R) managed to regain power as a result of electros of 1972.

#### **5.5.8. COALITION POLITICS IN STATES AFTER 1972 :**

The basic change in the trend of coalition politics occurred after 1972. Aware of their weaknesses, limitations and inherent contradictions, most of the non-Congress parties started thinking in terms of accepting J.P's appeal for the liquidation of their separate identities so that one strong party might emerge on the scene to offer a viable alternative to the hitherto powerful party. It was owing to this that some parties headed by the Congress (o) could successfully

contest elections to the Assembly of Gujarat in June 1974 and have their Government under J.B. Patel. (It was Coalition Government headed by the Congress (o) and having other constituents as the Jana Sangh, BLD, Socialists, National Labour Party and some Independents.) The first 'Janata Front Ministry,' as it was called, could survive till March, 1976 as the ruling party managed to have its own Government there under M.S. Solanki after a brief spell of President's rule.

Another instance of a Coalition Government in this period is that of Kerala where a CPI - led but congress - dominated till 1977. The elections to the State Assembly were held in 1970, but the tenure of the House was twice extended. Fresh elections took place in March 1977. In which the Ruling Front having Congress, Kerala Congress, Muslim League, revolutionary Socialist Party, National Democratic Party and Praja - Socialist Party with Congress as the biggest constituent came into power. The result was that another Coalition Ministry headed by the CPI leader came into being.

The great call issued by J.P. for the polarisation of all non-Congress rather anti-Congress, parties failed to live without its effect. The atrocities of emergency forced all the non-Congress organization to draw and devise effective arrangement to act as a viable alternative to the 'authoritarian party' of the country and, at the same time, be capable of solving the problem of their political survival. Hence the Janata Party emerged as a coalition of Congress (O), BLD, Jana Sangh and Socialist parties in which the CFD and the rebel Congressmen became additional elements. The Janta Government at the Center headed by Morarji Desai could be said to be a coalition in the sense that due care was taken while distributing tickets for the Lok Sabha election, and the selection of the leaders of different constituent before finalizing the list of cabinet Ministers. Move over, the Prime Minister included the members of the Akali Dal of Punjab and congress (O) of Tamilnadu in his cabinet. Not only this, the way different constituents, despite their formal merger in May, 1977 struggled for

the distribution of election tickets (as happened subsequently on the eve of state Assembly elections ) and then getting seats in the Council of Ministers and sharing there wards of political achievement all bore ample testimony to the same.

The result of the state Assembly elections held in June 1977 and thereafter opened another way for the formation of Coalition Governments fielding new experiments in this regard. The Government of the Janta - Akali Dal was formed in Punjab and a CPM - Janata Ministry came into being in West - Bengal. In other states where the Janta Party managed to secure absolute majority (as in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Harayana, Orissa and Himachal Pradesh), no such apparent coalition system prevailed, though one could easily find out the coalitional character of these Governments in view of the fact that the party itself was nothing else than a conglomerate alliance of several heterogeneous elements. It is owing to this that the dissident elements raised their head with the result that the Governments of Ram Naresh Yadav in Uttar Pradesh and of Karpoori Thakur in Bihar fell and new Governments came into being on the basis of fresh understandings. The break away wing of the Janata Party under Raj narjan Dal after some time. It managed to have its Government in Utter Pradesh under Banarasi Das, but it failed to dislodge the Government of Ram sunder Das in Bihar owing to a new development, namely, the support of the congress (I) to the Government headed by Harijan leader.

Coalition politics had a different form in the state of Maharashtra. On March 7, 1978 a Coalition Government came into being with Vasant Rao Patil of the Congress (S) as Chief Minister and N.K. Tirpude of the Congress (I) as Deputy Chief Minister. It could not last long as the industries Minister, Sharad Pawar, enthused with the secret support of the Janata Party as well as thriving on his close association with Y.B. Chavan of the congress (S) broke away and formed his parallel congress organization called progressive Democratic Front.

The result was the installation of a new coalition ministry under Pawar on July 18, 1978 with Janata, PWP, CPM, RPI (Kamble), PRI (Khobaragade) and Maharashtra socialist congress as the partners. The Pawar Government was sacked along with other state Governments by the centre in Feb 1980.

Reference may also be made to the state of Kerala where a coalition ministry with P.K. Vasudevan Nair of the CPI and having Congress (S), RPS, Kerala Congress, RSP and Muslim League came into being on October 29, 1978. It assumed office when A.K. Antony, (Chief Minister) resigned in protest against the comment of the congress Parliamentary Board that he had indirectly helped Mrs. Gandhi in the Chikmagalur by-election. It fell after about a year. On October 12, 1979 a new coalition ministry under C.H. Mohammed Koya of the ML came into being with Bal Krishan of the P.S.P and N. Bhaskaran Nair of the NDP banking on the support of congress (U), Congress (I) Kerala congress and Janata Party. It was by all means a peculiar development in view of the fact that it was headed by a Muslim Leaguer and had the support of both the congresses and Janata Parties. More over, it did not have the support of the communist party – a new development after an interlude of about 12 years, a Marxist – led Government assumed office in this state on January 25, 1980 with E.K. Nayarnar as the Chief Minister and having four representatives each of the CPM, and Congress (U), three of the CPI, two each of the Kerala Congress (Mani group) and RSP and one each of the All – India Muslim League and Kerala congress (Pillai group). The significance of this coalition set up may be seen in the re-union of the CPI and the CPM and all other parties and groups opposed to the congress led by Mrs. Indira Gandhi.

What is very important in this regard was the installation of the Janata (S) – Congress (S) Government as the centre under the Prime Ministership of Chaudhry Charan Singh in July, 1979. When Prime

Minister Morarji Deasi resigned, the Janata (S) stacked its claim and could have the chance to form the Government. The congress (S) and congress (I) Parties declared their support to it. In not much time some more parties like the Akali Dal, CPM, CFD and A-IADMK extended their support to it. The Congress (S) issued a 10 – point programme on the basis of which it joined the Government. The congress (I) decided to support it from outside. Shortly after, the Akali Dal and the A-IADMK also joined it. This Government could not last beyond a period of some four weeks. It fell when the congress (I) decided not to support the confidence motion tabled by the Prime Minister. The brief experiment at the centre gave an indication of a 'fragile coalition born out of high drama and low comedy.

A study of the coalition 'politics' in the content of the J.P. movement leaves the same impression that nothing but sheer opportunism remains the sheet – anchor of political behaviour that is further supplemented with the trend of anti-congressism, where possible. A noticeable shift became striking in the attitude of the CPI that pursued itself away from the Congress (I) and instead came closer to the CPM. The fact that even the Congress (U) has been allowed to join coalition ranks, as in Kerala, further testifies to the fact of the hostility of opposition parties towards the Congress led by Mrs. Gandhi that was ruled as the real Indian National Congress by the Election Commission.

A brief survey of coalition politics in the recent past shows that it continued to dominate the political scene of Kerala and West Bengal, Though it could make its dent, for the first time, in the state of Karnataka. Another Coalition Government headed by K. Karunakaran was sworn in Kerala on Dec. 28, 1981. It included congress (I), Indian union Muslim League, Congress (s) (Antony Group), Kerala congress (Joseph Group), National Democratic Party, Praja – Socialist Party, and Revolutionary socialist Party (Nair Group). It went out of existence

when L. Lambadan of the Kerala congress withdrew the support of his party in protest against the 'authoritarianism' of the congress (I) as revealed in the arbitrary role of the speaker who committed an 'undemocratic act' by casting his vote three times in a day to save the ministry. Thus, Kerala was placed under President's rule on March 17, 1982. Then, another united Democratic Front led by Karuna Karan came into being after new elections on May 24, 1982. It includes congress (I), congress (Antony Groups), Kerala a congress (M), Kerala congress (J), Janata (Rebel), Revolutionary Socialist Party (Sreekantan Group), P.S.P and D.L.P.

Since the CPI-M led alliance secured absolute majority in the Assembly election of 1982. It included CPI-M, RSP, Forward Bloc & some minor parties. Just 2 months after, a crisis occurred when RSP and FB Ministers resigned in protest against Chief Minister's proposal for bifurcating their departments in the name of efficiency of administration and closer Ministerial monitoring. However, the matter ended with the reallocation of portfolios on August 24, 1982. For the first time, Coalition Government was formed in Karnataka in January, 1983 when Janata and Karnataka Kranti Ranga could secure clear majority with support of the BJP.

#### **5.5.10 CRITICAL ESTIMATE**

Our study of the Coalition Governments made in eight states of the Indian union, big small, during the period of the politics of fragmentation and polarization leads to these impressions:

(1)- Coalition politics made many experiments with the working of our parliamentary system of Government. It put our pattern of Government under severe strain. The office of the Governor that was so far considered as a gubernatorial job became the butt of criticism in the name of its being a tool in the hands of the center irrevocably wedded to the policy of beating and crushing non-congress

Governments at the state level. The Chief Minister virtually lost the Privilege of being the 'master of his Ministers' and his position was undermined to the extent that he was dubbed as a 'postman' by some mischievous constituents. The norm of Ministerial responsibility to the legislature was thoroughly dishonored as a result of different Minister's pulling in different directions. It amounted to the decline of the executive. The neutral character of the civil services was also affected and it was found that the bureaucrats had strengthened their interference in view of the weak position of the Ministers. What undermined the position of the cabinet, above all, was the existence and role of the co-ordination committee of all constituents that assumed the status of a super Cabinet. The selection of the Chief Minister and his Ministers along with their portfolios and any change in the composition of the ministry became the concern of this extra - constitutional agency living under the control of one who was neither a Chief Minister nor even a Minister, in most of the cases. It made the Chief Minister like a show boy and converted his cabinet into a body rubber - stamping what the barons of the committee desired.

(2)- Coalition Government represented the most unscrupulous exercise in the sphere of political opportunism. It was just for the sake of capturing power that the issues of ideological significance were either side stepped or compromise and non-congress Governments of a most heterogeneous variety came into being. Despite serious efforts made by some important leaders, no headway could be made in the direction of political polarization either among the 'rightist' parties like the Swatantra and the Jana Sangh or among the leftist like the SSP and P-SP who were so eager to form socialist bloc. The process of internal bickering continued to have its flow and the shrewd leaders of the congress party could well cash the capital they so ardently desired. Thus, the lure of office sharpened the pace of political defections that always kept the Coalition Government ridden with the effects of political instability.

(3)-The politics of unscrupulous combinations manifested such a fluid situation that the line of demarcation between the Government and the opposition lost its clarity and preciseness in most of the cases owing to the conditions of political stalemate and large – scale shifting of political affiliations and allegiances. Most of the constituent partners behaved like interest groups rather than like political parties, in a real sense, by switching their loyalties in the manner of rank opportunism. It could be easily found that what the Ministers belonging to one Political party could not gain in the meetings of the cabinet or of the co-ordination committee, they sought to have by their alliances with the parties in opposition. Thus there occurred the strange spectacle of stating one thing by the Ministers in the meeting of the meeting of the cabinet, another in the legislature, and till another in their public utterances.

It is, however, certain that coalition experiments, regardless of the fact of their success or failure, believed the forecasts of the prophets of doom and despair. Several interesting experiments brought home the point, as an English columnist well pointed out, that the politics in India is rehabilitated in the eyes of its own people and is ready for further development." The rise and fall of several Coalition Governments made the electorate wiser and, therefore discriminating as a result of which some like the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, Bharatiya Karanti Daly, Samyukta socialist Party, Swatantra, CPI and the CPM, that had got the chance of sharing the fruits of power, were so badly relegated to a more pitiable position and the congress, that had been so badly rejected by them, was once again given the passport of power. In fine, these experiments proved that all-India segment of the political system was high in the absence of over whelming disturbance of the system from outside notably invasion or unremitting economic cries

## **5.6. HISTORY OF COALITION GOVERNMENTS AT THE CENTRE [1977-79 AND 1989-2004 ONWARDS]**

One party-the National Congress has been in power at the Union level for nearly 45 of the 54 years since independence. Until 1967, the same party dominated the scene and formed Governments in most of the States also. Only after the 1967 general elections, in many States, non-Congress Coalition Governments were formed by parties and groups coming together on anti Congress platforms of Samyukta Vidhayak Dal (S.V.D.). At the Union level, the one party monopoly of power of the Congress was first broken in 1977, when in the wake of emergency excess, Congress was badly mauled.

### **5.6.1. THE FIRST COALITION GOVERNMENT [1977-79]**

The first coalition experiment at the center could be said to have taken place with the installation of the Janata Party Government in 1977. The Janata Party itself was nothing but a giant coalition, though technically the constituent parties had agreed to merge their identity with the new party. But in practice all the old parties, particularly the Jan Sangh and the Socialists maintained their separate identity. Charan Singh also kept his group alive. The CFD of Jagjivan Ram and Bahuguna always worked like a separate party in all respects. The Akali Dal was anyhow an outside partner in the Government. The Communists were supporting this Government though they were not constituent part of the Government. Thus the Janata Government was a strange mix of various political ideologies and was subject to different pressures. It had its genesis in the common sufferings of most of its members during the emergency OF 1975 and it derived its binding force from the common hatred and fear its members held from Mrs. Gandhi. It did not had any Common Minimum Programme to implement. The mutually conflicting interests of its constituents and above all the unbridled ambitions of most of its

old leaders soon made their joint survival impossibility. The Janata Government came down on the issue of dual membership of its erstwhile Jan Sangh faction.

After Morarji Desai, Charan Singh formed the Government with the assurance of outside support of Indira Congress. This Government can not be considered a Coalition Government because there was no agreement between the parties, forming this Government or supporting this Government. This Government was purely a result of unprincipled ambition of Charan Singh and his cronies. Even the understanding between him and Mrs. Gandhi did not last long and even before Charan Singh could face the Parliament, Mrs. Gandhi withdrew her promised support and Charan Singh had to resign. Charan Singh went down in the history as the only Prime Minister who never faced the Parliament.

The era of Coalition Governments beginning with V.P. Singh's National front in 1989 has had a jinxed history with no such outfit being able to complete its full five – year term.

### **5.6.2. Ninth Lok Sabha-(1989-91)**

It was for the first time that no party had secured a clear majority. A minority Government of Janata Dal was formed by Prime Minister V.P. Singh with the support of BJP and the Left parties from outside. The ninth Loksabha had the unique distinction of having the single largest party. The Congress(I) with 197 members as the officially recognized Opposition and the former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was the first Prime Minister to sit as the leader of the Opposition in the Ninth Lok Sabha.

The Prime Minister V.P. Singh's minority National Front Coalition Government, formed in December 1989 fell within eleven months in November 1990.

The Ninth Lok Sabha was constituted by the Election Commission on December 2, 1989 thus automatically paving the way for summoning the new Lok Sabha by the President. No party has emerged with clear cut majority in the Lok Sabha. The Congress with 197 members was the largest single party in the newly constituted Lok Sabha. However it was not sufficient to form the Government, and hence Rajiv Gandhi informed the President that the Congress was not staking its claim to form the Government.



It is important to evaluate the formation of the V P Singh Government as a precedent because a superficial view would support the theory that the President called upon the leader of the National Front to form the Government as Congress(I), though the largest party, was 'rejected' by the electorate.

In fact it turns out that the President did not subscribe to this view. The President while inviting V P Singh to form the new Government issued a carefully worded communiqué. The president clearly implied that had Rajiv Gandhi opted to form a Government as the leader of the largest party he would have allowed him to do so and seek a vote of confidence. That Rajiv Gandhi did not so opt was a matter of political arithmetic and not because of Constitutional constraint. By this statement the President also rejected the theory that largest party had no claim to form a Government after a General election if the electorate voted for it with a reduced membership than before.

Was the President on good grounds in stating this? In this as in other areas of the President's discretionary powers, there are no clear out guidelines or precedents either in India or U.K. There is certainly no firm constitutional convention in the U.K. supporting the view of some constitutional experts that in the circumstances in which the Congress(I) party lost its previous majority the President was bound to

send for the leader of the second largest party to form the Government.

**One aspect of the President's action needs comment.** The President put V.P. Singh to terms by asking him to take a vote of confidence in Lok Sabha within 30 days. This appears to be taken from the precedent of Sanjiva Reddy putting Charan Singh to prove his support in the Lok Sabha after the fall of Morarji Desai's Janata Government in 1979. This was an exceptional case where Charan Singh's support in Lok Sabha was from the very inception considered doubtful. There was no reason for the President to have put V.P. Singh to similar term as the BJP and the Communists had declared support to V.P. Singh assuring him of a majority, in any case, the strength of the new Government would have been sooner or later tested in Lok Sabha and therefore the time limit of 30 days imposed by the President appears to be unnecessary and forming a wrong precedent.

Full marks must be given to the President for his concern for democratic process [as when he gave orders to the Election commission to investigate complaints of alleged mal-practices in Amethi], his tact and foresight in clarifying his action by issuing a Communiqué.

Prime Minister V.P. Singh's minority National Front Coalition Government, formed in December 1989 fell within eleven months in November 1990 after the BJP withdraw its outside support following the arrest of its President L.K. Advani during his controversial Rath Yatra.

Chandra Shekhar, who formed another revelation Government with Congress support from out side in November 1990, resigned in March 1991 after Congress with draw its support within four month in protest against the alleged surveillance at the residence of its President Rajiv Gandhi by the Harayana Police.

The Ninth Lok Sabha's experiment of minority Governments run with outside support having flopped, the country was back to square one facing General Election within less than two years.

### **5.6.3. Tenth Lok Sabha (1991-96)**

A clear majority for a party to form a stable Government which was the crucial need of the hour had eluded every party. The elections had conveyed that the people were either disgusted with the political system and therefore, disinterested and alienated or not at all sure of themselves, confused with the available alternatives and not able to decide, or were sadly segmented as a result of aggressive, confrontationist and divisive politics of vote banks played by almost all parties. Congress (I) emerged as by far the largest party in the House but a little short of absolute majority to form a stable Government on its own. The sympathy generated as a result of the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi did add a few seats to the Congress (I) tally but it was not enough. But the Congress Government strengthened its numerical position in the Lok Sabha and acquired simple majority largely through managing splits in Opposition parties and allowing Opposition members to defect to its rank allegedly through outright cash prizes and promises of Ministerships and the like. There was an interval of stability for five years from June 1991 as P.V. Narsimha Rao completed his full term at the Head of a Congress Government.

Hung Parliament resulted from the eleventh General Election during 1996. It regionalised national politics. The Chief Ministers of the States played a leading role in selecting one of them as the Prime Minister.

### **5.6.4. ELEVENTH LOK SABHA ( 1996-98)**

It was assumed that the B.J.P. had won, so it should govern. It was called to govern too. BJP had 119 members in 1991 next only to the Congress (I). In 1996 it has emerged as the single largest party with

161 members and with its allies Shivsena 15, samata 8, and Haryana Vikas party 3, it had demonstrated an impressive tally of 187. But the problem arose with 543 members in the Parliament, thus requiring more members for BJP to rule. Thus it remained beyond the reach of the party, whose Government collapsed even without formal voting. Vajpayee, who headed the first BJP – led Coalition Government after the May 1996 Polls, resigned on May 28, 1996, on the floor of Lok Sabha, unable to muster a simple majority.

Moreover, BJP had won seats only in 11 states while India consists of 25 states and 6 Union Territories. In 1996 BJP had made its now presence in Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir and Chandigarh but was wiped out in Assam, Himanchal Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh. BJP had no representatives from 132 seats in the south. So BJP might have won election only to become a leader of opposition. Even with the grace of Sri Ram, its number was unlikely to increase in the free market of parliamentary politics, given its rustic cast iron character making it unsocial.

Then comes Congress (I) with its 140 seats, even less than what it got in 1977 in the Janata wave. After losing as many as 109 seats from its tally, it had emerged as the biggest loser in the election. Congress (I) did not form the Government in 1989 though it then had a bigger tally than the BJP had in 1996. In 1991 it was on the ascendance and the minor deficit it had then for absolute majority was filled from the free political market. In 1996, Congress (I) lost 16 seats in north, 55 in south, 40 in the west. But what was both astounding and embarrassing for both Jyoti Basu and Laloo Prasad, it had gained two seats more in the eastern region obtaining 37 out of the total 142 seats, compared to 25 seats in 1991. Congress may not be that red in tooth and claw and was being considered less harmful by its worst opponents not minding its support. But its thin presence covered 30 seats and union territories in 1991, 25 this time. However, all this can

not deny the fact that Congress (I) has lost this diction even losing the place of major opposition and will have to sit quietly in the back extending unqualified support as it gave to Charan Singh in 1979 and Chandra Shekhar in 1991. Other parties destroy opponents by attacking, while Congress (I) destroys by lending support.

Then comes the Third Front, a combination of National Front and Left front, which was also a loser in the election but has rushed to form the Government. Janta Dal spearheading the move had been reduced from 60 to 44 between 1991 and 1996. However, its loss of 20 seats in U.P. and 10 seats in Bihar has been partly compensated by 15 seats in Karnataka. Samajwadi party, an ally of JD, got in 1991. Similarly in the Left Front, CPI (M)s seats had been reduced from 37 to 32, CPIs from 14 to 13 the forward Block remains constant at three while the RSP had added one seat taking its total to five. In any way, like NF, this time LF also stands loser in the election. So altogether it was not respectable position to lay claim to form Government at Delhi. So United Front had been floating which included TMC (20) DMK. (17) TDP (16), AGP (5), INC (T) (4) etc adding the strength of 65 supported by 12 members of other smaller parties. All these took the strength to 190 at par with that of BJP group to form a new Government to be headed by one most malleable politician, Deve Gowda, the JD Chief Minister from Karnataka. However, the new Government was beset with two upsetting problems from the beginning. Even after adding everything it was far short of absolute majority in the Parliament needing constant support from Congress (I). Further, by shifting Deve Gowda to Delhi, infighting amongst the warring groups of JD has erupted in Karnataka destabilizing groups of JD had erupted in Karnataka destabilizing the Karnataka Government before delivering a stable Government at the Center.

H.D. Deve Gowda who succeeded Vajpayee as the head of the United Front Coalition Government on June 1, 1996, lasted for just 10

months and resigned on April 11, 1997 after losing a confidence vote necessitated by the Congress withdrawal of support.

I.K. Gujral who succeeded Gowda as the Prime Minister in another United Front Government resigned in seven months on November 28, 1997, after the Congress again withdrew support over the **Jain** Commission issue.

#### **5.6.5. Twelfth Lok Sabha [1998-99]**

Vajpayee again took over as Prime Minister in March 1998, in the Twelfth Lok Sabha, heading a Coalition Government after the general elections and resigned 13 months later on April 17, 1999 after losing the confidence vote in the Lok Sabha. The Vajpayee Government was dependant on support of a number of allies, AIADMK being one of such allies. The leader of the AIADMK, Ms Jaylalitha, a highly mercurial person, and at the time she was facing a number of court cases involving charges of corruption. She felt that the Vajpayee Government was not doing enough to bale her out of the corruption cases. She, therefore, tried to keep the Vajpayee Government on tenterhooks on the issue of her party's support. Her threats to withdraw the support were frequent, and the consequent negotiations between her and the majority coalition partners looked like a political farce. Ultimately both the sides ran out of patience and in April 1999, Ms Jaylalitha finally announced withdrawal of her party support to the Government. She met Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, the leader of the Congress party at a tea party and declared her support for the Congress. However, the Congress failed to muster support of sufficient number of M.P.s to form a Government. The Samajwadi Party of Mr. Mulayam Singh refused to support Mrs. Gandhi, and thus, though, one Government was voted out, new Government could not be formed. The parliament was dissolved. Thus, the 12<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha turned out to be the short-termed.

#### **5.6.5. Thirteen Lok Sabha [1999-2004]**

The elections that followed the fall of the Vajpayee Government, could not produce any clear majority in the Lok Sabha. The popular verdict, once again was a hung parliament. The BJP and some regional parties had formed a pre-election alliance – named as the National Democratic Alliance in short the NDA. The NDA, under the leadership of Shri Vajpayee, formed the Government with the outside support of the Telugu Desham party. This Government had to face many ups and downs, some of the coalition partners left the coalition ( Trinmool Congress and the PMK) and then rejoined it and Government was rolling on. But there were many parties in this alliance with different ideologies, mostly inimical to each other, that the Government looked like a rudderless ship, being twisted and tossed around on the waves without any sense of direction.

#### **5.6.7. FOURTEENTH LOK SABHA [2004 ONWARDS]**

However, it would be wrong to assume that during 1991-96 India witnessed interlude from coalition politics. For one, the Congress Government headed by P.V. Narasimha Rao was a minority Government, enjoying support of some regional groups; and for another, the political map of the country was dotted with coalition experiments. Each of the political parties was busy building either social or political coalition.

Contrary to popular impression, coalition politics did not take rest at the national level during the tenure of PV Narasimha Rao Government. The minority Congress Government survived on the support of several small groups till Narasimha Rao and the Congress got its arithmetic right. The Thirteen day BJP led Government in May 1996 too helped the sprouting of coalition culture at the National level. For one the BJP with 161 seats had the support of 31 more MPs

in the Loksabha. And for another, its alliance was restricted to Shiv Sena in Maharashtra and Shiromani Akali Dal in Punjab. A strong resistance by the members and the allies of the United Front to align with the BJP indicated a pattern in coalition making. That the emerging pattern would dissipate within a couple of years due to contradictions within was beyond any possible political conjecture then. More particularly the weakening of reaction against the Majoritarian mobilization of the BJP with a strong sectarian communal bias due to the party's attempt to defer the contentious issues and broad basing of the alliance could also not be guessed. Of course, political opportunism too played a role in this.

Apart from the internal wrangling within the coalition partners, which played no mean role in eroding the popular legitimacy of the United Front and the Janata Dal, it is important to have a look at the issues that brought the UF partners together and the Outside support phenomenon in the history of coalition making in India, which has so far proved the bane of coalition politics in India. On the one hand the UF was bound together by twin 'anti' factors – anti Congressism and anti communal stand against the BJP. On the other hand, it stressed its adherence to secular values. Though the outside support by the Congress to the UF in 1996 and 1997 was part of political compulsions of both the parties, it was different in nature as compared to the earlier ones in 1979, 1989 and 1990. The outside support given by the Congress to Charan Singh's breakaway Janata Party (s) in 1979 and to Chandrashekar's breakaway Samajwadi Janata Dal in 1990 were strategically maneuvered to destabilize Morarji Desai and V.P. Singh led Governments respectively. The critical support offered by the BJP to the V.P. Singh led National Front in 1989 too seemed brittle as ideological and policy incompatibilities were too stark. However on a smaller scale, the BJP led Government in 1998-99 was also supported from the outside by AIADMK and Trinamul Congress and the support of the AIADMK proved to be a bane for the Government. While the outside support may be dictated

by the immediate political compulsions of political parties and formations, the co-existence remains uneasy. Even if the party providing outside support does not try backseat driving, it may expect accommodation of its political interests. Partisanship and other incongruities involved in this expectation may lead to political crash of kinds that Indian politics witnessed in 1989, 1996, 1997 and 1999. However, it would be wrong to assume that during 1991-96 India witnessed interlude from coalition politics. For one, the Congress Government headed by P.V. Narasimha Rao was a minority Government, enjoying support of some regional groups; and for another, the political map of the country was dotted with coalition experiments. Each of the political parties was busy building either social or political coalition.

Beyond ideological agreements and disagreements the BJP's efforts both in 1998 and 1999 to create a countrywide pre-poll political coalition deserved attention. While in 1998 it had to rope in partners even after the elections, in 1999, its pre-poll National Democratic Alliance has succeeded in getting an absolute majority and it looked much more cohesive than before. Indeed, there were visible contradiction and incompatibilities, which were always there in any coalition situation, particularly in India. But that did not necessarily mean collapse of the alliance. For example, Badal's assertion despite poor show of his party in Punjab that 'The victory of the National Democratic Alliance is a victory of all its constituents and a forceful mandate in favour of a Government having a strong federal character' may be a warning against possible ignoring of his party within the NDA, but it was also an assertion of consolidation. Similarly, the avoidable isolation of R.K. Hedge too may spell trouble, but that was to be in the future. In fact, to be fair to the 1998 brand of the NDA, Jayalalitha remained the only visible sign of contradictions and incompatibilities and she proved the single source of its dismantling. Yet the Government, which lost just by one vote, may have just won by a vote or two. Despite the Congress's stated a version to coalition

politics, the trend represents slowly but surely maturing of coalition politics in India.

### **5.6.8. CRITICAL APPRAISAL**

A comparative study of Congress Vs. Non-Congress coalition models relating to the period of 1967-72 leaves an impression that while the former could survive on account of the flexible character of the Congress party coupled with its unified and strong leadership at the Center, the latter model woefully failed on account of lack of ideological cohesion and political discipline among the constituent partners. Let us examine the two models in order to understand their essential nature and operational character.

The Congress coalition model may be said to have **two dimensions**: the normal one that existed even before 1967 and that again came into existence after the restoration of the single-dominant -party system under the leadership of Mrs. Indira Gandhi and the abnormal one that had a short spell of about five years beginning with the phase of the disintegration of the Congress party in 1967-69 and ending with the phase of its re-integration in 1971-72.

#### **5.6.8.1. CONGRESS COALITION MODEL**

When we look at the normal dimension, we find that the very character of the Congress party is that of a coalitional character. It is like an amorphous organization committed to a dynamic and flexible policy having elements of enlightened nationalism, parliamentary democracy, secularism, democratic socialism, constitutionalism, mixed economy, planned development and national integration. That is why, the congress party has been said to function more or less as a greater alliance representing various political interests and tempers accommodating diverse elements and enjoying a prestige behind it of

emanate personalities so that they remain under one flag despite their sharp differences of approach and outlook.

The reason for having being coalitional character of the Congress party was that it was a party with an 'Aristotelian character' with a mild bias towards the left and adhering to a set of ideals that are shared by other parties and groups, weather rightist or leftist, in some measure, thus creating a bond of double or multiple coincidences to requisition the support of other parties on the issue in question. It is for this reason that even in the pre-1967 period we find some opposition parties appreciating the programmers of the Congress party as per their reaction to the issue in question. In view of the compulsion of a backward economy, the Praja-Socialist party did support the Congress party where necessary, or it did adopt an attitude of a soft critic to influence the policy and programme of the party in power. Likewise, the Communist party of India changed its traditional line in 1956 and depicted to support the Congress party taking it as the only progressive force among the reactionary political organizations of the country. This short of unmasked support from the side of the opposition parties proved a blessing to the Congress party at the Center when the Government of Mrs. Gandhi lost its majority owing to the split in the party.

The abnormal aspect of the Congress coalition model is a story of the particular period of recent political history. It relates to the events when the Congress asked for the co-operation of other parties, or it entered into the process of political bargaining to retain power in the midst of heavy doldrums, or it did the same with the intention of regaining the lost power. Thus, the Congress sought to establish co-operative rapport with other parties like the Bharatiya Kranti Dal in U.P. to form its Government under the leadership of Charan Singh (one-time leading Congressman and the Chief of the BKD); it outstretched its arms to enter into a coalition arrangement even with the Communists and Communalists (like Muslim league) to retain at least a share of power in Kerala. With a view to save the onslaught of

the opposition at the Center in the midst of loss of working majority caused by the great divide of 1969, it maintained an attitude of complete appeasement towards rank communal and reactionary organizations like the DMK in Tamilnadu and the Akali Dal in Punjab as a result of which it left seats uncontested for these parties in the Fourth General Elections. The best case of such a hobnobbing is afforded by the presidential polls of Aug. 1969, when the Indira-faction of the Congress openly asked for and counted upon the support of other Opposition parties like the Communists and the SSP (even the BKD) while the other faction of the Congress party headed by Nijalingappa openly demanded and sought to give on the co-operation of rightist organizations like the Bhartiya Jana Sangh and the Swatantra Party. The result was the victory of one and the defeat of another Congress. It presented a strange spectacle that from simple anti-Congressism to limited and selective support on specified issues became an indication of a new behavior pattern among the opposition parties.

If one makes an attempt to find out a line of difference between the pre-and-post-1967 coalitions systems in the Congress Model, one is struck with this glaring fact that the same party continued to occupy the central position. The line of distinction lies in the fact that many groups, that once prospered at the Congress organization, now multiplied and emerged on the map of state politics to stake claims for the share of power like potential alliance partners.

In the place of political fragmentation of a structured party system many regional organizations came up, owing allegiance to local issues and loyalties, rather than national perspectives, dominated the electoral politics. Taking stock of the new situation, the giant political party of India had to enter into visible coalition system by making alliances with the Communists, BKD, DMK and for no other reason than to retain, or recapture, the lost power.

### **5.6.8.2. NON-CONGRESS COALITION MODEL**

Distinguished from this, the non-Congress model came as a result of the wonders of the Fourth General elections that really marked a “beginning of a break with the past.” What contributed to this political revolution was a set of factors:

First the opposition parties showed a striking innovation in their tactics. They came to realize that it was not by upsetting the legitimacy of the electoral process but rather by participating in it that Congress fort could be shaken.

Second, something more positively fruitful than mere negatively workable tactics of agitations was the need of the hour. This dawned on many non-Congress parties and groups which developed a new mind to have electoral adjustments and alliances not on the basis of all-India issues but on the basis of all-India grievances.

Third, the general political climate of the country was also in favour of having new leaders who could give a better administration and establish a more democratic rapport with the people of country.

Fourth, several non-Congress parties could formulate programmes according to pragmatic and accommodative orientation. The problem of ideological orientation did not stand in their way as not the in and out of some philosophical or academic principles but matters of general interest were involved in the politics of coalitional adjustments.

Above all, there was the factor of Political Opportunism that prompted the have – nots to somehow become the haves in the new focus of power.

**The non-Congress coalition model** however failed to have a stable existence as the inherent heterogeneity came to have its results sooner than later. Matters went on unchecked to a point that a common and also the most respected leader became quite a disaffected, person who, under the changed circumstances, had to defect with a sizeable following to revise the scheme of coalitional

adjustments, or he had to shift his allegiance in a manner that brought about the downfall of his Government eventually leading to the restoration of the Congress model. The fundamental factor of ideological consideration came into the forefront when the constituent partners fought for the implementation of their 'Common Minimum Programme' according to their own ways of looking at things in the light of their political interest. It was well marked that coalition – making after an early period of in-fighting was born out of the compulsions of a popular demand for a change on the narrow of Congress defeat at the polls. The participants did not seem to have become used to the ways of collective responsibility.

The State Assembly polls of 1972 signified termination of the non-Congress coalition model as all non-Congress parties were badly routed by the tempestuous blow of the "Indira Wave". It looked like the restoration of the singly-dominant party system both at the Centre and State levels. However things took a different turn again when the JP Movement started in 1973. Hitting at the failures of the Congress party in implementing its programmes given in the election manifestoes and also lashing out at the state of corruption, this movement took to the new strategy of forcing the 'corrupt' Governments to resign. The leaders of this movement also insisted on electoral reforms so that the new elections could be conducted in a free and fair manner. Gujarat became the first theatre of this movement where the students and the youths took the matter to the streets and forced the Government led by Chimmanbhai Patel of the Congress party to quit. A new form of non-Congress model based on the clear principle of anti-Congressism once again came into being that had its experiment in the form of Janata Front. Elections to the State Assembly took place in June 1975 in which this front led by the Congress (O) managed to capture 86 seats in a House of 186 leaving the Congress (N) in the second place with 75 seats only. Shortly afterwards, a coalition ministry came into being. The Gujarat experiment once again enthused the non-Congress parties to

challenge the Congress model in the Forthcoming elections. However it should be pointed out that the way it all could be achieved and the way this movement had a quick eclipse with the declaration of emergency hardly after a week of the installation of this coalition ministry confirmed that the Janata Front proved worth but cannot be deemed to have established its political viability in the sense that it presents a clearly acceptable alternative to the Congress.

Thus what occurred on the eve of the Fourth General elections had once again come to exist. The characteristic of the system has been the continued dominance of the Congress party, claiming to represent the nation and holding the monopoly of power, internecine factional disputes within it, and a persistent tendency for it either to take over the Programmes of the opposition parties or to make timely concessions on issues taken up by them from acquiring much permanent strength. The bargain power was always in the hand of Congress. Congress withdrew support and the Prime Minister designate Charan Singh had to resign in the year 1979. Congress withdrew support and the Prime Minister Chandra Sekher went out of power. Congress withdrew support and the Prime Minister Deve Gowda was defeated by No-confidence motion and resigned. Congress withdrew support and the Prime Minister I.K.Gujral Government had to resign.

The role of opposition parties has generally been restricted to influencing the policies of the ruling party rather than challenging its monopoly of Power.

### **5.7. CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FORMATION OF THE COALITION GOVERNMENT OTHER COUNTRIES**

The erosion of the classical British two-party system (where two or only two cohesive parties existed) and reform of electoral systems in the direction of proportional representation has transformed parliamentary democracies in the twentieth century into multiparty

systems. In such a multiparty system where three or more parties seek to win parliamentary seats, there is always the possibility that none of them is in a position to attain a parliamentary majority alone. Such "minority situations" enable coalition formation of one or another form. They can be parliamentary alliances where one minority Government from day-to-day and from issue-to-issue seeks support in parliament. In reality, this possibility has become the norm in majority of the parliamentary Governmental system of the world. Postwar Western Europe political culture has, in fact, led to Coalition Governments with great stability and continuity (with the possible exception of Italy). With very few exceptions, minority cabinets have tended to form in more than three party systems, such as Denmark, Italy, Norway and Sweden; minority cabinets have very rarely formed in three-party, two-dimensional systems such as Austria and Germany.

Britain, Spain and Greece represent countries where a one party Government dominates or is the only prevalent form of Government in the post-World War II era. Thirteen countries are either those where all postwar Governments have been coalitions of where coalitions have been disastrous or at least a hopeful form of Government. Even in the so-called one party Government there were times when minority situations (e.g. partly in Spain and from 1976 - 1979 in Britain) existed which led to the formation of parliamentary coalitions.

## 1. COALITION GOVERNANCE IN WESTERN EUROPE

In a parliamentary system, parties choose strategies with attention to both elections and to the subsequent bargaining over Government formation and their choices of platforms may be viewed as a balancing electoral incentives and Government formation incentives. The two most important factors for the bargaining power of a party, in general,

are (a) its share of parliamentary seats and (b) its spatial position against the other parties.

Many analyses of coalition behavior in Western Europe have tended to make no distinction between legislative and executive branches, and the two are clearly not the mirror images of each. Moreover, the prevalence of "minority coalitions" in Governments across Western Europe, while hardly the norm, further demonstrates that a majority in one branch does not imply or require the same in another. In fact, the most serious conflicts do not seem to lie between the two institutional arenas of Government and parliament, but between parties and party factions that are represented both in the Government and the parliament. Furthermore, Government coalitions may survive, despite the absence of legislative successes, because of the absence of credible alternatives. In addition, the complexity of the bargaining environment in which a Government is formed and within which the Government must survive has a major impact upon its durability. Countries (like Italy) with complex party systems and hence complex bargaining environments have witnessed very short - lived Governments. Cabinets in such system seem to be susceptible to random shocks.

The game of governing in parliamentary democracies characterized by Coalition Governments can be broken into four stages: pre-election in which parties try to position themselves, actual elections, coalition bargaining, and finally legislating, when the Government coalition attempts to implement policy. Policy - making and policy implementation are crucial elements in coalition formation and behavior. Parties are instruments of their supporter's interests, and their policy positions are assumed to be the same. However, the outcome of Government formation bargaining is a policy different from the policy of a party, since a party must make concessions to its Government partner". However, the general trend in Western Europe is executive dominance of policy - making, since most legislative initiatives come from the Government departments as they hold

“agenda Power”. Policy-making, in fact, becomes a joint endeavor of Government and parliament. However, that does not mean that legislative coalitions necessarily equal governing coalitions. Experience in Western Europe demonstrates that there is “nothing magical about a majority when it comes to forming a Government”, nor does a legislative majority reflected by the parties in the Government ensure that a policy programme will pass successfully.

Party policy clearly influences the formation of coalitions since some parties in all West European countries, as Bridge and Laver point out, do get ‘policy rewards’ from being in Government. Additional factors influencing coalition outcomes seem to be the relative size of parties and their general ideological positioning evident in long-term structures and cleavages within different party systems.

Thus, where historical developments, crystallized in electoral cleavages, have produced two fairly equal, competing blocs, one or the other will control Government according to the results of a particular election. On the other hand, where historical and electoral developments produce more amorphous Coalition Governments, the links between Government policy and party membership become noticeably weaker. Even membership of the coalition may become subject to chance factors as payoffs become less clear.

Changes in party systems and voting behavior in Western Europe are having uncertain effects on coalition formation. Electorates in many Western European countries in the 1990s are increasingly characterized by a permanent state of change in which politics is paramount in determining electoral outcomes. They are determined less and less by the old traditions, ideologies, religion, social origin or party loyalties and more and more by “the capacities of the parties to achieve goals and solve problems in Chief political fields and by the competence of their leaderships”. Voting has become uninhibitedly pragmatic, more issue oriented in many West European countries. Voter choice is specifically influenced by perceptions of personal economic circumstances, the general state of the economy, and party

competence at economic management. This process has been accelerated by the continued decline of old environments, traditional party loyalties, political frustration and disillusionment with mainstream/national parties. The declining popularity and decline in the share of the vote of major parties is enabling many smaller parties to pick up the votes and gain access to parliament. The political arena has become much more open and accessible to new social movements and citizen's initiatives since the 1980s, and political parties of a new type have been challenging old institutional patterns.

A direct consequence of this trend has been a decline in voter turnout, protests, anti-positions and apathy in many member states of the European Union. Volatility has tended to become a kind of "permanent condition" of European electorates since the late 1980s. This has led to a consistent, substantial growth in the floating vote and the number of non-voters (e.g. in Germany they constituted nearly one third in the 1998 federal elections).

In Western Europe removal of Governments by parliaments through **no confidence votes has become so exceptional** that it can no longer be called a parliamentary means of controlling the Governments.

The prevalence of a system of proportional representation in many West European countries (Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Denmark) has accelerated the decline of the party system's concentration. This system prevents one party to have a majority in parliament. This, in turn, makes coalition cabinets necessary. As a result, coalition building tends to become more and more complex, in direct proportion to the complexity of the decomposing party system.

Another result of this is that it diminishes the power of the head of Government – the main beneficiary of clear one party majority in parliament. The more dependent he is on "complex configurations in parliament and on the goodwill of other parties, the less power he has

to make decisions on policy.” Thus, proportional representation coupled with the decomposition of party systems make more Continental polities less like that of the British Prime Minister and more similar to that of the Italian, Danish, Belgian and Dutch Prime Ministers, who are dependent on the confidence of small political parties. The break-up of the two-and-a-half party systems and the deconcentration of party systems of smaller European democracies with proportional representation enabled the smaller parties to play a role in coalition formation since it was no longer possible to declare indisputable winners and losers.

The growing popularity and electoral success of extreme right wing parties like the National Front in France or the Freedom Party in Austria has led to a radicalizing of mainstream agendas. In reality, they are “true agents of populist anti-party sentiment – criticism aimed at the policies and / or behavior of other parties.” The success of extreme right parties is indicative of “a long term shift in the advanced industrial societies of Western Europe from class based to ‘value based’, or ‘issue-based’, politics.” Western European electorates in some countries have not been inclined to give them enough support so that they cross-parliamentary entry threshold limits. Moreover, owing to their populist, anti-establishment, anti-immigration, xenophobic attitude they tend to become isolated and it becomes impossible or nearly impossible for them to find coalition partners.

There is a growth in regional cleavages in some West European Countries as a result of the channelisation of anti-centrist emotions through party line. Moreover with the decline of party concentration, the party system’s capacity to integrate regional divergences also declined and regional antagonism came into the open. In fact, as “traditional loyalties break down, the absence of their integrating effects is being felt. The rise of regional controversies is one of the foreseeable results. “ The process of emancipating regions from central Governments is a much more common phenomenon in countries such as Italy or Belgium.

### **5.7.2. GERMANY**

As far as coalitions and coalition politics is concerned, Germany has gained a lot of experience in the last five decades. First and foremost, coalition cabinets are the rule, not the exception in the German context. All national post-war Governments have been coalitions, even when a single party obtained an absolute majority of seats in parliament – which has so far occurred only once, namely in 1957 when the CDU (Christian Democratic Union) won an absolute majority. But even then, Konrad Adenauer, the first Federal Chancellor after World War II who brought back Germany into the community of free and democratic nations, formed a Coalition Government along with two other smaller liberals and conservative parties.

Characteristic features of the German constitutional system, the political procedures and the party system are:

1. Coalitions are quite common in Germany's post war history because – at least from a German perspective – the broader the Government's basis within the population, the more likely it will be able to conduct policies acceptable to a majority of the voters.

2. Furthermore, it has been proved to be successful to subscribe to so called coalition agreements between the parties in question, setting out the policies and solutions, the coalition parties intend to apply for as many policy areas as possible, laid down in writing and published prior to the election of the head of Government what in Germany is the Federal Chancellor.

3. In addition, what is of public and psychological importance is that according to the constitution, the Federal Chancellor has to be elected by a majority of the first chamber of the German Parliament, the Bundestag.

4. Similarly, a stabilizing factor is the constructive vote of no confidence, in other words a positive vote of distrust according to

which a Government can only be brought down by a new majority electing another Federal Chancellor. This means that a Federal Chancellor cannot be ousted simply by a mere vote of no confidence of a negative parliamentary majority, but only if a new majority elects its candidate as Federal Chancellor.

5. And finally let me refer in this context to the rule that only parties getting at least five percent of the overall votes polled can be represented in the Bundestag, that means that parties which are not able to get a minimum of five percent of the votes are not allowed to enter the parliament as active players on the floor (with the exception of some regional parties, representing ethnic minorities)

These features of the German constitutional framework were established by the fathers of the German Constitution, called the "Basic Law", to avoid fragmentation in the parliament and a vacuum in which no majority-based Government exists. The Basic Law's framers, themselves party representatives – Christian Democrats and Social Democrats made up the large majority of the delegates – set out to create a stable political system powered mainly by political parties but instead reinforced by shifting power from the president to the chancellor. They built better than they knew, for Germany has developed into a durable democracy marked by high voter turnouts, overwhelming support for the established parties, and a competitive party system capable of producing stable coalitions and alternating Governments.

The decline in the number of parties and the disappearance of strong party ties with narrow class interests have interacted with various legal and political arrangements to produce a workable stable parliamentary majority in the Federal Republic which has enabled political parties to play a pivotal role in the political system. The development of general public support for the democratic institutions affected the party system in Germany in two important ways.

First, parties opposed to the regime found it impossible to obtain even the minimum number of votes they needed to gain parliamentary representation. Thus the number of parties and the range of party alternatives were reduced.

Second, positive attitudes enabled the parties to establish themselves securely in German public life with public financial and legal privileges. They could not be “easily challenged by mass movements or other forms of unconventional political participation”.

Four long established rules have characterized postwar German politics: Germany can be governed only from the political centre; Germany can be governed only by a coalition’ electoral results are bipolar and federal Governments re-elected.

Table – 2-Table is shown in the Annexure- E (i)

#### Remarkable Stability of Coalitions

Germany is marked by a remarkable stability of Government coalitions. As Table 2 indicates there have been only three changes in Government in fifty years: from the Christian Democratic Union to the Social Democratic Party in 1969 and back again in 1982, and back once again in 1998. From 1949 to 1966, a right of centre coalition of the conservative social union (CSU) was in power, usually with the support of the Free Democratic Party (FDP) From 1969 to 1982, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) was in power when the FDP changed its coalition partner and brought the conservatives in power. This continued for sixteen years till the SPD and the Greens formed a coalition in 1998.

There has been continuity of political leaders, especially of Chancellors in the postwar era: Konrad Adenauer (1949 – 1963), Helmut Schmidt (1974 – 1982) and Helmut Kohl (1982-1998), Out of fifty years, three Chancellors have been at the helm of affairs for fourteen, eight, sixteen years respectively, i.e., a total of thirty eight years.

In the Federal Republic, it is the party organisations / committees rather than parliamentary parties that have a decisive influence on the political constellations that lead to particular Government coalitions.

As above we have come to know about their features of the constitutional system in the Federal Republic there is a threshold of 5 percent of the vote for inclusion in the Bundestag. This has served to prevent a mushrooming of small parties. As a result we witness a gradual decline in the percentage of votes polled by the minor parties. With the fragmentation of the parties, though clearly below the 5 percent hurdle, the ideological spectrum has broadened, marked on the right by the Republican Party and the German people's union, on the left by the Party for Democratic Socialism (PDS) in each case with regional parties.

Since the dominant concern of the German electorate has traditionally been a quest for security, it has not been willing to approve of a party whose very existence is constantly threatened. This has been a dilemma, which has constantly threatened the FDP. With only slightly more than 5 percent of the vote necessary for inclusion in the Bundestag, the FDP radiates insecurity. Such a party is not attractive to votes whose political orientation is based on a striving for security".

#### Coalition Formation and Coalition Agreements

Coalition bargaining and coalition formation in the Federal Republic has four broad features. First, access to coalition bargaining typically has been restricted to a few select patterns. The social democratic party was left out of any serious bargaining from 1949 until 1966, during which it acted as the opposition party, just as if a single majority party, and not a coalition of parties, occupied the Government bench. In 1969, the CDU/CSU inherited that lot.

Second, those parties which at the outset decide to bargain with one another have always concluded the bargaining successfully. This process has led to the conclusion of a coalition agreement amongst

coalition partners. Over the years, these agreements have become more detailed and exhaustive.

Third, in order to produce a winning coalition not more than two parties had to come to an agreement. A grand coalition between the CDU/CSU and the SPD would have always been assured of majority support, a small coalition between the CDU / CSU and only one minor party from 1953, and a small coalition between the SPD and FDP from 1961.

Fourth, "the selection of coalition partners has always preceded the thorough examination of policy issues. This sequence presupposes an understanding among the coalition partners that their policy positions were compatible or at least reconcilable. Whatever differences arose during the bargaining failed to wreck the planned coalition. The formation of future coalitions in Germany was to be much affected by the "treaty making" style in 1961.

#### Tensions in Coalition Governance

Coalitions in Western Europe have been characterized by frequent tensions between the coalition partners. Thus, the internal division within the SPD-FDP coalition (1969-1982) not only created "a public image of discord, drift, decay, and disillusionment. They also led to ineffective and inefficient Government decision making, compromises unsatisfactory to both parties, and even to immobility." It was not mere appearance that the SPD-FDP Coalition Government seemed unable to cope with the economic, foreign policy, defense, and social changes that were challenging the German Government in the 1980s. From October 1982 to September 1998 the CDU/CSU-FDP coalition displayed considerable internal tensions. This tension was especially noticeable between the CSU and the FDP and arose principally from the marked hostility expressed by the CSU towards the FDP.

### Ideology as a Factor in Coalition Formation

After 1961, coalition formation in Germany was predominately a bargaining process among the three major parties in the Bundestag. A major problem in this regard has been to keep the ideological distance over time. The main explanation in the German case for the move of the FDP into coalition with the Social Democrats was hardly a greater share of power, but rather a wearisome shift of ideological preference within the Liberal Party. The FDP moved from the position of an 'anti-socialist bourgeois block to a social – liberal position, but not without fierce internal conflicts and the loss of certain elements which were once predominant in the party.

This factor also explains why it has been difficult for the Social Democrats until recently to pursue a coalition policy with the Greens. This had remained a highly controversial issue in the intra-party decision – making process of the SPD. Essentially, two schools of thought emerged. The minority, which favored cooperation with the Greens, put greater emphasis on post material, than material, values. The older SPD generation was more attuned to the achievement oriented principles of a pragmatically organized economy and thus was inclined to oppose cooperation with the Greens. However, the transformation of the Greens from a protest party to a pragmatic party, which had elected representatives in most Land Assemblies lent support to the marriage of convenience between the SPD and the Greens in the late 1990s. In order to keep all coalition options open, Gerhard Schroeder was deliberately vague in his programmatic vision: he promised all thins to all people and maintained a business – friendly face.

### Regional Parties

Regional Parties have also acquired some role in coalition politics in the 1990s. The East German Party system is more volatile, polarized and segmented. In Germany, the PDS has been extremely successful in exploiting and mobilizing this protest potential and is widely

perceived as the only real advocate of East German interests. The PDS, despite declining membership, continued to consolidate itself as an East German 'resentment' party. In practice, the PDS remains a regional, Eastern Party with virtually no support or an organizational basis in Western Germany, where it has managed to get only 1 percent of the vote (mainly in the city states of Bremen and Hamburg) It needs over 20 percent of the vote in the new states to achieve 5 percent nationally. Since it apprehends that it may not get more than 4 percent of the votes, its electoral strategy has been to win three directly elected federal seats, which, under Germany's complex election laws, will enable it to be rewarded with additional seats on a proportional basis, i.e. up to thirty seats in the parliament. It has certainly created difficulties for the CDU / CSU and the FDP in attaining an absolute majority.

### **Conclusion**

The stability of West German political system has been based on the ability and willingness of all relevant social groups and political parties to co-operate within the accepted constitutional, legal, and institutional framework. Since the 1980s, the West German system has been transformed into a highly differentiated competitive political system. Unlike the past, when there were mainly four parties to run the political system and assumed an importance and status unprecedented in West German Society, Germany became a democratic society able to withstand temptation from the far right and left. In fact, the political system and the political parties managed to integrate fundamental opposition groups into the political mainstream.

### **5.7.3. FRANCE**

France has had a great variety of Governmental systems. Between the Revolution and the 3rd Republic, the French experimented with about

a dozen constitutions. Although the average lifetime of each was brief, these were elaborate long detailed documents; but precision and care with which a constitution is drawn has no relation to its survival. The most durable among all the experiments with governance was the 3rd Republic. The 4th Republic ratified the political practices that had evolved under the 3rd.

The Third (1875 – 1940) and the Fourth (1946-1958) Republics were parliamentary systems plagued by weak, unstable, short lived Coalition Governments and divided, indecisive assemblies. During the Fourth Republic, there were so many parties, which were poorly disciplined and ideologically based, that it was difficult to form stable coalitions. The unstable coalitions of the Fourth Republic has paved the way for much more stable ones during the Fifth Republic largely because of the transformation of the French party system, from a shifting multi-party system to a more structured, disciplined and bipolarized party system. It also led to the reduction of the number of parties in the National Assembly from seven in 1958 to four in 1993. Without this, presidential supremacy would never have been established. A change in the nature of political and socio-economic divisions, changes in the electoral system at parliamentary level coupled with the introduction of the direct election to the presidency in 1962 placed a premium on coalition-building. Isolated parties no longer had any chance of success.

The Period since 1958 witnessed the growth of two big coalitions with one dominant party, each of which comprised several parties. The right wing coalition, which initially comprised of the Gaullist Party (UNR, alter UDR) the party established by General de Gaulle - and the Independent Republicans (RI) was in a dominant position in the party system in the French Parliament. This was expanded in the presidential elections of 1969 and 1974 and the legislative election of 1978 to embrace other right wing and centre right groups. By 1986 the right-wing coalition was composed of the Gaullist Party (Since 1976 known as Rassemblement pour la Republique – RPR), and the

Union for French Democracy (Union pour la Democratie Francaise – UDF), itself a coalition of the Independent Republicans, Centrists, Radicals and a motley collection of right-wing groups. The dominating position of the Right coalition was reflected in both the percentage of votes in parliamentary elections (around 35-40 percent) and a substantial number of seats in the National Assembly (a relative majority in the years 1962, 1967 and 1973 and an absolute majority in 1968) As the governing party, it had the loyal support of a part of the Conservative Party. This support was necessary for the formation of a majority coalition. France is a clear example for a one – dimensional party system in which the Left – Right position of parties deliver a purposeful representation of policy.

The consolidation of a relatively cohesive right-wing electoral coalition pressurized the left into building its own coalition. But this was considerably difficult since not only was each party of the left aiming for superiority within the alliance, but also the communists and the socialists were divided over fundamental social, political and major economic and foreign policy issues.” Relations within the alliance oscillated between active harmony (1972-74 and 1981-82) suspicion (1969-72 and 1974-77) and acrimony (1977-81 and 1982-86). Much of the tension was due to the changing strengths of the two parties. Although relations between the two parties reached a new low point after 1984, they were forced into electoral alliance at the second ballot of the 1986 elections and of most local by-elections. The bipolarizing pressures of the Fifth Republic neither dictate the shape of coalition nor do they prevent discord and rivalry within each, but they do ensure that even the most reluctant partners remained united for electoral purposes.

**All Governments have been Coalitions**

All the Governments in France since 1958 have been coalitions. During the first legislature (1958-1962) the coalition included all major parties except the Socialists and Communists. Subsequently, the Governments of the Fifth Republic have been able to count on a

majority in the National Assembly although these majorities and these Governments have typically been coalitions. During the first legislature (1958-62), the coalition included all major parties except the Socialists and Communists; from 1962 to 1981 the Gaullists, Giscardians and a faction of the Centrists; from 1981 to 1984 the Socialists, Communists and Left Radicals; and from 1984 to 1986 the Socialists and Left Radicals.

Single Party Governments were Possible, but not formed

In the Fifth Republic, single party Governments might have been theoretically possible at two different periods – during the fourth legislature (1968-73) when the Gaullist party had an absolute majority (293 out of 497), and during the seventh legislature (1981-1986) when the Socialist Party had an absolute majority (285 seats out of 491). However, even in these two cases, the majority party did not wish to govern alone out of respect for the electoral alliance. In the first case, the Gaullist party maintained an alliance with the moderate conservatives. From 1981 to 1984 Communist Ministers were included in the Government and only when they resigned in July 1984 the French Government became a single party Government for almost two years.

Nature of Coalitions has changed

Although all the Governments between 1958 and 1984 were coalitions, the nature of these coalitions differed. Some as Thiebault points out, have been 'unequal' (as from 1962 to 1968 or from 1973 to 1978 when the right governed on the basis of an alliance between Gaullists and moderate conservatives). During the second legislature (between 1962 to 1967) the Gaullists party had an absolute majority (233 seats out of 482) and it governed with the support of a small number of conservatives (35 seats)

The situation changed during the third legislature (1967 – 1968) when the Gaullist party had only 200 seats and needed the support of an expanded, small group of conservatives (42 seats) in order to govern. During the fifth legislature (1973-1978) the parliamentary strength of

the Gaullist Party was further reduced to 183 seats. More balanced coalitions appeared during the sixth legislature (1978 – 1981) and the eighth legislature (1986).

#### Constitutional Powers

A number of provisions of the French Constitution have a direct impact on the structure and processes of Government. These relate to the dualism of executive power, to Prime Ministerial supremacy and to the subordination of Ministers to the Prime Ministerial or presidential will. The impact of presidential politics has had two important effects on the French party system.

Firstly, it created the need for personalized electoral machines and assembly majorities that extend beyond the bounds of a single party. Secondly it has weakened the role of parties in the policy making process with a new breed of presidential advisors weakening the role of traditional party élites.

The French electoral system in parliamentary elections in two ballots encourages the formation of political alliances between politically and ideologically proximate parties, at least in the second ballot. In the Fifty Republic, the single member district, two ballot rules used for all but one (1986) of the Republic's legislative elections. It is usually said in France that " on the first ballot one votes and on the second, one eliminates" Electoral realism necessitates that " a political party, in order to maximize its chances, thinks in terms of combining forces with another party by means of pre-electoral deals and second-ballot withdrawal, or mutual support agreements. The French electoral system in parliamentary elections in two ballots encourages the formation of political alliances between politically and ideologically proximate parties, at least in the second ballot. The survival of coalitions is not only the result of a tradition of joint governance, but is the outcome of the necessity to build electoral alliances. The electoral system with its second ballot run-off rule has led to a reduction in the number of parties and made it difficult for smaller

parties to survive. It has also encouraged the development of two broad coalitions: one on the left and other one on the right.

There have only been two periods of cohabitation or power sharing. During the first period (1986-1988) between a Socialist President (Francois Mitterand) and a right-wing parliamentary majority in the National Assembly comprising a coherent and disciplined majority in the National Assembly comprising a coherent and disciplined alliance of parties opposed to the President. As a result the President was constrained to cohabit with a Prime Minister imposed on him by political circumstances. By nominating Jaques Chirac, the head of the Majority coalition in the National Assembly, as Prime Minister, Mitterand appeared to create " a new precedent in French politics: that the leader of the Majority Party or Coalition had a right to be called up on to form Government". The cohabitation led to a situation whereby the Prime Minister had Governmental power and the President became an arbiter. Even power sharing did not prevent president Mitterand from exercising some control over domestic policy and more extensively in the traditional "presidential domain". Viz., foreign affairs and defence.

The second period (1993-1995) of cohabitation was after the RPR-UDF electoral alliance had won the parliamentary election of 1993 and the Government coalition was led by E. Balladur. And this election brought an end to experiments in power sharing with the victory of Jacques Chirac against the Socialist candidate, Lionel Jospin with the appointment of A. Juppe as head of Government since 1993 with the RPR – UDF coalition.

There are three important levels for coalition building in France (1) the Construction of Parliamentary Majority which is protected by a combination of parties (2) negotiations over the content of Government policy, and (3) the allocation of portfolios under cabinet Ministers.

### **Process of Coalition Formation:**

The initiative for the formation of a coalition lies with the French President who first establishes contact with the leaders of parliamentary parties. He assumes an active role in the selection and appointment of Prime Ministers. He decides who has the best prospects for the building of a Government. However, the room for action for presidential action is constrained by results of the parliamentary election. Negotiations for coalition formation in France have not generally required much time. There were only two instances between 1959 and 1996, when coalition negotiations lasted more than one week (viz. 1962 and 1973). All other coalitions were formed between one and three days. In France, the building of a coalition is neither a complicated nor a time consuming process.

The process of Government formation in France is rather quick for a number of reasons. There is no discussion about the composition of a coalition because the participating parties which belong to presidential and or parliamentary majority are bound together by an electoral alliance. Coalition politics and negotiations for coalition formation in the Fifth Republic have been dominated by one political schism, viz. The Left – Right dimension. All Governments have been formed out of this dimension. There is no instance of a “not allied” coalition.

**Coalition Agreements** At the beginning of the fifth republic, the rules of the game were neither public nor expressly laid down in detail in a coalition agreement. The first coalition agreement was of July 1966, which provided for the principle of ‘Contract de legislature’ together with a principle to dissolve the parliament in case of a Government crisis. There have also been instances, e.g., before the parliamentary election of 1978 when the Right which was in majority coalition could not unite on a coalition programme of participating parties and provide a basis for Government declarations. Since 1981, coalition programme has been more extensively worked at than before and

constitute documents which guide Governmental policy. They incorporate a list of political, economic, cultural and social aims and objectives and are generally approved by overwhelming majority in special conventions of coalition partners.

#### Variance in Prime Ministerial Authority

Prime Ministerial authority has varied in the Fifty Republic. Despite the fact that some Prime Ministers have had many means to establish their influence, there have been marked differences among them in the extent to which they have been able to exercise this influence. The Prime Ministers who had most authority were Micher Debre, Georges Pompidou and Raymond Baree; Maurice Couve de Murville and Pierre Mauroy, on the other hand, were those who had least influence over their colleagues. Between 1958 and 1985, nine men served as Prime Minister. Eight of them had resigned because they lacked the confidence of either the president who had appointed them or the succeeding president. Prime Minister had also submitted their resignations of their Governments nine times and been reappointed immediately with new Governments eleven times. Premiers have averaged thirty six months in office, Governments sixteen and two - tenths months.

#### No No- Confidence Motion

In France, the traditional rules of cabinet responsibility vis - a - vis the parliament (confidence motions and no-confidence motions) play no real parliamentary role. This is primarily because of party discipline in Governmental unity and the stability of electoral alliances. The existence of a stable, coherent and disciplined majority has prevented the fall of Governments. The national assembly of the Fifty Republic has never expressed a lack of confidence in a newly appointed Government or Prime Minister. The only example was in October 1962, where the Assembly passed a motion of censure initiated by the opposition against the Government of Geroges Pompidou because of its intention to carry out de Gaulle's plan to revise the constitution by popular referendum. This led to the

overthrow of the Government. In response, President de Gaulle dissolved the rebellious Assembly and his supporters won a larger majority in the new Assembly. Since then, majorities in the National Assembly have held firm. There have been "grumbles, groans and occasional splits, but the MPs have not endangered the Government or themselves".

Despite the significant gains of the National Front a local, national and European elections, it is unlikely to gain a majority in the French Parliament because of the combined strength of the Socialist and UDF parties. Le Pen's success has contributed to a disquieting element of opportunism within the major parties and a radicalizing of the agendas of mainstream parties. **The national front is largely isolated on the political extreme. The main conservative parties have refused to have any dealings with it at the national level despite their narrow parliamentary majority at that time.** The two ballot majority system is a serious disadvantage for a party like the national front. Without any allies, it can hope to win an absolute majority in only a few districts. The voters know that and reluctant to support such fringe parties.

#### Conclusions

France represents a variant of coalition building in which the president has important powers in coalition formation. In such a semi-presidential system coalition formation seems to be the most important presidential prerogative. Most Presidents have extensively used their power to select candidates for the position of Prime Ministers, given them instructions for party negotiations. The second aspect is the existence of an electoral system where in the parties use the second ballot for building of coalitions. Negotiations over the content of Government policy find only before the parliamentary elections. The coalition programmes are more thoroughly worked on than before. The Government today is a stronger Coalition Government and less a presidential Government.

#### 5.7.4. ITALY

Though many models have been devised to explain how Government coalitions are made and broken, Italy is an unusual case which defies the models' predictive capabilities. In the postwar years, it had "the lowest cabinet turnover rate, but the most short lived Governments of any country in Western Europe and presents a pattern of both stability and instability. From June 1945 till today Italy has had 54 Governments with an average Government life of eleven months. The classic case of the shortest time is the Christian Democrat Politician Giulio Andreotti who lasted for nine days and the longest till date has been Socialist Prime Minister Bettino Craxi with 1,058 days (4 August 1983 to 27 June 1986). There were 54 Governments but only 24 heads of Government. For instance Alcide De Gasperi was Prime Minister eight times. G. Andreotti seven times, and A. Fanfani Six times.

##### Polarized Multiparty system

Since the end of the Second World War, coalition formation in Italy has been considerably influenced by the polarized multiparty system. From 1945 to 1992, Italian politics were dominated by the Christian Democrats (DC) who were able to remain in power continuously as a consequence of an unspoken agreement between the DC and its governing allies to permanently exclude from office the second – largest party, the Italian Communist Party (PCI). Though it enjoyed an absolute majority only once (from 1948 – 1953, the Christian Democrats were the largest party and the mainstay of every possible coalition. It was able to sustain itself in office permanently on the basis of coalitions with four much smaller parties – the Socialists (PSI), the Social Democrats (PSDI), the Republicans (PRI), and the Liberals (PLI). The unspoken agreement to exclude the communists had three consequences:

First, Governments were highly unstable (Since parties which knew that they would remain in office indefinitely could afford to quarrel).

Second, Governments were ineffective (because the effective absence of electoral constraints removed the need for parties to compete on policies). Third, governing party rivalry gave rise to politicization of the state apparatus as the governing parties engaged in a 'sharing out' of Ministerial and administrative posts according to the bargaining power of each. This allowed the parties to maintain and develop clientelistic ties with their electoral constituencies, a practice, which frequently degenerated into out and out corruption.

From 1948 to 1992, the party configuration was relatively stable. During this long period, seven parties (PCI, PSI, PSDI, PRI, DC, PLI, MSI) enjoyed a relatively stable protection. A number of additional parties rose and faded away largely as a result of party splits and mergers. The existence of a relatively large number of small, centrist parties was a typical characteristic of the Italian party system during this long political cycle.

#### Coalition Formation

From 1948 to 1992, an extremely complicated game of coalition formation in a series of short political cycles which are characterized by various coalition formulae (1) Centrism (2) Centre – Left Coalition (3) The Parliamentary Coalition of National Solidarity and (4) the Five Party Coalition. Thus, the period 1948 – 1963 was the era of centrism with the DC allied with the Social Democrats (PSDI), Republicans (PRI) and Liberals (PLI) from 1963-1976 the DC were in coalition with PSDI, PRI and the Socialists (PSI) from 1976-79 was the period of Christian Democrat minority Governments, supported by a broad coalition including the communists. During 1979-1992, Governments consisted of a five party coalition consisting of the Christian Democrats Joined by the PSI, PRI, PLI and PSDI. Those period of stable coalition formulae were at the same time ones the cabinet instability.

The 1994 elections brought a right-wing coalition to power in Italy for the first time since the end of Second World War. The media magnate Silvio Berlusconi who became the Prime Minister was the leader of his new party – Forza Italy( Go Italy) – the neo-facist National Alliance and

the Northern League. Berlusconi's Government has suffered since its beginning from "a chronic instability created by internal ideological contradictions, conflicts of interest within the coalition and personal animosity between leaders". Berlusconi's Government lasted for seven months (till December 1995) when the Northern League pulled out of the Government coalition and Lamberto Dini headed a Non-political Government, formed by technocrats, which was supported by the left-wing parties in parliament. The new Government began the desperately needed reforms of the Italian State.

The elections of April 1996 led to the installation of a left-wing Government for the first time since Italy became a republic in 1948. This was the result of the electorate's increasing discontent with traditional parties, increasing percentage of votes of non-traditional parties (from 5.7 percent in 1987 to 14.5 percent in 1992) The main losers of this trend were the Christian Democrats which had been able survive all sorts of scandals, and Italy's Perennial crisis had never damaged the credibility of Italy's major party" and the beneficiary of this was the Northern League.

In the April 1996 elections, the core of the governing coalition was made up of Romano Prodi's small Catholic Party, the Italian People's Party and the formerly Communist Democratic Party of the Left (PDS), which is Italy's largest party with 21 percent of April 1996 vote. However, the Catholic party is not enchanted by the alliance, and the two parties have different views on social issues like abortion. The fragility of the coalition is increased by its small right-wing component, Italian Renewal (RI), which abhors the dependence on the RC.

The Italian system of Government amounts in effects to one party rule through a series of unstable coalitions with various small partners, where the second largest party- permanently excluded from office- grows ever stronger. The opposition is subject to cross pressures - acceptance of the norms of the system in the hope of winning enough

votes to come to power or equating opposition to the Government in office with opposition to the regime itself.

Italy displays certain unique political characteristics in coalition formation.

Firstly, the Christian Democrats (DSs) have been part of every Government from the end of World War II until 1994 and the simultaneous exclusion of the second largest party, the communists (PCI).

Secondly, the existence of parliamentary coalitions that are distinguishable from the governing ones is readily conceded and was largely the result of the so-called "strategy of alliance" that guided Government coalition formation until 1994. That strategy was "less about programmes and policies than about who could be in and who must be out.

Thirdly, not one Italian Government in the postwar era has fallen as a direct consequence of a non-confidence vote.

### **Dissolution's of Coalitions**

The Italian experience with the dissolution of coalitions highlights two important points,

First cabinet crises were ardently used as an instrument to resolve different problems in the coalition.

Second, the end of coalitions was the result of both inner party conflicts and external events. Party factions "nourished by the growth of spoils, have also learned to take the liberty of destroying individual Governments"

In the last decade, the influence of these external and inner party events had less to do with the internal balance within the larger coalition party (DC) and more with the balance between the parties. The decline of the dominant party and the increasing influence of the coalition partners illustrate the greater necessity of collegiality in reaching decisions. Since 1970 there were 19 Majority summits" to discuss the dissolution of the cabinet. Thus the changes in the party

system in the 1990s and especially the increase in the number of capable coalition actors with more influence in the art of cabinet crises rather than its frequency. The weakness of Prime Ministers, who in contrast to most heads of Government, could not call for new elections explains the rest.

### **Changes in the 1990s**

The Grave economic and financial crisis of the the Italian state highlighted the structural defects of the political system and the severe difficulties of the political decision making process. After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the East-West conflict, this was followed by an ideological-political crisis which challenged the old logic of the party system along the cleavage of communism / anti-communism. This pushed the Communist Party of Italy and above all the Christian Democrats, into a deep identity crisis. The revelation of political scandals, the numerous tainted money affairs and the illegal party financing in which the old political class was involved, ultimately led to a radical legitimacy crisis of traditional parties. Coupled with this was the rise of regional parties, especially the Northern League in the north of the country which challenged mainstream parties and which fostered decentralization and regionalism.

The party system in Italy was beginning to collapse around 1990. This was partly due to the loss of the integrative potential of the Italian elites, the increasing distance between the elite and the masses, the end of the "communist question" and the emergence of new "Party movements" Two factors accounted for the collapse of the old parties. The continuation of an anticorruption drive initiated by prosecuting magistrates in Milan in February 1992 coupled with the electoral law changes in August 1993 led to a fragmentation of party organizations and a regrouping of these organizations into new types of alliances in new guises and new names (e.g. the Christian Democrats by the beginning of 1994 had split into four groups and the PSI into three groups)

## **Conclusion**

Much of the instability and stalemate in Italian politics has been the result of fragmented and fictionalized parties, in which political conflict or crisis was created frequently. One aspect which distinguished Italy from other West European democracies is the "Perennial lack of political alteration" which reflects a political culture characterized by a chronic lack of trust in parties and movements that are not in Government. Changes have occurred through radical regime changes. Italian politics became known for its entertainment value. Moreover, for over a quarter of a century, the executive in Italy freely used decree laws, but the rate of conversion by parliament was directly opposite to the number of parties in the coalition. However, during 1983-1994, the more parties represented in a coalition, the higher the rate of decree laws converted.

Party organizations and alliances in Italy are still in a state of considerable flux, and it is difficult to predict which alliances and parties will be shaping party Government in the millennium. However, a major change, which is likely to last is that "the basic dynamics between the organizations and alliances is one of bipolarity, something which is markedly different from the situation existing until 1992 when the DC still occupied the centre".

Coalition Governments and their problems have dominated the Italian political scene since the fall of Fascism. The deep transformation of the early 1990s has not basically altered the ground realities. The Fragmented party system with no less (and often more) than seven parliamentary parties and the long term permanence of pro-system / anti - system schism till the 1990s reveals a complicated, conflict - prone and seldom disciplined and at the same time a fundamentally irreplaceable, coalitions. The lack of real alternatives.. had contributed significantly to 'stable instability' of Italian Governments". Short lived coalitions have only marginally changed from one cabinet to another while the number of attempts to build a new majority, and the

number of Prime Ministerial candidates throughout the entire postwar period was very different. However, in all cases the iron clad rule of the dominance of parties outside the Government remained valid. When a coalition is in parliament or otherwise, out of discussion a fresh vote of confidence could very quickly be achieved. No changes could endanger the inner balance in coalitions and these could be resolved through various devices: changes in personnel, allocation of departments, and party composition.

The divorce of responsibility between parties and Governments had encouraged party leaders to pursue party goals without inhibitions / restrictions and typically without giving much attention to Governments. At the same time and as result thereof, party leaders did not support institutional prestige and legitimacy, which they should have done as a result of a direct linkage to Governments. At the same time and as a result thereof, party leaders did not support institutional prestige and legitimacy, which they should have done as a result of a direct linkage to Government responsibility.

The core of the problem in Italy today as before, is the defects of a real political responsiveness which would make Governments stronger, the representatives more disciplined and the parties less belligerent. Today, the rules of the game of Coalition Governments are considerably flexible and in the general framework of limited Government, there is no normal coalition parties to the cabinet. The motion of work of the cabinet is based on formal parliamentary confidence / no-confidence motions and external mechanisms (above all the leadership summits of majority parties.) Italian Governments diverge from others in that "they have not demonstrated that they can successfully govern or even more their policies to the fore of the parliamentary calendar.

The events of the early 1990s have shown that it is not enough to build the Governments which have a majority from elections (and not from coalition negotiations after elections) and build stronger Prime Ministers. The fragmentation of the party system together with an

unstable electorate and unstable political positions of a few parties explain the rapid fall of the Berlusconi's Coalition Government formation appears to have been accepted as a "normal" characteristic of new politics. The further development of the new party system, especially the consolidation and strategic positions of the new parties will have a decisive influence on the life of coalitions and the stability and efficiency of Governments.

While coalitions might free form to overrun or create Governments there does not seem to be any available internal mechanism whereby a coalition can ensure that its members will make particular decisions" Minority Governments need the "tacit support of some winning coalition and this will be forthcoming only to the extent that the policy outcome implemented by the Government is at least as good as any which the winning coalition could achieve by replacing the Government" That is also why cabinet ministries are important consolation prizes. Government coalitions may therefore survive even in the absence of legislative successes because of the absence of credible alternatives.

#### **5.7.5. SOUTH AFRICA**

With the release of Nelson Mandela and the lifting of the ban on the ANC party in 1990, the South African polity entered a new era of coalition politics. Such coalitions were being formed around the future of apartheid system in South Africa. The Phenomenon of coalition politics initially gathered roots and matured in the hospitable social climate provided by the post war liberal democracies of the west. It was also an off shoot of the imperative of making democratic governance operative in the socially plural context of the West. Over the years, the practice of coalition politics in the western countries threw up some familiar patterns regarding the formation, alignments and realignments of political parties that trigger off coalition politics. The phenomenon of coalition politics in the democratic context is no

longer confined to the West. Nevertheless, there are certainly more viable grounds for any comparative analysis of coalition politics between developed countries of Western Europe because the experiments of coalition politics in developed and developing countries have much less in common. But some of the post-colonial states, having taken a leaf out of the western democracies, have undoubtedly added new dimensions to the phenomenon of coalition building. The South African experience in coalition politics under the ANC offers an evidence of the same. As a mass movement, the ANC itself functioned like a coalition between different ethnic, linguistic class, religious and racial groups. This was possible because it functioned, like several centrist parties / movement, on the basis of inclusive ideology located at the center of the spectrum. Consequently it was able to carry the majority of the population, including the extremist elements along with its onward march in the unprecedented transition of coalition politics in post-apartheid South Africa, which at this juncture, is being shaped in the shadow of the overwhelming dominance of the ANC in the South Africa polity. The ANC, in its turn, continues to wield a loose coalition of diverse social groups and force to sail through the process of democratic governance.

#### **5.7.6. UNITED KINGDOM**

The framers of our Constitution consciously adopted for India the British Model of parliamentary Government as best suited to the genius of India. It may be, therefore, instructive and useful to find out how the British System responds to this situation of a hung Parliament. It is significant that on all occasions in this century when general elections have failed to produce a single party majority in England, the outcome has been single party minority Government and never a coalition. England, does not like coalitions. For them, coalitions are detestable and dishonest. In the situation of a hung

Parliament outcome always had been a single party minority Government and never a coalition.

### **Techniques of Minority Governments**

Bagdonor treats even a minority Government supported by one or many parties a coalition<sup>7</sup>. There may be disagreements on this, but since such a support is also part of a temporary alliance between or amongst political parties, it could be construed as a coalition in a **broad sense**.

**In England**, minority Governments have adopted a number of techniques to ensure their survival against a potentially hostile majority in the House of Commons.

**The first** technique is to negotiate a formal pact with the minor parties. This was the method used by the Labour Government during the period of March 1977 to July 1978. Alternatively, the minority Government may arrive at an informal, unwritten, unpublished, private understanding with other parties.

The first Labour Party minority Government of Ramsay Macdonald lasted only for a few months in 1924 because the Labour party did not make a deal with the Liberal Party. The Second Labour Party minority Government lasted from May 1929 to August 1931. A number of attempts at cooperation between Labour and Liberal Parties were made on various issues and bills. But Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald preferred informal discussion with Lloyd George, the Liberal leader. Neither of the leaders was in a position to carry his party with him. The details of the talks between the two leaders were never made public. It seems that it was less a treaty than an entente the terms of which were not very clear and the existence of which could be disowned by either party if need arose.

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<sup>7</sup> Supra 1

**The February 1974** elections produced a hung parliament. Prime Minister Edward Heath in his negotiations with the Liberal Party Leader, Thorpe, insisted that the Liberal Party should join in a coalition and not merely give support from outside, but Thorpe declined. As a result of by-elections and defections, the Labour Government lost its majority which it had gained in October, 1974.

**In March 1977**, Prime Minister James Callaghan reached a pact with the Liberal Leader Steel. The Liberals promised to support the Government from outside on key issues to the end of parliament session in return for prior consultation on major policy initiatives as well as promise regarding devolution in Scotland and European Elections. As a result of the pact, cabinet Ministers regularly consulted Liberal Party Spokesman.

**In March 1977**, neither party was in a position to face the electorate. The pact was liaison of convenience which ended in 1978. Steel knew that the Liberal Party will have to break the pact well before the elections so that it was not too much involved in Government's failure and its independence was not lost. During the lifetime of the pact, the Liberals voted against the Government on issues like income tax level, dock labour scheme, National Insurance contribution and devaluation of the green pound. Within six days of the signing of the pact, the Liberals threatened to vote against the increase in the tax on petrol in the budget. The Government decided not to implement the increase.

The pact resulted in regular negotiations between Chief whips of the two parties. The Liberals were consulted on Government legislation and the Queen's speech. Liberal leaders were given access to privileged Government documents. **Yet the pact failed because its success solely depended on personal rapport.** The pact was negotiated by Prime Minister Callaghan and Liberal Leader Steel. The cabinet as a whole was not consulted. The Parliamentary Labour Party was also not involved in the agreement.

Initially the pact was welcomed by many commentators and by the stock exchange. Later it was criticised as a selfish conspiracy between two parties both scared to face the electorate. It was also said that the Liberals gained nothing from the pact except the postponement of an unwanted election.

**A political party supporting a minority Government from outside is not a phenomenon new to India.** The Indira Gandhi Government during 1969-71, the Charan Singh Government, the V.P. Singh Government and the Chandra Shekar Government were all minority Governments supported from outside.

People's verdict in the 1996 Lok Sabha elections produced a fractured mandate and a hung parliament. The Congress was in no position to form the Government as both the Janatha Dal and the CPI (M) had clearly stated that they will not support a minority Congress Government. Moreover, the people's mandate for the Congress was that it should sit in opposition. The congress could ill afford to violate that mandate by joining the coalition of the United Front. Equally, the Congress did not want to punish the electorate by inflicting on it another immediate Lok Sabha election. The question of the Congress supporting the BJP simply did not arise. The Congress Party, therefore took positive steps in support of the process of the formation of a Government by political parties which are committed to secular democracy. That briefly was the rationale of the Congress decision to support the United Front Government from outside.

**Indian and British experience** of a minority Government surviving on support from outside by another party permits a few generalizations. Support from outside is a very unstable arrangement and does not last for very long. Minority Governments have survived not so much by entering into agreements but through fear of elections. The longer a minority Government wishes to survive the more it is compelled to enter into negotiations with other parties.

Support from outside creates tensions amongst the parties. It affects the morale of rank and file of both the parties. It is extremely difficult not to suffer from guilt by associations with the traditional enemy. There is no assurance for them that the policy of their party will get properly implemented. The shadow of the next elections hangs over all coalitions. Ministers are very conscious that some of their colleagues are likely to be their adversaries when they next face the voters. Mere Participation in a coalition changes every party's image. During the elections, it does not become possible for any party in a coalition to claim credit for coalition's achievement and blame other parties for the failures.

However, from the point of view of the supporting party it is a better arrangement than joining a coalition. It avoids immediate elections. At the same time the voter in the next election does not regard the supporting party as responsible for the failures of the Government.

#### **5.7.7. ROLE OF CONSTITUTIONAL HEAD IN GOVERNMENT FORMATION OF AT THE TIME OF HUNG PARLIAMENT**

The history of the House of Commons shows that when a general election does not produce a clear majority for any party, single party minority Government, rather than coalition, has been the rule. This is because the basic principle of parliamentary Government that a Government must enjoy the confidence of the House of Commons – means either that a Government commands the positive support of a majority in the House of Commons or that there is no majority in the House of Commons against it. In such a situation, two problems arise for the sovereign in Britain:

Whether the sovereign should appoint as Prime Minister the leader of the largest party, or the leader best suited to secure the support of the majority in the House of Commons. Similar problems arise for the

continental constitutional monarchies like Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Spain - whom to appoint as Prime Minister and whether to specify that a majority Government should be formed. In the Netherlands majority Government are generally formed, but in Scandinavia – and especially in Denmark – minority Governments are more frequent indeed, under Article 16(2) of the Danish constitution the Government enjoys a juridical existence simply by virtue of a Prime Minister having been nominated by the Sovereign. No formal vote of confidence is necessary. A minority Government can thus continue, as long as there is no positive majority against it in the legislature. The continental monarchies, unlike Britain, have codified constitutions which offer little guidance to the Government formation process. These countries have, therefore developed various methods to protect the sovereign from political involvement.

The Danish sovereign, after the general elections, consults the party leaders one at a time according to their relative strengths in the single chamber legislature, the Folketing. The Party leaders offer their recommendations as to which Governmental combinations are feasible and desirable. If party leaders representing a majority in the legislature recommend that a particular person be asked to form a Government, then the sovereign will ask that person to attempt the task. If the first round does not yield such a majority, further consultations are arranged until the majority of parties finally agreed upon a particular person for the premiership. So far, the process has never resulted in a deadlock. And although there is an ample scope for the sovereign to influence the outcome, there has not yet been any major controversy about his role since 1920.

In Belgium and the Netherlands, the sovereign is not only allowed, but expected to play a more active role in the process of Government formation. In both these countries a very active role is played by a person appointed by the sovereign called the informateur merely

register the points of view of the parties. But in Belgium and the Netherlands, he also initiates an active search for agreement on the composition of a Coalition Government, the distribution of posts, and the programme of the Government. The process of the Government formation is itself a vital part of the attempt to achieve consensus. In Belgium, apart from the outgoing Prime Minister, speakers of both houses, leaders of main parties, Ministers, and former Ministers, the sovereign consults the so-called interlocutor's sociaux, the governor of the national bank, the chairman of the Federation of Belgium Industries, and leaders of trade unions. But while in Belgium the details of negotiations are not disclosed, all the reports about the Dutch Government formation including the advice of the leaders, the reports of the informateur and the drafts of coalition agreements are published.

In Sweden, since the 1974 amended constitution, the sovereign has been deprived of any role in the Government formation process. The prerogative of the sovereign is transferred to the speaker of the Riksdag. The speaker calls the representative of each party in the House of Consultation, besides the Vice-speakers, and then submits a proposal to the Riksdag. Within four days the House votes on the proposal. It can be rejected only if more than half the members of the House vote against it. If the proposal is rejected, the same process is followed again. If the proposals are rejected four times, general elections take place.

It is suggested that in U.K. the Queen should hear the views in audience of each party leader in turn in order of their seat strengths in the New House. But it would be a nice question who would go first if the two leading parties tied.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Rodney Brazier, *Constitutional Practice*, Oxford 1994, p.37.

## 5.8. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES IN COALITION



It is said that coalition is not all that bad:

Every Coalition Government is not necessarily an evil or incapable of serving public interest. Moreover, stability alone should never be the goal. The very fact that several European countries and Australia have made enormous progress after the Second World War under Coalition Governments is itself the proof that Coalition Governments can rule effectively and promote public good. In fact, it can be argued forcibly that political choice among several minority parties need not undermine political stability. **On the contrary, party system reflecting a moderately diverse range of views conceivably could integrate the citizenry through open recognition of and competition between competing minority perspectives promoting the interest of the community by developing a commitment to democratic processes.** Further, a wider range of party system structures may indeed be more appropriate to the democratic polity. But for a coalition to succeed, it is necessary that either there is a sense of discipline a sense of right and wrong adherence to rule of law and above all a commitment to promote national interest. There may be ideological cohesion among the coalescing parties.

This situation dictates an accommodative politics of compromise and conciliation in which smaller parties and less powerful interest potentially get a voice in Government and public policy.

There is no reason why a country with diverse Communities should not have a Coalition Government like other West European Country. Germany and Italy have Coalition Governments and are known for their popularism and prosperity. We have to develop national feeling for development and spirit of Indianness. If India is to stay a pluralistic society, it cannot but encourage pluralistic thinking. Different point of view have to be recognized and respected. To coalesce them without destroying their individuality or entity is necessary so that the mosaic of cultures remains intact. A coalition of

such people who think differently but work within the larger frame of India is the real coalition. It will also bring understanding, without which no coalition can work successfully.

### **DISADVANTAGES:**

Founding fathers of our Constitution adopted the British Model of Parliamentary form of Government for India with some Indian modification. But this system is essentially based on four principles:

- (i) **Collective Responsibility:** The first mark of the cabinet is united and indivisible responsibility.
- (ii) The cabinet is answerable to the majority of the House and so indirectly to the electorate which created that majority.
- (iii) The cabinet is selected exclusively from one party.
- (iv) Cabinet Government provides a special role for the Prime Minister who is not only the first among equals but is also the keystone of the cabinet arch.

1. The first shortcoming of a coalition is the **principle of collective responsibility**. The cabinet speaks in many voices. The sense of direction and unity of purpose that is very essential for proper functioning of a cabinet, gets lost in a Coalition Government. Leaks of positions taken by the constituent parties on various issues in the cabinet become almost a daily occurrence. The Ministers under pressure from their rank and file are anxious to show that they have not sold out to and are not hoodwinked by their partners. When the Government is in trouble, the temptation to make scapegoats of the other partners is enormous, especially when election approaches. The working of a coalition cabinet is profoundly affected by the need to secure inter-party consensus. All this frequently leads to increasing the power and influence of the bureaucracy. The Cabinet was weak, partly because the Premier could not be a strong unifying party leader as in Britain. His task was more that of a broker or a compromiser

seeking to get divergent groups to work together. Often one or more of these groups saw more advantage in **the voting** against the cabinet than in supporting it.

While the parliamentary form of Government has several merits, one of its main weaknesses, which becomes more pronounced when a polity does not have disciplined, or ideology based political parties, is its precarious nature. In other words, in a parliamentary form of Government, the Government is always on borrowed time. The Government holds office only so long as it has the confidence of the majority in Parliament. This very circumstance allows for intrigue of the highest order, as parties and factions maneuver to bring down one cabinet to replace it with another they think is more acceptable. Public interest, nay, national interest, becomes a casualty in the process. Because, of the weakness of the cabinet, particular in its relationship to parliament, the French parliamentarianism came generally to be known as Assembly Government, signifying the predominant power of the legislature. This contrast with the terms cabinet Government, which is often used for the British Parliament system signifying the predominant power of the cabinet.

The 5th Republic Constitution - was to get away from a system in which parliament predominated-one that had failed to provide effective leadership. This was done by giving substantive powers, especially in time of crisis, to the President (formerly powerless Chief of the State) by conferring greater powers on the Premier by limiting the parliament's policy making powers and its powers to vote Government out of office. An innovation is creation of a constitutional Council to keep parliament within the bounds of the power granted it in the Constitution.

2. The Second victim of a coalition is the **office of the Prime Minister**. In the British system the Prime Minister enjoys a unique

position of power, prestige, prerogative and patronage. He holds the ultimate weapon of recommending the dissolution of Parliament. In the very real sense, he leads the Government. In a coalition arrangement, the Prime Minister is under constant pressure from even the smallest party represented in the coalition. The Prime Minister cannot select his own team. He cannot even reshuffle the cabinet without the consent of the constituent parties. **A Coalition Government is by its very nature a shotgun marriage which does not last for very long. As Disraeli once remarked, "coalitions thought successful, have always found that their triumph has been brief"**<sup>9</sup>. A coalition by its very nature is a weak and unstable Government.

In a parliamentary form of Government, the Prime Minister is the Kingpin. He chooses Ministers and he can dismiss them at his choice. It is for this reason that very often-parliamentary form of Government is derisively called "Prime Ministerial" form of Government. The Prime Minister in a parliamentary democracy is far more powerful than the President of United States can ever aspire to be, provided it is a one party Government. This is for the reason that the Prime Minister controls both the executive and the legislature in the sense that his party is the majority party in the legislature. In a Coalition Government, however, this power and privilege of the Prime Minister to choose Ministers of his choice or to dispense with them is seriously eroded. This certainly affects the prestige and efficiency of the office of the Prime Minister.

The most serious consequence of a coalition is that it creates tensions in political parties at the grass root level. Cooperation in the constituencies is immensely difficult to attain. The rank and file does not always appreciate the political compulsions of the national level politics. Any credible coalitions must have some list of agreed political

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<sup>9</sup> The 1996 Mandate: Its meaning and message.

priorities particularly among grass root activities. Coalitions last only as long as the parties composing them believe that the survival of the coalition is more important than uninhibited pursuit of their party interest.

In the words of Prof. David Butler, “coalitions threaten the disciples of party. They damp down the organized criticism of Government action. They obscure the clear cut choice of a two party system. The more all embarrassing and successful their combination, the less alternative they leave; dissenters may be derive to extremes”<sup>10</sup>

Any administration formed by a coalition of parties is usually weak, not merely because the combination is unstable but because men who professed principles differ are likely to be entangled in inconsistencies or driven to unsatisfactory compromises. The Coalition Governments represent the diversity of political opinions and conflicting interest of the people.

## **5.9. COALITION GOVERNMENT IN INDIAN CONTEXT**

In the last fifty years of working of Parliamentary System in India, there have inevitably been long periods of stability. There have also been periods of considerable instability due to an uncertain verdict returned by the electorate. It has already been discussed in the early part of the Chapter. In the first three elections, between 1952 and 1962, the Congress was returned with comfortable majorities at the Center and in the States and fall of Governments did not loom large on the political scene, except the dismissal of the Communist Government in Kerala in 1958 under Article 365 by the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

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<sup>10</sup> The 1996 Mandate: Its meaning and Message,p8

But for last 15 years things have changed. Now coalitions seem inevitable atleast for some time to come. We are not altogether stranger to Coalition Governments. We have seen that the Indian People voted for coalitions in 1977, 1989, 1996, 1998 and 1999. Even the 1991 vote was close to being a vote for a Coalition Government. If we start with the 1977 elections, every national election except the ones in 1980 and 1984 produced something other than a single party majority.

A lament against Coalition Governments would imply that Indian voters lost their good sense from the late eighties and have yet to find it back. When we say that India's voters chose a coalition in 2004, what we really mean is that they were divided and thus chose a Coalition Government. It is likely that a majority of electors voted for a single party and perhaps desired that party's single rule. But they could not agree on which party.

### **5.9.1. The problem of stability**

The basic requirement for a good Government is stability. Instability leads to weakness and weak Government and lead to chaos. We have been fortunate that the Indian democracy remained stable for nearly three decades (1947-77). Even when the ruling party was split in 1969 there was no threat to the survival of the Government. Another factor that contributed to this stability was the fact that at the intra-party level the issue of leadership never became contentious. It was only in 1967 that there were two contenders for the leadership (Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Shri Morarji Desai) but it was democratically resolved. Of course, there was all along articulation of diverse regional interest in the ruling party and there existed several competing ideological viewpoints but they never posed a threat to democratic stability.

It was routing of the Congress at the sixth General Elections in 1977 at the hand of the Janata Party, which brought an element of

instability in the Indian democracy for the first time. Although the electoral verdict in favour of the Janata Party was loud and clear, the Morarji Desai Government fell after two years. Its replacement proved more fragile and did not last even six months paving the way for dissolution of the Lok Sabha half way through its term. The return of the Congress to power during the general elections that followed restored stability at the Centre. It was the formation of the Janata Dal Government in 1989, which again introduced an air of instability, and the V.P. Singh Government had to bow out after one year. The minority Government of Chandra Sekhar, which came to power with the support of Congress from outside, too did not last long. The Congress contested the tenth general election held in 1991 on the slogan of stability. After being voted to power, it made sure that its Government lasted for full term. The verdict of 1996 general elections did not go against the incumbent party; it produced a hung Lok Sabha for the first time. The element of instability was thus built in the popular verdict itself. No political party was anywhere near majority in the Lok Sabha. The BJP, which had emerged as the largest single party, formed its Government but could not prove its strength on the floor of the house and fell in just two weeks. The Congress which was the second largest party in the house was aware of the fact it did not have sufficient numbers to form a stable Government and, therefore, it expressed it's unwilling to try its hand. This paved the way for the emergence of the Third Front- an amalgam of the non-BJP and non-Congress outfits ranging ideologically from left to right. However, it only proved an experiment in instability because it had to lean on Congress for support. The two Governments of the Third Front, one under H D DAVEGAUDA and another under I K GUJARAL could last only two years. There being no possibility of formation of a stable Government, the Lok Sabha was dissolved in less than two years. The search for democratic stability proved equally futile and the electoral gave a fractured mandate at the 12<sup>th</sup> general elections held in early 1998. Neither the Congress nor the BJP was anywhere near the

majority. The BJP being the largest single party formed its Government with the help of nearly a score political outfit even though they had been pulling in different directions right from the day one. The BJP led coalition, which formed its Government in March 1988, broke up after 13 months when the AIDMK withdrew from the ruling alliance. With no viable alternative being there the 12<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha was dissolved. 13<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha could complete its term but it could not perform well, all energies were spent in making balance of power with its allies and former Prime Minister authority was much less.

However, unfortunately, the general elections that followed also failed to throw up a clear majority Government. The Congress with Allies emerged as the largest single party. It cannot be said with certainty that present Government will last full five years.

Two other factors need to be considered here –

(I) The first relates to the casual link between democratic stability and the citizen's consensus on particular set of values. Even if all citizens favour democracy and elections, they are likely to disagree on different issues. The problem of democratic stability becomes particularly acute in societies like India, which have multiple-diversity. India in some ways constitutes a category in itself in terms of range and intensity of its diversities and divisions. It has its own unique coordination dilemmas whose focal solution does not relate merely to put in limits on the states but requires the delineation of spheres of federal, regional and local authority which is broadly acceptable to majority and minority communities at one level and backward and forward castes at another level and rich and poor states at yet another level. India does not only have multiplicity of languages and religions but also multiple cultures and multiple modes of production. Added to this multiplicity are numeral external pressures on its economy, polity, and society and culture which do not only impede but render the resolution of its coordination dilemmas extremely difficult. One does not know where to start the process of resolution of dilemmas because the relation between citizens' values and democratic stability

is symmetrical in so far as shared citizens' values help democratic stability as much as democratic stability helps in shared values.

It needs to be remembered in this connection that a sizable section of this diversity-ridden society is deprived of basic survival needs. This undermines the very legitimacy of the regime. The situation is further compounded because the society is historically rooted in strict hierarchy. This economically and socially disadvantaged strata has started nursing a feeling that it is not getting its due share of political power. It is easy to sell them the idea that their economic and social emancipation is possible only if they were to acquire political power. In this process, their ire is directed at the socially and economically advantaged strata that they hold responsible for their misery. Given the fact that they have numbers and numbers are all that matters in a democracy, these backward groups come to have an electoral advantage. Democratic stability is the first casualty in such a scenario. The situation becomes totally hopeless if the advantaged classes who are deeply entrenched in the seats of power do not allow reasonable political space to those backward groups who are threatening to gatecrash.

(II) The second point is that democratic stability is also affected by the federal nature of polity, particularly if the federating units are constituted on linguistic or ethnic basis. Several of these units start perceiving the federal authority's attitude towards them is discriminatory. By doing so they bring enormous pressure on the central Government to increase their share in the national cake. The regional elite also begin to realize that by playing up the discrimination card they can achieve rapid political mobilization in their favour and rise to power in their respective states. Even the Central legislature begins to reflect a regionalized character where the legislators go on shifting their loyalties to serve their narrow parochial interest. Thus, democratic instability is institutionalized.

### **5.9.2. Role of Regional Party**

This phenomenon of coalition has been described by many observers 'ethnification' of the party system whereby voters are most likely to vote accordingly to their caste to understand the past and answer why Coalition Governments did not sustain or succeed in the past.

A single-party Government, cohesion, effective governance and stability go together with stalemate, logjam and paralysis, followed by a fall of Government and new elections. Accommodating in policies, programmes and party power structure, newly assertive or social rising sections of society, and the strong sentiments of India's diverse regions evidently proved a challenge for national parties. Mushroom growth of political parties at state level conveys that Voters seemed to want their party, physically and emotionally closer to them and representing their region or social group. With the emergence of regional parties and the erosion of national parties in states, there had to be a political re-alignment in power sharing at Centre, when the country, especially the political class, was not ready for it. This resistance to accept the reality and the internal urge to gain majority to corner other parties made things worse and elections resulting in hung parliament. Since 1957, Indian polity has witnessed a continuous process of splintering of political parties and birth of new parties. For instance, so many parties have emerged from the original Socialist party or from the original Communist party. The Congress Party has also been subject to splits from time to time. Personality conflicts and personal ambitions coupled with regional and linguistic factors have contributed to the proliferation of political parties. The most undesirable development, of course, has been the coming into existence of the political parties based upon religion or caste, notwithstanding the constitutional prohibition. In the 12<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha, there were 34 political parties. There has not been a fall in the number of parties in the present Lok Sabha either. There are many more parties whose representation is confined to one or the other State

Legislature. It is necessary to arrest this trend. Political processes should bring about this but when this does not appear feasible or adequate, legal methods can be thought of.

### **5.9.3. CABINET IN COALITION**

The essence of Parliamentary system is Ministerial Responsibility that is practically realized by the cabinet and authority of the Prime Minister. If there is a coalition ministry in the office then the position in this respect is different. It functions without joint responsibility and becomes arena of intrigue party-politics. Ministers belonging to various parties freely criticize each other. For example, when there was a coalition ministry in West Bengal between 1968-69, Ajoy Mukherjee, the then Chief Minister, had to go on fast for few days against the policy of violence followed by CPI(M)- a partner in the Government. Same situation was present in the NDA Government. The position of the Prime Minister is comparatively weak in Coalition Government. Generally, whenever there are differences of opinion between the Prime Minister and the Minister or the Prime Minister wants to drop somebody from the Council of Ministers then he can ask the latter to resign. When a coalition is formed by parties whose stands differ substantially on major issues, it becomes difficult to arrive at a consensus on them. If the decision in the cabinet is taken by votes, the Minister whose views are in the minority will have to compromise the stand of his party unless, of course, his party decides to leave the coalition. No party can allow its Ministers to continue in a coalition if its views on major issues have to be compromised. At the same time, no Government can evade decisions on them to avoid trouble with its coalition partners. The advantage lay, in avoiding responsibility for decisions that might prove to be politically unpopular. In addition, some parties had reasons to believe that they would gain greater influence in the new cabinet which would be formed following the break-up of the present one. They could play this

game of political musical chairs with impunity because they did not need to anticipate a new election, which might have cost them seats in the legislature.

### **Position of Prime Minister**

At the best of times when the ruling party had a comfortable majority in parliament, the Prime Minister had a minimum 16-18 hour schedule every day to cope with the enormous load of work. One would naturally wonder how the present Prime Minister, who has the additional responsibility of securing support from the opposition parties for his Government's proposals, is able to find time for managing the business of administration.

Some people may think differently that the authority of the Prime Minister has been have increased considerably because of the very important role he has now to play to secure the support of other parties for the Governments proposals. Unlike the two minority Governments which preceded the present one, Government does not have the assured support of any particular opposition party for its survival. It is therefore negotiates with the opposition parties for support on the basis of the merits of a particular proposal. Since this task is the sole responsibility of the Prime Minister, his role has become far more important today than at any time before.

#### **5.9.4. ROLE OF PRESIDENT**

The constitutional head is not permitted under the Constitution, to create conditions for destabilizing a Prime Minister who has obtained a confidence vote in the House after assumption of office. Nor is he empowered to issue any direction ,advice even by a 'whisper of throne' to the PM regarding his term of office except when he does not demit office without advising for dissolution after the defeat on a no confidence motion or monetary bill.

In areas of the president's discretionary powers, there are no clear out guidelines or precedents either in India or U.K. There is certainly no

firm constitutional convention in the U.K. Supporting the view of some constitutional experts that in the circumstances in which no party gets majority, what stand the president was bound to take for Government formation.

It is important to evaluate the formation of the V.P Singh Government as a precedent because the President called upon the leader of the National Front to form the Government as Congress(I), though the largest party was rejected- In fact, the President did not subscribe to this view. The president clearly implied that had Rajiv Gandhi opted to form a Government as the leader of the largest party he would have allowed him to do so and seek a vote of confidence. That Rajiv Gandhi did not so opt was a matter of political arithmetic and not because of Constitutional constraint. By this statement the President also rejected the theory that largest party had no claim to form a Government after a General election if the electorate voted for it with a reduced membership than before.

The President's stand is appreciable for his concern for democratic process, his tact and fore sight in clarifying his action by issuing a Communique. The President has to ensure that a "Hung" Parliament does not result in public morality being hanged. In the fitness of things under the entire scheme of the Constitution the Presidents powers----- can only be appreciated as declaratory of the will of the Lok Sabha as communicated to him through some properly prescribed procedure such as a formal resolution of the Lok Sabha. In the matter of appointment of Prime Minister, President makes his own assessment of the political situation, discusses the claim and counter claim of different political parties and their leaders and then arrives at a conclusion as to who can probably command majority support in the Lok Sabha. If the Prime Minister so appointed, fails to prove his majority on the floor of House, then the President again enters the exercise of assessment of the political situation to

find out another suitable person till the President realizes that he can do no better.

The question that is being debated is who should be invited by the President to form the Government and to seek a vote of confidence as has been done on a few occasions when no party or pre-poll alliance of parties getting a clear majority in recent general elections. The fair thing to do obviously would be to give the first option to the pre-poll alliance which has won more seats than the other pre-poll alliance which has won fewer seats. Like should be compared with the like ones. This would be in accordance with the recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission<sup>11</sup>. An important criteria in judging the future stability of a Coalition Government would be the Proportion of the seats of parties in the final coalition. If the number of seats of the main party is less than the strength of other parties the longevity of the Coalition Government will depend on the whims of a large number of parties, including regional parties, any one or two of whom could upset the Government. These are the factors that the President should hopefully take in to account. Which pre-poll grouping and which pre-poll manifesto had the larger mandate from the people should be an important criterion for the President to consider while deciding on who should have the first chance to seek the vote of confidence from the Lok Sabha.

#### **5.10. REASONS OF NOT BEING SUCESSFUL IN COALITIONS IN INDIA**

In Indian psyche always wanted a strong leader – an authoritative father figure to lead the country. Though there was a very strong party Indian National congress – associated with freedom struggle, among the masses there was always intense identification with the leaders

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<sup>11</sup> 'Choices Before the President, by G.V. RamaKrishna, Former secretary of the Sarkaria Comm., The New Indian Express, May,12,2004.p.8.

such as Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabh bhai Patel.

This 'Messiah' protector or God Father image of the leaders gave political mileage to the party in the elections and voting to congress was viewed more as a part of their patriotic obligations.

The strong leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi gave the impetus to Congress to stay in power throughout their tenure. Of course, there was a brief Janata Party rule in late Seventies during Mrs. Gandhi's period, which was born out of anti establishment wave following the emergency rule

A similar political misadventure happened in 1990, when Janata Dal did a similar fiasco during Rajiv Gandhi's period. Barring these two developments there was no major alternative to Congress Government at the Centre.

This can be largely attributed to the powerful and charismatic leaders of Congress and lack of such leaders in the opposition parties to counter challenge their charisma. Even with rich divergent political ideologies and commitment they could not make a dent in national leadership as popularity at a national level was a major issue. Nehru family, with their contribution to the freedom struggle and congress administration, thus demanded loyalty from people and remained the source of Prime Ministerial choices.

The rise of regional parties in states, which proved to be the powerful alternatives, always had a powerful leader to initiate the movement. Whether it is Annadurai or MGR of Tamil Nadu or NTR of Andhra Pradesh, there was always an "aura" seen around them by the public. This "dependent" follower model suited Indian population, as even educated, urban, well - informed electorate also did not behave differently in most of the elections. Hence the political environment never gave an opportunity for coalition rule till 90's.

**Coalition Governments in India were unsuccessful for the following main reasons:**

1. The non-Congress Governments, which were given opportunity to form the Government, failed to survive, as the power struggle within the United front was always alive and intense, which made the "remote control" supports outside the cabinet possible by pulling the carpet at the right time.

Minority Governments with more scope for coalition rule did most of the damage by making coalitions synonymous to instability. When party of the congress stature fails to establish a national level popularity, other opposition parties, which have roots only in selected pockets could not manage to be a national alternative.

With the emergence of regional parties and the erosion of national parties in states, there had to be a political re-alignment in power sharing at Centre, when the country, especially the political class, was not ready for it. This resistance to accept the reality and the internal urge to gain majority to corner other parties made things worse and elections resulting in hung parliament.

The lack of readiness of our political parties, irrespective of their ideology, for coalition governance is also a major factor.

2. The poor percentage of voting in General Elections, irrespective of increasing education and awareness, throws light on the voter behavior. The political consciousness of our voters seems to be blurred. There has been a lot of information and awareness about performance of political parties and Governments, civic administration, law and order and other parameters of power. Thanks to media, there is tremendous reach of information about what is happening in the country. The unfortunate part is that this information does not get assimilated into political thinking or consciousness.

This "too much of information and nothing to do " paradox leads to apathy and indifference to social and political issues among our voters. Educated class which is critical about burning issues like

corruption, misuse of power, exploitation of under privileged etc., has conveniently developed selective insensitivity.

The life style the people have today is dictated by western norms of material culture and excessive independence. The break down of joint family system, urbanization, fragmented social support systems, declining opportunities for collective decision making processes, selfishness being an accepted way of life, power being the temple of worship combined with apathy about politics and governance have led to total lack of faith in coalition form of power sharing.

The life style of our people also has been shaping the perception toward the type of Government.

3. It has been always been witnessed in the past that every minority Coalition Government feels that because of one or two persons or the group that often results in collapse of a Government. Whether it is Sitaram Kesari or Mayavati or Jayalalitha, it is always a few people who cause the ultimate damage to the Government.

Managing people is the core issue in the survival of any Coalition Government. Though this looks like a behavioral issue, this deserves much more serious attention, as this would save our country from frequent elections and build credibility of the system among our people and would help us to regain our strength at a crucial phase of economic reform.

Coalition Governments do not represent a new phenomenon. In many parliamentary democracies, particularly in Europe, Coalition Government has been the norm rather than the exception. Between 1945 and 1974 there has never been a one party Government in Finland, France, Luxembourg and Netherlands. In fact, Finland and France never did have a single party Government from 1918 till 1974. Germany did not have a one party Government between 1918 and 1940. In Australia and Belgium, there had been only one occasion during the period 1945 to 1974 when a single party formed the Government. In Canada there have been five one party Governments and five multiparty coalitions during the same period. On the other

hand in the United Kingdom and New Zealand, there has never been a Coalition Government since the Second World War; it had always been a single party Government. During the period between the two world wars, Great Britain had three multiparty Coalition Governments, the most disastrous being the 1931 experiment when King George V brought about a national Coalition Government or a 'Government of personalities' as it was called, under Ramsay McDonald.

In India, we had Coalition Governments both at the Centre and in some of the states from time to time. That the life of Coalition Governments in India (except the ones in West Bengal and Kerala) has been short, should be no surprise. Most of them are victims of their inherent contradictions. In any event, those were the first brushes with such an experiment.

**In India there are neither** clearly differentiated policy positions nor agreements on even such fundamentals as secularism. Therefore, even such devices to ensure the stability of coalition and minority Governments have the odds stacked against them. On the issue of the likely stability, longevity and policy capacity of coalition and/or minority Governments in India, therefore, one is forced to conclude from looking at Indian Politics through the prism of theory, comparative experience and our own recent political history. (If we take examples of Jayalalitha and Mayawati, no doubt they have made coalition a dirty word, at a time when country may well be left with no option but to come to terms with it. Nor is it inevitable that coalition should be synonymous with political and economical stability. Bipolarity is emerging in the country. Two poles are discernible, with the BJP and the Congress as the Center points and regional parties revolving like satellites around them. A two party does not seem likely in India in near future for the simple reason that society is too diverse and the middle class too narrow to allow domination by two parties

### **5.11. FUTURE OF COALITION GOVERNMENT IN INDIA :-**

In the last fifty years of working of Parliamentary System in India, there have inevitably been long periods of stability. There have also been periods of considerable instability due to fractured mandate given by the electorate. In the first three elections, between 1952 and 1962, the Congress was returned with comfortable majorities at the Center and in the States and fall of Governments did not loom large on the political scene, except the dismissal of the communist Government in Kerala in 1958 under Article 365 by the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

But for last 15 years things have changed. Now coalitions seem inevitable at least for some time to come. We are not altogether stranger to Coalition Governments. Their success depends on the Principle of power sharing going by the experience of States like West Bengal and Kerala. The record of West Bengal and Kerala Governments although not faltering has been in fact much better than there of single party Governments in several other States in India.

It has been discussed above that Coalition Governments have an impressive record all over the world during the half of the Twentieth Century and they seem to have come to stay as an integral part of the parliamentary system. Germany is a shining example. Italy is a classic case where several political parties have been getting together and forming Coalition Government from time to time, and performing with reasonable success. All these countries are much different from India from the point of view of the complexity of problems such as regional, logistic and socio- cultural. Yet they have not been striving for single party Governments.

The present is a momentous moment for our political leader to think seriously and plan carefully in order to hammer out a new, viable and stable Coalition Government since the idea of a national Government is beyond the realm of reality. Indian democracy is clearly in transition. Hung Parliaments and seemingly fractured mandates are

not unfortunate accidents or evidence of a confused electorate. They are a message from the people that the orientation and priorities of governance needs to be changed. It can also be inferred, that the electorate feels that Regional Parties are closer, and more accountable to their constantly evolving aspirations. Viewed in this perspective, coalitions should be welcomed as democracy's dynamic response to the need of the hour, rather than a deterioration of the body politic., They are indicative of the reality, that we have to learn to live together and make the best use of scarce resources or soon there will be very little left to squabble over. Coalition Governments could thus be the symbol of India's maturity as a democracy.

At another level, there is emergence into prominence of regionalism and regional parties which have been one of the Chief causes of coalition.

A coalition is not necessarily a sign of weakness. In fact a durable partnership can be built either by equally strong or strongly motivated persons – whereas unequal partners can only ruin the prospects of any venture.

Thus, coalitional Governments are legitimate and they can be a purposeful form of Government, although mere survival of such Government scarcely merits applause only through dynamic transition. Therefore the structure, composition and dynamics of coalition politics will continue to evolve until an optimum level of responsive governance is achieved.

Since 1977 out of 138 State Governments, 84 single party Governments lasted 41 months and 40 Coalition Governments lasted 26 months and 14 minority Governments with outside support lasted one year.

But eight pre-election coalitions of West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura have lasted longer than single party Governments.

**The time has now come to evolve a constitution for coalitions,** which should be anchored upon ideological and policy affinities, a time bound action programme and mutual respect between the

constituents. The concept of support from outside should be discouraged, since it could result in irresponsible behavior, and collective responsibility becomes the first casualty. But unless we learn the art of coalitions, it will be difficult to predict how long such a state of affairs will last.

In the ultimate analysis, Indian political parties defy theories and there is simply no coherent frame of reference to predict any preordained course of events. Suffice it to say, that mutual understanding, accountability and the pursuit of well established programme and policy are the need of the hour. At the present time, it appears that diverse interests formed into harmonious social and political coalitions will be representative of and most responsive to India's ethno cultural diversity. It only remains to be seen whether our political parties have the vision and maturity to rise above narrow partisan considerations and unite, to further the national interest.

## **5.12 CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

### **The suggestions for making a success of Coalition Governments cannot be generalized.**

First and foremost requisite, is the wisdom, sagacity, patriotism and commitment to promote public among all members of the coalition – a statesman like attitude – and a willingness to subordinate their petty political interests to the greater good of the nation. Even so, some suggestions can certainly be thought of to achieve this but they have to be time specific. Our country has a multi cultural, multilinguistic, multireligious and multiracial society. In a sense it is a continent comprising regions far removed from each other in social, economic and political development. While Hindi is the main language of the Northern heartland, half the Indian population speaks different languages, the formation of linguistic states has given territorial

identity to each of these linguistic groups. In a nation of such diversity the only viable form of Government is the federal form of Government. A unitary constitution is the most inappropriate one in such a situation. Indeed, the rise of regional political parties like the Dravidian parties in Tamil Nadu, Telugu Desam in Andhra Pradesh, Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, Akali Dal in Punjab, Trinamul Congress in West Bengal and AGP in Assam are all rooted in separate linguistic cum regional identities and aspirations. Cooperative federalism is the only viable policy in such a situation. It may not be possible in the near future, to do away with these regional and / or linguistic political formations, in as much as they represent the processes in and aspirations of, the respective linguistic groups and regions. This diversity in the political spectrum is bound to be there and indeed has to be reflected and accommodated in any Government at the centre.

It goes without saying that it is the constitutional obligation of the political party is to provide to the people, who have elected them, a stable and good Government for the prescribed period.

Stability is important, not for the sake of continuance of the particular formation in the govt., but only because a stable govt. can contribute to public good and create confidence in the international circles.

**The Law Commission has made some recommendations for stability of the Government :<sup>12</sup>**

**(i) Amendment of rule relating to no-confidence motion**

The moving of no-confidence motion is not provided or regulated by any law – much less by the Constitution. So far as Lok Sabha is concerned, Rule 198 of the Rules of procedure and conduct of business, framed by the Speaker prescribes the manner in which the no-confidence motion has to be moved, debated and voted upon. With a view to introduce stability in governance, the commission has

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<sup>12</sup> Supra I.

recommended the introduction of a new rule, Rule 198 – A. The rule proposed requires that a motion of no confidence should necessarily be accompanied by another motion expressing confidence in a named individual and that both the motions should be moved and debated together. Only the second motion should be put to vote. It is further recommended that once a no – confidence motion – or a confidence motion moved at the instance of the President / Governor is moved and considered by the House, no such motion shall be allowed to be moved for the next two years.

**(ii) Another important recommendation is the introduction of “five percent” rule.**

It means that unless a political party obtains five percent of the total valid votes cast for Lok Sabha or a State Assembly, as the case may be, such party will not obtain any representation in the Lok Sabha / Assembly. In case a person is elected on the ticket of such a party, he will not become a member of Lok Sabha / Assembly and the candidate who has polled the next highest votes will be declared elected from that constituency, provided his party gets five percent of the valid votes cast. Such a rule is in vogue in Germany because of which there are only three political parties in that country. The object behind the five per cent rule is to arrest and reverse the proliferation of the parties and to force the existing parties into coalitions / fronts. In other words, the idea is to bring about polarization of political forces and to reduce the number of parties / fronts / coalitions to two or three. A pre-election coalition / front shall be treated as one political party for all purposes including for the purpose of law of defection. But for the purpose of giving effect to this rule, it is necessary to provide two other measures, namely (a) the independents should be barred altogether and 9b) the definition of “Original Political Party” in the Tenth Schedule to the constitution (law of defections) should be substituted by the definition of “Political Party” on the lines mentioned above if the five percent rule has to be implemented. We cannot have independents and yet enforce the five- percent rule. The rate of

success among independent candidates in the case of Lok Sabha is less than one percent. In 1996 elections out of about 2000 independent contestants only six succeeded i.e., less than half a percent. Moreover a parliamentary democracy like ours is predicated upon the existence of political parties and not independent candidates. One can imagine what would happen if tomorrow 300 independents are elected to the Lok Sabha.

From all the experiences of coalitions recounted above, the following steps can lead to success in forming stable coalitions, apart from the steps required which will be considered later, for discouraging unprepared coalitions and for encouraging the stability of coalitions Governments.

1. Inter-party negotiations for forming a coalition should be completed long enough in advance of an impending election for its prospective members to contest the elections as a proclaimed coalition. There should be clear and timely agreement on the distribution of tickets and each member party should announce its candidates well enough in advance.
2. The negotiations should be patient, thorough, discriminating and should take particular note of ideological factors as between prospective parties, and temperamental factors as between their leaders.
3. While the coalition must have enough parties as members to make up a majority on the floor of the house, it should not be expanded so much as to compound the risk of incompatibilities.
4. The coalition must have an agreed agenda which is proclaimed well enough in advance of the election, and it should be weighty and detailed enough to be sufficient as a work programme for the coalition for a full term. Any new item on which action is not immediately essential should then be added to it only if there is a broad enough consensus on it within the coalition, and as a rule consensus is not difficult on issues which call for urgent action. Each item put on the

initial agenda or added to it later on should be spelt out clearly enough to forestall future disagreements about its meaning.

5. The coalition should admit only those parties which agree to be full members both of the coalition and of the Government which the coalition aims to form "outside support", whether outside the coalition or outside the coalition's Government, should be discouraged, because while it may look like a short cut to power today it also becomes a short cut to the fall of the Government tomorrow.

6. In deciding whom he should invite first to try to form the Government, the president should recognize only those coalitions which were formed and announced before the election., But if such a coalition has more members on the floor than the single largest party, it should be invited first, and there should be no need for the constituent parties to furnish evidence that they would support a Government formed by their coalition, though in case of doubt a party may be asked to affirm that it is a member of the coalition which claims its support.

7. A coalition formed after the election should not be invited at all to form a Government, or should be invited only after all pre-election coalitions and all single parties have been invited to try first steps 6 and 7, apart from other steps which will be discussed later, can become a strong incentive gradually for like-minded parties to come together in coalitions, and to do so before rather than after the election.

8. Each coalition should have a strong coordinating mechanism regardless of whether the coalition is in power or not, and in no case should it be delayed beyond the formation of the Government. Once installed, it should meet often and should be the primary place where inter-party differences are dealt with though the cabinet should remain the primary place for dealing with inter-Ministerial differences. As a rule all member parties should have equal representation in the coordinating mechanism.

But while the foregoing reforms may encourage parties to form mature and well considered coalitions, and to form them before rather than after an election, another reform would still be needed for ensuring that Governments do not fall and elections are not called with avoidable frequency.

A simple and fully democratic way of ensuring this would consist of three steps. First, a Government's recommendation for dissolution should be binding on the President only if it is backed by say, two thirds of the members present and voting. This would allow dissolution recommended by the Government only for enlarging its majority in the house because the Government thinks it is riding a wave in the country. At the same time it would avoid the rigidities of a fixed term for the house, which can cause complications of a kind not difficult to foresee.

The new leadership style has to have the following features, as opposed to the traditional political leadership style. Some of the major differences between both the styles are listed in the Annexure E (ii) at the back.

Indeed, the politics of coalition is the politics of compromises, given the multiplicity of interests. This is understandable. But when a coalition is given entirely to compromises, it inevitably reflects on governance. This, sadly, has been the fate of many a Coalition Governments in Kerala. What distinguishes a compromise – ridden coalition from a confidence raising coalition is leadership. There had been only one instance when a coalition set-up demonstrated that it could govern quite effectively and beneficially for the state. That was the CPI led coalition of 1970-77 headed by C. Achutha Menon.

The emerging coalition of regional interests and the influence they are likely to wield in the national power game is important for yet another reason, namely its enormous potential to strengthen federal ethics that had been so much weakened and abused during the long one party rule at the centre. The perceived distrust of the States of the Centre has a lot to do with the way the latter sought to reduce the

powers of the states in the name of strengthening the sinews of growth. The process was started in the early seventies under the Congress rule of Indira Gandhi and climaxed in the eighties during her second term.

This is the time we can look at evolution of Indian party system from the stand point of coalition theory, comparative experience and historical development to draw what one may realistically expect from coalition politics in the Indian context.

There is a growing realization that whether a coalition or a single party, the Central Government should be allowed to complete its term. According to former Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee the coalition experiment can succeed if the following steps are taken :- (These proposals were made in Press Conference on 13<sup>th</sup> August 1999).

- i) Reforming election laws to provide for representation to only those parties which poll not less than eight percent of the total votes cast. In the case of regional parties the percentage can be forty in their regions only. This will eliminate a large number of small and frivolous parties.
- ii) Amending constitution to provide for a fixed tenure of five years for the Lok Sabha.
- iii) Coalition should be formed only on the basis of a unanimously agreed programme from which all contentious issues between the coalition partners are excluded.
- iv) No confidence motion against the Council of Ministers should be admitted for discussion only if it is accompanied by the proposals of a viable alternative.

Some suggests for National Government, but it is not a natural Government. It is created by abnormal circumstances such as war or economic crisis. Its disintegration starts the minute the pressure of circumstance eases.

There have been many occasions in England when a national Government was proposed by eminent persons, but the logic of the

Westminster model rejects such attempts. A national Government cannot work successfully merely because no party has secured a majority. A national Government by its very definition will have to comprise all parties including the BJP. Let us say that the very first item in the very first cabinet meeting of such a national Government is the common civil code, or Article 370, or Ram Janmabhoomi. Will the cabinet ever be able to decide on any one of these items? Let us, therefore realize that the concept of a national Government is a mirage which we had better give up.

The truth is that, like the British system of judicial trial, which we have adopted, the British Model of Parliamentary Government is essentially adversarial. There is no room in it for consensual politics. On a occasions in this century, when general elections failed to produce a single – party majority in Britain, the outcome was a single – party minority Government (as in 1923, 1929, and 1974), never a coalition or a national Government.

India has become fractured polity of an exceptional character. A case for a National Government of all the leading parties is early to implement as our politicians and people will take time to cultivate the spirit of 'Constitutional Morality' which is an essential sine qua non for its success. The failure lies not only in the structure of polity and in the political process, but also in good governance, which comes with a vision, transparency and the impartial enforcement of laws. Good governance is not predicted upon one or other form of Government: Presidential, Parliamentary, or any combination of political systems.

The Westminster model works successfully only if there are no more than two strong parties. Even with the absence of the two – party system in India, the model worked fairly well in the era of one party domination, because the Congress could always command the majority in Lok Sabha. That age is now over and we may be

witnessing the dawn of the era of hung parliaments and Coalition Government.

It would be pertinent to point out here that for a country like India which itself is a melting pot of diverse communities and cultures, only a Coalition Government at the Center can provide better representation. No doubt, Coalition Government has its own weaknesses but it appears Coalition has now come to stay in India.