

CHAPTER - SEVEN

CONCLUSION

Challenges and Suggestions :

The main challenge regarding coalition politics is that since in India, it is inevitable, the focus should be on how to ensure that basic issue of good governance, clean politics and administration are not neglected. It is a fact that coalition politics has come to stay in the Indian scenario. One party majority system or that of two single party system is past. The dominant political scenario would be the two coalition group. Thus rather than return to a political centralization that was the economic ruin of India, our major national parties need to focus on social and cultural ecosystems, linking them, together across regions and communities.

Electoral dynamics are also ensuring that no single party will be in a position to dominate the political scenario. Politics of consensus is sought to be achieved, which unfortunately often becomes politics of one-upmanship and bargaining. In this context, however a contrasting and different view may be taken of two former home secretaries of India, Mr. N.N. Vohra and Mr. K. Padmanabiah. Mr. Vohra has an optimistic viewpoint that since meetings are so often and there is so much conversation, decision, taken

may be slow, but they are more lasting. Mr. Vohra who was also principal secretary to Prime Minister, I.K. Gujral, there have been few governments where the Cabinet & Cabinet Committees have met so often. Mr. Padmanabiah also agreed and said that in a multiparty government, the state satraps who are rewarded with cabinet portfolios do not resist development related decisions.

However, an alternative and differing viewpoint have been given by former Cabinet Secretary T.S.R. Secretary T.S.R. Subhramanium who said that simply bringing about a meeting between two ministers of different parties becomes a herculean task, more a process of appeasement. This is one of the most important challenges for not only the ministers but also the bureaucrats. They have to rise above parochial and narrow considerations and think in terms of the national interest.

Often, coalitions are formed after the electoral process is over. This sometimes leads to politics of horse-trading, especially if two groups of parties have roughly the same strength. Therefore, it is desirable that pre-poll alliances are formed which would mean that at least the voters are clear of their choices and later on after election results, the peoples' mandate is respected. It is so important that majority should be tested on the floor of the house and a specific time period be given before the floor

test. Often this time period varies, and unnecessarily this leads to allegation of bias against the President or Governor as the case may be.

In coalition politics, it is understandable that the parties to the coalition will try to expand their support base. This can not be avoided altogether, but this should not be the immediate-and exclusive objective of the partners, who should also owe loyalty to the coalition and the common minimum program. The coalition of parties should endure consultation and co-operation between the organizational and ministerial wings through devices such as co-ordination, consultation committees. Constitutional functionaries such as the President, the Prime minister, the Governor, the Chief Ministers as well as the Civil Servants should not transgress or be denied their importance simply because the Government happened-to be a coalition.

A closer look also needs to be taken at whether the first past the post system is serving the its purpose in a coalition politics system or whether a system if say proportional representation would be more suitable. In the latter, the final result would more closely reflect the wishes of the people, However smaller parties would be sidelined and marginalised which in itself may not be desirable.

Since coalition politics has come to stay and all parties have come to realise the inevitability of coalition and political alliances their tactics will also accordingly change. They will aim at compatibility which would reduce and even remove in-coalition stress and conflicts. This would necessarily lead to prior formulation of ideological and policy commitment oriented to solving issues than merely gaining power. Coalition will probably work better if there are two or three major parties which might act as the anchor or pillars of the system. The other parties can co-operate with them in an endeavour to provide a stable government.

In the context of the emergence of a competitive multi-party system and the inevitability of coalition politics, minor reforms need to be initiated in the scheme of parliamentary governance to expand the democratic space and increase the effectiveness of government. The suggestion that the Prime Minister should be elected by the Lok Sabha and the Council of Ministers can be removed by a vote of no-confidence by the Lok Sabha only after the House had selected an alternative leader also needs to be widely debated and implemented, if there is consensus among parties on this issue.

India has now moved much ahead from where it was sixty three years ago. Material progress can be realised faster if moral areas are guarded. That is the weakness today. The foundations of the new politics cannot be built without an ethical base for politics and administration.

While diving to the conclusion part, we can make some categorization.

Firstly, out of the fifteen States with coalition governments, a few have achieved political stability through continuous experimentation and methodical practice on the part of the political parties and leaders (Kerala and West Bengal).

A second category consists of States that have moved back and forth between one-party government and coalition without having the opportunity to practise coalition politics with commitment (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Goa).

A third category manages coalitions under the patronage of anchor parties, i.e. one party having enough strength to run the government but willing to share some power with the poll allies (Haryana, Orissa, Punjab and West Bengal).

The fourth category includes new entrants, still in the experimental stage (Maharashtra).

The fourth general election (1967) was believed to have marked a watershed in Indian politics, as it broke the Congress dominance in several States and aroused hopes of political polarization. But later developments resulted in the further fragmentation of party structure and gave rise to a more competitive multi-polar politics. The emergence of new political parties and forces including the regional parties occurred at the expense of the dominant Congress which was cut down to size in several States and subsequently at the Centre. Not only are the regional parties today cutting at the roots of the Congress power they are also checking the growth of any alternative party including the BJP at the national level. The two NDA experiments at the Centre seem to strengthen the view that there is no going back to single-party dominance of any complexion —secular or non-secular, socialist or non-socialist.

In the present situation, India is today undergoing through a complex political transition. The context of one party dominance system has become a myth and has given birth to an era of coalition politics. It is seen

that with the decline of the Congress system and since there is no national alternative it was logical for the people to repose faith in different parties and groups. Some of them confined to region only. During the initial period the coalition politics has suffered from the lacuna of unprecedented instability and weak governance. The tentative experiment in coalition government, specifically at the centre, has evoked mixed responses ranging from extreme scepticism to post facto admiration and acceptance. In fact, the inevitability of the arrival of coalition politics in the working of our democracy has become a concern for all.

A clear and in depth analysis of coalition polities is crucial for us to understand the myriad of changes that are occurring in our polity in order to better manage the transition and anticipate and influence the future course of action to be undertaken,

In view of the fact of demands by religious, cultural or ethnic groups for greater autonomy have increased in India, there is an urgent need to think afresh about approaches to structures of governance in multicultural and multiethnic societies like India. India's experience as arguably the most diverse society in the world and her attempt to wrestle with tensions between centralising and decentralising tendencies is reflected in our experiment in coalition government.

It must be said that the formation of coalition governments reflects the transition in Indian politics away from the national parties toward smaller, more narrowly-based regional parties. Some regional parties, especially in South India, are deeply aligned to the ideologies of the region unlike the national parties and thus the relationship between the central government and the state government in various states has not always been free of rancor. Disparity between the ideologies of the political parties ruling the centre and the state leads to severely skewed allocation of resources between the states.