

CHAPTER - ONE

Introduction

A coalition government is a cabinet of a parliamentary government in which several parties co-operate. Usually, such a government is formed if no party on its own gets a majority in the parliament elections. However, a coalition government may also be created in a time of national difficulty or crisis, for example during wartime, to give a government the high degree of perceived political legitimacy it desires whilst also playing a role in diminishing internal political strife. If a coalition collapses, a confidence vote is held or a motion of no confidence is taken.

The term coalition is derived from the Latin word *coalitio* which is the verbal substantive of *coalescere*, which means to grow together. (1) However, as actually used, it somewhat belies its nominal meaning, for the units or the elements brought into combination by a coalition very seldom grow together in any literal sense. (2)

According to the dictionary meaning, Coalition means an act of coalescing, or uniting into one body, a union of the persons, states alliance. In the strict political sense, the word coalition is used for alliance or temporary union into a single government of distinct parties or members of

distinct parties (3). In other words, it commonly denotes a co-operative arrangement under which distinct political parties, or at all events members of such parties unite to form a government or ministry .(4)

It is generally regarded as the product of parliamentary democratic process and is commonly used in connection with political parties, particularly in multiparty system. It may, however, refer to, an alliance of forces within a party or groups cutting across party lines. It is applied to the union of two or more parties, or, as generally happens, portions of parties, who agree to sink their differences and act in common .(5)

Coalition thus refers to a combination of political groups or forces, temporary in nature and for specific objectives (6). It is also generally accepted that a coalition can take place only within the contexts of mixed motive in which both conflict and common interest are simultaneously present and must govern the course of action chosen (7).

Coalition politics: A Theoretical Framework:-

In spite of the fact that the subject of Coalitions is not of recent origin, it has not entrenched itself as a part of the literature on Political Science especially with regard to a theoretical understanding of the concept. In India, the study of coalitions is of recent origin though the

developments of the last two to three decades have witnessed an upsurge in the writings on coalition politics (8).

Two seminal contributions to the theoretical literature on coalition politics are found in the works of William H. Riker and William A. Gammon. Riker has primarily employed game theory to study coalition politics, thus imparting a more disciplined tone to the whole field. He uses the n-person game to develop his theory and simplify a highly complex phenomenon. He put forth the notion that in order to discover the trends or design of a coalition, it is advisable to make an assessment of the human behaviour of the members constituting a coalition. Especially of those who are at the helm of a coalition. Riker holds that general decision making policy of a coalition depends upon its leader (9). The analysis of his leadership is as essential as the analysis of a mathematical theorem or a chemical reaction. Riker's theory finds its echoes in Bryce who subscribes to much of the formers views.

It is seen that a coalition can take place in two phases: pre election alliance or adjustments between the parties and post election union to share political power and run the government (10).

The former type of coalition has two additional advantages than the later. A pre poll understanding provides a common platform to the parties in order to attract the electorate on the basis of the joint manifesto. Moreover, the radicalism of such parties is softened to a great extent in the process of mutual concessions without causing the slightest damage to the image of either of them.

There are generally three types of situations, which inevitably give rise to a coalition government in a state.

a) Inability of any single party, in a multi-party system, to form ministry by commanding a working majority, in the Lower House of Parliament in a bicameral legislature. Owing to the fractured mandate at the polls, India has in recent years increasingly been confronted with such a situation.

b) Existence of a dead lock between the two parties in a bi-party system that is an even balance between the two parties, leading one of the two to ally itself with any minor group.

c) A national crisis necessitating the suspension of party strife and the concentration of all forces in a common direction for the common safety.

The latter two types of situations are most commonly found in the history of England. England is classic land of bi-party system and it is there that the above types of coalitions have occasionally taken place.

Again, a coalition can be tacit or implied and formal or express (11). A tacit coalition is a mere understanding with some group without actually coalescing with it. An express or formal coalition is a formal and legitimate alliance with some group with a clear understanding of give and take (12).

To be more precise, the term **coalition government**, or **coalition cabinet** refers that it is a cabinet in parliamentary government in which several parties cooperate and come under one political umbrella in order to make a majority to form a government. 'Majority' is a must which is the prime requirement of a parliamentary democracy. In a situation where no party has a majority, coalition is the only alternative. In times of crisis, such as war or a major economic or political crisis, parties may form an all-party coalition often called as a National Unity Government or a Grand Coalition.(13)

Cabinets based on a coalition with majority in the parliament ideally are more stable and long lived than minority cabinets. While the former are prone to internal struggles, they have less reason to fear votes of no

confidence, although majority governments based on a single party are usually even more stable as long as its majority can be maintained.(14)

It is seen that Coalition cabinets are common in countries where the parliament is proportionally representative for several political parties. It may be stated that it does not appear rather than the lower house (such as the United States). In semi-presidential systems, such as France, where the President formally appoints the prime minister but where the government itself must still maintain the confidence of parliament, coalition governments are formed quite regularly. In fact, it has become the practice of the day.(15)

It may further be pointed out that the term 'Coalition' as it is generally used in political science, is a direct descendent of the exigencies of a multi-party system in a democratic set up. It is a phenomenon of a multi-party government where a number of minority parties join hands for the purpose of running the government, which is otherwise not possible in a democracy based on a one-party system.(16) A coalition is formed when many splinter groups in a House agree to join hands on a common platform by sinking their broad differences and form a majority in the House. It is an astonishing chorus of discords. Though outwardly a coalition appears to be one solid mass,

inwardly it is ridden by party foibles and frantic party favours and it is for this reason that coalition prove to be transient.(17)

The system of coalitions has certain important implications.(18)

Firstly, coalitions are formed for the sake of some reward, material or psychic.

Secondly, a coalition implies the existence of at least two partners.

Thirdly, the underlying principle of a coalition system stands on the simple fact of temporary conjunction of specific interest.

Fourthly, coalition politics is not a static but a dynamic affair as coalition players and groups dissolve, and form new ones.

Fifthly, the keynote of coalition politics is compromise and a rigid dogma has no place in it.

Sixthly, a coalition Government works on the basis of a minimum programme, which may not be ideal for each partner of the coalition. After all, politics is the act of the possible and coalition politics is its highest expression.

Seventhly, pragmatism and not ideology is the hall mark of coalition politics. In making political adjustments, principles may have to set aside and in this process ideology is the first casualty.

Lastly, the purpose of a coalition adjustment is to seize power; it may seek to stake its claim for the formation of a Ministry for pulling a Ministry down. As the former Governor of D.C. Pavate visualized; if the purpose of forming a coalition is to topple the existing government without any common programme of action or approach, the coalition, however, broad-based or cohesive it may be, would not provide for stability and would in its turn be the victim of the same process of defections.(19)

It is seen that quite often coalitions are formed to prevent a common enemy from capturing power.(20) In this context, the coalescing parties having ideological differences are compelled to come to an understanding, as they have to choose the lesser of the two evils. There have been instances of the Rightists and Leftists coming together to challenge the citadels of the ruling party. Equally interesting is the instance of the Communists and anti-communists forging an alliance to face a common enemy. A coalition devoid of ideological moorings survives till the enemy is humbled. Once the

euphoria of victory is over, differences come to the surface and the structure collapses like pack of cards.(21)

It should be stated that there are a good number of instances of parties shifting their alliance in search of fresh pastures. If power is the only motive behind joining a coalition, realignment will be a regular feature. Indeed, in a coalition set up, alliance go on changing like the sand dunes of a typical desert. No coalition partner has permanent friends or enemies, it has only permanent interests and this is the key word of a coalition.(22)

The subject of coalition government is one which is of great interest and importance to the contemporary world. To us in India, the subject has a special significance and relevance in the context of current political trends and development. An objective and scientific study of the various aspects of the system of coalition governments, and academic elucidation of the principles underlying the system, will be invaluable in helping to identify the problems confronting coalitions and to discover solutions.(23)

The Coalition Government is a familiar form of government in democratic systems. Such a Government is the result of a cooperative arrangement between distinct political parties.

Such arrangements become necessary in a multi-party system when any single party cannot command majority and in a bi-party system where one party allies itself with a minor group or party in order to keep itself in power and also when in a national crisis, party strife is suspended and the demands of national security requires concentration of all forces.(24)

In multi-party countries coalition government often serve as stop-gaps. Sometimes such arrangement takes place between parties owing allegiance to similar ideologies. But that is not a necessary condition. When parties follow different ideologies, there may be political compromises and mutual concessions. Although these do not conduce to stability, such arrangements have been observed to 'tend to curb radicalism and likewise to liberalise conservatism".(25)

In a vast country with diversities as ours, coalitions may be a necessary stage in the evolution of democracy. Sometimes, they may constitute a natural step in the process of change from a multi-party system to a bi-party system. It is obvious that coalitions have both advantages and disadvantages. As Lord Bryce observed that an administration formed by a coalition of parties is usually weak, not merely because the combination is unstable, but because men, whose

professed principles differ, are likely to be entangled in inconsistencies or driven to unsatisfactory compromises.(26) Since Bryce wrote, the dynamics of coalition have undergone changes in certain countries. A recent authority has remarked that "for the political scientists, it may be as superficial to say that a coalition was dissolved because of policy conflict as it may be for a doctor to say that a man died because his heart stopped". But this authority also says that some coalitions are both effective and quite stable. It is said that should all coalitions be of a fleeting duration? Is it not possible that political parties may learn from the experience of coalition governments in this and in other countries and may try to minimise the risk of disruption by a wide and judicious choice of the minimum common programme, by loyal implementation of its items, by the appointment of a strong coordinating committee and by the adoption of such other measures and advices as may result in reducing strains and stresses between the various participants and in promoting cohesive action. The stability of a coalition government depends on the cohesion and determination of the people composing it. In this connection, an example cited by Professor Jennings is pertinent. He observes: "Curiously enough, the coalition which saved civilization between 1940 and 1945

seems to have been at least as united as the ordinary party government".(27)

It is minority parties who generally enter into coalitions with other. It is well known, however, that even minority governments can be stable. In his book on Cabinet Government, Professor Jennings remarks that where no party obtains a majority at a general election there are two possibilities only, the formation of a Coalition Governments or the formation of a minority Government with Opposition support, for, another dissolution is not practicable. He notes that in England there were minority governments from 1839 to 1841, from 1846 to 1852, from 1858 to 1859, from 1866 to 1868, from 1885 to 1886, from 1886 to 1892, from 1910 to 1915, in 1924, and from 1929 to 1931. Thus, it appears that a minority government is not quite an abnormal feature of democracy and must have been within the contemplation of our constitution-makers.(28) It is worth remembering that in England coalition governments operated from 1852 to 1855, from 1895 to 1905, from 1915 to 1922 and from 1931 to 1945. Professor Jennings remarks that the exact point at which a coalition becomes a unified party government is not always clear. There is a tendency for coalitions to lose their party differences. Speaking about coalition government Professor Jennings

said: "Here there may be a little personal and no party loyalty. The Cabinet has a plethora of eminence. There are rival policies as well as rival ambitions". "England", said Disraeli, "does not love coalitions". The truth is that the parties in the coalitions do not love each other.(29)

Excessive political strife and repeated unstable governments would naturally, in ordinary cases, affect good administration and the welfare of the people and even the security of the country may suffer if attention is diverted too long, even though the security of the country may suffer if attention is diverted for long, even though partially, from the real objects for which the democratic system exists.(30) In such cases, the problem must be how to make the administrative machinery so strong that even without superior direction and vigilance for a short period, it can carry on its functions without detriment to public interests. In this connection, the history of France furnishes usual examples.

It is unfortunate that in India floor-crossing and defections continue to vitiate public life in spite of the universal realisation of their pernicious effects. They feed the causes that lead to uncertainties in our political life.(31)

Related to coalition governments, is the question of the power of the Governor in the matter of formation of governments. It is acknowledged

that in the performance of his functions in normal times he is neither the agent nor the servant of the Central Government. Although appointed by the President, he derives his authority from, and is clothed with functions and obligations by the Constitution. It may not be denied that except in matters where he is required, expressly or by necessary implications, by the Constitution to exercise his functions according to his discretion, he is bound by the advice of the Council of Ministers. In normal cases, the provision regarding the necessity of acceptance of such advice by the Governor would apply to the cases of dissolution of Assembly also. It is also asked that is the applicability of this provision affected by the fact that the government for the time being is a minority government or a coalition government?

Again, if the law is that the power to appoint or dismiss a Chief Minister vests in the Governor but he can appoint or dismiss other Ministers only on the advice of the Chief Minister. Does this provision apply to a minority or a coalition government and in the same way as in the case of a minority government ? There are important questions which should be examined.

The study of the various cases which have occurred so far in India, may enable one to deduce some concrete principles. If any variance in

practice is discovered, what is the correct view ? For nothing is more desirable that uniformity in action and certainly in the operation of the Constitution.(32) A continual study of practice leads to formulation of principles which help in the development of constitutional law and conventions. Professor Jennings truly said: "Practice suggests theory; and theory helps to mould practice if it seems to accord with political conditions". It cannot be disputed that consensus of fundamentals is a matter of transcendental importance. Such a consensus will help in precluding the possibility of confrontation between high functionaries.

There is no doubt that the system of coalition governments has a bearing on the question of Centre-State relations. The question relating to the relationship between the composite legislative wing and the party organisations may also arise. Such a conflict, however, is not an abnormal feature of the party system, and it may be said that the prevailing view favours the superiority of the legislative or governmental wing over the party organisation.(33) The view is based on the principle that power and responsibility must go together. But, in reality, the legislative wing and the party organisations are interdependent and such conflicts could perhaps be easily resolved. A careful attempt to

examine many of the problems in depth may be undertaken. An attempt would be taken not only to deal with the history and background of our Coalition governments but will also seek to examine the basic issues confronting them. The focus of the study would cover the role of the Governor, Civil Service and the administration vis-a-vis Coalition Government; the powers and functions of the Chief Ministers; and power relationships between parties in coalition; coalition governments and legislatures; defections etc. In view of the fact that multi-party systems and coalition governments are to be found in other countries, the study here will probably refer to the experience of the Coalition governments in those countries also.

Meaning of Coalition

In its ordinary usage, “coalition” refers to a group of people who come together to achieve some end, usually on a temporary basis. In politics, it signifies a parliamentary or political grouping of different parties, interest groups or factions formed for making and/or influencing policy decisions or securing power. (34) It may be defined as “the joint use of resources to determine the outcome of a decision in a mixed motive situation involving more than two units”.’ With the elaboration of the theory of person games,

the concept has assumed a high degree of mathematical systematization. As the games theory is based on coalitions of players and provides a model for the study of decision making in legislative assemblies, committees, cabinets and international organizations, coalitions can be regarded as a characteristic form for political decision making. Generally, The theory on person games was developed by John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern and was later elaborated by Duncan R, Luce, Anatol Rapoport and William H. Riker. According to this theory, in three person or larger games, the problem for each player is to select partners who can collectively win (as distinguished from two person games in which the problem for each player is to select the best strategy against his opponent). The result of the process of selection of partners is the formation of coalitions. Coalition is a process basic to decision making in politics and needs to be given a proper place in a theory of politics. According to Professor William H. Riker, "Since politics is often defined as the authoritative allocation of values and since allocation is a process of coalition formation, it is apparent that a theory of coalitions is a central part of a theory politics".(35)

18 DEC 2012

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Theories of Coalition Formation

There are many theories of coalition formation which aim at predicting the combination of parties and their modus operandi. Usually, three theories are generally referred regarding coalition formation. In order to show how each theory can be applied, the following example of a coalition situation has been used by Gamson. We can take a situation where polling at a political convention has reduced the list of candidates to three : candidate X with 46 per cent of the votes ; candidate Y with 30 per cent and candidate Z with 24 per cent. It may be assumed that each of the three has absolute control over the votes of supporters. The rules state that whoever obtains a simple majority is nominated.

The first theory is minimum resources theory which was first developed by Gamson and Riker. The basic assumption of this theory is that “a coalition will be formed in which the total resources are as small as possible while still being sufficient”. To use the above example, since the coalition YZ, having 54 per cent of the votes is the possible winning coalitions, it is the one that is likely to be formed. In this situation, the strength possessed by the candidates in term of their resources before any coalition is formed, is really weakness, since the strongest candidate (i.e. with 46 per cent of the votes) is excluded from the winning coalition.

A second theory is called *the theory of minimum power*, based on L.S. Shapley's method for evaluating the worth of a person game for any player. This method is part of mathematical game theory and "is based on the number of times a player is the 'pivotal' member who turns an insufficient coalition into a winning one". A player's pivotal power is a measure of his initial bargaining power which is distinct from his power possessed in terms of initial resources. In the case of the three man convention, since there are six permutations, each candidate will be pivotal twice. On this assumption, the Winning Coalition will be smallest one possible in terms of the total pivotal power of its members.

A third theory of coalition formation is known as the *anti competitive theory*. "The basic assumption of anti competitive theory is that players in the coalition situation do not want to compete with each other ; on the contrary, they are concerned mainly with preserving social relationships within the group. It follows that coalitions in such a group will form along the lines of least resistance". In such a situation, players who follow the lines of least resistance will avoid hard and skillful bargaining. Playing to win will be playing to lose, since the more openly a player seeks to get as much as he can, the less likely it is that he will find a partner who will help him to get it. In such coalitions sometimes, the players who profit most are those

who have made least efforts to do so the aftermath of the 1967 General Elections in India which witnessed a new stage in Indian politics in that it signified the process of transferring the power, previously concentrated in the “Congress System”, to diverse parties and party coalitions in more than half the Indian states. The multi party system which has emerged in India is fundamentally dissimilar to what Giovanni Sartori calls a “structured party system”.

It should be mentioned that the policy making process of the Coalition is fairly direct in its method. Committees are generally formed by Ministries in response to an idea for policy of theirs. So for instance, if the Ministry of Energy wants new regulations on reactor production, they would form a committee to study it, made up primarily of the bureaucracy. (36) They study the idea and its impact and generally do what governmental committees do today. Sometimes they will bring in civilians with knowledge of the area they are looking at to sit on a committee as well, although this is not standard practice, as there is a thriving bureaucracy to draw upon. However, Prosek has said that he wants a thorough review of policy before it reaches the Senate.

From there, it gets sent on to the Senate. The Senate was created as a sober second look to items that are seeking the Emperor's attention, and it

stands as the make or break arena for policy. Generally an item gets three readings in the Senate, and if it is voted down at any step, it must return to the committees for further improvement. If it fails, all three readings, it is considered a dead item. When it finally passes all three readings, it goes on to the Emperor for Imperial approval. Senators are appointed by the Emperor himself, and there are 100 of them at any given time. Most are specialists in one field or another who lend some of their time to their Empire, and the Emperor tries to keep the number balanced from each region.

It goes without saying that the Emperor has to, in the end, finally sign all items into law. Of course, he also has the final authority to approve or kill the item. Quite often he will kill something that is expected to be signed, and most of the peons can only assume he has some great reason for it, but he rarely states why. With Imperial approval stamped on, it goes on to the bureaucracy, whose job it is to implement the policy as per guideline.

The Emperor's advisers are often kept apprised of policy within their purview and are involved in the Senate readings and sometimes add some items before it reaches the Emperor but after it is passed in the Senate, the Military Council and Civil Council both have full time members in the Senate and both tend to be fairly powerful members of the fairly equal Senate.

Because both have the direct ear of the Emperor, they are considered Advisory for all nominal purposes.

A surprising entry into the political circle tends to be the Emperor's family, both literal and extended. When dealing with an Imperial form of government, influencing the Emperor is of prime importance to achieve the agenda, and quite literally anyone who has the Emperor's ear can be used for that purpose. While wackos always exist who claim to be the Emperor's long lost brother, actual blood relatives of the Emperor can be powerful tools if used properly. The Prosek clan has always tried to keep their offspring out of the political loop but such is impossible when dealing with such an important family. Politicians trying to influence the Imperial family are best urged to use utmost caution since like any family raised in the spotlight they tend to be aware of such maneuvering, but if done correctly, you can skip the entire chain of bureaucratic process and possibly impress the Emperor himself.

STRATEGY IN THE PROCESS:

We can ask a fundamental question : how can one have any sort of politicking in an authoritarian environment ? The key here is to picture the government like a big circular maze, with bureaucracy maintaining guarded

doors on each level closer to the center, where the Emperor resides. Some people may walk by all the gates without blinking and others won't ever pass the first, and adept politicians know how to quietly slip in or to find alternate ways in. The Emperor remains at the center of everything, orbiting around him like his own little universe. In fact he remains as a pivot round which the satellites revolve.

The politician walks a fine line in the Coalition. Openly displaying greatness which will usually get him hated and make him enemies, while displaying incompetence leads to the same result. Wise politicians learn to listen and not to speak unless spoken to, because showing that if we know more than others rightly should, is a dangerous thing, while openly broadcasting great ideas, is likely to get them stolen and credited to anyone. Allies are best gathered and kept in reserve, but too many allies could result in unwanted attention from the own government, and the wrong kind of allies will definitely lead down the wrong path. It's not easy, but those who have mastered the political game, are influential people indeed and worthy of more respect than current politicians who more or less fall into their positions. (37)

Targeting the correct people is the key to working the political game. If we have an idea about water management and we talk to the Minister of

Education's wife about it, we don't expect much in the way of results. Wise political creatures learn quickly that usually the top level is out of reach to begin with and the bottom level is useless. The mid-level bureaucrats are often the best place to start, having enough pull to pass along something good and hopefully take you with him. Most mid-level bureaucrats will eventually fade away but some advance and finding those ones who will advance, is a good skill to have and getting in on the ground floor with them, so to speak, will take you up to the top when they go there. Patronage positions are not yet a dead concept and the buddy system remains in full effect in the hierarchy. (38)

Of course, shameless self-promotion never hurts, either. Being at the right parties and talking to the right people is always a big bonus, and squirreling away potential allies is highly recommended if we plan to spend any time at all in the political arena. Just as pointing out our own highlights can be useful, so can pointing out opponent's weaknesses. Of course, needless to say this will garner some enemies in the process, but no one ever said life was fun. Capitalizing on an enemy's weakness is a key to politics (and arguably the whole basis of the Parliamentary Democracy). However, we can take a situation where a guy just humiliated in front of his Minister probably has his own set of friends in high places too and we

can bet he won't let that slight slide for long. Which of course, brings us to the most important rule of all, and watch our back. Politicians learn to have many fronts and if they are lucky, no backs, so they can see it all coming, but the nature of politics is that it could all change in a moment, especially under the auspices of an Imperial form of government. However, as a rule, one usually has friends in high places or friends in low places, not both. The nature of politics is such that the politician only gets to align with one or the other since keeping everyone happy is totally impossible. (39)

There are some old standbys that still work in the Coalition, including every gamer's favourites, bribery and blackmail. Political compacts are created on the promise of reward for support, but bribery goes above and beyond this, offering direct, literal material or social goods in exchange for a mild change of opinion. While by no means a corrupt bureaucracy can, but it certainly is willing to make a little extra on the side for a relatively painless agreement. Blackmail goes a step further and holds incriminating or damaging evidence on someone else and is waved over their heads to either force them to comply with our demands or the evidence will be released, usually ruining said person. Quite often thuggery can be involved, which is also known as sending a "goon squad" over, perhaps threatening, perhaps kidnapping family members. Such tactics are considered very

significant. A relatively new twist is psychic compulsion and while very rare tends to be highly effective. Character assassination goes two steps beyond pointing out the weaknesses of our opponent and takes things out of context and/or creates entirely false things about someone to weaken their image. The list is endless of white, grey and black means by which politics can be played out.

Of course, the inclusion of the Senate changes things immeasurably. The Imperial Senate wields much of the power to control who and/or what goes on to Imperial approval, and that is a lot of power concentrated in few hands, especially few non-elected hands. Senators tend to be very jealous of this power and yet at the same time extremely easily influenced, which is how the political parties (so to speak) can operate. Of course, we need a fair number of Senators (about 51 of them) to vote for our proposal, and this is where the major politicking comes about. With a number of contra-influential groups trying to influence them, Senators tend to be quite rich and quite sought after, although most manage to maintain some sense of foresight with regards to the Empire. After all, if too many bad items make it through, the Senators know they can be replaced almost as fast as the trigger would be pulled. This is not a traditional liberal-democracy Senate but rather an extension of the Emperor himself, given the task of guarding

him from frivolous policy that he has no time for. Each is patriotic to itself and that comes first, while the rest is mostly perks. Yet the jockeying for Senatorial approval is a vicious game still, full of passionate near-fanatics. Senators must walk a fine line for one day they will be called to account for their lifestyles and voting the wrong way at that time could be fatal. Still, a Senator is an immensely powerful person. Most are known by name as well as their political leanings, although it tends to be a degree of grey more than anything. Most can ask to see the Emperor and see him within a reasonable amount of time. The populace as a whole are quite loyal to their Senate and most are treated with a celebrity status that few know in the Coalition. (40)

This all being said, it must be restated that the Emperor is the ultimate figure over which this whole thing is fought. He sits like an objective judge, awarding favour and taking it away as he sees fit. The whole ordeal is a play to the Emperor and his relative applause or lack of it results in men being made or destroyed. However, it is a game of influence, and those who get counted out today may be back tomorrow even stronger than before. It also needs to be said that virtually everyone who gets caught in political games is a patriot at heart, but there are degrees of patriotism. American militia groups are ostensibly patriots of the highest order while

bleeding-heart liberal groups are the same. It's all done for the best of the Coalition, or at least so they believe, and that arguably is the best definition of politics of all.

Coalition Politics: A Critical Evaluation :-

Acceptance of coalition politics as an important political phenomenon today, makes it imperative to study their advantages and disadvantages.

Bryce once remarked administration led by coalition of parties is usually weak, not merely because the combination is unstable but because men whose professed principles differ are likely to be entangled in inconsistencies or driven to unsatisfactory compromises.

Coalition politics in a democratic polity is a reflex of a living and continuous interaction between a parties are natural and hence ultimate quest to come to power by itself and the expedient perhaps transitory inter-party collaboration to capture the reins of government. Thus, by its very nature coalition politics is subject to contradictory motivational pulls and pressures. It is therefore not surprising if parties tend to use the coalition experience fulfill the ultimate objectives, it is equally understandable if parties avoid and even prefer to opt out of a coalition if the former goal tends to cost the latter. Thus stability is a major casualty in

a coalition government that which is an essential requirement for carrying out any long-range programme of economic and social development and providing administration.

Again, the leadership of the real executive is one of the accepted principles of parliamentary democracy. This principle hardly appears to be empirically tenable in the context of coalition politics in India.

The following reasons may be discussed;

Firstly, a person does not owe his position as PM/CM to his election as leader of a particular party or to his pre-eminence within a party but to inter-party acceptance which is usually the result of hard bargaining. There are claims and counter claims which results in the creation of the post of a Dy. Leadership which tends to be more contractual than a cultivated one and as such he is PM or CM more by courtesy than by right, though there are always exceptions.

Secondly, the PM/CM does not always enjoy even elbowroom freedom in the distribution of portfolios. This distribution is in fact part and parcel of the agreement governing the coalition.

Thirdly, the PM/CM is always fighting the battle of political survival sometimes placating the prospective defectors with more minister ship, at

others being at the beck and call of co-ordination committees, and at still other maneuvering for an alternative set of political alignments.

The principles of collective responsibility, so critical to parliamentary democracy, are also seriously threatened by coalition politics. There are numerous examples of responsibility being more individual than collective, especially in state governments. An extreme case being that of Ajoy Mukherjee, the CM of West Bengal who would resort to hunger strikes and mass satyagrahas against Jyoti Basu, Home Minister in his own Cabinet. The cabinet, which consists of representatives from different parties, speaks in many voices. The sense of direction and unity of purpose gets lost.

Political homogeneity is another characteristic of a parliamentary government. This, in turn, is rooted in programmatic unity. Though coalition governments do make efforts to provide for programmatic unity through minimum programmes, they are very poor substitutes, ill-conceived compromises of contradictory programmatic pulls and pressures. The parties in the coalition also have different support structure, which further militate against minimum programmes being treated as an integrated programmatic unit, and more importantly against its implementation. Thus minimum programmes are many a time and evil however necessary-

dysfunctional to political homogeneity, they are more a source of weakness than strength.

Another dysfunctionality is that it affects the morale of the rank and file of the parties. With frequent elections at all levels, the problem that arises is that of alignment. Continued partnership at one level may come in conflict with possibility of competition at another levels. The rank and file does not always appreciate the competition of national level politics. They are further alienated if they don't get adequate share of offices and patronage. There are no assurances for them that the policy of their party will get properly implemented.

Neutrality of the civil servants under a coalition government sometimes suffers. The contradictory pulls and pressures of the coalition model may either cripple independence on the part of the civil servants that may become too strong and just ignore the misunderstanding. Neither attitude is conducive to nation building.

Many critics of the coalition experiment raise the question of its negatively affecting relations between the Center and the States. Obviously in terms of its relation with the Central government, a state government will be at an advantage if formed by a party which supports the Central government. On the other hand, a state government formed by parties,

which are in the opposition in the parliament, will have a difficult passage. However, this is not only true of coalition governments. Even with single party majority governments such problems do arise and these have more to do with working out an effective federal structure that allows smooth Center State relation than with coalition politics per se.

Then comes the question of growth of fissiparous tendencies and factionalism based on region, caste, community etc. getting stronger due to coalition politics. However, the reverse is also true. Diversity in society gets political representation more clearly through coalition rather than single party dominance. Thus, in explaining success or failure of coalitions, political culture is an important factor. Cultures which accord a central place to accepting and negotiating differences are considered conducive to the consolidation and stability of federal coalitions. Recent experiment in India with the instability of minority and coalition governments has undeniably generated misgivings, but it need not necessarily be so.

The diversity and plurality in India's fabric can be best represented through coalition politics when even small groups regional groups, etc. have say in politics. This is not possible in single party dominance. Even only when that party had within it various shades of opinions and espoused a multiplicity of cause. In a vast country with diversity as ours, coalitions may

be thus a necessary stage in the evolution of democracy. Also, a coalition government need not necessarily lead to instability or discontinuity in policies, nor can they be called ineffective or less purposive. The coalition government in Kerala had many achievements to its credit, the most important being land reforms. The coalition, in West Bengal was equally successful although, its success may not be spectacular in dealing with communal labour issues.

With respect to collective responsibility and the powers of PM, it can be said that while there is undeniably a difference in this respect because of the absence of party discipline mechanisms, the contrast is not as sharp as it is made out to be. It is widely recognized that head of government don't have absolute power to choose and remove colleagues. Some impose themselves by virtue of their political weight, while others cant be removed with impunity. Regional, caste and minority representation has always played a role in cabinet formation. All these factors only become accentuated in coalition government situations.

Accountability is best achieved in plural societies through coalition politics. Those who bemoan the cost of coalition governance ignore similar deals cloaked in the secrecy of dominant party discipline. The multiplicity of partners and sub-agendas obviously brings about greater transparency, but

the policy outcomes are not necessarily or inferior to those emerging from single party dispensations. As a result of the pressure experienced by the various partners within the coalition, the policies, which finally emerge, are in the nature of consensus, avoiding extreme positions. For example the BJP had to drop Mandir plans in order to successfully forge a coalition and form the government.

One might now consider the argument that only a bi-party system will lead to efficiency and stability. Studies have shown that coalitions are more a common feature of the political systems of a majority of countries and the USA, UK, Australia, Canada are really not perfect models of bi-party system. These two or three parties are only what are called the main pillars of the political system. The American Government may be cited as the foremost instance of a two party system. However, it must be remembered that the American parties are themselves coalitions of various forces and groups.

In India, the Congress has gone on record against the principle of coalition government, calling them dishonest alliances. This ignores the possibilities of honest alliances and draws sustenance from a typically British aversion, which could be an unreliable guide to governance alternatives for a federal party.

Thus, though the Indian experience with coalition has not been very encouraging - it would be foolish to dismiss them altogether.

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