

**IMPACT OF COALITION  
POLITICS ON THE WORKING OF  
THE FEDERAL SYSTEM IN INDIA  
– MAJOR CHANGES IN THE  
ADOPTED PATTERN OF  
FEDERAL GOVERNANCE**

**I**

The nature of Political Process in India has undergone qualitative changes since 1967 when after the 4th General Elections, some non-Congress governments were formed in some states of the Indian Federal System. It is considered to be a water-shed in the federal governance as it brought to the surface a number of issues of profound socio-political and economic implications which could not be visible earlier. Not only that it brought a new Power configuration and new equilibrium in the political and administrative Process in India.

Needless to mention, it had its impact on the “Congress System”

as expressed by Rajni Kothari in his construction of "one dominant Party System" model. With the emergence of some non-Congress parties, mostly regional in character and a process of regionalisation in Indian Politics began to appear.

From the functional point of view, there had been changes in the federal governance in so far as the newly installed non-congress governments began to claim for greater share from the national resources both political and economic. The immediate result was the call for a total restructuring of the centre-state relations, particularly in the field of financial relations in India.

## II

In this context, a look into the nature of stresses and tensions may help understand the general course of federal process. For convenience, the tensions which had their impact on the functioning of the federal system may be broadly classified into two (i) Political tensions both within the ruling party and with the ruling party and other opposition parties and (ii) Economic tensions arising out economic power bases and the attitude of

the political parties towards them. It is accepted that so far as economic dimension of the tension is concerned, it is mostly due to the conditions of unevenness, leading to instability of the social base.<sup>1</sup>

With the changes in the economic scenario and shift in economic priorities, there had been signs of movements and displacement of the working class from labour intensive to capital intensive production. This had resulted in a vast expansion of labours both in the organized, unorganized and marginal sectors, causing further weakening of the basis of work-force. The total impact of this change has been described as an intensification of the horizontal contradiction within the dominant class during these periods.<sup>2</sup> Whether this was a conflict between the industrial bourgeoisie and the rising rich and middle peasant classes is still a matter of great debate. But one thing was clear that due to this process a new kind of tension and conflict developed between the rich and the middle peasants on the one hand and the poor peasants and landless labourers on the other hand.

Besides these political and economic dimensions, cultural and linguistic differences have also contributed to the emergence of

a new kind of environment which had its impact on the general nature of federal governance in India. There had been sharp differences between Hindi-belt which mostly covers the heartland of India and non-hindi-belt mostly representing the South. The tension became so complex that the entire nation seemed to be on the verge of a vertical split which in turn had their impact on the federal process. The Three Language Formula as adopted is nothing but a working mechanism to solve this pressing problem to save the polity from further cleavage.

Another issue in the study of coalition politics in India calls for greater attention. The emergence of coalition politics has brought forward a new power equation in which smaller states have found important position in the federal governance. Without going into the theoretical position of "greater nationalism", "lesser nationalism", "little nationalism", and the like, one can draw the conclusion that in the newly created political arrangement, smaller states with greater political capability in the field of power manipulation can play a very decisive role in the federal process. The reorganization of states on the basis of language, it is now admitted, could not produce the optimum result. Had it been so, there would have been no signs of further

demand for creation of new states on the basis of language and ethnicity. The experiences that the Indian state has gained over the years show that all types of regional or local issues create situations for the emergence of new types of demands – sometimes demand for ‘autonomy’ and sometimes the creation of the state. The experiences of recent movements in the North-Eastern region as well as in some parts of India will establish the fact that regional assertions or demands may appear for a number of reasons. It should be noted that not all the demands will culminate in the creation of a state but there are some instances where new states have been created in order to satisfy the local aspirations.

From the functional point of view it may be noted that there have been sharp changes in the relationship between the Congress Party and other non-Congress regional political parties. It is true that in most of the cases, before the emergence of coalition politics and because of the dominant position of the Congress party, the local or the regional parties did not enjoy any influential authority in the total political process. But there have been significant changes since 1967 and a climate of bargaining

politics had taken its roots and in this process local or regional parties have been able to come forward with their agenda of action.

For a better understanding a tentative periodization can be made. Following T.V. Sathyamurthy, the periodization may be as follows : a) the era of linguistic cultural differentiation within a framework of unchallenged unity and integrity of the Indian State (1947-67); b) the era of centralization following the challenge from the states (1967-77); c) a brief interregnum of attempts to redress the balance of influence in favour of the centre (1977-84); and d) the era of coalition and co-existence between the centre and the states (from 1985).<sup>3</sup>

### III

It is generally understood that the actual functioning of the federal system in any country does not depend on the nature of the constitution or the general-legal framework but on the various factors that influence the political process in the country. Of all these factors , the role of the political parties assumes great

importance and it would therefore be of considerable relevance to examine to what extent and in what way political parties in India have been able to influence the working of Indian federalism. Any discussion on this aspect may start by referring to Art.1 of the Indian Constitution which describes it a "Union of States". This term rests on the assumption that the concept of power is 'one dimensional' and 'one directional'. The whole idea proceeds on the assumption and paradigm that power is to be understood in a 'possessional' or 'capability' sense . But the working of India's federal system over the last few decades has proved that the term used in Art.1 was to convey the general trend of the federal governance in India . Moreover, there are two areas which call for further analysis. These are : 'dispositional' and 'control over systemic outcome' which were meant to solve major political and social crisis. To elaborate this point one may cite the problems faced by the political system in various parts of the country like Kashmir, Assam or the entire North-East. What appears is that the center in these areas , when failed , had to look for alternative support structure which could be provided only by the local or regional authorities.

Some interesting studies have been made with regard to a number of social-issues like language or even ethnic-considerations. These issues exert direct pressure on the functioning of the federal system as a whole . It has been correctly observed :

*“It is no wonder that controversy on this point has often absorbed the passionate interest and energy of a developing nation more than any other aspect of nation building and modernization.”<sup>(4)</sup>*

In a similar way, scholars have led emphasis on to other issues ,namely, social mobilization and consolidation of states. To quote, Karl W. Deutsch :

*“The stage of rapid social mobilization may be expected, therefore, to promote the consolidation of states whose peoples already share the same language.....while the same process may tend to strain or destroy the unity of state whose population is already divided several groups with different languages or cultures or basic way of life.”<sup>(5)</sup>*

The same was stated by the States Reorganisation Commission

in its report :

*“Linguistic homogeneity provides the only rational basis for reconstructing the states , for it reflects the social and cultural pattern of living obtaining in well-defined regions of the country.”<sup>(6)</sup>*

Historically one may recall that Nehru believed that such ‘provincial expansionism’ might destroy the unity of the nation.<sup>(7)</sup> On this issue , one scholar has correctly observed that *“the effect of reorganization was to give state-politics a more intensely regional character and to make the states a much more important level of power.”<sup>(8)</sup>*

The nature of the central allocation to the states is another area for serious debate in the country as it has often been alleged that the Planning Commission has been instrumental in aggravating rather than bridging the differences among states. Moreover, it can not be ignored that what has been achieved so far in economic field, has been in response to the needs and demands of states to some extent.<sup>(9)</sup>

In this connection , the following observation by one of the

leading authorities on federalism seems to be quite relevant :

*“Invariably in the area of economic policy, the founders of the federation have found it impossible to divide the functions of general and regional governments into two isolated compartments and have been forced to recognize the independence of governments . Generally, as a result of the placing of major fiscal instruments for economic policy in central hands , the regional governments have become heavily dependent upon the former for their financial resources . At the same time , however, the central government tended to be heavily dependent for the implementation of national economic and social programmes upon autonomous regional ministers and legislatures directly responsible to their electorates. This situation of mutual dependence of each level of government upon the other has characteristically produced a proliferation of institutions and arrangements for consultation and cooperation in a wide variety of economic fields.”<sup>(10)</sup>*

The actual pattern of Union-States relations in India is one of “Coalition administration”, or a high degree of “Collaborative Partnership” both in political decision making and in implementing the operation of plan projects.<sup>(11)</sup>

It may be quite relevant to state that the same idea had been stated by Dr. Ambedkar in the Constituent Assembly when he observed :

*“The basic principle of federation is that the legislative and executive authority is partitioned between the center and states not by any law to be made by the center but by the Constitution itself . This is what the constitution does. The states in our constitution are in no way dependent upon the centre and states are co-equal in this matter”*.<sup>(12)</sup>

The Indian situation offers an example where one can find both strong centralizing and decentralizing tendencies. What has been stated in the context of American federalism can also be helpful in understanding the Indian situation :

*“However, everywhere it basically means a new form of federal –state – district –municipal sharing in revenues and administration of national programmes.....such a federation is called ‘co-operative’, ‘interdependent’, or ‘marble-cake’.*<sup>(13)</sup> To put it in a more lucid way :

*“A far more accurate image is the rainbow or marble-cake, characterized by an inseparable mingling of differently coloured ingredients, the colours appearing in vertical and diagonal strands.....As colours are mixed in the marble –cake, so functions are mixed.....”*<sup>(14)</sup>

This can be true of Indian federalism where resource or power is not uni-dimensional. There can be variation of influence or dependence but too much dependence of the state on the center may put an obstacle in the proper functioning of a more participatory and interactive federation . The emergence of new regional forces calls for wider decentralization of power and resources and better scope for the states to play in the federal governance. In a word the new power configuration that has

emerged with the rise of coalition politics has altered the balance of power between the center and the states with a definite tilt towards the state power so far as partnership pattern of federal relations is concerned in contemporary India.

It is a common observation that the actual functioning of the federal system in any country depends not only on the general-legal framework but on the nature and impact of the political parties. It will therefore be of some importance to examine to what extent and in what way political parties in India have been able to exert influence on the working of the Indian federalism. So far as the Congress party is concerned it had been generally in favour of a strong center with sufficient powers to control the policies in regard to matters assigned to the states. The economic and social reconstruction for the purpose of creating a socialist society had been on the agenda of the Congress party and for that reason it favoured a centralised federalism

## Party Competition in the Major States

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<b>State</b>	<b>Major Parties</b>
Andhra Pradesh	Telugu Desam, Congress
Assam	Asam Gano Parishad, Congress
Bihar	Janata Dal, BJP, Congress
Gujarat	BJP, Congress
Haryana	Haryana Vikas Party, BJP, Congress
Karnataka	Janata Dal, BJP, Congress
Kerala	United Front, Left Front
Madhya Pradesh	Congress, BJP
Maharashtra	BJP, Shiv Sena, Congress
Orissa	Congress, Janata Dal, Biju Janata Dal
Punjab	Akali Dal, BJP, Congress
Rajasthan	BJP, Congress
Tamil Nadu	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, All-India Dravida Munnentra Kazhagam, Tamil Maanila Congress
Uttar Pradesh	BJP, Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party
West Bengal	Communist Party of India (Marxist), Congress

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Cited in Democracy without Associations :Transformation of the Party system and social cleavages in India – Pradeep Kr. Chhibber, Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, 1999.

Among other parties the erstwhile Jana Sangh (later on B.J.P.) has also stood for a centralized federalism. It propagated the idea that in the interest of nation and preserving national unity it stood for some kind of a decentralized unitary system in place of federal set-up. The Left Parties wanted a system of governance which would ensure substantial autonomy to the states. At the initial phase since 1967 the Left Parties in West Bengal and Kerala adopted a policy of confrontation with the center for greater autonomy.

Of all the regional political parties , D.M.K. and A.I.A.D.M.K., the Akali Dal and later on AGP in Assam demanded more devolution of authority for the regions. The changes brought about since 1967 have created a situation where there have been radical changes in the party positions all over the country. With the emergence of the Non-Congress government in several states and reduction in the Congress strength in Parliament after the 1967 General Elections, the position of the states vis-à-vis the union was strengthened. However, the spectacular success achieved by the Congress in 1971 Lok Sabha Elections had once again established the dominance of the center.

A reference to the Congress policy may be helpful in this respect. The Congress party after independence proceeded to achieve a "Socialist India" and "a Socialistic pattern of Society" through peaceful and constitutional means. It therefore, adopted a planned economic development for the country. Planning in one way helped the process of centralization and "*super-seeded the federation and our country is functioning almost like a unitary system in many respect*".<sup>(15)</sup> Both the Planning Commission and the National Development Council were dominated by the central government and states were to rely more and more on the center for their financial resources . As the states were heavily indebted to the Union , they lost their independence so far as borrowing was concerned ; they lost their financial autonomy substantially.<sup>(16)</sup>

As has been observed the Indian National Congress had always stood for a united India in which the writ of the center is made to run the states so that "*the matrix is strong enough to withstand the occasional squalls and tempests.*"<sup>(17)</sup>

The Indian National Congress had reaffirmed its belief in a strong center controlling the divisive forces in the country through

constitutional mechanism.<sup>(18)</sup>

In 1968 , the Communist Party of India stood for “*changes in the federal constitution of the country so as to divest the union government of its overriding powers to interfere in the affairs of the states and in order to widen the autonomy of the states especially in the matter of finance and state economy.*”<sup>(19)</sup> It favoured the abolition of the office of the governor and establishment of autonomous districts and regions within the states.<sup>(20)</sup> The CPI(M) favoured “*widest autonomy for the various states comprising the Indian federation*”.<sup>(21)</sup>

The Socialists on the other hand basically believed in the policy of decentralization “*accompanied with co-ordination to ensure a national unity, harmony and progress.*”<sup>(22)</sup> While the national parties stood for restructuring the center-state relations , the Akali Dal would like the constitution “*to be made federal in content “ and the states to be given “more autonomy and more power particularly in the field of finance and legislation.*”<sup>(23)</sup> The DMK called for “*states rights without infrinzement*” by the center and the transfer of “*unspecified or residuary powers which are vested in the center to the states.*”<sup>(24)</sup>

## Fluctuations of principal regional parties in some States

State	Year/ Party	1989			1991			1996			1998			1999		
		C/W	F	%	C/W	F	%	C/W	F	%	C/W	F	%	C/W	F	%
Andhra Pradesh	TDP	35/2	0	34.5	35/1 3	1	32.3	36/16	2	32.6	35/1 2	1	38.0	34/29	0	39.9
Assam	AGP	-	-	-	14/1	6	17.6	11/5	0	27.2	10/0	3	12.7	8/0	3	11.9
Bihar	JD	37/31	2	36.4	36/3 1	1	34.1	44/22	0	31.8	35/1	27	8.7	-	-	-
	RJD										38/1 7	2	26.6	36/7	1	28.3
Haryana	JD	8/6	0	38.9	7/0	0	37.2				-	-	-	-	-	-
	HVP							4/3	0	15.2	4/1	0	11.6	2/0	0	2.7
	HLD (R)							-	-	-	7/4	0	25.9	-	-	-
J&K	JD	2/0	0	30.0	-	-	-	5/1	2	17.6	1/0	1	0.5	1/0	5	0.14
	JKN	3/3	0	6.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	6/3	10	21.7	6/4	0	28.9
Karnataka	JD	21/13	3	28.3	21/0	4	16.8	27/16	1	34.9	28/3	10	21.7	**10/3	0	13.3
Kerala	CPM	10/2	0	22.9	9/3	0	20.7	9/5	0	21.2	9/6	0	21.0	12/8	0	27.9
	CPI	3/0	0	6.2	4/0	0	8.1	4/2	0	8.2	4/2	0	8.3	4/0	0	7.6
	MUL	2/2	0	5.2	2/2	0	5.2	2/2	0	5.1	2/2	0	5.0	2/2	0	5.3
Maharashtra	SIIS	3/1	1	1.2	17/4	-	9.5	20/15	0	16.8	22/6	0	19.7	22/15	1	16.9
	NCP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	38/6	7	21.6
Orissa	JD	19/10		0	19/6	0	34.6	19/4	2	30.1	16/0	15	4.9	-	-	-
	BJD			49.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	12/9	0	27.5	12/10	0	33.0
Punjab	SAD	4/0	0	1.3	9/8	0	28.7	9/8	0	7.8	8/8	0	32.9	9/2	0	28.6
Tamil Nadu	DMR	31/0		0	29/0	0	22.7	18/17	1	25.8	17/5	0	20.1	19/21	0	23/1
	ADMK	26/1			11/1 1	0	18.1	10/0	0	7.8	22/1 8	0	25.9	24/10	0	25.7
				0												
Uttar Pradesh	BSP	75/2	57	9.9	67.1	5 2	8.7	85/6	24	20.6	85/4	25	20.9	85/14	2 1	22.1
	SP	-	-	-	-	-	-	64/16	7	20.8	81/2 0	9	28.7	84/26	2 4	24.1
West Bengal	WBTC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	29/7	3	24.4	22/8	2	26.0

*Note : C/W seats contested/won*

*F : Seats forfeited*

*% : Percentage of vote in the State*

*\* : JD(U) in 1999 elections*

*\*\* : Jammu and Kashmir National Conference*

*# : Trainamool Congress was WBTC in 1998 and AITC in 1999.*

*Cited in Ravi Bhatia, "A Decade of Parliamentary Elections in Indian Mapping of Trends, The India Journal of Political Science, Vol.-62, No. - 4 December 2001.*

At this point it is important to note the observation of the Administrative Reform Commission on center-states relationships : “Where a single party has controlled over affairs at the center as well as in the states an alternative and extra-constitutional channel becomes available for the operation of center-state relationships. In practice the channel has been very active during Congress Party rule and has governed the tenor the center-state relationships.”<sup>(25)</sup>

It has already been noted that the 1967 and post 1967 developments have brought about radical changes in the nature of federal governance in India . It has rightly been stated : “ The political Ice-berg in India has melted and the real political evolution of the country has began in earnest.”<sup>(26)</sup> A few important features of the post 1967 developments may be noted :

1. There was decline in the power of the Congress.
2. There was wide variation in voters’ preference.
3. There was a shift from national to regional political parties.
4. The awareness of regional demands became extremely

articulate, and

5. With no clear mandate the evils of defection began to appear.<sup>(27)</sup>

Relations between the center and the states , more particularly between the non-congress government and the center took a new turn . Initially the non-congress governments only wanted that the dispute should be settled through a constitutional mechanism than through consensus technique. Basically the major issues of debate centred round the appointment of governor, formation of the Council of Ministers, deployment of Central Reserve Police and allocation of financial resources. Moreover, Art.356 also figured in this controversy because the non-congress governments considered the application of this article by the center for -

- a) maintaining Congress party's rule in a state,
- b) preventing opposition parties from forming the state government ,and
- c) maintaining the status-quo of the existing ruling Congress Party.

But the subsequent developments since 1977 have drastically altered the nature of center-state relations and for that matter the functioning of the federal system'. Both the N.D.A. and the U.P.A. governments in more recent years have to depend on the support of regional parties. The recent experiences of the coalition governance indicate that the Left Parties are playing crucial role by lending support from outside the government. A new trend is seen in the voting pattern which indicates that no single political party at the national level will be able to gain absolute majority. If the strength continues, the obvious conclusion is that there will be substantial changes in the federal administration of the country — changes which the Founding Fathers did not envisage.

#### IV

A look into the constitutional arrangement of federalism will show that the framers of the Indian Constitution preferred the term "Union" to the term "Federation". The makers had their

own explanations. Considering the vastness of the country as well as variety in different fields, the primary task of the makers was to ensure cohesion and not division. Of course they did not ignore the issues like pluralism in social structure, openness in the political process and imperatives for economic development. They also provided enough scope for a multi-party system to operate. This was a clear departure from the Anglo-American model. Moreover the creation of a federal system with a bias towards the central authority was also a deliberate act.

During the first phase of the operation of the political system, a clear tendency was visible that Congress Party would remain at the central stage and other parties will revolve around the Congress party. But that scheme did not last long. With the rapid changes, both qualitative and quantitative, in the social and political structure, newer and newer support bases began to appear. Interestingly these support bases began to act as the breeding grounds for further demands. The local political parties could realize that these local support bases needed to be exploited so as to derive popular support for their action and agenda,

Congress being the national party failed to address these local power bases and as a result it could not reach the people at the local level.

The gap, so created, provided the scope for local or regional political parties to play important role in the governing process.

It is to be mentioned that these trend or patterns were not uniform all over the country. Once again the differences in manifestation

were the results of wide variations in peoples aspirations, awareness level and expressions. One may try to justify this

development with the help of the theories of 'relative deprivation' or 'theories of dissatisfaction'. But it should be

noted that not all the assertions can be explained with the help of these well accepted theoretical positions. One should go

beyond the outward manifestations and look into the nature of socio-economic and political matrix in order to get at the truth.

It is also admitted that the forces and factors engaged in this process are not only complex but also overlapping in character.

As a result of this, any segmented or microscopic examination may not lead to a generally agreed conclusion. Ofcourse one

should remember that in such analysis, the results are bound to be tentative and not conclusive.

A brief reference to the political developments since the First General Elections will justify the position. In the first election Congress could emerge as the dominant party because no other national political party could present itself as an alternative to the Congress Party itself. During this period, linguistic demands began to appear in a more forceful way. A reference can be made to the Telengana Movement in Andhra Pradesh where the Communist Party of India took a very leading role. In fact, the re-organization of states were in line with the demands that were generated all over the country since the Telengana Movement.

As a consequence the States Re-organization Commission made a total restructuring of the federal set-up by bringing into existence some new states like Andhra Pradesh, Gujrat, Maharashtra and Karnataka. It brought about enormous changes in the character of the power holders both at the centre and at the states. Not only that, it had added some new elements in the management of the internal boundaries of multi-lingual India

in some specific cases. That was perhaps the reason why the S.R.C. (States Reorganization Commission) did not consider it viable to divide Uttar Pradesh into two small states. It should be noted that the social and political forces operating at the time did not allow the bifurcation of Uttar Pradesh which, to many observers, became the core area of hegemonistic role of the North over the rest.

So far as Assam and for that matter the entire North-East is concerned, the situation became somewhat complex and compelling. The main issue centred round the positions of two communities – the Assamese and the Bengalis. It was further compounded by other social issues like linguistic or cultural identity. Besides, the question of Muslims immigration from across the border became a very important issue. In fact the entire debate now centres around the demographic situation mainly in Assam and remotely in other areas of North-East.

A look into the political dynamics during the period between 1947 and 1966 indicates that because of the overwhelming position of the Congress Party, the Indian federal governance

did not encounter with any serious challenges both from the structural and functional point of view. During this period important economic policy declarations were made and steps were taken for rapid industrialization. It was thought that what was needed during this period was a steady growth of Indian economy and creation of opportunities for providing employment to the youth. It is interesting to note that these policies were supported by the Indian national industrial bourgeoisie because to them it provided opportunities for capital accumulation, industrial expansion and production — diversification.<sup>(28)</sup>

## V

During the Fourth General Election, substantial changes had taken place in the federal governance when, for the first time the hegemonic position of the Congress witnessed opposition from regional or local political parties. It may not be an exaggeration to say that the seeds of regionalization of Indian politics had been sown during the 4th General Elections.

Looking from the point of view of socio-economic configuration, it may be seen that a new social and economic class, mostly in the middle order, emerged and began to exercise their influence in the policy making process. No longer the issue of relative autonomy of the states found favour with the national political parties and in its place the politics of bargaining came to the surface in which states began to assert themselves in the federal governing process. It may be noted that not all the regional political parties which came to power during 1967 could exert equal amount of influence of the national politics. In the South, the DMK in Tamil Nadu emerged as the most powerful political party which, at the initial phase, played a very dominant role in the state-level politics before it underwent a split when a new break-away group came to the local politics under the name AIDMK. Since the DMK started its work on the strength of some regional considerations, mainly opposing the issue of imposing Hindi as a National Language, it could easily win over the hearts of the Tamil speaking people and through them, the entire south Indian sentiment.

But that was not the case with the developments in West Bengal, Tripura and also a South Indian state, Kerala. The rise and growth

of left politics in these states had been spectacular, Studies have shown that a number of factors were responsible for the defeat of the Congress Party in these states. Apart from the problem of factionalism, the economic policies followed by the Congress Party became the sources of its weakness. It may be noted that no substantial steps were taken by the Congress Party in the field of land reforms and rural development. This created a gap which was fully utilized by the left parties in these states. Although there had been an official division of the undivided Communist Party in 1964, the C.P.I.(M) emerged stronger than the C.P.I. But the history of the left politics in West Bengal had never been uniform. During mid 60S the rise and growth of radical left politics, popularly known as Naxalite Movement can be seen as a turning point in this process. Though short lived, the radical left politics could respond to the immediate and urgent need for agrarian restructuring of the rural economy in the state. But due to some internal policy contradictions, the radical left movement in West Bengal during this phase failed to deliver the necessary "goods" to the people of its target.

## Performance of the Left parties in different States

Party	Year/ State	1989			1991			1996			1998			1999		
		C/W	F	%	C/W	F	%	C/W	F	%	C/W	F	%	C/W	F	%
CPI	Andhra	2/0	0	1.96	2/1	0	1.87	3/2	0	2.4	3/2	0	2.6	6/0	4	1.3
	Bihar	12/4	0	7.93	8/8	0	7.55	7/3	0	5.1	15/0	11	3.1	9/0	7	2.7
	Kerala	3/0	0	-	4/0	0	8.12		0	8.2	4/2	0	1.1	1/0	0	7.6
	Tamilnadu	2/1	0	2.04	2/0	0	2.04	4/2	0	2.3	2/1	0	1.1	1/0	0	2.6
	Panjab	4/0	1	-	-	-	-		3	1.6	1/0	0	3.4	1/1	0	3.7
	W. Bengal	3/3	0	3.9	3/3	0	3.9	2/2	0	3.8	3/3	0	3.6	3/3	0	3.5
	Total	49/12	20	2.37	42/14	16	2.4	3/0	22	2.0	58/9	40	1.75	54/4	39	1.5
CPM	Andhra	2/0	0	2.4	2/1	0	2.43	3/3	0	2.9	3/0	0	2.9	7/0	6	1.4
	Assam	-	-	-	2/1	0	4.73	43/12	0	3.9	2/0	1	0.4	2/0	1	1.8
	Bihar	3/1	1	1.4	1/1	0	1.41	3/1	2	0.8	4/0	4	21	2/1	1	1.0
	Kerala	10/2	0	22.9	9/3	0	20.7	2/1	0	21.2	9/6	0	0.6	12/8	0	27.9
	Tamilnadu	4/0	0	3.66	3/0	0	2.48	3/0	7	1.82	2/0	1		2/1	0	2.4
	Tripura	2/0	0	41.7	3/0	3	6.54	9/5	0	52.4	2/2	0	48.8	2/2	5	56.2
	W. Bengal	31/27	0	39.4	30/27	0	35.2	7/0	0	36.7	32/24	0		32/20	0	35.6
Total	64/35	5	6.51	60/35	7	6.1	2/2	22	2.7	71/32	20		72/33	20	5.4	
FBL	Bihar	-	-	-	4/0	0	01	31/23	-	-	1/0	1	1.1	3/0	3	0.03
	Panjab	-	-	-	-	-	-	3/0	-	-	-	-	5.2	1/0	1	0.01
	Tamilnadu	-	-	-	-	-	-	75/32	-	-	-	-	0.02	8/0	8	0.23
	W. Bengal	3/3	0	3.95	3/3	0	3.65	-	0	3.42	3/2	-	-	3/2	0	0.45
	Total	8/3	5	0.41	19/3	16	0.41	-	0	0.03	4/2	1	-	15/2	12	0.35
RSP	Bihar	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.3	1/0	1	0
	W. Bengal	4/4	0	4.96	4/4	0	4.5	3/3	0	4.76	4/4	0	0.33	4/3	0	4.25
	Kerala	1/0	0	2.41	1/0	0		3/3	-	-	1/1	0	-	-	-	-
	Total	6/4	1	0.62	9/4	4	0.63	-	0	0.5	5/1	-	4.48	5/3	1	0.41

*Note : C/W seats contested/won*

*F : Seats deposits forfeited*

*% : Percentage of vote share in the State*

*Cited in Ravi Bhatia "A Decade of Parliamentary Elections in India "  
The IJPS, Vol. 62, No. -4, Dec 2001.*

During this period the Indian National Congress had to struggle within itself for the purpose of projecting as a progressive political platform with socialist bias. It may be noted that the

'great split' within the Congress in 1969 helped the Congress under Mrs. Indira Gandhi take some progressive steps towards radical, social and economic transformation. A series of constitutional amendments passed during this period clearly shows that the Congress had been trying to fulfill the pledges it made in its election manifesto during the mid-term poll in 1971. The Congress (R) under Mrs. Indira Gandhi was also able to push the other group known as Syndicalist or the Syndicate to the background with the stigma of being status — quoists and hence no-changer.

These changes at the national level had their profound impact on the state level politics. It is interesting to note that following the split at the national level, the state level Congress Parties also encountered similar splits in their respective state units. Moreover, with a view to strengthening the party positions in the state by frequent changes in the leadership pattern, the party sought to regain political supremacy in the state. Another important development had been the formation of the Rajamanner Commission by the Tamil Nadu Government under DMK for restructuring the centre-state relations. Since it was

an effort at the state level, nothing concrete could emerge out of the recommendations; at the same time it was to be considered as an attempt by a State Government to detail out the various aspects of the political, financial and economic relations between the centre and the states.

## VI

Another development of profound political implications can be cited which explains the changes in the nature and course of centre-state relations in India. The proclamation of National Emergency (1975-77) is considered to be a significant event from political perspective. One may trace the seeds of discontent among the constituent units of the Indian federation and agitations on national scale was the manifestation of such a trend. In other words, the decline of the hegemony of the Congress party which led to a new structural equation of the political parties posed a serious challenge to the established authority of the Congress Party. The impact was tremendous and this was considered to be a serious departure from the accepted norm of parliamentary and participatory democracy. The declaration

brought to the surface a number of issues which, otherwise, were not visible on the social and political front. Over the years, a powerful political force emerged in the rural sector mainly because of the success of the Green Revolution in India. These "rural rich" segment began to exert tremendous pressure on the issue of power sharing. In spite of the best efforts by the Congress, it could not satisfy these newly emerged class in the rural sector. Moreover, pressures came from the industrial capital which demanded more industrialization on the basis of the surplus made on the agricultural front. In other words, there was a demand that a new balance should be achieved between industrial capital and agricultural capital keeping in mind the importance of both the sectors in the Indian economy.

Another development call for explanations that has added a new dimension to the Congress. politics in particular and that of opposition politics in general. Because of its secular position Congress was able to utilize Muslim votes for a considerable time but there had been oppressions of the poor and the Muslim Community by many forces either on religious or economic grounds. These communities looked upon the Congress as the ultimate centre of protection but the party, because of its inner

conflicts, failed to live upto the expectation of these communities. This happened not only with the Congress but with many other non-left regional parties. The rise and growth of left politics in Kerala, West Bengal and Tripura may be explained with the help of these developments. The emergency, thus added a new dimension to the nature and extent of federal governance in India.

The emergency provided an opportunity to the opposition parties to chart-out joint programmes against the authority of the Congress at the centre. The result was spectacular. The defeat of the Congress in 1977 elections may be referred to as the result of this development. The 1977 elections clearly showed that the people of India in general did not accept the imposition of authoritarian regime and the departure from the parliamentary practices. In fact, a demand was generated for total revision of the centre-state relations in general as well as in specific terms.

## VII

The establishment of the first non-Congress Government, the Janata Government as it was popularly called, should be seen as

a major turning point in the history of the political process in India. One may not be wrong in suggesting that the 1977 development is the process of culmination which started way back in 1967. It brought about two important changes : in the first place it proved that anti-Congressism can be an alternative strategy for gaining political power; secondly it could establish that with the breakdown of the "Congress System", the period of coalition politics had begun at the national level along with the state level. The regional political parties began to assert themselves in such a way as to become the controlling factors in the process of national mainstream politics. Although there had been the case when the Congress Party could regain power in 1980 elections, much erosion of the support base of the Congress Party had taken place by then. The party could not project itself as the ultimate source of political authority as it could do earlier. It is interesting to note that during this period demands for more autonomy in financial matters began to appear from the regional political parties.

## Fluctuations of BJP and INC in some States

State	Year/ Party	1989		1991		1996		1998		1999	
		C/W	%	C/W	%	C/W	%	C/W	%	C/W	%
Andhra Pradesh	BJP	2/0	2.0	41/1	9.6	39.0	4.0	38/0	18.3	8/7	9.9
	INC	42/35	51.0	42/25	45.5	42/22	39.7	42/12	38.5	42/5	42.8
Assam	BJP	-		8/2	8.6	14/1	15.0	14/1	24.5	12/2	29.8
	INC	-		14/8	28.5	14/5	31.6	13/10	39.0	14/10	38.4
Bihar	BJP	25/9	13.0	51/5	16.0	32/18	20.5	32/20	24.0	29/23	23.0
	INC	54/4	28.0	52/1	24.2	54/2	11.3	21/5	7.3	16/4	8.8
Delhi	BJP	5/4	26.2	7/5	40.2	7/5	49.7	7/6	50.7	7/7	51.8
	INC	7/2	43.4	7/2	39.6	7/2	37.3	7/1	42.6	7/0	42.0
Gujarat	BJP	12/12	30.5	26/20	50.4	26/16		26/19	48.3	26/20	52.5
	INC	26/3	37.2	16/5	29.0	26/10	48.5	25/7	36.5	26/6	45.4
Haryana	BJP	2/0	8.3	10/0	10.2	6/4	38.7	6/1	18.9	5/5	29.2
	INC	10/4	46.2	10/9	37.2	10/2	19.7	10/3	26.0	10/0	34.9
Himachal Pradesh	BJP	4/3	45.3	4/2	42.8	4/0	21.9	4/3	51.4	3/3	46.3
	INC	4/1	42.0	4/2	46.2	4/4	39.6	4/1	41.9	4/0	39.5
J&K	BJP	2/0	7.2	-		5/1	54.3	6/2	28.6	6/2	31.6
	INC	3/2	39.0	-		6/4	18.8	6/1	19.2	5/0	17.8
Karnataka	BJP	5/0	2.6	28/4	28.8	28/6	27.5	18/13	27.0	19/7	27.2
	INC	28/27	48.9	28/23	42.1	28/5	24.6	28/9	36.2	28/18	45.4
Kerala	BJP	20/0	4.5	19/0	4.6	18/0	30.3	20/0	8.0	14/0	6.6
	INC	17/14	41.7	16/13	38.8	17/7	1.2	17/8	38.7	17/8	27.9
Madhya Pradesh	BJP	33/27	39.7	40/12	41.9	39/27	38.0	40/30	45.7	40/29	46.6
	INC	40.8	37.7	40/27	45.1	33/8	41.3	40/10	39.4	40/11	43.9
Maharashtra	BJP	33/10	23.7	48/38	10.1	25/18	30.9	25/4	22.5	26/13	21.2
	INC	48/28	45.4	31/5	14.4	48/15	21.4	41/33	43.6	42/10	29.7
Orissa	BJP	6/0	1.3	21/0	0.5	20/0	34.4	9/7	11.2	9/9	24.6
	INC	21/3	38.4	21/13	44.1	21/16	11.7	21/5	11.11	20/2	36.9
Punjab	BJP	3/0	4.2	.0		6/0	44.9	3/3	11.7	3/1	9.2
	INC	13/2	26.5	.11		13/2	6.0	8/0	25.9	11/8	38.4
Rajasthan	BJP	17/13	29.7	25/12	40.9	25/12	35.1	25/5	41.1	11/16	47.2
	INC	25/0	37.0	25/13	44.0	25/12	42.4	25/18	44.5	11/4	45.1
Tamil Nadu	BJP	3/0	0.3	15/0	1.7	37/0	40.5	5/3	6.9	11/1	7.1
	INC	28/27	39.9	28/28	43.6	29/0	0.9	35/0	4.8	11/2	11.1
U.P.	BJP	31/8	7.9	84/51	32.8	83/52	18.3	42/57	36.5	11/20	27.6
	INC	84/15	31.8	82/5	18.9	85/5	33.5	76/0	6.0	11/10	14.7
W. Bengal	BJP	19/0	1.7	42/0	11.7	42/0	5.8	14/1	10.2	11/2	11.1
	INC	41/4	41.4	41/5	36.2	42/9	2.6	39/1	15.2	11/3	13.3

*Cited in Ravi Bhatia "A Decade of Parliamentary Elections in India Mapping of Trends" The India Journal of Political Science, Vol – 62, No.- 4 December 2001.*

Not only that the 1977 elections made it possible for the different governmental organizations to play more effective role in the governing process of the country. Of these, the Planning Commission and the National Development Council began to play decisive role in the plan formulation, resource mobilization and resource distribution. States began to play a major role in sharing of powers through their Chief Ministers in the National Development Council. The demand was there for a total re-evaluation and restructuring of the centre state relations in India. There had been demands for greater political autonomy from different units of state administration. These became evident in Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir and in North-Eastern states. The spread of terrorist and insurgent movements in different parts of the country can be explained with reference to these developments in general terms.

The brief period of the Janata regime could release new forces which ultimately strengthened the hands of the national capitalists in general. There was the beginning for the foreign and multinational capital to take active role in the industrial sector. This was possible because there was a general feeling

that foreign capital would further strengthen the national industrial as well as agricultural capital all over the country.

But the return of Congress Party under Mrs. Indira Gandhi can be seen as a new dimension in Indian politics. There had been instances where conflicts appeared among different segments of the society over the issue of managing the economic system. This was explained as a case for direct suppression of the conflictual situations by the state machinery. So there was attempt at searching for stability on the social and political fronts which had their profound impact on the centre-state relations in India. It may not be wrong to suggest that Congress failed to understand the need for a coalition between the agricultural and industrial segments of the dominant class. Although Rajib Gandhi's Government tried to restructure the Centre-State relations in a new way, the slogan of entering into the 21st Century did not produce the optimum results.

As time passed by, it was felt that the need for addressing the problems of agricultural bourgeoisie, as opposed to those of industrial bourgeoisie, remained same as before. Both the agricultural and industrial segments began to expand their areas

of influence, causing the government to take a new approach to solve these problems.

During Rajib Gandhi's leadership, the strategies adopted to meet the crises originating from the states under non-Congress government became counter — productive on many issues. Initially, the Congress tried to penetrate into the Hindi heartland states in order to regain their electoral superiority. But the results in the Assembly elections in as many as ten states did not register a steady growth. In the states like U.P. and Bihar a new force under the name the Dalit-Majdoor-Kisan Party (D.M.K.P.) emerged as a substantial force to challenge the already established political equilibrium. Almost the same picture can be seen in Maharashtra and Punjab.

In a bid to settle these issues, mainly in Punjab a peace accord was concluded between Rajib Gandhi and the religious leader Longowal. Although outwardly this attempt was appreciated by all sections, it also failed to satisfy either the people of Punjab or the government at the centre.

Again problems became more complex in the entire north-eastern states of India. There were ethnic tensions and solutions

that were provided were mostly political in nature. Besides the movements in Assam took a different turn when the students began to take part in the process of agitation.

The regional party, the A.G.P., could utilize this situation to their benefit and a government was formed under its leadership.

In a word, it can be said that the balance between centre and states or the federal balance had been affected many times because the Government at the centre could not correctly assess the demands and compulsions generated at the regional or local levels. It was evident that mere structural readjustment at the governing level can not solve the problems at the functional level. In a country like India where multiple forces operate in the multi layered functional system, no uni-dimensional approach is adequate to handle these multi-dimensional issues. The analysis of the dynamics of political process in India will testify this position.

## VII

Thus the entire discussion can be placed in the backdrop of the overlapping relations between national power and local politics.

It is therefore necessary to understand the complex interactions between extra political forces and the organizational mechanism as structured under the constitutional frame at the local or regional levels. An analysis of the nature and dimension of federal governance in India will show that there had been qualitative changes in the inner dynamics of political parties in India, both at the national and regional levels.

It will be convenient for an analysis to examine the nature of leadership issue which is considered to be the basic source of power in Indian politics in general and that of Congress politics in particular. It may be stated that Nehru or Indira Gandhi and even Lal Bahadur Shastri or Rajiv Gandhi had their own styles of functioning as the head of the government. One of the weaknesses of such personalized type of governance is that in case of crisis generating out of the absence of the particular leader, the political system can not and do not get organizational support from the system itself. In other words individuals replace the structure of the government in many cases.

This element can be linked up in an analysis to understand the dynamics of federal governance in India. The decline of the

“Congress System” brought a number of issues to the surface. One of these issues was to make room for other political parties to play their roles in the national as well as local politics. The installation of non-congress governments at the state level after 1967 Fourth-General Elections may be considered as the beginning of the process of erosion of Congress hegemony. In fact this was the starting point for the emergence of Coalition politics in India. Needless to mention that there have been a good number of coalitions of different forces playing at different levels. but their manifestations at the political level could not be seen before 1967.

The space gained by the regional political parties were fully utilized by them to advance their own interests. For the first time these Parties were able to play important role in regional as well as national politics.

The growth of regional political parties in India is the result of the interplay of many forces and it is difficult to pin point only one factor as solely responsible for it. It has been correctly pointed out that this development should not be viewed “merely as a consequence or a by-product of regionalism rather as a

phenomenon in its own right.<sup>(29)</sup>

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