

## Coalition Governments in India: Towards a Multi-Party Democracy

**\*Dr. Bharat Lal Meena**

### **Abstract**

Coalition government, is a body of advisors that is formed when different political parties choose to cooperate in the administration and regulation of a country or community. The paper deal with the creation of coalition government in India. The paper discussed about how coalition government leads to the multi-party democracy in India since 1967-2009.

One of the main advantages of a coalition government is that due to having to share a mandate, this leads to broader representation, as the two or more parties have to compromise on their opposing ideologies in order to create policies that result in legislation.

**Keywords:** Coalition Government, Multi-party Democracy, Power Sharing.

### **INTRODUCTION**

A coalition government in a parliamentary structure is a government in which various political parties collaborate, minimising any party's supremacy within that 'coalition.' The usual explanation for this system is that no party alone can gain a parliamentary majority. A coalition government may also be formed in periods of national difficulty or crisis, e.g. during wartime, to give a government the high degree of presumed political credibility that diminishes political turmoil intervals. In such times, parties have formed all-party coalition (grand coalition of national unity government) if a coalition fails, a vote of confidence or a motion of no confidence is taken.

Coalition government was established at different intervals in many developed and developing countries. Coalitions mean division of the common mandate to the degree that no single party can achieve a majority in the legislature. In this case, several minor parties join hands to form government. A coalition government thus means a two-party or more power-sharing arrangement. Coalition is thus founded on expediency and ostensible for sharing power.

Coalition is defined in the social sciences encyclopedia as a mutual arrangement under which different political parties or representatives of such parties form a government ministry at all events. The situation for formation of coalition in different countries arises when no single political party can achieve a working majority in the common house because of multi-party structure. In what conditions, many like-minded coalition parties have a workable majority and run the government.

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**COALITION GOVERNMENT IN INDIA****A. First Phase (1952-1967) Congress dominance: -**

In India, the trend is now towards coalition politics. The Indian experience with the state and centre coalition government. But indicate more differentiated and nuanced results. In India, the parliamentary system is largely due to the advent of coalition government.

After Independence, the congress continued to enjoy patronage from all parts of society for some time. Jawaharlal Nehru's entire time can be regarded as one-party domination and also called a congress structure.

The congress won the first parliamentary election in 1952 by a large margin. Congress won 364 of 489 seats. The CPI's closest competitor managed just 16 seats. The first election outcome didn't surprise anybody. The Indian National Congress was predicted to win. The Congress Party, as popularly called, inherited the National Movement's legacy. In the second and third general elections, respectively, in 1957 and 1962. The congress retained the same Lok Sabha status by winning three-fourth seats. In the first decade of electoral competition, the congress served as both the governing party and the opposition, so this era of Indian politics was described as the 'congress system'

As we noted above, during this time, India did not have opposition parties. Even then, India had more diverse and vibrant opposition parties than many other multi-party democracies. During this time, all these opposition parties succeeded in winning only a token representative in loksabha and state assemblies. Yet their participation was essential in preserving the system's democratic character. This kept the governing party under pressure, frequently shifting the legislative balance of power.

**B. Second Phase (1967-1977) towards multi-party system and coalition government: fourth general elections 1967:-**

1967 is a milestone year in India's political and electoral history. From 1952 onwards, Congress Party was the ruling party in the first three general elections. This trend was to experience drastic changes with the 1967 elections. Especially after the fourth general election of 1967, after non-congress parties emerged, coalition politics began to emerge as an alternative political structure for democratic government. Coalition ministers in different states.

Following 1967, a systemic transition affecting both social process and organisational expression of this change is the collapse of one centre party supremacy and its substitution by a multi-party alliance.

1967 marks a revolution in Indian politics, leading to a shift in the character of the party structure in India. No single party claimed absolute majority at every level of political structure, resulting in the Intra-Party model (tacit or implied) being replaced by inter-party (express or formal) coalition arrangement. Congress vote fell from nearly 5 percent, and although it had held 74 percent of previous parliamentary seats, it now managed to win just 54 percent. There were as many as nine states – Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, which now

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had non-congressional governments – even more stunning was the amount of seats it failed to gain a majority (or lost it because of shortcomings soon after the elections). This created a completely new situation in Indian politics where opposition parties experimented with coalition politics and government formations in some states.

Opposition parties were influential in organising mass demonstrations and challenging the government. Parties opposed to congress found that their vote division held the congress in control. Thus parties that were totally different in their programmes and ideology got together to form anti-congress fronts in some states and entered into electoral adjustments of sharing seats in others. They felt Indira Gandhi's inexperience and congressional internal factionalism gave them an opportunity overthrow the congress. Socialist leader Ram Manohar Lohia called this tactic 'Non-Congressism'. This outcome jolted both national and state-level congress. Many contemporary political analysts characterised the outcome as a political earthquake. Half of Indira Gandhi's ministers were defeated. In several states, too, congress lost majority.

1967's election pictured the alliance phenomenon. Since no single party had a majority, different non-congress parties came together to form joint legislative parties (called SamyuktVidhayak Dal) supporting non-congress government. For example, the SVD government in Bihar included the two socialist parties—SSP and BSP—together with the CPI on the left and Jana Sangh on the right. It's called "Popular United Front in Punjab.

**C. Third Phase (1977-Continuing):** The Beginning of Formal Coalitions at the Center Level: -

The 1977 elections mark the third step in India's party system development and set the stage for the establishment of the center's first coalition government. At the 1977 general elections, Congress won just 154 seats (through they had fielded candidates in 492 constituencies of the Lok Sabha)

The Janata experiment:- The turning point in India's coalition history can be associated with the Janata party rule (1977-1979), which took a collective of non-congress parties to the middle for the first time. This was a rather historic campaign for opposition parties that succeeded in offering alternatives to the national congress. This experiment became catalysts in the process of democratization—strengthening, multi-party system, policy making, and power-sharing. The Janata party won 295 seats out of 540. Thus, Indian politics described the 1977 elections as a watershed and political earthquake. Janata leaders proclaimed democracy victory. But the inconsistencies inherent in the Janata alliance soon emerged as a warning to the life of itself. Morarji Desai became prime minister, but that didn't end the power struggle within the party. The Janata party split, and Morarji Desai's government lost its majority in less than 18 months. Another government headed by Charan Singh was founded on Congress Party support guarantee. But the congress party later decided to withdraw its support, resulting in the Charan Singh government remaining in power for just about four months.

Janata coalition collapse, ideological differences and defections. But Janata's loss wasn't suddenly important. It concentrated on the importance of improved coalition government cooperation. But the key importance of the 1977 elections was that the concept of coalition government was first adopted

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in India.

Post-Janata process (strengthening coalition government 1989-2014):- After witnessing the taste of coalition government during 1977-1979, one-party supremacy appeared again in 1980-1989. But after 1989's 9th general election, the situation shifted drastically in favour of a central coalition government. Four coalition government has established democratic values since 1987. They are the following :-

- National front government led by V.P. Singh (1989-1990)
- United front government led by H.D. Deve Gowda and I.K. Gujral (1996-1998)
- BJP led coalition government headed Atal Bihari Vajpayee and the majority coalition again led by the BJP after the 13th Lok sabha elections.
- United progressive alliance – (may 2004-2009). United progressive alliance- (2009-2014)

The National Front Alliance:- The ninth general election of 1989 witnesses a coalition government leading the emergence as a third force expanding the multi-party structure. In the poll (1989) verdict, both new political forces—the BJP and the National Front—defeated the congress. Both opposition parties agreed to form a coalition under V.P. Singh, 1989. The left parties and BJP decided to support the outside government.

But the national front government struggled to achieve its goal due to its parliamentary minority status and internal dispute. Although one of the major benefits of this government experiment was fostering fresh hope for a new coalition government period.

The united front government:-

First the 1996 general election resulted in a parliament that genuinely represented national pluralism. No single party could demand absolute majority as the basis for forming the government. BJP emerged as the largest party in 11th Lok Sabha election. But after BJP's 13-day fall led coalition government in 1996, the united front was invited to form the government. The united front was a thirteen-party alliance whose key players were TDP, DMK, JD, CPI (M), CPI, TMC, AGP, and SP. H.D. H.D. Deve Gowda became Premier. But in November 1977, congress withdrew its united front support. Congress was said to be upset about its inability to get government share. Thereafter I.K. Gujral became the Premier.

The results of both '12th and 13th Lok to Sabha elections' created opportunities for the largest political party –BJP to lead coalition governments at the core. Improved BJP standing in the 12th Lok Sabha election results and the BJP's conciliatory approach to regional parties further improved BJP relations with several regional parties.

BJP founded the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). NDA is a coalition of highly educated political parties in India. NDA included many regional parties, including the Samta Party and the AIADMK, as well as Shiv Sena with external support from the TDA, the NDA was able to gain a slim majority in the

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1998 election, and Atal Bihari Vajpayee returned as Prime Minister. The government collapsed within one year after (AIADMK) withdrew its support after a few more regional parties, the NDA.

United Progressive Alliance (UPA) congress-led: UPA is a center-left political parties coalition established in India after the 2004 general election. UPA's largest member party in the Indian National Congress, whose former UPA chairman is Sonia Gandhi. It formed a government with support from some other left-wing – allied parties in 2004 (2004-2014).

Thus, with the 1989-2009 elections, India started a long period of coalition politics. Since then, they have been at the forefront of eleven administrations, all of which were either coalition governments or minority governments sponsored by other non-governmental groups. In this process, any government could be established only with many regional parties' involvement or support. This referred to the 1989 national front the 1996 and 1997 united front the 1997 NDA, the 1998 BJP led alliance, 1999 NDA, 2004 and 2009 UPA. This pattern, however, shifts in 2014.

### CONCLUSION

It is widely understood that one party enjoys absolute majority in the government's parliamentary structure. But it's not always so, because most of Europe's countries have had coalition governments.

A coalition government is usually more open to mass issues, more receptive to their needs. It must be remembered that the congress could only wander away from Gandhi's principles because it was mostly in a powerful position. It stopped caring about the needy, even land rules. Nehru once remarked that even a lamp-post will win a congress ticket election. Similarly, most previous disgraceful scams and accidents. In a coalition government, several constituents serve as a check on drastic actions.

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