



EMERGENCE OF CENTRIFUGAL FORCES THROUGH REGIONAL PARTIES IN INDIAN POLITY

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Federalism as a system of government provides unity in diversity. It aims at achievement of a consensus about the basic values among the various groups and strives to create a sense of belonging to the community. It is a process for the resolution of economic, social, political, and cultural cleavages. In the past federalism was defined as constitutional division of powers between centre and periphery (provinces or federating states). But at present federalism is redefined in dynamic terms. It is viewed as a process and not a mere constitutional division of powers. In the words of J. Friedrich, "the development of federal relationships has become a primary focal point as contrasted with the distribution of jurisdiction". With the changing nature of the world society as well as rapid changes in social, economic, political systems in the states. Classical federal state like U.S.A. which was based on the principle of division of powers has emphatically shifted its focus to the functional federalism. Dicey strengthens the view that focus of federal system is to harmonise the local autonomy to national unity. Thus federation implies union but not loss of identity of the federating units while joining hands for common defence and increased power to implement programmes, the states or the federating units must be able to maintain their separate identity¹. Federalism is an arrangement of governance in which the larger interests of the society are served in such a way that every group of the society (religious, ethnic, linguistic etc.) feels secure and confident to be empowered. David Nice defines federalism as a system of government at least one level of sub-national governments those which enable each level to make same significant decisions independently of others. The ability to make decisions is not absolute, one level may be influenced by the others in various ways. Nevertheless, a federal system gives each level the ability to make decisions without the approval (formal or informal) of the other². Hence federalism is the most viable system of governance in the modern era, when every segment in the society wants to maintain its independent identity, as well as wants to be secure from its neighbouring states and other international pressures.

In case of India at the time of independence, national leaders experienced different kind of pressures such as partition of India, pressure of sub-national forces (linguistic, ethnic, religious). Keeping in consideration the situational and long term factors, the framers of the Indian Constitution intended to develop a strong united India and to uphold the values of national unity, cultural diversity, democracy, regional autonomy and rapid socio-economic transformation through collective efforts. Indian Constitution was framed with the objectives to strike a balance between the forces of disintegration and the forces of over integration, to create balance between centripetal and centrifugal forces by providing sufficient space to various ethnic groups to develop.

The Constitution is not the creation of the Constitution Assembly within the specific time framework (from July 1946 to November, 1949). It evolved on the cultural heritage of India as well as on the bases of various governing practices under different system from ancient time to British time. The Government of India Act 1919 gave the term 'diarchy' and 'provincial autonomy'. In 1929 Simon Commission recommended complete autonomy at provincial level. Nehru report (1928) envisaged that the constitution of India should be federal in character. Indian Act of 1935 was the important document which gave real shape to the Indian Constitution. Pragmatically it has been observed that every state of the world has formulated its constitution according to the needs of the society. Indian constitution is also a product of the Indian societal needs. It is a blend of the features of unitary and federal system. Considering the cause of national integration constitution makers strengthened the unitary aspect of the constitution. By providing exclusive power to change boundaries of the states (art 4), the Governor of the State shall be appointed by the President of the union and shall hold office during the pleasure of the President (art 155-156), reservation of the bill for the President's consent (art 200), inequality of states in the representation to the Rajya Sabha, single citizenship (art 5) residuary powers to the centre (art 248), Rajya Sabha's prerogative to shift any subject from state list to centre's legislative power (art 249), centre has strong hold over states (under article 252, 253, 256, 257) in the field of administration and Legislative action. Besides these provisions emergency powers (art 352, 356, 360) provide strong hold over the states³. From these features it seems that constitutional makers intended to create a strong centre but the constitutional history is an evidence of the intentions of the national leaders who wanted to build strong federal system by giving

residuary powers to the states before the decision of the partition of India. After the partition to avoid further disintegration of the federalized Indian society they took decision of strengthening the position of the centre. But their intention was never to hamper or sabotage the interests of the sub-nationals. Dr. Ambedkar known as the 'Founder of the Indian Constitution' stated regarding the peculiarity of the Indian Constitution, the only new thing, if there be any, in a constitution framed so late in the day are the variations made to remove the faults and to accommodate it to the needs of the country". Dr. Ambedkar stated that art 356 would be dead letter in the Indian Constitution. Thus these statements strengthen the view that unitary features of the Indian constitution are reflectors of the fear psychosis of Constituent Assembly. Otherwise they wanted federal system for federal society. Despite the unitary character of Indian Constitutions federal aspect cannot be ignored. Like the constitution of United States of America, Canada, Australia, Switzerland Indian constitution has basic features of the federal polity constitution provided initially two tiers of the government. But after the Seventy Third and Fourth Amendment (1993) in constitution provision has been made for three tier system of the government in which each tier has its own legislative functions under the schedule VII and XI of Indian constitution. Schedule (VII) has divided powers between the centre and states, powers of the Panchayati Raj described in XI schedule of the Indian constitution. Power of judicial review (124, 226) of the Supreme Court and the high court reflects the federal nature of Indian polity. In some cases judiciary by using its power of judicial review and judicial activism upheld the spirit of the federal polity. In the present scenario the question whether a state is federal or unitary is one of degree. In case of India also in the post independent history it has been seen that federation is more a 'functional' than an 'institutional' concept. Nature of Indian polity varies from time to time since independence. Its nature has been determined by multiple factors like party system, sub-national forces, economic development and international relations.

After independence for a very long span (forty years) India was governed by Congress. Congress enjoyed the status of a mass party due to its contribution during the independence movement it was able to sweep up and retain voters and groups who were first mobilized into mass politics during the independence movement. From 1947-67 (the party) it remained ruling party at the centre as well as in most of the states. Morris Jones and Rajni Kothari described Indian party system from 1947 to 1967 "a dominant party system", that is multi party system, in which free competition among parties occurred but the Indian National Congress enjoyed a dominant position, both in terms of number of seats that it held in Parliament in New Delhi and at the state Legislative Assemblies in terms of immense organizational strength outside the Legislature.

Thus India had a party system characterized by dominance co existed with competition but without a trace of alteration. The first four general elections to the Lok Sabha 1952, 57, 62, 67 coincided with elections to all state assemblies. In the first three of these, the Congress won only over two third majority of seats in the Lok Sabha on the basis of plurality of votes ((44.8 per cent). It also won majority of the seats in the State Assemblies of all then existed from (1952 to 62). Jawahar Lal Nehru held the leadership of the Country. His personality, attitude and style of leadership influenced profoundly all aspects of the functioning of the Indian political system during the period of his dominance, state and central politics were largely autonomous. Though the central leadership of Congress often played arbitrary and mediating roles between competing factions in the State Congress. More over a strong central government coexisted with strong states and powerful state leaders in a mutual bargaining situation in which ultimately authority existed in Delhi⁵. Dominance by single party co existed with inter party competition, but the opposition parties had little prospects of replacing the Congress, except in few states. Internally Congress was a grand coalition of major social and political forces in the country and held together by its image as the party that won India independence and popularity of leaders like Gandhi and Nehru, as well as a very large number of provincial leaders who had participated in the National Movement and had managed the party organization at the states level. But ideologically the party was committed to centralization democracy, minority rights, secularism, and mixed economy.⁶ Its centralized character was not suitable to Indian society due to its pluralistic character. Congress ignored the pluralistic character of Indian society and tried to build a centralized system.

About the same time, congress set for itself the twin goals of national integration and socio-economic development. Nehru preferred centralized planning system to seek the objective of socio-economic development of the entire country. This process resulted in the imbalanced development of different regions of the country. This system of over centralization, proved inadequate when it encountered the larger currents of the era of mass politics. As long as there was hope that the achievements of the national economic growth and modernization would finally spill over into the peripheries and lead to nation wide wealth and prosperity, regions could not much contest the central administration of regional development. Peripheral faith in the poll growth approach began to fade, however, when its shortcomings or outright failure became evident.⁷ Due to economic imbalances among the different regions it led to the rise of new demands – and a new scale of demands – that were not any longer satisfied with marginal adjustments and incremented cooption of new groups but called for attending to structural and distributive issues. By the middle of the sixties this turn from accepting what came and hoping for things to improve, to asking for what was the due under a democratic order had taken place and generated a new politics of demand and an atmosphere charged with the idea of change⁸. One party dominance, modern level of political participation and elite consensus politics of 50s and 60s gave way to second phase of greater democratization and opening up of the political system to non elite participants. That resulted into unfolding of unexpected political patterns. The replacement of the Congress system by multi party competition, an intensification of party competition the fragmentation of parties and emergence of party politics.⁹ Land reform policy and Congress centralized tendencies led to the rise of regional forces. Political mobilization increased during this period. Congress was able to cope up with heterogeneous pressures before 1967, was not able to satisfy the rising demands of different classes, castes, ethnic groups, and regional forces. Growing dissatisfaction among the different segments of society resulted in to the evolution of parties based on sub national interests. These parties posed challenges to Congress at the states level and at the union level Congress lost its role of coordinator of interests of heterogeneous society. Intra policy conflicts replacements by inter party conflicts. New parties were based on different cleavages emerged in India. According to Rajni Kothari the socio economic and demographic profile of the Indian polity is changing rather fast. The mobilization of new recruits and groups in to political processes has given rise to the development of new and differentiated identities and patterns of new cleavages. This gave rise to the expectations of political access and greater insistence on government performance.¹⁰ During this phase of transformation in sixties to represent the diverse interests that Congress ignored as less important in comparison to the objectives set by the Congress party during national movement and immediately after independence such as: development of economy, secularism of society etc. Insensitivity to the issues to those issues to which people were more sensitive language, cultural identity, political autonomy and economic development led to the rise and further consolidation of regional parties i.e. DMK, Akali Dal, National Conference and small parties in north east of the country. Most of the parties emerged in sixties they confined them to the states level and they represented the interests of those areas. Most of them demanded change in the existing federal arrangements of the country in this context Anand Pur Sahib resolution of Akalis and Rajmanner committee of DMK made important suggestions. The basic cause of emergence of small parties in periphery was people dis satisfaction with centralized system in most of the states those ruled by the Congress. State governments behaved like representative bodies of the centre and districts were considered mere as administrative units of centre and state governments. Local bodies had no effective existence in rural and urban areas of the country. Indian society with diverse culture and plurality of interests opposed centralized system beside its under developed nature (low literacy rate, and unaware masses) consciously or unconsciously all opposed the one dominant party system and working style of the ruling party at center and states where Congress was in power till 1967.

These developments as reaction to the centralized tendencies resulted in the evolution of regional forces to achieve their due in the Indian political set up.

It was evident in the parliamentary and state legislative elections of 1967. For the first time in independent India power of Congress was challenged in the states by the regional parties and in the parliament also. Party lost its previous status of its seat share also reduced (283) in Lok Sabha considerably. Out of sixteen states in eight states opposition was able to capture the power. Regional parties had pre dominant role in the formation of governments at the states level. It was for the first time that non Congress identities made the presence at the states level. Beside the fact the Congress won majority in the parliament and formed government but the vote share and seat share of other parties also increased in the parliament. One prominent feature of late sixties in politics was largely region dictated political phenomena, in the sense those issues in both the formation of coalition and its continuity were largely dictated by regional interests. But the consolidation of other parties, with their strong presence posing a serious challenge was the first occasion when non-congress parties formed coalitions in as many as nine states regional interest. The rise of regional parties as combined force bidding for power at the centre is possibly due to two factors. First was the decline of the congress as an institutionalized party representing various and often conflicting – socio-economic interests. It lost its hegemony, inter alia, due to the departure of nationalist generation, the demise of internal democracy, and the emergence of personalized mass appeal of the top leadership¹¹. With the congress losing its hegemony in nine states, 1967 Lok Sabha and the state assembly

elections radically altered the Indian political landscape. In all the regions non-congress coalitions were formed by the regional parties to keep the congress out of power. Coalitions in the states failed to sustain the spirit in which it was constituted, but existence of coalition governments in the states clearly spell out a new political wave challenging the conventional faith in the congress system. Reflective of the unrivalled cultural diversity of the country, this was a process rooted in the growing regionalization of politics in India. It was the watershed period in the Indian politics. Centripetal forces challenged by the centrifugal forces. The 1967 poll out come clearly suggests a metamorphosis in Indian politics that 'produced a tendency in the form of demands from several states for greater regional autonomy. Selig Harrison strengthened the view by giving a statement', the possibility of divergence on a multiplying scale between the national party in power and an assortment of ruling state party looms unmistakably on Indian political horizon¹². The Emergence of the regional parties and their role in the state politics recognized by the scholars as well as the masses. This period is recognized by Rajni Kotari as a period of "competitive dominance". During this period congress lost power, unfortunately there was no cohesive opposition and despite having power in 1967 elections in as many as nine states, no durable coalition was formed. The event of coming together of parties with diverse interests was thus a part of wider democratic processes, whereby a new wave was crystallized with far reaching impacts and significant consequences on future political articulation. Coalition was inevitable; it appears, because the basic shift that has occurred in Indian politics can not be glossed over. Regional parties proved to be substitute to the national parties to serve the interests of the masses at large. The manipulative capabilities of Indian political system have given rise to regional parties with their demand for greater autonomy for the states. Emergence of the regional parties at the states' level provided a platform for the evolution of political alliance with the formation of coalition governments of parties opposed to the congress. Inspired by the ideology of Ram Manohar Lohia, several parties formed coalitions that drew if not exclusively, primarily on anti-congress sentiments. Lohia had been emphatic in the belief that a continued alliance among parties would enable them to come closer, despite being ideologically dissimilar. Precisely in Indian politics a shift from Maurice Durverger's 'one dominant party system' to Rajni Kotyari's 'competitive dominance' reflected in the last of sixties. The increasing conflicting interests at various levels of Indian political structures have provided fertile soil for regional parties in the country. Working of the centripetal federal system proved that one dominant party system is not suitable to a country like India where diversity in social, cultural, linguistic religious fields is one of the important feature of Indian society. Pluralistic nature of Indian society, one dominant party system, and imbalanced economic development of the different regions led to the growth of regional parties in India. Downfall of congress in the states gave space to the regional parties the centre of gravity in Indian politics has moved from the centre to the states¹³. Regional parties reflects the pluralistic nature of Indian society. While national parties failed to carry the sub-national interests and lost confidence of different ethnic groups regional parties automatically became the servers of the regional interests. According to Rudolph and Rudolph regional parties tend to be more traditional rather than modern because their appeal is more towards traditional culture whereas a national party's appeal is more towards modernity¹⁴.

To express diverse demands its specific feelings whether concerning with religion, caste language, culture or regionalism people have formed a number of regional parties. Regional parties consequently directly or indirectly affected the national politics as well as state politics. Regional parties demand from the different platforms for state autonomy, more financial powers to the states, decentralization, recognition of the importance of diversity, (ethnic, lingual, religious) these demands became more prominent after 1967. Because under the leadership of Mrs. Gandhi internal democracy and its capacity to understand and act positively to the demands of the opposition parties those were pursued by the Congress leaders most of the time reduced to minimum. Mrs. Gandhi adopted more confrontational approach both towards opposition parties at the national level and the opposition controlled governments at the states. It was the major cause of rise of the regional parties at the states level.

Rising demands from different sections of society in 1971 general elections sitting Prime Minister appealed across regional, parochial and caste lines with direct class appeal to "abolish poverty". The subsequent success of the Congress was attributed to its having forged a distinctive coalition of dis advantaged, especially among the Harijan, Muslims and Scheduled Tribes¹⁵. In 1971 Congress successfully encashed its slogan "Garibi Hatao" and resorted its position by winning two third majority (352) seats with 43.7 per cent votes. Credit of success was given to the leadership of Mrs. Gandhi. But her style of functioning from 1971 to 1977 reflects her consciousness to strengthen the national government and centralization of more powers. Regional parties whether in power in the states or not, were active in the different regions and demanded state autonomy and balanced economic development. National emergency under art 352 (due to internal disturbance) was also a reaction to suppress the rising centrifugal forces in the periphery. Centralization during the Indira period led to the landmark development in the Indian polity. Coalition government and the phenomenon of regional parties which was restricted to the states in the last decade reached the centre stage. The main significance of the 1977 elections was that it introduced, for the first time in India, the idea of coalition governments at the national level. With the Janata coalition at the centre, the state level parties were exposed to the

national issues as members of union government, and national level parties got the feel of polity of the states and even lower levels¹¹. Rise of regional parties at the national level led to the development of participatory political culture. Apathy of the people was replaced by active interest in politics, when the regional political parties such as DMK, BLD, Akali-Dal started raising issues of their immediate concern or those which had direct emotional appeal. Developments of 1977 were also breaking point in the political history of independent India. The Akali Dal and DMK were partners in Janata Government, though Janata Government had a clear majority of its own. There were fifty one members belonging to different regional parties from 1977 to 1980. At centre regional parties became active partners of national parties in the formation of the union government, policy formulation and in the implementation of the various schemes. During this period government made endeavor to accommodate the various partners in the government, its industrial policy to strengthen the rural economy was based on the broader objective to balance the national economy which was one of the most important demand of the regional parties.

In 1980 again congress came into power at the centre. But its position changed considerably. Regional parties were quite active that time. The conflict between the unitary and the federal processes had been set in motion with the advent of the multi party system. The demand of the state autonomy was intensified at the cost of erosion of democratic federal norms in the system. There has been a mushroom growth of regional parties and pressure groups in almost every state in India since Mrs. Gandhi's return to power in 1980. The failure of the central government to fulfill regional aspirations of the people and the inability of the national opposition parties to provide an effective and viable alternative to the Congress (I) at the national and state levels led to the emergence of large number of regional parties. Like the Telugu Desam, the AIADMK, DMK, Kranti Ranga, Assam Gana Parishad etc. During this period parties formed around the assertion of subaltern political identities and specifically committed to 'the upliftment of the weaker sections of society'. By eighties regional parties and regional party run government have become common phenomenon and it has come to stay in Indian political processes. They are now taking initiative in vital issues and more particularly in the centre state relations. In (1989) coalition era at union level has emerged in India except for a limited period from (1993 to 1996) when a minority government led by Narasimha Rao managed to muster majority. This government was also supported by the regional parties TDP, AIADMK, Janata Dal (G) etc. However these parties were not part of the government. Since 1989 regional parties dominated the formation of third front – national front in 1989 and united front in 1996. Most of those that constituted the front were state based or regional parties with a support base in one or two states other than the state it has formidable presence. In 1989 V.P. Singh's National Front coalition included the representation of three national parties (the Janata Dal) it was combination of two Lok Dals led by Ajit Singh and Devi Lal in North India and Janata party of R.K. Hedge in Karnataka, CPI (M) and CPI and two regional parties. Besides formal pre election alliance, the second alliance was informal seat adjustment between National Front and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana in spite of the fact both the parties BJP and CPI (M) and CPI ideologically incompatible. In the tenth Lok Sabha poll, regional parties that challenged the congress electorally maintained their regional profile even within the National Front by paying equal attention to region specific issues that had catapulted them to power in the states. By adopting a two pronged strategy to highlight both the national and regional issues, the regional parties devised a political agenda to sustain their claims both at the national and state level¹².

The importance of regional parties in the formation of coalition governments has increased arithmetically since 1989. National parties were not able to gain majority in the Lok Sabha. Share of smaller parties rose collectively and national parties became dependent on the regional parties to form coalition at the centre. A look at the last six elections from 1989 to 2004 reveals that there is a decline in the performance of the national parties taken together both in terms of total number of seats won as well as their vote share. State parties and other parties gained at the cost of national parties during this period. This is one of the factor that has contributed to federal coalition governments in the recent past. While the national parties seat share was 470 in 1989 elections, which reduced to 465 in 1991, 403, 387, 369, 336, in the year 1996, 1998, 1999, 2004. Their vote share also decreased in the consecutive years. In comparison regional parties vote share as well as seats in Lok Sabha has also been increasing since 1989. All the state parties put together, could get only 27 seats in 1989 elections. They improved their tally to 51 in 1991, 129 in 1996 and 158 in 1998¹³. In the 2004 election also regional parties as partner coalition of UPA had effective position and roughly they had 190 seats. Since 1996, regional parties have become indispensable in formation of the government at national level. They have been important partners in the coalition that came into power since 1989. In 1996 Post election united front coalition was formed. It was comprised of Janata family thirteen regional parties and their allies. Similarly, in 1998, the BJP increased its share of seats to 182 while the congress obtained 139 seats in the Lok Sabha. Once again no major party was able to form a government without the support of other parties. Thus in 1998, the BJP governing coalition included fourteen regional parties and their allies¹⁴. After the NDA's complete term elections for Indian Parliament were held in 2004. These elections proved that India is surely in the era of coalitions and the 2004 Lok Sabha poll results confirm it. A single party majority does not seem possible any longer; a combination of parties will continue to rule at the centre¹⁵. The Indian National congress remained the major partner in the

UPA with a tally of 145 seats in the newly constituted Lok Sabha. Despite its reservations, as the Panchamarhi resolution indicates, that congress was not in-favour of coalition government, the congress accepts the principle of coalition as an appropriate strategy to gain electoral dividends – which resulted in victory in those states where it had peripheral existence. The results were spectacular in the states, except Uttar Pradesh. While the congress – DMK alliance routed the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu, winning all the 35 Lok Sabha seats, its performance in four other states was impressive. In Andhra Pradesh, the congress and the TRS, won 34 seats leaving only five seats for the ruling TDP, the latter's partner failed to open its account. In Maharashtra, the congress NCP – RPI (A) alliance succeeded in 23 seats. In Bihar, the congress, RJD – Lok Jana Shakti captured 27 seats. Similarly in Jammu and Kashmir, the coalition between the congress and the ruling PDF won four out of six parliamentary seats¹⁶. The congress and its allies won a majority in the Lok Sabha polls, while the constituents of the BJP led NDA suffered electoral reverses in most of the states, except for the BJP in Orissa and Akali Dal in Punjab – both sustaining their hold by winning a majority of seats. Where as the electoral battle was fought between two coalitions, led by the two dominant national parties, the poll results in West Bengal, Tripura, and Kerala clearly demonstrated the powerful presence of the CPI (M) Left Front. The Left Front remains the only stable coalition that sustained its base by winning most of the seats in West Bengal, Tripura and Kerala. As evident from the poll outcome, there were three clusters of parties, apart from the two major coalition, parties belonging to neither of the coalition had also a significant share of the popular vote. Whereas congress alliance secured 40.5 per cent. Lok Sabha seats, BJP led coalition could secure only 34.2 per cent and other parties got the rest. The results also reveal the hegemonic position of the leading partners in the respective coalitions. The congress obtained 66 per cent seats, while the share of its allies 34 per cent. The pattern seems to be identical to the other major coalition, the BJP secured 74 per cent, while, its poll partners have share of only 26 per cent. What these statistics indicate is the hegemonic presence of the two national parties, while the other constituents remain regional or state based parties¹⁷. From 1989 to 2004 Lok Sabha elections indicate some common trends. The pan-Indian parties – the BJP, the congress and third front have failed to secure majority at the centre at their own. All the three were heavily dependent on the regional and state based parties in providing the magic number to the parties seeking to constitute government at the union level. These parties have become an integral part of governance in view of the changing complexion of parliament which is in no way dominated by a single party. Coalition governments have not only formulated a new mode of politics, but have also established beyond doubt the capacity of a coalition government to sincerely pursue regional goals as well, complementary to what is conventionally defined as 'national' goals.

While regional parties have become important partners in the task of governance at the national level it has also led to the participatory political culture, apathy of the people was replaced by active interest in the politics. This has enabled the union government to address regional aspirations more effectively. Regional issues can be sorted out amicably through conscious democratic process rather than through imposition from the centre. The fragmentation of power is an opportunity for relocating Indian democracy in a perspective in which region specific issues are equally important¹⁸. The new role of regional parties in the national coalition is also indicative of a more competitive and polarized party system. Democracy is, indeed moving closer to the people. Now NDA and UPA in the last fifteen years are a powerful experiment in federalism and coalition politics in India. Although Bharatiya Janata Party gained majority still the regional parties have stable vote share and the leadership of the BJP also. convinced about the importance and weight of regional parties. Ruling coalition beside the strong position of the BJP has given important cabinet portfolios to the regional leaders in national government. Vote share of national parties has changed but not at the cost of regional parties. In West Bengal, Bihar, Tamilnadu, Odisha, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh there are Governments of the regional parties with string bargaining power. True spirit of federalism lies in maintaining balance between centre and periphery. To ensure that the presence of the regional and state based parties accords a wider basis to governmental policies by providing inputs from the areas and regions to which they belong. In view of the indispensable role of these smaller parties, coalition governments are also an institutional device for participation of the hitherto marginalized sections in the policy making process. Effectiveness of regional parties proved that region specific issues no longer remain confined to the regions, but have acquired pan – Indian character. Rise of the state based parties attributed to the process of growing democratization and participatory political culture which is one of the significant pre requisite for the sustainability of the democratic system. In the last two decades it has been observed that pan Indian parties have become more flexible and accommodating in adjusting the parochial interests. National Front, 1989, United Front 1996 tried to adjust the various interests represented by the regional parties. United front in its common minimum programme committed to balance the principles of political, administrative and economic federalism. It made its commitment clear to implement the Sarkaria Commission Report. In 1999 BJP led National Democratic Alliance prepared a National Agenda for Governance, which by avoiding contentions issues, cemented the bond to such as extent that it was never fragile despite the inherent tensions. It was based on the principles accommodating the ideological goal of those within the alliance. UPA is also based on the Common Minimum Programme. In which interest of various sections of the society are accommodated. These developments show the trends that coalition between the national and regional parties, leading to more stable social, economic and politi-

cal system.

The growth of the last decade of twentieth century, forced the acceptance of a more federal system of governance (in social and regional terms) than was ever achieved by the proponents of state rights earlier. These developments have resulted in the changing attitude of the regional parties, despite over coming local, regional and parochial myopia, and emerging as crucial players in national politics, the regional parties have not yet fully come to the terms with their national role. Experience of the coalition government in the centre and states proved that regional parties are gradually synchronizing regional interests to the national interests. Trends of Indian polity are showing tilt towards the decentralization because regional parties always condemned the policy of centralized planning, strong hold of centre in financial matters. Positive development of the federal polity due to regional pressures are, the concept of mutual cooperation between the centre and the states has become a reality of the day in our federal structures. Practically regional parties are performing the functions of checks and balances. Now centre can not behave arbitrarily and as colonizer in the case of the states. Centre has to be very conscious in using or misusing the various provisions of the constitution and other practices to impede or over look the state interests. While positive attitude of centre helped to develop the legislative and executive powers of the states as well as of the local bodies, which resulted into the democratic decentralization to same extent. Presently India federalism is combination of cooperative federalism and competitive bargaining. Centre and states cooperate with each other on some issues. In others states bargaining power has increased tremendously due to their increasing role in determining the coalition at the centre and the states. Now there is competitive bargaining between the central government and the state governments for matching grants and other financial assistance and aids¹⁹. But Iqbal Narain argues that competitiveness and bargaining are the core of democratic politics, but he puts the blame on the absence of broader social purpose for the operational distortions of the federal process in India.

Emphatically Indian polity indicates that federalism is the best form of government for solving the complex problems of Indian society, coalition government's experiment proved to be more representative in which regional parties are determining factor in the governance, their participation forms part of gradual mode of transition within democracy. Era of the single party dominance has disappeared and the trend of decentralization replaced the centralization. Enlargement of political participation and political awareness among minorities have profoundly influenced the governance. As the rise of different independent centres of power at the regional and grassroots levels are assertive and profound, the primary concerns of the state and basic needs of the grassroots of Panchayati Raj cannot be overlooked in a new phase of decentralization especially in the fiscal and industrial era²⁰. Thus perspective of Indian political system has been determined by socio-economic system. Regional political parties as institutions to

put forward plural interest have become a force to be reckoned within Indian politics. Now they are taking vital issues and more particularly centre – state relations. The national parties barring the Indian National Congress have started leaning on regional parties. The regional parties are now indispensable in providing a viable national alternative to congress party²¹.

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