



A STUDY ON INDIAN FEDERALISM AND REGIONAL POLITICAL PARTY'S IMPACT FOR FEDERALISM

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Abstract:

Although the word "federal" was never mentioned in the Indian Constitution, it did establish a system of government that is fundamentally federal in essence. The Constitution has granted the Central government superseding powers within the fundamental limits of federalism. Cooperative Federalism was the goal of the constitution's creators. National parties, on the other hand, have been seen to promote power consolidation. Since its independence, India has had a one-party dominating system that was seen as a unitary government for four decades. Though the collapse of the one-party hegemonic regime at the Center has been aided by the growth of regional parties. The state has become the epicenter of Indian politics thanks to the regional parties, who also play significant roles in national policy and further federalize the functioning of federalism.

Keywords: Federalism, Co-operative, Regional, Autonomy, Bargain.

INTRODUCTION

India has a population of 120 crores and a land area of 3.28 million square kilometers. This is a nation with a diverse spectrum of ethnicities, languages, and customs. Its 29 states and seven union territories all function quite differently in terms of their access to natural resources, ability for administration, and economic output. India was formerly a very centralized federation. Because of its democratic track record, institutional strengths, robust civil society, and dynamic political culture, it has succeeded in maintaining a democratic and federal system. India has been able to coexist peacefully with its notable differences because to federal ideals.

The essence of federalism is that it is a political system that establishes two levels of government with assigned powers and responsibilities in a society. These powers and responsibilities are derived from a variety of factors and political agreements, and they exhibit a tendency to insist through an active response to the challenges of a changing environment by the process of adaptation through innovative institutional models as well as functional relationships. India meets all key requirements for federalism, including having two separate administrations, a written constitution, and an independent judiciary system, among others. In the last 60 years, trials have taken place under the federal system in India. The purpose of this essay was to highlight the effects of the party system in general and regional parties in particular on how Indian federalism operates.

Political Party and Federalism in India

After gaining independence, the Indian National Congress changed into a political party, assumed control of the government, and established governments at the federal and state levels. To protect the nation's integrity, the Congress protected the strong center. Until Jawaharlal Nehru, the country's first prime, ruled over its future, this condition remained constant. There were no dissidents and center-state relations were generally cordial due to (a) the role of the Congress party in securing freedom and institutionalizing the relationship

between the state and society, (b) the national elite enjoyed high legitimacy as a result of their involvement in the freedom struggle, (c) the use of state power was moderate despite elitist predisposition, and (d) the states were largely used as a tool for social change (Chakraborty, 1999).

Centralized Federalism

India had a very centralized federalism system throughout the Nehru period. The Congress party continued to be a centralized party, adopting national policies under the direction and management of Congress-led state governments. Following the passing of Sardar Patel in December 1950, Nehru combined the positions of party president and prime minister before passing the reins to a protégé. In this setting, Nehru made the statement, "The Congress is the country and the country is the Congress," in 1953 (Khan, 1999). Intra-party democracy in political parties was not seen favorably, and dissidence was repressed harshly. Voices from below were disregarded, and dissidence was violently put into check by the Parliamentary wings of the majority of the national political parties, which generally supported the Congress position.

In accordance with Article 356 of the constitution, the Centre declared President's Rule in order to retain its dominance. Because it was so widespread, President's Rule was declared 14 times between June 1951 and November 1967: six times in Kerala, three times in Punjab, and once each in Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Goa, Rajasthan, and Haryana. After 1967, its usage put the rights of the state and the practice of power-sharing with regional parties and leaders in jeopardy (Khan, 1999).

Between the 1960s and the 1980s, Mrs. Gandhi shattered the authority of the state Chief Ministers, degraded the Congress apparatus, and restored the parliamentary party's dominance over the party apparatus. She also created a new balance—or, more accurately, imbalance—between the federal government and the states. States received a significant amount of money from the center, but the projects were federally supported and managed by the center while being carried out by the states. However, the centralization, politicization, and authoritarian practices of the Indira rule had harmed the federal and democratic structure of the nation and contributed to the formation of non-Congress political parties. The consensus politics of the "Congress System" (Rajni Kothari, 1974) started to fall apart as the Congress party's power was short-lived. The process became clear in 1969, when Indira Gandhi, who succeeded Nehru, "rejected the principle of consensus in favor of the majoritarian principles" in the face of fierce resistance (Chakraborty, 1999).

Emergence of Regional Parties

Since 1967, the states have often argued for the necessity of a fully decentralized federal government. The functioning of Indian democracy has been significantly federalized as a result of the evolving character of the party system and the rising significance of regional parties. State-level sub-regional cultures first emerged in the middle of the 1970s. Congress found it difficult to address all of the provinces' local concerns since new ones of a local character had started to emerge. The local leaders of the ordinary people were far more accessible to them than the national leaders, and they were more focused on local concerns than global ones (Chakraborty, 2003). According to Surendra Mohan, who wrote an article titled "Pivotal role for Regional Politics" for the Hindustan Times, "the Central leadership failed to take note of safeguarding distinct cultural identities, persisting regional economic

imbalances, and as a result the regional leaders started to assert their existence." Local and regional leaders emerged in order to play the game of regional politics, establish their regional concerns, and forge tight ties between the state and society for the benefit of the populace.

Therefore, it is necessary to consider that the over-centralization of national leaders and the government is mostly to blame for the rise of regional parties. In Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Maharashtra, Sikkim, Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, and other states of the Union, the regional parties have become more powerful. Their cultural regional identity, linguistic antagonism to most non-Hindi governments, political dedication to increased regional autonomy, and emphasis on state- or regional-specific issues are some of their distinguishing characteristics (Khan, 1999).

Regional Parties Demand for State Autonomy

In order to assure more state autonomy, regional parties in several states began to propose reorganizing center-State relations. The demand for greater state autonomy may result from the Governor's discriminatory actions, such as the dismissal of Chief Ministers, the reservation of Bills for the President's consideration, the demand to repeal specific laws, the dismissal of State Governments under Article 356 of the Constitution, the deployment of the CRP, the use of all India services by the Center, and the alleged discrimination against states in the allocation of Central projects and food grains. In order to guarantee state autonomy, the regional parties began to call for a reorganization of center-State relations. Since then, several regional parties have offered different recommendations and suggestions. The Rajamannar Committee was established in 1971 by the DMK government of Tamil Nadu to study the federal system. A note on center-state financial ties was given to the National Development Council by the Kerala government, which is run by the CPI (M). In its Anandpur Saheb Resolution from 1973, the Akali Dal argued in favor of state autonomy. In 1977, the West Bengal administration, which was headed by the CPI(M), issued a statement urging a radical change of the constitution that would turn India into a federal rather than a union state. A "White Paper" on center-state relations was published in 1983 by the Janata Party administration in Karnataka and was held in Bangalore. The non-Congress regional chief ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Pandicherry urged a fair allocation of financial resources between the federal government and the states during this conference (India Express, 1983).

The southern chief ministers of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Pandicherry established the "Southern Chief Ministers" forum to address their shared issues and push for significant reforms in center-state ties, notably in the financial sector. These Southern regional parties had pushed for more state autonomy. It received little attention from the central Congress administration (Indira Gandhi's administration). On March 24, 1983, the central government announced the creation of the Sarkaria Commission to review the functioning of the ties between the Center and the State after realizing that other states had also started to gain momentum for state autonomy. (1990; Ram Rao). The Congress was defeated by the rise of several strong regional parties, including the DMK and AIADMK, followed by the TMC in Tamil Nadu, Telugu Desam in Andhra Pradesh, the Shivsena in Maharashtra, the Akali Dal in Punjab, the national Conference in Jammu & Kashmir, the

Assam Gana Parishad in Assam, the RJD in Bihar, Biju Janata Dal in Odisha, Janata Dal in Kar

The influence of regional parties in Parliament has increased since 1989, leading to increasing federalization. The regional parties began to seek more state autonomy as they became stronger. The regional parties then established a series of conclaves to discuss center-state relations. The first Chief Minister of a regional party in Andhra Pradesh and the leader of the Telugu Desam Party, N.T. Rama Rao, took the effort to bring together a number of regional and non-Congress parties. Between 3 May and 1 June 1983, the first conclave was convened, and the heads of 14 different political parties attended. The reform of center-state relations to maintain State Autonomy was the major topic of discussion during the summit (Rao, 1998). The second conclave, which took place on June 30, 1983, expressed a common stance on the delicate Punjab issue and encouraged the center to try to find a political solution. The third conclave, which took place in Srinagar on October 5, 1983, adopted a resolution with 31 points that called for significant adjustments to the center-state relationship in the spheres of politics, business, and administration. Additionally, they recommended that the center limit its focus to areas like communications, currency, and international affairs, among others. The conclave in Srinagar was significant (Rao & Sundar Ram, 1990). The regional parties on center-state relations emphasized the need of enhancing state autonomy in order to keep the center-state relations in a correct balance. On January 13 and 14, 1984, Calcutta hosted the fourth conclave. The council passed a resolution calling for "a total restructuring" of the central government's economic policies and providing a substitute economic plan for the advancement of the lower and middle classes (Sen, India Today).

On September 17, 1988, in Madras, an alliance known as the National Front was formed by seven parties, including the Janata, Jana Morcha, Lok Dal (B), Congress (U), Telugu Desam, DMK, and Assam Gana Parishad. NTR and V.P. Singh served as the National Front's Chairman and Convener, respectively. In order to address the imbalance in budgetary, legislative, and administrative connections and to usher in a period of harmonious relations between the Union and the States in the genuine federal spirit, one of the major goals of the Front was to reexamine Center-State relations.

Regional Parties –Partner of Union Government

N. Chandra Babu Naidu, NTR's son-in-law, headed a faction of the TDP that broke out after NTR's tragic death in January 1996. This faction ran in the 1996 Lok Sabha elections, winning 16 seats on its own and capturing 22 seats overall, including those of its political partners, the CPM and CPI. The Janata Dal, DMK, TDP, AGP, TMC, NC, and CPI were the main partners in the creation of the United Front, which consisted of 14 parties. CPM and Congress (I) provided support from outside, as did the TDP President and United Front Convener N. Chandra Babu Naidu. The regional parties came together as allies to establish the national government at the center after the collapse of the Atal Bihari Bajpaae administration, which was led by Deve Gouda as prime minister. Along with serving as the TDP's convener and president, Chandra Babu Naidu recognized the need for a federal institutional framework for regional parties and actively participated in the formation of the "Federal Front"—a coalition of the TDP, TMC, DMK, and AGP—to advance their own interests while also defending the interests of the states they represented. The regional parties have collaborated with the UPA and NDA coalition administrations at the center during the

previous 20 years.

Bargain by Regional Parties with Federal Government

Indian federalism has undergone a radical transformation as a result of the growing involvement of regional parties. Once the Union had control over those nations, the states began to push themselves against the superpower of the Union Government. They began negotiating on their behalf with the Union administration. For instance, the Congress and the BJP, the two national parties of India, alternately formed coalitions with the two Dravidian state parties, DMK and AIADMK, and each time they did so, they demanded a price in the shape of projects or greater funding for the State. Before recently, Tamil Nadu didn't have any ministers in the Union Cabinet, but they have just joined the Union Ministry and been granted the desired positions. The DMK was able to get a guarantee from the Congress-led Union Government in the most recent coalition that Tamil would be treated as a national language.

Some regional parties have even provided outside support to the union government while blackmailing it. For instance, between 1999 and 2004, the Telugu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh repeatedly requested and received concessions from the NDA Government in Delhi. Despite coming from outside, the TDP's support for the NDA government in New Delhi was advantageous for the state. Without charging a single penny for years, the Department of Telecoms (later BSNL) had to provide enormous bandwidth to connect all the district towns to the State capital. The TDP was successful in obtaining significant funding from the center to deal with natural catastrophes like as flood and drought. Even the TDP fought for the central government to support its World Bank debts; in fact, it demanded the right to directly negotiate with the World Bank and obtained Union Government assurances to support its debt to foreign financial institutions.

In order to appease the north-eastern states, each of which contributed one or two MPs to the coalition, the 23 party coalitions Union Government in Delhi continued to unveil packages totaling millions of billions of rupees for development initiatives between 1999 and 2004. Financial incentives were used to ensure that certain governments would provide their full support and allegiance. In 1996–1997, a United Front Prime Minister offered a package worth Rs. 8000 crore for Jammu and Kashmir. National Conference Party with the intention of paying terrorists for peace. In 2004, a different prime minister offered a package worth Rs. 24,000 crore for Jammu & Kashmir. Every time the regional parties offered their support to the Delhi-based Union administration, they received more benefits.

When it comes to the use of the river water that flows through multiple states, the demands of regional parties in power have caused mayhem. The Kaveri water dispute between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, as well as the Krishna water dispute between Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and to a lesser extent Maharashtra, are still open issues. The partners in the coalition government in Delhi were the governments involved in the water conflicts. The Government chose to send the matter to the court rather than attempt to resolve it because it was hesitant to assume the risk. Farmers will lose time, water, and money as they wait for the court to rule. Some of the concessions made by regional parties as coalition partners include covering up corruption, protecting offenders, and turning a blind eye to unlawful infiltration. Among the challenges posed by the regional parties to the Union Coalition Government are the withdrawal of cases, non-progression of ongoing prosecutions, fabrication of cases, revival of

cases, inclusion of criminals in Ministries, failure to resolve interstate water disputes, extraction of "packages" of funds from the Union, subversion of states, and change of demography through infiltration. Thus, in order to protect their national interests and meet the needs of the populace, the regional parties could not keep quiet and spoke up. This need not be seen as a bad development. It is a step in the democratic process in a federal democracy.

CONCLUSION

This essay aims to demonstrate how the emergence of regional parties has aided in the demise of the one-party system that predominated at the national level (and resembled a unitary form of government), as well as the complete reversal of the authoritarian and centralized politics of the Congress (I) leadership, which treated the Chief Ministers as though they were the Chief of Municipalities during their rule. The Chief Ministers were never considered equal participants in the administration of India's federal polity by the Prime Ministers of the Congress (I). For their continued employment, the Chief Ministers had to rely on the Prime Minister. In contrast to these earlier political traditions, regional parties have significantly federalized Indian politics today. The Prime Minister no longer has the same level of authority as they had when there was a one-party system in place. The President and the Governors are aware of their constitutional responsibilities rather than serving as rubber stamps for the governing party's demands. Indian federalism has undergone tremendous change as a result of the growing involvement of regional parties. Since the 1990s, the state has been the political epicenter of India. Regional parties eventually assumed significant national responsibilities and were the main participants in coalition governments. This kind of movement in political parties in India reflects the radical transformation in federalist politics, from co-operative Federalism to dominating Federalism.

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