

ROLE OF REGIONAL AND STATE PARTIES IN INDIAN POLITICS

** Snehal Kalyanrao Laghane, Research Scholar, Department of Political science, Dr BAMU.*

Introduction:

In modern age most of the democratic countries have adopted ‘representative democratic forms of the government’ in which political parties play an important role and act as a ‘link between the electors and elected.’ As compared to other neighbouring countries it could be said that the democracy in India has been successful, though the emergency traumatized the democratic system, but it was temporal, and the democratic system remained intact. After independence 17 Parliamentary and many more Assembly elections have been conducted successfully, and political parties in India have played an important and pivotal role in this journey. Political Parties are the most vital part of the modern democratic government, but their function, organisation and number show substantial variation. Party system in any country is shaped by multiple factors such as its political system, and whether it is federal or parliamentary. Indian party system has also been shaped by its distinct political and social features. After independence an elected representative parliament has been setup at the union level and the legislative assemblies in the states of India on the same pattern. The purpose of setting a parliamentary form was establishing an accountable government as in this form of government, the executive is constantly observed and controlled by the opposition. After the analysis of the history of the parliamentary system, it could be seen that, it played a significant role in shaping the Indian party system. With the end of single-party dominance and rise of the coalition era, the fragmentation of political parties happened to take place more rapidly, which lead to the multi-party system in the country.

Another important feature by which the party system in India has been shaped to the larger extent, is the federal character of the country. Though it cannot be put in the category of ‘distinctive federal system,’ constitutional power has been divided among the central and the state governments. State governments are formed based on Assembly elections, which are mostly dominated by the state parties, different in ideologies and programmes, representing the varied interests of the citizens. The diversity of India is another most important feature which has great impact on the party system. There are four underlying social diversities in India: language, tribe, religion and caste.¹ The first two are manly associated with the geographical diversity and are regionally concentrated, last two diversities are linked with the social and present all over the country. The reflections of these diversities can be seen in the party system of the country in a strong manner. The Indian

party system took its distinctive shape in the context of the above mentioned factors in which regional and state-based parties have been playing its significant role. The presence of regional parties in the states can be traced much earlier than their presence in the national politics. It was in 1967 only when Congress lost ground in most of the Southern states and regional aspirations emerged in the form of state based regional political parties, but it took almost two decades for these parties to register their strong presence at the national level. Although, the Janata Party government which was formed after the emergency gave an introductory sight of the Congress decline and emerging strength of the regional political parties during their short span of ruling, but the actual force of regional parties could be seen only after 1989 Lok Sabha elections, when a coalition of regional/state based parties named as ‘National Front’ formed the government at centre led by Vishwanath Pratap Singh. The 1989 general election is a landmark election in Indian political system. For the first time regional parties registered their presence in national politics. The coalition led by Janata Dal included regional political parties like TDP of Andhra Pradesh, the Congress (S) in Kerala, and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in Tamil Nadu. This paper explores the role of regional parties and their changing dynamics in national politics of India.

Statement of the Problem

In context of the research problem, the role of regional and state parties in Indian politics at the national level is the heart of this study. The study further examines the role played by the regional and state parties in making and dismantling of the union governments since 1989. The making of the UPA and the NDA are without any doubt the alliances of number of parties which include both national as well as regional parties. This research will go deep down to find out the theoretical explanation of the emergence and growth of the regional and state parties across the states and the varying pattern of these parties. The increasing bargaining power within these alliances/coalitions is no doubt having an impact on the politics played by the pan India parties at the national level. To what extent their role is making an impact on the national politics, and in whatever way, is the guiding path of this research problem. The year 1989 is selected to study the role of the regional and state parties in the national politics, because it is marked as a year since the role of the regional political parties in nationwide politics has considerably increased which further lead to many changes in the Indian federal system. Finally, an attempt shall also be made to understand the

dynamics of regional parties in the context of changing party system, which is being considered to taking place after 2014 general elections.

Methodology

The methodology adopted in paper is historical, descriptive and analytical in nature. Previous knowledge is precondition for the existing one. This method is used to trace the origin and growth of the regional/state political parties in the national politics and in their respective states as well. A comparative method has also been used to study the trajectory of regional and state-based political parties in different states. In order to prepare the data, the regional political party leaders will be interviewed and their comments and replies on the basis of questionnaire will be analysed and subsequently incorporated in the paper. The data, facts and figures of the paper is based on both, the primary as well as on the secondary sources. The primary sources of the material include the data from the ECI (Election Commission of India), the Lok Sabha debates, data received from the CSDS (Centre for the Study of Developing Societies) Data Unit and the responses of the regional political party leaders based on the questionnaire. Books, published research papers, articles of newspapers and magazines are used as secondary sources.

Literature Review

This research is divided into four sections, which deal with the various aspects of the Indian party system and especially focuses upon the dynamics of regional and the state parties in Indian political system. The party system in India follow its own unique trajectory, which has drawn attention of the scholars from the very beginning. There is a vast number of literatures which have been very helpful to not only understand the key concepts of the party system, but also have great contribution in the creation of this paper. We shall only scrutinize briefly the important works of the field concerned in order to make clear how this study relates to the preceding works and in what manner it contributes to the existing reliable literature.

Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in Modern State, by Maurice Duverger. (Methuen and Company Limited., London, 1954). This book is a valuable contribution in the literature on party system. This book is divided into two sections- first section deals with the evolution of the party structures, party membership and party leadership. It compares the different types of the party organisations and tries to define and assess the leadership and the membership

of the parties. The second part of the book deals with the party system and the political structure into which numerous types of the party system fits, which are as single/one-party system, dual/two-party system, multi-party system. It also deals with the approaches of evaluating party strength, the question of the party alliances and the general relations between the political parties and the governments. The aspects of the book are conceived within the framework of America alone, based on which Duverger proposes a general hypopaper about the party system, which is the main limitation of the study. Despite its limits, it is an important contribution to our thoughtful understanding of the party system in general.

Party Politics in India: The Development of a Multi-Party System, by Myron Weiner. (Princeton University Press, 1990). The first edition of this book was published in 1957 which deals with the beginning phase of the Indian party system. The author explains the party system in India where universal suffrage has been introduced recently and the country is aspiring to find out a political system which responds to the different varieties of classes, the interests and loyalties of its diverse populace and also preserves the important basis of the national unity. The majority of the book contains a sequence of ‘case-studies’ of the splits of the parties, effective alliances of the political parties (particularly that between the Socialist Party and the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party in 1952), in addition it also contains the details of the failed efforts at the union level, for example between the Jan Sangh and the Hindu Mahasabha.

The author argues that the mixture of numerous interest groups is represented by the Congress Party only like that of the Western political parties. The other political parties of India characterize either a sole interest, or they are filled with the ideologies, hence make ‘total’ demands, like ‘the Hindu Nation’ or ‘socialisation.’ The author notes that in India the development of the organised interest groups would act as a stabilising force; and subsequently the interest groups would push for their demands on the government and the political parties would force the government to negotiate and eventually negotiate more readily. Though, the title of this brilliant book is somewhat misleading, as it suggests that a multi-party political system has already advanced in the Indian union. Nevertheless, as the book itself quotes, *“India could be described as having a one-party democratic system, based not on the coercion found in one-party dictatorships, but on consent.”* There are no effective contending parties yet, at least on a national level, to the Congress.

Disagreement aside, the manuscript is valuable contribution for the data it contains on India and for putting the general light on the study of the Indian political parties.

Transforming India: Social and Political Dynamics of Democracy, edited by Francine R. Frankel, Zoya Hasan, Rajeev Bhargava and Balveer Arora. (Oxford university Press, New Delhi, 2000). This is an edited book by the leading social scientists, which covers the different aspects of the Indian democracy. This is an essential reading to study the democratic process and its various aspects of the India. It describes the understanding and the experience of the democratic functioning of India for over fifty years and analyses the deep transformations which have been happening by the democratic form of governance. The different chapters of this book discuss roles of different constitutional and non-constitutional institutions including the judiciary, political parties, federalism, the electronic media and the police. The important section of this book regarding this paper are the chapters which explains the electoral upsurge of historically marginalised groups, fragmentation of political parties and tendencies towards regionalisation. This book has been helpful to understand the democratic process of the country.

Parties and Party Politics in India, edited by Zoya Hasan. (Oxford India Press, New Delhi, 2000). The book is a collection of articles on the politics of Indian and the party system. It examines the Congress system, the national political parties, as well as the regional political parties. The compilation also analyses these parties by their effect on the changing nature of the Indian politics in terms of their connection with caste, class, communal and the regional politics. The first section of this book discusses the dominance and the weakening of the Congress party, the second section focusses on the rise and growth of Hindu Nationalist politics and role of its ideology. The third section evaluates the left parties and radical politics. The fourth section discusses the social diversity and party politics grounded on regional and state-based parties. The fifth and the final section of this book deals with political competition and transformation of the party system as well as coalition politics. The entire book presents a comprehensive description of the transformation of the Indian party system since independence.

Why Ethnic Parties Succeed: Patronage and Ethnic Head Counts in India by Kanchan Chandra. (Cambridge University, New Delhi, 2004). This book makes an important theoretical contribution to the study of Indian political parties. Chandra develops her theory in the context of

‘Patronage Democracy.’ K. Chandra believes that the patronage democracy is that form of the government in which the public sector is bigger as compared to private sector and the state dominates access to the services and other jobs. According to the author, the elected officials of the government must have an authority in the implementation of the laws and the allocation of the jobs and services. The focal point of the book is on the approaches and performance of BSP in three states of the Indian union- Punjab, UP and Karnataka. The BSP claims to represent the ‘Schedule Caste’ of the country, which constitutes a major portion of the total populace and are almost equally scattered in the major states of India. However, in some states the party has been more effective and successful like UP than Karnataka and Punjab. This study seeks to explain the reason of the success and failures of these parties. The book is divided into two sections. In the first part of the book Chandra offers a well-designed theoretical framework which deals with the victories and failures of the ethnic political parties. Other part of the book analyses the empirical evidence, as well as a chapter which observes the success of other three ethnic parties, BJP, DMK and JMM in India.

India’s political Parties edited by **Peter Ronald DeSouza, E. Sridharan.** (Sage Publications India Pvt. Limited, New Delhi, 2006). The book has chapters on India’s key political parties by different experts. Peter Ronald DeSouza (of CSDS Delhi) and E. Sridharan (India Centre at UPenn) are the editors of the book. This book deals with a wide range of subjects and issues of Indian politics in general and in particular focuses upon the party system. This book presents the Indian party system as a multi-faceted organization functioning in interaction with each other as they compete for power, both at the central level and the state level in the federal political system that consist of distinct state and national party systems. The authors bring together seminal articles, scholarships on national and regional parties, precise commentaries on the important aspects of parties and party system. The book gives us a great insight on history and ideology that has shaped these various political parties from Congress to Shiv Sena. For a largely politically ignorant person, it is a great start as much is unknown. Apart from political parties, there are articles on how we classify political parties based on objectives etc. and how India’s political parties can be classified accordingly. It has classical articles by likes of Rajni Kothari, Jayaprakash Narayan (JP), MN Roy, Myron Weiner and other eminent scholars.

The Formation of National Party Systems: Federalism and Party Competition in Canada, Great Britain, India, and the United States by Pradeep Chhibber, Ken Kollman. (Princeton University Press, 2009). The book is a significant contribution towards the study of the federalism and the party systems and produces suggestions that are largely generalizable beyond the federations. Relying on a long-term constituency level statistics from the Canada, the United States, India and the United Kingdom, the authors have tried to build a substantial explanation that the rise and fall of government and administrative authority in periods of centralization and provincialization explicates sequential variations in the party aggregation. When the central governments have added authority on the higher taxing and expenses, bigger constitutionally allocated authority and control over the economic development, the common party label will be of the interest of the candidates so to coordinate and subsequently influence the policies by banding together. Authors believe that the voters are more likely to push for the support towards the candidates who have affiliations and the labels of the national parties. Conversely, *“decentralization or provincialization creates the space for local or regional parties to form and survive.”*

Party System in India: Emerging Trajectories, edited by Ajay K. Mehra. (New Delhi: Lancer Publishers, 2013). The book, consists of eighteen essays and a very insightful introduction by Ajay K. Mehra. The articles and essays by the well-known analysts in the field of Indian politics emphasis on almost all aspects of the life and times of the Indian democracy plus its strong association as well as affiliation with the parties followed by the party system.

Conclusion:

The study presents an elaborative dissertation on the dynamics of regional and state-based parties in Indian politics. The party system is a pillar of an elected ‘representative form of government’ which acts as a ‘link between the electors and the elected.’ Modern political representative democracies cannot be visualised without the existence and functioning of political parties. Parties make the citizens capable to perform politically and offer them opportunity to mark an influence on the politics and political decisions. Tracing the origin and expansion of the political parties in the context of single theoretical framework is difficult as different political systems have dissimilar political arrangements and have their own set of political developments. There have been several scholarly attempts to study the origin of political parties, which sees the political party’s evolution

mostly related to the Western democratic system. Maurice Duverger classifies the emergence and creation of political parties into two categories- the electoral and parliamentary origin of parties. This type of genesis of parties follow the simple mechanism and the parties emerge slowly and gradually from the activities of the legislators and the Extra-Parliamentary origins of the parties. Externally created parties are those that emerge outside the legislature and consistently involve some challenge to the ruling group and a demand for representation. As per the Duverger's explanation there are various associations and groups which further developed into political parties or play the leading role in the creation of political parties such as; Trade Unions, Agricultural Co-operatives and Peasants' Associations, Philosophical societies, Ex-servicemen's Associations, Industrial and Commercial groups and intellectual and religious organizations.

Duverger explained the origin of development of the political parties in a detailed manner but his theory fits into the Western democracies only. It does not provide any substantial material on the development of political parties in Asian or developing countries. J. La Palombara and Myron Weiner suggested three theories concerning party origins- Institutional theories, Historical-Situation theories and developmental theories which covers the evolution of the party system in developing countries but if we come to the progression of the party system in India it shows its own unique trajectory though. India got independence after a long movement and political institutions as a legacy of the colonial rule. The preamble of the Indian constitution clearly states that the Indian union derives its authority as well as the power from the Indian people. The constitution lays the foundation of a democratic, parliamentary, federal and secular republic of India. Representatives of the people derive their power from the citizens of the country. Indian constitution makes provisions for an elected representative parliamentary system at the centre as well as in the states on the same pattern.

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