

CH 9.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN INDIAN POLITICS

MAIN ISSUES IN INDIAN POLITICS IN THE PERIOD AFTER 1989.

The main issues in Indian politics in the period after 1989 were the fine developments that were to make a long lasting impact in our politics. These were:

1. The defeat of the Congress party in the 1989 elections. This marked the end of what political scientists have called the 'Congress system'.
2. The national front led by V.P. Singh witnessed the rise of 'Mandal issue' in national politics. The decision of national front to implement the recommendation of the Mandal Commission led to 'Anti Mandal' protests in different parts of the country.
3. In 1991, the Congress led by Narasimha Rao, introduced the 'new economic policy', with liberalization and globalisation. Even though it was criticised by various movements and organisations, it was followed by the later governments.
4. A number of events culminated in the demolition of the disputed structure at Ayodhya (known as Babri Masjid) in December 1992.
5. The assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in May 1991 led to a change in leadership of the Congress party.

ERA OF COALITIONS.

1. In 1989, general elections marked the end of Congress dominance over the Indian party system. No single party secured majority in Lok Sabha elections.
2. It began an era of multi party system. There was emergence of several parties in such a way that one or two parties did not get most of the votes or seats. This also meant that no single party secured a clear majority of seats in any Lok Sabha elections held since 1989 to 2014.
3. This development initiated an era of coalition governments at the centre, in which regional parties played a critical role in forming ruling alliances.
4. Since 1989, there have been nine governments at the centre either coalition government or minority government supported by other parties.
5. In this phase, government could be formed only with the participation of many regional parties.
6. The nineties also saw the emergence of powerful parties to represent Dalits and Backward classes and regional assertions as well.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Coalition govt. in India.

ADVANTAGES -

Rise to the other backward classes as a political force - The emergence of the coalition era gave rise to the other backward classes as a political force. These are communities other

than SC's, and ST's who suffer from educational and social backwardness. These are also called and referred to as Backward castes.

2. Alliance politics - The coalition govt. provided ample opportunities for the emergence of powerful parties and movements that represented the Dalit Backward castes like BSP and Bahujya Kramti Dal. Many of these parties represented powerful regional assertions as well.

DISADVANTAGES -

1. One of the drawbacks of coalition govt. was the rise of politics based regional or religious identity. The BJP lost in elections of 1980 and 1984, changed its ideology and began to emphasize the Hindu Nationalist element in its ideology.
2. The emergence of a religion based party led to communal riots. For instance, in Feb-March 2002, large scale violence broke out against Muslims in Gujarat. It is known as Godhra incident. Incidents like these pose as a threat to democratic politics.

DECLINE OF CONGRESS DOMINANCE, THE CONGRESS PARTY CONTINUES TO INFLUENCE POLITICS -

While many developments took place and the 1989 elections marked an end of the Congress system but even after that, Congress party continues to influence politics in the country because -

1. No single party could replace Congress.
2. Congress came back to power after mid term elections in 1991.

3. It also supported United Front govt.
4. In 1996, the left continued to support the non-Congress govt. but this time Congress supported it as both Congress and left wanted to keep BJP out of power.
5. The election of 2004 also witnessed the partial revival of the Congress party.

Thus, Congress remained an important party and ruled the country for more than any other party did since 1989. But it lost the kind of centrality it earlier enjoyed in the party system.

THE EMERGENCE OF BJP AS A SIGNIFICANT FORCE IN POST EMERGENCY POLITICS -

In the 1989 elections, the National Front received support from two diametrically opposite political groups: The BJP and the left front.

The decision to implement the Mandal Commission's reports recommendation forced BJP to reconsider its support and finally withdraw it. Thus, in November 1990, the rule of National Front came to an end.

In 1996 election, BJP emerged as the largest party and was invited to form the govt. But most of the other parties opposed its policies and therefore, the BJP govt. could not secure a majority in the Lok Sabha.

It came to power by leading a coalition govt. from May 1998 to June 1999. and was re-elected in October 1999. Atal Bihari Vajpayee

was the Prime Minister during both these NDA governments and this govt. formed in 1999 completed its full term.

The NDA led by BJP remained out of power at the centre for a decade i.e. from 2004 to 2014. It returned to power in 2014 general elections under the leadership of Narendra Modi.

EMERGENCE OF A NEW CONSENSUS

It's correct to say that coalition govt. in India has helped in arriving at some consensus.

In the midst of severe competition and many conflicts a consensus appears to have emerged among most parties on many crucial issues. This consensus consists of 4 elements -

1. AGREEMENT ON NEW ECONOMIC POLICIES - While many groups are opposed to the new economic policies, most parties believe that these policies would lead to prosperity in the country and a status of economic power in the world.
2. ACCEPTANCE OF THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CLAIMS OF THE BACKWARD CASTES - Political parties have recognised that the social and political claims of the backward castes need to be accepted. As a result, all political parties now support reservation of seats for the backward classes in education and employment. Political parties are also willing to ensure that OBC's get adequate share of power.

3. ACCEPTANCE OF ROLE AND POWER OF STATE LEVEL PARTIES IN GOVERNANCE OF THE COUNTRY -

The distinction b/w the state level and the national level parties is fast becoming less important.

4. EMPHASIS ON PRAGMATIC CONSIDERATION RATHER THAN IDEOLOGICAL POSITIONS AND POLITICAL ALLIANCES WITHOUT IDEOLOGICAL AGREEMENT -

Coalition governments have shifted the focus of political parties from ideological differences to power politics. Thus most parties of NDA did not agree with the Hindutva ideology of the BJP.

Important questions.

1. How far is it correct to say that Coalition govt. in India has helped in arriving at some consensus?
2. State the main issues in Indian politics in the period after 1989.
3. What different configurations of political parties these differences lead to?
4. 'Towards the end of 1980's, five major changes took place in Indian political system.' In the light of this statement, examine any three changes.
5. What have been the major trends in the electoral performance of the Congress and BJP since 1989?
6. From 1989 to 2004, there have been nine coalition governments in India. Analyse the rise and fall of any two such coalition governments.
7. 'In the new era of coalition politics, political parties are not signing or realigning on the basis of ideology.' What arguments would you put forward to support or oppose this statement?

8. Trace the emergence of BJP as a significant force in post emergency politics.

9. In spite of the decline of Congress dominance of the party, congress continues to influence politics in the country? Do you agree? Give reasons.

1. VP Singh National front. Dec 1989 - Nov 1990
2. Chandrashekhar Janta party (S) Nov 1990 - June 1991.
supported by Congress.
3. Narshimha Rao Congress supported June 1991 - May 1996.
by AIADMC and others.
4. AB Vajpayee BJP minority govt. May 1996 - June 1996.
5. HD Dev Gowda United front with June 1996 - April 1997.
Congress support.
6. IK Gujral United front w. April 1997 - March 1998.
Congress support.
7. AB Vajpayee NDA. Oct 1999 - May 2004.
National democratic alliance.
8. Man Mohan Singh UPA. May 2004 - May 2014.
United progressive alliance

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