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 resolu-
tion of economic, social, political, and cultural cleavages. In the past federal-
ism was defined as constitutional division of powers between centre and periph-
ery (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 jurisdic-
tion”. 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 stresses the view that focus of
dependent system is to harmonies the local autonomy to national unity. Thus
federations 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 separ-
ate identity1. Federalism is an arrangement of governance in which the larger
interests of the society are served in such a way that each group of the society (re-
ligious, 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 signifi-
cant decisions independently of others. The ability to make decisions is not abso-
olute, 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 main-
tain 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 powers
(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, democ-
racy, regional autonomy and rapid socio-economic transformation through col-
lective efforts. Indian Constitution was framed with the objectives to strike a bal-
ance between the forces of disintegration and the forces of integration, to, cre-
ate 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 spe-
cific time framework (from July 1946 to November, 1949). It evolved on the cul-
tural 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 like ‘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
pluralistic character of Indian society and tried to build a centralized system.

After independence for a very long span (forty years) India was governed by Con-
gress. 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 tp 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 organiza-
tional strength outside the Legislature. Thus India had a party system characterized by dominance co existed with com-
petition but without a trace of alteration. The first four general elections to
the Lok Sabha1952, 1957,62,67, 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 (195266). 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 Delhi. Dominance by single party co existed with inter party
competition, but the opposition parties had little prospects of replacing the Con-
gress except in few states. Internally Congress was a grand coalition of major
social and political forces in the country and held to gather 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 centralized democracy,
social, political rights, secularism, and national unity. The problem that 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 economic development. Nehru often used his powers as prime minister 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 new political order were capable of gradually spilling 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 promises of developmental autonomy became disillusioned. Due to economic realities 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 incrementing cooptation of new groups but called for attending to structural and distributive issues. By the middle of the sixties this turn from accepting what cannot be changed towards recommending for change became a burning issue. Democratic order had taken place and generated a new politics of demand and an atmosphere charged with the idea of change. 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 conflict in 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. Land reform policy and Congress centralized tendencies led to the rise of regional forces. Political mobilization increased in the states during this period. Congress was able to coop 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 segmental parties and the realization of the evolution of collective political identities and its states. 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 party conflicts replacements by inter party conflicts. New parties were based on different cleavages emerged in India. According to Rajni Kothari the increase in the number of regional parties of the last decade reached the mathematical crises and the development in the Indian polity. Coalition government and the phenomenon of centralization during the Indira period led to the landmark internal disturbance (due to national emergency under art 352 (due to balance of power) was also a reaction to suppress the rising centrifugal forces and balanced economic development. National emergency under art. 352 due to its unprecedented, 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 single party system to coalition governance system has 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 at the state level. The centralization of powers was in vogue in the Congress led by Mrs. Gandhi and the formation of coalition governments. The National emergency under art 352 as a reaction to the imbalanced development of different regions led to the growth of regional parties in India. Downfall of congress in the states gave space to the regional parties the central government in Indian politics has moved from the center to the states. Regional parties are reflected the pluralistic nature 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 central government in Indian politics has moved from the center to the states. Regional parties are reflected 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 servants 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 modernity.

To express diverse demands its specific feelings whether concerning with religious, caste language, culture or regionalism people have formed a number of regional parties. Regional parties aggressively directed or indirectly the national politics as well as state politics. Regional parties demand from the dominant party system to a country level and from the sub-national level as well as a national level. The 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 leading most of the time reduced to minimum. Mrs. Gandhi adopted a 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 sight Prime Minister, Mrs. Gandhi 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 Scheduled and Scheduled Tribes. A coalition was possible due to Mrs. Gandhi’s political acumen and strength. The awareness gained by the Congress on the issue of poverty, successfully enmeshed 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 1967 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 country. Centrifugal forces have a tendency to increase the decentralization 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 idea of coalition governments for the first time in India, the idea of coalition governments at the national level. The Janata coalition was formed in 1977, it represented a change in the existing federal arrangements of the country. The Janata coalition was formed in 1977, it represented a change in the existing federal arrangements of the country.
national issues as members of union government, and national level parties got the least benefit. Although the situation changed even later, the process of the national level led to the development of participatory political culture. Apa-thy 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 this type were also witnessed in Tamil Nadu, where the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) rose to prominence. The Akali Dal and DMK were partners in Janata Government, though Janata Gov- ernment had a clear majority of its own. There were fifty one members belong- ing to different regional parties from 1977 to 1980. At centre regional parties became active partners of national parties in the government, policy formulation and in the implementation of the various schemes. Dur- ing 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 mush- room 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 govern- ment 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, Kranoti Rashtra, Assam Congress, the Janata Dal were formed during this period. In 1989 the number of the regional parties increased. The state government has to open its account. In Maharashtra, the congress NCP - RPI (A) alliance won 34 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 parties 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 coali- tions as well, the poll results turned 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 to stay in Indian political processes. They are now taking initiative in vital issues and more particularly in the fiscal and state matters. In 1989 regional parties dominated 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 or other than the state it has formidable presence. In 1989 V.P. Singh’s National Front coalition included the representation of eight regional state parties (the Janata Dal) it won union level majority in India except for a limited period from (1993 to 1996) when a minority government led by Narasimha Rao managed to muster majority. This govern- ment was also supported by the regional parties TDP, AIADMK, Janata Dal (G) etc. However, those 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. 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 regional specific issues that had caught the attention of the voters. By adopting that strategy, it light both the national and regional issues, the regional parties devised a political agenda to sustain their claims both at the national and state level18.

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 num- ber 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 factors that has contributed to federal coalition governments in the recent past. While the national parties in the eleventh Lok Sabha 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 position to 53 seats in 1991, 129 in 1996 elections. In 1996 elec- tion also regional parties as partner coalition of UPA had effective position and roughly they had 190 seats. Since 1996, regional parties have become indispens- able in formation of the government at national level. They have been important partners in the process of formation of the government and have always been involved in the process of governing coalition govern- ments and their allies19. The NDA’s complete term elections for Indian Parlia- ment 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 centre20. The Indian National Congress, the major partner in the UPA with a tally of 145 seats in the newly constituted Lok Sabha. Despite its res- olvings for a position of regional parties, the ruling NDA was in the support of 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 AIAST and BJD in Tamil Nadu and won the state of independent state of Andhra Pradesh. The Akali Dal and DMK were partners in Janata Government, though Janata Gov- ernment had a clear majority of its own. There were fifty one members belong- ing to different regional parties from 1977 to 1980. At centre regional parties became active partners of national parties in the government, policy formulation and in the implementation of the various schemes. Dur- ing 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.
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 aids. 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 Panchayat Raj cannot be overlooked in a new phase of decentralization especially in the fiscal and industrial era. 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 party.

REFERENCE

12. Ibid., p. 138.
16. For detail see, Ibid., pp. 203-04.
17. Ibid., p. 206.
18. Ibid., p. 237.