

## National Seminar

on

# THE EMERGENCE OF REGIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES IN INDIA: A MOVE TOWARDS HEALTHY DEMOCRACY

27-28 March 2024

VENUE

*Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur*



**Institute of Development Studies  
Jaipur**

&



ICSSR

**Indian Council of Social Science Research  
New Delhi**

### About the Seminar

Since the inception of electoral democracy in independent India, party system has traversed through different genre. For much part of the first two decades, the 'Congress System' was the dominant narrative as the Indian National Congress (INC) remained in power at the national as well as the state level. As a result, politics at the level of the states was a reflection of the national level politics. The period was marked by a monotonous stability and one-party dominance irrespective of inter-party and intra-party competition. However, this system came under stress towards the end of the 1960s as Congress faced serious challenge by non and anti-Congress alliances in many states. The real challenge to Congress came from a number of national political parties during the 1970s. The Congress managed to retain power in the 1980s due to fragmentation of the opposition but the party itself was considerably weakened.

The politics of 'triple M' i.e. Mandir, Market and Mandal which was later relegated to 'mandal-kamandal' changed the shape of Indian politics. During the 1990s, political competition became much more state centric with the appearance and consolidation of a number of formidable regional political parties through the length and breadth of the country. Consequently, study of state level politics assumed greater salience. The political tussle between Congress as a national political party and a number of regional political parties took a new shape as the BJP emerged as the alternative pole during and after the 1990s. The 'reconfiguration' of politics led to unstable governments throughout the late 1980s and the 1990s. Six general elections between 1991 and 2009 did not produce an absolute majority for a single party or coalition leading to the formation of minority and/or coalition governments. In fact, this was the golden period of regional political parties and the ascendance of state level politics.

Towards the end of the 1990s and till 2014, national level political competition became bipolar coalition era with Congress and the BJP as the two principal poles around which other minor national political parties and regional political parties revolved. Throughout this period, the decline of Congress was marked by consolidation of the BJP mostly in the northern, central and western parts of India. In the general elections of 2014 and 2019, BJP has gained from strength to strength by not only securing an electoral majority on its own but also weakening the regional parties in their spheres of influence. Political competition in India is now marked by a clear 'north-south divide' wherein the BJP is the dominant political party in north and the southern states are marked by the presence of regional parties and a much-truncated Congress.

It is in this background that the two-day National Seminar seeks to focus on the emergence and role of regional political parties. Prior to the 1980s, many of the political parties having national agendas were confined to a few states. These parties challenged the Congress either from the right or from the left. Most of these were socialist in orientation. The only formidable ethnic regional parties were Shiromani Akali Dal in Punjab, Shiv Sena in Maharashtra and the DMK in Tamilnadu. The 1980s marked the appearance of several new political parties. Many of these state-based parties are not confined to one state. Parties such as Samajwadi Party, Rashtriya Janata Dal, Janata Dal (Secular), Janata Dal (United), Rashtriya Loktantrik Dal, AIMIM have units and fielded candidates in many states. National parties such as the AAP, BSP, NCP, CPI and the CPI (M) could be described as multi-state parties because their presence and representation in the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha is limited to a few states. Regional political parties with an explicitly regional-ethnic character include the TDP the YSR Congress in Andhra Pradesh, TRS now BRS in Telangana, DMK and the AIADMK in Tamilnadu, AGP and the AIUDF in Assam, SAD in Punjab, Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, AITC in West Bengal, BJD in Odisha, NC and PDP in Jammu and Kashmir, RLP and BAP in Rajasthan, LJP in Bihar, JMM and AJSU in Jharkhand, INLD and JJP in Haryana and a host of parties in the north eastern states as well as Sikkim.

Even as the number of regional-ethnic based political parties has increased in recent times, the effective number of political parties has come down. It is being felt that party competition in India is again moving towards one-party 'hegemony' as the BJP spreads its area of influence from its traditional strongholds. The BJP has advocated its goal of 'Congress and Kshetriya Dal Mukh Bharat'. Its ladder politics of allying with a regional party at the first instance and then consolidating itself at the expense of that regional outfit has paid it rich dividends. The call for 'one nation-one election' may have an adverse impact upon the future of regional parties. One can also observe that as ideological convergence gets deep rooted, there might be an ascendance of ethnic and region based political parties which will be sub-regional in nature confined to smaller pockets within a state. A significant issue that emerges from this sub-regionalization of political competition is whether it will be detrimental to the goal of a strong India. Will political diversity strengthen democracy in the country or will it lead to fissiparous tendencies is another subject which calls for scholarly attention. Seat-vote disproportion is another issue which needs to be discussed.

Based on the above narrative, a number of themes can be identified for the two-day seminar:

- Changing status of regional political parties in different states
- Regionalization of political parties
- Ideological moorings of regional political parties
- Potential impact on 'one nation-one election' on regional parties
- Future of regional political parties in a one party dominated political system
- Regional political parties as bulwarks of nationalism and democracy or adversaries
- Seat-vote disproportion and its impact on party system
- Non-party political movements and regional political parties

The above themes of the seminar are only suggestive. The scholarly community may definitely go beyond these and reflect upon other relevant issues as well. Since the presentations in the seminar are going to be published, the participants are expected to submit a full length paper of about 5000 words.

## Important Deadlines

**Submission of abstract (500 words): *March 10, 2024***

**Paper Acceptance Confirmation: *March 12, 2024***

**Full Paper submission: *March 22, 2024***

Scholars and researchers interested in participating in the Seminar may submit their abstract and full papers as per the above time schedule to:

**[national.seminar.erpp@gmail.com](mailto:national.seminar.erpp@gmail.com)**

**Note:** There is no registration fee to present a paper or to participate in the seminar. To out-station paper presenters, the IDS, Jaipur will provide local hospitality and will also take care of their '*to and fro*' economy class air travel/II class train/ taxi fare as per IDS rules.

You may address your communication to:

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