

Review of President's Rule in Punjab

C Punyashree¹ Preksha S M² Srihari G³ P L Muralidhara⁴

⁴Associate Professor

^{1,2,3,4}Department of Chemical Engineering

^{1,2,3,4}RV College of Engineering, India

Abstract — This paper examines Punjab's recurrent periods under President's rule, reflecting socio-political challenges and emergency declarations. It discusses constitutional amendments made during these times, emphasising evolving mechanisms to restore stability. Punjab serves as a poignant example of the importance of the President's rule in preserving democratic governance amid political turmoil and communal tensions. It underscores the significance of this measure in upholding constitutional principles, restoring order, and fostering long-term peace and development. The study advocates for sustainable solutions to prevent the recurrence of situations necessitating President's rule, ensuring a resilient and inclusive democratic process in Punjab and other vulnerable regions.

Keywords: President's Rule, Punjab

I. INTRODUCTION

Since coming into force on 26 January, 1950, President's Rule according to the constitution of India has been promulgated 111 times in 26 States. Punjab was the first State in the Union where President's Rule was necessitated within two years of the commencement of the Constitution.

Under the Punjab Reorganisation Act, 1966, the old Punjab State was reorganised on 1-11-1966 into two States, namely Punjab and Haryana, and a new Union Territory of Chandigarh. Punjab experienced periods of President's rule on several occasions throughout its history. These instances highlight the turbulent political landscape and challenges faced by the state.

- 1) From June 20, 1951, to April 17, 1952, Punjab was under President's rule for a duration of 302 days, marking a significant phase of governance transition.
- 2) Another brief period occurred from July 5, 1966, to November 1, 1966, lasting 119 days, indicative of political instability during that era.
- 3) Following this, from August 23, 1968, to February 17, 1969, Punjab saw President's rule for 178 days, reflecting ongoing governance challenges.
- 4) In June 1971, President's rule was imposed until March 17, 1972, lasting 277 days, underlining persistent issues in governance and administration.
- 5) A shorter period of President's rule occurred from April 30, 1977, to June 20, 1977, spanning 51 days, reflecting the intermittent nature of political stability.
- 6) Similarly, from February 17, 1980, to June 6, 1980, Punjab underwent President's rule for 110 days, reflecting a period of political uncertainty.
- 7) The longest phase of President's rule occurred from October 10, 1983, to September 29, 1985, lasting 1 year and 354 days, highlighting prolonged political instability and unrest.
- 8) From May 11, 1987, to February 25, 1992, Punjab experienced President's rule for 4 years and 259 days, marking one of the most extended periods of governance

transition in its history, indicative of deep-rooted political challenges.

During the periods of President's rule in Punjab, several constitutional amendments were enacted to address governance and emergency provisions.

- 1) The 48th amendment to Article 356 was made on April 1 to allow President's rule for up to 2 years, reflecting the need for extended periods of central governance.
- 2) Subsequently, the 59th amendment to Article 356 permitted President's rule for 3 years and introduced Article 359A, enabling the imposition of emergencies specifically in Punjab or certain districts.
- 3) The 63rd amendment empowered the direct imposition of emergency powers in Punjab, while Article 359A was repealed during this time to streamline emergency provisions.
- 4) Following this, the 64th amendment extended the President's rule for up to 3 years and 6 months, signifying a move towards longer periods of central governance.
- 5) The 67th amendment further prolonged the President's rule, extending it for up to 4 years, highlighting the persistent challenges in restoring stable governance in Punjab.
- 6) Lastly, the 68th amendment extended the President's rule for up to 5 years, indicating the severity and complexity of the political and administrative issues faced by the state during those times.

In Punjab, an attempt is being made to divide the people on communal lines and to negate the achievements of democratic movement by giving communal colouring to mass thinking. This has given a certain degree of legitimacy to naked and professedly communal organisations. These organisations at the moment, have snatched social, political and ideological initiative from class based secular and democratic organisations.

Punjab has its own history of communalism. By the end of the 19th century feelings of separate identity Hindus and Sikhs were raised in Punjab through their activities of Arya Samaj and Singh Sabha movement. By 1890s the Punjab was divided into a series of aggressive organisations each possessing its ideology, each containing a unique sense of identity.

II. HISTORY OF EMERGENCIES IN PUNJAB

There was a noteworthy period in Punjab's history of government between Chief Minister Trivedi and Gopichand Bhargava. A significant decision was made by the government to declare an emergency in Punjab for the first time on July 20, 1951. There were several very significant differences inside the Congress Party that led to this decision. On June 16, 1951, the head of the government, Dr. Gopichand Bhargava, made the decision to resign. This took a lot of people by surprise and raised a lot of questions. The assembly was then put on hold by the government on July 20, 1951.

This indicated that the conflicts and issues had forced a halt to regular government operations. On August 7, 1951, the lower house of the Indian parliament, the Lok Sabha, was officially informed of the emergency declaration. On August 9, 1951, it was accepted following substantial debate. This emergency persisted until April 17, 1952, at which point normalcy returned. 1952 saw the holding of both new and general elections following the lifting of the state of emergency. People have the opportunity to choose new leaders during this time. Ultimately, on April 17, 1952, Shri Bhim Sen Sacher, a member of the Congress Party, was appointed as the new Chief Minister. Although it was a turbulent and unpredictable period, Punjab's government was eventually given a new beginning.

A momentous chapter in PEPSU's history was written during the administration of Shri Yadavindra Singh, as Shri Gyan Singh Rarewala, a representative of the United Party, took on the role of Chief Minister. The pronouncement of a state of emergency resonated through the corridors of power on March 4, 1953, a momentous day in the political history of the area. A number of turbulent events led to the declaration of emergency, most notably the shifting ties of lawmakers and the Election Tribunals' decision to hear petitions against four Ministers of the Council of Ministers, including the Chief Minister. Amidst increasing strain and political instability, the Chief Minister and his associates submitted their resignations to the Rajpramukh, signifying a profound change in the state's governance. The next day, 5 March 1953, both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha were presented with the declaration of emergency, a document of great constitutional significance. Following discussion, on March 12, 1953, the Lok Sabha gave it their seal of approval; on March 25, 1953, the Rajya Sabha did the same. This signified an official recognition of the exceptional conditions engulfing the state. The period of political unrest and uncertainty, the emergency lasted until March 7, 1954, when the emergency decree was eventually removed, signaling the beginning of a new era for PEPSU. After enduring the trial by fire of electoral democracy, the state's General Elections, which took place between February 18 and March 4, 1954, cleared the path for revolutionary transformation. On March 8, 1954, following the elections, the leader of the Congress Legislature Party, Shri Raghbir Singh, became the nation's first Chief Minister. His investiture, which represented the victory of democratic principles and the possibility of fresh governance, signaled a sea change in PEPSU's political history. The events of March 4, 1953, and the ensuing electoral realignment are painful memories of the region's tenacity in the face of adversity in the annals of PEPSU's political history. Power fluctuations punctuate this tale, which is emphasized by the unwavering spirit of democratic regeneration.

Massive decisions echoed through the administrative corridors on that fateful July 5, 1966, when the Congress regime of Shri Dharma Vira and Shri Rama Kishan was in power. In the tense environment, the foundation of government appeared to be in jeopardy. At this point in history, there was a great deal of turbulence and it seemed like history was about to change forever. The assembly was suspended in an extraordinary step that rocked the political establishment. The nation was rocked by the decision's

reverberations, which carried a great deal of constitutional significance and left many people in disbelief. The decision, which was made by the President, was a reflection of the turbulent circumstances in which the country was caught up.

But the assembly's suspension was only the beginning of a series of events that would ultimately come to characterize a period. Because history records that on June 22, 1966, there was yet another dramatic change in the political terrain. In the midst of conjecture and ambiguity, the ministry, headed by influential Congressmen, submitted their resignations. It was a symbolic gesture, representing the ever-changing tides of political fortunes and the ebb and flow of power.

Following these resignations, there were ardent discussions in the halls of power. A sense of both promise and dread permeated the air as the air crackled with expectancy. It was a moment of reckoning for the country, when the very pillars of administration appeared to fall under the weight of history's unrelenting progress.

Punjab had a dramatic political revolution during DC Pavate's administration, spearheaded by the Punjab Janata Party's Shri Lachhman Singh Gill. The assembly was dissolved on August 23, 1968, concurrent with the resignation of Shri Gill on August 21, 1968, due to the State Congress Legislature Party's lack of support. Punjab was left in a state of political instability since no other political faction was able to gather enough support to form a ministry, even with concerted efforts. The complex dynamics of coalition politics and the pursuit of political stability are reflected in this era. The failure to create a new administration highlights the difficulties in managing changing political allegiances and highlights the necessity of strong leadership and consensus-building to maintain Punjab's governance and public welfare.

On June 15, 1971, a major political event took place under the direction of Shri Parkash Singh Badal of the Akali Dal party, under the administration of Dr. D.C. Pavate. On June 13, 1971, the parliament was dissolved due to defections from the ruling Akali Dal party, which also forced Chief Minister Shri Parkash Singh Badal and his Council of Ministers to step down that same day. The political environment remained turbulent after the resignation on June 16, 1971, along with a copy of the Governor's Report to the President dated June 13, 1971. This situation continued until August 2, 1971, at which point political events started to take place. The political situation changed over the next few days, leading up to the elections that took place in March 1972. Following the elections, the Congress Party became the overwhelming winner, winning an absolute majority. On March 17, 1972, Giani Zail Singh became the Chief Minister. During Dr. D.C. Pavate's administration, these incidents highlight the complexities of political dynamics and the need for stability in governance.

Punjab was led by Guma Zail Singh, a Congressman, under the administration of Shri M.M. Choudhary. The assembly was dissolved on April 30, 1977, coinciding with the development of momentous political events. The absence of any seats from Punjab in the Lok Sabha held in March 1977 proved to be crucial for the ruling Congress party. The Union Government saw this result as evidence of the electorate's blatant lack of faith in the state

government. Elections to the State Assembly were held on June 20, 1977, which was a significant turning point in Punjab's political history. On May 20, 1977, an Akali-Janata coalition government headed by Shri Parkash Singh Badal came into power. These incidents highlight the complex relationship between the results of elections and the dynamics of government, influencing Punjab's political development under the leadership of Shri M.M. Choudhary.

Punjab was governed by Shri Prakash Singh Badal of the Akali Dal party, who took control under the leadership of Shri Jausukh Lal Hathi. The assembly was concurrently dissolved on February 17, 1980, which was a major shift in the political landscape of the state. The Union Government regarded the massive defeat of the ruling party in the January 1980 Lok Sabha elections as a definitive sign that the people's will in Punjab was no longer represented by the ruling party. Elections for the State Assembly were then held on June 7, 1980, in line with Punjab's changing political climate. With the ascension of a Congress (I) Government led by Shri Darbara Singh, the state's governance underwent a significant transformation in May 1980. During Shri Jausukh Lal Hathi's administration, these incidents highlight the complex link between election results and the practice of democratic governance.

In Punjab, under the administration of Shri A.P. Shanna, Shri Darbara Singh became the leader. An important development occurred on October 6, 1983, when the assembly was placed in suspended animation, and it was disbanded on June 26, 1985. The Shiromani Akali Dal's increasing agitation and the actions of radical forces within the state created a volatile political climate that affected this decision. A significant shift in Punjab's political landscape occurred on September 29, 1985, when Shri Surjit Singh Barnala of the Shiromani Akali Dal established the government in response to the Assembly elections held on September 25, 1985. These events highlight the intricate relationship that exists between political turmoil, election procedures, and the functioning of government under the administration of Shri A.P. Shanna.

Punjab was ruled by Shri Surjeet Singh Barnala of the Akali Dal party, who took control under Shri S. S. Ray. The legislature was suspended on May 11, 1987, and disbanded (March 6, 1988), a pivotal moment in the political history of the state. It was difficult to create a state administration in accordance with constitutional procedures because of the significant deterioration in law and order caused by unchecked terrorist activities, according to the Governor's report to the President. After the elections to the Assembly on February 19, 1992, a Congress Government headed by Shri Beant Singh came into power on February 23, 1992. This change represented an important turning point in Punjab's history and reflected the region's efforts to achieve stability as well as the difficulties presented by terrorism.

III. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Punjab has endured numerous emergency declarations and periods of President's rule throughout its history, reflecting the complex socio-political dynamics and challenges faced by the state. These interventions were prompted by various reasons including political instability,

communal tensions, and security concerns. President's rule, while often viewed as an imposition of central authority, plays a crucial role in restoring peace, stability, and democratic governance in regions facing turmoil or administrative breakdown. In the case of Punjab, the imposition of President's rule served as a mechanism to address deep-rooted issues, restore law and order, and safeguard the interests of the citizens. The frequent instances of President's rule in Punjab underscore the importance of such interventions in preserving the peace and sanity of a nation. By providing a framework for temporary central governance, President's rule enables the restoration of constitutional order, ensures the protection of fundamental rights, and facilitates the process of reconciliation and development. Punjab stands as a poignant example of how President's rule, while a measure of last resort, can be instrumental in addressing the challenges of governance and fostering long-term stability. Moving forward, it is imperative for stakeholders to work towards sustainable solutions that address the underlying issues and prevent the recurrence of situations necessitating President's rule, thereby fostering a more resilient and inclusive democratic process in Punjab and beyond.

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