

CONTEMPORIZATION OF FEDERALISM

Dr. Benjamin Gangmei
Associate Professor
United College, Chandel, Manipur

Abstract

The cotemporization of federalism is yet felt with the rising problems in India. One of intense federal hassle at the moment is north-south divide over delimitation and it likely to exacerbate the matter. In this regard, the tensility and resilience of Indian asymmetric federalism may be experimented for a resolute model. The federalism producing horizontal inequity and vertical confrontation is not always negative. For, it is not exhaustive for devising a model of equity among States in representation matter which is not vitiation or aberration from Indian asymmetric federalism. In addition to host of practical solutions proposed recently, region-based representation may be experimented for Southern States and allow normal population-based delimitation in northern States ensuring expedition of mitigation of the divide, the defreezing delimitation, fair representation for both region may take place. These equitable outcomes will certainly unleash force strengthening the great nation, Bharat. Therefore, present article written to promote understanding among all concerned by bolstering intellectual inputs from the informed leaders, scholars, etc. to the hassle, is a humble piece of research over the issue in question.

Key words: Horizontal equity, vertical unity, region-based segmentation, tensility and resilience, demos-equalizing, synergism, equal representational mode.

Federalism is way of organising a State that there are two sets of government called general and regional government with division of powers between the two. Each centre of power is intended to be independent within their respective sphere (Kuper and Kuper, 1989, p. 297). But it also aims at enjoying cordial relationship between the two centres of power as agreed in their federal negotiations. The negotiations are made with a view to securing mutual benefit by being co-ordinate in their relationship. The protection and promotion of their respective powers and functions are justifiable as both are accoutred with rights to settle disputes relating to their relationship through law courts (Sen, et al 1992, p. 456). Compelled by the peculiar problems federal countries adopted federal system for solving the same. The problems are of economic, political, social, etc. whose solutions are usually immediate or remote or both in nature. The solutions to the problems sought through federalism are effected by (a) recognising pluralism as valid basis of collective peaceful coexistence, (b) seeking to stabilise a pattern of constitutional diffusion of power in order to reconcile the twin concerns of common 'shared rule' with particular 'self-rule', and (c) coordinating the legitimate distribution of power and jurisdiction between general and regional governments (Khan, 1995, p. 36). In other words, federalism as social theory, posits pluralism as sound foundation for social integration, as political principle it tries to effectuate the system of distribution of powers between the two sets of

government and as administrative arrangement it coordinates administrative processes between the two centres of power. Therefore, federalism is adopted to provide a socio- economic, administrative and political retexture through reorganisation and integration of a given State. Federation is thus a means, in countries where diversity exists, of accommodating government to the consent of the governed, and as a device, it allows flexibility where total area is large. Under federal system it is expected possibility for making experimentation easier as it heightens the opportunity for participation in government and elimination of undue concentration of power. (MacMahon, 1972, pp. 5-6)

An attempt to explain federalism from bare legal description fails to take into account the question why federal systems were at all created. Therefore, concepts of federalism must include the account of origin of federations. Background of the origin of each federation can be traced to sociological, political imperatives and other allied factors. Sociologically, the origin of federation is that the federal nature of society: diversity gives birth to the federal political system. The diversity is caused by the differences in economic interests, religion, race, nationality, language, separation by great distance, differences in historical background, previous existence as independent States or separate colonies, dissimilarity in social and political institution, etc. (Rath, 1978, pp. 582-586)

The political imperatives for the creation of federation are those that centre around power and the need of division of political power. Federalism that bears special corresponding characteristics for these problems is considered right solution. (Rath, 1978, p. 577)

Besides sociological and political origin of federations, there are multiple factors that induce a desire for union and regional governments. The factors are treated as sufficient and necessary conditions for creating federations. They are like the need for common defence, desire to be independent of foreign regime, hope for economic advantage, geographical contiguity of social units, similarity of social and political institutions, previous political associations in loose treaty or confederal union. The desire for union must coincide with desire for independence of regional governments. The latter persists in people's mind as it is reinforced by their previous experiences. The experiences are derived from their being separate and distinct States or colonies, divergence of economic interest, geographical factors favouring regional consciousness, dissimilarity in social institutions. But the above mentioned explanation also does not give complete concept of federalism and, in fact, is limited to the possible conditions for creating the federations. (Rath, 1978, p. 580). It fails to take into account the area that federations, despite of excessive centralising tendency in federations try to persist in the face of new challenges. This area, to get more complete concept of federalism, is important to know how the federations after their creation with certain federal designs, are able to sustain their existence. (Rath, 1978, p. 581)

Of course, the sustenance is done under changed conditions with changed federal stresses on federal working. The stresses are shifted to partnership, interaction, interdependence, co-operation, etc, and hereby rejected the concept the dual federalism which is considered to be quaint unsuitable for changed society.

(Rath, 1978, pp.581-582) The changing concept of federalism is owing to the fact that federal nation is unfinished nation that it gives room for suitable modification under changing social and political situations. Therefore, new federal bargain has to be sought through the process of joint ventures on a regular basis even as they react to each other antagonistically. (Duchacek, 1970, pp. 192-193) Regarding the importance of federalising process rather than mere constitutional provisions, K.C. Wheare says: “it is not enough that federal principle should be embodied predominantly in the written constitution. That is something, but it is no guarantee that a system of federal government will operate. What determines the issue is the working of the system.” (Wheare, 1980, as cited in Ray and Bhattacharya, 1989, p. 302). It is because modern federalism becomes basically a federalism of functions rather than of powers — federalism more of politics than of laws (Kikshit, 1982, p.243). This operational aspect of federalism depends upon the happy blending of the forces of the Union and the units. Therefore, what is required in a federation is “to keep the centrifugal and centripetal forces in equilibrium so that neither the planet states shall fly off into space nor the sum of the Central Government draw them into its consuming fire.” (Bryce, 1888 as cited in Ray and Bhattacharya, 1989, p.291) The equilibrium has not been kept steadily in Indian federal working and hence over – centralisation. The federal polity has not been invariably working on the principles of co-operation, co-ordination, interdependence. As has been stated above, the tradition of power distribution between the General and the regional Government is no guarantee of the keeping of the equilibrium. But federal working based on those principles — co-operation, co-ordination and interdependence is guarantee of the equilibrium. To quote P. R. Dubhashi,

“...in working out the relationship between the centre and the state government , what is important is not so much the formal position in the constitution , as the need for better performance in relation to realisation of objectives of administration . . . , the relationship between the Centre and the state must be one of co-operation. We want federalism based on co-operation between the Centre and the State rather than confrontation.” (Dubhashi, 1985, p.1163)

The nature of intra- federal conflicts in India is characterised by confrontation between the two centres of power. At the same time the conflict has been characterised by the absence of united struggle of the States and hence over-centralisation. This is largely because Indian type of federalism is asymmetric. How it was so is briefly examined below.

Indian federalism was modelled into a specific type conveniencing India’s agile response in the post-1947 and the incorporation of both original and statutory provisions which are often fit for differential treatments and unitarism. Classification of States during national integration process accounts the background of asymmetric federalism. It was done under different exigencies showing no uniform standard of federal bargain but hinted “strong bargaining position of the Centre”. As to time of the bargain some units were integrated into India in 1947. The Princely states which continued remaining as administrative units after integration were reorganized in 1953 eroding their status leading to the loss of their geographical entities. Under asymmetric arrangement, which accepted different institutions and administrative standards, gradually allowed to get unified with the loss of asymmetries existed at the time of independence [Rao and Singh, 2004, pp.8-9]. Even Jammu and Kashmir which was acceded to the Union on special terms and having unequal positions with other States was made to share with the fate of those afore mentioned States in 2019

by scrapping the Article 370. And, asymmetric federalizing process was also applied in India's north eastern region covering Nagaland, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, including Sikkim by invoking Article 371 with the insertion of Clauses A, B, C, F, G and H to the Article. It was done with a view to addressing their historical, regional, cultural needs or imperatives whereby fostered national integration. The Clauses were made granting special powers, privileges to those States. The ultimate outcome of these federal bargains is making "allowances for separate laws to govern different religious groups, and there are provisions for various kinds of affirmative action for extremely disadvantaged groups" involving recognition and respect for diversity and correction of diverse inequalities for which equality cannot be made legislatively with satisfactory equity as goal.

Apart from these federated asymmetries there are differential treatments applied to different States or regions under built-in provisions. The States diverse in population and disparity largely become natural necessities for differential treatments posing federal asymmetry on economic plane in India. For differential treatments a group of States which are considered economically non-viable, is constituted with ten States whose geographical area is fourteen percent of the country. The States generate about four percent of the NSDP. Among the economically viable States, there are variations between geographical area and income meaning States with lesser area are high in income and the reverse is with the States whose geographical area is greater. So, the State are categorized as economically non-viable and low income often with populous category conditioned for differential treatment. The reason for this state of affairs in India is assigned to non-consideration of economic viability in demarcation and reorganization of States. Horizontal inequity on economic or fiscal pane is resulted from this foul-up. (Rao and Singh, 2004, pp. 12-14)

What is interesting to note, with regard to asymmetry is that it is not only structural and positional but also operational as well meaning transfer system and plan assistance are asymmetric. The asymmetry in transfer of special category, some are small, States enjoy different advantage in the form of a) transfer which are high in per capita terms are not significant cost which other States may not perceive it as such, b) purposing politically for some purposes as allowed in councils to coordinate policies and, c) collective negotiation with the Centre. (Rao and Singh, 2004, p.17)

As to the method and patterns of transfer routing through the Finance Commission, the Planning Commission and individuals Central Ministries, increasingly involved discretionary element with the change in the role of Finance Commission and Planning Commission. These has been centralized development planning and the Planning Commission started acting as "dispenser of both grants and loans". As a result of which, the Finance Commission is "continued to examining non-plan requirements" of the States and "providing transfer" for those requirements. In similar way planned requirements come under Planning Commission. Departing from the practice of "Central Assistance for State Plans and grant-loan composition" made for approved plan projects, the allocation is made on formula determined by the National Development Council. But this practice was changed with the increase of earmarking of central assistance for the State plans. Change is also observed in the transfers by Central Ministries which use discretion. Therefore, transfers for plan schemes and other transfers for Central sector and centrally sponsored schemes have increased over time. Therefore, transfers are made to States using discretion which is change over initial modes of transfers (Rao and Singh, 2004, pp. 17-18).

As seen above the asymmetric on financial or fiscal plane allocation and transfers to States are discriminative with the increase of centralizing planning in India taking change over initial practice. In fact the practice of discriminative allocation of resources which came to stay was effected through the conjoint operation of the process of strong centralizing tendency and centralized planning and it was from the latter that the concentration of economic power and centralized allocation of resources became in vogue. The process became climaxed with the nationalization of insurance and important commercial banks in 1969. (Rao and Singh, 2004, p. 29)

The nature of resilience of Indian federalism lies in the fact that the “Constitution could function as both unitary and federal, depending on situational demands”. How it could have agile response to the forces of emerging situation is its worth of being federal spirit in the constitution. In other words, Indian federal system was “designed to operate as a federal one” in normal times. (Raghavulu, 2024, p. 1)

In spite of strong unitary bias federal principles are very much present in the Constitution as necessitated by “continental scale and its profound economic, political, cultural and social diversity”. To quote Raghavulu, who says, “Federalism forms the spirit of unity amidst diversity, allowing India to balance shared national identity with regional autonomy. Federalism serves as a vital institutional framework for sustaining India’s integrity, playing a critical role in conflict resolution, democratic stabilization and accommodating various regional demands. It is essential for meeting the aspirations of the people preserving the country’s unity through equitable power distribution” (Raghavulu, 2024, p.2). He has rightly said that the Constitution was built in such a way that it functions resolving any conflict not at the cost of national unity and vice versa.

As influenced by political engineering and the nature of federal society, certain type of federalism, be it symmetric or asymmetric federalism, seen in some countries is adopted. The asymmetric type, having demerit, does have merits particularly in the form of being tensile or resilient to address federal issues. Indian asymmetric federalism, having that typical merits is comparatively able to operate pragmatically. That is, it is tensile or resilient enough to accommodate diverse interests. True, the federal system was adopted, to some extent, in the interest of some States with multitasking for unity and integrity of the Union of States. The accommodative strength of Indian asymmetric federalism may be said as the very workability of the federalism of India. Its workability against the backdrop of rising federal problems underpins the contemporization of the system being resilient to address those problems by federally devising model(s) which may be for region-specific problem(s).

Therefore, the model(s) which aligns with horizontal equity may be called demos-equalizing model. It focuses on horizontal equity on representational scale aiming at providing measure of mitigation of North-South divide and to strengthen vertical equity. The reason why it is proposed is that the problem in hand is the result of demos-enabling or restraining system applied in India. Demos-equalizing model may be tried under asymmetric federalism of India for country’s agile response to exigencies. If the model is able to mitigate inter-states and Centre-states frictions, it is not a vitiation or aberration from Indian asymmetric federalism. What can empirically be posited in this regard is that federalism followed by a nation is “unfinished agenda”. Federalism is believed to have done several things resolving problems and it is bound to do for the likes emerging from the federal society. As horizontal equity under the proposed model aims at achieving equal outcomes from the exercise of delimitation and the anticipated increase of number of seats for both region: North and South, it is to mitigate malapportionment experienced among northern States and the loss of seats which is likely on the part of Southern States if delimitation is done basing on population.

The delimitation issue kept pending after 1971 has created an incremental malapportionment making normal delimitation process vexing between populous Northern States like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan which are likely to gain 43 seats and less populous Southern States Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka which anticipate the loss of 24 seats if delimitation is carried out after 2026 census. Thank God, India follows federal polity. The test of federalism is its effective synergism for which

equity needed is vertical and horizontal. The horizontal frictions resulted from weak equity equally exacerbates vertical frictions weakening the prospects of synergism. The model of vertical and horizontal equity may be tried, in agile response, under Indian asymmetric federalism whose tensility is flexible enough for innovating a purposeful system in representation whereby both the levels may mutually be strengthened and give the synergism with doable condition.

North-South divide yet contemporizes federalism in India. What is still pragmatic, in this regard, would be tasking delimitation process and adoption of an innovative system for achieving an equitable effect in representation for Southern States. Fair treatment devised within federal resilience is desired to ensure increase of seats for both regions. To this end region-based segmentation is desired for Southern State with a sole aim for raising the number of seats. In this exercise, what is considered must-have is principle of regional convenience by considering the factors like geography, communication, administrative units, etc. for best representing region-specific with equitable effect of representation and due influences in the Parliament. Such federal innovation is considered crucial at this juncture that it is better united with region-based-representation than divided with proportional representation for which region segmentation is considered an essentiality.

The proposed model of region-based representation, while carrying non-proportional character, is not entirely abberative and vitative of current delimitation process. For each Parliamentary segment, for one imperative or other, is constituted having varying ranges of strength of voters. Viewed at the scale of existing varying status of the segments, it is found that the largest of the five segments Malkajgini Parliamentary segment is 29, 53, 915 and the smallest of the five is Lakshadweep has 47,972 or at the most 50,000 voters. (PIB, 2008) If so, any region-based segment having voters not less than the least existing strength could, to meet the challenge of disproportionate representation through fair treatment in representation, constitute a Parliamentary segment in any of Southern States.

Region-based segmentation with principle of regional convenience may most likely be able to prevent any intent and act of gerrymandering or any identity-based move in the process. It will not necessarily condition to redraw existing district boundary nor will preclude delimitation process particularly in those States in question. Again, the segmentation or region-based representation may be able to check the nature or plan of degressive or repressive proportionality. On the other hand, it aligns with the objective of Article 81. Weighing the prospect of the model, it may be experimented with a view to a) protecting progressive States without affecting the prerogatives of populous States and allowing the segmented region within each State to equally represent the State and the region as well; b) mitigating the hassle between majority and minority over the unequal influence in the Parliament; c) two-layered position for representing the diverse interests can be in effect for general and particular interest of a State.

Under the proposed model, aiming at achieving equitable outcomes from the exercise of federal contemporization, there is possibility for increase of seats with projected strength of 848 or 888 by defreezing delimitation hassle; mitigation of North-South divide defusing threats and strengthening vertical

relation with States. These equitable outcomes may align, one way or other, with various solutions proposed to manage existing problems. Some notable solutions are mixed-member proportional representation which allows increase of representation without change in direct local representation for Northern States; multi-member constituencies which, while mode of segmentation is different, stands for increase of seats for progressive Southern States.

The second option, in addition to region-based representation, may be a novelty of equal representation devising a model for giving an effect of equal representation in decision-making process in the Parliament. It may be tried in national and States' interest. While the proposed model may appear aberrative from proportional representational system current in the country, it may be conceived to exercise voting for an equal outcome in the Parliament (preferably in both Houses). The voting is to exercise while dealing with issues which have to do with nationally paramount policies. They constitute issues such as health, education, representation, development, unity and integrity of India, representation, matter demanding supermajority, question of basic structure of the Constitution, religion, language, redrawing State boundary, etc. There shall be plenary discussion, debate on any of the issues but voting for any of these issues is to limit to select members belonging to each State. They may be selected with equal number of members to exercise voting on behalf of their States to give an effect of equal representation for each State. The federal creativity producing a model as structural solution designed to defuse the minatory nature of federal problem under comparatively inexhaustive Indian asymmetric federalism may not be unimaginable if its built-in power is used to formulate the model. The proposed two humble models called region-based representation and equal representational mode in decision-making on nationally paramount issues are desired as both immediate and long-term plans for addressing federal problems. They are also desired, as part of immediate solution, and to impede the revisit of past North-South divide existed in pre-independence days and 1950s and 1960s. Therefore, it is proposed, to make it speak for its divisive severity, to have a brief discussion on it.

As federal sentiments, for vertical or horizontal operations, are determined with varying degree by the existence of extra constitutional realities, there is varying insistence of the States for their rights. For example, as formed a cultural zone, Southern region exhibits different federal sentiments grown under prevailing social, political and economic conditions. In spite of cultural interaction among different culture groups of India, owing to geographical location the Southern region is dominantly inhabited by the Dravidian family of languages and the Northern India by Indo- European family of languages (Dev, 1994, p.37). These two cultural Zones sometimes have not been in good terms before Indian independence whenever some sinister atmospheres provoked them. There has been cultural conflict between the two families of languages that the Southern States particularly in Tamil Nadu the Kazhagams were opposed vehemently the domination of the Aryans of the North asserting themselves that Dravidian culture and civilization were superior to that of the Aryan (Sadavisan, 1977, p.265). The Tamils were proud of their culture which extended over 5,000 years and the fear of the North is profoundly ingrained in them because

they thought their past and free and egalitarian society was rigidly stratified by the Brahminism from the North. So, they resisted to the likeliness of such repetition over them (Sadavisan, 1977, pp.221-223).

There were protagonists like Sri Aurobindo Ghosh and Swatantrayaveer V. D. Sakar who advocated the idea of Hindu Nation. And men like Nehru and M.K. Gandhi rejected the same in view of cultural-religious diversities and possible disastrous consequences from Hindunisation of Indian state. Yet there are 'hegemonisers of Hinduism' who continue to harp upon the 'Hegemonising Project of Hinduism' which is reflected in democratic politics. In social context the growth of mass appeal of the 'hemogenisers' originates from the problem of disparate arrangements of resources in Indian society. These arrangements force the masses to attract to the 'ideology of the ruling segment' of Hindu society. Viewed in this context, the problem of cultural conflict can be effectively checked by removing social and economic inequalities (Bhambri, 1997, pp. 117-122).

Had not been there strong and steady movements from some States of India, perhaps Indian federal polity would have already been made otiose. The opposition to Hindi by non- Hindi speaking States was their effort for preserving particularism. The issue of Official Language in the latter half of 1950s and early part of 1960s was, in fact, one of centralised move from the point of view of federal polity. Tough stand against Hindi as Official Language was held by States like Tamil Nadu, Punjab, West Bengal, Assam, etc. reacting to the recommendations of the Official Language Commission. They mostly insisted to use regional language as official language and to that effect many of them passed Language Bills (Gupta, 1988, pp. 435-436).

There had been chain of reactions since 1954 in the forms of riots among different linguistic communities posing serious centrifugal tendency. The centrifugal was precluded from its further deterioration by formulating three- language formula in 1961 permitting to teach three languages: English, Hindi and regional language depending upon linguistic situation. This wisdom was able to maintain national stability and integrity from violence and endangered situation (Gupta, 1988, pp. 437-438).

Again, anti- Hindi agitation was once again revived particularly among Sothern States when Official Language issue was revived in 1963. At this time there was burning of copies of part XVII of the Indian Constitution which deals with the official language. This occurred in Tamil Nadu. Agitations were also launched in Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, West Bengal, etc. calling the imposition of Hindi " the advance of Hindi imperialism" and taking it to "smash the conspiracy to relegate people of the South to the position of second- class citizens" (Gupta, 1988, pp. 438-439). The situation was further allayed by repeating Nehru's formula- English to be continued as an alternate language as long as people required it and decision for that would be made by the non- Hindi- knowing people (Gupta, 1988).

Finally, official language issue causing riots between supporters and opponents of Hindi reoccurred when the Union Government further took a decision that regional language would be used in all courts of India. The decision was opposed by the people of different walks of life. Here even authorities of law, educationists and scientists joined in the opposition of the Government language policy. Many Northern

States of India like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan including western State Maharashtra indulged in anti- English riots and Southern States particularly Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh also responded to with anti- Hindi demonstrations. Therefore, the Union Government reverted to solution (Gupta, 1988, pp. 441-442). This attitude of non- Hindi speaking States seems to stand on the way of national progress; yet this is one of the real federal sentiments standing for their particularism. What is the ideological basis of making Hindi as official language of India? If it had its basis on the claim that 46 percent of the Indian population uses it; yet if Punjabi and Hindustani are treated distinct from Hindi as used in Punjab in the script of Gurmukhi and the latter in Bihar and Rajasthan respectively, the percentage of Indian Hindi speaking people falls below 30 percent. (Duchacek, 1982, p.301). Moreover, Hindi is found to be the language belonging to Sanskrit, (Duchacek, 1982) and that set Southern states moaning over Hindi as new language which is attempted to promote it by Northern linguistic groups for the purpose of linguistic - political- economic domination of the South by the North. This schism between the two regions often brought them to direct confrontation. The South knew that Hindi was not an All-India language (Duchacek, 1982, pp.302-303). So they concluded that the introduction of Hindi as official language had no justified reasons in federal polity.

The problem of official language is one of the characteristics of federal polity of multilingual federations. The language formulae so far devised in federal nations are adoption of language, native or foreign as official in the Centre and in communications among the units; two official languages on equal footing; more than two languages adopted in a somewhat explicit hierarchical order in emphasis and use proclaimed one or more languages as official and others in the units (Duchacek, 1982, p.298). Since the issue of official language in multilingual federations involves both highly emotional and highly practical, whatever the solution is, it is bound to be some resentment (Duchacek, 1982, p.304). Though palliative in nature the efficacy of three- language formula for Indian federal polity may not be underrated. Perhaps this formula is more suitable for federal polity which was the fruits of struggle launched by some States and the struggle prevented from drawing the federating units to consuming fire of the Centre (Watts, 1996, p.30).

The cultural, political, linguistic problems of the people who occupy Southern region were compounded by extra- constitutional problem like economic disparity – regional imbalance before. This state of affairs determined federal sentiments of the region and in its case the problems induced it to unleash efforts for emulating itself with other regions by strengthening federal polity in India. Equal enjoyment of economic privileges and fair measure for economic development are important requisites for further federalization. Absence of these requisites along with other problems of federal asymmetry confronted the region. In the South particularity the Tamils maintained social development through the spread of liberal education. B.R. Ambedkar made observation that there was difference between the North and the South in social field. According to him, the North is conservative whereas the South is educationally forward but the North is educationally backward. The culture of the South is modern whereas the culture of the North is ancient (Sadavisan, 1997, p.222). In spite of upward trend in education, the South particularly Tamil Nadu was once

languishing in the deteriorating economic conditions. Impelled by the conditions, the Tamils went in search of material security particularly in the North from the fall in 1920s. They were not treated as equal fellow compatriots by the North. Thus their pride hurt and they justified anti-North movement when they came back to their States. They further concluded that with Indian independence the Southerners have increasingly become victims to discrimination and in their attempts to champion the cause of the South, they won the tacit approval of their Southern counterparts. The Tamils acted in that way by virtue of their innate propensity and adequate political resources and thus had been vocal for the common sentiments of the South (Sadavisan, 1977, pp.221-222). Their expression for those sentiments was found in the strengthening of federal polity in India, at least to emulate itself with the North.

The unleashing efforts of the region to unravel from the knots of regional imbalance were seen after 1967. The Southern states attributed the problems of regional imbalance o half- hearted Central attitude to the region and hence they strained with the Federal Government. In 1967 Chief Minister, EMS Namboodripal, of Kerala complained that Centre had not paid heed to regional problems. The urgent problems for the State in those days was the lack of food grains. Therefore, he threatened that if the Centre failed to supply it he would ask China for the supply of food grains (Agarwal, 1986, p.270). The momentum towards the strengthening of federal polity was gained in the early 1980s, Chief Ministers of three states (Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka) and a union Territory (Pondicherry) formed a Council of Southern States. Chief Ministers, with a view to redressing their grievances particularly financial ones proposed various measures to smoothen Centre-state problems in India (Kapoor, 1985, p.411). The great achievement of the formation of the Council was that it intensified pressure on the Union Government for the need of the restricting of Centre-States relations by examining the existing relations. Eventually, the Union Government instituted Sakaria Commission on May 24, 1983 which was barely three months after the formation of the Council of Southern States' Chief Ministers (March 20, 1983), (Agarwal, 1986, pp.285-287).

It was also after 1967 that efforts for normalization of Centre- state relations were initiated by Tamil Nadu Government. It instituted Rajamanan Committee on Centre –state relations on September 22, 1969. The report of the committee was submitted to the State Government in May 1971 (Agarwal, 1986, p.276).

After the formation of the Sakaria Commission, under the initiative of another Southern Chief Minister, N. T. Rama Rao, fourteen opposition leaders gathered at Vijayawada on 28 May 1983. The enclave also endorsed proposals for strengthening federal polity in India (Agarwal, 1986, p.288-289).

In the plural society socio- cultural conflicts bring in politico- economic issues as supportive elements of the conflicts. The conflicts are protective in nature for their identity and interest which are often coincided with the events of rapid change, increasing competition and aspirations for power and influence. Generated some perceived grievances and deprivations by the mass perceptions of the ethnic, cultural groups are usually associated with feelings of distrust, political insecurity, economic helplessness, competition and threats to cultural identity, etc. (Rastogi, 1993f, pp. 6-9). These were the cases between the North and the South particularly from the first decade of the 20th century. In countries like India there has been problem between

scarce resources and demands which are disproportionate on account of the rise of population. This forces the groups or the regions to adopt acute competition that finally culminated into regionalism and economic component forms the crux of regional tensions (Narain, pp.28-29). The South was aware that in the existing political set up it weighted in favour of the North. Therefore, on their part, they tried to emulate through adequate safeguards so that equilibrium between the North and the South could be counter-balanced which was indispensable for national unity. To this end in view they wanted to start an intensive and coordinated demands for greater powers (Sadavisan, 1977, p.222).

In the history of Indian federal polity particularly after 1967 certain differences in terms of steadiness and genuine breath can be observed on Southern federal pursuits. The Southern States through their ruling political parties took initiatives for the tasks of mobilizing opinions and deliberations on federal problems whereas in other States such characteristics are comparatively absent. States which strained themselves with the Centre were mostly on individual issues and opposition parties which voiced against the Centre were only when they were being placed in political predicament and their activities were temporary in nature. As the difference regarding the federal sentiments of the North – Eastern region and the Southern region, the former exhibits threat to Indian federation and the latter exhibits emulative federal tendency so that it can be on a par with the rest in all fields. Now this genuine federal spirit held by the Southern States is come under threat with delimitation exigency and the Southern States are likely to assume in disproportionate dimension with the expression of unfederal sentiments against the North and the nation. Hence, models feasible as part of agile response are crucial at this pivotal hour. In this regard, Government's proposed plan of "flat 50% increase in segments" making an overall increase for the North and the South to the tune of 200 and 66 seats for the both, raised apprehensions. According to Jairam Ramesh it will disadvantage the Southern, North-Eastern and Western Small States and at that rate total number of the MPs in Lokh Sabha will be 816 which means 273 to 543 (The Times of India, April, 2026). The plan is not a systemic reform to the representational morass and the plan may be repercussive on its palliative nature without meting out fair treatment to the South.

References

1. Agarwal, R.C. (1986), Constitutional Development of India and National Movement, S. Chand and Company.
2. Bhambhri, C.P. (1997), The Indian State–Fifty Years, Shipra Publications.
3. Dev, Arjun (1994), The Story of Civilization, Vol. II, NCRT.
4. Duchacek, Ivo.D. (1970), Comparative Federalism: The Territorial Dimension of Politics, Holt.
5. Gupta, D.C. (1988), Indian Government and Politics, Vikas Publishing House.
6. Kapoor, A.C. (1985), Constitutional History of India–1965-1984, S. Chand and Company.
7. Kikshit, R.D. (1982), What Maintains Federalism?: Towards Some Proposition. In Roy, Ramsray (ed), Democracy in Two Nations (USA & India), Asian Publishers.

8. Kuper, Adam and Kuper, Jessica (1989), The Social Science and Encyclopaedia, Routledge.
9. MacMahon, Arthur W. (1972), Administering Federalism in Democracy, Oxford University Press.
10. Narain, Iqbal (1984), A Conceptual Analysis in the Indian Context. In Majeed, Akbar (ed), Regionalism–Developmental Tension in India, Cosmos Publications.
11. Ray, Amal and Bhattacharya Mohit (1989), Political Theory, The World Press.
12. Rastogi, P.N. (1993), Ethno-Social Conflict and National Integration, Gyan Publishing House.
13. Sadavisan, S.N. (1977), Party and Democracy in India, Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company.
14. Sen, S. et al (1992), Political Science, Unique Publishers.
15. Watts, R.L. (1996), New Federations, Oxford University Press.
16. Raghavulu, B.V. (2024), The Marxist, Vol. XXXX, No. 1-2, pp. 1-2
17. Rao, M. Govinda & Singh Nivirkar (2024), Asymmetric Federalism in India, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP) pp.8-29
18. Rath, Sarda (1978), Federalism: A Conceptual Analysis, Indian Journal of Political Science, Vol.XXXIV, No.4, pp.582-586
19. PIB, <https://archive.pib.govt.in/2008>
20. The Times of India, April, 2026

Copyright & License:

© Authors retain the copyright of this article. This work is published under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0), permitting unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.