



## **Federal Contradiction and Administration: A Study**

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### **Abstract**

*Over centuries and decades, Federalism has been evolving through several experiences of ruler vs subjects, public vs government and constitutional unit's vs federal units which in common signify the necessity and importance of the human concern for widening the space for 'unity' in diversity. Federalism in India has been a debatable issue as it is sometimes referred as quasi-federal, co-operative federalism or competitive federalism. But above all the most important debate is whether Indian is a federal state or not. However, apart from the analysis of whether India is a federal state or not this paper majorly deals with a major issue of "Regionalism" or referred to as "Parochialism" that is faced by the Indian federalism. It also tries to understand the relation between Federalism and parochialism. The research concludes with an observation that the need for federalism has enhanced in countries with ethnically distinct regions where the territorial accommodation of distinct groups of people is of utmost importance*

*Keywords: Federalism, Regionalism, Parochialism, Linguistic States, Indian Federal System.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Like "democracy" federalism has different meanings for different people. In principle by federal concept, is a principle of government that defines the relationship between the central government at the national level and its constituent units at regional, state, or local levels. Under this principle of government, power and authority is allocated between the national and local governmental units, such that each unit is delegated a sphere of power and authority only it can exercise, while other powers must be shared. Federalism thus, is a method of dividing powers so that the central and regional governments are each within a sphere, coordinate and independent.

India, right from the dawn of civilisation has been a unique case of unity and diversity. It has geo-political and historical characteristics which have few parallels. Its size and population, geographical, linguistic, religious, and other diversities give it the character of a subcontinent. But its natural boundaries marked by mountains and seas serve to identify it as a separate geographical entity. This diverse nature over the years, led to the evolution of

a feeling of common heritage and composite cultural unity. Another significant argument that finds its place here is that according to the Sarkaria Commission, India's history is that the provinces and the local governments in various empires, from the Mauryas to the Mughals, enjoyed considerable degree of autonomy. Hence, the very natural tendencies in India point out towards pluralism and federalism as necessary basis for its governance.

Few scholars and analysts have pointed out that the framers of Indian constitution in their approach to federalism, in view of the experiences of the time and with the belief that it is only the Centre which can work for a common end and maintenance of Unity carved out a federal form of government in which Union government was not only very powerful in terms of distribution of powers but also had enormous authority to interfere in the functioning of the States. However, in the Constituent Assembly it was said that the Indian scheme was one of cooperative federalism" which means there was a desire for a federal spirit.

With the population of diverse groups of cultural, linguistic, and ethnic identities, Indian federalism started facing various challenges and one of the major challenges that created a huge impact on the country was regionalism. Though in India it is referred to as parochialism. It is the state of mind, whereby one focuses on small sections of an issue rather than considering its wider context. It has survived in the country since ages in various forms. In ancient times, the society in the Vedic period was not only divided based on socio-economic factors but also on basis of Castes and Varnas. Amidst British rule, Indians were divided based on language, "*Division of Bengal (1905)*" by Lord Curzon. Even after the independence, the demands of citizens for separate states on the linguistic basis continued which not only adversely affected the federal structure of India but also the unity of the country.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Lawrence Saez (2001) in his book "Federalism without a Centre: The Impact of Political and Economic Reforms-2001" has examined the nature of Indian federalism and the impact of political and economic reforms of India's federal systems. He also discussed the impact of regional parties that have changed the considerations of Indian federal system. The author perceived a shift from cooperative federalism to jurisdictional conflicts in the expanded ambience of union-state relations as well as the relationship between the state and the private sector.

DR Sarita (2009) in her book "Federalism in India: A Quest for New Identity-2009" contends that India's dimensions and diversities, fostering and maintenance of unity is a primary objective for adopting a federal form of government. The central government may display greater authority in one policy area than in another, at one time than at another and in its dealings with one state than with another. In the same way, regional governments may be inclined to accept or submit to the central government's initiative, persuasion, or pressure under one set of circumstances and may be prone to assert, agitate and 'fight' for their autonomy under another. The author also emphasized that the federal nation-building reinforces the importance of federalism in holding a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-regional society together within a federal Union.

Jonathan Baron (2005) stated that parochialism was often moralistic, absolute, and seen as without bias. He argued that parochialism was an intermediate state between commitment to the self and commitment to humanity in general. He suggests that political action in favour of a group often hurts both the actor and the humanity.

## Central Question

What is the relation between federalism and parochialism from a sociological and critical perspective?

## **Related Questions**

Why does parochialism exist in society?

To what extent is Indian federalism responsible for parochialism in India?

To what extent is parochialism responsible for the type of federalism that India has adopted?

## **Hypothesis**

Federalism in India gives enough space to enjoy one's culture and gives authority to have own kind of politics

Indian model of federalism facilitates sustained democracy even in phase of linguistic diversity and low-level economic development

## **Objectives of the study**

To understand the relation between federalism and parochialism in India

To identify factors responsible for parochialism in India

To identify the relation between migration and parochialism in India

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This paper is mainly factual, analytical, and descriptive in nature. Through this paper, an attempt has been made to understand factors responsible for parochialism in India and analyse the relation between Federalism and Parochialism. The data used in this paper is from secondary sources as per the requirements of the study.

## **An analysis of Federalism and Parochialism**

Federalism is the most relevant factor of modern constitutionalism. The core objectives of Indian federalism are unity in diversity, devolution in authority, and decentralization in administration. Having said that, it is argued that parochialism is one of the significant aspects of the failure of development of healthy federal system

## **Factors responsible for Parochialism in India**

The factors responsible for growth and development of parochialism in India can be divided into broad categories namely, cultural, economic, and political. However, in operational terms these three factors might overlap each other.

## **Cultural Aspects**

For geographical and historical reasons India has continued to be a multi-ethnic, multireligious, multilingual country. Cultural minorities are only too aware that failure to maintain themselves politically, economically, and socially leads to an erosion of cultural identity. This means that the ability to protect cultural identity depends upon the economic and political power. This becomes more important in India, because in view of scarce resources the conviction that minorities are vulnerable to discrimination, exploitation, and suppression by those who control the

state, and its resources is easy to grow.

For instance, before independence, particularly from 1920 onwards, to win the mass support and create confidence among the minority groups, the Congress committed itself to reorganisation of the provinces on the linguistic basis. The Dar Commission and the states Reorganization Commission are such examples (Hossen et al., 2026). Though, ultimately under tremendous pressure from linguistic groups, reorganisation of States had to be carried out on language basis, the outlook of the ruling circles created a lot of bitterness among cultural groups. Moreover, efforts for concentration of powers at the centre, absence of a sound language policy and very ambivalent attitude towards secularism continued fear among linguistic and cultural groups and religious minorities that attempts were being made to assimilate them in the large Hindi culture. They, therefore, wanted the regions of their concentration to be autonomous to protect their cultural identities. The political demands of some groups have sometimes threatened the geographical unity of the country, but their effects in general have been marginal. The creation of Telangana from Andhra Pradesh is the latest example of the cultural aspect (Alam et al., 2025).

### **Economic Aspects**

During the independence struggle people were fed on the idea that all their suffering and problems were due to the foreign rule and once the British left the country all their suffering would come to an end. Based on this promise, people in general gave their confidence to the nationalist leadership and the dominant party. However, despite many achievements, India remains economically underdeveloped. The resources are scarce and demands disproportionately heavy and ever-growing in the wake of continued population explosion. There is acute competition among individuals, groups, and regions. The conditions of the masses particularly have deteriorated, and they have started feeling that perhaps, benefits of development may be difficult to attain at national level and have started looking towards local and regional level leadership (Mohd Pauzi & Shahadat Hossen, 2025).

But despite the acceptance of the goal or removal of regional disparities at ideological level, insertion of these ideas in the constitution and plan documents and adoption of various policy measures, after more than 50 years of independence the regional inequalities and disparities not only continue but, in many cases, have increased. There is virtual unanimity among scholars who have analysed inter-regional disparities in India on two points that is the disparities have increased and central policies on resource transfers have not only been unable to prevent the increasing gap between the rich and poor States but may have contributed to accentuating the disparities (Alam et al., 2025).

### **Political Aspects**

The fact that the nation state had been created without a prior confrontation between the modern leadership and the authoritative traditional groups helped to preserve the old leadership patterns. The introduction of electoral politics under these conditions tended at the outset only to reinforce the strategic position of the dominant land-owning castes by enlarging their role as intermediaries in relationship between the village and outside authorities in the administration and government (Hossen et al., 2023).

Prior to 1967 elections feeling that the Congress policies were moving away from their interests these local dominant classes left the Congress to join some other parties or form their own regional parties. Somewhat the same happened before the 1977 elections. Thus, within the plural society the sudden arrival of the expanding activities of government, the dispersion of power, and the democratisation of power have resulted in the growth of popular participation in local, state, and national politics. This has caused the emergence of what Myron Weiner called, two political cultures operating at different levels at Indian society. One culture is in the districts. It

permeates local politics, both urban and rural, local party organisation, and local administration (Rashed et al., 2025). The second political culture predominates in New Delhi. It is personified by India's planners, many of national political leaders, and the senior administrative cadre. It is a defensive political culture. The first political culture according to Weiner can be characterised as an emerging mass political culture, the second, as an elite political culture. The conflict between the two is reflected in parochialism. \*

Apart from this, the other reasons for the existence of parochialism can be the feeling of superiority of one's religion and culture, historical and geographical isolation, lop-sided development, continuous neglect, insider-outsider complex that nurtures nativism and son-of-the soil ideology, internal colonialism, reaction to an imposed ideology that can make its appearance as a reaction against the perceived imposition of a particular ideology and language or cultural pattern on all people and groups, political interests of the leaders, etc.

### **Is federalism responsible for parochialism?**

In broad terms, two major reasons for the rise of parochialism are due to constant neglect of a particular region by the ruling party which leads to uneven distribution of resources and encouragement by the local leaders to be adamant on their hold of a particular region. Even though the constitution has tried to make provisions for the equal distribution of resources, yet the disparity is so wide that centre's apathy towards some of the areas has led to strong feeling of parochialism in the country. The nature of Indian federalism is held responsible for parochialism mainly because of the provision of strong centre and weak states has led to greater interference of the centre in state matters than required (Rahman et al., 2025).

There have been many consequences due to this combination. One of the major fallouts is that the state is not fully accountable, and they depend on the centre for funds and support in adverse conditions. Second fall out is the subject classification in 7<sup>th</sup> schedule of the Constitution that defines and specifies allocation of powers and functions between Union and States has not been fair and just. This is in special reference to the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> schedule that mentions the powers, authority and responsibilities of Panchayats and the municipalities, respectively. Political scientists and scholars argue that the tier closest to the people is the weakest tier. This results in issues of fiscal federalism. There is growing demands for decentralization of power and money both for the state and grassroot levels under the backdrop of gross inability of the Centre to deliver public services in an efficient manner all through this vast country. Hence, it can be said that the federal structure worked towards development of certain regions leading to regional disparity.

### **Is parochialism responsible for Indian Federalism?**

Granville Austin, American historian stated that Indian federalism is realistic and its own type of cooperative federalism. He argued that Indian federalism has given out a strong centre but not yet the weak states. Further, the decentralization was not seen by our founding fathers as only an administrative tool to a complex nation with huge ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic diversities. They tried to create a living social space around constitutional protection blending the price of citizenship with richness of multicultural diversities. Thus, they tried to accommodate regional aspirations in constitution by providing for special provisions, rights of minorities, separate personal laws and special protections and affirmative action to ensure equity and justice for all.

Nevertheless, mere constitutional provisions could not address the sudden upsurge of ethnic identities, and their constant struggle for more autonomous spaces as reflected in the demand for separate statehood for

themselves, within the federal set-up complicated the task of a centralized governance from any level. The demand for more states has become prominent in recent times, especially after the formation of Telangana in 2014. Demands like four-fold-division of Uttar Pradesh and creation of Gorkhaland from West Bengal are instances of aggressive regionalism or parochialism that pose a threat to federal structure of India. The agitations for Gorkhaland, Bodoland and Karbi Anglong have been revived.

The growing regional powers may affect the international relations or the foreign policy of the country. For example, West Bengal threatened India's Teesta river waters treaty with Bangladesh because of its possible potential costs for West Bengal or the issue of Indian Tamilians in Sri Lanka.

### **Findings of the study**

It is argued that parochialism has resulted into communal violence, hatred regional movements, rise of regional parties, inter-state hostility, etc. which results into disturbance of law and order of the state but also it has negative implications on the economy of the country. In the shield of parochialism, militancy and extremism are also creating the threat to the internal security of the country. Parochialism in broad sense undercuts the national interest by being hurdle in international diplomacy<sup>†</sup>

These may be economic competitions leading to fears about possible shrinking of job-market. This is especially true on the part of working class and the lower middle class. We may cite the example of Telengana's apprehension against the Andhra migrants. Then, there may be status-threats posed by the migrants to the social status of the middle classes as was the case of Maharashtraian fears against the South Indians in Bombay. There may be political fears of some social classes of the threats from migrants to their long-term interests. For instance, the Assamese apprehension against the Muslim-Bengalis. The whole Bengali influx into Assam over a long period, may also explain the demographic reasons of nativism, where the natives have some level of tolerance but, at a given time, the rate and volume of migrants passes this level, giving rise to native apprehensions and opposition. Further, nativism develops if the native population is likely to be immobile relative to other groups in the population. For instance, Assamese, Maharashtraian and Andhraites - who have indulged in sub-national movements are less mobile linguistic groups in India. Regional aspirations arising out of these grievances are finally deliberately used by the political elite for their own power struggle and as techniques for bargaining<sup>‡</sup>.

### **Suggestions**

In accordance with the arguments stated above one can argue that there might be a need to change the architecture of federalism.

There are two way forward that the author has suggested. One suggestion is to make the Finance Commission a permanent body and expand its mandate to undertake the resource allocation role. But one can argue that this option might not preserve the fiscal autonomy of states as the Finance Commission would decide what programmes and projects should be allocated to which states. The other suggestion is to revive the Inter – State Council as an effective federal decision-making body. It can be restructured as a federal institution outside the home ministry, a council with state Chief Ministers as members. The council should be supported by a secretariat of experts to lay out the allocation of the resources. The council will be chaired by the Prime Minister.

## CONCLUSION

Thus, from the above-mentioned arguments, one can comment that Indian federalism has very well considered the aspirations of various religious groups, minorities and has been able to mark a peaceful co-existence of various social groups. The unity in diversity is only possible with the interference of the centre in the state matters. A shift has been witnessed towards a “cooperative federalism”. States are being given more say in the centrally sponsored schemes and the government is trying to move towards inclusiveness with the vision of Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas.

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