Assessing Indian Federalism From Social Inclusion Perspective: How Are the Institutions Responding to Diversity?

Dr. Rajesh K Jha
Associate Professor, Rajdhani College, University of Delhi
drjharajesh@gmail.com

Abstract

In a vast and populous country like India with numerous castes, tribes, religion and languages, the understanding of evolution of federalism requires a sociocultural approach. Within fifty years of its independence, Indian federation has been transformed from 'quasi-federation' to 'quasi-confederation' and considered as the vital factor in the success of India's democracy. The growing federalization of the Indian parliamentary system has been accentuated by the active interplay of the social diversity and the democratic process. On the basis of Indian experience, we can say that: Social diversity + Social Democracy = Federalisation of Polity. The analysis of responses of different institutions to intense diversity and pluralism can help in understanding this equation. There are some factors like diversity and multiculturalism, secularism, democracy, federal framework, special constitutional provisions for socially and economically weaker sections and regions; which are responsible for creating a conducive environment for institutions to be responsive and sensitive to the social diversity. The reorganization of the states, political parties and parliament have played very important role in power-sharing arrangement in the country and their expanding social and cultural diversities bases have given impetus to federalization in India. As the forces unleashed by the democracy worked on the new social groups, the pull factor for more decentralization and devolution increased. One of the challenges of democratic mobilization of social cleavages is that it may trigger the confessional tendencies. And the confessional forces argue in favor 'nationalistic' federalism rather than 'multinational' federalism. Then democracy carries its own eternal strength and solves problems in its own way.

Keywords: Federalism, Indian Federalism, Social Federalism, Social Inclusion

Introduction

Understanding of Indian federal politics requires significant use of sociocultural approach, which considers federalism as a function of not only government, but also that of society. *Aaron Wildavasky has described India as social federalism on the basis of its response to social diversity. But, the question arises - is this response is cybernetic, self-generated one? Is the mere presence of social diversity sufficient to make the national system federal?*
An analysis of Indian experience can help us not only in finding the answers of these questions, but also in understanding the challenges in the process.[2] India has been extremely diversified and multicultural. Even in the days of large empires of Ashoka and Akabar, regional kshatraps enjoyed a

---

[2] This paper tries to understand this concern: "To what extent has the constitutional and political structure of a country been deliberately molded so as to accommodate the differences to which reference has been made, either at the local level or within the central government or at both levels (forms of power sharing)? Are there regional/ethnic parties represented in the central Parliament? If a country has federal structure, to what extent has this structure been designed to respond to ethnic/cultural differences?" In the course of discussion, conceptual issues like identity, multiculturalism, etc in Indian context have also been tried to be dealt with.

considerable amount of autonomy. Social diversity with certain elements of cultural commonality existed amidst fragmented polity. The needs and demands of the British colonial system erected a centralized political authority, but 'pull factors' for the federalism could not be wished away. The successive Government of India Acts in 1919 and the Government of India Act 1935 had shown an increasing evolutionary trend within a centralized political framework. This framework, with minor modifications incorporating some 'elements of cooperative federalism' (Morris-Jones) was adopted in the republican constitution as the enthusiasm of the national leaders for a federal set up got dampened by the painful experience of the partition. Even those elements of 'cooperative federalism' remained dormant under the prevailing political condition of a nascent nation (smaller size of the political elite, Nehru's charisma, Congress system, colonial hangover, etc.) and India remained 'quasi-federal' (K C Wheare). Within fifty years of its independence, Indian federation has been transformed from 'quasi-federation' to 'quasi-confederation' (Douglas Verney) and considered as the vital factor in success of India's democracy (Atul Kohali).

So, my argument is that social federalism has been a continuous stream of Indian society and polity, but the growing federalization of the Indian parliamentary system has been accentuated by the active interplay of the social diversity and the democratic process. With the deepening of democracy, more and more social groups started moving from margin to the political center and demand for power-sharing grew intensely. As social entities have been used as ready-to-use-infrastructure for political mobilization, the institutions have to respond to social diversity, albeit reluctantly, because the institutions have developed a predilection for centralization out of their design and habit.

On the basis of Indian experience, we can say that:

Social diversity + Social Democracy = Federalisation of Polity

Here federalization implies not only constitutional and legal provisions for the divisions of power and resources amongst different levels of government, but an inclusive decision-making process incorporating different social groups also. The social issues have always got higher priority in the democratic process of India. The elections have been fought and won on social issues, rather than economic and other issues. The social cleavages have been tapped for political mobilization and this brought hitherto marginalized social groups in the political arena. Despite the resistance from above, these newly politicized social groups have given thrust from below to the federalization process.
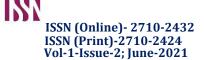
1.1 Conducive factors

The analysis of responses of different institutions to intense diversity and pluralism can help in understanding this argument. Before that it would be quite pertinent to discuss some of the factors responsible for creating a conducive environment for institutions to be responsive and sensitive to the social diversity:

1.1.1 Diversity and Multiculturalism

India is a highly diversified country in terms of religions, ethnic groups and languages. But analysts feel that this diversity in Indian context is a boon rather than a bane. Such a wide diversity made it not easy for any single ethnic group to control the political center. The 28 states in India reflect a dominant ethno-linguistic group, but these people divided into different religion, caste, ethnicity and a host of socio-economic clashes. For instance, if a community is divided sharply between blacks and whites, the conflict would be intense, but the society with thousands of castes can rarely witness the conflict involving the energy of the whole community.

India Today, August 20, 2007 special issue discussed this theme: What unites India? Out of 13 articles by reputed writers, 5 attributed it to the mammoth diversity of the country. The nation building exercise has its deep root in pluralism of the country. Here diversity is organic in nature,

resulting in cultural mosaic.[3] Organic diversity is one in which there is interspersion and interfusion of different identities. But this interfusion is not assimilative. Social cleavages are cross cutting. Religious groups are territorially dispersed and cut across by other identities. Religious groups are strongly grounded in their regional-linguistic formation. Different identities retain their individual characteristics, but they are tied together in such a way that gives them a collective (id) entity. Such a multiculturalism with a mutually enforcing mode of pluralism and accommodation has helped in weaving the concerns of the group's autonomy into the framework of national unity and integrity.

An Indian individual bears multiple identities with a base in caste, religion, and language and anyone of these might become more important than the others, depending upon context and situation. This makes ethnic hostilities transient and their scale and intensity become function of these factors: the objective difference between different ethnic groups, the social awareness of these differences, and the political organization of this awareness.[4] In a postcolonial society like India, ascriptive attributes have permanent impact on identity formation.

Democratization in India has inclusions and exclusions impacts on the identities.[5] Democracy implies a process giving participation to all the people irrespective of their differences. At the same time, root of democracy in the need for a high degree of cohesion leads to exclusionist tendencies. For instance, submerging their separate identities, Hindu-Muslims came together during Non-Cooperation-Khilafat Movement in 1919-21.[6]

1.1.2 Secularism

The Indian constitution takes all the religion as equal treatment basis, it does not erect a "wall of separation" between church and state. It tries to recognize and foster all religious communities. As in the Article 25-28 have also mentioned freedom of religion and the right of each religious group to establish and administer its own education institution and to maintain its distinct traditions. The state is not anti-religion, rather it shows *sarvadharma sambhav* (equal treatment of all the religions). The approach of the constitution is cultural autonomy to the communities and legal pluralism to diverse religious groups.

1.1.3 Democracy

In the forties and fifties of the 20th century, there was a lot of apprehension about the survival of Indian democracy, but it started with an optimistic note. Austin argued that decision-making by consensus and principle of accommodation were two most important characteristics of the constitution making process, which gave a solid start. Despite the problems of poverty, unemployment and poor health infrastructure, it is the poor and downtrodden class – who is more committed to the democracy. They come in large numbers to vote in every election. The credit for this largely goes into the democratic process.[7]

With the onset of democratic process, a deep network of patronage developed up in the remote countryside. In order to secure rural votes, state leaders spread patronage far and wide. Consequently institutional power shifted downward and new local elites emerged – not well versed in the language of modern politics, but modernizer and pragmatic.

The emergence of 'newly enfranchised' groups in politics led to the downward shift of power within the government. Need for the legitimacy of institutions brought the question of participation to the

---

[3] Kumar Suresh, *Pluralism and Accommodation of Minorities and Deprived Groups in India*, New Delhi: Centre For Federal Studies, Hamdard University, 2005, pp. 4-5

[4] Andre Beteille, 'Race, Caste, and Ethnic Identity' in Bidyut Chakrabarty (ed), *Communal Identity in India: Its Construction and Articulation in the Twentieth Century*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 144-45.

[5] Bidyut Chakrabarty, 'Introduction', in Bidyut Chakrabarty (ed), *ibid*., pp. 6-7

[6] See Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement:Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilisation in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999.

[7] Javeed Alam, *Who Wants Democracy?*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2004, pp. 19-24

fore and thus institutionalisation became a continuous process. There are several elected bodies in India besides the governmental ones, like cooperative societies, which helped in the process.

Indian democracy is primarily a social democracy with the prominence of sociocultural issues and group concerns. Unlike classical democracy, it is the social groups which form the basis of democratic competitiveness. Social coalitions and alliances compete for political power.

1.1.4 Federal Framework

Though the federalism has not figured in the constitution, the Supreme Court in Bommai case proclaimed it to be one of the basic features of the constitution. As under Articles 245-255 of the Indian Constitution deal with the legislative powers of the Union and the States. The following powers awarded to the Union by those articles clearly have a centralizing effect: "residuary powers of legislation", "Power of Parliament to legislate with respect to a matter in the State List in the national interest", and "power of Parliament to legislate with respect to any matter in the State List if a Proclamation of Emergency is in operation." The Union list as amended consists of 96 list, the state list consists of 66 and 47 items in the concurrent list.

As it has been mentioned in Article 253 of Indian Constitution that one of the associating issues relating to the executive power to the central government is the power to enter into international agreements. "Rapid globalization and liberalization have led the Union Government to sign several international treaties with little or no consultation with the states. Conflicts arise when the interests of the Centre differ from those of the states. Though treaty-making power lies with the Centre, it needs to consult the states before signing agreements that affect the state jurisdiction under the constitution. Moreover, the process of consultation needs to be institutionalized in the federal polity".

Under Art.356 of the Constitution, the President of India if satisfied that a situation has evolved in which a state can't be governed in accordance with the content of the Constitution, President's rule could be imposed. By and large has remained controversial, as it has been misused several times by political parties to the state Governments which failed to promote the interests of the ruling parties of the Union. By a landmark judicial decision in this context, that's popularly known as *S.R. Bommai* case (1994), made such pronouncements subject to judicial scrutiny.[8]

1.1.4.a. Rural and Urban local governments

The local governments (LGs) in India are the Panchayats and the Municipalities for the urban areas. After 73rd and 74th amendments, there are 11th and 12th schedules in the constitution, though they are not mandatory like 7th Schedule providing division of subjects between the Centre and the state. These schedules for the local governments are only suggestive. The States currently enforce the constitutional provisions for LGs through their conformity acts, which more or less borders only to "administrative federalism" for the Panchayats and the municipalities. These grass root institutions are far from "institutions of local self-governments" as envisaged in Article 243G of the Constitution.

There is no formal mechanism for the Union government to deal directly with the LGs as per the federal provisions of India,. It therefore needs to work its way through the States, and provide them with the incentives required for them to transfer powers down below.

1.1.4.b. State Autonomous Councils

In order to accommodate features of regional and ethnic governance, Indian constitution had also incorporated features of asymmetrical federalism.[9] For instance, at another level, Darjeeling Gorkha

---

[8] S.R.Bommai vs Union of India and others, All India Reporter, Supreme Court Section, 1994.

[9] George Mathew, "Republic of India" in *Distribution of Powers and responsibilities in Federal Countries*, Akhtar Majeed, *et. al.*, (eds.), London: McGill-Queen University Press, 2006, p. 161.

Hill Council (1988), Bodoland Autonomous Council (1993), Bodoland Territorial Council (2003), Jharkhand Area Autonomous Council (1994 until 2000 when Jharkhand won statehood), and Autonomous Hill District Council for Ladakh (1995) were created, comprising single- or multi-district decentralized units.

These special arrangements were enacted after prolonged agitation by particular ethnic groups residing in those areas. They represent one of the new types of decentralized units that have emerged as a response to popular demands for self-government at a sub - state level and they impart greater diversity to the institutional arrangements of a federal system that is evolving into a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural environment. However, limited powers, inadequate finance, insufficient autonomy and State government interventions have rendered the State Autonomous Councils inefficient in performing their functions of development. In most of the cases, the Councils are not operating in the mode, with the intention of which they were created. The internal mode of operation is such that it converts the federal institution of self-rule into an institution of a few leaders. Financial irregularities are other important constraints. According to B.K. Roy Burman, this institution "represents more of a political rhetoric than the systemic devolution of power and functions."[10]

1.1.5 Some specific constitutional provisions for Dalits (untouchable castes or SCs), Other Backward Castes (OBCs), Tribals (STs) and Minorities.

The Constitution makes special provision for ensuring the equality, autonomy and social justice for these deprived groups. In order to make the equality of opportunity substantive to them, reservation in public services has been given to SCs, STs and OBCs and reservation in representation are available to SCs and STs. Articles 29 and 30 provide for minority rights to both – religious and linguistic ones. Their right to establish and run educational institutions is one of the fundamental rights. The government has set up separate national commissions for SCs, STs, Safai Karamcharis, OBCs and Minorities in order to protect their constitutional rights and promote their interest. The government has also started separate financial banks for these categories in order to encourage entrepreneurship and commercial activity amongst them.

1.1.6 Information Technology (IT)

The IT has emerged as an important source of efficiency at the delivery end. Corruption could be reduced because of an ease of communication and greater transparency made possible by the use of IT. E-government has potential to bring the government nearer to the people. It has opened up new possibilities for disseminating information and providing services in the far flung areas. For instance, an educated youth leaving in remote rural areas might have missed the deadline for submitting the application-form of a government job. First, the newspaper carrying the advertisement would have come to the village after one or two days. Then he would have sent the request for an application form. This could have consumed a lot of time. But now he can get information through net immediately, download the application and submit within the time. IT is helping in making the democracy inclusive.

1.2 India: From 'quasi-federation' to 'quasi-confederation'

In the initial period, the size of the ruling elite was smaller with a root in higher socio-economic class. So, the political scene was marked by consensus on the tasks of national reconstruction. The reigning ideology was socialism, which follows the principle of democratic centralism. The tilt of the constitutional design towards the center in combination with the pan-Indian rule of the Indian National Congress under the charismatic leadership of Nehru created a scenario, which led K C Where to characterize Indian federalism as 'quasi-federalism'. Nehru Era can be described as an era

---

[10]B.K. Roy Burman, "Federalism in Perspective: Problems and Prospects for North-East India", *Mainstream*, 7 August, 1993, p. 9.

of strong PM (Prime Minister) and Strong CMs (Chief Ministers), in which intergovernmental matters were sorted out through the party channels. It was the era of linguistic/cultural differentiation within a framework of unchallenged unity and integrity of the Indian state. *In the federal arena, Nehru built and nourished a broad institutional framework for consultation with the state governments, but he preserved the concept of hierarchy of polity with the center on the top.*

The decline of the 'Congress system' started with the formation of eight non-Congress governments in the states after the fourth general election in 1967. This led to some tensions in union-states relations immediately. In the initial years of her premiership, Mrs Indira Gandhi faced serious challenges from various quarters and she was feeling insecure from the old guards of 'syndicate'.[11] She "used a variety of methods to defeat her opponents. ..Both the culture and institutions of informal federation that had existed within the Congress, especially before the 1967 elections virtually collapsed. The state units became increasingly weak and dependent upon the party's political center under the leadership of Indira Gandhi."[12]

With the split in the Congress and with her pro-poor policies, she gained the stature and charisma. During 1969-77 periods, the Indian federalism took the turn towards unitarism owing to the control of such a party of the state, which relied exclusively on its leader for its survival.[13]

The dominance of the Congress Party at the Centre and the states up to 1989 had its own imprint on the federal functioning. Hence the transition from Congress Party dominated politics to the coalition politics in 1990 marked a new era in the development of federalism. Although, in 1967 and 1977, India witnessed the multi-party rule, it's in the 1989 election that India really entered a new political era:

> "[The] irreversible phase of federalization may be said to have really started only with the 1989 Lok Sabha elections. This was the turning point in a party system configuration when India made a definite transition from one-party dominance to a multi-party system. [...] Since 1989, India has witnessed a strong spell of federal governance that seems likely to continue in the foreseeable future."[14]

After 1989, the successive governments at the federal level has been coalition governments except in 1991-96, when the Congress government led by Narsimha Rao was a minority government and 2014 onwards, when BJP got a majority on its own. The United Front government was the first coalition with strong presence of the regional parties, which followed alternative model of governance and improved federalism significantly through "devolution of greater economic and administrative autonomy to states".[15]

The Coalition era can be described as the period of federalized governance as the incidences of President's rule under Article 356 were rarer, states had greater fiscal autonomy and number of Centrally Sponsored Schemes came down. Most of the important ministries in the federal government are held by the leaders of the regional parties and state-based parties. Now, after the elections of the federal government, the leaders from the state assemble in New Delhi and decide about the PM and portfolio distribution. Laloo Prasad Yadav, a strong leader with a base in Bihar,

---

[11] Syndicate was caucus of senior leaders of the Congress like Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy, M Kamraj, etc, who were instrumental in making her the PM. But there was no trust between Mrs Gandhi and the syndicate.

[12] S.K. Jain, *Party Politics and Centre-State Relations in India*, New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1994, p. 78.

[13] T V Sathyamurthy, 'Impact of Centre-State Relations on Indian Politics: An Interpretative Reckoning", in Partha Chatterjee (ed), *State and Politics in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 250.

[14] Rekha Saxena, 'Recent Trends in Parliamentary Federal System: India and Canada', *Indian Journal of Federal Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2003, p.76.

[15] Ash Narain Roy, 'Cajoling and Compromise Drive India's Multi-Party System: Indian Federalism Bristles with Paradoxes, *Federations,* October/November, 2007, p. 22.

openly proclaimed that 'I am the King maker.'

For some analysts this turn around in Indian federalism is largely due to multi-party system with increased presence and influence of regional parties, while some attributed this to presidential and judicial activism. The LPG package (liberalization, privatization and globalization) has also been brought to explain this phenomenon. But, the real augmentation to this process came from political mobilization of increasing number of social cleavages, which tried to find some place in the institutional arena. This increased decentralization and devolution within the given federal framework. This got reflected in the increasing diversified base of the institutions, especially decision-making ones, which gave impetus to the process of federalization in the country. As the institution accommodates more and more diverse, more and more federalization takes place.

1.3 The Institutions' Response to Diversities:

Here our focus would be on reorganization of the states, political parties and parliament, which play very important role in power-sharing arrangement in the country.

1.3.1 States as ethno-cultural unit:

The States in independent India have not been treated as an administrative unit and they have helped in meeting the ethno-cultural aspirations of the different regions.

In 2000, three new states of Jharkhand, Uttaranchal and Chhatisgarh were created to meet the long standing demands of the tribe and underdeveloped people. Reorganization of state boundaries has helped India in remaining intact. 'As soon as state reorganization is perceived as a social phenomenon, we cannot but have strong regional states, collaborating on equal terms with central authority to shape their common destiny and interests.'[16]

1.3.2 Party System

After the 1989 general elections, the single-party dominant system (also called Congress system) at the center gave way to multi- party system. Major reason was the inability of the Congress to keep its social coalition intact and attract newly mobilized social groups. The Congress with the support of upper castes, scheduled castes and minorities registered successive wins. Lohia, a socialist leader started organizing middle castes under the banner of anti-congressism. Middle castes or other backward castes (OBCs) are numerically and economically significant in rural areas. With growing democratization they started asserting themselves and gave a first shock to the Congress in 1967. As the upper caste domination in the party structure of the Congress persisted owing to centralization and lack of inner party democracy, SCs and minorities got disillusioned and deserted the party. The victory of Janata Party can be attributed to this new social coalition of SCs, STs, OBCs and minorities. But Janata Party treaded the same path of the Congress in the party affairs and got disintegrated. The era of parties appealing to narrow support base started. The rise of OBCs is also considered to be the significant factor contributing to the growing trend of regional parties. The OBCs are mostly big and middle farmers. After the green revolution in mid-seventies, their economic affluence grew, which instigated their political aspirations. As the national politics has been dominated by big industrialist, they adopted the strategy to capture political power at the state level.

1.3.2.a. Regional Parties

Verney asserts that 'If anything made India more federative, it is the rise of state political parties.'[17] Between 1980 and 1998, the number of national parties remained almost stagnant, while the number of regional parties doubled. The percentage of votes polled to regional parties in general elections

---

[16] Ajay Kumar Singh, 'Federalism and State Formation: An Appraisal of Indian Practice', in B D Dua and M P Singh (eds), *Indian Federalism in the New Millenium*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2003, p. 140.

[17] Douglas V Verney, 'Understanding India as a Federation: Liberal Principles, Conservative Tradition and Socialist Ideology' in B D Dua and M P Singh (eds), *ibid*, p. 44.

doubled between 1980-1998, while the corresponding figures of the national parties show a decline.

Table1: Number of National and State Parties

Category	1980	1984	1989	1991	1996	1998
National	6	7	8	8	8	7
State	19	17	20	13	30	30

Source: Douglas V. Verney, "How has the Proliferation of Parties Affected the Indian Federation? A Comparative Approach", in Zoya Hasan, et. al. (eds.), *India's Living Constitution: Ideas, Practices and Controversies*, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2002, p.142

Table2: Lok Sabha Elections: Votes Polled in Percentage.

Parties	1980	1984	1989	1991	1996	1998
National	85	80	79	77	69	68
State Parties*	15	21	20	23	30	32

*State Parties also include other groups.

Source: Pradeep Kumar,'The National Parties and The Regional Allies: A Study in the Socio-Political Dynamics' in Ajay K. Mehra, D D Khanna and Gert W Kueck ,(eds.), *Political Parties and Party Systems*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003, p.305

State-based parties dominate eastern, North-Eastern and Southern States. In Twelfth Lok Sabha, 220 seats out of total 543 seats were commanded by single- state and multi-state parties.

Table 3: **Regional Parties in the Lok Sabha, 1952-1998.**

Parties	1952	1957	1962	1967	1972	1977	1980	1984	1989	1991	1996	1998
Regional Parties	35	34	13	36	51	51	36	76	45	56	137	161

* Regional parties include state parties, but excludes cross - regional parties like CPI(M) and BSP.

Source: Suhas Palshikar, 'The Regional Parties and Democracy: Romance Rendezvous or Localized Legitimation?', in Ajay K. Mehra, D D Khanna and Gert W Kueck (eds.), *ibid* , pp. 310-12.

1.3.2.b. Federal Coalitions

Federal coalitions have tried to connect the region- based identity within a broad frame even in the absence of shared ideologies. It is not tough to achieve a stable government within this type of coalition that is based on program and ideology-based coalition. As he later ones cannot root out the regional aspirations and territorial ambition of the constituents. For political parties, caste –based and class-based competitions remain significant at state and Panchayat level, but regional aspirations gain importance as politics move beyond the state boundaries.

1.3.2.c. State Party Systems

Each state shows certain distinctive character of its party system and cannot be said a replica of the national party system. For instance, take the case of Odisha, which can be considered as a mainstream state.

At the first glance, the party politics of Odisha seem to be merely an extension of the pan-national party system with all its strength and weaknesses. A person interested in this topic may feel contented with the study of the major national parties like the Congress, the BJP, the Left parties, as

more than two third of the total votes polled in the general elections has been cast in the favor of national parties (see Table 1). But an in depth and holistic study of the Oriya party system clearly shows that it shares many common elements with its national counterpart, but it has strong characteristics of its own and hence, can be described as '*Pakhal*' party system.[18]

Table 4: Votes Secured by the National and the Leading State Parties (%)

Parties	1984	1989	1991	1996	1998
National Parties	62.0	95.8	93.4	91.0	68.88
State Parties*	06.0	03.0	03.6	07.6	31.04

*State parties also include the votes (%) polled by independents and others.
Source: M S Rana, *India Votes*, Delhi: B R Publishing Corporation, 1998, pp 191-92.
(Emphasis added).

From the very beginning there has been very strong presence of national parties in the state, but the state based outfits like Ganatantra Parishad, Utkal Congress, BJD, etc registered their significant presence from time- to- time. This trend might have its root in the simultaneous competitive presence of the INC and Utkal Sammilini in pre-independence era. But, the Odisha politics did not witness the rise of regional parties, in the sense of DMK, Telugu Desam. This may be attributed to the place being a zone of confluence of north and south India and trajectory of Oriya nationalism in close linkage with freedom struggle and national mainstream. Secondly, the assertion of Oriya identity seems to be emerging from the despair caused by the deplorable state of affairs in the province and strongly indicate towards the yearning for its overall sustainable development. Even the initial thrust for the Oriya cause came from the severe famine in 1866. Thus the strong developmental dimension of Oriya identity has also influenced the party politics of the state. Even a state based outfit like BJD goes to the election talking of issues like development and probity in public life. Generally the electoral pundits do not dissect the results of this state in terms of castes. Here, the parties to narrow social appeal (like BSP, SP, RJD) are not able to replicate their success stories of the north. Even 'the BJP might be having the image of a communal party in the other states, but in Orissa it has no such image…'[19]

The center of programmatic gravity of Oriya party politics does not necessarily match with that of the national one. Even when the country was glued to the romantic dreams of 'socialistic pattern of society' and 'garibi hatao', the party system here was tilted towards the right- of- the center. Left parties achieved little success despite the economic backwardness in the state. The reason might be that the movement to create a separate state was led by Raja, Zamindar and higher middle class and twenty six princely states merged in the province after the independence.

 Despite one of the first two linguistic states in 1936, the Oriya polity remains multicultural. In one district of Gajapati, three completely different languages – Oriya, Telugu and Saura are spoken. Around one fifth of the state population is tribal largely concentrated on the hill and plateau districts. And much before the national politics, the state polity initiated and practiced coalitions as a political mechanism to accommodate the diversities. The coalitions have provided a convenient framework for binding diverse forces together in a workable pattern.

Now-a-days, the ideologically heterogeneous national coalitions like National Democractic Alliance (NDA), United Progressive Alliance (UPA) in the post- 1989 period are explained in terms of

---

[18] Rice is staple diet of all the neighbouring states of Orissa, but the way it is consumed here in *Pakhal* – is entirely unique.
[19] M S Rana, *India Votes*, Delhi: B R Publishing Corporation, 1998, p 188.

'federal coalitions' by the political scientist. The federal coalition underlines the importance of territorial factors over ideology and program for coalition formation and stability. But coalitions in Odisha seem to practice, the federal coalitions much before analysts of national politics focused on it. In 1959, the Congress – Ganatantra Parishad (GP) coalition came to power amidst the possibility of various other permutations and combinations and their regional bases need a closer look. The Congress obtained 42 seats in coastal districts and 14 in the highland region while GP secured 2 seats in the coastal districts and 49 seats in highland. The coalition was viewed 'a mixture of oil with water' owing to their ideological and social differences. Later GP merged in Swatantra Party (SP) and SP's coalition arrangement with Jana Congress in 1967 indicates towards the similar pattern. The coalition of SP – Utkal Congress – Jharkhand in 1971 had territorial compatibility amongst the allies in terms their regional base. BJD-BJP alliance seems to follow the same pattern and they have also been able to carve out exclusive social constituencies of their own. BJD won 2 out of 3 SC seats and the BJP won none in 1998 elections. In that election, BJP, 3 out of 5 ST seats and BJD's tally was nil.

The ills engulfing national party system like lack of inner party democracy, dynastic leadership, black money, funding, nexus with criminals, parties getting reduced as election machines, etc. seems to be infectious and the state's party systems seems to be inflicted by all of them in varying degrees.

1.3.3 Parliament

Presidential system makes politics a zero-sum game, but parliamentary democracy provides more opportunities and layers for accommodating diversity. One of the arguments in favor of parliament is that it generates required legitimacy to the system by providing the opportunities to wide array of social groups, which will not be possible in the Parliamentary system.

Initially, parliament was the preserve of western educated upper caste and upper class people. But recently, noted writer Shashi Tharoor begins his essay with this title - Fifty Years of Parliament – Celebrating Diversity, Pluralism and Freedom. It has become more diverse in representation in terms of political, social and economic background.

In the social realm, the majority of MPs belong to middle castes. With 22.5% reservation for SCs and STs, non-upper castes dominate the Parliament. But, women and minority are still underrepresented. Elite professions' dominance, i.e. lawyers, teachers, etc gave way to agriculturists, social service, etc. In the last sixty years, the number of parties in the parliament has doubled. This should be seen should be seen in the background social particularistic parties. It implies that more and more social groups have representation in it. This has affected the nature of debates in the houses. Former speaker P N Sangama felt that increasing members of regional parties in the houses had led to frequent discussion on more mundane affairs than the elites preferred issues like foreign affairs, etc.

Table5: Number of Parties in Lok Sabhas

Lok Sabha	No. of Parties	*Lok Sabha*	No. of Parties
First	22	Seventh	18
Second	12	Eighth	14
Third	20	Ninth	25
Fourth	19	Tenth	25
Fifth	12	Eleventh	31
Sixth	18	Twelfth	40

Source: ' Divided House', **Pioneer**, April 8, 1998 (emphasis added)

Languages in which MPs took their oath: Not only the number of languages increased, but use of regional languages used for this purpose clearly indicate the increasing diverse background of MPs. Increasing use of regional languages also indicates the rising number of regional elites entering the national legislature.

Table 6: **Distribution of Languages in which MPs took Their Oaths**

Language	6LS	7LS	8LS	9LS	10LS	11LS	12LS
Pan Indian Languages							
Hindi	264	213	219	235	183	203	215
English	164	168	161	108	125	79	86
Total	428	381	380	343	308	282	301
Classical Languages							
Sanskrit	06	05	02	26	54	47	65
Urdu	08	23	-	13	07	10	07
Regional Languages							
Bengali	33	40	28	38	34	34	34
Tamil	29	26	26	36	30	40	36
Marathi	12	12	05	13	22	34	16
Kannada	05	11	12	12	14	19	22
Telugu	-	06	30	08	12	22	14
Gujarati	1	5	3	2	7	7	7
Oriya	5	6	2	12	7	10	8
Assamese	01	-	-	-	6	6	3

Malayalam	1	4	2	1	5	13	13
Punjabi	10	03		08	02	12	09
Maithili					01		
Total	97	113	118	130	140	187	162

Source: Compiled by the Researcher from the Parliament of India documents.

1.4 Concluding Remarks

The analysis of these institutions clearly shows that their increasing diversified base correspond to the growing volume of federalization in India Politics. As the forces unleashed by the democracy worked on the new social groups, the pull factor for more decentralization and devolution increased. One of the challenges of democratic mobilization of social cleavages is that it may trigger the confessional tendencies. And the confessional forces argue in favor 'nationalistic' federalism rather than 'multinational' federalism. Then democracy carries its own eternal strength and solves problems in its own way.

References:

1. Ajay Kumar Singh, 'Federalism and State Formation: An Appraisal of Indian Practice', in B D Dua and M P Singh (eds), *Indian Federalism in the New Millenium*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2003, p. 140.
2. Andre Beteille, 'Race, Caste, and Ethnic Identity' in Bidyut Chakrabarty (ed), *Communal Identity in India: Its Construction and Articulation in the Twentieth Century*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 144-45.
3. Ash Narain Roy, 'Cajoling and Compromise Drive India's Multi-Party System: Indian Federalism Bristles with Paradoxes, *Federations,* October/November, 2007, p. 22.
4. B.K. Roy Burman, "Federalism in Perspective: Problems and Prospects for North-East India", *Mainstream*, 7 August, 1993, p. 9.
5. Bidyut Chakrabarty, 'Introduction', in Bidyut Chakrabarty (ed), *ibid*., pp. 6-7
6. Douglas V Verney, 'Understanding India as a Federation: Liberal Principles, Conservative Tradition and Socialist Ideology' in B D Dua and M P Singh (eds), *ibid*, p. 44.
7. Douglas V. Verney, "How has the Proliferation of Parties Affected the Indian Federation? A Comparative Approach", in Zoya Hasan, et. al. (eds.), *India's Living Constitution: Ideas, Practices and Controversies*, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2002, p.142
8. Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement:Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilisation in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999.
9. George Mathew, "Republic of India" in *Distribution of Powers and responsibilities in Federal Countries*, Akhtar Majeed, *et. al.*, (eds.), London: McGill-Queen University Press, 2006, p. 161.
10. Javeed Alam, *Who Wants Democracy?*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2004, pp. 19-24
11. Kumar Suresh, *Pluralism and Accommodation of Minorities and Deprived Groups in India*, New Delhi: Centre For Federal Studies, Hamdard University, 2005, pp. 4-5

12. M S Rana, *India Votes*, Delhi: B R Publishing Corporation, 1998, p 188.

13. M.P Singh, "Federal Division of Responsibilities in India", *Indian Journal of Federal Studies,* vol.1, January, 2004, pp.109-11.

14. Pradeep Kumar,'The National Parties and The Regional Allies: A Study in the Socio-Political Dynamics' in Ajay K. Mehra, D D Khanna and Gert W Kueck ,(eds.), *Political Parties and Party Systems*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003, p.305

15. Rekha Saxena, 'Recent Trends in Parliamentary Federal System: India and Canada', *Indian Journal of Federal Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2003, p.76.

16. Rekha Saxena, "Treaty making Powers: A case for 'Federalisation' and 'Parliamentarisation'", *Economic and Political Weekly,* January6, 2007, pp.24-28.

17. S.K. Jain, *Party Politics and Centre-State Relations in India*, New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1994, p. 78.

18. S.R.Bommai vs Union of India and others, All India Reporter, Supreme Court Section, 1994.

19. Suhas Palshikar, 'The Regional Parties and Democracy: Romance Rendezvous or Localised Legitimation?', in Ajay K. Mehra, D D Khanna and Gert W Kueck (eds.), *ibid* , pp. 310-12.

20. T V Sathyamurthy, 'Impact of Centre-State Relations on Indian Politics: An Interpretative Reckoning", in Partha Chatterjee (ed), *State and Politics in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 250.