

NCAFI-2022: National Conference on Asymmetrical Federalism in India- Problems and Prospects

A Two-day National Conference commemorating
Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav

Organized by

Department of Political Science
Motilal Nehru College (day)
University of Delhi

To commemorate Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, Motilal Nehru College is organising a two day National Conference on ‘Asymmetrical Federalism in India: Problems and Prospects’ on **3rd and 4th March, 2022**

Concept Note

One of the most enduring features of independent India’s political system has been that of federalism. The federal structure and relations have evolved and adapted to accommodate diverse requirements spanning a whole range of economic, cultural and political variables. As we celebrate 75 years of India’s independence we also need to celebrate the resilience and dynamism of India’s unique template of federalism within which the concept and practice of asymmetrical federalism has been particularly pertinent. Focused on this endeavour, this conference attempts to make salient the variations, transitions and the future prospects of asymmetrical federalism in India.

Scholars widely agree on the proposition that all successful multinational federations are asymmetrical in their structures in some way or the other, to recognize and accommodate diverse ethnic identities. This is further justified by the fact that conventional equality based federal structures have failed to come up with mechanisms to regulate ethnic conflicts. Asymmetrical mechanisms are thus meant to both protect the unity of the nation as well as preserve the distinct identity of the minority community.

The existing diversities and internal heterogeneity in a 'state-nation' like India, leads to the movement around the concept of 'identity' and 'recognition'. While acculturation and assimilation undoubtedly remain a larger objective of any modern state, the immediate concern is to unify and to accommodate. This remained a major thought behind the sub-committees created by constituent assembly to solve the question of administration of tribal areas. The Indian constitution therefore has been characterized as a 'demos-enabling' kind of federation in contrast to the 'demos-constraining' one like in the USA. In a 'demos-enabling' kind or the 'holding together' kind of federalism, there exists constitutional-flexibility wherein minority demands for greater linguistic or cultural autonomy can be addressed by the majority at the center. Asymmetry in simplest terms denotes granting of differential rights to these differential layers existing in the federal sub-units, while also recognizing the territorially concentrated 'ethnic' or 'national groups' belonging to that subdivision.

The abrogated article 370, the special provisions for Nagaland and Mizoram under article 371, the provisions ensuring 'tribal autonomy' under 5th and 6th schedule or other asymmetrical arrangements in terms of centre state relations are meant to protect the unity of the nation as well as preserve the distinct identity of the minority communities. The differences with regard to the governance of States and Union Territories and greater subjection of the later to central control is also a provision of asymmetry. Other than these provisions, the constitution also makes special provisions concerning the admission of new states into the union as per the discretion of the Parliament, paving way for a differential treatment and arrangements.

However there are distinct gaps between the normative ideals that underlie asymmetrical federal arrangements and the praxis thereof. The meaning, significance and practice of asymmetrical federalism is undergoing constant transition and taking on newer forms.

Within this framework, the conference aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Theorizing asymmetrical federalism through a conceptual and comparative framework

- The Indian case of asymmetrical federalism with reference to concerns and considerations as reflected in the Constituent Assembly debates
- Provisions and working of decentralized autonomous councils as provided for under the Vth and VIth schedule of the constitution.
- The nature and impact of secessionist and separatist demands on the federal structure of the country.
- Abrogation of article 370 and its implications as well as special features of the union territories established in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.
- Financial federalism and asymmetries in devolution of funds, grants and aid to the sub-national units with special reference to the Goods and Services Taxation regime.
- Covid-19 pandemic and emerging federal asymmetries in management, mitigation of its impact as well as future -proofing.
- Dilemmas and possibilities of reconciling claims of territoriality, social cleavages and political cultures through asymmetrical federal institutional arrangements and practices in the context of nationalist and majoritarian identities.

Abstract Submission

The abstract should be written in 250-300 words containing title, brief introduction, objectives, relevance, methodology and major findings of the paper. Please use Times New Roman 12 point fonts for English and for Hindi use Kurti Dev 10 point fonts.

Please submit the abstract at polscience@mln.du.ac.in by **7 December 2021**.

The selected abstracts would be notified through mail by 15 December 2021.

Submission of Full Papers

Last date for full paper submission of the accepted abstracts would be **15 February 2022**

Registration for the conference will begin from **1 February 2022**.

Fee for Registration is Rs. 500 for Research Scholars and Rs 1000 for Faculty members and academicians.

General Conference Chair:

Dr. Shrivatsa, Principal, Motilal Nehru College

Program Organizing committee:

1. Radhika Kumar, Professor, Department of Political Science, Motilal Nehru College
2. Yogesh Kumar Gupta, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Motilal Nehru College
3. Pradeep Kumar, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Motilal Nehru College
4. Rahul Kumar Singh, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Motilal Nehru College
5. Priyanka Choudhary, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Motilal Nehru College

Venue: The conference is scheduled to be held in online mode but depending upon the circumstances might be held in hybrid mode.

Contact:

All questions related to conference and submissions of abstract/paper should be emailed to: polscience@mln.du.ac.in

For more information please visit <https://sites.google.com/mln.du.ac.in/ncafi-2022>