

## Federalism and the Concept of Consociationalism: An Experience in Indian Context

*Tabesum Begum*<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*Today a federal form of governance with its nature and scope is presenting itself as an increasing important and relevant issue with the changing nature of polity. The very idea of consociationalism and the concept of Federalism are very useful tools for understanding any political systems in its core. Actually federalism and consociationalism are both based on compound majoritarianism rather than simple majoritarianism, and both represent modern attempts to accommodate democratic complexity and pluralism, although the two systems are not quite symmetrical, and territorial organization is not the only feature that differentiates each of the term in real sense. Again, in a highly plural society, the decision-making process becomes so competitive that new types of interest aggregations take place, thereby making the system looks like more complicated. My paper exactly emphasizes these fundamental issues within a broad framework of Consociationalism and Federalism in India.*

**Key Words:** *Federalism, Consociationalism, Majoritarianism, Pluralism, and Interest Aggregation.*

### I. Introduction

Based on the logic of plural society any type of nation-states has basically come to face with larger obstacles in acquiring the required democratic outcomes than any type of homogeneous political system. Pronounced cultural diversity entails the presence of diverging and often incompatible interests. Processing differentiate interest articulations into widely accepted political decisions is a particularly cumbersome exercise. Naturally, this system remains politically segmented and instable and in this respect how the democratic principles are arrange and rearrange with own institutional framework and further how are confronted with, to borrow Easton's observation<sup>2</sup>, the dual tasks of 'system-

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<sup>2</sup> David Easton, A Framework of political analysis, N.J. Printice Hall, (1965), P.88

maintenance’ and ‘system-persistence’ seems to be appeared as crucial question.

In spite of a significant pessimism about the future of democratic rule in such states, scholar, like Lijphart<sup>3</sup> offered a new kind of terminological model called consociational democratic framework for plural societies. This model of democracy suggests a particular form of power sharing for divided power components. He suggested that the constitutional engineering of developing countries like India need to adopt the mechanism of consociational democracy to meet the challenges of diverse interests in the plural societies in the specific arrangements of federal structure.

## II. The Concept

Before engaging ourselves in the study of consociationalism and federalism, a brief reference seems to be relevant about the importance and significance of such an exploration. Very often these two terms, consociationalism and federalism are taken to mean a kind of governing arrangement based on power-sharing among a number of stake-holders. Arend Lijphart has identified the overlapping features of both these systems: ‘Consociationalism plus some additional attributes spells federalism and vice-versa’.<sup>4</sup> It is accepted that both federalism and consociationalism are basically the concepts of “non-majoritarian democracy” also they differ mainly with regard to their political form.”<sup>5</sup> Daniel J. Elazar has coined the term “compound majoritarianism” and concludes that federalism focuses on compound majoritarianism as a constitutional form, whereas consociationalism refers to the – mostly informal – modes of interest intermediation of a polity’s regime.”<sup>6</sup>

Elazar has in his studies on federalism and consociationalism, identified ‘six’ ambiguities associated with the concept of federalism. These are:

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<sup>3</sup> Arend. Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies*, London, Yale University Press, (1977).

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*, and Arend. Lijphart. *Consociation and Federation: Conceptual and Empirical Links*, Canadian Journal of Political Science, Vol. 12: No. 3 (1979).

<sup>5</sup> Arend. Lijphart, *Non-Majoritarian Democracy: A Comparison of Federal and Consociational Theories*, *Publius*, Vol. 15: No.2. (1985).

<sup>6</sup> Daniel. J. Elazar, *The Ends of Federalism in Partnership in Federalism*, edited by Max Frankel, Peter Long, Bern, (1977).

- (1) Federalism involves both structures and processes of government.
- (2) Federalism is directed to the achievement and maintenance of both unity and diversity.
- (3) Federalism is both a political and social phenomenon.
- (4) Federalism concerns both means and ends.
- (5) Federalism is pursued for both limited and comprehensive purposes.
- (6) There are several varieties of political arrangements to which the term federal has properly been applied.<sup>7</sup>

A clear method of distinguishing between federalism and consociationalism has been sought to be made by stating that while federalism involves both structures and processes of government, consociationalism involves processes only. Both federalism and consociationalism are directed to the achievement and maintenance of both unity and diversity.<sup>8</sup>

Consociationalism as a method of administrative mechanism has been clearly made by Lijphart in the following words:

“Consociational democracy can be defined in terms of two primary attributes – grand coalition and segmental autonomy – and two secondary characteristics – proportionality and minority veto. Grand coalition, also called power-sharing, means that the political leaders of all the significant segments of a plural, deeply divided society, jointly govern the country. Segmental autonomy means that the decision-making is delegated to the separate segments as much as possible. Proportionality is the basic consociational standard of political representation, civil service appointments, and the allocation public funds etc. The veto is a guarantee for minorities that they will not be outvoted by majorities when their vital interests is at stake.”<sup>9</sup>

A brief reference to the existing consociational regimes of the Netherlands, Israel, Lebanon, Cyprus and Belgium will establish the fact that most of these countries have been successful in retaining consociational arrangements

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<sup>7</sup> Daniel. J. Elazar, *Federalism and Consociational Regimes* in *Publish*, Vol. 15: No.2, (1985), pp.19-20.

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> Arend. Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands*, University of California, Berkeley, (1969).

primarily because of their movements in the direction of formal federation along territorial lines.<sup>10</sup>

Thus viewed, consociationalism can be considered to be “a relatively transient arrangement.” It has been very correctly observed:

“Indeed, the classic consociations seem to last for about two generations before giving way to some other form of regime, which, coincidentally or not, is about the length of time that a majority party maintains its majority coalition in fact in two party systems. This has been true for the United States over the entire course of its history as an independent nation. It seems to be true for other democratic polities as well; hence it may teach us something about the lifetime of coalitions for their survival capacities.”<sup>11</sup>

This brings to the fore another aspect of the problem under discussion. This is relating to the issue of models of polity. Basically there are three models of power-sharing in a polity which may be outlined as (a) hierarchical, (b) pyramidal and (c) cybernetic models. In a hierarchical model organized in a pyramidal fashion, power is concentrated at the top. In a cybernetic model power is distributed through a matrix of centers, federal systems, on the other hand, are based upon the third model with multi-centric form and non-centralized organization of powers.

It has been rightly observed:

“It is true that the overwhelming majority of consociational regimes are democratic in character and that consociationalism was developed as a form of democratic regime, but even it can be used for other purpose. It is true that there are two kinds of federal systems – those in which the purpose of federalism is to share power broadly, pure and simple, and those in which the purpose of federalism is to give individual national communities a share in the power of the state. The former is more simply devoted to advancing the cause of popular

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<sup>10</sup> Aristide R. Zolberg, *Splitting the Difference: Federation without Federalism in Belgium: Ethnic Conflict in the Western World*, ed. Milton J. Esman, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, (1977), pp.103-142.

<sup>11</sup> Daniel J. Elazar, *op.cit.* p.31.

government, while the latter may rely upon other mechanisms for securing popular government and merely add federalism as an extra device.”<sup>12</sup>

### III. Consociation and Federation: A Comparison of Majoritarian and Non-Majoritarian Democracy

According to Arend Lijphart, the nine elements of majoritarian democracy are the following:

- (1) Concentration of executive power in one-party and bare-majority cabinets.
- (2) Executive dominance in executive-legislative relations.
- (3) Unicameralism or bicameralism with a weak second chamber.
- (4) Two-party systems.
- (5) One dimensional party system (i.e. a party system in which the programmes of the parties differ from each other mainly along the one issue dimension of socio-economic policy).
- (6) Plurality systems of elections.
- (7) Unitary and centralized government in which there are no clearly designated geographical and functional areas from which the parliamentary majority and cabinet are barred.
- (8) Unwritten or constitution and parliamentary majority: the majority's power to legislate is not restricted by any requirement of qualified majorities or judicial review.
- (9) Exclusively representative democracy: the power of the parliamentary majority is not restricted either by any element of direct democracy such as referendum.<sup>13</sup>

Again, he has outlined eight elements of non-majoritarian democracy. These are:

- (1) Executive power-sharing: Instead of one party, bare majority cabinets, non-majoritarian democracy tends to have coalition of governments of two or more parties that together have the support of a broad majority in parliament. Such an arrangement often leads to which called grand-coalition.

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<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> For details, see Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation*, op.cit.

- (2) Balanced executive-legislative relations: Instead of an executive that dominates the legislature, non-majoritarian democracy is characterized by an executive and legislature that maintain a somewhat balance of power with each other.
- (3) Strong bicameralism: In place of concentration of all legislative power in the hands of the majority in a unicameral legislature, legislative power is shared by with the second chamber in which certain minorities may enjoy special representation.
- (4) Multi-party system: It may offer the existence of a number of parties in which all parties are minorities.
- (5) Multi-dimensional party system: in addition to the socio-economic issue dimension, the parties in non-majoritarian democracy tend to differ from each other along one or more other issue dimensions.
- (6) Proportional representation: In place of plurality of rates, the system of proportional representation appears to be more effective in a non-majoritarian democracy.
- (7) Federalism and decentralization: A federal arrangement with wide ranging decentralization of power provides more space for all the regional and local interests to play effective role in the governing process.
- (8) Written Constitution and majority veto: Non-majoritarian democracy is generally characterized by a more or less rigid constitution which can be amended only after complying with a special procedure provided for it.<sup>14</sup>

From this construction of Lijphart, one can notice that while dealing with non-majoritarian democracy, his main reference point was the Westminster System. On this issue, the observation by Daniel J. Elazar appears to be more specific and pointed. To quote him:

“While I accept the basic distinction, I would like to redefine it a distinction between single majoritarianism and politics based upon compound majorities – in short, compound majoritarianism.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Id.*

<sup>15</sup> Daniel J. Elazar, *op.cit.* p.17

Federal systems are dependent on “dispersed majorities” based on territorial arrangement, whereas consociational systems are dependent upon concurrent majorities, generally a territorial in nature. “Both involve the systemic building of a more substantial consensus that is the case in simple majoritarian systems.”<sup>16</sup> Elazar has presented this idea in a diagram which shows the nature and interconnectedness among different segments of a federal arrangement:

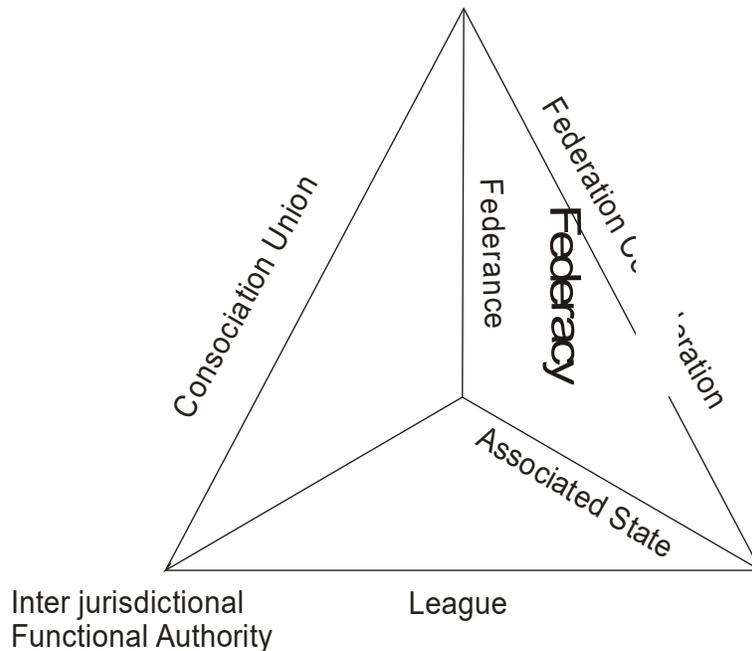


Fig: 1: Forms of Federal Arrangements<sup>17</sup>

As an extension of this idea, Elazar has identified six basic ambiguities associated with federalism as ‘a theoretical and operational concept’. These are:

- (1) Federalism involves both structures and processes of government.
- (2) Federalism is directed to the achievement and maintenance of both unity and diversity.
- (3) Federalism is both a political and social phenomenon.
- (4) Federalism concerns both means and ends.

<sup>16</sup> *Id.*

<sup>17</sup> Source, Daniel J. Elazar, *Federalism and Consociational Regimes*, Publish, Vol.15, No.2, (1985),p.20.

- (5) Federalism is pursued for both limited and comprehensive purposes.
- (6) There are wide variations in the federal arrangements all over the world.<sup>18</sup>

Thus viewed, federalism is considered to be a process of structure which includes within itself a sense of partnership manifested through negotiated cooperation on issues and programmes based on a commitment to open bargaining for power and share. It is agreed by all that federalism should combine both structure and process. This aspect has been beautifully presented in the following observation:

“Where a federal structure exists without a correspondingly federal process, there is evidence to indicate that it may have some impact on process of governance, even if the latter are not ultimately federal, but in the last analysis, its impact will be secondary.”<sup>19</sup>

Again, he observes:

“The terms ‘federalism’, ‘federalist’ and ‘federalize’ are commonly used to describe both the process of political unification and the maintenance of the diffusion of political power .....Federalizing does involve both the creation and maintenance of unity and diffusion of power in the name of diversity. Indeed, that is why federalism and presumably consociationalism as well, is not to be located on the centralization – decentralization continuum, but on a different continuum altogether, one that is predicated on non-centralization, or the effective combination of unity and diversity.”<sup>20</sup> In this connection, Morton Grodzins has opined that federalism, like all forms of government, must be judged as a means of fostering democratic ends.<sup>21</sup>

In the process of forming a federation, the role of sub-cultural groups needs special attention. Alan Chairns, while analyzing the nature of Canadian

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid. For further details, see S. Rufus Davis, *The Federal Principle*, Berkeley, University of California Press, (1978) and Deil S. Wright, *Understanding Inter governmental Relations*, Duxbury Press, (1978).

<sup>19</sup> Daniel J. Elazar, *op.cit.* p.22

<sup>20</sup> *Id.* p.23; For a further discussion of non-centralization, see Daniel J. Elazar, *American Federalism: A View from the states*, Harper and Row, N.Y., (1984).

<sup>21</sup> Mertin Grodzins, *the American System: A New view of Government in the United States*, Chicago, (1956).

federation has stated that the basis for federalism in Canada is ‘a constitution which has provided political entrepreneurs with the tools for seeking and obtaining power.’<sup>22</sup> It has been suggested that while explaining Canadian federalism, Cairns might have ignored the role of language and culture in this respect.

This position may lead one to another dimension in the formation of a federal arrangement – that is, elite accommodation. It has been very correctly observed that elite accommodation lies at the heart of any kind of consociational arrangement and very often described as “the will to cooperate”, compromise or even “fear of system collapse”. On the other hand, it is argued that a general definition of federalism does not, in many cases, refer to the motion of process or informal behavior. Elite accommodation is considered to be one of the informal mechanisms that play its important role in this process.

These informal mechanisms in this process of the formation of federal arrangements have been described under different names, such as, intra-state federalism, cooperative federalism, interdependence and the like.<sup>23</sup> One may not disagree with the following observation in which the scholar has tried to contextualize the issue on a broader theoretical and operational plane:

“In most federations, the objective is to work out differences between central and local governments and to a considerable extent, between units themselves, usually concerning the development and implementation of policies and programmes affecting both levels of government. However, more serious conflicts can also be handled in these more broadly based arenas; whether these practices are superior to, or more democratic than, the technique of elite accommodation is not really at issue here.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Alan Cairns, *The Government and Societies of Canadian Federalism*, Canadian Journal of Political Science, Vol. 10, (1977), pp.695-725.

<sup>23</sup> This aspect has been discussed in greater details by many scholars. For further details, see Daniel J. Elazar, *The American Partnership*, Chicago Press, (1962), A.H. Birch, *Federalism, Finance and Social Legislation in Canada, Australia and the United States*, Oxford, (1955) and Roger Gibbins, *Regionalism: Territorial Politics in Canada and the United States*, Toronto, (1982).

<sup>24</sup> Herman. Bakvis, *Structure and Process in Federal and Consociational Arrangements*, *Publius*, Vol.15, No.2, (1985), p.63.

That elite accommodation goes a long way in the process of integration of a federal arrangement has been highlighted in the following observation:

“One must further be able to show that elite accommodation does indeed play an important role in diffusing conflict at the mass level or in bringing about a degree of integration of diverse units. Ultimately, this informal behavior is dependent upon the perceptions, beliefs and attitudes of the participants; formal rules cannot guarantee cooperation among elites.”<sup>25</sup>

Structure plays important role in other ways restricting the number of policy options and bringing the elites much closer to one another. In defining the role of ‘sub-cultural’ blocs in this process, social or political institutions do play a major part. Their role may create conditions for bringing the elites to minimize their gaps and differences and in the ultimate analysis, it may be seen that these elite groups may form a compact force. One may find examples of such outcomes with reference to the federalizing process of Canada, Austria and even, Germany.

#### **A. The Benchmark: Federalism and Consociationalism:**

There is a common agreement on what constitutes the yardsticks of federalism which may be outlined as follows:

- (1) Indestructible identity and autonomy of the territorial components;
- (2) Their residual and significant power;
- (3) Equal or favourably weighted representation of equal units;
- (4) Their decisive participation in amending the constitution;
- (5) Independent sphere of central authority;
- (6) Immunity against secession, i.e. a permanent commitment to build and maintain “federal nation”;
- (7) Two sets of courts;
- (8) Scope for the operation of the power of judicial review;
- (9) A clear division of power between the centre and the constituent units;
- (10) Exclusive national control over subjects affecting the nation as a whole.

This refers to another area where one can make a distinction between a federal and a consociational arrangement. The basic points in respect can be noted as:

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<sup>25</sup> *Id.* 64

- (1) The segments of the plural society must be geographically concentrated;
- (2) The boundaries between the component units of the federation must follow the segmental boundaries as much as possible;
- (3) If segmental autonomy assumes a federal form, this necessarily entails that the primary requirement of a central-regional division of power as well as the secondary requirements of internal constitutional autonomy and decentralization are fulfilled.

Moreover, in addition to these, the following features are worth-noting in this connection:

- (1) A federation must be a democracy;
- (2) Only federation in plural societies can be consociations;
- (3) Only federations which are highly decentralized and in which the component units are highly autonomous can be consociations;
- (4) The federal boundaries must be drawn in such a way that they approximate the segmental boundaries; as a result, the heterogeneity of the federal state as a whole is transformed into a high degree of homogeneity at the level of component units;
- (5) Such a high degree of segmental homogeneity in the component units can be achieved optimally if the federation consists of relatively many and relatively small units.<sup>26</sup>

#### **IV. Indian Constitution and Consociational Arrangements**

Thus, following these arguments we can consider that the spirit of consociationalism is still continuing in Indian democracy with its unique federal characteristics. If we review the Indian constitutional arrangements we find that it introduces a federal system as the basic structure of government though there is a strong admixture of unitary bias. However, none of the provisions of Indian constitution, the state is given the epithet of a Federal state. In fact, in Article 1(1) of the constitution, the Indian state is declared as a

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<sup>26</sup> Details of this aspect can be seen in the following works: Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*, Yale University Press, (1977); Carl J. Friedrich, *Limited Government: A Comparison*, Prentice-Hall, N.J. (1974); Ivo D. Duchacek, *Comparative Federalism: The Territorial Dimension of Politics*, New York, (1970).

‘Union of States’ and the constitution does not proclaims it means a federal state. Therefore, in what ground we will say that the Indian state is a Federal state. It can be stated if we observe the nature of the state of India that follows some fundamental features of federalism.

Firstly, the constitution of India, as in all federal states of the world is written and rigid. Truly is not fully rigid but partially rigid because some of its provisions declare that an alteration of them shall not be treated as amendment within the meaning of Article 368 which lays down a rigid process of amendment of the constitution. Similarly, there are some provisions which may be amended not by a special procedure but by the ordinary process of lawmaking<sup>27</sup> and at the same time; some provisions may be amended only by a special procedure as written in Article 368.

Secondly, in India there is a dual government – Centre and State governments and the source of power of both the structure is Constitution. In normal conditions, the governments at these two levels independently exercise their powers according to the constitution. The constitution of India follows a threefold distribution of legislative, administrative and financial powers between the Union and the States. The legislative and administrative relations between Centre and States in the Indian federal system have been detailed in Part XI of the constitution and Part XII gives an account of financial relation between them.

Thirdly, the judicial powers are not divided and the constitution clearly stated that there is a common Judiciary for the Union and the States. The Supreme Court plays the role of a federal court. In its original jurisdiction, the court settles the dispute between the Centre and one or more than one States and also between different States.

Fourthly, “following the federal principle, the Indian Constitution has provided for a bicameral central legislature and the upper House of this legislature is constituted on the basis of federal representation”.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> AMAL KUMAR MUKHOPADHYAY, ‘A JOURNEY ACROSS THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION’, Kolkata: Sreedhar Publication, (2017), p. 257.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 258.

Thus, recognising all these features we may state that Indian state clearly proves as a federal kind of state. Additionally, in the *Keshavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala*, (1973), *Srikumar v. Union of India* (1992), *S.R. Bommai v. Union of India* (1994) etc. cases the Supreme Court has identified the federal character of Indian state as the primary base of the constitution.

Following these unique federal characteristics with definite spirit of consociationalism as observed by Lijphart, India also attains its integrativeness with regards to power sharing. If we consider the era of Nehru we find the prevalence of command polity rather than demand polity, which may be termed as ranked or controlled polity with the institutionalization of diffused power.<sup>29</sup> Thus, in this context we may refer Horowitz's integrative democratic model<sup>30</sup> to proper understanding of the issue. This model actually emphasizes the importance of fostering multi-ethnic political coalitions. In fact, both these issues are important to understand federalism and consociationalism in its best collaborative form.

#### **A. The Consociational-Integrative Forces:**

It is however, not out of context here to mention Horowitz concept of 'integrative democracy' which is a fair account of an alternative approach to the rule of plural societies. The integrative power-sharing approach 'seeks to deal with ethnic conflict potential through fostering political arrangements that will lead to bridging or transcending ethnic group differences'.<sup>31</sup> However, though '...India was a consociational state before Independence, from 1947-64 it was a non-consociational state-what Horowitz would term a "ranked" society, or Lustick a "control" state-in which lower castes, religious minorities, and linguistic minorities within states were denied cultural rights and largely excluded from government jobs and political power. Since the late 1960s, far

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<sup>29</sup> A. M. Mallick. *Indian Federalism and the Multicultural Context*, *Journal of Management & Public Policy*, Vol. 4, No. 2, (2013),p. 28.

<sup>30</sup> Donald. L. Horowitz, *D. Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Berkeley CA: University of California Press, (1985); & Donald. L. Horowitz, Donald L. *Conciliatory Institutions and Constitutional Processes in Post-Conflict States*, *William and Mary Law Review*, Vol. 49: No. 1213(2008).

<sup>31</sup> Mallick, op. cit.

from becoming “less firmly consociational”, as Lijphart claimed, India has in fact become more consociational.’<sup>32</sup>

Apart from this, Indian constitution not only protects the rights of the state through the distribution of power, but also provides for the protection of rights and interests of the socio-cultural minorities and the disadvantaged groups, and decentralized and autonomous governance within its federal set up.<sup>33</sup> The constitution recognizes cultural diversity, but does abolish communal representation. Article 29(1) says that any sections of the citizens of India with distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the fundamental right to preserve their identity.<sup>34</sup> Article 29(2) regards prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, or language with regard to admission into educational institutions maintained by the state.<sup>35</sup> Article 30(1) specifies that the minorities can establish and administer educational institutions of their own choice.<sup>36</sup>

Further, Articles 330-334 and 336-337 categorically mention the advancement of the socially and economically backward classes and minority communities. The Constitution of India has provided, among other various protections and safeguards, safeguards for Public employment to the persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, keeping in view the discrimination and disabilities suffered by these classes to catch up and compete successfully with the more fortunate ones in the matter of securing public employment.<sup>37</sup>

Therefore, what we find in India is a combination of compromise by segregation and compromise by negotiation. It is a compromise formula between the two alternatives: group building block approach relying on accommodation by ethnic group leaders guaranteeing group autonomy and minority rights and integrative approach seeking to integrate society along the lines of division within a common society. It is observed that the integrative

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<sup>32</sup> Ian. Steven. Wilkinson, *Consociational Theory, and Ethnic Violence, Asian Survey*, Vol. 40: No. 5 (2000) & Mallick, op. cit.

<sup>33</sup> Mallick, op. cit., 30.

<sup>34</sup> D. D. Basu, *Introduction to the Constitution of Indian*, 22<sup>nd</sup> edition, Nagpur: LexisNexis, (2015), p. 440.

<sup>35</sup> *Id.*, 441.

<sup>36</sup> *Id.*, 442.

<sup>37</sup> Mallick, op. cit.

approach tries to build multi-ethnic political coalitions, to moderate ethnic conflict and to enhance minority and disadvantaged groups' influence in the decision making<sup>38</sup> process.

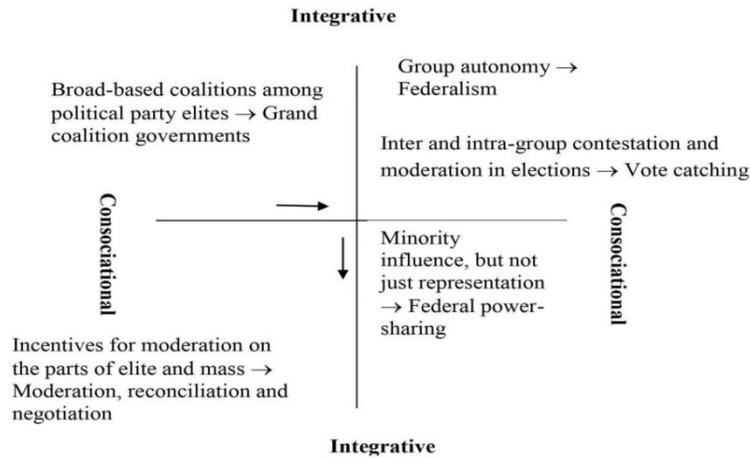


Fig. 2. Diagrammatic representation of integrative approach<sup>39</sup>

Hence, in the post-independence period it is observed that in several times the governments of India are often formed coalitions with ministers deliberately chosen to correspond to various religious, linguistic, ethnic and caste groups which actually provide a consolidated consensual power structure within a system and the Nehru regime is the good example in this regard. As mentioned above that the cultural autonomy is maintained using a variety of devices like creation of linguistic states, separate personal laws and allowing minority education institutions. Sometimes it is executed using the system of affirmative actions with caste groups having reservation in legislatures, higher education and government jobs.

<sup>38</sup> *Id.*, 30-31.

<sup>39</sup> Source, A. M. Mallick. Indian Federalism and the Multicultural Context, Journal of Management & Public Policy, Vol. 4, No. 2, (2013),p. 40.

In the post- Nehruvian era what we have been witnessed that the shrinking of dominance of one party system. 'During the last four decades, independent India has undergone a transformation from a homogeneous polity in which power was shared between the centre and the states under the control of the ruling Congress party into one in which control is shared between a centre... and the states in which a variety of different parties have won executive power in legislative assemblies ... India may well be on the verge of a new era of power sharing,... powerful states can benefit from a strong Indian state controlled at the centre by a coalition of parties representing diverse ruling class interests.'<sup>40</sup>

As we know that linguistic minorities are represented using states since Nehru era, and India's federal nature has been greatly strengthened for that. Previously we have witnessed many incidents of misusing of Article 356, which allow the Union government to dismiss an elected state government and rule the state directly from Centre almost at their will till the 1970s. Now on days it is rarely rare in practice. Moreover, the rise of state centric parties has further strengthened the consociationalist power sharing amongst different groups. Naturally, the presentation of these regional parties in the Union legislature is predominant which in many respect compel the ruling parties accommodates certain amount of interest with these parties.

Commenting on the nature of Indian political structure James Manor<sup>41</sup> said that the federal-state relations in India remain generally manageable because its formal and informal political institutions can still make the politics of bargaining work. All political parties have enough people and support bases with appropriate skills and attitudes to sustain the bargaining process. A veritable legion of political activists and "fixers" give India a major resource that is unavailable in most less developed countries. With their help, the politics of bargaining works well enough to keep socio-cultural heterogeneities from sowing political chaos. As against the American 'Melting Pot' democratic

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<sup>40</sup> T. V. SATHYAMURTHY, IMPACT OF CENTRE-STATE RELATIONS ON INDIAN POLITICS: AN INTERPRETATIVE RECKONING 1947-1987, PARTHA CHATTERJEE (ED.), STATE AND POLITICS IN INDIA, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, (1997), pp. 269-270.

<sup>41</sup> James. Manor, *Making Federalism Work*, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 9: No. 3, (1998).

model where all the identities get subsumed under the major American nationality, Indian democracy has come to be defined as ‘Salad Bowl’.<sup>42</sup>

## V. Conclusion

Thus, the foregoing discussion conclusively proves that there are certain areas where federalism and consociational arrangements come very close to one another. But there are also areas where they differ substantially both in terms of structure and process. Again, a distinction should be made between institutional structure and decision – processes. The decision process refers to the dynamics of day to day interactions among the decision-makers-the nature of coalition-making of interests, policies and also actions. This also brings within it the forms of bargaining activities and modes through which these bargaining activities operate. The process is complex and at many points, it is difficult to identify them and place them in a clear distinct position. But at the same time no one can ignore the idea that these forces and factors need to be identified, explained and placed in their respective position. Again, in a highly plural society, the decision-making process becomes so competitive that new types of interest aggregations take place, thereby making the system more complex.

Thus it is seen that elite accommodation takes place in different ways in different types of federal arrangements. Such accommodation becomes necessary for preventing the symptoms of, what is called, ‘system-collapse’. In order to place the problem in broader perspective, a new term has been employed by the scholars who come almost closer to the concept of system maintenance. The term which is now used is known as “the system-saving behavior”. It implies that for the sake of the survival of the system, such arrangements become necessary, no matter whether achieved through national or local/regional initiatives – which may help in the process of greater degree of “integration of diverse units.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ashis Nandy as quoted in Y. Atal, Y. Managing Multiplicity: The Insider-Outsider Duality, *Economic and Political Weekly* (2001) & also see, Mallick, op. cit., 35.

<sup>43</sup> Santa Ghosh and Pradip Kumar Sengupta, *Ethno-Cultural Conflicts, Federalism and Consociational Arrangements: An Exploratory Note Towards Theory – Building on a Cross-Cultural Basis, Administrative Change*, January-December, 2010, Vol.XXXVII, (2001), pp.93-100.

In this respect, it can be stated that with experience of Indian context since independence, in true sense federalism and consociationalism are neither undemocratic nor dysfunctional in its nature. Consociationalism when is applied to a vast, ethnically diverse country with many cleavages to eventually undermine itself would require representation for every section of people, which in India's case is simply impossible. Rather in case of India the constitution seems to be a great tool for blending both the features of federalism and consociationalism.