

Federalism as a Geographical Phenomenon

- In 1961, Robinson in his writing noted that federalism is “the most geographically expressive of all political systems’, i.e., it is purely a geographical phenomenon.
- ✓ It is based on the existence of regional differences, and recognize the claims of the competent areas to perpetuate their individual characters.
- ✓ At the same time, it also recognized their limitations as completely functioning units, it stresses the necessity for linking them with a common thread that draws toward a common goal.
- ✓ This goal is national cohesion within the larger political framework.
- ✓ Federation does not create unity out of diversity, rather it enables the two to coexist.

➤ In 1982, Dikshit has attempted to identify the following two reasons for it to be considered as a geographical phenomenon or the most geographically expressive:

1. It is based on the existence of territorial grouped diversities, that each component unit in it seeks for the perpetuation of its regional identity, and individual quality.
2. Spatial interaction is a logical expression/manifestation of the federal polity or principle as it indicates the interdependence between the federal or the central government and the units or state governments as complementary to the “society-environment interdependence within a single area”.

- The geographical expressiveness of federalism can be recognized more in a sense that every society, every nation is more or less closely integrated in accordance with its own peculiar historical, cultural, economic, political and other determinants.
- Each is composed of elements that feel themselves to be different from other elements in varying degrees and that demand in varying degrees a means of self-expression.
- These diversities may turn on all sorts of questions – economic, religious, racial, historical – and any of these can produce in a certain group within the population a demand for such self-expression.

- Furthermore, these diversities may be distributed among the members of society in such a fashion that certain attitudes are found in particular territorial areas, or they may be scattered widely throughout the whole of the society.
- ✓ If they are grouped territorially, that is, geographically, then the result may be a society that is federal. If they are not grouped territorially, then the society cannot be said to be federal.
- ✓ In either case coherence in society may depend on the devolution upon these groups of the exercise of functions appropriate to the diversities that they represent.
- ✓ No government has ever been called federal that has been organized on any but the territorial basis, when organized on any other it has gone by another name.

- Component state or units in federation exist because of some great significant diversity of such importance that it is felt that only a federal organization can offer it sufficient protection.
- Federalism becomes nothing if it is held to embrace diversities that are not territorially grouped, for there are no territorial units that can serve as components of the federal system.
- ✓ It is indeed a reality that the federal society is usually organized on a functional basis which in itself expresses functional differences based on territorially grouped diversities.
- ✓ Therefore, territories differ in opinions, in composition, in interests, in function. If there was no functional differences, there might be no need for federalism.
- ✓ But the point that must be emphasized is that these functional differences are territorially grouped, and thus, they provide a reason for and demand for a federal polity.

- The territorially-grouped diversities, which tend to constitute the *raison d'être* for the federalism, intrinsically, engineer spatial interaction between the component units on the one hand and between them and the federal government on the other in terms of interdependence on complementary to the complex pattern of the society-environment interdependence within the political structure.
- Each territorial/component unit in the federation is unique with regard to the pattern of its diversity which gets manifested in its orientation/inclination/interest/ and regional personality. So is the case with other territorial/component units in the federation.
- ✓ Each of it seeks to perpetuate its interest and individuality in the political structure which requires some kind of cooperation/mutual understanding/mutual adjustment, and adaptability/compromise between the units involved in the federation.

- ✓ It is through the inter-unit mobility that the merging units in the federation are linked together to ensure interdependence between them that involves
 - ‘complementarity’ (relating to the character of the units),
 - ‘transferability’ (relating to the character and division of power and function between the federal government and the component units and between them) and
 - ‘intervening opportunities’ (relating to more closer social contacts, articulation, and dynamisms).
- ✓ It is this spatial interaction between the units involved in the federation that the regional character of the component units is allowed its expression and perpetuation in the federal constitution.
- ✓ More to say, the spatial interaction in a federation enables unity and diversity to coexist, making it “the most geographically expressive of all political systems”.

Thank you!