

# When the Pandemic Infected Indian Federation

**Sarbani Guha Ghosal**

Associate Professor, Political Science  
Bijoy Krishna Girls' College, Howrah

## ***Disaster:***

COVID-19 has brought a once-a-century event before the entire world. In the first quarter of 2020 human existence has been affected in a superfast way leaving all of us utterly baffled putting our imaginative power also in abeyance. The pandemic tragedy seems to be more devastating than the World War II if we consider the range of affected areas. Every single aspect of geopolitics is tremendously stressed bearing consequences for local, regional, national and international politics. Crises are grappling economic, political and social lives in unprecedented ways resulting historical reshaping of power, government, governance and communities. The entire scheme of social contract where our existence is rooted upon is severely devastated. Several questions are floating on the air regarding the role of government, health sector, economic system, legal system and other segments of governance and public policy in local, national and international levels.

One of the most strained political concern during this COVID 19 period in India undoubtedly centers on the concept of “*Federalism*”. The very concept of federalism and its several principles started facing serious challenges everyday leading to remarkable tension in the centre-state relations. Centrality of the union government has entered not only in the level of policy decisions but also in the level of *collective consciousness* in an unprecedented way making the basic foundation of federal democracy absolutely weak. The post independent tradition of democratic federalism with strong constitutional arrangement and rule of law is facing serious challenges showing critical signals for the foundation of Indian nationhood questioning the fundamental political structure of the land. It often seems that the federal narrative of the Indian state which has faced different ups and downs in different period is standing before a blind alley. Now the present paper will try to throw some questions on the changing nature of Indian federation with definite effects on national, sub-continental and global politics. This piece of writing is a product of documentary sources predominantly received from electronic and print media and finally the

accumulated information are submitted on the anvil of the broad theoretical paradigm of federalism to deduce certain conclusions.

The article starts with a very brief understanding of Indian federalism and some points of intervention. In the next phase elaborations are on some areas of sociopolitical challenges in the COVID19 period. Here it is worthy to remember that almost all the sociopolitical challenges to Indian federation have their roots in financial issues. In the concluding part attempt is made to find some convergence points on how the central and state governments can reduce the tension points to act together.

### ***Foundational Principle and Opportunism:***

The despicable nature of the Indian political parties deserves a special mention at the very beginning as all the major political parties support the principles of federalism absolutely and vouch for its proper implementation as long as they are in opposition bench of national parliament. However, the moment they occupy the majority in Lok Sabha they prefer to blissfully ignore all fundamentals of federalism. And this is the perennial problem of federal ethics in India. Moreover, all the leading political parties in the present times are proudly giving the open call for “*opposition free legislature*” in all their election campaigns. This is an utterly disgusting behavior bearing the innate desire to masquerade the basic principles of parliamentary liberal democracy that the framers of the Indian Constitution very meticulously developed for the land.

Indian federation from the very initial days suffers from some terminological fallacy. We all are aware of the fact that Article 1 declares that India, that is Bharat shall be a Union of States. Nowhere have we found the term “*federation*” leading to several subsequent problems. Founding father of the document Dr. Ambedkar categorically has stated on several occasions that there were certain advantages in describing India as a Union of states and this expression indicates two important facts: first, that federalism in India had not been the result of an agreement among the units and second, that the constituent units of Indian federation had no right to secede from it. K.C. Wheare also reiterates the same spirit somewhat by saying: Indian union is a unitary state with subsidiary federal features rather than a federal state with subsidiary unitary features. Similarly several other commentators have identified it as federation without federalism or union of unequal states. An interesting description was provided by Alfred Stephan in 1999 in his

famous article “Federalism & Democracy: Beyond the US Model”. It regards India as “holding together”(meaning thereby that there is no pooling of authority and retention of nationality in that pattern of federation) federation and not “coming together”(where separate states combine their sovereign rights and assets to form a strong nation) federation. This is an idea which really is quite fascinating.

Now in the next part the author prefers to refer to the different categories of challenges that Indian federation has confronted in this COVID -19 era, resulting mostly from economic control of the union government which gradually has spread its dark wings over the socio-cultural domains with every step having distinct political cadence. A humble submission to start with is that COVID 19 has developed a completely directionless polity and economy for a large part of globe and not for India alone.

### ***Power Play:***

“**Lockdown**” is a new entry in the common vocabulary since March 2020 as different countries have adopted it as a strategy to control the rising curve of the disease. The Government of India on March 22, 2020 ordered a voluntary curfew followed by a number of combat regulations in different phases. The first in this series was declared on March 24, 2020 whereby the Central Government has ordered a nationwide “**lockdown**” for 21 days completely limiting the movement of above 1.3 billion population of the land as a preventive measure by stopping all kinds of activities barring a few essential ones. Till 30<sup>th</sup> May, 2020 we have witnessed 68 days of total lockdown in four phases and from 1<sup>st</sup> June began the fifth phase of lockdown along with 1<sup>st</sup> phase of unlocking.

After the great depression of 1930s the entire global economic system never suffered in such a shattering way as in front of COVID 19 pandemic. The massive halt in the economic front put the constituting states of India in a situation of complete income less status. While the sudden medical exigency put a heavy toll on their spending part as public health, sanitation and hospitals are state subjects. The outbreak of COVID-19 took place at a time which is an extreme inappropriate period for the economic sector of the country. The national economy already started showing palpable indicators of slowdown. Particularly investment rate and savings rate in the economy showed a clear downward trend. Employment fell. The result of lockdown

restrictions meant to contain the spread of the corona virus ultimately wiped out jobs and businesses for millions. The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) reported unemployment levels of 24-27% in April and May 2020, up from 8-9%, before the lockdown started. The situation improved to some extent in 2021 but again since August the situation is deteriorating. People who have not lost their jobs have reported income losses for pay cuts and lowering business profits. In a national survey of nearly 6000 households in May 2020, 84% of households reported decreases in income since the lockdown.(IFPRI:2020) The Indian economy contracted by 23.9 percent in the second quarter, the most drastic fall in decades. India's decline is the worst among the world's major economies.(NYT:2020)

However, before this severe blow official data of 2018-19 showed that our unemployment rate is highest in 45 years. India's economic growth is about 5.0 percent in the 2019-20 fiscal years, the slowest pace since 2008-09 and significantly slower than the previous year, according to the First Advance Estimates, released by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation. Amidst several upheavals the Covid-19 pandemic has emerged on top of the already brewing crisis giving a serious jolt to the slow moving economy with an all round halt.

The imposition of a pan-India lockdown, a precarious decision with so many repercussions was taken without any consultation with State governments. But prevention of Contagious Disease across states clearly is mentioned in item number 29 of the Concurrent List of Indian Constitution. Moreover, the issues of social security, social insurance, employment and unemployment all of which are integrally related as outcomes of lockdown decision categorically belong to concurrent list.

Several notifications and guidelines issued by Union Government following the lockdown declaration have paralyzed State finances. At the same time those have significantly undermined concepts of federal cooperation also, a foundational principle of Indian nationhood. The central orders covered even fields strictly falling within the domain of the State as per the 7th Schedule of the Constitution. This includes the state government offices, hospitals, shops, markets, industries, agriculture, alcohol etc.

The major share of states' revenue comes from liquor sales, stamp duty from property transactions and the sales tax on petroleum products. Closing down of these areas naturally

brought severe financial constraint for the states. Nobody opposed the series of interfering decisions of central government because the issue of human life is an important and extremely sensitive concern and COVID19 has percolated such an illogical state of mind among majority that any kind of opposition to the decisions would surely earn the anti-people tag for them. So, neither any political party nor the state governments took that risk of challenging the central decision, especially as election was slated for a number of states in coming days. Ultimately this approach undermines the basic principles of federal democracy.

The medial pandemic has unleashed pandemic beyond repair for fourth pillar of federal democracy. Flood of paid news leads to absolute loss of credibility for the media universally and for Indian media in particular putting the concept of federal democracy in leviathan like stage. Media is absolutely engaged in spreading sensational news instead of sensitizing the people about the disease. In the context of the pandemic the terror of media has let loose a spirit of *thanatophobia*, meaning thereby a type of anxiety developing out of a fear of one's own death or the process of dying. Media very successfully from the very beginning of pandemic has circulated and validated the notions of *thanatophobia* and lockdown in binary terms and thereby completely destroyed the domain of balanced, scientific and critical thinking which is indispensable for successful federalism as well as for any crisis management. The issue has reached such a pathetic stage that even the police terror for implementing lockdown has been justified by media and the general public in several states. The sense of mutual trust and camaraderie among the population, a sense of entitlement towards certain rights among the community members which are the bedrocks of federal democracy are lost completely. Thus the Gramscian concept of cultural hegemony of the state through ideological state apparatus has been completely percolated over the length and breadth of the society and community in every possible way.

### ***Money Matters:***

It is the issue of GST compensation on which some state governments have raised their voice first showing signs of opposition to central directives. However the media in this crucial juncture has found untimely demise of SSR, the short time hero of Mumbai and involvement of Rhea, his partner, more important than either outright denial of GST compensation or abolition of

questioning hour in parliament and different state assemblies as if that will surely bring more fortune for the *aam admi* of India. This is a sheer violation of the role of media in federal system.

The GST issue is the prime cause for the decay of the federal character of Indian state. States' GST collections have been severely affected with their dues not disbursed by Centre in proper intervals. Centralization trends associated with GST collections drained the states' financial capacities. Despite repeated demands from the beginning, the Centre did not release any outstanding GST compensation till mid June 2020.(Vijayan:2020) After that also the release process is extremely irregular. The autocratic approach of the union government on GST issues is manifested greatly in the 41<sup>st</sup> GST council meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> August, 2020. In respect of 33% lesser collection of revenue in the first four months of current financial year than the last year the states naturally have asked for compensation package. As per the GST (Compensation to States) Act, 2017 the Centre is bound to compensate states for a five-year transition period for any potential loss in revenues due to implementation of tax. The states agreed on this new scheme with this specific assurance on 2017. Attorney General of India, who according to the Constitution is supposed to be the highest law officer of the land, took a highly confusing decision on the issue when the central government has referred it to him. The AG on principle agreed to the view that states should be compensated as per the law. But he placed the responsibility to GST Council for deciding the modalities of compensation. The GST Council opines that it cannot compel the centre to compensate by borrowing. In this dubious federal crisis the only truth is huge loss for the states. Amidst the GST row the honorable Finance Minister, the alumnus of one of the premier educational institute blamed the *act of God* for revenue shortfall and defended the Centre's stand of not paying GST compensation to states. Shrugging off any financial central responsibility the states are offered with two equally problematic options of borrowing by setting special RBI window with clear objective of putting them on further financial dreariness.

The trend towards centralization is also evident in the Terms of Reference (ToRs) for the 15th Finance Commission (FC). It is entrusted to examine along others, whether revenue deficit grants should be provided at all for the State Governments (ToR5), and to recommend measures for controlling "populist measures by the States" [ToR 7(viii)]. Such directions not only compel the Finance Commission to go beyond its constitutional mandate, but also reveal how non-

elected bodies are being misused to constrain the fiscal space of the States. This not only weakens the foundations of fiscal federalism but also runs against the basic principles of cooperative federalism and a sense of distrust develops in overall polity.(Ghosh:2020)

The constitution of PM-Cares Relief fund and situating it above CAG audit jurisdiction is another bone of contention in the sociopolitical and financial relationship between the union and state governments. It is clear use of pandemic crisis to upheld partisan interest. This fund is created under the umbrella of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) contributions. But the central government has decided to keep Chief Minister's Relief Fund and State Relief Funds for COVID19 out of CSR purview. This is a direct dis-incentive measure towards corporate donation for the states. Surprisingly this exclusion is done merely by issuing a circular from the Ministry of Corporate Affairs. It is simply an attempt to divert funds from States to Centre. It is not only illegal but also *ultra vires* the Companies Act, 2013, and is also unconstitutional by making an arbitrary distinction between two identical entities set up for same statutory purpose, i.e., the PM Cares Fund and the State Funds to fight Covid-19. Amitava Chaudhury, President IAPR, the famous RTI activist has categorically mentioned in two episodes of *RTI & Good Governance* series that RTI application for detail of the PM Cares has been rejected on the plea that this Fund is not a Public Authority under the ambit of Section 2(H) of the RTI Act, 2005. (Chaudhuri:You Tube:Ep:5)

The unilateral decision of the central government to suspend MPLADS for two years and diversion of the funds to the Consolidated Fund of India is another blow to the concept of fiscal cooperative federalism. It is definitely anti-federal centralization of financial resources burdening the states. In times of extreme health crisis, like the COVID19 situation, local level relief works seriously gets affected for this decision. The moment the fund allotted to MPLAD scheme is transferred to the Consolidated Fund of India it becomes a monopoly for the union government to decide the rule of games regarding its allocation depriving the separate local needs and the state priorities.

'One India, One Agriculture Market' slogan declared on June 3, 2020 is an open declaration of the centralizing objective of union government. Central government has introduced three anti-federal major agricultural market reforms acts in monsoon session: The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act 2020, (removing cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, onion

and potatoes from the domain of Essential Commodities Act list and putting them in private hands the government has directly touched the issue of food and nutrition of the people with far reaching consequences). The Farming Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, and The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020. PM Modi has defined the passage of these bills as a “watershed moment” for India’s farmers. “Farmers have been given new independence in agriculture. They will now have more options and opportunities to sell their produce.” But still farmers are protesting all over India. Several farmer groups have expressed that the farmers of different areas are apprehending of larger corporate exploitation. P. Sainath founder editor of the *People’s Archive of Rural India* said in an interview that the Bills are an attempt to wipe out the fortunes of farmers simply. These three inter-linked acts reflect most concerted entry of the Centre into state sphere of agriculture as per the constitution. This trio ordinances clearly attack on states’ limited revenue resources. The states cannot impose any market fee, levy and cess by their APMC (Agricultural Produce Market Committee) Act or any other state law. After depriving the states of the revenue, they earlier earned through sales tax by replacing it through centrally controlled GST, this is another attack for financially weakening the states and making them more dependent on the Centre. COVID -19 has made it clear that protecting agriculture as a state subject in Indian federalism would be a key economic, political, social and cultural battle in the coming years.

The attempted Labour law and governance reform (LLR) has proved to be equally dangerous. Annulment of labor laws, a product of long years of struggles of the working class of our federal democracy is directly destroyed by making the states allies. Facing serious labour unrest over last decades in different areas the centre has permitted the state governments to go ahead with labour reforms since labour falls under the Concurrent List in the Constitution. It is stated that the suspension of labour laws for the next three years will help the industry overcome the present crisis. It is needless to say that this decision is more political than economic. Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and Odisha—have amended the Factories Act, 1948 during the lockdown to increase the maximum number of working hours per day from 8 to 12 and maximum working hours from 48 to 72 hours per week. This decision would surely reduce female workforce participation and will impose a "gender penalty” besides



other detrimental effects. According to a Business Today Report of September 2, 2021 the Indian female labour participation has already dropped to 16.1%. The ILO has also criticized it and calls for a transition to a "decent working time" to ensure health and safety, work–life balance, promote gender equality, enhance productivity, and facilitate worker choice and influence over working hours.

### ***Stop Talking:***

Debates and discourses are the cardinal feature of federal democracy all over the world. In the monsoon session began on September 14, 2020 the central government through a simple notification has abolished the question hour using the excuse of COVID19 to murder the basic ideals of federal democracy. The opposition parties strongly criticized the move in vain and was quick enough to implement the same in different opposition ruled states with success.

### ***Health Fiasco:***

The pandemic on a whole has badly exposed the limitations of India's health system and its highly privatized nature which is increasingly going out of common people's reach. According to a recently published estimate in India two persons are drowned below the poverty level every minute to meet the medical expenses. (IFPRI:2020) The launch of digital health card with much fanfare may yield rich electoral dividends as instrument for data mining of citizens. But addressing health issues of the commoners will be taken up hardly. The real need stands exposed because of different media reports regarding acute shortage of critical care equipments, lack of testing facility, lack of proper protective gears for doctors and health workers and also increasing shortage of hospital space also. The overall budgetary expenditure by Centre and states in FY2020 estimates that healthcare is merely 0.31% percent of GDP. The Union Government in the year FY2021-22 with a lot of fanfare has increased the health budget to Rs. 2.23 lakh crore from the earlier years Rs. 94,452 crores. In government terminology this is an increase of 137%. But in reality it is only 0.34% of GDP. There was a clear recommendation of the National Health Policy (NHP) 2017 to increase health expenditure to 2.5-3% of GDP to improve the health sector of India and that has been violated in the context of pandemic even. (The Wire Science:01.02.21) The highly restricted access to healthcare during lockdown – where focus remained solely on

Covid 19, has led to many avoidable deaths due to other medical causes. In an RTI application mentioned by Amitava Chaudhuri, President IAPR it is stated that in response to one of their RTI application a spokesperson from the budget division of the Ministry of Health has responded by saying that “there is no dedicated budget-head for the COVID19 pandemic in the detailed demand for grant-in-aid for 2020-21”.(Chaudhuri:You Tube:Ep:7)

The medical management of COVID19 pandemic is also a matter of concern for the union-state relationship. Initial classification of the zones in red, orange and green has generated strong criticism from several states. The states quite naturally being the direct authority in dealing with pandemic have demanded more autonomy. It is worthwhile to remember here that the central guidelines for managing COVID19 were formulated under the Disaster Management Act of 2005 and as per the Section 11(2) of this Act state consultations are mandatory for formulating and furtherance of National Plan. But in this case no consultation has been made with the state. Moreover, the arbitrary inspections of central teams in selected disease infected states also have created cracks in mutual trust in the federal relationship.

Covid-19 has not been any kinder to our resource-starved population in India, and definitely has overburdened the healthcare management. The first wave of the pandemic saw an unprecedented rush to secure drugs, critical equipment, hospital infrastructure, and skilled manpower through 2020. Fortunately due to the relentless work of medical workers of all categories and some noble social works by some individuals and organizations and some early measures stymied a large-scale negative impact on India. In 2021, despite the advancements in the vaccination programme, infrastructure, treatment protocols, and relentless efforts of our medical and sanitation fraternity, we have lost thousands of precious lives to the second, more virulent tsunami. Side by side another pandemic in all probability silently has already grabbed the society and the result of that are yet to be calculated in detail. The Global Financing Facility, which has been tracking the impact of Covid-19 on maternal and child services after the first wave in 2020, has already flagged disconcerting dips in child immunization, outpatient consultations, and rising risk of complications from pregnancy.(Bhattacharya &Anand:2021)

India began a partial liberalization of the economy in the 1980s, but it was after the New Economic Policy of 1991 it fully embraced the new strategy. Liberalization, privatization and

globalization (LPG) became declared official policies. The role of the public sector was scaled down from its commanding heights. Health and education became two sectors where private investments started to pour in because of instant return and high profitability. Inequalities and exclusions in these two sectors soon became rampant. The poor and the middle class are pushed out completely. Infectious diseases like malaria, leprosy, small pox which were eradicated earlier, reappeared. In other words, since the 1990s the already crumbling India's public health system started signs of cracks due to lack of public investment and political commitment to positive health policy aiming at social change. As a result, when the pandemic hit India, its health system was completely vulnerable and unable to meet the new challenge.

### ***Social Division:***

Taking the opportunity of the turbulent situation arising out COVID19 the state authority very quickly posed several unsavory sociopolitical challenges before Indian federation. This includes legitimization of religion and caste based divisions in identifying the patient, division between *vande bharat* workers and migrant workers, rapid pace of privatization of key sectors without caring a bit about the people of the soil and of course suspension of any form of dissent through arrest, imprisonment and withdrawal of legal facilities. Concept of criticality which lies at the epicenter of both democracy and federalism is gradually losing its ground in a very fast speed. Compliance obligation, for both individuals and constituting states, has become the domineering ideology. Simultaneously common individuals are receding more and more in the background and the idea of boundary construction at different levels is gaining increasing social and moral justification.

### ***Search for Survival:***

In this segment let us try to formulate some points for providing some relief in the centre-state relations supplying oxygen to the federal ethos required for the state and individuals. In this section preference is given in digging into some ideas provided by famous political scientist Ashutosh Varshney almost seven years before in his article "How has Indian Federalism Done?" (Varshney:2013)The situation of Indian polity has undergone oceanic change after 2013 when the article was published, but still some of its elements remain relevant. It is felt from the clues

of Varshney that the approach of our society and polity towards Indian federation needs to be changed. From the early period of Indian federation political parties, the leadership, the media, the citizens and even academicians are used to decipher Indian federation in terms of binary. The oft-assumed binary is that the stronger the states are the weaker the centre and the vice versa. But now it's perhaps the time to draw a new formula where both can be simultaneously strong and powerful. Varshney makes a plea for understanding the concept of Indian federalism in relation to Indian nationalism.

There are predominantly four social diversities contributing towards the formation of modern Indian polity: language, tribe, caste and religion and all require great care to maintain proper social and political fiber. At the same time it is undoubtedly true that India's federalism is fundamentally rooted in two simultaneous pursuits of nationhood. Firstly, an embrace of state-based cultural diversities and secondly a commitment to the larger pan Indian political community. This spirit needs to be respected and reserved carefully. At the same time we must remember that the dispersed and crosscutting nature of India's ethnic configuration has also contributed to the survival of federalism. So any kind of gross trend towards assimilation from any sector should be prohibited by all means. Socio-cultural diversities of the land can never be compromised as it is the key to our internal and external security concerns. Secular or composite nationalism should be our guiding principle and that is of course different from either long prevalent melting pot approach or present majoritarian nationalist approach, which is essentially fundamentalist in nature. Instead of emphasizing on the idea of "nation-state" our focus could be shifted in building up "state-nation", where a citizen should be a part of larger nation keeping his/her all other socio-cultural identities, like sex, caste, religion, linguistic identities including the state related federal identity unharmed. This can help in maintaining the multiple identities of the citizens in a complementary way sans confrontations. All cultural and social variations should be equally preserved with same vigor and without any attempt to trimming them down. Side by side, regarding the distribution of fiscal resources there should be a continuous attempt to flatten the economic diversity by making access to financial reserve equal for all. All of these are of utmost importance in developing a strong centre in the context of strong states as well.

Another important formulation for reconciling federal problems can be drawn from the famous pragmatic American thinker John Dewey almost a century ago.(Ostrom:1979) In his famous work on “The Public and its Problems”(1927) a very interesting formulation has been provided by Dewey. His central focus was on developing the method of “intelligent cooperative experimentation” for solving the problems of federal polity. He at the beginning has rejected the language discourse inherent in the theory of state as the very moment we utter the term “state” a score of intellectual ghosts arise to obscure our vision drawing into consideration logical relationship of various ideas, far away from real human activity. Dewey has suggested to avoid this inherent trap of the state and to focus on human activities and thereby to highlight the concept human behavior, which have consequences for others. So instead of state attention must be focused on public. Public, to Dewey is a body of individuals all of whom are “affected by the indirect consequences of a transaction to such an extent” that it is deemed necessary to have those consequences symmetrically cared for. Dewey has further suggested that in determining how good a particular state is, we have to look at the degree of organization of the public and the performance level of the officers in carrying their functions with care for public interests. Dewey has the belief that federalism enables concurrent and overlapping self governing communities to function as articulated and self conscious publics capable of regulating affairs with beneficial consequences.

***Arise Awake Righteousness:***

The present author believes that this formulation of Dewey is extremely relevant in the context of postmodern neo-liberal federations which are marked by the existence of multiple organizations and institutions of both national and international dimensions. In this context along with extremely high flow of media inputs awareness generation is not much difficult among the public. But the question is how the public would prefer to behave particularly in the context of rampant fake news? If they choose to exert their identity in rationalistic way there are several opportunities and similarly if they prefer to remain as irrational nonentities bowing before the strong power holders as dictated voters merely, there is adequate arrangement to make it happen. In other words, the ball is on the court of the public. Following the formulation of John Dewey thus, the success of a federation depends upon the capacity of its public to behave justifiably.

In this regard we must remember that November 19, 2021 is definitely a day for victory of the Indian struggling peasants against the three infamous agricultural laws passed during pandemic. Time has not yet come to evaluate its subsequent and covert consequences but for the first time in recent years popular demand received positive government response at least overtly. The Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha passed the bill to repeal the three farm laws on November 29, 2021 in the same manner in which the laws were brought, that is, without any discussion. This naturally has generated a faith on the role of popular protest, though we have to remember faith and success are not synonymous and perhaps some extra caution is perhaps the need of the hour.

Now, to end the long discussion in short, the final submission is that the battle against corona virus is a long drawn process and is not going to end very quickly. A virus neither recognizes the national boundary nor the state boundaries. The pressure to foot the cost of lockdown bill is hitting the centre hard but it is harder for states. Coordinated pandemic policies involving both central and states with equal respect and knowledge reserve, involving experts of public health, economy, diplomacy and other segments of governance can only bring some interim reliefs, though solution is still far away. Unfortunately it seems that both at the union and state levels the governments are geared mostly in making arrangements and institutionalizing processes that could serve their ruling dispensation afterwards. Now if India chooses to fight the COVID-19 war with the street smart politicians as leaders whose sole focus is on gaining electoral numbers without broad vision, severe crises will surely grapple us in the coming period and many of those would come from completely unknown sectors. Fight against COVID-19 is not a battle against corona virus only but a fight against stupidity, unscientific mindset/action, superstitions, vested interests – different layers of power play are involved in it in a vicious way. So we have to be very cautious. The primary change has to be initiated by the government of India. It must redefine its responsibilities towards its citizens adopting inclusive approach including universal social welfare for all citizens. This is the ethical implication of COVID-19 crises before Indian federation. We sincerely believe that defeating Covid-19 is extremely important but the victory must never be pyrrhic for our federal structure and ideology. Indians have to decide whether in near future we are going to say that India “was” a federal system or India “is” the most powerful federation. The entire play actually rests upon the “public” of India.

\*\*

## References-

1. Awasthy, S.S.(2013).*Indian Government and Politics*.New Delhi.Har-Anand Publications.
2. Bhattacharya.Siddhartha & Anand Abhisek. (2021). “Are we Ready for the Silently Approaching Wave of Non-Communicable Diseases?” in *Forbes India Blogs*. June 21, 2021.
3. Burman, Anirudh. (2020). “How Covid19 is Changing Indian Federalism”, *East Asia Forum*, July 28, 2020
4. Chanakya. (2020). “Covid-19 will lead to a new federal compact”. *Hindustan Times*. June 7, 2020
5. Das, Koustav. “Why Indian Farmers are opposing historic farm bills”. *India Today*. September 24, 2020
6. Editorial.(2020) “Indian Federalism & Covid 19”, *Economic & Political Weekly*, April 18, 2020
7. Editorial.(2020). “ Reason of the State and COVID 19”. *Economic & Political Weekly*, March 28, 2020
8. Gatade, Subhash. (2020). “Crisis For The People, Opportunity For The Corporate-Government Nexus : NSI”. *New Socialist Initiative*. May 29, 2020
9. Ghosh, S.Kabir. (2020). “Erosion of Fiscal Federalism in the times of COVID19”. *The Hindu*. May 25, 2020
10. IFPRI Survey. (2020).“How COVID-19 may affect household expenditures in India: Unemployment shock, Household Consumption, and Transient Poverty”, in [http://southasia.ifpri.info/2020/07/02/how-covid-19-may-affect-household-expenditures-in-india-unemployment-shock-household-consumption-and-transient-poverty/?fbclid=IwAR0wO3aMp0wHpFLZPDwIgmekC3HheEhPrIcZFoMN8hAJGYZgfvONc\\_vUO](http://southasia.ifpri.info/2020/07/02/how-covid-19-may-affect-household-expenditures-in-india-unemployment-shock-household-consumption-and-transient-poverty/?fbclid=IwAR0wO3aMp0wHpFLZPDwIgmekC3HheEhPrIcZFoMN8hAJGYZgfvONc_vUO) accessed on 10.08.20
11. Khosla,Romi.(2020). “In a Post-COVID-19 World, the Only Way Ahead for India Is Economic Federalism”. *The Wire*. May 16, 2020.
12. Maniktala, Parth .(2020). “Diluting Federalism In The Fight Against COVID-19 Pandemic”, *Outlook*,April 27,2020
13. Ostrom, Vincent.(1979) “Dewey and Federalism: So near and Yet so Far”. *Publius* , Autumn,Vol. 9, No. 4, Federalism as Grand Design (Autumn, 1979), Oxford University Press.
14. “Reaffirm Cooperative Federalism”. (2020). *The Hindu*. May 13, 2020
15. [Shekhar Gupta](#).(2020) “Coronavirus has brought India’s almighty Centre back, and Modi’s unlikely to give up control”. *The Print*. 25 April, 2020.

16. Singh, Pritam.(2020). “Centre's Agricultural Marketing Reforms Are an Assault on Federalism”. *The Wire*, June 20, 2020.
17. Sinha, Dipa.(2021)”Explained:Despite Govt Claims, India’s Health Budget Only around 0.34%”. *The Wire Science*, February1, 2021.
18. [Stepan](#),C.Alfred.(1999) “Federalism and Democracy: Beyond the U.S. Model”. *Journal of Democracy*. [Johns Hopkins University Press](#),Vol. 10, Number 4, October 1. 2020.
19. Varshney, Ashutosh.(2013). “How has Indian Federalism Done?” *Studies in Indian Politics*, 1(1),2013 Lokniti, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies.
20. Vijayan, Pinarayi. (2020). “Challenges in the Midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic”. *Economic & Political Weekly*. June 13, 2020 Vol. LV.No 24.
21. Yasir,Sameer & Gettleman,Jeffrey. (2020). “India’s Economy Shrank Nearly 24 Percent Last Quarter”.*New York Times*, August 31,2020
22. You Tube Channel *RTI & Good Governance*, Episodes 5 & 7, [www.youtu.be/V2odc8IyLko&t=84s](http://www.youtu.be/V2odc8IyLko&t=84s)