



**THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
KAMALA NEHRU COLLEGE  
UNIVERSITY OF DELHI**  
*ORGANISES ITS FIRST*



**AHILYABAI HOLKAR ANNUAL LECTURE SERIES**  
*ON*

**THE POLITICAL  
QUESTION OF  
FEDERALISM IN INDIA**





**Prof. (Dr.) Pavitra Bhardwaj**  
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Convener

*BY*  
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**REGISTER NOW**



1<sup>ST</sup> JULY 2025  
3:45 PM ONWARDS  
GOOGLE MEET

Dr. Monica Chutani (TIC)  
Dr. Kamal (AIC)

Iram Ali & Aaradhika  
(Student Coordinators)

## ABSTRACT

This session will feature Sarath Pillai speaking on the political question of federalism in India. Federalism in India has never been a settled issue but a deeply contested space shaped by the country's constitutional history, political struggles, and linguistic complexities. While the Constitution refers to India as a "Union of States," it does not use the terms "federation" or "central government." Yet, "federation" remains a sui generis political and linguistic category across many Indian languages, reflecting a broader aspiration for regional autonomy and power-sharing.

How early constitutional debates, especially in the 1930s and 1940s, reflected competing visions of the Indian state ranging from strong centralization to demands for robust provincial autonomy will also be examined. Also how colonial categories like "central government" carried over into postcolonial governance, often overshadowing more federal impulses will be explored. Language too, both legal and vernacular, has played a critical role in shaping India's federal imagination. At a time when centralizing tendencies appear to be intensifying, this session invites a reflection on the possibilities of recovering and revitalizing a political language that can meaningfully sustain federalism in India.