

DETERMINANTS OF REGIONALISM IN INDIA

Dr. K.Babu Rajendra Prasad

Assist. Professor of Political Science
Government First Grade College,
Mariyammanahalli-583222

Abstract

“Regionalism at present a fairly widespread phenomenon in Indian political system. In this paper an attempt has been made to focus on the historical perspectives of regionalism and to find out how far and to what extent regionalism poses a challenge to the national politics in India asserting autonomy and what are the basic factors influencing regionalism. Finally paper concludes with some suggestive measures to protect regionalism.”

Keywords: Region , Regionalism, Federalism, Nationalism

Introduction

India is a multicultural, multilingual and to be precise, a multifaceted nation. In the midst of all these factors it is obvious that feelings of regional oneness. It does not turn out to be wrong if we argue that these feelings of people have given rise to what is today known as Regionalism. In Indian context, regionalism refers those people in who try to assert their love on their region through means of socio-cultural and political aspects and to develop their regional power. The roots of regionalism in India lie on different aspects like linguistic, cultural, political, economic etc. basis.

Region and Regionalism

Region as a geographical unit, is delimited from each other. Region as a social system with distinct identity, language, culture and tradition.

Nationalism and Regionalism

Nationalism is the adherence to the principle of putting your nation first, its economic well-being, its political stability, historical heritage and relative position among the family of nations. Regionalism is almost similar in its goals, drives and objectives, and methods as nationalism. Their difference only lies on geography,

Federalism and Regionalism

Federalism is a political concept in which a group of members are bound together by covenant, it is a system of government in which sovereignty is constitutionally divided between a central governing authority and constituent political units (such as states or provinces). Regionalism is a political ideology that focuses on the interests of a particular region or group of regions.

Regionalism: Regionalism is feeling or an ideology among a section of people residing in a particular geographical space characterized by unique language, culture etc., The term “regionalism” has two connotations. While positive regionalism is a welcome thing in so far maintaining as it encourages the people to develop a sense of brotherhood and commonness on the basis of common language, religion or historical background. The negative sense regionalism is a great threat to the unity and integrity of the country.

Significance:

Regional diversity in India has assumed political significant in the form of regionalism. If it taken beyond a limit, then regional feeling comes direct conflict with the feeling of nationalism, leading to the emergence of the process of disintegration and secessionism. According to Morris Jones, regionalism has posed a serious threat to the national unity and integrity. The need of the hour is to integrate these regional forces and tendencies within the national mainstream so that the nation gains strength and prosperity.

Objectives:

- 1.To understand the meaning of regionalism;
- 2 To focus on the historical perspectives of regionalism.
- 3.To identify determinants of regionalism.
4. To provide suggestions based on study.

History behind the rise of Regionalism

The Indian state was confronted with demands for the reorganization of the states (provinces or federating units) immediately after independence. Upon the recommendation of the States Reorganization Committee (SRC) of 1953, headed by Fazal Ali, the provinces were recognized on the basis of language. The larger province of Bombay was divided into Marathi-speaking Maharashtra and Gujarati-speaking Gujarat. Punjab was trifurcated into a Punjabi-speaking Punjab, Hindi-speaking Haryana, and Pahari-speaking Himachal Pradesh. The Kannada-speaking areas of Bombay were transferred to the state of Mysore/ Karnataka, and similarly, Telugu-speaking areas of the Madras province were transferred to Andhra Pradesh. The linguistic reorganisation looked complete and the first phase of reorganisation of the states within the Indian union was over. Then came the demands for autonomy in the north-eastern region. The aspirations of the tribal groups were soon recognised by the Indian state. The states of Manipur, Tripura, and Meghalaya were formed in the late 1970s. The North Eastern Frontier Agency (NEFA) was granted statehood under the name of Arunachal Pradesh in 1987. The restive Nagas and the Mizos, however, were granted statehood only after violent encounters with the Indian state. The Naga insurgency continues until the present day, even after the formation of the state of Nagaland in 1956. The Mizo insurgency subsided after the 1973 agreement which declared the Mizo district of Assam as a Union Territory. Mizoram was later granted full state status after the 1986 agreement with the rebel leader Laldenga. However; this did not completely exhaust the aspirations for autonomous administration or statehood by many groups. The cultural differences within the overarching linguistic unity, in many cases, led to demands for statehood within the primarily language-based federating units of the Indian union. The Telengana movement raged on until the

1980s in the less developed Telugu-speaking region in Western Andhra Pradesh, which was under the rule of the Nizam of Hyderabad and was later merged with the more economically developed, Telugu-speaking, coastal Andhra Pradesh. The less assertive Kosal movement in western Orissa still continues. Similarly, the movements for Chhattisgarh in Madhya Pradesh, the Jharkhand movement in Bihar, Orissa, and Madhya Pradesh, and the movement for Uttaranchal/ Uttarakhand in Uttar Pradesh, have been active since the 1950s until they were granted statehood in 2001. This has led to an intensification of demands for autonomy from other ethno cultural groupings within Indian society. Recent forceful demands for statehood for Vindhyanal, Vidarbha, Haritdesh, Coorg, Kamtapur, Gorkhaland, Madhyadesh, Bundelkhand, and Purvanchal have demonstrated the rising aspirations of sub cultural group-ings to have their own autonomous administrative units. In the 1950s and 1960s, in the wake of the movement for constitutional recognition of Hindi as the national language, there was a lurking suspicion in the minds of the political elite in the southern states of India that the elite of the northern region- perceived to be mainly of Aryan racial stock- were intent on subjugating the predominantly Dravidian south through their language policy. The anti-Hindi movement in the south had assumed violent proportions and there were demands for the secession of southern states and establishment of Dravidstan. The Indian state demonstrated remarkable wisdom in accommodating the demands of the southerners and recognised English as an official language along with Hindi.

Determinants of Regionalism in India

- 1. Geographical factor:** Sometimes people live, in such area which appears as a separate region cut off from the rest of the country and thereby may give rise to feelings of separatism among the inhabitants of the region.
- 2. Economic factors:** There are certain regions in the country where industries and factories have been concentrated, educational and health facilities are adequately provided, communication network has been developed, rapid agricultural development has been made possible. But there are also certain areas where the worth of independence is yet to be realized in terms of socioeconomic development.
- 3. Political and Administrative Factors:** Political parties, particularly regional parties and local leaders exploit the regional sentiments to capture power.
- 4 Historical and cultural factors:** The historical and cultural components interpret regionalism by way of cultural heritage, folklore, myths, symbolism and historical traditions.
- 5 Caste and religion:** It leads to dogmatism, orthodoxy and obscurantism.
- 6. Nationallanguage:** The efforts of the Central govt., after independence, to make Hindi the national language led to widespread agitations and led to the rise of regionalism. The Southern states thought this as a major step by the center to impose its will on them.
- 7.Ideology:** Regionalism has also emerged because of the attempts made by the government to improve a particular or ideology on people who desire to follow a different path.

8. Demand for autonomy: The desire of the various units of the Indian federal system to maintain their sub cultural regions and greater degree of self-government has promoted regionalism and given rise to demand for greater autonomy.

9. Politicians: To enhance their authority and power and they didn't hesitate propagating regionalism among people.

10. Socio-cultural Factor: - Socio-cultural differences, regional caste, sub caste and kinship differences motivate regional feeling within a broad socio-linguistic area.

11. The continuous neglect of people belonging to certain region within a state and not allowing them to participate in the activities of politics to assert themselves, using up their resources without concerning them etc. led to agitations to decentralize the governmental activities.

12. The failure of people to relate their own regional interest with that of the national interests.

13. Growing population. 14. Interstate dispute among states. 15. Feeling of separateness between North India and South India. 16. Discriminatory attitude of the central government towards the state governments as claimed by the states. 17. Growing importance and powerful role of the regional leadership. 18. The role of neighboring countries in inciting regional feelings in certain parts of the country. 19. Lower level of infrastructural facilities in backward states:

MEASURES AND SOLUTIONS TO PREVENT REGIONALISM

As long as the political leaders thrive for regional development without discriminating against outsiders, Regionalism is good for India. According to us, the measures to protect regionalism are as follows.

1. Development of Transport and Communication: Transport and communication network should be improved so that people of a region may find it easier to visit other regions and develop friendly relations with people therein.

2. Acculturation: The cultural distinctiveness of regional groups delimits the interaction between different groups. Frequent cultural contacts should be promoted to break the regional barriers and to develop the nationalist spirit.

3. Abolition of Regional Parties; The regional parties which play a dirty role in exploiting the regional feelings of the people should be banned.

4. Appeal through Mass-Media: Mass media, particularly electronic media are powerful agents of social change.

5. The neglected areas must be given more importance so that they feel a part of the national mainstream.

6. The union government must not interfere in the affairs of the state unless it is unavoidable for national interest.

7. A proper law should be passed to execute the political leaders supporting regionalism just to gain political attention.

8. Problems of people must be solved in a peaceful and constitutional manner.

9. The different departments for different states can be constituted at central government level so that that specific department can look upon state critically and suggest the ways to government for the upliftment of the state.
10. Except for issues of national importance, the states should be given freedom to run their own affairs.
11. There should be a nominal participation of all the states at central level government.
12. A system of national education that would help to overcome regional feelings and develop an attachment towards the nation should be introduced.
13. Election Commission should lay down some norms for regional parties against regionalism.
14. As much as possible, public policies depicting the idea of nationalism should be introduced and there should be uniformity in schemes and policies for all the states.
15. Irrespective of the political party whose government is the state, the central government should not be biased with any state. Funds, packages, allocations should be equally distributed.
16. Proper committees should be set up to look into the matters where there is demand for different state. As such the demand for new states has to be effectively scotched and conceded after only after careful scrutiny of each case on the basis of economic development and administrative convenience.
17. Non-Government Organization's should come forward to promote idea of nationalism among people. They should spread awareness of living by unity in the diversity.
18. Good schemes for the development in terms of industrialization, modernization, agriculture, finance, should be introduced in these areas.
19. Although, India is largest democracy in the world, yet it has to get a mature stage. All the pre-requisite of vibrant democracy in India is not available because of variety of reasons like (a) There is a lack of democratic training. (b) There is a lack of well educated society. (c) There is lack of committed political parties. (d) There is a lack of committed political leadership. (e) There is a lack of initiative for women empowerment. (f) Neglect of girls education. (g) There is lack of inter-party and intra-party democracy. (h) Passive role of civil society. (i) believes in traditionalism. (j) Widespread poverty and many more.
20. The Union government must not interfere in matters of State and should do so only when the situation is supposed to cause harm to national integrity and security.
21. In the course of struggles for linguistic States, the Centre apparently developed a set of four formal and informal rules in its reorganisation efforts:
 - 1) The first rule which began as a practice but was formalized in the Constitution itself in 1963 was that recognition would not be granted to those groups which made secessionist demands.
 - 2) The second rule, a heritage of the partition of the Indian subcontinent is that the regional demands based upon religious differences will not be entertained. The case of Punjab fits into both the cases.
 - 3) The third rule is that the demand for a province should be able to mobilise large numbers of people from the concerned region in sustained agitations to persuade the Central Government to recognise that the demand enjoys "popular support."

4) The final rule is that the Centre would not agree to thereorganisation of a province if the demand was made by only one of the important language groups concerned, 21. Removal of Regional Imbalance:

22. Restructuring of the society

Conclusion

Regionalism should not be considered as the sole reason for failure to achieve national integrity but it is one of the main causes. As a principle, regionalism need not be feared as anti-national, against other regions or so, unless and until it turns into a non-violent militant movement. Hence there is principally nothing bad in following regionalism. Nor does the growth of regional values and consolidation of regional forces as such pose a challenge to the central administration of the country. The regional parties should not cross their limits in this aspect and try not to invoke these feelings among people. To sum up it may be argued that like certain objective conditions such as compact geographical area, distinct history, common culture and a separate mother tongue largely helped to create a strong sense of regional identity among the people of a part region, notwithstanding the formation of an integrated and united state in independent India. In addition to this, their relatively backward socio-economic position in comparison to the people of other region created a sense of material deprivation between them. Regionalism is an issue that the India has faced even before the time of independence and will have to keep on facing. If the politics of India continues to be played out on regional, regional or even a cultural plank, the regional aspirations of many will continue to be encouraged, and more and more demand of separation fired either by a Xenophobic belief or otherwise will continue to threaten the secular and Federal fabric of our constitution. But at the same time we have to look to other angle also, we had to solve the problems of region which is demanding separate state. But these problems should be solved through talks not by force. If a particular region is demanding their different state, central government should deal with this problem seriously and if their demand is justified, then they should be provided separate state as in the case of Odessa and Andhra Pradesh.

“United we Stand, Divided we fall”

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