REGIONALISM IN INDIA: SOCIAL ACCOMMODATION OF IDENTITY

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Abstract:

"Economists usually see this rise in regionalism as hindrance to economic reforms. However, for Federalists and social scientists this is deepening of democracy." There is no single pure model of federation that is applicable everywhere. Rather the basic notion of involving the combination of shared rule for some purposes and self-rule for others within a single social system so that neither is subordinate to the other has been applied in different ways to fit different circumstances. Regionalism has remained perhaps the most potent force in Indian politics ever since independence (1947), if not before. As a study of the interaction between federalism and regionalism in India, this paper seeks to focus on Indian federalism as a method of accommodation of regionalism in India. Federalism is seen here as a social equilibrium, which results from the appropriate balance between shared rule and self-rule.

Keywords: Economicstis. Regionalism, hindrance, economic reforms.

Introduction:

Before the formation of the Constituent Assembly, the Cabinet Mission Plan had "outlines a central government with very limited powers to be confined to foreign affairs, defense and communications" However, the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League could not reach an agreement on the Plan. Further the first report by the Constituent Assembly also envisioned a relatively weak Centre as advocated by the Cripps and Cabinet Mission Plans. "The passing of the India Independence Act and the eventual Partition of India led the Constituent Assembly to adopt a more unitary version of Federalism"Interestingly, Mahatma Gandhi was in favour of a decentralized structure and had expressed a preference for a panchayat or village-based federation.Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru were in favour of a unitary state while Home Minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and many others stood for the cause of federalism. A compromise was reached: Ultimately a healthy compromise was arrived at, to ensure a balance of power between the Centre and States and the Constitution described India as a 'Union of States' implying that its unity is indestructible.There is a big deference between Union of States and United States. First indicates the union has formed the states and second indicates the states have formed the union.

Meaning of Federalism:

Federalism means "A proper respect for state functions, recognition of the fact that the entire country is made up of a Union of separate State governments, and a continuance of the belief that the National Government will fare best if the States and their institutions are left free to perform their separate functions in their separate ways". Federalism is a social concept in which a group of members are bound together by a covenant with a governing representative head. The term Federalism is also used to describe a system of the government in which sovereignty is constitutionally divided between a central governing authority and constituent social units.It is a system of government in which a written constitution divides powers between a central government and regional or sub-divisional governments. Both types of government are supreme within their proper sphere of authority. Both have to consent to any changes to the constitution.Component states often also possess their own constitutions which they may amend as they see fit, although in the event of conflict the Federal constitution usually takes precedence.

Regionalism:

Regionalism is a feeling or an ideology among a section of people residing in a particular geographical space characterized by unique language, culture etc. and the feeling that they are the sons of the soil and every opportunity that exists in their land must be accorded to them first and not to the outsiders. It is a sort of Parochialism. In most of the cases it is raised for expedient social gains. The term Regionalism has two connotations. In the negative sense, it impliesexcessive attachment to one's region is preference to the country or the state. In the positive sense it is a social attribute associated with people's love for their region, culture, language, etc. with a view to maintain their independent identity. 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:

In the contest of IndiaA vast geographic expanse, India's choice of a federal structure was more of a necessity at the time of its inception in 1947. The members of Constituent Assembly believed that the federal structure was required to address the plural set-up in India which was deeply stratified along lines of caste, language and religion. But more than sixty years after independence and despite division of powers clearly laid down in the Constitution, there still exist palpable centre-state tensions relating to issues of the federal structure. The pattern of governance has not been able to bridge the gap in matters relating to centre-state relations. The centre-state tensions have been addressed from time to time, the last exercise was done by Sarkaria Commission. More recently another commission has been set up under Justice Punchhi to make recommendations for ensuring smoother centre-state relations.The politics of territorial governance in India revolves around two variants-economic and social . The Planning Commission reviews and recommends allocation of funds to the states for the purpose of development. The centre-periphery bias for disbursement of funds is much resented by states.The social map of India, at independence, was far from complete. A lot of territorial adjustment and re-adjustment

was to be done to right-size the state keeping in mind the country's manifold diversity, and multiple identities. The number of States in India has thus remained changing. One way of creating a new State has been by up gradation of centrally-ruled Union Territories which today are 7 in number. Up gradation of Union Territories to statehood has remained one method for fulfilling the identity aspirations of ethnically significant people living within the given territory. Statehood means relatively more autonomous powers, and freedom of action within the federation than a Union Territory status affords.

Goal of this paper:

1.Tomake conceptual clarity between Federalism and Regionalism.

2.To focus on Indian federalism as a method of accommodation ofregionalism in India. Federalism is seen here as a social equilibrium, whichresults from the appropriate balance between shared rule and self-rule.

3.To find out reason for birth of Regionalism in India.

3.To advance the following four ideas as a conceptualpreface to the discussion. (A), there is no necessary conflict between federalismand regionalism. The relations between the two may be conflicting as well ascollaborating depending on the manner of accommodation, if any, which isundertaken in a federal system. (B), federation rather than a nation-state, ideal-typically, is better able toaccommodate ethnically distinct regions because while the nation-state demandsuniformity, federalism is based on the recognition of differences. This assumesspecial significance when the top-down approach to federation-building isfollowed.(C) a two-tier federation may not be sufficient to accommodate regionalismof many forms and levels. A tier below the 'states', or 'provinces' with appropriateconstitutional guarantee may be necessary for regional accommodation.(D) regionalization may itself be a technique for ethno-regional accommodationprovided both the constitutional input and a sufficient ethno-regional pressuresfrom below are available. Following this technique, the spill-over effects ofregional discontent are minimized.

Research Methodology:

Discourse research is the key methodology of research in social science and can be used to analyse issues of federalism and regionalism.

Research Design: In view of the objectives of the study listed above, exploratory research design has been adopted. Exploratory research is one, which largely interprets the already available information, and it lays particular emphasis on analysis and interpretation of the existing and available information and it makes use of secondary data.

Sources of data:

        The study is based on secondary data . The data has been collected from various other reports like magazines, journals, published books and official websites. These are also referred to for the present study.

Tools of analysis: The data collected for the study is analysed logically and meaningfully to arrive at meaningful conclusions.

There are various reasons for its emergence of regionalism in Indian Politics such as:

1.Administrative policies: The administrative policies and decisions as well as the developmental plans taken at the national level may not satisfy all people of the country and these people, who remain dissatisfied, may feel that their interest are not properly safeguarded. In such a context they form the regional parties to solve their own problems. That was the how the regional parties like D.M.K, A.D.M.K. the National Conference of Jammu and Kashmir etc., were formed.

2. Religious orthodoxy: India is still not free from ethnic, racial and religious orthodoxy. Sometimes the Regionalism in Indian Politics emerge on these ethnic, racial or religious grounds.That was how the Hindu Mahasabha, Ram Rajya Parishad, Siromani Akali Dal, the Muslim League or even the Telugu Desham party was formed.

3.Language issues:Sometimes the Regionalism in Indian Politics are formed on language issues as well. The D.M.K,A.D.M.K parties of Tamil Nadu, the Telangan Praja Samithi of Andhra Pradesh or the Gorkha League of West Bengal etc. was formed on the basis of this language issue. These parties focuses on the interest of people who speak common language.

4.Sometimes the regional social parties are formed on the initiative of one or a few social leaders. However, these types of regional parties usually do not last long. Since, most of such social parties are dependent on one leader, they generally extinguish when the leader himself dies.

5.Minority interests: Sometices the Regionalism in politics helps to safeguard the minority interests. The Muslim Leaue, the Jharkhand Mukti Morch, the TYC etc. belong to this category of the regional social parties.

6.Sometimes the internal conflicts of the big national parties may pave the ground for the rise of the regional social parties. That laws how the Congress party was divided into several small parties like Congress for democracy, Congress(J)etc.

7.Sometimes a leader of a big national party, if ousted from his other original party, forms a regional party to express his or her grievances. That was how Sri Ajoy mukherjee formed the Bangla Congress or S,t. Mamata Banerjee formed the Tirnamul Congress in Bengal.

8.During the pre-independence days people fought for the country's freedom and a unique sense of oneness, a sense of nationalism had flared up in them which had strengthened the solidarity and integrity of the nation. But after independence that burning sense of nationalism has evaporated and a narrow sense to regional interest has developed. This has also paved the grounds for the emergence of regional social parties.

9. The general decadence of values, too much centralisation of power, dictatorial role of the leaders, negligence to the regional leadership etc. in the national parties have not only weakened their status but also facilitated the rise of numbers of regional social parties both big and small in India.

10.More targeted governance: Division of states means that every state will have its own leaders. Looking at the bigger picture, this means that a government who had to formulate policies for 5 crore people, will now have to do the same for only 2 crores. By simple maths, there will be more efficiency in the administration and less pressure of performance on the governance. Better administration fuels growth.

11.Proximity of capital city: It is a known fact that the capital city is where the people of the state go to air their grievances as all major government offices, judicial houses like state high courts and social quarters are housed there. A new state would more often than not, mean a closer capital city and thus provide relief to the people. This cannot be said about larger states. For e.g. : If a citizen in western UP were to be heard in any of the state commissions or courts, he has to travel over 600 km to Lucknow, spending large amounts of money in an attempt to get justice. Thus, reduced distances between the state capital and peripheral areas would improve the quality of governance and administrative responsiveness and accountability.

12.Proper utilization of central funds: In a larger state, the problem is that the allocation of funds by the centre can never be evenly distributed. So some parts stand to lose and thus remain backwardly developed, while the part which holds maximum social affiliate gains. Dividing states definitely solves this problem.

13.Increased Growth Rate: According to Planning commission data, Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) for Chhattisgarh rose from 3.1% avg growth over 1994-95 and 2001-02 to 8.6% avg since 2004-05. Even Uttarakhand shows similar trend (4.6 % to 12.3 %). Also, the industrial sector in Chhattisgarh grew at 13% over this 5-year period while the growth rate was only 6.7% for Madhya Pradesh. With an efficient and more targeted administration, growth is inevitable.

14.Better Living Standards: Per Capita income of people in Uttar Pradesh rose from Rs.9721 in 2000-2001 to Rs.17349 in 2010-11. The same for Uttarakhand rose Rs.14932 to Rs.44723, much better than its mother state. Over 2004-09,Uttarakhand and Jharkhand have done a better job in reduction of poverty than their mother states reducing the poverty rates by 14.7% and 6.2% respectively while Uttar Pradesh and Bihar could manage figures of 0.9% and 3.2% respectively. These figures speak for themselves.

15.Demand for Telangana valid: Farmers in Telangana have lost irrigation water and witnessed major power cuts. Within the current statehood, Telengana has remained backward and issues have not been sorted out, majorly due to a biased government. Many people think that Naxalites in the Telangana region have a role to play in the region's backwardness. But the truth is, their movements have gathered momentum due to the lack of progress. As the area has been constantly neglected, systematic theft of natural resources has taken place. Division is a necessity here.

16.It offers voters choice. They can choose to vote for different parties at the state and national level, depending on their policies, or choose to move to another state if its policies are chosen. The fact that people and businesses do vote with their feet is one of the reasons that states are forced to reform and improve.

17.Policies and services are better tailored to meet the needs of the communities they directly affect. They are put in place by people who live in those communities and understand their different needs.

18. It ensures that government remains close to the people because the state government argue that they are more in tune with the daily needs and aspirations of people especially relevant to small and isolated places.

19. It encourages development of the nation in a decentralized and regional manner and allows for unique and innovative methods for attacking social, economic and social problems.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like to highlight two issues. First, India's federalreconciliation of regional identity with autonomy has a democratic aspect. Itoperates at two levels. Any social demand for statehood, or sub-statehood, tobegin with, must, first, demonstrate identifiable popular support born of massmobilization, before such demands are conceded to. Secondly, the social institutions achieved (whether a state government, or a regional or tribal council)must be elected by universal adult suffrage in every five years, as it is the normalsocial practice for such representative institutions throughout India. Democracyrather than ethnicity is thus the legitimacy basis of such social institutions. I have argued elsewhere that Indian federalism has provided the institutional terrain within whichvarious 'ethnic nations' in India (e.g., Tamil, Telegu, Bengali, Sikh, Gujarati,Manipuri, or Assamese) have taken shape, defined themselves, and are able toprotect and to celebrate their identity. The underlying principle in various regionalaccommodations of identity in India has remained internal self-determination. Aswe have emphasized in the paper, internal self-determination has remained thepredominant form in which regionalism, and even sub-regionalism, has sought toexpress itself. The regional and sub-regional accommodation of identity in Indiahas served to weaken the bases of social secessionism and separatism while notdefeating the principle of (internal) self-determination (of nations). Long time ago,Joan V. Bondurant (1958) expressed her apprehension about the future unity ofIndia as follows: "But if religious, communal, cultural and linguistic differencesthreaten the unity of India, they present, as well, a challenge to the social Union. For 'unity in diversity' is at once a threat and a promise". Ourstudy strongly suggests that while religio-communal differences in India are still amatter of some serious concern, the threat from the country's cultural and linguisticdifferences has most effectively been met in ways in which diversity has beentransformed into a strength.

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