

# A BIRD'S EYE VIEW ON REGIONALISM IN INDIA

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**Abstract-** To understand regionalism, we need to know various dimensions of the region. Region as a geographical unit, is delimited from each other. Region as a social system, reflects the relation between different human beings and groups. Regions are an organised cooperation in cultural, economic, political or military fields. Region acts as a subject with distinct identity, language, culture and tradition. Hence a person tends to be very loyal to a distinct region more than to the country. Regionalism implies excessive loyalty to one's region or state that tends to pose a danger to national unity. Responsible for regional conflicts in India. Regional conflicts have assumed extreme forms from time to time whether it be the demand for autonomy, river disputes or boundary disputes. Separatist agitations – The Kashmir debate has been raging for several decades now. Anti- Hindi stance as well as demand for state-hood by Tamil Nadu has done irreparable damage to the national identity. Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Uttaranchal and Telangana were states created because of the inter-state disparities. In this regard this paper analyzes regionalism in India causes of it and suggestions for the elimination of excessive regionalism.

**Key Words:** - Regionalism, Region, Common Language, Regional Parties, Re-Organisation

## INTRODUCTION

"India is a large country having continental dimensions and comprising no fewer than 29 States and 7 Union Territories. It is a multi-racial, multi-lingual nation. There are scores of regional languages, various strains of culture and different loyalties, single as well as multiple. Amidst the amazing diversities, it is natural that regional feelings, regional parties, regional institutions and similar other organizations meant for voicing the aspirations of local people and providing forums for them, should emerge. Indeed, with the passage of years, the multi-faceted aspirations, which together may be described as regionalism, have gained strength. It is not a new phenomenon. In fact The growth of this trend can be traced back to the fast unto death by PottiSriramulu over the demand for the creation of Andhra Pradesh which set in motion the reorganization of State along linguistic lines in 1956."

## DEFINITION OF REGIONALISM

If someone is aspiring to or make special efforts to develop one's state or region or to remove poverty & make social justice there, then that cannot be called as regionalism. Regionalism doesn't mean defending the federal features of the constitution. Any demand for separate state, autonomous region or for devolution of power below the state level is also, sometimes confused as regionalism. Regionalism within nation If the interest of one region or a state is asserted against the country as a whole or against another region/state in a hostile way, and if a conflict is promoted by such alleged interests, then it can be called as regionalism. According to M.E. Dimock," regionalism is a clustering of environment, economic social and governmental factors to such an extent that a identity within the whole, a need for autonomous planning, a manifestation of cultural peculiarities and a desire for administrative freedom, are theoretically recognized and actually put into effect.

## REGIONALISM IN INDIA

Regionalism has remained perhaps the most potent force in Indian politics ever since independence (1947), if not before. It has remained the main basis of many regional political parties which have governed many states since the late 1960s. Three clear patterns can be identified in the post-independence phases of accommodation of regional identity through statehood.

First, in the 1950s and 1960s, intense (ethnic) mass mobilisation, often taking on a violent character, was the main force behind the state's response with an institutional package for statehood. Andhra Pradesh in India's south showed the way. The fast unto death in 1952 of the legendary (Telugu) leader Potti Sriramulu for a state for the Telegu-speakers out of the composite Madras Presidency moved an otherwise reluctant Jawaharlal Nehru, a top nationalist leader and it was followed by State re-organisation commission under Fazal Ali paving way for State Reorganization Act, 1956.

Second, in the 1970s and 1980s, the main focus of reorganization was India's North-east. The basis of reorganization was tribal insurgency for separation and statehood. The main institutional response of the Union government was the North-eastern States Re-organisation Act, 1971 which upgraded the Union Territories of Manipur and Tripura, and the Sub-State of Meghalaya to full statehood, and Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh (then Tribal Districts) to Union Territories. The latter became states in 1986. Goa (based on Konkani language (8th Schedule)), which became a state in 1987, was the sole exception.

Third, the movements for the three new states (created in 2000) Chhattisgarh out of Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand out of Bihar and Uttaranchal out of Uttar Pradesh were long-drawn but became vigorous in the 1990s. And the most recent one, we can see with the division of Andhra Pradesh, giving a separate Telangana, which started in 1950s."

### CAUSES OF REGIONALISM

Regionalism in India is a multidimensional phenomenon as it is a complex amalgam of geographical, historical, cultural, economic, politico-administrative and psyche factors. It is not possible to indicate exactly any particular factor, which has been solely responsible for the phenomenon of regionalism. Therefore, all these factors need to be explained briefly.

Some of the most important causes of regionalism in India are as follows.

#### (i) Geographical factors:-

Linguistic distribution along geographical boundaries and isolated settlement pattern induce in people the concept of regionalism. 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.

#### (ii) Historical and Cultural Factors:-

In the Indian scenario the historical or cultural factors may be considered the prime components of the phenomenon of regionalism. The historical and cultural components interpret regionalism by way of cultural heritage, folklore, myths, symbolism and historical traditions. People of a particular cultural group also derive inspirations from the noble deeds and glorious achievements of the local heroes. Nevertheless there are sudden political and economic realities which can be covered under the gamut of historical and cultural factors.

#### (iii) Caste and religion:-

Caste system and religion in Indian society play only a marginal roll in causing regionalism. Only when caste is combined with linguistic preponderance or religion it may cause regional feeling. In the like manner religion is not so significant except when it is combined with linguistic homogeneity or based on dogmatism and orthodoxy or linked with economic deprivation. However, regionalism is usually a secular phenomenon in a relative sense and it can cross-cut the caste affiliation or religious loyalties.

#### (iv) Economic Factors:-

In the present times, uneven developments in different parts of the country may be construed as the prime reason for regionalism and separatism. There are certain regions in the country where industries and factories have been concentrated, educational and health facilities are sufficiently provided, communication net work 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 socio-economic development.

This disparity has caused the feeling of relative deprivation among the inhabitants of economically neglected regions. It has manifested itself in the demand for separate states such as Bodoland or Jharkhand land, Uttarakhand, etc.

#### (v) Political - Administrative Factors:-

Political parties, especially the regional political parties as well as local leaders exploit the regional sentiments, regional deprivation and convert them to solidify their factional support bases. They give place to the regional problems in their election manifesto and promise for political and regional development.

In the present day Indian political scenario some regional parties have strongly emerged and captured power in some states like Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Assam (Regional parties like ADMK, AIDMK in Tamilnadu, TRS in Telangana, Assam Gana Parishad in Assam). That apart some other regional parties like Akali Dal in Punjab, Jharkhand party in Bihar, etc. have posed constant threat to the nation."

### SUGGESTIONS FOR THE ELIMINATION OF REGIONALISM

Sometimes this regionalism, assumes militant forms, as it has done in Punjab. Where in recent years certain groups of misguided youth started running a parallel government and creating chaos. Regionalism must not be allowed to become a shield for militancy, extremism, establishing a reign of terror and carrying on other anti-national activities.

"As for the cures, three suggestions may be made. First, there should be a greater spirit of accommodation on the part of the Central authorities. This implies a reversal of the process of concentration of power which has admittedly been much in evidence in the country, causing resentment among the opposition-governed State. Power and authority must be shared on an equitable basis between the Centre and the constituent units, of the Indian Federation. Harmonious, balanced growth should be the administrations aim, not suppression of local desires and demands.

The regional parties patriotism should not be suspected, regionalism does not weaken India. The majority groups should not become arrogant or obsessed with power. They should be generous towards the minorities, religious, cultural and linguistic Suppression of regional aspirations is not the right remedy.

There are some uniting factors which need to be further promoted. The emergence of a national market, the spread of communications, the influence of all India institutions, the widening transport facilities, the vast network of the electronic media, the establishment of a common structure of formal education almost throughout the country These factors helps to counter regional tendencies."

## CONCLUSION

Regionalism is considered as significant facet of Indian political system. In the current context, many Indian states are demanding autonomy. The reason being that they are blaming the centre for their backwardness. Many states in the North-East are accusing the centre for its “step-motherly” treatment and this has given rise to many militant outfits such a ULFA that are demanding the liberalization of Assam. Same is the situation with Kashmir. Sometimes this war between nationalism and regionalism can have bitter effects. When we ask a person who he is, his reply is either a ‘Maharastrian’ or ‘South Indian’ or ‘Gujarati’; but never an ‘Indian’. This is a worn out yet the best example of how people consider regionalism to be superior to nationalism. At times this leads to political dramas, riots and civil wars. Internal disturbance often proves to be the cause for external aggression. After all these wars between regions, what do they want to prove? Do they want to prove that their region is the most important and has the more significance in the country? All this is a futile, waste of time. We need to see our country as a flower. Each region is one petal of this beautiful flower. Only because of all these petals, this country has bloomed so much. So, instead of withering these petals in regional wars, we should nurture it further to bloom to its fullest potential. Regions form an intrinsic part of our nation. When we perform our duties for the nation, we naturally are doing the same for our region. If all the regions come together, then we will project an image of unity and brotherhood. This will help us to pass the torch of freedom, from generation to generation. Because, ultimately, as the age-old saying goes, ‘united we stand, divided we fall.

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