

REGIONALISM IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT: *regionalism is more a form of “politics of pressure” and a bargaining technique than the feeling of one’s separate existence. It is often seen that the people living in a particular region instigate the regional feelings of the people for the fulfilment of their specific demands and adopt the confrontationalist attitude towards the centre as well as other states. They calm down after the fulfilment of their specific demands and the intensity of their regional feelings comes down. Some people regard regionalism and nationalism as opposed to each other but this is not bound to be so. The need is to establish balance between regional and national interests and in case of the establishment of best balance between them, regionalism assumes a positive form and helps in strengthening unity and integrity of the country. But when regionalism assumes the form of separatism it becomes dangerous and we should be cautious about it. Regionalism is not only the problem pertaining to Indian politics alone rather, it is a world- wide phenomenon and this problem is influencing the politics all over the world in different forms. However, its nature and basis varies in different parts of the world. Even prior to independence, regionalism was used as a tool by the imperialist to promote their policy of keeping India divided regionalism was deliberately encouraged by many with the result that the people of each region thought more in terms of their region rather than of India as a whole. In India, this problem has taken a serious turn after independence and thus, it is posing a serious challenge to the unity and integrity of the country. In the constitution every step was taken to ensure that the feeling of regionalism were cut down from the roots. But with the passage of time, it has become very clear that regional feelings very much thrive in India state and local leaders, in order to maintain or rather strengthen their leadership, very much exploit regional feelings. In this way regionalism is getting more and more deeply entrenched so that its uprooting is becoming an increasingly arduous task.*

MEANING OF REGIONALISM: The general meaning of regionalism is the attachment to a particular region. The feeling of regionalism produces more allegiance and love for one’s own region as compared to one’s country. This feeling may arise either due to the continuous neglect of a particular area by the ruling authorities, or it may spring as a result of increasing political awareness of the henceforth backward people that they have been discriminated against.

A region is a defined territorial unit including particular language or caste, ethnic groups or tribes, particular social setting and cultural pattern, folk dance, music, folk arts etc. According to D.C Gupta, ‘regionalism means love of a particular region in preference to the country’. However, most scholars are of the opinion that regionalism is the consciousness of the people inhabiting a particular part of the country, of their separate existence Yogesh Atal characterized regionalism as essentially a political phenomenon very analogous to the phenomenon of nationalism and added that regionalism is an example of micro. nationalism and a region provides a meaningful frame for overlapping interaction of several social processes and thereby cemented unity instead of disintegration. Forestar, holds the view that regionalism implies that small part of the country which is conscious of its separate existence due to economic, social and geographical reasons.

WHY REGIONALISM DEVELOPED: Why did regionalism grow? It grew due to major five factors. First and foremost among these was the problem of economics and social development of Indian society. After independence, India lacked a balanced economic growth of all parts. There is no doubt that India has made tremendous progress in different spheres. However, the gains of this progress have not accrued equally to all people in all parts of the country. Even today several parts of India are quite backward as compared with other parts, So the emergence of the feeling of regionalism among the people inhabiting these parts is natural phenomenon they were being neglected in the matter of education and job opportunities, in the setting up of plants and factories, in the construction of dams and bridges and above all, in the allocation of central funds and grants.

Language has also played a special role in awakening regionalism. India is a multilingual state. A renowned scholar named Morris Jones holds the view that where as language has strengthened internal unity, it has also given rise to many problems. According to Norman D.Palmer the politics of several Indian states moves around the question of language and the problem of regionalism is linked with language. Linguistic differences remind people of their separate existence and thus regional feeling is created.

India is a vast country having several diversities in its geographical configuration some of its regions are isolated from other regions because of the geographical conditions. Due to this reason, the emotional unity among the people living in these regions and the people living in other parts of India not be developed. Analyzing the geographical location and concentration of tribes Professor Moonis Raza maintained that the Indian tribal population is regional and gives rise to regionalism as the tribal people, who were gradually pushed into ‘refugee’ areas lying on the border or periphery, are now beginning to press its urge for redressal of the historical injustices.

The impact of political factors in the development of regionalism cannot be ignored. Many times, politicians flare up feeling of regionalism among the people to gain power and they launch agitations which are based on regional interests Moreover, the regional politicians think that with the coming into existence of a separate state, the possibility of their acquiring power will increase considerably . so, they instigate on different occasions, the regional feelings based on caste, language, religion economic backwardness etc. although, the regional parties are the product of regionalism, yet after come into existence, they preach and spread regionalism and instigate the regional feelings in order to strengthen their base and to realise their ambition of capturing power. Regional parties, such as D.M.K Telugu Desham, Assam Gana parishad, shiromani Akali Dal and National conference etc, have always taken recourse of regionalism for capturing political power.

During the last few years there has been a decline of the nationalist feeling and at the same regional feelings are growing stronger among the people. The country lacks the leaders of the stature of Mahatma Gandhi, Pt Nehru, Lal Bahadur Shastri etc. Most of the present leaders incite the regional feelings and try to promote their selfish interests.

EXPRESSION OF REGIONALISM IN INDIA: The demand for secession for the Indian union is the worst form of regionalism. This demand poses a serious threat to unity and integrity of India on June 5, 1960 D.M.K the Tamil Nadu regional party, along with another party, named, "we Tamils" launched an agitation for the separation of Madras from Indian union and the formation of an independent state. The agitation burnt flags of India, besides those of Tamil Nadu and declared that the state of Madras, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Karnataka should secede from India and establish the Republic of Dravid Nad. As a result of this 16th amendment to the constitution was undertaken in 1963 which provided for awarding severe punishment to the persons endangering the unity and integrity of India. It also provided for taking oath of allegiance to the constitution of India by the candidates contesting the elections of state legislatures and union parliament. Gradually, the demand for the separate Dravid Nad came to an end and Tamil Nadu joined the national main stream.

In Punjab, the extremist elements had demanded the creation of separate independent state under the name of khalistan this demand had become quite violent. Similarly separatist movements have been launched in North. Eastern states of India from time to time Mizoram and Nagas living in the north-eastern states are demanding an independent Mizoram and Nagaland. Although, after the establishment of the separate states of Mizoram and Nagaland and the conclusion of an accord with Naga leaders, they have given up the demand of separate sovereign states, yet their regional feelings are still very strong. Besides this, these days kashmiri militants are raising the demand for the independent Kashmir. Thus, the demand for separate states is the worst of regionalism in India.

The formation of separate state within the Indian union, according to Dr. D.C Gupta, is the second form of regionalism In India, this demand was made for the first time for the formation of a separate Andhra state, which was accepted in 1953, after this reorganization of state on linguistic basis was undertaken in 1956. However, instead of solving it further complicated the problem. The demands for the formation of separate states came to be raised from different parts of India. In 1960, the state of Bombay was divided and two new states, namely Gujrat and Maharashtra were formed. In 1966, reorganization of Punjab on linguistic basis was undertaken and after dividing Punjab, two separate states, namely Punjab and Haryana were formed. In 1972, Meghalaya was given the status of full statehood and in this way, this process continued on May 31, 1990 a constitutional Amendment bill which provided for granting the status of full statehood to Delhi was introduced in parliament. Besides, even today, Bodotries in Assam Buddhists settled in Ladakh, the people belonging to Dang and Dublas Tribes settled in the southern part of Gujrat and Vidharbha area of Maharashtra are demanding the formation of separate state.

Inter-state disputes also constitute a form of regionalism. Today many states are making demands for the merger of territory belonging to other states and for just division of river water. The states of Maharashtra and Karnataka are laying claims over each other's territory and Shiromani Akali Dal is demanding the inclusion of Punjabi speaking areas of Haryana into Punjab. The state of Haryana is demanding the merger of some territories belonging to Rajasthan and Uttar-Pradesh into Haryana besides this, there are boundary disputes between Maharashtra and Karnataka on Belgaum, between Kerala and Karnataka on Kasargod between Assam and Meghalaya on several hill areas and between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh on Pasighat subdivision etc.

Apart from this, many disputes are going on among various states regarding distribution of interstate river waters. There is a dispute among the state of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujrat and Maharashtra regarding the distribution of Narbada river waters. Another dispute arose among the state of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra-Pradesh over the use and distribution of waters of the Krishna river, another dispute arose over the use of Cauvery water among the state of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka. A river waters dispute is going on between Punjab and Haryana. For a long time a dispute has been going on among Punjab, Haryana Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir regarding the construction of their dam on July 2004, Amrinder Singh, the chief minister of Punjab convened a special session of the Punjab assembly and enacted a legislation to Inroll all past pacts entered into by the state on the sharing of river waters with the neighbouring states. This new law has resurrected the war over water between Punjab and Haryana. Thus, many inter-state disputes are going on and these disputes are based on regionalism.

In all these cases the state chief Ministers behaved like spokesman of independent nation and endeavoured to obtain the maximum for the own state. It appeared as if India was a multi-national country.

CONCLUSION: In the end we come to the conclusion that although, the problem of regionalism cannot be solved fully yet its effect can be minimized. For the achievement of this objective, proper understanding should be developed among the people and attention should be given to the balanced development of the people. Alongwith this the political atmosphere in India need to be purified because the root of many evils arising out of regionalism lie in unprincipled politics.

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