



TOPIC: REGIONAL POLITICS AND ITS EXPRESSION IN INDIA-A STUDY

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ABSTRACT:

Regionalism is the expression of a common sense of identity and purpose by people within a specific geographical region, united by its unique language, culture, language, etc. In a positive sense, it encourages people to develop a sense of brotherhood and oneness which seeks to protect the interests of a particular region and promotes the welfare and development of the state and its people. In the negative sense, it implies excessive attachment to one's region which is a great threat to the unity and integrity of the country. In the Indian context generally, the term 'regionalism' has been used in the negative sense. 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 center 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 was 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 strong- then 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.

KEYWORDS: Regionalism. Indian Politics. Separatism. Pre-independence. National Interests. Imperialist. Government Policy.

Introduction:

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. Forester, 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.

History of Regional Movements in India

The roots of regional consciousness in India can be found in the colonial policies. Differential attitudes and treatment by the British towards princely states and those of the presidencies developed regionalist tendencies among them. British exploitative economic policies completely neglected some regions, giving way to economic disparities and regional imbalances. On the other side, the Indian national movement furthered a pluralistic idea of India. The history of regional movements in India can be traced back to the 1940s Dravida Movement or the Non-Brahmin movement that started in the present day Tamil Nadu. Later, the movement was resulted into the demand of a separate and independent Tamil state. This, in turn, led to several other parties like the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) springing up in the Andhra region, with the demands of separate statehood. The decades of 1950s and 1960s witnessed intense mass mobilization, often taking on a violent character for the demands of statehood. In 1954, the revolt for the separate state of Andhra for Telugu - speaking people spearheaded by Potti Sri Ramulu and his eventual death triggered the wave of political regionalism in India with many princely states and other states making a demand for a separate state. This resulted in formation of the States Reorganization Committee (headed by Faisal Ali) which recommended reorganization of Indian states on linguistic lines, thus reinforcing the regionalist tendencies. With the enactment of the States Reorganization Act, 1956, linguistic states became a reality. During 1970s and 1980s, owing to the intensification of tribal insurgency for separation and statehood, the Union government passed the North-eastern States Reorganization Act, 1971. It 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 which became states in 1986. The decade of 2000s, witnessed vigorous movements for the creation of separate states due to a rising sense of regional deprivation. It resulted in the formation of the three new states – Chhattisgarh out of Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand out of Bihar and Uttarakhand out of Uttar Pradesh. The latest addition to this is the state of Telangana created by the division of Andhra Pradesh in 2014.

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 the 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 metalinguistic state. A renowned scholar named Morris Jones holds the view that whereas language has strengthened internal unity, it has also given rise to many problems. According to Normal 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 verge 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 relies their ambition of capturing power. Regional parties, such as D.M.K Telugu Desam, 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.

Types of Regional Movements

Secessionism is a form of regionalism that involves militant and fundamentalist groups advocating a separation from India on the basis of ethnicity or any other factor. Isaac Muivah's National Socialist Council of Nagaland, the Islamic fundamentalist groups in J&K, ULFA in Assam are examples of such an extreme dimension of regionalism. Separatism is a demand for separate statehood within the Indian Union. Many times, linguistic or ethnic minorities within the states come together and unite against the majority community in that state. This kind of sub-regionalism was validated by the State Reorganization Act of 1956. The most recent examples include the formation of Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Telangana. Meanwhile, there have been many demands including the creation of Bodoland for the Bodo-speakers in Assam; Gorkhaland for ethnic Gorkha (Nepali) people in West Bengal; a Bundelkhand state (covering part of Madhya Pradesh and part of Uttar Pradesh) for promoting the development of the region. Demand for Full Statehood, the union territories have been forwarding such demands like the NCT of Delhi. Most of such demands have already been accepted. In 1971, Himachal Pradesh got the status of a full state and thereafter Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh (former NEFA) and Sikkim got full statehoods The Demand for Autonomy, since 1960's, with the emergence of regional parties, the demand for state autonomy has been gaining more and more strength due to the central political interferences. In Tamil Nadu the DMK, in Punjab the Akali Dal, in Andhra Pradesh the Telgu Desham, in Assam the Assam Gana Parishad, the National conference in J&K and in West Bengal the Forward Bloc have been continuously demanding a larger share of powers for the states. Demand for Regional Autonomy within a State, in some of the states, people belonging to various regions have been demanding recognition of their regional identities. The genesis of such demands lies in the regional imbalances resulting from inefficient planning for instance in J & K, the Ladakhis are demanding a regional status.

Reasons behind Growth of Regionalism in India

- Historical and geographical isolation
- Lop-sided development
- Continuous neglect of a region
- Insider-outsider complex that nurturers nativism and son-of-the-soil ideology
- Internal colonialism, i.e., despite being rich in natural resources some regions remain economically underdeveloped.
- The reasons being either ill-conceived top-down approach or survival of one region at the cost of the other region. Chhota Nagpur plateau is an example of this type of underdevelopment.
- Political vested interests can accentuate and exploit regional loyalties.
- Reaction to an imposed ideology that can make its appearance as a reaction against the perceived imposition of a particular ideology, language or cultural pattern on all people and groups.
- Linguistic aspirations that have remained a formidable basis of regionalism.
- Expression of ethnicity

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 Kasaragod 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 Narmada 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 in roll all past pacts entered into by the state on the sharing of river waters with the neighboring 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 endeavored to obtain the maximum for the own state. It appeared as if India was a multi-national country.

CONCLUSION:

We have seen how regionalism could be good or bad for a nation as well for group of nations. Constitution of India under Article-19, gives every citizen a fundamental right to move around and settle down peacefully any part of the country. And, as citizen of India everyone should respect this fundamental right of every person, avoiding clashes like Shiv Sena does in Maharashtra. The need of the hour is to develop each region of India, through devolution of power to local governments and empowering people for their participation in decision-making. The governments at state level need to find out the alternative resources of energy, source of employment for local people, use of technology in governance, planning and for agriculture development. The 12th five year targets for "Faster, sustainable and more inclusive growth", The regional blocks like BRICS, ASEAN are developing more negotiation capabilities for economic needs of the region, for climate change negotiations, etc. The dependency on World Bank, IMF for developmental projects is being complimented by the new commitments of the BRICS Bank, New Developmental Banks, etc. In future, the further integration of the different regions will give every nation due respect and due importance to their needs. Their exotic and unique things are getting exposure at international level and no one will feel left out. The whole world will be a global village with unique regions within.

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. Along with 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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