



Politics of Regionalism in India



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ABSTRACT

Regionalism in politics is like a political ideology in which people of a particular region shows political loyalty for a particular region in preference to other neighbouring regions or other parts of a country. Regionalism in India started in pre-independence period, even after more than seventy years of independence regionalism is persistent in India. In country like India where there are rich diversities of cultures, religions, different regional identities, regionalism becomes a natural phenomena up to a certain extent in all these conditions. Regionalism has showed its both positive and negative impact in India. Many times, political parties try to exploit the regional sentiment of people of particular region to bring unrest in the name of demand for a separate state to increase their political base. Indian government has successfully tackled the challenges of regionalism in India. This paper tries to analyse the why regionalism persists in India, how politics is played in the name of regionalism ,impacts of regionalism in India and tries to suggest some measures to tackle regionalism in India.

Keywords: Autonomy, Secessionist, Economic Disparities, Development, Violence.

INTRODUCTION

Region is a highly subjective term. There is no exact definition of region. It is interpreted differently in different context. It is generally referred to a homogenous area with same physical and common shared culture which is distinct from neighbouring region. The term region has territorial connotation. Regionalism is referred to the strong feeling of attachment of people with a particular region. Regionalism may be defined where people become loyal to a particular region. People love a particular region much more in compare to other parts of country. Sometimes regionalism is referred as an ideology and movement. In regionalism core concern is issues of advancement of regional cause.

In International context, regionalism refers to cooperation among different groups of nations which have common objective or shared common problems. Some examples of regionalism in international dimension

are Southeast Asia, South Asia, Western Europe etc. At national level regionalism is referred as regional movements which is associated with a particular region. Roots of regionalism in India is in India's vast diversity of languages, religions, culture, different ethnic groups etc. India's almost all regions reflect a distinctive characteristics. Southern region of India represent culture of Dravidian ,it is different from the culture of other regions of India. North-east region has large population of tribal population, this region has own tradition and culture. Regionalism is characterised by many things like it is formed around social, economic, cultural and political disparities .It express identity of groups .

POLITICS OF REGIONALISM IN INDIA

Regionalism is not new to India it is pre-independence phenomena. Some policies of Britishers sowed seeds of regionalism through their policies like Government of India Act 1909, and 1935. Many political parties like Akali Dal Justice Party paved the way for regionalism up to a certain extent. After independence of India regionalism emerged as an important factor in politics of India. Regionalism gave a reason for formation of many regional political parties.

In the period of 1950s and 1960s regionalism was driven by ethnic mobilisation and it was violent in character. Telugu leader Potti sriramulu sat on fast unto death for demand of a separate state Andhra Pradesh out of Madras presidency for Telugu speaking people .He died on 52nd day of his hunger strike, this led to rioting and violence ,his death led to formation of Andhra Pradesh in 1956. Jawaharlal Nehru had constituted state reorganisation commission on 22nd December 1953 for reorganisation of boundaries of states. Members of state reorganisation commission were Fazal Ali, K.M.Pannikar, and H.N.Kunzru. Some recommendations of this commission were accepted by central government. This commission provided the ground for State Reorganisation Act 1956.

North-east region of India were reorganised in 1970s and 1980s. There was insurgency in North-east for separate state and autonomy. Union government came with North-eastern State Reorganisation Act ,1971. This act gave status of union territory to Manipur and Tripura and full statehood to Meghalaya, union territory status to Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, later these states got status of state.

In year 2000 three state were formed Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand out of Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh respectively, movement for separation of all these three states were vigorously started in 1990s. In 2014, a new state Telangana was formed out of Andhra Pradesh.

REASONS FOR REGIONALISM IN INDIA

Regionalism develops if people of a particular region feel that they are dominated culturally or they are being discriminated against neighbouring. Ethnicity and cultural factor sometimes form the basis for separate state like Jharkhand, its culture and ethnicity were different from Bihar, in Jharkhand there are majority of tribal population. Low rate of economic development is also one of the reason of regionalism. Day by day demand and expectations of people are increasing, due to low rate of economic development state are not able to meet these demands of people. It gives them sense of being ignored by the state. Most of the demand for

regionalism is on the basis of unfair and unequal distribution of resources, expenditure and benefits of development.

Language politics play vital role in regionalism. First state was Andhra Pradesh which was created on the basis of language. Many political parties' core base are on issues of language like DMK, AIADMK party of Tamil Nadu TDP in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Many political parties particularly of Southern India are always suspicious about central government's imposition of Hindi language over southern states of India. They easily mobilise people against central government on issues of language. Many other factors combine with language politics like issues of ethnicity, race, Dravidian and Aryan race intensifies the regionalism. Personal and selfish motives of politicians is also a cause of regionalism in India. Some politicians are always active to find any issues which can add fuel in formation of a new state. Formation of new state means new posts for governors, chances to become member of legislative assembly, chief ministers in new formed state. The selfish and professional politicians always try to utilise sentiment of ignorant people.

Geographical location and climate like hilly region, high altitude areas, cold region, directly and indirectly help in regionalism. Less economic development of these regions accentuate their demand for separate state. Sometimes religion is a factor for regionalism, like in case of Punjab religion combined with language homogeneity which led to demand for a separate nation Khalistan. Politicians exploits the discontent and unrest among people of region, they try to culminate it into a movement for a separate state to increase their political base like fight within congress party, a group of politician of congress party in Andhra Pradesh paved the path for Telangana agitation.

TYPES OF REGIONALISM

Secessionist movement is one type of regionalism. People of certain regions demand to secede from Indian territory to form a new independent state. This form of demand is mostly non-existent now. There is Son of soil theory, it bounds people to place of their birth and prefer some benefits, rights and responsibilities on people of that region which may not be available to others. It is added by factors like utilisation of resources, jobs and economic disparities of region like movement started by Shiv Sena in Maharashtra for Maharastrians, clashes between Bodo and Bengali speaking Muslims in Assam Region. Movement for demand of separate statehood like Gorkhaland, Vidharbha, Bodoland. There is inter-state Regionalism where boundaries of one state overlaps with other state, it is not clearly demarcated like dispute of Belgaum between Maharashtra and Karnataka. Other issue involved in inter-state regionalism is river water dispute. There is also Supra-state Regionalism, in this type of regionalism more than one states are involved. People of these regions or states take their common identity, on mutual issues, they take a common stand like rivalry between northern states and southern states.

IMPACT OF POLITICS OF REGIONALISM

Regionalism has both positive and negative impact. Positive aspect of regionalism is that it led to group solidarity among people of a particular region. People of particular region may feel that they should come together to protect their common interest. It became an effective way to put their demand and attract the

attention of government. In era of globalisation which has severely impacted the identity of people, regionalism can be used a source of identity among people. This consciousness of identity is good for maintaining socio and cultural diversities of India..Regionalism may increase healthy competition among people of a region and may induce to do better for improving the status of their region like completion among different regions for establishing industries attracting investment development of infrastructure facilities.Regionalism has brought the issues of uneven development of regions and opportunity for government to improve the policy of development. Emergence of regional parties from movement of regionalism have impacted politics in India both negatively and positively. Regionalism has also many negative impacts. It severely impact national integration, as in regionalism people's love and affection for a particular region is more in comparison to neighbouring region. Many times the regional issues dominates over national issues for people of particular region. The discontent and unrest among people are many time exploited by political parties to gain votes. Regionalism movement creates law and order problems in state and disturb the whole economy of that region and violence also take place which may claim many person's life. It can give a chance to external factors like radical extremist groups, terrorist groups to get involve and can disturb the peace and progress of nation by inciting the ignorant masses. Regionalism also affects national issues. Regional demands try to undermine the nation interest of the nation. Dirty politics is played by the politicians and divert the core issues of nation. Regional leaders starts playing vote bank politics on the basis of ethnicity, culture, language which are against democratic development. Demand for separate state lead to formation of new small states. The newly created small states are not easily effectively run by politicians and administration of state may become ineffective. Regionalism promotes violence and hampers the whole society, people are killed, study of school and college students are disturbed. To control all these government has to deploy extra forces and administration, which could be better used for developmental activities. Affected societies are remain separated from mainstream development and it leads to backwardness of that region.

In regionalism ultimate goal is power. The demands of regionalism are legitimised in the name of uneven development, backwardness, preservation of culture. Regionalism will not be a problem if we successfully manage the problems of regionalism. If we adopt the policy of development for all regions without any discrimination, making effective and responsive administration ,we can successfully handle the regionalism up to a certain degree .

There are many constitutional provision through which India tries to solve the demand of regional challenges. Democracy in India tries to accommodate the different voice of regionalism. Many times Secularism is used to counter unnecessary emphasis on cultural and ethnicity. Independent Judiciary system like supreme court resolves many regional disputes among states, and between centre and state. Federalism is also used to counter regionalism. Federalism is a method of power sharing arrangements. The objective of federalism is to give some space to maintain regional diversity and achieve unity without compromising diversity. Nature of federalism in India is asymmetrical and centralised federation. Government of India has no any formal policy to tackle regional movements but we can observe that Indian government tries to find any solution of regionalism within constitutional framework. Indian government are ready to negotiate through peaceful means but no talk with arms. If a secessionist force will use force ,government will use

bigger force. Government of India is more accommodative if demand are expressed in linguistic terms and is more insecure if demand is in religious term.

India has showed better record in tackling regionalism. Since independence India is able to maintain territorial integrity and sovereignty. India's record is much better if we compare it how Pakistan and Sri Lanka handled with challenges of regionalism. Not only in non-western world India is much better if we compare with former USSR and Yugoslavia.

CONCLUSION

The phenomena of regionalism is natural in country like India which have rich diversities in terms of languages, religions, geographical terrains. It was also present in pre independence time. After the independence, the phenomena of regionalism increased. Regionalism has showed its both positive and negative aspects. In positive aspects it has given space for creation of a new state to accommodate various aspirations of people like formation of new state on the basis of language, ethnicity and different culture, different geographical setting of hilly areas, mountainous region. On the other hand it has also weaken national integrity of nation. Jawaharlal Nehru has said regionalism communalism and casteism are biggest threat to national unity. Many regional parties tries to exploit the discontent among people of a particular religion and creates unrest. It hampers the national development. Some times Regional issues tries to undermine the national issues. It also affects the relations of India with other countries like issues of violence over Tamils in Sri Lanka raised by regional parties of southern India like DMK,AIADMK .These party compelled Indian government to vote in favour of inquiry of violation of human rights in Sri Lanka, which impacted the relations between India and Sri Lanka. If we want to move ahead on the path of economic development and bring a positive change then we must not excessively focused on regionalism. We must ought to mean, cohesion but not fusion, unity but not uniformity, reconciliation but not merger, solidarity but not regimentation of many segments of the people in a territorial sovereignty. We must strive to preserve the values and ideas of India.

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