

Indian Federalism and Regionalism

Zarina Khaton

Research Scholar

Department of Political Science

Veer Kunwar Singh University, Ara

Email-akbarali80222@gmail.com

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.

Keywords: Regionalism, Federalism, Constitutional Safeguards, Secessionism

INTRODUCTION: Regionalism is not a new phenomenon in India. It is as old as the Indian Union. A historical survey reveals the fact that India has suffered from the chronic problem of regionalism. As a term 'region' denotes a geographical area which either possesses certain homogenous characteristics that distinguish it from adjacent areas or other regions or which serve as a unit of government or administration¹. On the other hand, the concept of regionalism implies the love of a particular region or state in preference to the country as a whole². At the center of regionalism is a more or less intense of identity having both positive and negative dimensions which is no less real to the people than the feeling of belonging to a particular state or nation or to a language group³.

The term regionalism properly represents the regional idea in action as an ideology, as a social movement, or as the theoretical basis for regional planning⁴. To be precise, the concept of regionalism denotes the persistence of sub-national and trans-national differences, identities and commitments⁵. Regionalism is a counter movement to any exaggerated or oppressive form of centralisation⁶. Regionalism is also often referred to as 'sub-nationalism' or micro-nationalism⁷. However, regionalism as a movement may be defined as (a) a cultural and political movement, seeking to protect and foster an indigenous culture and to promote autonomous political institutions in particular regions; (b) an administrative and political movement, aiming at the creation of a democratized and integrated governmental structure at an intermediate level between the state and traditional organs of local government.

It is pertinent at this point to note that the idea or sentiment of regionalism, or the idea of regional tendencies may arise out due to many factors. From a general point of view, India is divided into a number of castes, sub-castes, sects and sub-sects. A careful survey reveals the fact that there is heavy concentration of some ethnic or religious or linguistic groups in some parts of the country while in other parts there are cases of least concentration. This wide variation in the distribution of population has been one of the cause's social tensions within the fabric of the Indian polity. It is seen that either concentration or less concentration both are responsible for social tensions and several ethnic problems which ultimately leads to a very serious social and political crisis. A careful scrutiny reveals the fact that regionalism rises its ugly head due to several factors. We can list a few of them.

- (a) Linguistic Regionalism
- (b) Demand for creation of New states
- (c) Demand for State Autonomy
- (d) Demand for Intra Regional Autonomy within the states.
- (e) Secessionist Movement and
- (f) Sons of the Soil Theory

A careful analysis of the Indian political scenario reveals a trend of regional demand which appears along the line of linguistic demand. In fact, the original division of states in India was made on linguistic basis. It has been seen from survey of different cases that demand for recognition arises from a feeling of one language being dominated by the language of a dominant group. A part from this same problem assumes other dimensions when a small minority feels-which the national government at the centre intends to impose one language policy to the detriment of the interest of the other linguistic minority.

Factors: - In India a number of factors have combined to strengthened the feelings of regionalism.

- (1) Firstly, because of vast-size of our country different regions are at different stages of economic and social development. Political leadership became narrow minded and began to make progress of their own state or region instead of caring for the interests of the country as a whole.
- (2) The increasing awareness of the people in the backward areas of India, who are neglected by the government in the allocation of grants and funds.
- (3) Personal and selfish goals of the politicians have also given rise to regional tendencies. As the central authority has become weak, regional and state leaders have got the opportunity to increase their own power by encouraging regionalism.
- (4) Regional has also emerged because of the attempts made by the governments to improve a particular language or ideology or people who desire to follow a different path creation of linguistic states has also given rise to regionalism within the state.
- (5) Emergence of various regional parties and then attempts to capture power by all means has also encouraged regionalism.
- (6) Improvements in transport and communication have created awareness among the people of backward regions to realize their differences and relative deprivations.
- (7) The interaction between the forces of modernisation and mass participation has also largely contributed to the growth of regionalism in India. As the country is still away from realizing the goal of a nation, state, the various groups have failed to identify their group interests with national interests; hence the feeling of regionalism has persisted.
- (8) Continuous negligence of a region by the government and increasing interference in the affairs of the state by the central government has also resulted in the growth of regionalism.
- (9) The desire of the various units of the Indian federal system to maintain their sub-cultural regions and greater degree of self-government has promoted regionalism and given rise to demand for greater autonomy.
- (10) Inter-state tensions regarding resources have also emerged regionalism.

Whatever may be the cause of regionalism it should be curbed when it threatens the unity and integrity of the nations. Regionalism can prove to be a positive phenomenon if people having regional feelings are able to balance the interests of their region along with the interest of the nation as a whole.

Suggestions-

The suggestions for correcting regional imbalance are as follows.

- (1) The central government must not interfere in the affairs of the state unless it is unavoidable for national interest.
- (2) Political leadership should leave narrow mindedness; they should try to make programs not only their region but also the whole nation. National interest should be kept first.
- (3) The neglected areas must be given importance so that they feel a part of the national mainstream. Central governments should allot special grants and funds to these areas. Central government should not interfere in the affairs of the state.
- (4) Interstate tension regarding resources should be settled amicably. Politicians must not be allowed to misuse of regional demands.
- (5) Except for the issue of national importance state should be given freedom to run their own affairs.
- (6) People should be taught to respect and tolerate people of all religious and region. Educational institutions should preach for importance of national unity and integrity.

References-

- (1) Gould Julius and William L.Kolb. (1964) A Dictionary of Social Science (New York Free preb.) p.582.
- (2) Fadia, Babulal (1984) State Politics in India vol.1. (New Delhi: Radiant Publication) p.480
- (3) Maheswari, S.R.- State Government in India (1986) Macmillan p.186.
- (4) International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences vol.13. p. 178.
- (5) Huegin Thomas – Regionalism in Western Europe, Comparative Politics, July 1986 p.112.
- (6) Seligman and Johnson- Encyclopedia of Social Sciences. vol. xii-xiv p.208-209.
- (7) Chakraborty Manan & Anindya Guha- Regionalism in West Bengal: A Study of Gorkhalands.
