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REGIONALISM IN INDIA AND THE ROLE OF REGIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES.

Dr. Deepak Modi

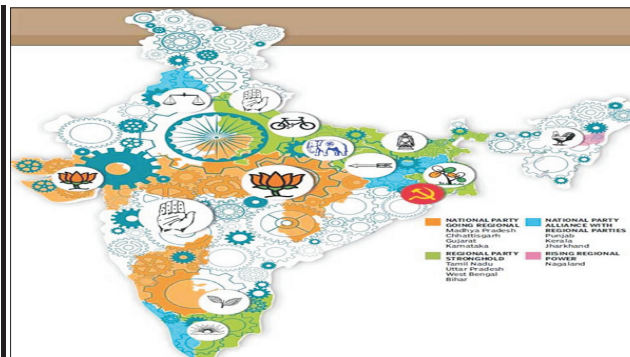
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ABSTRACT

Regional political parties champion the interests of social and economic groups. The role of regional political party as a facilitator of common feeling and awareness amongst social and economic groups is important in understanding the role of different regional political parties in independent India. The approach can be applied to understand the role and nature of various caste, religion, language, and son of the soil based regional political parties that have emerged in Independent India.

The role of regional political parties in spreading political education and developing a feeling of awareness in respective groups based on their traditional identities is a product of the electoral and democratic process in India. Some analysts have argued that traditional social groups



have provided a social base for the operation of democratic institution, caste, language, religion and regional identities have used democratic politics to put pressure and raising demands for favorable policies and benefits. Regionalism is getting more and more importance demanding separate region, promoting region specific interest, claiming representation to end exploitation etc.

KEYWORDS: Regionalism, Regional political parties voting behavior, social identities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The methodology employed in writing the Research paper is a

Doctrinal Research and it is analytical in Nature, In research the most of the sources, Primary as well as secondary sources which includes Articles, Paper Books and Web links, etc. To find out whether the Regionalism in India is a centrifugal tendency and whether is an Integrative force Regionalism in Indian politics has two aspects one is a positive and second is a negative dimension.

INTRODUCTION:

Regionalism in the ordinary usage refers to particularize or regional patriotism. The Encyclopedia of the social science describes it as a manifestation of federalism and an

intermediate stage between administrative decentralization and federalism. It involves such diverse problems of modern political and cultural life as those of minorities, administrative decentralization, local self-government and autonomy, the cult of home land and earth and local patriotism. It is not immediately related to particularize and opponents make the charge that it leads to separatism in a very general way regionalism may be defined as a counter movement to any exaggeration or oppressive form of centralization. It must not however, be considered solely from the view of political control as governmental administration Regional list problems arise only where ,there is a combination of two or more such factors or geographical isolation, independent historical traditions, racial, ethnic or religious peculiarities and local economic or

class interests (1)

Regionalism can be conceptualized as a multi-dimensional composite phenomena as well as a built-in process within nationalism, regionalism generally speaking is regarded as a divisive trend detrimental to national unity (2)

Regionalism is an ideology. Regional consciousness is based on linguistic, religious, ethnic and cultural identity of the people residing in a specific- geographical area. The ideology of regionalism is manufactured by the elite belonging to these groups. In a culturally heterogeneous society the factors like language and religion which demarcate the differences between the people are always existent though mostly in dormant form. Regional movement is initially based on some vague ideas. Later on in the course of the movement, certain more or less defined set of arguments of justification are developed by the key personalities of the region. (3)

EVOLUTION OF REGIONALISM IN INDIA

The genesis of regionalism in India dates back to the partition of the Bengal in 1905. The various acts of the British government had planted and sustained the regional feelings. The growth of regional idea also developed after independent India. The creation of first linguistic state of Andhra in 1953 set a chain reaction for demands of linguistic states. The government constituted state Reorganization Commission in 1953. Enacted and implemented state Reorganization Act to meet the regional aspiration of the people. The states Reorganization Commission received various documents and different proposals. Different demands were made on the basis of linguistic and cultural factors. The commission pointed out that there is a wide Variation in our life. But the strength of the sum total of the combined strength of the people of the component states.(4)

The process however acquired cast overtones in the south, while in the North; it was expressed either in the Hindu- Muslim antagonism or linguistic antagonism. In all cases, however, language or community or caste remained at periphery as cultural factors, for these factors had already assumed economic dimensions. (5)

Regionalism is a multi-dimensional phenomenon in terms of its components such as geographical, historic-cultural, linguistic, economic, political and administrative forces have been the main determinates of regionalism in India. As these determinants are inter-related but overlap with each other, the precise roles of each have always been mutually conditioned by one another.

Regionalism made its appearance as a reaction against the efforts of the national government to impose a particular ideology, language or cultural pattern on all people and groups. Continuous neglect of an area or region by the ruling parties and concentration of administrative and political power has given rise to demand for decentralization of the authority and bifurcate of unilingual states. On occasions sons of soil theory has been put forth to promote the interests of neglected groups or areas of the state.

The growing awareness among the people of backward areas that they are being discriminated against has also promoted feeling of regionalism. The local political leaders have fully exploited this factor and tried to feed the people with the idea that the central government was deliberately trying to maintain regional imbalances by neglecting social and economic development of certain areas.

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR RISE OF REGIONALISM IN INDIA

1.Worldwide phenomenon- Regionalism is not a peculiar feature of Indian politics; it is worldwide phenomenon. Although most modern nation states have been formed on the basis of linguistic and cultural homogeneity there is no state which is perfectly homogeneous in all respects. Almost in every state there are regional entities which have not been thoroughly assimilated into the body politic of the nation state. Scots in Britain, Tamils in Sri Lanka, Kurds in Iraq and in Turkey, Basques in Spain Baluchistan and pakhtoon in Pakistan are some well-known example.

2.Regional Diversity – In India regionalism is a product of her regional diversity there are more than two dozen well-defined homogeneous linguistic regions. Each one of them has not only a developed language but its distinct culture and historical traditions, and is highly conscious of its culture identity and very sensitive about it. The linguistic factor gave rise to linguistic regionalism and the movement for linguistic states.

3.Tribal Factor- In the north-east the tribal factor gave rise to regionalism. In that part the country, there are

several regions inhabited by tribes, each with its own language, culture and traditions these tribes have through ages stood apart from the mainstream of national life and history. Besides, they are highly self-respecting people and proud of their cultural traditions. It is not unnatural that they fear for the preservation of their culture and find it difficult to merge in the main stream of the nation's life.

4. Religious Factor- In the north-west the religious factor was responsible for the rise of regionalism and gave birth to the movement for the division of pre-independence India into two states.

5. Economic Cause – It should be noted that regionalism does not always express in combination of other factors, it arises independently of language, religion or tribalism. For instance, regionalism in Telangana in Andhra Pradesh, in Vidarbha in Maharashtra should be traced to the uneven economic development of the respective regions. The economic and cultural development of the various regions of the country has been uneven. It is, therefore, not surprising that conflicts develop between peoples and even governments of the various states, and within states between regions on questions of location of projects, distribution of waters etc.

6. Political Ambitions- Finally, ambitious politicians who fail to get into power at the state or national level seek to exploit regional sentiments to promote their personal interests.

The main concern of the factors contributing to Regionalism in India. It has become many forms of Regionalism in India like Demand for secession from the Indian Union, Demand for separate statehood, Demand for full statehood by certain union Territories, Inter-state disputes, and after forms of, regionalism. (6)

Role of the Regional Parties : There are many bases for formation of political parties, many people form a political party on the basis of religion. Their aim is to protect the interests of their followers. For instance, Muslim League, Akali Dal, Hindu Mahasabha etc. were formed on this basis. (7)

The regional parties operate within a very limited area and pursue only limited objectives, they have played a significant role both in the state as well as national politics. The regional political parties formed governments in several states and tried to give concrete shape to their policies and programmes. It is interesting to note that as per the classification of the Election Commission of India, there are three categories of political parties, namely, National Parties, State parties and registered/unrecognized political parties. National parties are recognized by the commission based on the percentage of the votes or seats secured by the parties in at least four states, and the state parties are recognized based on the percentage of votes or seats secured by the parties in a particular state. The registered/unrecognized political parties are parties that contest elections, and on the basis of their state parties or national parties. (8)

The various political parties in India. Some of the important regional parties which formed government in various states include DMK and AIADMK in Tamil Nadu; National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir, Telugu Desam in Andhra Pradesh, Asom Gana Parishad in Assam, Maharashtra Gomantak Party in Goa, Mizo National Front in Mizoram; Sikkim Sangram Parishad in Sikkim. All Party Hill Leaders Conference in Meghalaya and Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) in Haryana, some of the regional parties were also partners in the coalition government formed in several states after the fourth general elections in 1967.

Between 1967 and 1977, though the Congress predominance by way of procuring a simple majority in parliament and being in power it lost power in eight states and ultimately conceded government at the centre to the Janata coalition in 1977. The period from 1977 to 1984 was led by the Janata government for about two years, and was followed by the return of the Congress to power. The 1984 win was probably the last of its kind when the Congress surged to the majority, which ebbed by 1989. Ultimately turning India's polity towards the coalition era. Almost all the governments at the centre since the 1990s have been coalition governments. United Progressive Alliance (UPA-I & UPA-II) from 2004 to 2009 to 2014 is a coalition of national (INC, NCP, etc) and state parties (DMK, etc). The present government led by Narendra Modi under the overall umbrella of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is a coalition of political parties. The coalition was in power from 1998 to 2004 the alliance returned to power in this election. (9)

The most important reason for doubting the existence in India of anything that can be called a national party system is the fact that all the Indian states have distinctive party systems. The extent of variation in patterns of party competition and of regional variations in party strength can be seen by comparing the relative strength of the two leading parties in each state. State level regional political parties is that they have focused the

attention of the people in remote areas on various political and economic issues and contributed to their political awakening.(10) In short it can be said that the regional political parties play important role in growth of Regionalism in India.(11)

CONCLUSION:

In light of this the feeling of regionalism may arise either due to the continuous neglect of a particular area or region by the ruling authorities or it may spring up as a result of increasing political awareness of backward people that have been discriminated against quite often some. Political leaders encourage the feeling of regionalism to maintain their hold over a particular area or group of people. Above all, the regional parties have been able to impress on the national political parties that they cannot put up with their attitude of indifference towards regional problems and have compelled them to take keen interest in the resolution of their problems and have compelled them to take keen interest in the resolution of their problems.

SUGGESTIONS:

Following are some suggestions to the steps that may be taken to curb Regionalism in Indian politics and correcting regional Imbalances.

- To promote even development of the higher to neglected areas so that they feel a part of the national mainstream.
- The central government must not interfere in the affairs of the state unless it is unavoidable for national interest.
- Problems of people must be solved in a peaceful and constitutional manner. Politicians must not be allowed to misuse the issue of regional demands.
- Except for issues of national importance, the states should be given freedom to run their own affairs.
- Changes are necessary in the central-state relations in favour of the states, and for introducing a system of national education that would help people to overcome regional feeling and develop an attachment towards the nation.
- Central and state Governments make honest efforts to reduce regional disparities in development.
- The allocation of funds for developmental plans, location of projects, division of water etc. should be made on certain well-known principles.

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