Regionalism and Statehood in India: A Historical Analysis

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Abstract:

India is a massive continent-sized nation with a total of 28 individual states and 7 federally recognized territories. It is a country of many different peoples and languages. There are dozens of dialects spoken locally, many distinct cultural traditions, and a wide range of single and dual allegiances. It is only inevitable that, in the middle of such incredible variety, local sentiments, local parties, local institutions, and similar other organizations should develop, all with the goal of representing local interests and giving platforms for local voices. The current research attempts to examine the background of regional movements in India and to explore their motivations. The article also addresses the states' duties and contributions to regional movements in India. The research found that regional migrations in a democratic society like India are a continuous occurrence tied to socio-cultural and political dynamics.

Key words: *Recognized Territories, Local Institution, Cultural Traditions, Regional Movement.*

Introduction:

The regional movement is a kind of identity politics that advocates for exclusive treatment by the state. It's a trend towards decentralized rule at the state level. In other terms, it refers to a drive for new states, or a push for the federalization and diversification of the current political system. The conflict between regions or communities and the conflict between regions and the state are two possible and important root causes of regional movements. The insider-outsider complex, which fosters nationalism and son-of-the-soil ideology, is a common factor in interregional violence. This entails that the insider has an inherent right to special treatment from the state, especially in matters of resource allocation and job protection. Important manifestations of son-of-the-soil ideology include the anti-migrant campaign in Assam and the tribal-nontribal conflict over the domicile question in Jharkhand. Disputes across regions sometimes boil down to differences in language, customs, and culture. In cases of border conflict and sharing of river water, regional pride is amplified. 'Region' and the regionalist movement might thus take on the shape of a state-sponsored ideology under these conditions. The recent conflict between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu over the distribution of Cauvery water, the border dispute between Maharashtra and Karnataka, the recent conflict between Biharis and Assamese over the competitive examination for central services, and the 'Mumbaikar' call of the Shiv Sena restricting and preventing non-Marathis from occupying important positions in the business, economy, and politics of Maharashtra are all prime examples of this. This likely explains why

some academics see migration between regions as the result of social and political conflict (Fawcett Louise,1996).

In contrast, region-state conflicts often arise inside the state's institutional framework when a region challenges the state's distributive policy on the grounds that it is unfair, unjust, or otherwise harmful to the well-being of the area's local population. This perceived sense of deprivation, neglect, and 'internal colonialism' leads the people of a region to organize into a movement seeking, in most cases, separation from the existing state, or in some cases, settling with some autonomy arrangements within the same state. As a point of reference, it is important to note that in the federal-plural process of nation and state-building, it is the high degree of democratization and competitive political mobilization, which generally transforms a territorially concentrated socio-cultural group into a self-conscious political community, questioning the hegemony of dominant group (other regional community) in state apparatuses and policies, especially those affecting its identity structure and development. From this vantage point, the regional movement seems decentralized, self-determining, and ideologically driven by a desire to challenge the dominance of the state and the dominant regional group *(Haas Ernst B, 1958)*.

Historical Background:

Colonial policy in India sowed the seeds of regional identity. As a result of the British government's biassed treatment of princely kingdoms and presidencies, a regionalist movement emerged. Some areas were entirely ignored by British exploitative economic policies, which led to economic inequities and geographical imbalances. However, the Indian national movement promoted a more inclusive view of India. The Dravida Movement, also known as the Non Brahmin movement, began in modern-day Tamil Nadu in the 1940s and is considered the genesis of regional movements in India. A desire for Tamil independence emerged as a direct outcome of the campaign. This sparked the growth of pro-independence groups in the Andhra area, such as the Telugu Desam Party (TDP). Intense popular mobilization for the demands of statehood was commonplace throughout the 1950s and 1960s. It was Potti Sri Ramulu's uprising in 1954 for a Telugu-speaking state of Andhra that sparked a surge of political regionalism in India, with numerous princely states and other states demanding independence. As a consequence, the States Reorganizations Committee was established (under Faisal Ali's leadership), with the goal of reorganizing Indian states along linguistic lines in order to further strengthen regionalist inclinations. The States Reorganizations Act of 1956 legally established separate "linguistic states." The Union government approved the North-eastern States Reorganizations Act, 1971 in response to the growing tribal struggle for independence and statehood in the 1970s and 1980s. It made Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, formerly Tribal Districts, into Union Territories; in 1986, these territories attained statehood and joined Manipur and Tripura. In response to a growing perception of regional hardship, the 2000s saw a surge in support for state independence movements. As a consequence, Madhya Pradesh became Chhattisgarh, Bihar became Jharkhand, and Uttar Pradesh became Uttarakhand. In 2014, Andhra Pradesh was split in two, giving rise to the new state of Telangana*(Hettne Björn,1994)*.

Statement of the Problem:

Those who live in the same area, bound together by their shared history, language, culture, etc., often feel a strong feeling of solidarity and express this via a movement known as regionalism. In a positive light, it fosters a communal spirit among its citizens, with the goals of safeguarding regional interests and advancing the progress of the state and its people. Extreme regional loyalty, as used here, poses a serious danger to national cohesion and stability. In this regard the problem stated here is "**Regionalism and Statehood in India: A Historical Analysis**"

Objectives: The present study has been carried out with the following objectives-

- To study the history of regional movements in India

- To discuss the causes behind the regional movements in India.
- To find out the role and responsibility of states in the regional movements in India.

Causes of regionalism in India:

i) Geographical factor: At least in the Indian context, the populations of a given area are symbolic to the territorial orientation based on physical borders. This is especially true when you consider how languages are spread out throughout different regions. People develop a sense of regionalism as a result of variances in climate, topography, and settlement patterns.

ii) Historical and cultural factors: The impact of India's rich history and unique culture cannot be understated. Heritage, folklore, myths, symbols, and historical customs all play a role in the historical and cultural components' interpretation of regionalism. The heroic acts and spectacular accomplishments of local heroes often serve as sources of motivation for members of a certain cultural group. However, there are unexpected political and economic realities that may be explained by a variety of circumstances from the past.

iii) Caste and religion: Regional animosity is generated when caste is mixed with linguistic barriers or religious extremism. Dogma, orthodoxy, and obscure beliefs are the results.

iv) Economic factors: One possible explanation for the rise of regionalism and separatist is the country's uneven economic growth. Some parts of the nation have seen a greater concentration of manufacturing and industrial activity, while others have seen improvements in infrastructure like as transport and communications, allowing for more rapid agricultural growth. However, there are also other fields where the societal and economic benefits of independence have yet to be fully appreciated. It's possible that the British government is to blame for the widespread regional differences that have arisen for the sake of administration, trade, and commerce. After gaining independence, however, more should have been done to ensure equitable industrial, agricultural, and economic growth throughout the country. Residents in economically depressed areas understandably feel worse off as a result of this discrepancy. Bodoland, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, and so on are only a few examples of places where this desire for autonomy has taken physical form*(Nye Joseph. 1968)*.

v) Politico-administrative factors: Regional political parties and local leaders in particular use regional feelings and regional deprivation as political capital to strengthen their factional support bases. In their electoral platform, they prioritise solutions to local issues and pledge to advance local and regional politics.

Patterns of Regional Movements:

The relationship between territory and community in India is mutually beneficial. Communities within an area are defined and characterized by the region's geography, and vice versa. It is the combination of these two factors—community and geography—that gives birth to the call for secession. In order to have complete control over its 'homeland' in terms of its culture, politics, and economy, a territorial community may aspire to establish an independent state. The construction of the state is seen to be the process of establishing a system of government that will help to conserve, defend, and advance the 'independent self' of the community *(Obulapathi M, Ramanjaneyulu C,2016)*.

ii) A new state is sought by those with a unique socio-cultural identity who are located in a small number of geographically close regions inside the current state-systems. A constitutionally protected institutional space for interest articulation and protection inside the Indian nation is what they need, and it is suggested that a distinct state would provide them that. There is debate over whether or not this would improve their negotiating position with the federal government (the union government) and other states on issues of political power and economic resources. This, in other words, involves endowing with capability, which is now impossible given their current condition. Movements in Uttarakhand and Jharkhand provide instructive

examples. The presence of 'internal colonialism,' expansionism, and hegemony by other regional or cultural groups is (was) seen as a danger to their identity. This is true not just generally, but also particularly, of most sub-regional movements in northeastern India. They also claim that having their own country would allow them to flourish economically in a way that is really sustainable, thanks to the increased potential for using and capitalizing on indigenous knowledge and resources*(Wallis Allan. 2006).*

iii) Several of the aforementioned regional groups are fighting for official constitutional recognition, preservation, and legitimization of their unique social and cultural traditions.

Here, the call is made for mother language to be functionally elevated to the level of education and administration. The eighth schedule of the Indian Constitution provides a list of recognized languages. Another component of cultural and social regionalism is linguistic Puritanism. What this implies is that people's unique cultures will be protected. To define the limits of the state's intrusion into a regional community's cultural sphere, the identity component is amplified. We reject the state's attempt to impose cultural uniformity under the guise of a shared national culture. Therefore, most regional movements place an emphasis on social and cultural independence. A sovereign nation is justifiably sought for the purpose of fostering individual freedom of expression. An independent nation is seen as a safe political haven where the' self' may flourish in peace and safety.

Role of States in the Regional Movements:

The state's reaction to regional upheaval varies. There seems to be no overarching policy on this issue. Nonetheless, generalizations about these phenomena are possible. That the central government would not give in to regional demands based solely on religious differences; that demands for the creation of separate linguistic communities would not be granted unless such demands were both socially widespread and economically viable; and that secessionist demands could not be conceded. As an example, the constituent parts of the Indian federation could not be moulded into a uniform whole. Composite units are preferred. The States Reorganizations' Commission (SRC) emphasized four principles necessary for the formation of this composite unit: "(i) preservation and strengthening of the unity and security of India; (ii) linguistic and cultural homogeneity; (iii) financial, economic, and administrative considerations; and (iv) successful working of the national plan." While (re)drawing the boundaries of the units of the Indian Union, other variables such as "peoples' wishes,""historicity of the region," and "geographic contiguity" might have only limited, but qualificatory applicability *(The Economist. 2006).*

Conclusion:

When residents in a certain area or state band together under a common identity to lobby for special treatment from the government, this is called a regional movement. These movements' meteoric ascent may be attributed to both fictitious and actual factors. Since India's independence, several portions of the nation have been the target of regional movements based on factors such as territory, ethnicity, and economic deprivation. State reaction to regional uprisings has been inconsistent. The state's response to these kinds of movements has varied throughout time, from indifference to tolerance to repression. Because of their connections to the country's broader social, cultural, and political processes, regional movements are a constant feature of India's vibrant democracy.

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