



# Distance Learning Programme

UPPCS Mains

## Indian Society & Social Justice







drishti

# **INDIAN SOCIETY & SOCIAL JUSTICE**


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The term “regionalism” is defined as “feeling of oneness and loyalty shown by people towards their own region”. It is understood as the expression of a common sense of identity and purpose by a group of people within a geographical region, united by its unique language, culture, traditions, economic development, etc. In other words, regionalism/regional consciousness is an expression of group identity or a strong sense of association with a region and its people.

### Concept of Regionalism

Regionalism can be understood in both positive and negative connotations. In a positive sense, it is a political attribute associated with people's love for their region, culture, language, etc., with a view to maintain their independent identity. It encourages people to develop a sense of brotherhood and commonness on the basis of common language, religion or the historical background. Thus, regionalism as a positive concept seeks to protect the interest of a particular region and promotes the welfare and development of the state and its people.

However, in the negative sense, it implies excessive attachment to one's region in preference to the country or the state. In this sense regionalism 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 in India

Regionalism, in the Indian context, is an assertion of distinct ethnic, linguistic or economic rights by various groups. It is a multi-dimensional concept, which has its origin in various factors and conditions.

#### Origin of Regionalism in India

- The roots of regional consciousness in India can be found in colonial policies, administration and structures. The differential attitude and treatment by British towards princely states and those of presidencies, where, while princely states were given the autonomous power and authority to take care of their development process, on the other hand, presidencies were under supreme control of the British government, developed a regionalist feeling among them.
- The British created a modern economic infrastructure according to its needs for the market and raw materials, completely neglecting some regions, giving way to economic disparities and regional imbalances.
- Historically, the Indian national movement furthered a pluralistic idea of India. For instance-recognizing the importance of language as a binding force, Indian National Congress demanded constituting political units on linguistic basis.

- Some argue that post-independence, certain provisions were made in the constitution to protect linguistic and cultural rights of people in a pluralistic society with a federal Constitution, thus, creating a system to maintain and protect the sub-cultural regions. These constitutional provisions like certain group-based fundamental rights in Articles 29 and 30; special provisions for certain States and sub-State regions in Part XXI of the Constitution; the Fifth and Sixth Schedules giving special institutional measures for the administration of areas with high Scheduled Tribe populations as well as some of the key legislations like the Official Languages Act of 1963 favoured the ongoing wave of regionalism.

## History of Regional Movements in India

Regional movement is an identity based movement seeking special privileges, protection, and concessions from the state. It is a movement for regional self-governance, autonomy of identity, or autonomy of development. The history of regional movements in India can be traced back to Pre-independence period of 1940's Dravida Movement or the Non-Brahmin movement that started in present day Tamil Nadu. Started as a forum to empower (both socially and politically) the non-Brahmins, especially the Dalits, soon it became a movement for the creation of an independent Dravidstan (for the speakers of the Dravidian languages) for all of South India. The movement was led by the Justice Party (led by E. V. Ramasamy) and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) (led by C. N. Annadurai).

However, later on realizing the necessity to have their own state, the demand was shifted to form a separate and independent Tamil state comprising of only the Tamilians. This in turn led to several other parties like Telugu Desam Party (TDP) springing up in Andhra region, with demands of separate statehood.

Meanwhile, the growth of regionalism can be identified in the following phases in the post-independent India:

- **1950s and 1960s:** This was a phase of 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 a formation of the States Reorganization Committee (headed by Fazal Ali) which recommended re-organisation of Indian states on linguistic lines, thus reinforcing the regionalist tendencies. With the enactment of the States Reorganisation Act, 1956, linguistic States became a reality.
- **1970s and 1980s:** During this phase, owing to intensification of the tribal insurgency for separation and statehood, the Union government passed the North-eastern States Reorganisation Act, 1971. It upgraded the Union Territories of Manipur and Tripura, and the Sub-State of Meghalaya to full statehood, b) Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh (then Tribal Districts) to Union Territories which became states in 1986.
- **2000s:** This phase witnessed vigorous movements for 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.

## **Regionalism and Uttar Pradesh**

Regionalism in the state of Uttar Pradesh can be studied in two phases. First phase relates to demand, movement and formation of a separate state of Uttarakhand and second phase is in regard to the further division of Uttar Pradesh into four separate divisions namely Purvanchal, Bundelkhand, Awadh Pradesh and Paschim Pradesh.

### ***Demand for Uttarakhand and its Formation***

In 1954 Indra Singh Nayal, member Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council demanded for a separate development plan for Hill region to then Chief Minister Govind Vallabh Pant. Fazal Ali commission of 1954 in its recommendation proposed for the formation of a separate state for hill regions. This demand for special focus on hill region was further voiced by deputy chairman planning commission T.T. Krishnamachari.

Demand for statehood took the form of mass movement by formation of Uttarakhand Kranti Dal (UKD) in 1979. Party resolution for the formation of new state, including Haridwar was passed by UKD in November 1987. Movement for statehood took a brutal turn in 1994 with demand for statehood being intensified and increased state repression. In year 1996 Prime Minister announced the formation of new state of Uttaranchal. Bill for reorganization of Uttar Pradesh was introduced in the Uttar Pradesh assembly and finally it culminated to formation of new state of Uttaranchal on 9th November, 2000.

### ***Demand for Further Division of State***

In 2011 further split of Uttar Pradesh into Purvanchal, Bundelkhand, Awadh Pradesh and Paschim Pradesh was proposed by Mayawati. The idea of proposed split can be seen in the split proposed by Dr. Ambedkar in 1955 through his book, "Thoughts On Linguistic States". He suggested the creation of three states, with Meerut as the capital of the Western Region, Allahabad as the capital of the Eastern Region and Kanpur as the capital of the Central region.

The present demand for split is more of a political nature, but at the same time it also has the pinch of administrative issues. Uttar Pradesh being a large state with three separate regional divisions has a requirement of a separate policy and programme for development.

The demand may appear genuine if seen with the administrative and economic view, as region of western Uttar Pradesh leads far ahead of Eastern and Bundelkhand region. One way forward to this problem is to create a bottom to top approach where specific plans, according to regional demands can be made and development can be done holistically.

## **Types/Forms of Regionalism or Regional Movements**

Based on the nature of its objectives, i.e., accommodative, protectionist, welfarist, autonomist, separatist and secessionist, some of the most important forms/manifestations of regionalism in Indian political system can be described as follows:

### **Secessionism (Demand for Secession from the Indian Union)**

It can be classified as the most violent and dangerous form of regionalism as it is based on the desire, or hope to divide the Republic of India and form a separate nation of one's own. This form of regionalism involves militant and fundamentalist groups and organisations

advocating secessionism from India on the basis the factor of ethnic identity. Isac Muivah's National Socialist Council of Nagaland, Islamic fundamentalist groups in J & K, ULFA in Assam are examples of such extreme dimension of regionalism

### **Separatism (Demand for Separate Statehood within the Indian Union)**

It is probably called the most legitimate form of regionalism as it constitutes a demand for separate statehood within the Indian Union. Several new states and union territories have been created out of existing states since 1956. Many a 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 Reorganisation Act of 1956. The most recent examples include the formation of Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh and Telangana.

Meanwhile, there have been many demands, including creation of Bodoland for the Bodo-speakers in Assam; Gorkhaland for ethnic Gorkha (Nepali) people in West Bengal; for establishing a Bundelkhand state (covering part of Madhya Pradesh and part of Uttar Pradesh) for promoting development of the region.

### **Demand for Full Statehood**

The union territories have been putting forward their demands for grant of full statehood. 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 statehood.

The most recent addition to this category is demand for the grant of full statehood to Delhi.

### **Autonomism (Demand for Autonomy)**

Since 1960's, with the emergence of regional parties, the demand for state autonomy has been gaining more and more strength. Aggravated by central political interferences in the affairs of states and overthrow of duly elected State governments have resulted in demands for greater autonomy by the powerful regional political parties. In Tamil Nadu DMK, in Punjab Akali Dal, in Andhra Pradesh Telugu Desham, in Assam Asom Gana Parishad, National conference in Jammu and Kashmir, and in West Bengal 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 of the Indian Union, 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 an inefficient planning. In J & K, the Ladakhis demand a regional status. In West Bengal the Gorkhaland demand was based on this principle. Even demands for Telangana, Bodoland, and Konkan states can be placed under this head. Now these demands have got transformed into demands for the grant of statehoods.

## **Factors Behind Growth of Regionalism in India**

The roots of regionalism in India lie in a manifold diversity of languages, cultures, tribes, ethnic groups, communities and religions. One of the most important aspects of the Indian

polity is that it is an aggregation of regions and sub-regions (for instance- like Vidharbha region in Maharashtra, Telugu speaking region of Karnataka state etc.), with each one remarkably distinct from another. However, it is not only cultural or an aspect of language, but a multi-faceted phenomenon, caused by the following factors-

- **Historical and Geographic Isolation:** Because of their historical separate existence as provinces, the wave of nationalist freedom struggle was not able to influence areas like Jammu & Kashmir, Nagaland, and Manipur in Northeast. They remained isolated from major political centres. Meanwhile, even after independence, since transportation and communication technologies have failed to connect these communities with the rest of Indian society, people here tend to have very strong regional identities. Therefore, any sort of perceived or real interference by outside powers have, time and again, fanned the separatist movements in these regions.
- **Lopsided Development:** The neo-liberal model of development adopted by the government, shifted development from being state-centric to ruthless market driven. This has led to a phenomenon where the benefits of development percolated more to the already developed areas, resulting in the failure of planned economic development and thus, accentuation of sub-regional imbalances.
- **Continuous Neglect of a Region:** The continuous neglect of a particular area or region by the ruling authorities and political parties often result in concentration of developmental, administrative and political power to a particular region and neglect of social and economic development of the others. This eventually gives rise to demand for decentralization of authority and bifurcation of states. The secessionist movement in North Eastern states like Nagaland and Mizoram as well as demand of new states like Telangana, Jharkhand etc., is examples in this category.
- **Insider-outsider Complex:** It is a complex that nurtures nativism and son-of-the-soil ideology. This, in other words, means a natural claim of the insider for better and preferential treatment by the state, particularly in terms of resource distribution and reservation of the jobs for the locals. The 'anti-migrant' movement in Assam against exploitation of resources by outsiders, especially Bangladeshi migrants or the 'Mumbaikar' call of the Shiv Sena restricting and preventing non-Marathis from occupying important positions in the business, economy and polity of Maharashtra are examples of such ideology.  
This theory has been put forth to promote the interests of neglected groups or areas of the state against loss of economic opportunities and exploitation of resources by outsider, which gives a feeling to the people of the region that others are benefiting whereas, they are losing.
- **Internal Colonialism:** It is a phenomenon when many of the sub-regions, despite being rich in natural resources remain economically underdeveloped either because of the ill-conceived top-down approach of development or, survival of one region at the cost of the other region through resources and earning transfer. The example of the Chota Nagpur plateau that has 98% coal deposits of India and still, apart from mining fields, has the road network in critical condition, manifests the lack of inclusive development.
- **Vested Political Interests:** Politics may not create regionalism, but it certainly accentuates and exploits regional loyalties. Quite often political leaders encourage the feeling of regionalism to maintain their hold over a particular area or group of people. Regionalism has been a key factor in the party building of political parties such as DMK, AIADMK, Akali Dal, Telugu Desam Party, Asom Gana Parishad etc., who have



encouraged regionalism to both capture and retain power. Regionalism has become an instrument to mobilize masses under a single umbrella by making sentimental and emotional appeals. We have moved to make single state with different languages; hence regionalism is a matter of concern.

- **Reaction to Imposed Ideology:** Regionalism can make its appearance as a reaction against the perceived imposition a particular ideology, language or cultural pattern on all people and groups. For instance- the efforts of the Union Government to make Hindi the national language led to widespread agitations in southern states. The fear of dominance of the North led them to further cultivate an endless and superior feeling towards their own mother tongue or regional languages. Similarly, in Assam anti-foreigner movement by the Assamese was manifestation of the apprehension on the part of linguistic, ethnic or religious minorities in view of uniform system of administration and policies.
- **Linguistic Aspirations:** Language has remained a formidable basis of regionalism. The policy of linguistic reorganisation of states has been instrumental in setting the stage for the emergence of small states in the Indian Union. Linguistic riots in bilingual states, violence against linguistic minorities within a state have been witnessed as a manifestation of linguistic regionalism.

Meanwhile, growth in the importance of regional languages, literature and movies and in the number of people educated in those languages has led to the enhanced self - identification of people with their unique language and culture, and sharpened loyalty towards the region of their domicile.

- **Expression of Ethnicity:** When people belonging to a particular ethnic group reside permanently within a specific geographic area, their ethnic feelings find expression in the form of increased regional loyalty. Many recent regional movements in India, such as the movement for Gorkhaland in Darjeeling and Bodo movements in Assam, are basically movements for establishing ethnic identity.

## Impact of Regionalism on Indian Polity

### Positive Outcomes

- **Rise of Regional Parties:** Many political parties have sprung up in the due course of regionalism in India. After the first general election of 1952, the Election Commission had declared 19 political parties as regional parties. Today, with about 62 in number such as D.M.K. and A.I.A.D.M.K. In Tamil Nadu; Akali Dal in Punjab; Gorkha League of Darjiling as well as Trinamool Congress in West Bengal; National Conference party of Jammu Kashmir, the regional political parties have become a part and parcel of the Indian political system.
- **Refocus on Regional Issues:** By breaking the stranglehold of the two major Indian national parties, the regional parties have helped usher in a semblance of competitive federalism. The state/regional parties bring various political and economic issues into the attention of the people in remote areas and thus, contributed to their political awakening. Moreover, in the era of coalition politics, with their growing prominence and influence at the centre, the regional parties have compelled the central government to take keen interest in the resolution of their problems. The creation of the state of Telangana in 2014 points out how regionalism and regional parties can successfully highlight and resolve issues pertaining to the welfare of the respective regions.

Regional recognition in terms of statehood or state autonomy gives 'right to self-determination' to the people of that particular region and thus pave the way for inclusive and participatory governance. For instance- formation of Tripura Tribal Autonomous District Council (TTADC) in 1985, led to not only protection of an otherwise endangered tribal identity in the state, but also provided a democratic platform for former separatists to become a party of governance, and thereby reduced significantly the bases of political extremism in the state.

### Negative Impacts

- Regionalist tendencies often stir interstate hostility as its spillover effect. The boundary disputes as well as friction between different states over the sharing of river waters (because of the construction of irrigation and power dams) are the results of the creation of new states owing to separatist movements. For instance- the dispute over Chandigarh between Punjab and Haryana or the Cauvery water dispute between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka are result of formation of linguistic states.
- Regional movements often result in violent agitations, disturbs not only the law and order situations, but also have negative implication on the economy of the state as well as the nation.
- Regionalism sometimes undercuts the national interest by being a hurdle in the international diplomacy. For instance, opposition of regional/state parties of Tamil against the stand of the central government had direct implications on the relation of India and Sri Lanka. The disagreement of political leadership in West Bengal with the central government over the Land Boundary agreement and Teesta River Water sharing treaty with Bangladesh resulted in increasing tensions between the two nations.
- Sometimes regionalism becomes a shield for militancy, extremism, establishing a reign of terror and carrying on other anti-national activities, creating an internal security threat. Kashmir militancy is an example in this regard.

### Regionalism vs. Nationalism

Nationalism is a sense of belonging to one nation, a feeling one shares with all the citizens of the country, regardless of their caste, creed, culture, religion or region. This association with a nation is the primary mode of identification for a person and every nation encourages its citizens to take pride in being its national. However, when people begin identifying more strongly with their region than with their nation, it is alleged that nationalism is undercut by a sense of regionalism. The question that arises here: Is regionalism a threat to national unity and integrity?

### Arguments in Favour

- While a nation tries to establish harmony between all its citizens by uniting them through a constitution, national symbols and songs, regionalism glorify the heritage of only one particular region, of one culture and of one people. This leads to the formation of multiple communities within one nation and restricts the efforts of national integration. For instance-most recently, even in the states like Karnataka (which is neither ruled by a regional party, nor has shown any significant separatist or secessionist