

Mastering Mains Answer Writing (Ep-7)

Indian Society, GS Paper-I

Question

Regionalism is important for maintaining 'unity in diversity' in India. Discuss

Command Word

'Discuss' - broadly covered and all encompassing answer - highlighting both positive and negative aspects of theme. Solutions and remedies can also be suggested.

Answer Structure

- **Introduction** – We will include a brief description and link between the terms - 'Regionalism' and 'Unity in Diversity'
- **Body of the Answer** – Will include, how regionalism facilitates unity in diversity and how regionalism leads to fragmentation of the country.
- **Conclusion** – We will sum up our answer by mentioning how government is addressing the legitimate concerns of regionalism.

Representative Answer

Introduction

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. Regionalism in India is rooted in India's diversity of languages, cultures, tribes and religions. But underlying this diversity are bonds of unity or oneness even in variety and differences.

Body

Regionalism is Important for Unity in Diversity

India, by adopting a democratic approach to the question of diversity, allows the political expressions of regional aspirations and does not look upon them as anti-national or as a threat to its unity.

- Allowing parties and groups to address the people on the basis of their regional identity, aspiration and specific regional problems - gives a sense to the people that their voice is being heard. This prevents the aspirations from taking a negative direction by ensuring that regional issues and problems receive adequate attention and accommodation in the policy making process.
- Recognising the rights of different regions and linguistic groups thus helps them to retain their own culture - thereby balancing the principles of unity and diversity.
- For example, the tribal autonomous councils in northeast such as Karbi Anglong Autonomous Territorial Council, Dima Hasao Autonomous Territorial Council, Garo Hills Autonomous Territorial Council, Khasi Hills Autonomous Territorial Council, Jaintia Hills Autonomous Territorial Council and Tripura Tribal Area Autonomous Territorial Council have served to protect their unique cultural identities by providing a democratic platform helping them to connect with national socio-political milieu.

According to this approach, the nation does not mean the negation of the region and cultural diversity is not seen as a threat to the nation as the regions together form the nation. Therefore, regionalism plays an important role in building of the nation, if the demands of the regions are accommodated by the political system of the country.

However, such an arrangement may sometimes lead to tensions and problems.

Regionalism as a Threat to Unity in Diversity

- Sometimes, the concern for national unity may overshadow the regional needs and aspirations. At other times, a concern for region alone may blind the policy-makers to the larger needs of the nation.
- Regional movements often result in violent agitations, disturbing not only the law and order situation.
- Regionalism sometimes undercuts the national interest by being a hurdle in international diplomacy.
- For example - the disagreements between the central government and the State Governments of Tamil Nadu (with regards to relations with Sri Lanka) and West Bengal (with regards to Land Boundary Agreement and Teesta River Water sharing treaty with Bangladesh).

- Regionalist tendencies often stir inter-state hostility as its spillover effect. Example - Inter-state Water Disputes over the Cauvery River between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.
- Regionalism can become a shield for militancy, extremism to create an internal security threat. Kashmir militancy is an example of this type of regionalism.

Conclusion

Way Forward

- Regional aspirations are very much a part of democratic politics and the expression of regional issues is not an aberration or an abnormal phenomenon. In a country like India where diversities are territorially grouped, accommodation of multiple aspirations of a diverse population is necessary. Unity in Diversity ethos needs to be preserved for the pluralistic character of the Indian nation state.
- It is primarily parochial regionalism that poses a threat to the sovereignty of the nation. Therefore, there is a need to check regional concerns that undermines the unity and strength of the nation in the longer run, defying the constitutional and national spirit of 'unity in diversity'

