

# Growth and Development of Regionalism in India: a Bird's Eye View

**Dr.C.M. Prakasha**

Assistant Professor

Department of Sociology

Government First Grade College and P.G Centre Channagiri: 577213, Karnataka, India.

## **Abstract:**

In the present paper the author attempts to describe briefly about the Regionalism in the Indian context. Regionalism constitutes a political demand for the devolution of power and function from central level to the local levels of authority. Regional disparities are already becoming more marked and widespread engendering a sense of cumulative deprivations in the people of certain regions. The strong feeling is to integrate the people of the country in spite of prevailing regionalism.

**Keywords:** Regionalism. Regional Disparities, Inter State Relations

## **Introduction**

Regionalism has been rooted in Indian manifold diversity. India, demographically speaking is the second largest country after China. It has more cultural and social diversity than any other country in the world. In India today more than 145 corers people live in 29 states and 7 Union Territories formed over many thousands of years as a country of immigrants who brought their own cultures and traditions. India's diversity is proverbial although predominantly inhabited by the Hindus who are however, regionally specific, plurals in beliefs, morals, customs, traditions, rituals, and practices and divided by castes, languages, religions, tribal's, cultural, India contains large proportions of Muslims, Christians spared over the country with more than a million in as many as 13 states (out of 29), and also Sikhs, Buddhist, Jains, and tribal's as so on and so forth.

Region is an area of the earth's surface with one or more features or characteristics which give measure of unity and make it different from the areas surrounding it. Thus, region may be termed cultural, economic, natural, political and socially etc; the nexus between people and their socio-economic and political environment gives rise to regionalism. The degree of regionalism of particular area can decrease or increase depending on regional dynamics, in which global, national and local forces create an impact.

## **Meaning of regionalism:**

Regionalism constitutes a political demand for the devolution of power and function from central level to the local levels of authority. In a '*Union type*' of federal polity, it means granting of more and more authority and local economy by the regional communities. In other words, it means a political movement for self-governance at the local regional levels.

Regionalism is a feeling or an ideology among a section of people residing in a particular geographical space characterized by unique language, culture, etc. that they are the sons of the soil and every opportunity in their land must be given to them first but not to the outsiders. It is a sort of parochialism. In most of the cases it is raised for expedient political gains but not necessarily.

Central to the analysis of regionalism is the concept of region itself; a region may be a historical region, cultural region, linguistic region, or structural region. Region in the present study refers to spatial location or a particular cultural group who share among themselves certain commonalities in terms of historical memories, language and other ethno-geographic components of that particular region.

### Definition of regionalism:

**W.P. Scott** – “Regionalism is an approach to study the behaviour that emphasizes the geographical region as the unit of analysis, stressing the relationship between man and his immediate physical environment. Economic social and cultural organizations are analyzed in terms of their interrelationships and functions within the geographic region”.

**Iqbal narain** – “Regionalism has both a positive and negative dimension, speaking in positive terms it embodies a quest for self- fulfillment on the part of the people of an area. Negatively speaking regionalism reflects a psyche of relative deprivation resulting from specific grievance”.

**Marshall E. Dimock** – “Regionalism as a clustering of environmental, economic, social, and governmental factors to such an extent that a distinct consciousness of separate identity within the whole, a need for autonomous planning, a manifestation of cultural peculiarities and a desire for administrative freedom, are theoretically recognized and actually put into effect”. Regionalism is something which remains to be realized and further developed, as well as a phenomenon which has already appeared and taken form. In one sense, and perhaps the best one. Regionalism is a way of life, it is a self-conscious process.

**Arun K. Chatterji** - In is sociological analysis of the phenomena of regionalism as a “Multi-dimensional composite phenomena as well as built-in process with in nationalism”.

The term ‘**Regionalism**’ frequently appears in the studies of regional cooperation, regional organization, regionalization and regional integration, but is often defined in slightly different ways.

### Development of regionalism in India

Regionalism in India can be traced back to dravida movement started in Tamil nadu, the movement initially focused on empowering dalits, non-Brahmins, and poor people. Later it turned against imposition of Hindi as sole official language on non-Hindi speaking areas. Finally, the movement, for some time, focused on seceding from India to carve out their own dravidastan or dravida nadu. The movement slowly declined and today, they have become prominent regional parties after many splits and factionalism. Regionalism, in contemporary India, is readily used for political gains by petty politicians and secessionist organizations. Economic reasons are exploited for political dividends.

Regionalism in India is only a short cut to meet the political ambitions by emotionally exploiting the sentiments of the people. The fear of balkanization **(It is a geopolitical term, originally used to describe the process of fragmentation or division of a region or state into smaller regions or states that are often hostile or uncooperative with one another)** is void of any logic. India is bound by common culture that has flourished on this land for many thousands of years. I may be Kannadiga or Tamilian but I am an Indian first, my identity outside India is that of an Indian. Regionalism is not a new phenomenon in India. The seeds were sown by the British with the intention of dividing the nation regionally and trying to suppress the nationalist feeling. This helped them rule the nation without any hurdle. After 1947, the leaders tried to foster among people that they belong to one nation. In order to realize this objective the framers of the constitution introduced single citizenship and a unified judiciary for all. But, the vastness of land posed problem and regionalism soon made its appearance, instances are Telengana movement in Andhra Pradesh, demand for Gorkhaland and so on.

The Indian state was confronted with demands for the reorganization of the states immediately after independence. Upon the recommendation of the state organization committee of 1953, headed by Fazal Ali, the provinces were recognized on the basis of language. By the 1960s, the provinces seemed to have settled down within the redrawn boundaries. The larger provinces of Bombay was divided into Marathi speaking Maharashtra and Gujarati speaking Gujarat, Hindi speaking Haryana, Kannada speaking areas of Bombay were transferred to the state of Mysore, Karnataka, and similarly Telugu speaking areas of the madras province were transferred to Andhra Pradesh. The linguistic reorganization looked complete and the first phase of reorganization of the states within the union was over. Later came the demand for autonomy in the north-eastern region. The aspirations of the tribal groups were soon recognized by the Indian state. The state of Manipur, Tripura, and Meghalaya were formed in the late 1970s. the north eastern frontier agency was granted statehood under the name of Arunachla Pradesh in 1987. The

telengana movement raged on until the 1980s in the less developed Telugu speaking region in western Andhra Pradesh, which was under the rule of the Nizam of Hyderabad and was later merged with the more economically developed, Telugu speaking costal Andhra Pradesh. The movements for Chhattisgarh in Madhya Pradesh, the Jharkhand movements in Bihar, Orissa, and Madhya Pradesh, and the movement for Uttaranchal and Uttarkhand in Uttar Pradesh have been active since the 1950s until they were granted statehood in 2001.

### Characteristics of regionalism

Regionalism has been interpreted as extreme loyalty or love to a particular region which may undermine the interest of the nation or the state of which the region is a part. There is always a natural tendency towards the primacy of regionalist over nationalistic, though one does not usually pose the two as either or situation. This may be characterized by the commonness of cultural, Linguistic, historical and social background. From the above definitions we may draw the following characteristics of regionalism.

1. Regionalism is a frame of mind.
2. It is a love and loyalty shown to the region in preference to the state or nation.
3. It is expressed in the ideas like development of one's own region even at the cost of other regions, enjoyment of all benefits from the development by the people of the same region alone.
4. It does not allow people from other regions to work and settle in the region even at the cost of other regions, enjoyment of all benefits from the development by the people of the same region alone.
5. It does not allow people from other regions to work and settle in the region.
6. Regionalism is a psychic phenomenon.
7. Regionalism it is built around as an expression of group identity, as well as loyalty to the region.
8. It presupposes the concept of development of one's own region without taking into consideration the interest of other region.
9. It prohibits people from other regions to be benefitted by a particular region.

### Types of regionalism:

Through the typology of regionalism is an overlapping concept, a state is widely accepted as a unit for evolving the types of regionalism. In this category, normally the principal actors are the federating states themselves. The administrative regionalism includes within its fold the sub-varieties like. Three main types of regionalism may be conceived on that basis. Politico-economic or administrative Regionalism.

1. Regionalism may be designated as **supra-state regionalism** which is an expression of group identity of several states. In this type of regionalism, the group of states join hands to take common stand on the issue of mutual interest vis- vis another group of states or at times against the union. It is not an instance of permanent merger of state identities in the collective identity. Even at times inter-group rivalries, tension, and conflicts may tend to persist, simultaneously along with their cooperation. Ex: north eastern states in India may be said to have possessed the supra-state regionalism.
2. Regionalism may be designated as **inter-state regionalism** which is coterminous with provincial territories and involves juxtaposing of the identities of one or more states against another. It is also issue specific. This issue is highlighted because it sabotages their interest. Ex: disputes between Karnataka and Tamilnadu over the distribution of Kaveri water may be construed as inter-state regionalism.
3. Regionalism refers to **Intra-state regionalism** wherein a part of the state strives for self identity and self development and therefore, it is taken in a positive sense. In negative terms it militates against the collective interest of the state as well as the nation. Ex: as for instance there is always a feeling of coastal region and western region on Orissa.

### Causes of regionalism:

Regionalism is a complex social process. Its cause are many and varied, some of the important factors promoting regionalism are discussed below.

1. **Geographical factor:** a define territory gives a sense of identity, similar experiences of living which develop 'we-feeling' among its members. India vast country, It has a number of distinct regions, each region has a different kind of climate, topography and settlement pattern. This geographical different gives the people of a region feeling that they are different from others.
2. **Historical factor:** many of the regions have their local history, historical traditions and local heroes. Common historical experiences, folklore, customs, social heritage act as unifying factor. The people of these regions get inspired by their regional history. If for any reason the local personalities are ignored and regionalism becomes pronounced.
3. **Cultural factors:** each region has own customs, traditions and culture, the people living in a regions develop an identity with the culture. They develop a tendency to like it and treat the culture of other regions alien. Cultural factor – socio- cultural symbols often provide necessary inputs of identity formation for the people living in that region, regional caste, sub caste, kinship difference create regional feeling.
4. **Political factor:** regionalism is the politics of the natives against centralization of power and administration. Political parties use region to serve their political ends. They exploit regional sentiments as and when necessary. At the time of election they make regional problem an Issue for campaigning, A good number of regional parties are also raising their heads, some such parties are ADMK and AIDAMK in Tamilnadu, Akali Dal in Punjab, Jharkhand party in Bihar, Assam Gana Parishad in Assam etc.
5. **Linguistic factor:** language also strengthens the hand of regionalism. India is a country with many languages. There were some 1632 languages spoken in India, so far, 22 languages have been officially recognized and placed under the People speaking the same language feel united. They develop an emotional attachment for the language and its literature. This at times turns into linguistic regionalism.
6. **Economic factor:** economic factor is the root of regionalism. Even after independence some regions have become more advanced economically, industrially and agriculturally than others. The different in economics development gives rise to the feeling in less developed regions that they have been relatively deprived. The recent creation of Uttarakhand state, Jharkhand state and Chhattisgarh amply illustrate this.

### Remedial measures:

1. Cultural interaction between the regions should be given to the economic development of the backward regions.
2. People should be educated to wipe out separatist feeling and develop patriotic feeling.
3. A balanced distribution of national resources should be made for all the regions.
4. Greater priority should be given to the economic development of the backward regions.
5. The regional parties should be banned.
6. Mass media of communication should be put to use for spreading the message of nationalism over regionalism.
7. Transport and communication system should be made wide-spread so that people from one region can move to other regions freely.

**Conclusion:**

Thus, the need of the hour is to develop a realistic perception of regionalism at the conceptual level focusing on righteousness and judicious outlook on the part of the political parties, if this objective is achieved, then the realization of the idea of different communities, speaking diverse languages and each linked with particular cultural expression, thinking globally, acting globally and seeing human unity in diversity in practical terms would become a distinct possibility. Regionalism is a present, a fairly widespread phenomenon in the Indian political system. Moreover, it is unlikely to lose its sway over people's minds. At least in the foreseeable future. On the contrary as the various developmental programmes are carried out. Regional disparities are already becoming more marked and widespread engendering a sense of cumulative deprivations in the people of certain regions.

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