

Chapter - I

REGIONAL ASPIRATION IN INDIA

- (i) Concept of Regionalism; Its Nature**
- (ii) Genesis of Regionalism in India**
- (iii) Indian National Congress and Regionalism**

(i) Concept of Regionalism : Its Nature

Regionalism in the ordinary usage refers to particularism or regional patriotism. The Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences 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 homeland and earth and local patriotism. It is not immediately related to particularism 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. Regionalist 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 is derived from the word region. A region is homogeneous area with physical and cultural characteristics distinct from those of neighbouring area, as part of a national domain. A region is sufficiently unified to have a consciousness of its customs and ideals and thus possesses a sense of identity distinct from the rest of the country. The term "regionalism" properly represents the regional idea in action as an ideology or as a social movement or as the theoretical basis for the regional planning, it is also applied to the scientific task of delimiting and analysing regions as entities lacking formal boundaries."²

Regionalism can be conceptualised 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.³ Regionalism

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1. *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 13, MacMillan, New York, 1962. pp. 208-209.
 2. *International Encyclopedia of the Social Science*, Vol. 13, MacMillan, New York, 1968, pp. 377-378.
 3. Arun K. Chatterji, "Sociological Context of Regionalism in India : A Concetual Framework", in Satish Chandra and Others (ed.). *Regionalism and National Integration* (Proceeding of a Seminar held at Jaipur, January 25-28, 1970), Aalekh Publications, Jaipur, 1976, p. 30.

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 a 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 or justification are developed by the key personalities of the region.⁴

Regionalism is in fact a conflict between national elites and regional elites. A regional movement which is the manifestation of regional ideology is an attempt by regional elites to acquire larger support so that they could increase their competitive strength vis-a-vis the national elites.⁵

Nationalism and regionalism are often termed as antonyms. Whereas the former represents forces of cohesion and tries to assimilate the minorities, the latter strives to keep the identity of such groups alive. The maintenance and preservation of such separate and independent identities become more desirable and crucial when a particular minority is linguistic or religious. Any religious minority is bound to become the victim of a fear psychosis that if merged completely into the national or cultural mainstream, it might have to pay a heavy price and consequently lose *raison de etre* of its distinctive identity. Such kind of minority fear psychosis is more relevant in a society like India where inspite of the existence of a number of cultures and sub-cultures, the Hindus represent the dominant religious majority. Any attempt to assimilate the minority in such a set-up is sure to give rise to certain misgivings. Thus, regional consciousness is generated by the euphoria created by the establishment of nation state.⁶

Regionalism is a nebulous concept. It has both a positive and a negative dimension. Speaking in positive terms, it embodies a quest for self-fulfillment on the

4. Arun Audholkar and Rajendra Vora, "Regionalism in Maharashtra", in Akhtar Majeed (ed) *Regionalism Developmental Tensions in India*, Cosmo Publication, New Delhi, 1984, p. 41.

5. *Ibid*, p. 42.

6. Rasheeduddin Khan, "National Integration", *Seminar*, New Delhi, April, 1979.

part of the people of an area. It is worthwhile to emphasize that the positive thrust of regionalism has more often than not, been ignored by political analysis of the Indian situation. Every regional movement thus becomes suspect and is taken as an earnest of the balkanization of the country.⁷

It is obviously an advantage that constituent units of a federation should have a minimum measure of internal cohesion. Likewise, a regional consciousness, not merely in the sense of a negative awareness of absence of repression or exploitation but also in the sense of scope for positive expression of the collective personality of a people inhabiting a state or region may be conducive to the contentment and well-being of the community. Common language may not only promote the growth of such regional consciousness but also make for administrative convenience. Indeed, in a democracy, the people can legitimately claim and the government have a duty to ensure that the administration is conducted in a language which the people can understand.⁸

Negatively speaking, regionalism reflects a psyche of relative deprivation on the part of a people of an area not always viable in terms of rational economic analysis, let alone prone to rationalization. More often than not, it is also believed, whether correctly or not, that deprivation is deliberately inflicted by the powers that be and this leads to acuteness of feeling on the part of those who carry the psyche of deprivation. The belief is easily cultivated in a milieu characterized by politics of scarcity as in India. The redeeming feature, however, is that to the extent the psyche of deprivation is the consequence of specific grievance, its growth could be halted and even the process reversed if the grievances are remedied. It is here that the politico-bureaucratic elite have to be up and doing. If they earnestly work and succeed, the quest for regional identities may ultimately mean areas of relative autonomy and partial dependence and not result in demands of secession.⁹

A distinction has to be made between regionalism and sub-regionalism. Regionalism is a kind of political counter movement aiming to achieve greater

7. *Ibid.*

8. Iqbal Narain, "A Conceptual Analysis in the Indian Context," in Akhtar Majeed (ed), *Regionalism Development Tensions in India*, op.cit., pp. 22-23.

9. *Ibid*, p. 23.

autonomy for the region through greater degree of self government within the federal structure of a nation. Regionalism may also manifest in the form of a movement for special privileges for the 'sons of the soil' as against the 'outsiders' a phenomenon resulting from native-migrant conflict.

Though sub-regionalism shows similar signs, there are some differences. It is a movement by sub-regional elites for the assertion of sub-regional identity based on common history and grievances emanating from an underdeveloped economy of that sub-region. The main considerations behind the sub-regional movement however, are economic development and an anxiety for a proper share in political power. It cuts across the linguistic loyalties and other cultural similarities, and emphasizes the finer and subtle differences in the historical background and cultural patterns. It stresses on an independent identity transcending the linguistic unity with the other groups of the region.¹⁰

But whatever the nature of the sub-regional movement, it is usually triggered off intentionally by the sub-regional elites. The movement, especially its violent eruption is meant for exhibiting strength by sub-regional leaders to the regional leaders and strengthen their claims to the share of power.¹¹

Region represents more of an analytic category than geographical entity. The region is a socio-cultural concept. Man is born with a territorial loyalty. He imbibes loyalty from the soil of his birth. Several variables when remain in operation for a long period of time, in a certain territory form the concept of regionalism, such as geography, topography, religion, language, customs and mores, political and economic stages of development, way of living and commonly shared historical experiences etc. Regionalism to be sure needs all these ingredients but the concept is much more inclusive and even when is said and done, it remains at least partially elusive. The essential fact is that a region is characterized more than anything else, by a widely shared sentiment of 'togetherness' in the people, internationalised from a wide variety of sources, which might even include common prosperity, comrades development in a common struggle.¹²

10. Arun Audholkar and Rajendra Vora, *Op.Cit.*, p. 92.

11. *Ibid*, pp. 92-93.

12. Maheshwari, Sri Ram, "Regionalism in India : Political Administrative Response". *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, IIPA, New Delhi, October-December, 1973, p. 442.

Regionalism as a phenomena emerges out of the cumulation of variations pertaining to the socio-cultural, economic and political spheres. The extent to which regionalism has the potentiality of determining the cleavages and unity within a nation in terms of the balance between the centripetal and centrifugal forces emanating from it, depends on the nature and intensity of these variations. Two sets of components, subjective and objective, determine the nature of regionalism. The subjective components are ways of living, customs and traditions, art forms, language and literature, social heritage, beliefs, attitudes and values as related to a group of the people termed as a regional group. The objective component includes the territorial region and the accompanied man environment complex within which the regional group lives together with others, these components are the determinants of regionalism.¹³

From the theoretical point of view, regionalism has often been characterized both as a doctrine as well as a tendency implying many things, for example;

- (i) decentralization of administration on a regional basis within a nation where there is excessive centralisation and concentration of administrative and political power;
- (ii) a socio-cultural counter-movement against the imposing of a monolithic national unity by imposing a particular political ideology, language as cultural pattern to foster national integration;
- (iii) a political counter-movement aiming to achieve greater autonomy of sub-cultural regions through greater degree of self-government within the federal structure of a nation;
- (iv) a tendency for separatism to fulfil the political aspirations of a regional group living in a specified sub-cultural region.

The objectives of regionalism in this instance are mainly four viz;

- a) revival of regional cultures and rebuilding of such sub-cultural regions having distinctive identity within a nation;

13. Arun K. Chatterji, *Sociological Context of Regionalism in India : A Conceptual Framework*, Op.Cit., pp. 30-31.

- b) administrative and political devolution;
- c) devising principles to solve centre-state confrontations and confrontations between two or more sub-cultural regions;
- d) to maintain economic and political equilibrium between the centre and the states; nation and sub-cultural regions.

It can be inferred from these objectives that regionalism involves many kinds of problems, socio-cultural, economic and political etc.¹⁴

(ii) Genesis 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 Congress had also helped the growth of regional idea through the commitment and struggle for creating linguistic states since 1917 down to its 1948 Jaipur session. However, the trauma of partition of the country on the basis of religion restrained the Linguistic Provinces Commission (Dar Commission), and JVP Committee (consisting of Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel) for the time being, to held up the idea of linguistic States, in the larger interests of the country. The creation of first linguistic State of Andhra in 1953 set a chain reaction for demands of linguistic states. The government constituted *State Reorganisation Commission* in 1953, enacted and implemented *State Reorganisation Act* to meet the regional aspiration of the people.

The non-judicial, non-statutory, primordial and parochial factors in India were sadly ignored by the Constitution. As a result with the initiation of the constitutional process, a process of regionalisation along primordial lines also commenced. This non-constitutional regionalism was inspired not merely by primordial factors like caste, linguistic, minority groups, sub-cultures but also, and perhaps the most significant among these, by the prevailing economic conditions of the different regional communities.

The origins and causes of this regionalism could perhaps be traced to the centralization of power during the British Empire and its consequent delegation to

14. *Ibid*, pp. 31-32.

regional middle classes. The intention of administration to remote areas of land and consequent induction of large masses in to the administration and other infrastructures and had paved the way for the emergence and alignment of linguistic middle classes. The growth of pan-Indian forces also saw the growth of regionalism in India for both implied participation of large and hitherto static masses in the new political development. If the horizontal process of mobility led to the national movement of freedom, the vertical process completed to a large extent the attitudinal integration of the growth of linguistic middle classes.

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.¹⁵

Rasheeduddin Khan has developed following criteria for recognising a region in India. "Maximum homogeneity within and maximum identify without. Where homogeneity are to be established on ten counts :

- (i) Language dialect
- (ii) Social Composition (communities/states)
- (iii) Ethnic groups.
- (iv) Demographic features,
- (v) Area (geographic contiguity),
- (vi) Cultural pattern,
- (vii) Economy and economic life,
- (viii) Historical antecedents,
- (ix) Political backgrounds
- (x) Psychological make up felt consciousness of group identify.

The main concern in this exercise is to eliminate factors contributing to heterogeneity and to coalesce factors promoting homogeneity."¹⁶

15. G. Ram Reddy, and Sharma, B.A.V., *Regionalism in India : A Study of Telangana*, Concept Publication, New Delhi, 1979, pp. 3-4.

16. Rasheedudin Khan, "The Regional Dimension", *Seminar*, New Delhi, No. 164, April 1973, p. 39.

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

Geographical Components

Geographical area or territory is one component on which regional identities are formed, and it is this which differentiates peoples of one area from that of another, if not in kind at least in degrees. After independence, several old Princely states were merged in the neighbouring big states in India. Such states bore a split personality, even if for the time being. The people and even elite and civil servants of merged Princely states maintained their regional identities on the basis of their royalties to old territorial units.¹⁷

This royalties of old territories helped the ex-rulers to win elections in the new states. However, such territorial orientations are only symbolic. Their survival now, require support of economic and political factors. The old memories are yielding place to new territorial identities of states.

Historico-Cultural Components

The historico-cultural components constitute the bedrock of the phenomenon of regionalism in India. The several components in this category are not only important individually but also in conjunction with each other. This is also true of other groups which have more than one component as also of groups inter se : a conjunctive perspective alone will, therefore, bring out the real import of these components.¹⁸

History

To begin with, there is the factor of history which buttresses regionalism by way of cultural heritage, folk lore, myths and symbolism. The historical trends,

17. Iqbal Narain (ed), *State Politics in India*, Meerut, 1967, pp. XXI-XXII.

18. Iqbal Narain, *A Conceptual Analysis in the Indian Context*, *Op.Cit.*, p. 24.

upheavals and crises not only led to territorial redemarcations and reorganisation of sub-cultural regions, but also through periods of stress and strain enhance regional awareness and ethnocentrism. The historico-forces act as catalytic agents in fostering regional awareness at the inter-regional as well as intra-regional levels, particularly because of the shared socio-cultural experiences and memories of a common past. In this instance the very name of the sub-cultural region or regional group awakens and re-awakens in the people memories of the whole series of thoughts, customs and traditions, art forms, habitat-behavioural patterns, and images corresponding to them, which are partly geographical, socio-cultural and historico-political facts. Documented historical evidences reveal that in most of the sub-cultural region of India, regionalism has evolved in this way.¹⁹

Culture

The cultural forces operating through the gamut customs, traditional ways and mannerisms, value and various institutional complexes; social, economic and religious have traded to reinforce the historical memories and determined the distinctive forms of mental sets and behavioural pattern of different regional groups. In this way the groups have gradually acquired individually and uniqueness in different degrees which is more perceptible and understood in terms of intra-regional comparisons. Thus, any regional group which has internalised most of the elements of its own sub-culture can infer, and also asserts its own individuality and uniqueness through such comparisons, and consequently, perpetuates a distinctive brand of regionalism and maintains its continuity through generations.²⁰

Radha Kumud Mukerji emphasising importance of culture observes: "the supreme end of the state is to promote culture because culture is one's country and the country is one's culture. India's culture is a synthetic complex made up of a number of diverse elements, each of which makes its own contribution to the comprehensive whole."²¹

19. Arun K. Chatterji., *Sociological Context of Regionalism in India : A Conceptual Framework, Op.Cit.*, p. 33.

20. *Ibid*, p. 34.

21. Quated in Kodesia Krisha, *The Problem of Linguistic State in India*. Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1969, p. 22.

This distinctive brand of regionalism pertaining to any particular regional group spreads spontaneously and less through deliberate efforts, although in times of regional crises, it can be deliberately intensified. Depending upon the extent and nature of the cumulation of regional variations, currently held beliefs, values, and interests, it may either precipitate schism and create cultural and linguistic barriers, leading to greater social distance and alienation or promote inter and intra regional cohesion, identification and integration. Therefore, it follows that the demand for greater regional autonomy or separatism gain strength from the schimistic influences of regionalism and the urge for national integration on account of its cohesive influences. When the cohesive influences of regionalism is more intense than its schismatic influences, the different regional groups feel a conscious need and identify themselves as interdependent and inter-related constituents of a greater entity; the nation. They may even consciously try to foster national integration.²²

Language

Among the cultural forces, language has assumed a significant role in India today. It is fairly well known that language is perhaps the most important mark of group identification. It is more precisely discriminating than either colour or race. Linguistic homogeneity strengthens regionalism both in positive and negative senses; in the former in terms of strength in unity and in the latter through emotional frenzy. Language as an expression of shared life, thought structures and value-patterns' has the potential to unite people emotionally and make them work to improve their common destiny as also to add to their bargaining strength.²³ The creation of Punjabi Suba and division of Bombay into Maharashtra and Gujrat provides testimony to this. However, intra-state regionalism surpasses the bond of common language where economic grievances of a sub-region takes precedence over language as is illustrated by the Telangana issue. While language help a group to form an emotional identity it also helps to make it highly inflammable, as is illustrated by the language riots in Tamil Nadu and Assam.²⁴

22. Arun K. Chatterji, *Sociological Context of Regionalism in India : A Conceptual Framework*, *Op.Cit.*, p. 34.

23. Iqbal Narain, *A Conceptual Analysis in the Indian Context*, *Op.Cit.*, p. 25.

24. *Ibid*, pp. 25-26.

The rise of linguism has alarmed some observers and sections of people who fear that linguistic territorial fragmentation is strengthening the foundation of sub-nationalism and encouraging the regional royalties and separatist tendencies. The confusion in the linguistic situation can be analysed in terms of :

- (i) The growth of linguism as an exclusive and separatist trend giving paramount importance to the regional language of respective states, over all other language which happen to co-exist with it. The people are becoming more conscious of the legal status and role ascribed to their mother-tongues, whether it is Hindi, Assamees, Teluga, Punjabi, or Tamil.
- (ii) The superimposition of Hindi as Rastra-Bhasha and how to reconcile the idea in those non- Hindi region where the accepted language of education and culture are the regional languages with superior literary standing than Hindi.
- (iii) The controversy over the role of Hindi as the national or link language, or regional languages as official state languages and the double advantage of Hindi in being the national language as well as the official regional language of all the Hindi-speaking states.²⁵

The importance of language component is well established by the re-organisation of states in 1956, on the recommendation of the States Reorganisation Commission. Linguistic and cultural homogeneity was considered desirable for according statehood. The linguistic reorganisation of states gave ascendancy to linguistic regionalism, and as a result there were demands for according statehood from different part of the country. However, it ought to be submitted that "together with language many variables are critical factors like ethnic-cum-economic considerations (Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura); language-cum-culture (Maharashtra and Gujrat); historical and political factors (U.P. and Bihar); religion, script and sentiments (Haryana and Punjab); integration of princely states and the need for viable groupings (M.P. and Rajasthan) and language-cum-social distinctiveness (Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Bengal and Orrissa) have played a decisive role in the composition of the Indian federation.²⁶

25. Arun K. Chatterjee, *Sociological Context of Regionalism in India : A Conceptual Framework*, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 36-37.

26. Rasheeduddin Khan, "The Regional Dimension", *Seminar*, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 35-36.

Economic Component

The crux of regionalism lies in economic under development of the country. It is common knowledge that India is economically underdeveloped in spite of the many achievements registered since independence. The resources are scarce and demands disproportionately heavy and evergrowing on account of continued population explosion. The scarcity of technical know-how, corruption, deteriorating law and order situation have created a dismal mosaic of politico-economic life in the nation. There is thus acute competition among individuals, groups and regions within a state for acquiring more and more economic gains. This has also resulted in the emergence of local leadership who very often raise the bogey of regionalism to strengthen their bargaining posture with the centre. In this period of nation-building, some regions of a state may acquire an advantage over the other. Thus, economically, "regionalism is the outcome of some real or perceived sense of internal colonialism, the result of mal-development or a symmetrical development. Regionalism is the response of unequal sharing of benefits of developmental activity."²⁷

The economic imbalances are exploited by the regional elite, who engineer regional movements taking benefit of the economic grievances of a region and demand distributive justice for their region. According to the report of States Reorganisation Commission, the demands for creation of new states were mainly based on allegedly unfair and unequal distribution of developmental benefits and expenditure in the multi-lingual states.²⁸ Telangana movement is the best example of this type of regionalism. The conflict between the migrant and the son of the soil is a manifestation of the economic factor. The Assamese-Bengali conflict in Assam and Shiv Sena movement to oust non-Maharashtrian from Maharashtra are motivated mainly by economic compulsions.

In a seminar on "Regionalism and National Integration in India" while analysing the texture and structure of the phenomenon of regionalism in various

27. Amba Dutt Pant, "Introduction", Akhtar Majeed (ed), *Regionalism Developmental Tensions in India*, Op.Cit., p. VI.

28. Report of the *State Re-organization Commission*, New Delhi, 1955, p. 225.

parts of India, several participants²⁹ advocated a 'reductionist' explanation in terms of the awakening economic urges of the people and maintained that even such apparently non-economic as a economic phenomenon such as the demand for 'linguistic States' were solidly grounded in such economic factors as employment and economic development. Discussing the question of "linguistic Regionalism", K.C. Pande maintained that inter-regional rivalries were ostensibly motivated by linguistic royalties the real forces operating behind such movements stemmed from economic frustration of the people in one area being deprived of employment opportunities or being unable to compete with outsiders in this sphere. Language, in such cases only provided a convenient cloak for the deep rooted economic maladies and added that most of the so-called 'communal riots' are also rooted in economic maladjustment as in the case of Ranchi and Ahemadabad riots, where economic tensions and not religious differentials tregg the communal violence.

Despite pulls and pressures for distributive justice, economic integration is at work. The national five year planes have provided economic development to many backward regions. The impact of this economic benefit is that even economically backward regions, have developed their separate identity and demand separate state, but they do not want to secede from the union. Because they have realised that their economic well being lies in continuing as a part of the union. Thus, it can be argued that regional pressures emanating from economic compulsions are mere bargaining centres than secessionist moves. The balance of economic advantages in India at any rate is still in favour of union rather than secession. This is further buttressed by safeguards for cultural autonomy.³⁰

Politico-Administrative Component

The political component of regionalism is also important even though politics does not so much create, as accentuate and exploit the situation of regional feelings.

29. P.C. Mathur, "Regionalism and National Integration in India", (A Report of the Discussion-Sessions of the Seminar on Regionalism and National Integration held at Jaipur, January 25-28, 1970) in Satish Chandra & Others (ed) *Regionalism and National Integration*, Aalekh Publications, Jaipur, 1976, p. 178.

30. Iqbal Narain, *A Conceptual Analysis in the Indian Context*, *Op.Cit.*, p. 29.

Politicians, in their self-interest, exploit situations of regional deprivation and unrest and convert them into movements, just to create base for their political survival and strengthen their individual and factional support bases. Regional political parties like the DMK, Akali Dal, Shiv Sena etc. would in fact, built up and survive on the accentuation of the regional sentiment. Border disputes, like the one between Maharashtra and Karnataka, also thrive on fomenting regional sentiments.³¹

In the beginning the ideology of a regional support remains vaguely defines and puts arguments for the justification of regional movement. The regional elites legitimise the movement on regional ideology. Thus, regionalism is in fact a conflict between national elites and regional elites. It was the infighting in the Congress party that generated Telangana agitation. The regional political parties are thriving by exploiting the regional sentiment of the people. Even national parties have to depend on regional influences and, therefore, they recruit regionally influential persons in the party who can mobilize support for the party.

It is undisputable that since the independence, all kinds of inter and intra-regional tensions and conflicts are increasing. The parties in power, although claim to be guided by a common policy and objectives for national development, in actual practice act as if the national and regional interests are incompatible. As aptly stated by H. Abayavardhan :

".....a new generation of provincial leaders without national reputation is advancing to the front. These are not starry eyed visionaries but ambitious politicians willing to concede nothing to none in their quest of a career. Their rise has made a fundamental difference to the Congress party. Already the party's decisions increasingly take the form of compromises among its strong men belonging to different regions....."³²

As far as administration is concerned, it more often than not, easily, if not willingly, becomes the instrument of political discrimination. It also does not always succeed in rising above the regional psyche in favour of the national sentiment. This

31. *Ibid*, p. 30.

32. Arun K. Chatterji, *Sociological Context of Regionalism in India : A Conceptual Framework*, *Op.Cit.*, p. 35.

is true both of the All-India and State services - more, of course, of the latter than of the farmer.

Psychic Component

Regionalism in India, as elsewhere, is a psychic phenomenon, and in the ultimate analysis its roots lie in the winds of men. Each individual, by and large, carries a split personality. Every individual is partly regionalistic and partly nationalistic. There is always a natural tendency of regionalistic sentiment taking primacy over the nationalistic. There is always a natural tendency of regionalistic sentiment taking primacy over the nationalistic sentiment though one does not usually post the two as an either/or situation. 'To be Indian' is not necessarily 'not to be a Maharashtrian'.³³ Similarly "national royalties do not demands that other royalties should be eliminated. The split personality phenomenon can be best illustrated by an observation of Lokanath Mishra :

"My first ambition is the glory of Mother India. I know it in my heart of hearts that I am Indian first and an Indian last. But when you say, you are a Bihari, I say I am an Oriya. When you say, you are a Bengali, I say I am Oriya. Otherwise, I am an Indian."³⁴

Regionalism can be classified in to three categories, supra-state regionalism, inter-state regionalism and intra-state regionalism. The boundaries of state are not necessarily co-terminus with region yet this type can be illustrated through the example of state :

The supra-state regionalism is formed by forging an identity by a group of states against other groups of state or even against the union. The group identity formed here is usually negative in character. Such type is also 'issue-specific' in the sense that it is confined to certain matter on which the group would like to take a common and joint stand. It is not at all a case of a total and permanent merger of state identities in the group identity's; in fact, rivalaries, tensions and even conflicts

33. Rasheeduddin Khan, *The Regional Dimension, Op.Cit.*, p. 35.

34. Lok Nath Mishra, *Debates on the Report of the State Reorganizaton*, Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, 19th December, 1955, Vol. 23, Column, 3270-3271.

continue to take place at times even simultaneously with group postures. Its example can be cited by south vs. north in India on the language issue.³⁵

The inter-state regionalism is coterminous with state boundaries and involves juxtaposing of one or more state identities against another on specific issues which threaten their interest. River water disputes in general and the Maharashtra-Karnataka border disputes in particular can be cited as example.³⁶

The intra-state regionalism, a part of a state develops the quest for self identity and self development positively, and negatively, it expresses a psychic of deprivation or exploitation in relation to the other parties of the same states. This phenomenon is also called sub-regionalism. The main considerations behind the sub-regional movement however, are economic development and an anxiety for a proper share in political power. It cut across the linguistic royalties and other cultural similarities, and emphasis the finer and subtle differences in the historical background and cultural patterns."³⁷ This type of regionalism is most rampant, typified by a Vidarbha in Maharashtra, Saurashtra in Gujrat, Telangana in Andhra Pradesh etc.

Regionalism and sub-regionalism are unavoidable in a country as vast and expansive as India. Nothing is more basic to the very concept of federalism than regionalism and sub-regionalism. Once the federal nation-state comes into being and national freedom becomes a reality, the regional sentiments and demands also manifest and assert. Not infrequently, those supporting the cause of 'unity and integrity' of the country and the nation, consider every attempt to support or defend sub-regional and regional interests as divisive, fissiparous and disintegrative. This is not a correct approach, we must remember in a country of manifest diversities like India, unity does not mean uniformity, nor close integration means centralisation.³⁸

In India, there is a strong case not only for the existence but also for the growth of healthy regionalism perceived from a democratic perspective and political

35. Iqbal Narain, *A Conceptual Analysis in the Indian Context*, *Op.Cit.*, p. 32.

36. *Ibid.*

37. Arun Audhalkar and Rajendra Vora, *Regionalism in Maharashtra*, *Op.Cit.*, p. 92.

38. Rasheeduddin Khan, "Federal-Nation Building; The Problem of Regionalism and National Integration", in *Democracy in India*, New Delhi, NCERT, 1990, p. 78.

angle. It manifests the genuine democratic ethos of the country and needs a proper accommodation in the Indian federation. The need, therefore, is to discard this notion that regionalism is unpatriotic and poses threat to national integration. Regional sentiment is an important factor in the political ordering of affairs in a democracy. For proper management of regionalism, administrative institutions can be set up at regional level in the states and for the proper regional coordination units of political parties should be set up at the regional level also.

(iii) Indian National Congress and Regionalism

The attachment to one's own region, language, culture and other societal royalties have deep roots in the soil and history of India. As early as 1903, linguistic principles for partition of the then Bengal figured in a letter from Sir Herbert Risley, Home Secretary, Government of India, to the Government of Bengal, dated 3rd December, 1903, in which the proposal for the partition of Bengal was first mooted.³⁹ The Britishers, in their efforts to 'divide and rule' India, partitioned Bengal in 1905 which aroused bitter opposition. The Indian National Congress gave indirect support to the idea of linguistic provinces in 1905 "when it backed the demand for annulling the partition of Bengal which has resulted in the division of the Bengali-speaking people into two units."⁴⁰ The partition of Bengal was annulled in 1911 due to linguistic and cultural considerations.

The seeds of linguism were sown in India by the Indian National Congress, and the principle was approved ... in the Government of India's despatch of August 25, 1911, and the consequent separation of Bihar from Bengal. The seeds struck roots in 1917 when the Congress recognised the demand of the Telugu speaking people to have separate province.⁴¹ The Indian National Congress to enlist popular support favoured the idea of constituting political units on rational and linguistic basis. As a result Andhra and Sind became separate Congress province in 1917.⁴²

39. Report of the S.R.C., New Delhi, 1955, p. 10.

40. *Ibid*, pp. 13-14.

41. K.M. Munshi, "Indian Constitutional Documents", Vol. I, *Pilgrimage to Freedom 1902-50*, Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1967, pp. 226-227.

42. Report of the S.R.C., *Op.Cit.*, p. 13.

Mahatma Gandhi who entered Indian politics in 1919, thought, it imperative that units of Indian National Congress be organised on linguistic basis then alone his message could be transmitted to people at large. The Indian National Congress was supporting the movement for the creation of linguistic states consistently and consciously. Beginning in 1920, the Congress had organised itself on the basis of linguistic and cultural regions, despite conflicting British administrative patterns.⁴³ The formation of Bihar, Sind and Orissa as Congressional provinces on the linguistic principle was a deliberate departure from the normal organisational pattern which had so far followed the boundaries of existing administrative provinces.⁴⁴ At the Nagpur session in 1920, Indian National Congress decided to organise its structure on the basis of linguistic units and from thereon attacked as arbitrary and irrational the provincial boundaries drawn by the British. It reorganized the existing provinces in to twenty-one Congress provinces on linguistic basis in 1921. The Indian National Congress encouraged the creation of "more or less" linguistic units such as Ajmer, Bombay, Maharashtra and Vidarbha.⁴⁵

On December 18, 1927, A. Rangaswami Iyengar, General Secretary of the Indian National Congress prepared a Draft Constitution of India Bill, for the consideration of the working committee. While referring to New Provinces Article 114 of the Draft read, "parliament shall, as soon as may be after the coming into force of this Act, appoint a commission for the purpose of making proposals for reconstituting the provinces on the basis of language groupings."⁴⁶

The Indian National Congress, adopted a resolution in 1927, session, regarding the reorganisation of provinces on the linguistic basis.

"b(i) That Sind should be constituted into a separate province, this Congress is of the opinion that the time has come for the redistribution of provinces on

43. M.F. Franda, *West Bengal and the Federalizing Process in India*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1968, p. 10.

44. Report of the S.R.C., *Op.Cit.*, pp. 12-13.

45. Suman Sharma, *State Boundary Changes in India : Constitutional Provisions and Consequences*. Deep & Deep Publications, Delhi, 1995, p. 77.

46. A. Rangaswami Iyengar, *Draft Constitution of India Bill*, Thompson & Co., 1927, p. 33 (Sardar Vallabhbai Patel Smarak Trust Library, New Delhi).

linguistic basis - a principle that has been adopted in the constitution of the Congress.

- (ii) that such readjustment of provinces be immediately taken in hand and that any province which demands such reconstitution on linguistic basis be dealt with accordingly;
- (iii) that a beginning may be made by constituting Andhra, Utkal, Sind and Karnataka into separate provinces.⁴⁷

The All parties conference convened on May 19, 1928, appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Pandit Motilal Nehru to consider and determine the principle of the constitution for India before July 1, 1928. The committee observed that at present the 'distribution of provinces was not on 'rational basis' and there was need of regrouping the provinces on a linguistic basis. "Language as a rule corresponds with a special variety of culture, of traditions and literature."⁴⁸ The Nehru report referred to the 'sentiment' as more important than fact in such matters. "Administrative convenience is often a matter of arrangement and must as a rule bow to the wishes of the people."⁴⁹ The report recommended that "the redistribution of provinces should take place on a linguistic basis on the demand of the majority of the population of the area concerned, subject to financial and administrative considerations."⁵⁰

The Indian National Congress in 1937, at the Calcutta session, passed a resolution, "The All India Congress Committee reaffirms the Congress policy regarding the redistribution of provinces on a linguistic basis and recommend to the Madras and Bombay Governments to consider the formation of a separate Andhra and Karnataka Province respectively. The A.I.C.C. also asks the Congress Government in Bihar to take early steps to restore Bengali-speaking areas at present comprised in Bihar to the province of Bengal."⁵¹

47. Indian National Congress, Congress Working Committee Resolutions, 1927. Allahabad: Swaraj Bhawan, p. 47 (Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Smarak Trust Library, New Delhi).

48. Nehru Report, Allahabad, The General Secretary, All India Congress Committee, 1929, pp. 61-62.

49. *Ibid*, p. 62.

50. *Ibid*, p. 122-123.

51. Indian National Congress (Resolutions passed during the period between April, 1936 to January, 1938), A.I.C.C. Swaraj Bhawan, Allahabad, p. 18.

In 1938, the working committee of Indian National Congress met at Wardha under the presidentship of Subhash Chandra Bose. After hearing the views of the deputations of the Andhra, Karnataka and Kerala provincial Congress committees on the question of the redistribution of provinces on a linguistic basis for administrative purposes, the committee declared that the resolution of the Madras Legislature on linguistic provinces and of the Bombay legislature on the separation of the Karnataka province were passed with the previous sanction of the parliamentary sub-committee and the full approval of the committee itself. The committee desired to assure the people of the area concerned that the solution of the question should be undertaken as a part of the future scheme of the Government of India as soon as the Congress had the power to do so and called upon the people of the concerned areas to desist from any further agitation which might divert attention from the main issue existing before the country.⁵² In its 1938, Haripura session, the President Indian National Congress, Subhash Chandra Bose, while referring to the A.I.C.C. pronouncement in Calcutta, October, 1937 remarked that "the culture, language and script of the minorities and of the different linguistic areas shall be protected."⁵³ The Indian National Congress stood firm on its election manifesto of 1945-46, it repeated the view that administrative units should be constituted as far as possible on linguistic and cultural basis.⁵⁴

S. Nijalingappa, President Karnataka Provincial Congress Committee and members of the Indian Constituent Assembly and of the Provincial Legislature from Karnataka wrote a letter,⁵⁵ in reference to the immediate formation of the Karnataka to the president and members of the working committee of the Indian National Congress on January 25, 1948. The letter regretfully referred to the comments made by some about their efforts as 'fissiparous'. They tried to remind the efforts made on

52. Indian National Congress, (Resolution passed during the period between February 1938 to January 1939) A.I.C.C., Swaraj Bhawan, Allahabad, p. 43. (Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Smarak Trust Library, New Delhi).

53. A.M. Zaidi, (ed), *Congress Presidential Address (1921-39)*, Vol. 4, Indian Institute of Applied Political Research, New Delhi, 1988, p. 251.

54. Report of the S.R.C., *Op.Cit.*, p. 14.

55. Dr. Rajendra Prasad Papers Files No. 1-P/48, 25.1.1948, pp. 4-7.

the part of the Congress to form linguistic provinces in 1920 for its own organization and for the fight for freedom under Gandhi's leadership. But "logical sequence of the formation of linguistic provinces for purposes of administration was yet to come..... We would like to point out that we believe with large number of eminent Congressmen that it would be a great act of constructive statesmanship to form linguistic provinces immediately so that they may develop to their full stature as live units of the Indian Union."⁵⁶

They appealed that, speedy solution of local problems would make people "form strong and homogeneous provincial governments and be a source of positive strength and support to the central government and the Congress as a whole rather than the dissatisfied peoples and disunited and weak Governments now obtaining in these composite areas."⁵⁷ Each linguistic group believed the independence should bring the fulfillment of its particular wishes.

In view of repeated demands, the Indian National Congress passed a resolution in 1948, Jaipur session, to form a committee of the members of the party, to study the issue of reorganisation of states on linguistic basis. This Congress appointed a committee known as Linguistic Provinces Committee in Dec. 1948, of the following three members, Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, "to review the position and to examine the question in the light of the decision taken by the Congress in the past and the requirements of the existing situation, (i) in view of the report of the Linguistic Provinces Commission (Dar Commission), appointed by the President of the Constituent Assembly, and (ii) the new problems that have arisen out of the achievement of independence."⁵⁸

The Linguistic Provinces Committee (JVP) submitted its report in April 1949, deviated from the old policy of the Congress when it maintained that the need is that of "ensuring security, stability, strength and unity of India, as rapidly as possible. In particular, we should avoid taking any step which may delay or come in

56. *Ibid.*

57. *Ibid.*

58. Suman Sharma, *State Boundary Changes in India, Op.Cit.*, pp. 96-97.

the way of this consolidation... The context demands above everything, the consolidation of India and her freedom, the progressive solution of her economic problems in terms of the masses of her people, the promotion of unity in India and of close cooperation among the various provinces and states in most spheres of activity."⁵⁹ The committee further observed "...it is impossible to have clear and rigid demarcation on linguistic areas... When conditions are more static and the state of peoples mind calmer, the adjustment of these boundaries or the creation of new provinces can be undertaken with relative ease and with advantage of all concerned."⁶⁰

The committee was conscious of the fact that "the present is not an opportune time for the formation of new provinces on lingual basis. It would unmistakably retard the process of consolidation of our gains, dislocate our administrative, economic and financial structure, let loose, while we are still in a formative state, forces of disruption and disintegration, and seriously interfere with the progressive solution of our economic and political difficulties."⁶¹ But the committee ultimately suggested, "if public sentiment is insistent and overwhelming, the practicability of satisfying public demand with its implications and consequences must be examined.....the case of Andhra Province to be taken up first and the question of its implementation examined before we can think of considering the question of any other province."⁶² The J.V.P. report suggested that "if there were an insistent demand the question should receive further and more detailed examinations..."⁶³

The Congress Working Committee adopted and endorsed the report of the *Linguistic Provinces Committee* in April 1949. The working committee received

59. Report of the Linguistic Provinces Committee, appointed by the Jaipur Congress (Dec., 1948), The AICC, New Delhi, 1948, pp. 4-5. (Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Smarak Trust Library, New Delhi).

60. *Ibid*, pp. 7-8.

61. *Ibid*, pp. 9-10.

62. *Ibid*, pp. 15-16.

63. Michael Brecher, *Nehru : A Political Biography*, Oxford University Press, London, 1959, p. 481.

various deputations and memoranda on the formation of linguistic provinces from Andhra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Nagpur, Vidarbha, Maharashtra, Bombay and Gujrat Provincial Congress Committee and the provincial Governments of Bombay, Madhya Pradesh and Madras. Accordingly the working committee recommended, in view of the general agreement between Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee and Tamil Nadu Pradesh Congress Committee and the Madras Government, the formation of the Andhra Province in Accordance with the report of the Linguistic Provinces Committee⁶⁴ and the Government of India should be requested to form forthwith the Andhra Province consisting generally of undisputed Andhra districts but without the city of Madras, the exact demarcation should be made by a boundary commission.

The demand for a separate state of Andhra had deep roots among the Telugu people. The regional feelings came to the forefront in the Madras Presidency that comprised of the Telugu, Tamil, Kanada, Malayalam and Odissi speaking people. Among them Andhras were in majority both in number and area wise. But the politics of Madras was dominated by the Tamil Congressmen, therefore, Andhra Congress leaders felt suffocated. They wanted to make an Andhra Congress but the National leaders did not pay heed to it. Despite, they formed Andhra Congress Committee in May 1913, and ultimately Central Congress leadership granted permission for the establishment of Telugu Unit in April 1917. This provided a fittings to the regional sentiments created Telugu identity and fastered an awareness of linguistic autonomy.

The arguments, which JVP committee had given in favour of reorganisation on linguistic provinces, were the result of the commitment of Congress to it. "No body denies that fact; but that can be an argument only if and when it is accepted....".⁶⁵ The Congress itself realised that its decision could not be implemented at that time, (in 1948-49) and the issue was postponed. The months of

64. Report of the General Secretaries, January 1949-Sept. 1950, The All India Congress Committee, New Delhi, p. 57. (Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Smarak Trust Library, New Delhi).

65. K.P. Mukerji and Suhasini Ramaswamy, *Reorganization of Indian States*. The Popular Book Depot, Bombay, 1955, p. 22.

confused lobbying followed outside the Constituent Assembly but did not produce the desired results. "This was primarily because the oligarchy - Nehru, Patel, Prasad and Azad - opposed the re-distribution of provinces on a linguistic basis."⁶⁶ Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru believed that some kind of reorganization was 'inevitable' but wanted to solve the problem, "at a suitable moment when the time is ripe for it."⁶⁷

The situation in Andhra was take a very serious turn in 1952. The differences between Rajagopalachari's and T. Prakasam, popularly known as Andhra Kesari, were well known. Their differences accentuated the clash between the Tamil and the Telugu speaking Andhras. The Andhras now revived their demand that the Madras state, as formed by the British be carved into two separate Tamil and Telugu speaking states. This movement got a big fillip when Potti Sriramalu, a respected Gandhian, undertook a fast unto death. Prime Minister Nehru was not in a mood to succumb to such tactice. But after 56 days of fast, Sriramulu died on December 19, 1952. The death of Patti Sriramulu resulted in widespread violence all over the Telugu speaking areas of Madras Presidency. "At the first assault by linguism, the Congress lost its nerve....Jawaharlal Nehru, in spite of his strong opposition to re-distribution of the provinces on the basis of language, surrendered to the emotional upsurge among the Telugu-speaking people,⁶⁸ and announced the formation of Andhra State on December 19, 1952, on the principle of the J.V.P. Committee.

Till September 1952, the Prime Minister Nehru was known to have been against the formation of linguistic states but 'Public Sentiment' pressurised the government, and in January 1953, All India Congress Committee at its fifty-eighth session at Hyderabad recommended the division of India on linguistic basis. Prime Minister Nehru in his Presidential Address on January 17, 1953, had said, "the decision to form the Andhra state has led to a renewal of demands for some other linguistic provinces.... I would earnestly suggest that while establishing the Andhra

66. Granville Austin, *The Indian Constitution : Corner Stone of a Nation*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1966, p. 243.

67. Constituent Assembly Debates : Official Reprot, Vol. VII, 1948-49 Nov.-Dec., Lok Sabha Secretariate, New Delhi, p. 320.

68. K.M. Munshi, *Indian Constitutional Documents, Vol. 1, Op.Cit.*, p. 231.

State, we should wait to see the consequences that flow from it and then take into consideration any like problems elsewhere."⁶⁹ After the formation of Andhra Pradesh on linguistic basis, in October 1953, the Prime Minister Nehru, made a statement in Parliament that a commission would be appointed. It was stated that the commission would examine "objectively and dispassionately the question of the reorganization of the states of the Indian Union....."⁷⁰ Accordingly a State Reorganization Commission under the chairmanship of Justice Saiyed Fazal Ali, with two members Hiriday Nath Kunzru and K.M. Panikar was formed on December 22, 1953, to examine the issue of reorganization. It submitted its report on 30th September 1955. The commission acted as a 'neutral' body. The commission was commissioned to suggest broad principles on which reorganization of states should be effected. The appointment of this commission suggested that the Government was in favour of the reorganization of states on a rational basis and the task of the commission was to recommend what should constitute the rational basis.⁷¹

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 nation is undoubtedly the sum total of the combined strength of the people of the component states. But while the building of contented units, strong enough to bear their share of the burden, is an important objective, it is no less necessary that the links between the units and the nation should be equally strong so that under the strength of regional royalties the Union does not fall apart.⁷²

The commission was conscious of the importance of the language and culture of an area as they represent a pattern of living, common in that area. But there are some other factors which are of great importance. The first essential consideration

69. Presidential Address, Indian National Congress, Fifty Eighth Session, Deccan, Hyderabad, January 17, 1953, p. 14.

70. Report of the *States Reorganization Commission*, Appendix A, Ministry of Home Affairs Resolution, New Delhi, Dec. 29, 1953, p. 265.

71. Suman Sharma, *State Boundary Changes in India*, *Op.Cit.*, p. 108.

72. K.P. Mukerji and S. Ramaswamy, *Reorganization of Indian States*, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 31-32.

is the preservation and strengthening of the unity and security of India. The commission realised that the theory of one language in one state was neither always justified, nor practical. It suggested that the practice of 'linguisticism' needed certain constitutional and ideological correctives. The resources - financial, administrative and technical should be the criterion along with language. The commission made it clear that "the states based on languages only are intolerant, aggressive and expansionist in character."⁷³

After discussing the recommendations of the States Reorganisation Commission, the Congress Working Committee suggested, in November 1955, that the commission's recommendations should be generally accepted except in cases where it is possible to find alternate solutions which receive a more general agreement or in certain cases of adjustments of boundaries. The Congress Working Committee clarified its stand that "the reorganization of states is only a means to an end, the basic objective being the unity of the nation and the prosperity of the people."⁷⁴

The Indian National Congress made its stand more clear in Amritsar session, in February 1956. "More than thirty years ago, the Congress encouraged the formation of linguistic provinces from the point of view of its own constitution, and such Congress provinces were constituted regardless of state administrative units. The object aimed at was to break the barriers which had been created under British rule between the English knowing classes in India and the masses and to encourage the growth of the Indian languages and the cultures associated with them. This was necessary step both from the political and cultural point of view."⁷⁵

The Indian National Congress, in its 1956, Amritsar session, emphasized that "...If linguistic demarcation of states leads to conflict between states and to considerations of provincialism, overriding the vital necessity of unity and the good

73. *Ibid*, p. 39.

74. Indian National Congress, *Resolutions on States Reorganization, 1920-56*, All India Congress Committee, New Delhi, pp. 13-14. (Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Smarak Trust Library, New Delhi).

75. *Ibid*, p. 21.

of India as a whole, then linguism has over-stepped its proper sphere and became a danger. The full development of a language and the culture associated with it can be secured, where considered necessary, by the proposal to have regions within a state and the Congress therefore, welcomes suggestions which have been made to this end. In this way linguistic homogeneity will be secured and at the same time, the larger interests of the state preserved."⁷⁶

The history of the movement for linguistic states indicates that the largest and most influential party in the country (i.e. Indian National Congress) had been giving support to it, probably just to quiet down agitations or probably just to manufacture another anti-British bias among the people and win popularity for the party. As a result, an atmosphere has been created in which emotion and politics have gained so much prominence than reasons.

76. *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.