



A Review of Regional Political Parties in India

Shikhar^{1*}, Dr. Sandhya Tiwari²

1. Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, Kalinga University, Raipur (CG), India
vimt2018@gmail.com,

2. Ph.D Guide, Department of Political Science, Kalinga University, Raipur (CG), India

Abstract: The evolution and impact of India's regional political parties are the subject of this analysis. There has been a decentralisation of power in India's democratic system since the country gained its independence, which is reflective of the country's rich linguistic, cultural, and social variety. Factors such as economic inequality, the emergence of linguistic states, the importance of caste, class, and identity politics, and mobilisation around regional demands led to the emergence of regional parties. By establishing personal relationships with voters and taking up issues that national parties would ignore, these groups often serve as advocates for local concerns. The theoretical underpinnings, historical development, and effects of regional parties on India's electoral process are all explored in this comprehensive study of regionalism. The democratisation of politics has been aided by regional parties, which have played key roles in coalition administrations and in defining national policy via both collaboration and rivalry with national parties. The study concludes that regional parties are necessary for fair representation under India's federal system, highlighting the dual character of regionalism as a form of self-expression and a threat to central power.

Keywords: Politics, Regional, India, Parties, Regionalism, Democratic System

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INTRODUCTION

A major factor in the development and consolidation of India's democratic system has been the process of decentralization of power within the country's political framework, namely via regionalization. The political landscape of India has become more regionalized as a result of the democratic process that began after the country gained independence. India is a vast country with a diverse population of around 1.3 billion people who speak a wide variety of languages and practice a wide variety of ethnic and social traditions. Because of its very diverse population, India has seen the rise of regional forces. All sorts of communities are a part of this variety, and they're all bound together by common experiences and heavily impacted by regional and local variables. Indian regional parties came into being for a variety of reasons. These include the rise of language states, the fall of the Congress party, differences in economic development between states, increased levels of mobilization, regional demands, interests, and ambitions, and the impact of caste, class, and identity politics.

AN INTRODUCTION TO INDIAN REGIONALISM

An examination of the origins of the word "regionalism" reveals that it derives from the Latin word "region." A region is an area that is both physically and culturally homogeneous and that is both cohesive and bordered by other territories. [1]

The term has distinct meanings to many academics. Geographical locations that may be roughly classified by physical characteristics are of particular interest to geographers. The field of anthropology is devoted to the study of human culture and its many manifestations. Looking at this entity via a sociological lens reveals

that it is made up of several communities that share certain social structures. A political scientist explains that the political subsystem is the boundary inside the national system that is formed by a number of components and their interactions. [2]

In a political arena, a region is coherent enough to be cognizant of its own traditions, values, and norms, and thus to have a sense of self distinct from the nation as a whole. [3] Thus, wherever there is a strong desire for locals to have priority over foreigners when it comes to access to resources. [4]

When a part of a country grows to feel like one big happy family with a strong feeling of shared history, culture, and identity, this phenomenon is called regionalization or the regional movement. This regional pride is an expression of the region's cultural identity. The term "region" can be used in any setting or with any given parameter to describe "a sufficiently large area that is distinguished from others by a variety of factors such as language, culture, religion, caste, creed, socio-economic life, political history, geographic continuity, and, most importantly, group consciousness," according to Haqqi. "Regionalists may be defined as those who oppose aggressive or excessive centralization," Hedwig Hintze argues. [5]

It takes two or more factors for regionalism to become an issue, however. Examples abound, including but not limited to: racial, ethnic, or religious peculiarities; economic class interests; geographical isolation; and independent historical traditionalism. The idea of political control over government administration as outlined by Hedwig Hintze is too narrow to be considered in isolation. In order to determine the location of a certain area, Rasheeduddin Khan suggests the following criteria: Language dialect, (3) social composition (communities/jatis), (4) demographic features, (5) area (geographic contiguity), (6) cultural pattern, (7) economy and economic life, (8) historical antecedents, (9) political backgrounds, (10) psychological makeup, and felt group identity consciousness are the ten criteria to establish homogeneities, with the goal of achieving maximum identity without. The primary objective of this task is to combine elements that promote homogeneity and remove those that encourage heterogeneity. [6]

The most potent political force in India's history has been regionalism. It has always shown itself nationally via organized campaigns and agitations. [7]

For many, sub-territorial allegiance takes the shape of regionalism, which has come to symbolise strong links to one's home area. It has its origins in the great variety of people, languages, tribes, faiths, and communities that emerged in the years after independence. Depending on how it is handled, regionalism in India may be both a problematic and cooperative force [8]

In the regions, political elites play a significant role by helping the people express their needs and wants and by organizing them into movements that have a regional flavor. By appealing to local sentiments, they are able to garner a large following and fortify their position in the face of competition from national elites, thereby legitimizing their control and power. But the ultimate aim of any regional movement is to increase regional autonomy within the larger framework of the country or current system. The release of pressure and power during a move may, on occasion, threaten the basic unity and integrity of a country. When there is a regional movement, its members often want greater power and resources and may even accuse the federal government of treating them unfairly within the larger national framework. This kind of behavior is typical of states that are competitive with one another. A separatist slogan will pop up if they're feeling completely alone. [9]

There is a good and a negative side to regionalism. Some see it negatively since it goes against federalism, policies, and the fundamental interests and goals of a developed and integrated democratic state. Despite Indira Gandhi's description of regionalism as "a very significant threat to the country's development, progress, and unity," Pant notes that "the federal structure of the Indian constitution left no alternative but to accept the geographical identities of the regions." [10]

Although it is often seen as a tool to help and encourage political activity via mobilization of regions in a favorable light. It allows individuals to express themselves constructively while also fostering a feeling of self-fulfillment and self-identity. [11]

Different languages and cultures form the basis of regionalism in India. Like religion, culture and language provide the bedrock of an individual's identity yet, when politicized, may escalate into deadly conflict. An excessive focus on regional exclusivity emerged as a consequence of the heightened occurrence of regional languages and cultural revival brought about by the reorganization of states. After looking at how regionalism has taken numerous forms in India, it's important to find out what led to its formation in the first place. [12]

As shown in the 1956 linguistic riots in the composite states of Bombay, when Marathas and Gujaratis engaged in violent street fighting, linguistic jingoism is a potent tool for inciting regional feelings and leading to such events. An important cultural and linguistic schism in India, the North-South divide, was politicized in the early 1960s by the struggle to establish Hindi as the national language. Similarly, the northeastern Khasis, Garos, Nagas, and Mizos resorted to regionalism as a means of self-defense after rejecting Assamese as the official language of the state. Minorities learn that regionalism is their greatest defense against efforts by a powerful majority to impose their language on them. [13]

Religion alone isn't enough when it comes with dominance, like in Jammu and Kashmir and the Laccadive Islands, where Muslims are the majority, or in Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Mizoram, where Christians are the majority, or in Punjab, where Sikhs are the majority, and areas where Hindus are the majority. In addition to providing politically combustible content, fundamentalists may inspire a militant and vocal kind of regionalism.

THE CHARACTER AND STRUCTURE OF INDIAN REGIONALISM

People often use the word "regionalism" to describe an extreme focus on or loyalty to a certain geographical area. One way to look at regionalism is as a transitional stage between federalism and organizational decentralization, as described in the Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences. Minority experiences, local self-governance, autonomy, administrative decentralization, regional identity, and local allegiances are some of the topics covered in this work as it delves into the complexity of contemporary political and cultural life. It is not always the case that regionalism is linked with particularism. To put it simply, when the federal government imposes harsh policies, the result is regionalism. Having said that, regionalism as an idea or a sentiment shouldn't be confined to governmental power or the legislative and executive branches. Historical, geographical, ethnic, racial, economic, and religious elements and challenges have largely contributed to the development of regionalist viewpoints.

The word "region" is the root of the term "regionalism," which describes a composite phenomena with

several dimensions. The term "regionalism" came from Webster's and means "consciousness of and loyalty to a distinct region with a homogeneous population." People living in close proximity to one another and sharing shared physical and cultural traits that are distinct from those of nearby places form what is known as a region. If this area is sufficiently united, its residents will become more aware of and committed to their own traditions, culture, and values, and they will develop a feeling of shared identity apart from the national average. What we call "regionalism" is really just a local belief system or social movement that has the potential to spark regional planning. The same holds true for the methodical endeavor of defining and studying areas as entities without legal bounds.

Theoretically, regionalism is often characterized as both a philosophy and a movement, which implies several things, including. [14]

- In countries with a highly concentrated and centralized administrative and political power structure, the concept of devolution of power according to regional perspectives is known as regionalism.
- Furthermore, it is against the idea of imposing a certain philosophy, cultural practice, or language on anybody in the sake of fostering national unity. An expression for this would be a "socio-cultural counter-movement."
- Additionally, it seeks to enhance the autonomy of subcultural areas by promoting self-governance within the context of the nation's federal system. Thus, it is also a political countermovement.
- The political ambitions of ethnic groups residing in a "specified sub-cultural region" are reinforced by regionalism, which in turn increases the likelihood of secession.
- The process of re-creating local cultures and subcultures inside a country or nation that have various identities. Greater decentralization of power in government and administration

Conflicts between the federal government and individual states, as well as among subcultural provinces, may be mitigated with the establishment of such guiding principles.

MEANING OF THE REGIONAL / STATE PARTIES

In various settings, the term "regional political party" has varied connotations. Limitation to one state and a deep connection to regional ambitions and complaints define regional parties. Because its members identify with different areas, cultures, languages, faiths, and more, the political party can only get support from a certain state. But in India, state and regional parties are treated the same by the Election Commission. Both the percentage of votes it has received in state assembly and Lok Sabha elections and the degree to which it has widespread electoral support across different states are considered when assessing the nature of a political party. There are three levels of political parties in India, according to the Election Commission: national, state, and registered (or unrecognized) parties. ECI says that a National Party fulfills the following requirements: "If a political party is treated as a recognized political party in four or more states, it shall be known as a" Party of India "throughout India, but only so long as that political party continues to fulfill the conditions for recognition in four or more states on the results of any subsequent general election either to the House of People or to the Legislative Assembly of any state."

As per ECI's findings

"If a political party is treated as a recognized political party in fewer than four states, it should be known as a "State Party" in the state or states in which it is so recognized, but only for so long as that political party continues to fulfill thereafter the conditions for recognition on the results of any subsequent general election to the House of People or, as the case may be, to the Legislative Assembly of the State, in the said state or states."

Importantly, in state elections, a political party is considered a state party if it collects 6% of the legitimate votes and wins two assembly seats, or in general elections, 6% of the valid votes and wins one Lok Sabha seat. This doesn't sit well with some academics, who are looking for a way to classify these groups as regional parties that focus on religion-culture, ethnic pride, and the expansion of regional interests.

THE IMPORTANCE AND FUNCTION OF REGIONAL PARTIES

When it comes to state-level politics in India, regional political parties are very powerful. There can be no effective democratic government without regional political parties, which have considerable influence on national and international politics. How much sway they have depends on the diversity of their population and how vocal their resistance is. When it comes to party platforms, most regional parties stick to issues that directly affect their voters or, at the very least, their home state or province. In most countries, regional political parties have little interest in becoming the dominant force in the national government. [15] Because of their restricted distribution within a certain geographic area, this occurrence has occurred.

On top of that, when it comes to issues of policy, regional political parties are very consistent. This occurrence could explain why they are so focused on issues that matter to their constituents or why they are trying to gain control of the state government. [16] There are two main factors that impact regional political parties. One advantage is that their followers tend to congregate in one area, which helps them zero in on certain voters when it's election time. Secondly, the stability that regional parties have is very beneficial. Because of their consistent support, especially from locals, they are able to advocate for these initiatives that are good for their community. [17] Currently, India is home to eight national parties and fifty-four state parties. [18] Many more unregistered parties, in addition to the National and State Parties, may become registered if they get 1% of the vote in a state. Regardless of their goals, regional political parties are increasingly sharing the political arena with national parties.

These groups have been in federal coalition administrations and state legislatures, and they are famous for their electoral partnerships with national parties. India has come a long way from the post-Independence period, when regionalist sentiment was seen as a threat to the nation's cohesion. The effects on public policy and the health of India's political system as a whole are unclear, despite regionalism's acceptability in the country's politics. [19] As a result of their participation in both central and state-level coalition administrations, particularly during India's economic reforms, regional parties are becoming more influential in Indian politics. Despite regional parties' relative obscurity during the Single Party Majority (SPM) administration, they have played a crucial role in the formation of most national administrations since coalitions first emerged. National administration participation has increased payoffs for party bosses at the regional level by securing cabinet positions, increasing discretionary cash from the federal government, and strengthening state governments. [20] Between 1989 and 2010, 33 of the 84 political parties that won seats in the lower house of parliament were able to win a representative in the cabinet. Of all the main regional

parties in India, the 33 named above constitute the largest majority. Regional parties have traditionally won other important ministries that offer chances for patronage and kickbacks from businesses, such as Agriculture, Railways, and Civil Aviation, while the national party that leads the government has traditionally held key portfolios like Defense, Home, External Affairs, and Finance. [21]

The emergence of regional parties has brought attention to the vastly diverse socioeconomic situations and locations. Their demands are no longer met via secessionism and violence; instead, they are more successfully represented as opposition in legislative forums. The question of federalism in the face of an overwhelming central power has recently been brought to the forefront by regional parties. Their ascent is sometimes characterized by political scientists as a "democratization of politics," a change that allowed for the incorporation of regional concerns in national policymaking by shifting focus from national to regional parties. For a people used to a small number of national party bosses, this also meant the rise of many regional leaders.[22]

It would indicate that regional parties are beginning to view contacts between the Centre and states in a more cooperative and less confrontational light. A new wrinkle to building a country and promoting national unity has emerged in recent times: the role of regional parties. Regional political parties in India have had a significant impact on the dynamics of relations between the central and the states. In societies that are diverse in terms of ethnicity, race, religion, and language, such as India, they are the natural consequence of a democratic system based on the franchise for adults. [23] Consequently, their growth is in line with the principles of democracy generally. Even if the political climate has changed, regional parties still don't have much to offer when it comes to tailoring development policies to local preferences.

After 1996, regional parties started playing a far larger role in deciding who would lead the country. Concurrently, a small number of regional party leaders and their respective regional parties have collected enough political clout to play a role in a novel coalition politics that helped build the Union Government. Considering this, it is worth thinking about the part played by Chandrababu Naidu, the ex-chief minister of Andhra Pradesh, who had tremendous influence over the Indian government in selecting and removing prime ministers, as a member of the United Front, a coalition of fourteen separate groups. [24] The fundamental issue in politics is power since politics is all about power. This is due to the fact that organizing people and their relationships within and across cultures is at the heart of politics. [25] Both national and secular parties have been very active in forming coalitions both before and after the election in an attempt to gain control of the government. Regional parties in India have gained power and credibility thanks to these arrangements and recent events. Occasionally, statements like this from India's national political parties lend credibility to the idea that regional groups really exist in the nation. "The regionalization of India's political landscape has decentralized power and deepened the country's democracy," says LSE professor Sumantra Bose.No. [26] Bose goes on to say that the rise of state-level political parties and candidates in an increasing number of Indian states throughout the last decade of the 1900s and the first two decades of this century is evidence that regionalization in Indian politics has progressed democratically according to popular will.

CONCLUSION

As a reflection of India's rich cultural diversity, regional political parties have emerged as an essential

aspect of the country's democratic system. Their emergence heralds a new era of participatory government, where citizens' opinions and needs at the regional and state levels shape policies at the federal level. In certain cases, regionalism might encourage separatist tendencies, but in most cases, it fosters collaboration between the federal government and the states by providing a forum for constructive representation. Regional parties in India have improved the country's federal structure and fostered a more nuanced unification strategy by joining forces in coalition administrations, demonstrating their ability to negotiate regional issues on a national level. With regional parties still going strong, it's clear that India has to celebrate its variety and recognise that different regions' characteristics should be seen as assets, not liabilities, to the country's national identity. The devolution of power in India has made politics more accessible to the general public and has shown that different regions can contribute to creating a unified but diverse national story.

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