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## **Regionalism vs Nationalism – In India**

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### **Abstract:**

*India is a large country having continental dimensions and comprising no fewer than 29 states and 7 Union Territories. It is a multi-racial, multi-lingual nation. There are scores of regional languages, various strains of culture and different loyalties, single as well as multiple. Amidst the amazing diversities, it is natural that regional feelings, regional parities, regional institutions and similar other organizations meant for voicing the aspirations of local people and providing forums for them, should emerged. Indeed, with the passage of years, the multi-faceted aspirations, which together may be described as regionalism, have gained strength.*

*In principal, regionalism need not be regarded as an unhealthy or anti-national phenomenon- unless it takes a militant, aggressive turn and encourages the growth of secessionist tendencies. National Unity is not impaired if the people of a region have a genuine pride in their language and culture. But regionalism develops into a serious threat to National Unity if politicians do not go beyond their regional loyalty and claim to stand only for their regional interests if regionalism is to be regarded as an unhealthy phenomenon, decentralization too would be objectionable, which of course it is not. So there is nothing basically contradictory between Nationalism and Regionalism.*

*Regionalism is the study of behavior that emphasizes the geographic region as the unit of analysis. Regionalism means a part of nation state marked by homogeneity in respect of language, culture and community of economic and other interests. Both Regionalism and Nationalism are associated with territory, it is basically psychological phenomena. Regionalism has two aspects. One aspect opposes loyalty to the region. In its extreme form it is a negation of nationalism. It becomes antagonistic to and subversive of the national unity. It aims at securing a region a greater measure of administrative autonomy. Regionalism in India its different forms like demand for secession from the Indian nation, demand for separate statehood, inter-state disputes. In some states there is hostile attitude of the people of a state against migrants. Regionalism is a challenge to Indian nationalism because of sub-territorial loyalty. Here different variable operate in different degrees like geography, religion, language, common historical tradition and expression, a common way of living.*

**Keywords: Nationalism, Regionalism, Attitude, Unity, Homogeneity.**

**Introduction:** Benedict Anderson defines “A Nation is an imagined political community and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest Nations will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives on image of their community”<sup>1</sup>. India is a large country having continental dimensions and comprising no fewer than 29 states, 7 union territories, over 1500 languages, 6400 castes, 6 major religions, and 29 major festivals. It is a multi-racial, multi-lingual nation. There are scores of regional languages, various strains of culture and different loyalties single as well as multiple. Amidst the amazing diversities, it is natural that regional feelings, regional parties, regional institutions and similar other organizations meant for voicing the aspirations of local people and providing forums for them, should emerge. Indeed with the passage of years, the multifaceted aspirations, which together may be described as regionalism, have gained strength in India<sup>2</sup>.

**Meaning and Definitions:** Regionalism is a country wide phenomenon and it took the form of well-conceived and well organized agitations and campaigns. Regionalism has been the most potent force in Indian politics since independence. It has remained the basis of regional political parties. It is significant type of sub-territorial loyalty. Interestingly enough, regionalism in India, has flourished in close identification with the regions. In the post-independence period, it has often been conflicting as well as collaborating force, largely depending on the manner of accommodation. Regionalism in India is deeply rooted in its manifold diversity of languages, cultures, tribes, religions and communities etc. It is originates from the feeling of regional concentration, which is often felled by a sense of regional deprivation.

Regionalism describes situations in which different religious or ethnic groups with distinctive identities coexist with in the some state boundaries, often concentrated with in a particular region and sharing the strong feelings of collective identity. Regionalism stands for the love of a particular region or an area in preference to the nation or any other region. It often involves ethnic groups whose aims include independence from a national state and the development of their own political powers. In Indian context, regionalism refers to assertions of distinct ethnic, linguistic or economic interests by various groups within the nation. Since the roots of regionalism lie in linguistic, ethnic, economic and cultural identities of the people living in specific geographical area, political scholars have treated various forms of regionalism which include economic, political, religious, and linguistic and even sub regional movements in the general frame of regionalism. In other words, it is the manifestation of those neglected socio- political elements which fail to find expression in the mainstream of polity and culture. These feelings of frustration and anger resulting from exclusion and neglect find expression in regionalism.

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<sup>3</sup>. In most of the cases it is raised for expedient political gains but not necessarily.

Nationalism is a sense of identity with the Nation. It is a belief, creed or political ideology that involves an individual identifying with or becoming attached to one's Nation. Nationalism involves the national identity, by contrast with the related construct of patriotism, which involves the social conditioning and personal behaviors that support a state's decisions and actions. It is the political belief that some groups of people represent a natural community which should live under one political system, be independent of others and have the right to demand an equal standing in the world order with others.

Nationalism is generally defined as a sentiment or a condition of mind of a group of people sharing some things in common. A.E. Zimmerman views "Nationalism as a sentiment to share the glories of the past, to have done great deeds together, to have a common will in the present and a desire to do more in the future". C.J.H .Hayes views "Nationalism is a modern emotional fusion and exaggeration of two very old phenomena, Nationality and Patriotism<sup>4</sup>".

**Objectives:** This paper tries to analyze the issue of Regionalism VS Nationalism in Indian perspectives.

1. Regionalism Vs Nationalism.
2. The growth of Regionalism and Nationalism in India.
3. Regionalism going through a dangerous decade in India.
4. Regionalism obliterating Indian Nationalism.
5. Forms of Regionalism.
6. Principle of Regionalism.
7. Remedies for Regionalism.

**Causes and Factors responsible for rise of regionalism in India:** In India a number of factors have galvanized the movements of regionalism.

1. The efforts of the national government to impose a particular ideology, language or cultural pattern on all people and groups compelled the regionalism movements to crop up. With the same effect, the states of the south began to resist the imposition of Hindi as an official language as they feared this would lead to dominance of the north.
2. Continuous neglect of an area or region by the ruling parties and concentration of administrative and political power has given rise to demand for decentralization of authority and bifurcate of unilingual states. On this occasions son of the soil theory has been put forth to promote the interests of neglected.
3. Apprehension the part of linguistic ethnic or religious minorities in view of uniform system of administration and policies. Many of these groups dominant in specific region became suspicious as to whether their cultural ties, ethos and symbols would be taken care by the Indian state.

4. Uneven pattern of socio- economic development have created regional disparities. What is worst is the naming of these states as BIMARU (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh) etc. The categorizations and sub – Categorization of the states on the basis of socio- economic indicators have generated resentment against the central leadership. The economic causes were the uneven economic development of the region lead to conflicts between peoples and even governments of the various states and within states between regions on question of location of projects distributors of water etc. For Ex: Regionalism in Telangana in Andhra Pradesh, Vidarbha in Maharashtra.

5. The elitist character of leadership and unwarranted intervention by the centre in the affairs of the state has rendered and the state vulnerable to regional forces. The strategic political calculations at the centre and failure of regional political parties to bargain with them have also been a cause of concern.

6. Regionalism is not peculiar to Indian society but it is a World Wide phenomena. At present day most of the modern Indian states have been formed on the basis of linguistic and cultural homogeneity. There is no nation which is perfectly homogeneous in all aspects. In every state there are regional entities which have lead to form a nation state.

7. India is the land of diversity. Regionalism is the result of Indian diversity. Diversity is appearing in the form of language, culture, and historical traditions and too sensitive to cultural and historical identities. The linguistic factor gave rise to linguistic regionalism and to the movement for linguistic states. This leads to regional linguistic passions further interstate boundaries, allocation of river water and location of development projects<sup>5</sup>. There is Anti-Hindi movement, and the demands for Dravidian are the result of regional linguistic factors.

8. In the North East the tribal factor gave rise to regionalism. In this area there are several regions inhabited by tribes each have their own language, cultural and tradition. The tribes are isolated from the mainstream of the society and national life. They are very much associated with their cultural traditions.

9. In the North West the religious factor was responsible for the rise of regionalism and it led to the division of pre–independence India into two nations India and Pakistan. After independence period it has led to the slogans of the Sikh home land or Khalistan.

10. Politicians who are fail to get into power at the state or national level seek to exploit regional sentiments to promote their personal interest. Ex. Telengana people are able to achieve the states of separate statehood.

**Forms of Regionalism in India:** Regionalism in India appears in four forms, e.g. demand of the people of certain areas for separate statehood, demand of people of certain Union Territories for full- fledged statehood, demand of certain people for favorable settlement of inter-state disputes, and the demand of the people of certain areas for secession from the Indian union. However it is agree that rise and growth of regionalism is rooted in the failure of the National political system to meet the aspirations of the people. To some extent, these have also taken the shape of violent movements galvanizing the popular participation.

According to Dr. C.A. Permal, regionalism in India is a multi-dimensional it has assumed mainly four forms.

1. Demand of the people certain areas secession from the Indian Union. It is an extreme dimension of regionalism. Secessionist groups have been active in Jammu & Kashmir, Manipur, Mizoram, and Tripura.
2. Demand of people of certain areas for separate statehood like the demand for Bodoland, Gorkhaland, Vidarbha, Telangana. This is second brand of regionalism. After the 1956 reorganization of states within in India, there is continues demand for separate statehood in various parts of the country<sup>6</sup>. This lead to rise in the number of Indian states from 16 in 1956 to 29 in 2016.
3. Demand of people of certain union territories for full-fledged statehood like the case of Delhi. Some union territories have been putting demand for the grant of full statehood. For Ex: In 1971 Himachal Pradesh got the states of state and there after Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim got full statehood. The demands for full state hood also reflect the presence of regionalism.
4. Demand of certain people for favorable settlement of inter-state disputes like boundary and sharing river waters. The boundary disputes between Maharashtra and Karnataka over Belgaum, Assam and Nagaland over Rangama reserved forest in the Rangapani area, between Assam and Meghalaya over Langpity and there is inter-state water disputes for instances, the disputes between Punjab and Haryana over the distribution of Ravi-Beas and Sutlej water. The disputes among the states like Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra over the sharing of the Narmada waters. The disputes among states like Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu over the Cauvery waters etc.

**Principle of Regionalism:** In principle, regionalism need not be regarded as an unhealthy or anti-national phenomenon-unless it takes a militant, aggressive turn and encourages the growth of secessionist tendencies. National unity is not impaired if the people of a region have a genuine pride in their language and culture. But regionalism develops into a serious threat to national unity if politicians do not go beyond their regional loyalty and claim to stand only for their regional interests if regionalism is to be regarded as an unhealthy phenomenon, decentralization too would be objectionable, which of course it is not the condition. So there is nothing basically contradictory between nationalism and regionalism. Nor does the growth of regional values and consolidation of regional as such pose a challenge to the central administration of the country. Any attempt to counter regionalism in the erroneous belief that is not conducive to national interests, would be ill- conceived. Enforced uniformity in a huge country like India would be sheer- folly<sup>7</sup>. Regional parties do not hinder national unity and integrity as long as they do not exceed their area of activity. Regionalism will come into conflict with nationalism only when the members of the various regional parties tend to forget that they are Indians first.

**To Combat Regionalism:** Regionalism has been an important aspect of Indian politics. Sometimes, it has posed threat to the unity of the country. How to combat regionalism? Hence it is necessary to take steps to reduce such tendencies. Some such measures are as follows,

1. To promote even development of the hitherto neglected areas so that they feel a part of the national mainstream.
2. The central government must not interfere in the affairs of the state unless it is unavoidable for national interest.
3. Problems of people must be solved in a peaceful and constitutional manner. Politicians must not be allowed to misuse the regional demands.
4. Except for issues of national importance, the states should be given freedom to run their own affairs.
5. Change are necessary in the central- state relations in favors of the states, and for introducing a system of national education that would help people to overcome regional feelings and develop an attachment towards the nation.

**Threat of regionalism in India:** Regionalism is an issue that the India has faced even before the time of independence and will have to keep on facing even today. The latest issue of regionalism is the Hogenakal drinking project, just some kilometers away from Bangalore, over which the two affected parties. Tamil Nadu and Karnataka came to literal blows. The dispute emerged from the long standing dispute over the sharing of the water from Cauvery River. This issue is among a long list of issues that have started to highlight the sharp divide among regional states of India where the overall national interest has been reduced to a secondary status.

Indian regionalism has come in three varieties, regionalism, parochialism and secessionism. The emergence for the need to forge out a regional identity based on language, religion, culture or region has been given rise to the tendencies of regionalism<sup>8</sup>. Some of the cases where the Federal Structure of the Indian Constitution has been threatened by the regional aspiration including Kashmir also has worldly connotation. The separate homeland Telegana has already threatened to India for many years. The regional aspirations of many will continue to be encouraged and more demand of separation fired either by a xenophobic belief or otherwise will continue to be threatening the secular and Federal fabric of our constitution.

**Is Regionalism obliterating Indian Nationalism:** Looking back at the time, we still remember those days when we were in school and every day we used to say “**India is my country and all Indians are my brothers and sisters**”<sup>9</sup> just before our classes began. To me it was a sentence which really meant the core reason to pride to be the citizen of India. But today we feel our unity in diversity is perhaps on the brink of extinction, that although India still remains my country, my brothers and sisters are all demanding to be allocated a portion of the country for their own ‘families’.

We the people of India, solemnly resolved to constitute India in to a sovereign socialist secular democratic republic, we also pledged to secure to all its citizens: justice, liberty, equality, fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation. These words placed at the beginning of our constitution, which then laid the very foundations of the world's largest democracy. The Republic of India, are now being openly violated by hooligans like the Shiv-Sena and the MNS. They asking the Bombay Stock Exchange website to be published in Marathi, threatening migrants and job aspirants from north India to leave Maharashtra, and demand of their pointless Maharashtra for Maratha's thirst. Be it Cricket–maestro Sachin Tendulkar or the Baadshah of Indian cinema Shah Rukh Khan, the Marathi–Manoos–Goondas spare no-one who thinks above the swamp of localized feelings. With all due respect to local-feelings, it's really preposterous to subside ones nationalist feelings entirely and submit to the hullabaloo of regionalist ideologies. In my opinion, India's unity is facing a severe crisis from such elements of division. Their radical- policies and brawl-before-brain attitude is severely limiting people's way of perceiving their National-identity.

**Regionalism Vs Nationalism India's most dangerous decade:** India is presently going through a most 'dangerous decade' of regionalism. Sentiments of regionalism with in regions are getting to be strong in many states as these arise and are nurtured by multiple factors. These sub-regional sentiments can and do divide linguistic unity. One of the biggest challenges today before the country in it's of 70<sup>th</sup> year of Independence, is to subdue these fissiparous forces to the bigger national interests. From the beginning the linguistic principle of state formation demanded for separate state. It resulted in the creation of separate states. The power of regional identities over linguistic unity is also seriously challenged in India. These identities are partly based on historical and cultural factors and partly grown out of political frustration and a sense of backwardness<sup>10</sup>. That is why India even today passing through a most dangerous decade of regionalism. The situation is caused by the failure of our system and institutions to achieve development for all. Party politics flourishes on divisive methods. We accused the British Government of following a policy of 'divide and rule' but we are also specializing in the same policy. Unfortunately in India, a person's feeling of identity is strongest at the lower level and gets weaker at every higher level. For many national identities is notional and comes last or even unknown. Today common people unaware of political machinations fall in the trap and imagine that a separate state is the panacea for their deprivations. Far from that regionalism has a common tendency to multiply with every division.

### **Remedies for Regionalism:**

1. In a pluralistic country like India some sort of regionalism is a natural phenomenon. This reflects in the form of anti- nationalism. It can be controlled through the use of law and order machinery as well as through a well-designed process of political organization.
2. The policy of appease of the minorities by political parties for securing electoral gains encourages negative nationalism. The political parties must stop doing or supporting

such activities. Political parties should learn to overcome the desire for short term gains in favour of long term national interest.

3. Linguistic reorganization has strengthened linguistic regionalism. It is through adopting policy of a common national language and through reforms in the educational system. The gravity of this form of regionalism can be minimized.

4. Economic backwardness behind the wide spread of poverty and unemployment among the masses. It has been major factor of regionalism. The solution lies in the proper and effective harnessing of national resources, rural development, and rapid industrial and technical advanced development.

5. Regional press has encouraged and popularized regionalism. They act as mouth-piece regional interests. It is through spread of education and well directed and meaningful publicity can be used to keep the regional press away from pure regional outlook.

6. The acquisition of land particularly inhabited by tribal's should be undertaken with due care and should be preceded by taking them into confidence and to be followed by immediate steps for their rehabilitation and compensation.

7. The centre must never try to act as a big brother. It should abandon unhealthy paternalism in Indian federalism. It must not misuse the unitary feature of the constitution for interfering with the rights and power of the states of the Indian union.

8. The major question lies in, if all these regional groups or parties exist today with intension to develop their regions. Still why Mumbai is home for the largest slum in Asia? While literacy rate is less than 60% in Jharkhand, why number of farmers ending their lives due to lack of proper infrastructure in Andhra Pradesh. There is list of such 'whys' but it is remained unanswered.

**Conclusion:** Mahatma Gandhiji lead our freedom struggle against the British but imagine how many such Gandhis do we need today to fight against these myriad problems, where in fact this time we are our own enemies. If 'why' is a question then 'why not' should be the answer. As famously quoted by Mahatma "Be the change you wish to see in the world". If every individual in this nation should feel the responsibility towards a better future and contribute in whatever possible way to set things right, only then we can still pull off a sensation, towards a feeling of One Nation, One India.

In India no one seems to be happy with Indian hood but wants to live with their region hood. This is all instead of our glorious constitution which says that "**we the people of India**" not the Gujarati or Marathi or Bengali or people of India or constitution's the constitutional guarantees or directions seems ideal but not practical in real India. In reality, we are not known by our Nation but by our region. If this continues, there are many states are lined up for further division. Hope this younger generation having different mindset about this issue and can make a change and contribution in Indian unity.



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