UNIT 14: REGIONALISM IN INDIA

UNIT STRUCTURE

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14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to–

- discuss the meaning of regionalism
- examine the causes of regionalism in India
- analyze the solution of regionalism.

14.2 INTRODUCTION

The issue of regionalism has been an important factor of Indian Politics ever since independence. Sometimes it has posed a serious challenge to the unity and integrity of the country. Due to the rise of regionalism, a number of states or parts of a state demand greater autonomy within the constitutional framework. However, the issue of regionalism always should not be looked at from a negative perspective. Many a time, it has protected the interest of the region from the undue interference of the central government. In this unit, we will discuss the concept of regionalism in Indian context, various forms of regionalism. Factors responsible for the growth of regionalism and possible solutions to this problem of regionalism will also be discussed in this unit.

14.3 MEANING OF REGIONALISM

In general, regionalism refers to the love of a particular region to which one belongs. The concept of regionalism has both positive and negative meaning. In negative sense, regionalism implies excessive attachment to one's region in comparison to the country as a whole which may pose threat to the unity and integrity of the country. So, in the negative sense, regionalism acts as a divisive force threatening the unity, integrity and legitimacy of the state. In the positive sense, regionalism indicates people's love for their region, culture, language, etc. with an objective of maintaining their independent identity and status and it helps in fostering a sense of brotherhood among people on the basis of common region, culture, language, etc. In other words, positively regionalism means a quest for fulfilment on the part of an area and reflects people's quest for freedom and democracy. In the political context of India, the concept of regionalism indicates assertion by different groups for the fulfilment of ethnic, linguistic, political, or economic interests. In other words, regionalism is the manifestation of those neglected socio-political and cultural groups who through their demands, try to achieve justice for themselves.

14.4 FORMS OF REGIONALISM

In Indian context, regionalism has taken various forms, such as:

- **Demand for more Autonomy:** Demand for more autonomy is an important form of regionalism in India. Such demand includes more autonomy in political, financial fields. Regional political parties of states more particularly raise such demands for autonomy. For example, in Assam the Asom Gana Parishad, the Akali Dal in Punjab are demanding for greater autonomy for their respective states.

- **Demand for Separate Statehood within the Indian Union:** Another form of regionalism is manifested through the demand of separate statehood within the Indian Union. This form of regionalism became more visible in India after the reorganization of states in 1956. After this

reorganization, demand for separate state within India has been raised by various parts of India as a result of which some states have been carved out from other states.

➢ **Demand for Full Statehood:** One important form of regionalism is in the form of demand for full statehood which has been made by the union territories of India. Some of these demands have been fulfilled, for example in 1971 Himachal Pradesh got the status of a full state. In 1972 Sikkim was given the status of full statehood.

➢ **Inter-State Dispute as manifestation of Regionalism:** In India the issue of regionalism is also manifested in the form of disputes between a numbers of states on various issues ranging from boundary to the distribution of river water. The boundary disputes took place between Maharashtra and Karnataka; Assam and Nagaland; Karnataka and Kerala etc. Disputes have been taking place between Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu over the distribution of Cauvery waters. Over the distribution of the water of the Ravi river, dispute took place between Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. In such disputes, all the states concerned are influenced by the factor of regional sentiments and each wants to gain benefits over others.

➢ **Linguistic Regionalism:** In India, we can see another form of regionalism based on language which can be termed as linguistic regionalism. This kind of regionalism became more visible with the adoption of policy of linguistic reorganization of Indian states in 1956. This reorganization of states on linguistic line led to conflict in bilingual states of India.

➢ **Militant Regionalism:** Another form of regionalism in India is militant regionalism. In this type of regionalism, various groups emerge to protect and promote the interest of their respective states and community. These groups, inspired by regional sentiment, become hostile towards the migrant people whom they consider as outsiders. These groups sometimes even resort to violent means against the people who migrated to their respective states.



ACTIVITY 14.1

Try to find out the names of Union Territories of India.

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Regionalism has both ..... and ..... meanings. (Fill in the blanks)

Q 2: What does regionalism mean in negative sense?

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Q 3: Inter-state dispute between Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh took place over distribution of water of which river?

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Q 4: In which year Sikkim was given the status of full statehood?

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Q 5: Write briefly about any one form of regionalism.

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14.5 CAUSES OF REGIONALISM IN INDIA

In India, regionalism has become a major issue of concern. Various factors can be identified which have contributed to the growth of regionalism in India. Some of such factors can be discussed below:

- **Geographical Isolation:** Some parts of the Indian state are geographically isolated from other parts of the country. Due to this isolation, emotional unity among the people living in such parts and people living in other parts of the country could not be developed which

may sometimes contribute in the emergence of regionalism in such isolated areas.

- **Economic Imbalance:** Economic inequality or imbalance among the states of India is another reason which has added fuel in the emergence of regionalism in many states. Resource allocation sometimes is made in such a way that amount of resource allotted to some states becomes higher in comparison to the other states. Due to this dissatisfaction people of such states demand for more autonomy or secession to fulfill their interest.
- **Political Aspirations:** Due to political aspiration of the regional elites to capture power, these leaders also encourage the growth of regionalism in many states. For the purpose of capturing power and enhancing their authority, the regional political leaders propagate the feeling of regionalism among the people of their respective states. For example, political parties like DMK, AIADMK, Telegu Desam etc propagate regionalism to increase their hold in their respective states.
- **Cultural Reason:** Growth of regionalism has cultural reasons also. For protecting cultural identity, heritage and values against the undue interference by others, many groups or community adopt the path based on regionalism. For example, in Assam, anti-foreigner movement was launched by the Assamese in 1979 to preserve their own culture.
- **Ideological Imposition:** Many a time regionalism also emerges as a reaction against the efforts of the Central Government to impose a particular language or ideology on the people of the country as a whole. To resist this kind of imposition, states have to resort to movement based on the principles of regionalism. For example,the States of the South had resisted imposition of Hindi as official language as they feared that this would lead to dominance of the North.
- **Growing Awareness:** Growing awareness among the people for the wellbeing of their native place and for their own has also promoted the feeling of regionalism. In such context, the people realize that they have been deprived from their just share in all aspects of development process. The local political leaders also exploit such situation and

propagate that the Central Government is responsible for such regional imbalance.



ACTIVITY 14.2

Try to find out the names of two regional political parties of India.

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14.6 POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM OF REGIONALISM

The issue of regionalism has become a major problem in India as it poses threats to the unity and integrity of the nation. Some ways through which this problem can be solved are discussed below:

- To solve the problem of regionalism, an even and balanced development of the entire nation must be achieved. The central government should not be biased with any state. Funds, packages, allocations should be equally distributed. In fact, proper attention should be given to the neglected parts of the country so that people of such areas feel that they are integral parts of India.
- The Central Government should not interfere unnecessarily in the affairs of the state. The states should be given proper freedom to conduct their own affairs. Proper administrative and financial autonomy should be given to the states.
- Necessary modifications should be made regarding the centre-state relations. Balanced distribution of power between the centre and the states should be introduced.
- To overcome excessive feeling of regionalism and develop a kind of attachment toward the nation, a system of national education should be introduced.
- The Election Commission by its active role can solve the problem of regionalism. The Election Commission should lay down certain norms

for regional political parties to prevent them from propagating regionalism in extreme form. The political parties should become more disciplined in conducting their affairs.

- Through nominal participation of all states at central level government, the problem of regionalism can be solved to some extent. The leaders of deprived and neglected areas should actively participate in the central government and raise their problems and concerns and should try to solve those problems through proper means rather than demanding new states.
- Last, but not the least, problems of the people must be solved through peaceful and constitutional means. Politicians must not be allowed to misuse the regional issues to fulfill their own narrow interest.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: Economic inequality among states is one of the main reasons for the emergence of regionalism in India. (True/False)

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Q 7: In which year was the anti-foreigner movement started in Assam?

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Q 8: Write briefly about any two causes responsible for the growth of regionalism in India.

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Q 9: Write briefly about any three possible measures through which the problem of regionalism can be solved to a great extent.

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14.7 LET US SUM UP

- Regionalism has become an important issue in Indian politics. It has posed serious threat to the unity and integrity of the country.
- Regionalism refers to the love of a particular region to which one belongs. It has both positive and negative implication. In negative sense, regionalism implies excessive attachment to one's region in comparison to the country as a whole. In the positive sense, regionalism indicates people's love for their region, culture, language, etc. with an objective of maintaining their independent identity and status.
- In India, the issue of regionalism is being manifested in different forms, such as– demand for more autonomy, demand for separate statehood within the Indian Union, demand for full statehood, linguistic regionalism, militant regionalism, inter-state dispute etc.
- In India, there are many factors which have contributed towards the growth of regionalism. Some of such causes are- geographical isolation of some areas from other parts of the country, economic imbalance among the states of India, political aspirations of regional elites, desire of various communities to protect their respective cultural heritage and identity against undue interference of others, ideological imposition by the dominant group, growing awareness among people to realize their wellbeing etc.
- Very often, regionalism poses threat to the unity and integrity of the country. To solve this problem, some possible measures are- ensuring even and balanced development of the entire nation, avoidance of undue interference by the Central Government in the affairs of the state unless poses threat to national security, modification of centre-state relationship, development of a system of national education, active role of the Election Commission through putting norms for the political parties to prevent them from propagating regionalism in extreme form, nominal participation of all states at central level government, peaceful and constitutional solution of regional problems.



14.8 FURTHER READING

1. Kapur, Anup Chand and Misra, K.K. (2006). *Select Constitutions.* New Delhi: S. Chand and Company.
2. Ghai K. K. (2017). *Indian Government and Politics*. New Delhi, Kalyani Publishers.
3. Chander, Prakash. (2000). *Indian Government and Politics*. New Delhi: Cosmos Bookhive Pvt. Ltd.
4. Pylee, M, V. (2006). *Constitutional Government in India.* New Delhi: S. Chand and Company.



14.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No1: Positive and negative

Ans to Q No 2: In negative sense regionalism implies excessive attachment to one's region in comparison to the country as a whole which may pose threat to the unity and integrity of the country.

Ans to Q No 3: Ravi river

Ans to Q No 4: 1972

Ans to Q No 5: Demand for more Autonomy: Demand for more autonomy is another form of regionalism in India. Such demand includes more autonomy in political, financial fields. Regional political parties of states more particularly raise such demands for autonomy. For example, in Assam, the Asom Gana Parishad, the Akali Dal in Punjab are demanding greater autonomy for their respective states.

Ans to Q No 6: True

Ans to Q No 7: 1979

Ans to Q No 8: (i) Economic Imbalance: Economic inequality or imbalance among the states of India is another reason which has added fuel in the emergence of regionalism in many states. Resource allocation sometimes is made in such a way that amount of resource allotted to

some states becomes higher in comparison to the other states. Due to this dissatisfaction, people of such states demand for more autonomy or secession to fulfill their interest.

(ii) Political Aspirations: Due to political aspiration of the regional elites to capture power, these leaders also encourage the growth of regionalism in many states. For the purpose of capturing power and enhancing their authority, the regional political leaders propagate the feeling of regionalism among the people of their respective states. For example, political parties like DMK, AIADMK, Telegu Desam etc propagate regionalism to increase their hold in their respective states.

Ans to Q No 9: (i) To solve the problem of regionalism an even and balanced development of the entire nation must be achieved. The central government should not be biased with any state. Funds, packages, allocations should be equally distributed. Infact, proper attention should be given to the neglected parts of the country so that people of such areas feel that they are integral parts of India.

(ii) The Central Government should not interfere unnecessarily in the affairs of the state unless national interest is threatened. The states should be given proper freedom to conduct their own affairs. Proper administrative and financial autonomy should be given to the states.

(iii) The Election Commission by its active role can solve the problem of regionalism. The Election Commission should lay down certain norms for regional political parties to prevent them from propagating regionalism in extreme form. The political parties should become more disciplined in conducting their affairs.



14.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q. 1: Mention the names of any two regional political parties.

Q. 2: In which year did the linguistic reorganisation of Indian states take place?

Q. 3: The Inter-state dispute between Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu took place over distribution of water of which river?

Q. 4: In which year was Himachal Pradesh given the status of full statehood?

B) Short Question (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q. 1: What is meant by regionalism?

Q. 2: Write a short note on inter-state disputes of India.

C) Long Question (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q. 1: Discuss the various forms of regionalism in India.

Q. 2: Examine the various causes that have contributed to the growth of regionalism in India.

Q. 3: Discuss the possible solutions to the problem of regionalism.

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