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REGIONALISM AND CHALLENGE TO DEMOCRACY IN INDIAN FEDERALISM

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ABSTRACT:

Nehruvian state is seen in terms of establishment of a viable structure of a relatively autonomous and democratic nation state at the core of the society. India though a federal state, had a thoroughly centralized unitary constitution set up by the act of 1935. Perhaps the most remarkable achievement of the Indian Constitution is to confer upon a federal system the strength of a unitary government. An essential feature of federal government is the presence of dual government – national and federal governments, equal distribution of powers between centre and state, supremacy of the constitution and authority of courts. Though normally the

system of government is federal the constitution enables the federation to transform itself into a unitary state. In India we find no state excepting Kashmir, can draw its own constitution, consent of a state is not required for altering its boundaries by Parliament, no equality of State representation, no double citizenship, no division of public services, no dual system of courts, union control in normal times and a strong central bias.

In federal structure of polity democracy as a political institution and as a way of life is essential in the affairs of man. It not only meant a representative form of government, but its inherent attributes of different freedoms such as freedom of thought and speech, freedom of religion, freedom of association and to eliminate inequality and poverty. But all Asian countries faced the problem of rapid population growth, gender inequality and lack of constructive public opinion, poverty, lack of resources, unemployment and in-diversified economies.

The regional political parties have turned out to be the most potential and threatening force challenging the institutions and practices of parliamentary democracy in contemporary India. To be more precise regionalism shows the limits of parliamentary institutions and forced the present government to look for alternative democratic institutions and practices. The dismal centre-state power sharing between the centre and state result in underdevelopment, inequity and identity crisis of the people result in regionalism which pose threat to India's democracy today who seeks legitimate hold on Indian politics through their separation. It is the responsibility of the central government to remove the cause of dissatisfaction of the people of the area demanding separate state to maintain the integrative spirit of Indian democracy. (400 words)

KEYWORDS: Democracy, federalism, government, regionalism, inequality, development, identity.

INTRODUCTION:

The most controversial issue of

the Indian constitution finds place in its essential nature emanating from the words of the Constitution of India that declares India 'a union of states', not a 'federal union'. The Indian federation is not a result of a

compact among pre-existing independent states as the American federation is. The federation of India came into being after the formation of the nation state. The federated units had no independent character of

their own in the past. The founding fathers of our Constitution inherited from the British Raj a highly centralised bureaucratic state but adopted a federal system of government as the most suitable for ethnically diverse Indian society. Their approach to federation has been that 'unity and diversity' could coexist in a framework that might optimise both values – unity of the nation and the identity of various sub-national groups forming the pillars of the federation which prepares the edifice of India's democracy. Nehruvian state is seen in terms of establishment of a viable structure of a relatively autonomous and democratic nation state at the core of the society. The constitution of India seeks to lay the foundations of a democratic republic embodying the ideals of constitutionalism and it declares to preserve social justice, political equality and embodies an impressive list of fundamental rights.

The constitutional form given to unity-in-diversity has created some confusion among analysts. The system of government adopted by independent India has been described variously as 'co-operative federalism' (Austin Granville, 1966: 187), 'quasi-federalism' (Wheare.K.C, 1951:28), and 'unitary' (Chanda.Ashok, 1965:124) in both concept and operation. The central government is also dominant in the legislative, administrative and financial spheres as to reduce states to being 'glorified municipalities' (Thakur Ramesh,1995:73). It may debate as to whether India is a unitary state with subsidiary federal features or a federal state with subsidiary unitary features. The federal ideal has been seriously diluted in India by the constitutional bias in favour of the centre in normal times, the constitutionally permissible opportunities to set aside state governments under exceptional circumstances, the substantial state dependence on the centre for operating and capital revenues, the centralised bureaucratic state apparatus (police, Judicial services and the centralised nature of the major political parties in India), vehemently lead to tremendous dissatisfaction of the respective state which gave rise to regionalism (Johari.J.C, 1987:517) and hampers India's democratic edifice and its smooth working.

In this article thus we have concentrate our study on the nature of Indian federalism with its centralised tendency and the dissatisfaction of the state which culminates in the growth of regionalism which pose a challenge to Indian democracy and finally to assume a solution to this problem so that democracy could work successfully in India's multicultural plural society.

Section -I Federal Features

i) Dual Government - A federal state is the fusion of several states in regard to matters affecting common interests, while each component state enjoys autonomy in regard to other matters. The component states are not mere delegates or agents of the federal government (Basu Das Durga, 2010:52) but both the federal and state governments draw their authority from the same source that is the Constitution of the land. On the other hand, a component state has no right to secede from the federation at its will.

ii) Distribution of Powers – It follows that the very object for which a federal state is formed involves a division of authority between the federal government and the states, though the method of distribution (Basu Das Durga, 2010:52) may not be alike in the federal Constitutions.

iii) Supremacy of the Constitution – A federal state derives its existence from the constitution just as a corporation derives its existence from the grant of a statute by which it is created. Every power (Johari.J.C, 1987:519-20) – executive, legislative or judicial – whether it belongs to the federation or to the component states is subordinate to and controlled by the Constitution.

iv) Authority of Courts– In a federal state the legal supremacy of the Constitution is essential to the existence of the federal system. It is essential to maintain the division of powers (Johari.J.C, 1987:519-20) not only between the coordinate branches of the government, but also between the federal governments and the states themselves. This is secured by vesting in the courts a final power to interpret the constitution and nullify an action on the part of the federal and state governments or their different organs which violates the provisions of the Constitutions.

Section -II

Non-Federal Features

a) The mode of formation -

India had a thoroughly centralised unitary constitution until the Government of India Act, 1935. From the earliest time, the Indian state had a separate political entity and there was nothing common among the Provinces which constituted the rest of India. Under the federal scheme of 1935 the Provinces (the Princely States) and Indian States were treated differently and the Princely states lacked the federal sentiment that is the desire to form a federal union with the rest of India. But after independence the makers of the constitution describes India as a union of states under Article 1 of the constitution. Several Princely states, old Indian states were integrated (Basu Das Durga, 2010:54-55) by eliminating the separate entities of states (Part A, Part B) and put them all in one category of states by 7th Amendment Act, 1956 of the constitution.

b) Position of the states in the federation -

(i) Constitution of the federation (Basu Das Durga, 2010:54-55) contains a number of safeguards for the protection of state rights. The residuary powers are assigned to the union by our constitution (article 248).

(ii) The constitution of India lays down the constitution for the states as well and no state except Jammu and Kashmir has a right to determine its own (state) constitution.

(iii) In matters of amendment of the constitution the state is minor and no state can alter its component units without the consent of union government. Legislation by a state shall be subject to disallowance by the President when reserved by the Governor for his consideration (article 201). Again the Governor of a state shall be appointed by the President of the union and shall hold office during the pleasure of the President (article 155-156).

c) No right to secede -

It is not possible for the states of the union of India to exercise any right of secession (Johari.J.C, 1987:519-20) and it has been made clear in 1963 that advocacy of secession will not have the protection of the freedom of expression.

d) State cannot alter its limit -

Article 4(2) states that the constitution (Johari.J.C, 1987:519-20) does not require the consent of the state legislature for altering its boundaries. Article 3 implies that state must express its views regard the alteration. State Reorganisation Act 1956 thus disintegrate and altered the boundaries of states lead to the formation of several new states - Gujarat, Nagaland, Haryana, Karnataka, Meghalaya, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur Sikkim, Tripura, Mizoram, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Chattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand. State with large population has more representative than state with less number of populations. In Rajya Sabha Uttar Pradesh have more representation as populous state than less populous Sikkim.

e) Lack of dual citizenship and courts -

Indian constitution does not introduce any double citizenship like America, Canada but one citizenship that is the citizenship (Thakur Ramesh: 1995:73) of India (article 5). The same system of courts headed by the Supreme Court will administer both the union and state laws as they are applicable to the cases coming up for adjudication. The machinery for election, accounts and audit is also similarly integrated.

f) Executive powers -

The constitution of India empowers the union to entrust its executive functions to a state by its consent (article 258). No question of 'surrender of sovereignty' (Basu Das Durga, 2010:54-55) by one government to the other stands in the way of this smooth co-operative arrangement.

g) Union control in emergencies -

President can declare emergency (Johari.J.C, 1987:286) in the country (article 356, 352, 360), where centre becomes more powerful and the state government come under the total control of centre.

h) Union control in normal times -

The union parliament may assume legislative power over any subject in the state list ((Johari.J.C, 1987:286) article 249). But union expansion is possible with the consent of state.

i) Strong central bias -

Though there is a distribution of powers between the union and the states under a federal system, the distribution has a strong central bias and the powers of the states are hedged in with various restrictions which impede their sovereignty even with the sphere limited to them by the distribution of powers basically provided by the constitution (article 256-257). Morris Jones calls, "bargaining federalism, (Austin, Granville, 1966:186) assuming the interdependence of national and regional governments of a federal union instead of granting them absolute independence in the allotted spheres to satisfy the requirements of a classical federal model. With the creation of a very strong central government the Founding Fathers have sought to ensure that it would not necessarily result in weak provincial governments that have large administrative agencies for central policies".

j) Strong central financial control -

Duties and some taxes (income tax) are levied by the union, collected by state and later deposit it to centre (article 270, 272). Central grant-in-aid (article 275, 282) may be given obligatory and voluntary to the state (Johari.J.C, 1987:286). According to the recommendations of Finance Commission aid given to the state sometimes remains discretionary of the Parliament of India (article 282). Sometimes discretionary grants may be return to the centre if centre feels so necessary.

Section -III**Regionalism and challenge to Indian democracy**

Federalism is one of the most important factors of modern constitutionalism. It is established all over the world perhaps, as the only form of political organization suited to communities with diversified pattern of objectives, interests and traditions, who seek to join together in the pursuit of common objectives and interests and the cultivation of common tradition. The basic objective of federalism is unity in diversity, devolution in authority and decentralization in administration. The basic condition of federalism is plurality, its fundamental tendency is harmonization and its regulative principle is solidarity. Federal system provides so as to allow each to maintain its fundamental political integrity. As we have noted earlier that federalism stands on the principle of 'unity in diversity', but in India federal system sought to preserve the diversities through its centralising tendencies. Though the people have diverse religious, ethnic and cultural patterns of life, they have also developed a sense of common identity that they do not desire to lose. This is not to deny that in spite of these social and cultural differences there must be an over-riding sense of unity to bind the diverse people together. The federal state differing as it does from the unitary state in essential features has to face a number of problems. It has two sets of governments which must work in concert and harmony. Integration implies the coexistence of the people of various languages, religions, races etc. in India. But there are certain fissiparous federal tendencies which threaten national unity and integrity and causing threat to the working of democratic government. They pose hindrances to federal system in India. Here we will continue our discussion to the challenges of regionalism in Indian democracy occurred due to centralised federal schemes in Indian Constitution.

Region acts as a subject with distinct identity, language, culture and tradition. Thus we may define regionalism is an ideology and political movement that seeks to advance the causes of regions. As a process it plays role within the nation as well as outside the nation i.e. at international level. Both types of regionalism have different meaning and have positive as well as negative impact on society,

polity, diplomacy, economy security, culture, development, negotiations etc. Regionalism has been traditionally present in India but its emergence as a limiting factor of Indian politics is a post-independence phenomenon. The fathers of the constitution were aware of it and they wanted to keep it under control. The demand for separate states in India, demands for full statehood for different areas, demands for state autonomy and emphasis on regional interests over national interests and lack of development and poor economic growth for the state are some of the reasons which show how regionalism is quite strong in India. In a positive sense regionalism means love for one's area of living or a particular region to which one belongs. However in a negative sense and in its present form regionalism means love for one's region over and above the country as a whole. The negative view is dangerous from the point of view of federal system in India and for the smooth working of democratic government.

Regionalism is a great **hindrance** to the working of **democratic government** and federal system in India. It takes the different forms like demands for secession, demands for separate statehood, demand for full statehood etc. The issue of creating smaller states like Telangana and Vidarbha and the demand for the division of Uttar Pradesh in Uttaranchal need to tackle carefully to maintain the spirit of co-operative federalism and to lessen the stress of working of democracy in Indian society.

The **regional political parties** have turned out to be the most **potential** and **threatening force** challenging the institutions and practices of parliamentary democracy in contemporary India. To be more precise regionalism shows the limits of parliamentary institutions and forced the present government to look for alternative democratic institutions and practices.

(A) Reasons for the growth of Regionalism

There are various reasons for its emergence of Regionalism in Indian Politics such as:

Firstly, the administrative policies and decisions as well as the developmental plans taken at the national level may not satisfy all people of the country and these people, who remain dissatisfied, may feel that their interest are not properly safeguarded. In such a context they form the regional parties to solve their own problems. That was how the regional parties like D.M.K, A.D.M.K., the National Conference of Jammu and Kashmir etc. were formed.

Secondly, India is still not free from ethnic, racial and religious orthodoxy. Sometimes the Regionalism in Indian Politics emerge on these ethnic, racial or religious grounds. That was how the Hindu Mahasabha, Ram Rajya Parishad, Siromani Akali Dal, the Muslim League or even the Telugu Desham party was formed.

Thirdly, sometimes the Regionalism in Indian Politics are formed on language issues as well. The D.M.K, A.D.M.K. parties of Tamil Nadu, the Telangana Praja Samithi of Andhra Pradesh or the Gorkha League of West Bengal etc. was formed on the basis of this language issue. These parties focuses on the interest of people who speak common language.

Fourthly, sometimes the regional political parties are formed on the initiative of one or a few political leaders. However, these types of regional parties usually do not last long. Since, most of such political parties are dependent on one leader, they generally extinguish when the leader himself dies.

Fifthly, sometimes the Regionalism in politics helps to safeguard the minority interests. The Muslim League, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, the TYC etc. belong to this category of the regional political parties.

Sixthly, sometimes the internal conflicts of the big national parties may pave the ground for the rise of the regional political parties. That was how the Congress party was divided into several small parties like Congress for democracy, Congress (J) etc.

Sevently, sometimes a leader of a big national party, if ousted from his other original party, forms a regional party to express his or her grievances. That was how Sri Ajoy Mukherjee formed the Bangla Congress or Smt. Mamata Banerjee formed the Trinamul Congress in Bengal.

Eighthly, the regional political parties formulate their policies and programmes on the basis of the regional demands, grievances and interests of the people. Naturally they pin with them the confidence and loyalty of the people. The National parties try to utilize this confidence and loyalty of the people for their own sinister interest. Thus they form Coalitions and Fronts and the Leftist and right political parties appear as strange bed fellows. This has made the regional parties gain a lot of importance and confidence.

Ninthly, during the pre-independence days people fought for the country's freedom and a unique sense of oneness, a sense of nationalism had flared up in them which had strengthened the solidarity and integrity of the nation. But after independence that burning sense of nationalism has evaporated and a narrow sense to regional interest has developed. This has also paved the grounds for the emergence of regional political parties.

Lastly, the general decadence of values, too much centralization of power, dictatorial role of the leaders, negligence to the regional leadership etc. in the national parties have not only weakened their status but also facilitated the rise of numbers of regional political parties both big and small, in India.

(B) Regionalism -is the demand for smaller state -

The demand for the smaller states (Datta Prabhat, 1997:74-75) is based on the following arguments -

1. It will halt the process of increasing regional economic imbalance.
2. It will quick the pace of development.
3. It will enable the local people to govern themselves and control their economy and thus to help them get rid of what is often called neo-colonial exploitation.
4. It will facilitate formulation of more responsive policies.
5. It will help some ethnic groups to maintain their independent culture, way of life etc.
6. Some of the states are too big and populous to be administered effectively and hence smaller states for administrative convenience.

A close look at the arguments would tend to show that they are rooted in the wider logic of development, democracy, responsive policy formation, identity, maintenance and better administration. The ethnic groups (Datta Prabhat, 1997:74-75) seem to have developed feeling of insecurity resulting in a demand for a separate state within the Indian union or sovereign state outside the Indian union. The roots of the problem lie embedded in the socio-economic structure of the country, the problem has been aggravated by the policies of the government and the political manipulation of ethnic nationalities. The era of manipulative politics began with Mrs. Gandhi and has been continuing unabated without much difference. Ethno-nationalism has created a dilemma for the state. Due to cleavages in political institutions the regional parties challenged the existing state structure.

The demand for smaller states (Kohli Atul ed. 1991:323-25) has gained considerably currency after the step taken by the central government to create Uttarakhand state. After this it enthused the Jharkhandis (Bihar), Gorkhas in Darjeeling hills, Bodos in Assam, Gonds in Andhra Pradesh the tribals in Chattisgarh and other places in India. The demand has been supported by some political parties who seek their own interests for acquiring power in the specific region, including BJP, Janata Dal and Samajbadi Janata Dal had pleaded for the constitution of the second States Re-organization Commission. BJP government suggested creating new states of Uttarakhand from Uttar Pradesh for their economic development. Similarly Jharkhand Autonomous Area Council felt that they also continue to fight for a separate state. More or less the separatist mentalities of these states were same. Ethnically the Uttarakhandis argued that they were different in language, in culture from the rest of the people of Uttar Pradesh. Moreover, socio and economically they remained as backward community, the Jharkhandis demand separate state for their own economic upliftment and to set up their own political administration (Ganguly Sumit ed. 2009:49-50). The demands were same of the tribals for the creation of Chattisgarh.

We may thus infer that regional economic imbalance is a legacy of long colonial rule aggravated by the model of development of policies adopted by the post colonial state. Even the strong tendency of

centralization and unequal financial distribution rather a dismal centre- state relation resulted in the development of regional politics (Ganguly Sumit ed. 2009:49-50) in Indian democracy. The question of equity is important issue in these demands for separate state, and obviously the manipulation of the political leaders to seek their own interest, power finally mobilize the people of the underdeveloped state for demanding separate state and separate identity.

The state reorganization of the 1950s did not put a stop to demands for the creation of new states. For example, in 1960s, mainly due to the agitations of Marathi and Gujrati speaking populations of the state of Bombay, the Bombay Reorganization Act created the linguistic state of Maharashtra and Gujrat. Similarly in 1966, the Hindi-speaking state of Haryana was created by dividing the Punjab. Though separate from purely the causes of regionalism, Jammu and Kashmir too to some extent pose an idea of separatism (Ganguly Sumit ed. 2009:49-50). All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference and its membership were thrown open to all communities in the state. Its principle demand was the establishment of a responsible government in the state. After the accession of the state of Jammu and Kashmir to the Indian union in 1947, Sheikh Abdullah became the chief minister and opposed the process of integration of the affairs of the state of Jammu and Kashmir with the government of India and he demanded self determination and the restoration of the sovereign states of Jammu and Kashmir. In election of 1977, Sheikh Abdullah aroused the sentiments of Kashmiri's patriotism against the Janata party, which posed a threat to Kashmiri's personality. He posed the national conference as Kashmir party with a Kashmiri leadership and solely devoted to the cause of protecting the honour and dignity of Kashmir. He threatened the session of Jammu and Kashmir from India. If any attempt was made to undermine its special status. Later on his Farooq Abdullah in 1983 released an election manifesto in which he laid stress on safeguarding the identity of state of Jammu and Kashmir and promoting the autonomy and to build "naya Kashmir", which would have an honourable place in great Indian federation. But the tendency of secessions to some extent was restored by Indian government. In the northeast, the Indian government tried to bring the Naga insurgency to a close by accepting the Nagas demand for a separate state; hence; in 1962, the districts of Assam were detached to create the new state of Nagaland. In the early 1970s three more new states – Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura were created in the northeast (VanaikAchin, 1990:121-23). The demand for new states however did not stop there. In West Bengal the Gorkhas of Darjilling and the Rajbonshis of Cooch Behar have long agitated for the creation for a separate gorkhland and Kamtapur. In Assam the Bodos have made a similar demand. The Telengana agitation in Andhra Pradesh, the movement to create Vidharbha in Maharashtra and a demand for a separate state of Jammu are all the cases with relatively long histories of political agitation. Later on the breaking up of the existing state of Jharkhand from (Bihar), Uttaranchal by breaking up of Uttar Pradesh and Chattisgarh by breaking up Madhya Pradesh. Many or most of these people who demanded for their own homeland are the deprived marginalized people (economically backward) as example put forward by Gorkha leaders(VanaikAchin, 1990:121-23) in creation of Gorkhland that they receive less central grant in compare to Sikkim and thus assertion for regional autonomy develops where these marginalized section of the people possess expanded political participation and every people were allowed to access state and local governments more effectively and thus regional political parties found it convenient to stoke the fire of separatist tendencies in order to capture the power in the newly created state, and hardly these regional parties had an intension to promote and protect the interests of the community.

The central problem that confronts Indian state and the ruling coalition has to do with the process of nation-building and national integration in the face of a variety of regional movements and pressures. A major aspect of the problem of regionalism (VanaikAchin, 1990:121-23) is the dialectic of centralization and decentralization between the centre and the states, the appropriate pattern of devolution of power. The general factors behind the growth of regionalist tendencies towards greater decentralization are the cultural and linguistic diversity of India, the inevitable unevenness of capitalist economic development, the growing strength of the agrarian bourgeoisie and the intermediate classes (the rural and urban petty bourgeoisie), and such political features as the growing electoral strength of opposition parties and the decline of democratic mentality of the country. Sub-state movements

(DattaPrabhat, 1997:80-81) usually aim either at attaining power at the state level (this was the implicit thrust of the Assam agitation) or at achieving some degree of political autonomy like statehood or 'autonomous' council status (Gorkhaland). In case of Assam GanaParishad (AGP) (Tiwari Lalan, 1995:36-37), they feel different from so-called mainstream politics and raised their region specific cultural, political and economic demands that is only restricted to a particular ethnic community. Assam movement (1979-85) demanded for detecting, disenfranchising and deporting the illegally settled foreigners that lay at the heart of Assam and predicted a distinction between the citizens and the foreigners. They solely believe that the survival of a nation-state depends on its ability to make and maintain this distinction between an alien and a citizen (DattaPrabhat, 1997:80-81). As Assam as a neglected region continuously exposed to the incessant influx of foreigners from across the borders particularly from Bangladesh which has not been resolved by the central government and thus United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) demanded sovereign and independent Assam where they would enable to carry their own administration. The Mizo struggle (Datta Prabhat, 1997:106-115) for secession (and merger with areas across the Burmese border) In the 70ties was led by the Mizo National Front (MNF) and its armed wing the Mizo National Army (MNA) under Laldenga, but finally settled for autonomy within the Indian Union. The Naga question could meet a similar fate.

Thus, we may infer that demands of regional parties by showing various causes like under-development, inequity and to preserve identity are actually a showy thing, behind the anger of this reasons they try to capture power and seek legitimate hold on Indian politics. Separation is not at all a solution rather it pose a threat to the democratic structure of India which favours integration. It is the responsibility of the central government to remove the cause of dissatisfaction of the people of the area demanding separate state to maintain the integrative spirit of Indian democracy.

Section -IV Conclusion

Regionalism may threaten national integrity if there is weak coalition at centre and strong regional parties that may lead to secession of states. In North East region the emergence of regional parties on the basis of ethnic factors can be seen Asom Gana Parishad, Mizo National Front. These parties have agenda of secessionist tendencies; they demand more autonomy and self-governance. In South Indian region regional parties like Telugu Desam party, AIADMK and DMK. develop on the basis on linguistic factors. The Dravidian movement can be seen as threat to national integrity. In case of Gorkhaland 1stly it may affect Indo-Nepal relations. How India treats the problems of the Nepali people of hill origin in Darjeeling will affect how Nepal deals with the people of Indian origin in Nepal that is Madhesi in Terai, 2ndly, Gorkhaland has a strategic location its vicinity to the chicken neck that connects rest of India with North East and its stability is must for India's strategic and economic interests of the nation, 3rdly, Darjeeling is a tea and tourist hotspot with a high level of poverty. It needs and has potential to become the economic engine of the east with a sustainable economic model. But with such things will be possible only if there is stability in the region.

However, **regionalism is not always threat to national integrity**. It can promote development and articulate the interests of the region in a better way. The formation of Telangana shows how the advantages of regionalism. Both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh are well on the way for greater prosperity. Regional identities in India have not always defined themselves in opposition to and at the expense of, the national identity, noticed a democratic effect of such process in that India's representative democracy has moved closer to the people who feel more involved and show greater concern for institutions of local and regional governance. For example- Tripura Tribal Autonomous District Council (TTADC), formed in 1985, has served to protect an otherwise endangered tribal identity in the state by providing a democratic platform for former separatists to become a party of governance, and thereby reduced significantly the bases of political extremism in the state. In such political setup, there always remains a scope of balanced regional development. The socio-cultural diversity is given due respect and it helps the regional people to practise their own culture too. In case of Gorkhaland

firstly, it may create a stable and responsible government in Darjeeling and secondly, it will end one of the longest movement for the creation of a separate state in India.

Solution to curb regionalism -

1. Regular public investment by central government through centrally sponsored schemes have focussed on development of necessary infrastructure and poverty eradication, integrated rural development, education, health, family planning, etc. For example- Pradhan Mantri Gram sadka yojana, Mid day meal, MGNREGA, etc. Government at centre and states give incentives to private players to develop in backward states through subsidies, taxation, etc. Nationalisation of banks, granting new banking licences, making mandatory for banks to open rural branches are few other steps for inclusive development and balanced regional development. There are certain discrepancies at the implementation part of these schemes. Few areas have been neglected like irrigation, which has created agricultural disparity. Rain fed and dry land agriculture also have been neglected, which became cause for suicide of farmers in various states (Coverage of P. Sainath, gives us more insights on such issues.) In reality, the interstate industrial disparity, agricultural disparity, number of BPL, etc. are decreasing. But, more actions are needed to completely eradicate the disparities.

2. The constitution attempts to establish institutions and practices that would permit the preservation of distinct regional identities while maintaining a sense of Indian nationhood. Politics is about the control and exercise of power. A political system is about the institutionalised distribution of power. Democracy and federalism are the two great institutions of India's constitutional structure. Democracy seeks to achieve a balanced distribution of power between the state and the citizens. Federalism seeks to strike a satisfactory balance between the central and state governments. A strong government is not inconsistent with democratic governance; the moral authority to govern based on constitutional propriety is more useful than authoritarian powers acquired by stealth and subversion. A strong centre is not incompatible with strong states; there is no reason why a union of strong states should lead to a still stronger India. Under Indian conditions, excessive centralisation of power will lead to an unnecessary nationalisation of local problems and unleash the problem like the growth of regionalism which hampers the working of government.

The most pressing requirement for India since independence has been economic development, pointing to an expansive role for the central government. The contrary permissive and restrictive pulls of democracy generate tensions between majority and minority rights, those of federalism generate tensions between central dominance and provincial autonomy. India is effectively a bargaining, co-operative federalism, even though the channels, forums and outcomes of bargaining may change from time to time. Federalism in India is a peculiar manifestation of the syncretic impulse in Indian society. People can be proud of their regional identities without any overt or implicit downgrading of their patriotism. The constitution has established institutions to promote a satisfactory blend of regional and national identities. These are buttressed by informal collaboration between the centre and the states and between the states directly.

In conclusion, regionalism in Indian politics can be good or bad to national integrity depending on political leadership, the role of institutions like Niti Aayog and economic factors. National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog aims (National Institution for Transforming India – www.niti.gov.in) to build strong states that will come together to build a strong India. NITI Aayog leads initiative to convert cent percent government-citizen transaction to the digital platform. NITI provides critical knowledge, innovation and entrepreneurial support to the country. To enable this NITI is trying to build an Art Resource Centre with citizens of all states as a repository of research on good governance and best practices. Radically redefining centre-state relations, NITI has for the first time ensured that all states should take the lead in protecting the policy interventions of the union government. To provide a platform for co-operative federalism, it facilitates the working of the union and states as equals. NITI ensures that people are involved and informed at all stages of governance. NITI waited for the state governments to adopt a number of reforms oriented legislative bills which aim

at transforming India and to develop a healthy centre-state relation and to curb the authoritative nature of Indian state for better governance.

Hegel said, "We learn from history that we do not learn from history". It proves from the present Gorkhaland issue. The solution lies in pleasing the population rather than the parties. Gorkhaland can become an epitome of decentralisation or a failed divided state. The choice is in the hands of people protesting. Are they protesting for the right cause?

It is true that a federal system has its own points of strength and weakness; a plausible conclusion would be that, in spite of several inherent difficulties, it alone is suited for the countries having a vast area and or diversity in respect of racial, religious, linguistic and cultural factors. It is for this salient reason that several democratic liberal countries including India have adopted it. In such a multi-cultural plural society only a federal system provides solution to the major problems of the people and they feel less danger from the rise of a despotic centralised government, usurping their rights. In such an atmosphere the tensions rose from regionalism, could be curb successfully where the rights of the individual in a democratic country would be given priority – the challenges of regionalism could be solved. In this kind of society the citizens would help the state to govern the country more effectively in order to satisfy the needs and aspirations of the citizens and the challenges of democracy could be meet in true sense. (6000 words)

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