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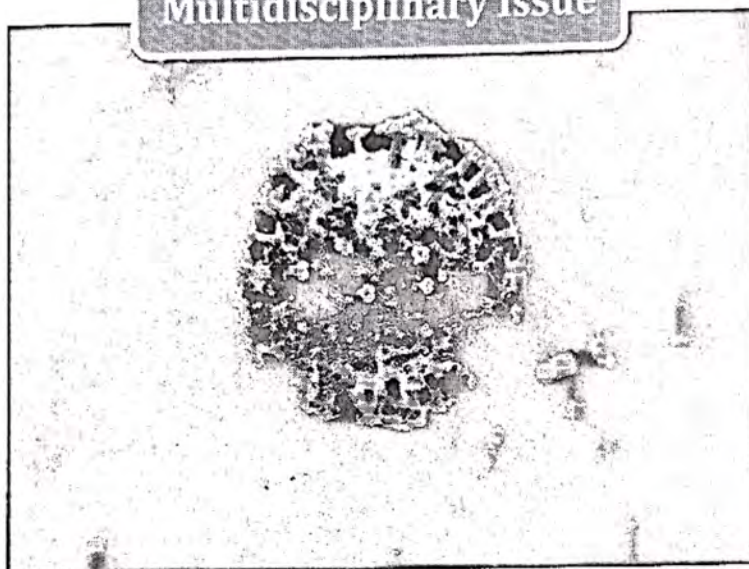
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## Linguistic State Reorganization and Linguistic Politics of Regional Parties

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### Abstract :

India is a democratic country and India has adopted a multi party system. Therefore, along with the national parties, many regional parties also exist in India. Generally from the ninety decade onwards, the national parties in India started gaining momentum and the regional parties started gaining strength. Regional parties politicize various regional and local issues. The issues of language and culture seem to be taken up more vigorously by the regional parties. This linguistic politics of regional parties seems to be rooted in state reorganization. Regional parties raise linguistic issues as well as many other local issues. But since the linguistic issue is gaining ground for the regional parties at all levels in the respective states, many regional parties seem to be prioritizing linguistic issues. On this basis, regional parties seem to be able to establish their influence in those particular states.

**Keywords :** Linguistic state reorganization, regional parties, language, culture, politics.

### Introduction :

From the pre-independence period onwards, the demand for state formation on the basis of language had been on the rise in India. But soon after independence, the demand for state reorganization on the basis of language took off. The Congress-led central government did not pay much attention to this at first. But after the death of Potti Sreeramulu, the then Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru announced the formation of an independent Telugu-speaking state of Andhra Pradesh so that the situation would not get out of hand. It also appointed a commission for the formation of linguistic states and reorganized the provinces of independent India on the basis of language. Yet the demands of all speakers were not satisfied by this commission. In the subsequent period, many regional parties emerged in India to preserve linguistic and cultural identities and made language an issue of their politics. E.g. Shiv Sena, a regional party in Maharashtra, was initially involved in Marathi language politics. In this way many regional parties appear to be doing linguistic politics. Therefore, the present paper seeks to review the various bases and characteristics of regional party politics.

### Features of Regional Parties

The number of regional or state level parties in Indian politics is steadily increasing. Some of the key features of these regional parties are as follows.

1. The influence or dominance of state or regional parties in Indian politics began to grow after the 1967 forth General Elections.

2. Regional parties in India are generally state level parties.
3. The main demand of these state level parties is for state autonomy.
4. The main rival of these state level parties was the Congress party.
5. State-level parties' appeals and bases are narrow. e.g. Culture, ethnicity and religiosity etc.
6. The rise of regionalism stems from anti-center sentiment.
7. Regionalism is, in fact, the easiest way to gain power; As a result, parties in national politics use many immediate (easy) ways.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the above characteristics of the regional parties, it is necessary to note here another changing symptom; the feature is that these regional parties, which used to oppose the Congress, now seem to have started opposing the BJP. Therefore, the picture is that 'non-BJP' is now taking the place of earlier non-Congress.

### Classification of regional parties :

Since India has adopted a multi-party system, there are many regional parties in India besides the national parties. India is a vast country with diversity in terms of language, culture, religion, caste and economic development. Adding identity to this diversity in India or addressing the issue of backwardness in terms of economic development, various regional parties have emerged in many states of India. Regional parties can generally be classified into three types.





1. Political parties belonging to a particular caste or religion. e.g. DMK in Tamil Nadu, Akali Dal in Punjab, National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir and Shiv Sena in Maharashtra.
2. The second type includes regional parties that have sprung up from the Congress party. Such as, Indian Revolutionary Party, Bangla Congress etc.
3. The third type includes parties with specific ideologies like Forward Bloc, Kisan Mazur Paksha.<sup>2</sup>

#### The basis of the politics of regional parties :

An important feature of the party system in India is that many of the major and minor parties in India are based on narrow issues such as religion, language, culture, regional identities. Of course, the influence of such parties is limited to a particular region. Different regional parties appear to exist in different states based on the issues of ethnicity, culture and regionalism in the Northeast;<sup>3</sup> at the same time, there are many instances in India where the party has expanded and become influential due to internal divisions within the national parties or competition for political ambitions and the formation of new political parties with a strong base of support in the state under their leadership. These "regional parties compete with the so-called national parties like Congress and BJP not only during elections but also as opposition parties as they have strength in their states;"<sup>4</sup> also, the inevitability of a coalition government has increased the dominance of regional parties in contemporary Indian politics.

#### Linguistic State Reorganization :

Morris Jones writes, "The question of territorialism and language remains such a burning issue in Indian politics that it has had a profound effect on current political history. Sometimes the real problem facing national unity seems to be regionalism."<sup>5</sup> In particular, the 1956 state reorganization was based on language and regional parties, based on language and region, strengthened their position and started their effective politics.

India is a multilingual country. According to the 1902 census, 179 languages and 544 vernaculars were spoken in India.<sup>6</sup> During the national movement, the Indian National Congress had three times supported the reorganization of the province on the basis of language between 1928 to 1944. 1) The convention held in Calcutta in October 1937 called for the creation of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka on the basis of

language. 2) In the meeting of the Congress Working Committee held at Wardha in July 1938, he supported the demand of the people of Andhra, Karnataka and Kerala for linguistic regionalization. He also promised to take steps in terms of linguistic regionalism when the Congress came to power. 3) At the time of the general elections of 1954-46, the Congress had included in its manifesto the issue of creation of administrative divisions on the basis of linguistic and cultural uniformity."<sup>7</sup> The Nehru Report of 1928 also called for the formation of provinces on the basis of language. But surprisingly, the Congress, which during the national movement had advocated the demand for provincialism on the basis of language for almost three decades; The same Congress got confused on the issue of linguistic regionalism after independence. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru opposed the formation of provinces in the Constituent Assembly on the basis of language. On November 27, 1947, in the Constituent Assembly, while opposing the formation of provinces on linguistic grounds, he had said, "The first priority should be given to the primary and India's primary need is security and stability."<sup>8</sup> In this way, the Congress ran away from its previous commitment regarding state reorganization.

It was impossible for the government to ignore the demand for linguistic regionalism that had been ingrained in the minds of the people in many parts of the country since pre-independence times. Therefore, the incident committee appointed Shri. A Linguistic State Reconstruction Committee was appointed under the leadership of Dar and this committee submitted its report to the government in December 1948. The Dar Committee observed that the idea of linguistic states was firmly entrenched in the minds of the people and acknowledged the overwhelming support for this demand. However, as the nation is currently in a state of emergency, the issue of linguistic regionalism is secondary and other important issues need to be addressed, the commission said. He also said that it was not in the interest of the nation at present to give priority to all the elements promoting nationalism and to give up those elements which would hinder the progress of nationalism. As the idea of linguistic states cannot stand on these criteria, it cannot be accepted. Dar had expressed."<sup>9</sup>

The report of the Dar Committee was strongly opposed across the country. In late 1948, the Congress appointed a high-level JVP Committee to reduce the intensity of this opposition and to reconsider the question of the linguistic state. The committee



submitted its report on April 5, 1949. Reiterating the findings of the Dar Committee, the JVP Committee emphasized on the issues arising out of linguistic regionalism and its many long-term consequences. The committee also expressed the view that the present time is not suitable for linguistic restructuring. But if people want linguistic regionalism, they have to consider this demand: But at the same time, we have to consider the consequences and dangers of this scheme, the JVP committee said."<sup>10</sup> Proponents of language-wise regionalization have started a hunger strike against this. In 1952, the Telugu-speaking people demanded a separate state. Potti Sriramulu died on 15 December 1952 after a 56-day fast-unto-death for the creation of Andhra Pradesh. As a result, the situation in the entire Telugu-speaking region got out of hand. As a result, on December 19, 1952, the Central Government immediately announced the creation of Andhra Pradesh by dividing Madras Province. On Oct. 1, 1953 the Telugu-speaking state of Andhra Pradesh was formed.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, the demand for linguistic state reorganization rose all over India and language & region became key issues in politics.

On December 22, 1953, the then Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru called on Justice The State reorganization Commission was formed under the chairmanship of Fazal Ali. On September 30, 1955, the State reorganization Commission submitted its report recommending that 14 constituent states and six Union Territories be created on a linguistic basis. It was accepted by the Nehru government. Thus, in the end, it was decided to organize the provinces according to the recommendations of the Fazal Ali Commission. From this, in the last 60-65 years, constituent states were formed in the Indian Union on linguistic basis. Therefore, "the constituent states of the Indian Union that exist today have a linguistic base rather than a geographical, political base. Therefore, such states are definitely conducive to linguistic identity."<sup>13</sup> This gave impetus to the politics of language.

#### Conclusion :

Many regional parties are influential in Indian politics at present and linguistic and cultural identities seem to be the cornerstone of their politics. Apart from language and culture, regional parties build their base by taking on many other regional and local issues. However, since language and culture bind the people of

a particular region or state in a single thread, it is convenient for regional parties to engage in politics. Originally, the language factor had been influential since pre-independence times. It gained more momentum after independence and the demand for linguistic state intensified. Therefore, the then government tried to solve this problem by reorganizing the states on the basis of language. Although the rulers have had great success in this, some linguistic problems persist. So in many states, regional parties are seen politicizing by bringing linguistic issues to the fore.

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