

## 70 Role of Regional Parties

**T**he presence of a large number of regional parties is an important feature of the Indian Political System. They have come to play a vital role in Indian politics at all levels, i.e. local, state and national. This is more so in the context of the new era of coalition politics.

## FEATURES OF REGIONAL PARTIES

Following are the features of a regional party:

1. It generally operates within a particular state or specific region. Its electoral base is limited to a single region.
2. It articulates regional interests and identifies itself with a particular cultural, religious, linguistic or ethnic group.
3. It is primarily concerned with exploiting the local resources of discontent or preserving a variety of primordial demands based on language, caste or community or region<sup>1</sup>.
4. It focuses on local or regional issues and aims to capture political power at the state level. It has no inclination to expand and control the central government.
5. It has a political desire for greater regional autonomy of states in the Indian Union<sup>2</sup>.

## **CLASSIFICATION OF REGIONAL PARTIES**

The various regional parties in India can be classified into the following four categories:

1. Those regional parties which are based on the regional culture or ethnicity. These include Shiromani Akali Dal, National Conference, DMK, AIADMK, Telugu Desam, Shiv Sena, Asom Gana Parishad, Mizo National Front, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and so on.
2. Those regional parties which have an all-India outlook but lack a national electoral base. The examples are Indian National Lok Dal, All-India Forward Bloc, Revolutionary Socialist Party, Samajwadi Party, Nationalist Congress Party and so on.
3. Those regional parties which have been formed by a split in national parties. For example, Bangla Congress, Bharatiya Kranti Dal, Utkal Congress, Kerala Congress, Telangana Praja Samithi, Biju Janata Dal, Rashtriya Janata Dal, Janata Party, Samajwadi Janata Party, Samata Party, Trinamool Congress, YSR Congress and so on.
4. Those regional parties which have been formed by individual leaders on the basis of their charismatic personality. These are called as personalised parties and they are short-lived. The examples are Lok Janshakti Party, Haryana Vikas Party, Himachal Vikas Congress, Congress (J) and so on.

## **RISE OF REGIONAL PARTIES**

There are multiple reasons for the emergence of regional parties in India. These are as follows:

1. Cultural and ethnic pluralism of the Indian society.
2. Economic disparities and regional imbalances in the development.
3. Desire of certain sections or areas to maintain separate identity due to historical factors.
4. Self-interest of the deposed Maharajas and dispossessed Zamindars.
5. Failure of national politics to meet the regional aspirations.
6. Reorganisation of states on the basis of language.
7. Charismatic personality of the regional leaders.
8. Factional fights within the larger parties.
9. Centralising tendencies of the congress party.
10. Absence of a strong opposition party at the central level.
11. Role of caste and religion in the political process.
12. Alienation and discontentment among the tribal groups.

## ROLE OF REGIONAL PARTIES

The following points highlight the role played by the regional parties in Indian politics:

1. They have provided better governance and a stable government at the regional level.
2. They have posed a challenge to the one-party dominant system in the country and led to a decline in the domination of the Congress party<sup>3</sup>.
3. They have made a strong impact on the nature and course of centre-state relations. The tension areas in centre-state relations and the demand for grant of greater autonomy made the central leadership more responsive to the needs of the regional actors<sup>4</sup>.
4. They have made politics more competitive and popular participation in the political process more extensive at the grass roots<sup>5</sup>.
5. They have widened the choice for voters in both the parliamentary and assembly elections. The voters can vote for that party which aims to promote the interest of their state/region.
6. They have increased the political consciousness of the people and also their interest in politics. They bring into focus the local or regional issues which immediately attract the attention of the masses.
7. They provided a check against the dictatorial tendencies of the central government. They opposed the ruling congress party at the centre on certain issues and forced the dominant party to be more reasonable in its approach to the process of conflict resolution<sup>6</sup>.
8. They have made a significant contribution for the successful functioning of parliamentary democracy. In a parliamentary democracy, the minority must have its say, the majority must have its way, and the regional parties have played this role successfully by being ruling parties in some states and opposition parties at the centre<sup>7</sup>.

9. They have succeeded in exposing the partisan role of the Governors in the appointment and dismissal of the Chief Minister, in issuing of ordinances and reservation of bills for the consideration of the President<sup>8</sup>.
10. After the dawn of the era of coalition politics, the regional parties have assumed an important role in national politics. They have joined the coalition governments formed at the centre and shared power with the national parties<sup>9</sup>.

## DYSFUNCTIONS OF REGIONAL PARTIES

However, there are also negative points in the role of regional parties. These are as follows:

1. They have given more importance to regional interests rather than national interests. They have neglected the implications and consequences of their narrow approach to the resolution of national issues.
2. They have encouraged regionalism, casteism, linguism, communalism and tribalism which have become hurdles to national integration.
3. They are responsible for the unresolution of the inter-state water disputes, inter-state border disputes and other inter-state issues.
4. They have also indulged in corruption, nepotism, favouritism and other forms of misutilisation of power in order to promote their self-interest.
5. They have focused more on the populist schemes and measures to expand and strengthen their electoral base. This has adversely affected the state economy and development.
6. They bring in regional factor in the decision-making and the policy-making by the coalition government at the centre. They force the central leadership to yield to their demands<sup>10</sup>

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Observation made by Stanley A. Kochnock in Ram Reddy, G. and Sharma, B.A.V., *Regionalism in India - A Study of Telangana*, Concept Publishers, New Delhi, 1979, pp. 87–88.
2. Brass, P.R., *The Politics of India Since Independence*, Second Edition, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 1993, p. 89.
3. Bombwall, K.R., Regional parties in Indian politics: A preview. In Bhatnagar, S. and Kumar, P. (Eds) *Regional*

*Political Parties in India*, ESS Publications, Delhi, 1988, pp. 1–16.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*

6. Siwach, J.R., *Dynamics of Indian Government and Politics*, Second Edition, Sterling Publishers Private Limited, New Delhi, 1990, p. 865.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*

9. For more details in this regard, see [Chapter 75](#).

10. *Ibid.*