
UNIT 11 REGIONAL MOVEMENTS

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11.1 INTRODUCTION

As India consists of a large number of regions with diverse social and cultural compositions and different levels development of economy and infrastructure it has been facing regional movements since it became independent. The Reorganisation of the states in India in 1956 did not solve problems related to regional disparities. Even after the formation of a particular state, a region or more within a state start regional movements for autonomy, independence or even secession from the union of India. This units seeks to familiarise the union of India. This units seeks to familiarise the students with the regional movements and issues related to them.

11.2 REGIONAL MOVEMENT: MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE

Regional movement is an identity movement seeking special privileges, protection, and concessions from the state. It is a movement for regional self-governance. In other words, it means a movement for state formation — a movement seeking pluralisation and federalisation of existing polity and political process. There are two potential and significant causes of the emergence of regional movement — one is the interregional or intercommunity conflict, and other is the conflict between region and the state. Interregional conflict is usually shaped around *insider-outsider complex* — a complex that nurtures nativism and son-of-the-soil ideology. This, in other words, means a natural claim of the insider for better and preferential treatment by the state, particularly in terms of resource distribution and reservation of jobs for the locals. Anti-migrant movement in Assam, and tribal-nontribal conflict over domicile issue in Jharkhand are some of the important examples of son-of-soil ideology. Interregional conflict also occurs over 'regional pride' rooted in culture, language and traditions. Regional pride is extended further in the event of boarder dispute and sharing of river water. In such a situation extent and meaning of 'region' and regional movement expand to take the form of state regionalism. This is very much evident from recent conflict between Karnataka and Tamilnadu over sharing of Cauvery water, or boarder dispute between Maharashtra and Karnataka, or the most recent conflict between Biharis and Assamese over the competitive examination for central services, or the '*Mumbaikar*' call of the

Shiv Sena restricting and preventing non-Marathis from occupying important positions in the business, economy and polity of Maharashtra. It is probably the reason that some scholars consider regional movement as consequence of developmental tension between society and polity.

On the other hand, region-state conflict usually takes place in the institutional structure of state system, wherein a region questions the distributive policy of the state as discriminatory, exploitative and unfavourable to the overall well-being of the concerned regional community. It is from this perceived sense of deprivation, neglect and 'internal colonialism' that the people of a particular region organise themselves into a movement seeking in most of the cases separation from the existing state, or in select instances settling with some autonomy arrangements within the same state. Here, it may be contextually mentioned that in the federal-plural process of nation and state-building, it is the high degree of democratisation and competitive political mobilisation, which generally transform a territorially concentrated sociocultural group into a self-conscious political community, questioning the hegemony of dominant group (other regional community) in state apparatuses and policies, particularly those affecting its identity structure and developmental needs. Viewed in this perspective, regional movement appears to be non-centralist and self-determining and defining ideology of protest against hegemony of state power and dominant regional group.

We can now possibly define regional movement as a movement for autonomy of identity and autonomy of development. Its objectives may be accommodative, protectionist, welfarist, autonomist, separatist and secessionist. Secessionism, however, seems to be merely a tactical strategy to pressurise the government. Once their genuine grievances are redressed they settle down within the constitutionally propounded democratic structure of Indian nationalism. There are numerous examples to support this submission, ranging from Tamil separatism to Akali movement (read religious nationalism of Sikhs), Gorkhaland movement, Bodoland movement, etc. A close scrutiny of their demands would suggest that they seek a redefinition of state-society relationship in such a manner that accommodates their identity demands and takes due care of their socio-economic requirement. And to serve this purpose, they usually aspire for a constitutionally documented institutional space of their own where their choices are self-determined. Thus, it is the 'protectionist self' around which politics of regional movement revolves.

11.3 METHODOLOGICAL INSIGHTS ON REGIONAL MOVEMENTS

Regional movements, especially in a diverse society like India, have contextualised formations. Therefore, it requires a componential analysis of the complex interplay of *region*, *people* and the *state*. When we say regional movement, it immediately refers to the existence of a regional community with political overtone. In more than one sense regional community is different from other social communities. In fact, region may consist of many social communities, which through a highly complex process of nation formation constitute themselves into a distinct regional community. Regional community is generally formed on the basis of identity of affinity and interests. "It is a community more in terms of 'horizontal comradeship' than the uniformity or homogeneity scaling vertically (AK Singh, "Sub Regions and State formation in India"). It is complementariness of interest and identity that help people to constitute and to imagine as a separate

regional community. But, is how a regional community formed? What are those subjective and objective factors, which constitute a group into distinct regional political community? Componential analysis also helps us in analysing the success, failure and sustenance of a regional movement. It further helps us in examining the nature and potential impact of regional movement on the process of federal nation-building. It is commonly held that more subjectively the identity is grounded, more intense is the regional movement. It is in this context that the theories of nationalism or nation and nationality formation assume critical significance in understanding the phenomena of regional identity formation and its transformation into a movement. Here, it is also worthwhile to consider the similarity and difference between nationalism and regionalism. Regionalism and nationalism are symbiotically linked. Both undergo similar process of construction and formation. They tend to serve their respective social constituencies as an ideology. They share similar analytical concern as to how identity is formed, and when an identity becomes politically salient. Only difference between them is while the nationalism is generally centralising; regionalism, on the contrary, is inherently decentralising. It is possibly the reason that regional movement also emerges as a reaction to nationalism.

In the literatures on nationalism, we find two principally important, but dichotomous accounts of nation-formation: *perennialist-primordialist*; and, *modernist*. Primordialist considers identity as pre-given entity of distinct races, ethnicity, language, culture, religion etc. These individual attributes of identity are called the objective markers of identity. Any one or combination of them constitutes a distinct national or sub-national community, which when politicised become a distinct nation. Thus for them, nation is a politicised ethno-cultural community, extended in history and deeply rooted in socio-cultural traditions. Since such a community is historically embedded, it is territorially persistent as well. In other words, a community in order to be effective must also have a cultural homeland. Thus region in this context refers to a socially structured territorial space whose ecology and economy have deep impact on the making of a distinct and visible common identity of the people living in that region. Two regions cannot be culturally similar. Their geo-specifics do vary from each other even though they share in common many zonal characteristics. It is this fusion of identity and territory that makes regional community a self-determining community. It is this fusion which also rationalises their claims to autonomy. Interestingly in India, a regional community may and may not have pre-given bond of ethnies and culture. As the studies on the construction of Uttarakhandi and Jharkhandi identities have shown, it is the distinctiveness of regional economy and ecology that created first an 'interest community', which over the years of cohabitation succeeded in creating a common cultural bond. Social making of India further suggests that every form of identity and its objective markers have carved out distinct territory for itself. This we referred to as identity zone(s). In India, culture, language, religion, ethnicity, social traditions have assumed regional characteristics. It is probably the reason that we find performative variation in the observance of religious practices and caste idioms from region to region. Another interesting fact about the regions in India is that most of them had some form of administrative identity in the past when people and territory structurally - institutionally enmeshed with each other to give region a particular cultural trait and easily recognisable patterned behavior of the people. Historical-cultural region has had evolved communicative signs and symbols which in some cases led to the growth of an independent language or dialect. What emerges from this account of region-formation is the fact that regional community may be constituted on the basis of pre-given identity, or it may be constructed afterwards

which in the process of modernisation and development gets consolidated further as community of common material interests and destiny.

But how a regional community translates itself into a sub-national movement? To find an explainable answer, we have to take into consideration the methodological submission of the modernisation or mobilisation theory of nation formation. There are two crucial submissions of this theory: (i) conversion of community into a movement is a process of mobilisation by elite, intelligentsia and leaders; and (ii) in order to provide further dynamics and cohesion to community consciousness, identity is reinvented and relocated in the contextual present. This may require contextual reconstruction and reinterpretation of identity-contents of a regional community. But who does this? It is the elite who selects symbols (usually from distinctive ethnic and cultural past), and standardises them for larger group cohesion. The elite in the competitive setting of liberal constitutionalism politically mobilises the given identity. In other words, it is the state, which provides a setting in which identity crystallises and movement emerges. The state itself becomes a critical site of identity contestations and a breeding ground for sub-national or regional movement to emerge. Writing perceptively about India, Myron Weiner observes: “The process of identity formation is a complex one with several key elements. One element is the *institutional structure*, which shapes the framework within which group identities are maintained and intensified. The federal system, the structure of political parties, the educational system, and media serve to reinforce some identities while undermining others. A second element can be described as *reactive mechanisms*. Group identities are often formed or reinforced when challenged by others. The challenge may come as a consequence of assimilative pressures, migration, economic competition, or political threats. A third element can be described as *policy feedbacks*. Government policies in the form of entitlements and reservations induce groups to organise for political action, which in turn intensifies group identities. A fourth element is the underlying *cultural conception* of the state’s relationship to group identities. Here the issue is whether society is seen as subordinate to the state...or whether society is viewed as autonomous.

Regional identity is also formed, what Marxist scholar Hobsbawm writes about nation, “at the point of intersection of politics, technology and social transformation”. Modern means of communication and technological advancement create, intentionally or unintentionally, a collective self of the people, who organise themselves into a movement for getting fair, if not preferential, deal in the dispersal of national power and resources. Technology creates, to use Benedict Anderson hypothesis, an ‘imagined community’ - community which has the affinity of boundary, beyond which other imagined community exists. Had not the print capitalism arrived, the imagined community of nation would not have been formed. In other words, identity is facilitated by modernisation and development. Amidst the above contested account of identity formation, David Miller probably provides the best possible working definition of community (read regional community) as “(1) constituted by shared belief and mutual commitment, (2) extended in history, (3) active in character, (4) connected to a particular territory, and (5) marked off from other communities by its distinct public culture...”. Thus in any academic exercise on regional movement, it is the dynamics of ‘self’ and ‘others’ that need to be examined and analysed. Self-others dichotomy needs to be further situated in the politics of modernisation and development. If modernisation structurally differentiates pre-given identity and seeks to supplement it with new structure of secular identity, it also, on the

other, provides identity the necessary technological gadgets to recreate and reinvent itself. If post-modernity theory is to be believed, then identity never lapses, it only finds new medium and new language in the modernisation process. Identity universalises itself through medium of mass communication. People re-search and re-draw its ethnic past and situate it contemporarily.

From the above discussion, we may now select some crucial variables, which may help us in analysing regional identity and regional movements in India. One of them is federalism. Its working in India has shown some inherent contradiction. As we know, federalism is essentially decentralising. It is a political programme of institutionalising autonomy of society and polity. It is expected to accommodate regionalism within the framework of a federal nationalism. But on the contrary, its working took a centralising turn where regionalism was not only misplaced but at one point of time was also characterised as antithetical to Indian nationalism, its unity and integrity. Thus federalism instead of patterning regionalism served centrally the Union. As a consequence, most of the regional movements have critically questioned the constitutional scheme of distribution of federal powers between the region and centre. Dravida movement in Tamil Nadu, Akali movement in Punjab, N T Rama Rao's political propagation of 'Telugu pride' and other similar movements critically questioned the legitimacy of central powers and downsizing of their sub-nationalism or regionalism. As mentioned above, regional movement is organised in reaction to certain state policies, which a regional community finds disadvantageous to its interests. Thus one has to also take into consideration the policy framework of the state — both central and regional. Societal and regional equations of governmental policies have catalytic impact on the formation and initiation of a regional movement. Initially, the promotion of Hindi nationalism at the cost of other languages (regional and local dialects) created a fertile base for linguistic sub-nationalism to emerge.

Another important variable is the party system and party structure. The key question to be examined is the coalitional and accommodative capacity of the party system. The hypothesis that can be put forth here is that less coalitional a national party and party system, more intense is the possibility of regional parties to be formed and movement to be organised. In this context of crucial importance is the leadership pattern and representational structure particularly of the national and state level parties. Many a times, leaders with considerable public understanding organise a party of his own with defined enclaves of regional support and core social constituency. Such a party usually survives on the ideology of regionalism or sub-nationalism. This holds true with most of the smaller parties of Jharkhand, Uttarakhand and Northeastern states. Interestingly in India regional parties have come into being through a process of division and split in the national and state level parties. However, there are parties like Assom Gana Parishad, which came into being through the process of regional movement itself. Regional parties unleash regionalisation process in the national political order with a view to have participatory control over such decisions, which affect their identity and development. In any case, regional parties have two important roles — (i) identity retention, protection and articulation, and (ii) mobilising people into a movement in the event of conflict between nation and region, and between regions. However, a caveat here may be added, party and party system is an important factor, but not a necessary prerequisite for regional movement to emerge. Regional movement may be autonomous and independent of parties and party system. Transient small group of intellectuals and elite may shape

movement. We should also not forget the fact that social and regional movements do follow the rules of spontaneity and subalterneity. Regional movement is generally self-processed and shaped in the structural dynamics of 'self' and 'others'. Thus for any substantive formation of knowledge on regional movements, one has to essentially understand the complex dynamics of 'self' and 'others' through a measured analysis of inter-regional relations (or conflict), state policies, instruments and institutions of political mobilisation, impact of technology on identity formation, role of mass media, and the structural analysis of national and regional conflict which generate group conflict.

11.4 REGIONAL MOVEMENTS, REGIONALISM AND STATE FORMATION: SOME CAUSATIVE EXPLANATION

India has been territorially reorganised into 28 states and 7 union territories. Out of this, we have today as many as 31 demands for statehood and sub-autonomy arrangements. They are: Maru Pradesh in Rajasthan; Bundelkhand, Poorvanchal, Bhojpur and Harit Pradesh or Jatland in the Uttar Pradesh; Vindhya Pradesh, Baghelkhand, Rewanchal, Madhya Bharat, Mahakosal, Malwa in Madhya Pradesh; Mithila in Bihar; Saurashtra in Gujarat; Konkan, Vidarbha and Marathwada in Maharashtra; Telengana in Andhra Pradesh; Coorg, Kodagu and Sagari Prant in Karnataka; Kosal Rajya in Orissa; Gorkhaland and Kamtapuri in West Bengal; autonomy demands of Jammu and Ladakh regions in Jammu and Kashmir; Bodoland, Karbi-Anglong, and Poorbanchal in Assam; Kukiland in Nagaland; Garoland in Meghalaya; and Hmar state in Mizoram. Movements for these states are in different stages of mobilisation. Some of them are strong and persistent, others are dormant but occasionally reiterative. What we need to examine here is why there exist so many demands for separate states? Do the present states lack requisite homogeneity of population and administration?

From close analysis of the official practice of state formation it appears that these demands exist because of the non-congruence between cultural boundary and administrative boundary. In many cases, the present states appear to be invented ones, which has unsuccessfully attempted to create common linguistic, administrative and political identity among the people living within the different regions of the state. Even if the invented state has succeeded in creating new pan-state identity, people have not relegated their pre-given ethnic-regional ties to the backyards in order to live with this *new* identity. In fact, people of India live with many identities, but this never means the replacement of one identity with other, or the assimilation of many into one. Co-living with many identities is possible only through inter-connectivity between them. But when this inter-connectivity is either missing, or attempt is made to supplement the pre-given ethnic regional identity with invented official (state) identity the problem of legitimacy begins. This is one among many dimensions of regional movements in India. Interestingly in the nine states of Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Goa, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, we do not find any dislocation between cultural boundary and administrative boundary of the state. Therefore, there does not exist any significant movement for statehood.

In the six major and large states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, there alone exist 16 major demands for statehood. Further, in three officially designated Hindi-states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh there are as many as eleven demands or movements for separate statehood. The

very existence of these demands itself questions the legitimacy of these states being Hindi-States, and their artificial constructedness. In other words, region and state are non-congruent. To explain further, in the ethnically homogeneous states like Punjab, Tamil Nadu etc. it is the culturally constructed 'We' that permeates different geographical divisions of the state. In this type of states, 'ethnie' is coterminous with 'territory'; therefore, we are having least (or for all practical purposes 'no') movement for separate statehood. While the ethnic states cultivate on the basis of pre-given identity, the ecologically distinctive states like Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranachal, Jharkhand and other hill states are having ecologically shaped, constructed and locally ingrained identity. It is the relative congruence of 'interests', 'destiny' and 'folk-affinity' that makes an ecologically distinctive state/region a cohesive political and administrative entity within the Indian federation.

On the other hand, in the composite — plural states such as West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, the similar congruence of affinity and interests lacks between the state and people of different regions. Coalescing together many distinct and mutually varying sub-regional identities within one dominant language like Hindi, Bengali, Rajasthani, Gujarati, Marathi, Telegu and Kannada have formed these states. It was believed that these languages would, in due course of time, succeed in creating a broad regional-state identity across the people and sub-regions of these states. But, these languages have not been able to create a sense of 'imagined communities' among two people living within two different sub-regions of a state. Bihar for example lacks requisite homogeneity of population, culture, language, geography, politics and economics. This delegitimises the relevance of state for serving the identific and development requirements of the people of Mithila region. This holds true with most of the above listed composite plural states.

What has been stressed above is the fact that though the principle of dominant language may help to create an '*imaginary state*', it fails to create an '*imagined community*'. Therefore, today we have demands and movements for the separate states of Mithila, Bhojpur, Braj, Bundelkhand, etc. Given their historicity of identity, administration and exclusivity of development, these sub-regions are potential claimants of separate states. Similarly, Bengali bhadralok identity has not been able to hold together the ethnic Nepalese in the Darjeeling hills, and Rajbonshis in north Bengal demanding a separate state in five districts of Cooch Bihar, Jalpaiguri, parts of Darjeeling and north and south Denajpur. Another classic example of language not creating an imagined community is the demand for a separate Telengana state in Andhra Pradesh. The people of Telengana cherish their history and tradition of cultural synthesis as their identity, instead of Telegu language.

The sub-regional identity assumes distinct political identity when factor of 'internal colonialism' generates and promotes inter-regional disparities and discrimination. This phenomenon has two dimensions: one, many of the sub-regions, despite being rich in natural resources have remained economically underdeveloped either because of the sheer neglect of their development by the state in which they currently are, or, ill-conceived top-down approach of development; second, survival of one region at the cost of other region through resources and earnings transfers. This is what rationalises the demands for separate states of Vidarbha, Marathwada and Konkan (in Maharashtra), Telengana (in Andhra Pradesh), Saurashtra (in Gujarat) and Kodagu (in Karnataka),

There is another dimension of it. If demand for Harit Pradesh in western Uttar Pradesh is any pointer, then it can safely be argued that an economically well-off region may seek separate statehood in order to retain its status as developed or developing economy.

11.5 SALIENT PATTERNS OF MOVEMENTS FOR STATEHOOD

From above discussion, following salient patterns of regional movements seeking separate state may be discerned:

- i) In India, territory and community are symbiotically linked. A region is known by the community, which lives in it, and community is designated and characterised by the geo-specifics of the given region. The demand for separate statehood arises from the synthesis between the two – community and geography. A territorial community seeks separate state in order to be the sole arbiter of its cultural setting, political making and economic wellbeing of the people and territory, which it *claims* as ‘homeland’. For them the state formation means creating an institutional-political space through which ‘autonomous self’ of the society is not only expressed, but preserved, protected and promoted.
- ii) People having distinct socio-cultural identity, concentrated in few contiguous districts within the existing state-systems seek a separate state in order to preserve, protect and promote their identity. It is argued that a separate state would provide them a political identity and a constitutionally documented institutional space for interest articulation and protection within the Indian nation. It is being contested that this would enhance their capacity to bargain with the central authority (union government) as well as with other states in the overall distribution of political power and economic resources. This, in other words, means capacity endowment, which otherwise is not possible within the existing state in which they currently are. The cases of Uttarakhand and Jharkhand movements are important pointers in this regard. There is (was) a perceived threat to their identity due to the existence of ‘internal colonialism’, expansionism and hegemony of certain other regional or cultural groups. This also holds specifically true with most of the sub-regional movements in the north-eastern parts of India. They further argue that a separate state would ensure them of a self-assuring mode of economic development through better application and exploitation of local resources, talents and skills.
- iii) Some of the above mentioned regional movements seek constitutional recognition, protection and legitimisation of their respective socio-cultural varieties by the state. It is at this level that the demand for functional elevation of mother tongue to the level of education and administration is made. This also includes inclusion of some languages in the eighth schedule of the Constitution of India. Linguistic purism is another facet of socio-cultural regionalism. This in other words means preservation of cultural identity. Identity factor is extended to delimit state’s encroachment upon the cultural space of a particular regional community. Cultural homogenisation by the state on the pretext of having a uniform national cultural identity is opposed. Therefore, most of the regional movements emphasise autonomy especially in the socio-cultural realm. And for exercising autonomy of identity, a separate state is legitimately demanded. A separate state, in this context, is perceived as congenial political space through which ‘self’ of identity is preserved, protected and promoted.

This further means delimiting the areas of influence and interference by the state (central and regional states) in the exclusive 'self' of the society. This requires periodic restructuring of state-society relationships, especially in terms of the cultural rights of the people and their subsequent obligation to a broader territorial state. Arguably, state's role is perceived in promotional terms, and not those of interference. And such a state-society relationship is sought to be provided a statutory basis in order to avoid encroachment by any other structures of governance.

- iv) Located within the realms of identity and development, regionalism for sub-regional groups serves as an ideology through which they seek to define their own administrative and political identity; and, their relationships with broader territorial state, regional state, and inter-community relationships. Regionalism provides them a bargaining space in the overall process of nationalism and federalism. It acts as countervailing force to centralisation, and allows polity and society to federal. It stresses for a decentralist framework of national unity, nation and state-building, and governance. Being an autonomist ideology, its two fold objectives are (i) maintenance of (sub) regional identity; and, (ii) self-devised and sustained mode of economic growth. These two objectives are best achieved, as regionalists claim, when they are granted the separate statehood or other structural-institutional mechanism of self-rule. In India, as Akhtar Majeed observes, "despite occasional and remote indications of potential secessionism, regional movements do not usually go beyond claiming resource sharing within the broader national context. Regionalism, in this sense, can politically be understood as a" search for an intermediate control system between the centre and periphery for the competitive advantage in the national arena".

11.6 TYPES OF REGIONALISM

Iqbal Narain has identified three major types of regionalism (or regional movements) in India (i) Supra-State regionalism; (ii) Inter-State regionalism; (iii) Intra-State regionalism. Supra-state regionalism is built around the issues of common interest in which group of states form a common political alliance, directed against either the similar alliance of other states or the Union. Supra state regionalism is issue specific and is, as Narain writes, "confined to certain matter on which the group would like to take a common and joint stand. It is not at all a case of a total and permanent merger of state identities in the group identity; in fact, rivalries, tensions and even conflicts continue to take place at times even simultaneously with group postures *south vs. north* in India on such issues as language or the location of steel plants illustrate the point". Compared to this, inter-state regionalism, as he further observes, "is coterminous with state boundaries and involves juxtaposing of one or more state identities against another on specific issues, which threaten their interest. River water in general and...boarder dispute in particular can be cited as example." On the other hand, a regional community against the state in which they are situated spearheads intra-state regionalism. Intra-state regionalism is aimed at assuring oneself of self-identity and self-development. This 'self' gradually becomes weak when we move onto other two forms of regionalism. In the case of intra-state regionalism, it is identity around which group's political and economic interests are defined. But in other two cases, it is conflict of interests either between two states or between the centre and the state which temporarily give the people a sense of togetherness, and a common political outlook. But, the essence of regionalism always

remains the same in all the category of regionalism. As a political idiom regionalism seeks federalisation-pluralisation of national identity and resources. In other words, it is an ideology of territorialising the process of federal nation-building. It is probably the reason that regionalism has been described as 'in-built' tendency of nationalism and federalism. It is a "complex amalgam of geographical, historico-cultural, economic, politico-administrative and psychic factors". What factors will assume ascendancy in the making of a regional movement is difficult to say. However, regional movement in any case will always seek a redefinition of the relationship between a regional and national on a more substantive basis.

11.7 STATE'S RESPONSE TO REGIONAL MOVEMENTS

State's response to regional movements has been varying. We do not find any consistent policy in this regard. However, certain patterns and principles can be discerned in this regard. They are: (i) secessionist demand could not be conceded, rather, secessionism would be suppressed by all necessary means; (ii) central government would not concede those regional demands based exclusively upon religious differences; and (iii) the demands for the creation of separate linguistic would not be conceded unless such a demand is socially wide and economically viable. To illustrate, there could not be any singular construct or formation of the units of Indian federation. Units should be composite ones. Such a composite unit could be formed only by mutual balancing of four principles which the States Reorganisation Commission (SRC) underlined as: "(i) preservation and strengthening of the unity and security of India; (ii) linguistic and cultural homogeneity; (iii) financial, economic and administrative considerations; and (iv) successful working of the national plan." Other factors like 'peoples' wishes', 'historicity of the region', and 'geographical contiguity' could have only limited, but qualificatory application while (re) drawing the boundary of the units of the Indian Union. Thus, wishes of the people can be acceptable as one of the yardsticks of territorial readjustment only when it is objectively ascertainable, and is subjected to the overall considerations of other important factors like "human and material resources of the areas claiming statehood, the wishes of substantial minorities, the essential requirements of the Indian Constitution and the larger national interests." Similarly, historicity of a region can be invoked only to the extent of determining the connectedness of the people with claimed territory, but it could not be stretched to an extent as to convert them into a separate nation. Though geographical contiguity is of high value in determining and devising the boundary of a state, "it [however] does not necessarily imply or involve the need for a geographical frontier....". Thus, while drawing the lines between two units, the primary concern as the SRC underlined should be of ensuring compactness of the units.

Within the above totalistic approach to reorganisation, the Commission strongly recommended for the creation of large states. "This, however", as Commission writes, "does not mean that units should be so unwieldy as to be without any intrinsic life of their own or to defeat the very purpose for which larger units are suggested, i.e., administrative efficiency and coordination of economic development and welfare activity." Thus, in the opinion of the Commission, the size principle must be balanced with viability principle. This, in other words, means that the region seeking separate statehood must have "adequate financial resources to maintain itself and to develop its economy". Though, Commission upheld the principle of internal homogeneity purely from the viewpoints of smooth functioning of administration, it, nonetheless, rejected the

monolingual and uni-cultural construction of state. It is precisely the reason that it rejected the 'homeland concept' and 'one language one state' formula for the reorganisation of the units of Indian federation. However, within the general principle of sizeable — composite state, a cultural group can have its own state when they do qualify the following two fold criteria: "(a) the people claiming a distinctive culture must constitute a recognisable group; that is to say, it should include a number of persons sufficient by themselves to claim, conserve and develop stable traditions or the characteristics of their culture; and (b) such cultural individuality should be capable of being expressed in terms of a defined and sizeable geographical entity." However, such a cultural basis of states' reorganisation should not impede the inter-mingling of two cultures and overall growth of composite national culture. What appears from above is, that every recognisable and dominant basis of states' reorganisation must be subjected to the test of maintenance of national unity and integrity, and national security.

On the basis of SRC's recommendation, the Government of India passed in November 1956, the State Reorganisation Act. The Act endorsed the bulk of the recommendations of SRC, except the merger of Hyderabad state into Andhra Pradesh, and Vidarbha was made part of the Bombay state. Thus, the number of states was reduced from 16 to 14 in this Act. However, the number of centrally administered territories was enhanced from 3 to 6. The major inclusion was the Himachal Pradesh and Tripura. Since then, the numbers of states have been increased to 28 and union territories to 7. States formed since 1956 include: Gujarat (1960), Nagaland (1963), Haryana (1966), Punjab (1966) Himachal Pradesh (1971), Manipur (1972), Meghalaya (1972), Tripura (1972), Sikkim (1975), Arunachal Pradesh (1987), Mizoram (1987) and Goa (1987). Jharkhand (2000), Uttaranchal (2000) and Chattisgarh (2000).

With the formation of three new states of Uttranchal, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, reorganisations have been effected for the first time in the Hindi-heartland of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. As stated above, the reorganisation was first effected in 1956 in the south. It moved down to north-west in 1966 and north-east in 1971 and 1987. In all these reorganisations, the basis of reorganisation also differs. The first reorganisation was done predominantly on the basis of language. In north-west in 1966, linguistic principle was combined with religious identity. Initially, this seemed to be a perilous combination having stronger tendency of drifting towards separatism. However, democracy has its own way to prevent separatism and promote integration. In the third major reorganisation affecting mostly the north-eastern region, tribal affiliations and distinctive ethnic features became the major basis of reorganisation. The formation of three new states, in all probabilities, may have 'domino affect' on the Hindi- heartland and other composite-plural and large sized states. Reorganisation in these states may not be purely ethnic or cultural, but it may be on the basis of 'economic specificity' and 'ecological-cultural distinctiveness'. Cultural specificity may in some case, as in the movement for Mithilanchal state, owe to language or dialect, but in no case it would owe exclusively to religion or ethnicity. In fact, most of the sub-regions of composite-plural states have developed and articulated a composite-cultural identity.

With initial reluctance, the Government of India is now applying the provisions of the Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the Indian Constitution with intended objective of containing ethnic separatism and tribal alienation in different regions, particularly in the northeast. Institutionally, the government seems to be receptive to the creation of autonomous

regional council or district councils for the people of ethnic enclaves, which otherwise may not qualify for separate state. Regional council is an experiment in the community governance, wherein the concerned regional community has powers to regulate its identity and developmental. Similarly, the state language policy is now being fine-tuned to accommodate the claims of various dialect or language groups. The government has embarked on two fold policies — one, to include the major languages in Eighth Schedule, and two, granting official recognition to culturally significant languages of the state as language of education and official transaction. All these policies have significant impact on integrating diverse regional community within the mould and measures of Indian nationalism. We find a positive change in the official attitude towards regionalism and regional movement. Government can concede ethnic claims of self-governance within the permissible autonomy framework of Indian Constitution. Now regionalism is very much integral to the process of nationalism and federalism. In fact the constitution of India itself recognises the notion of an autonomous region. It is with the extension of cultural autonomy, and initiation of democratic process with officially earmarked economic package of development that India has been able to contain ethnic separatism, and making regionalism ultimately the part and parcel of national life.

11.8 SUMMARY

To sum up, regional movements are indicative of the identity movements of people in a particular region or state, which seek special privileges, protection and concessions from the state. There are both imaginary and real reasons for the rise and growth of these movements. Ever since India became independent, regional movements have taken in different parts of the country on one or the other basis – territorial, ethnicity or economic backwardness of the agitating areas. The response of the state to regional movements has not been uniform. Depending on the situation the state has been indifferent, accommodative or coercive to such movements. Since regional movements are related to the socio-cultural and political processes, these are an ongoing phenomenon in a democratic country like India.

11.9 EXERCISES

- 1) Explain the meaning and significance of regional movements.
- 2) Discuss the methodology to study regional movements.
- 3) Explain the reasons for the rise and growth of regional movements in India.
- 4) Write a note on the response of the state to the regional movements.