**Impact of Caste on Indian Politics**

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Casteism is the exploitation of caste consciousness for narrow means. At the base of India’s social structure is the caste (varna) and sub-caste (jatis).The caste system is another term for the Hindu social base, comprising about 80 per cent of the Indian population. It is both hierarchical and segmentary, marked by a dichotomy between purity and pollution. Caste system was based on exclusion of and discrimination against the ‘outcaste’ groups. The caste system, presumably originating in the division of labour and occupational classes, over the centuries became a more or less rigid endogamous group, based on birth. Today it has relevance for rituals, marriages, inheritance, for other social traditions, and for inter-caste and extra-caste activities.Dr. Ambedkar has said, “the caste-system is not merely a division of labour. It is a division of labourers”. The most detrimental aspect of the caste system is the practice of untouchability. Gandhijee led the revolt against some of the inhuman practices aginst the backward castes.

The importance of caste should be realized in order to understand its impact on the political arena. Caste through a united efforts of its members to assert themselves, has today intruded both in politics and administration mainly through franchise and institutions like panchayati raj. Politics is, of course, accommodative and flexible enabling caste to step in. Yet while caste influences politics, politics also influence caste and shatters its solidarity. Caste solidarity is conducive to political power and strength but political power in turn tends to weaken caste consolidations by creating internal competitions leading to new alignments at times cutting across the caste barriers.

**Caste in politics :** Since independence, caste has been playing an increasingly important role in all political activities-elections, political appointments, party formation etc.While the four fold division of caste into *varna* is too broad and theoretical, the kingpin of the caste system is really the regional-specific *jat*i.when we refer to the dominant caste in a village, region or state, we really talk about *jatis*.The importance attached to the *jatis* is not due to their material wealth and control of land. In many regions several so called backward castes and middle castes (i.e. below the three “twice born” *varna* of *Brahmins, Kshatriyas* and *Vaishyas*), occupy positions of dominance in society and polity.

India’s political structure and processes are democratic, but its social base particularly in the vast rural area, is rather feudal, tribal, casteist and communal. Democratic facilities-like fundamental rights relating to free speech, expressions and associations, participation in electoral system, formation of parties, free media and press, and even legislative forum- are misused for maintaining casteist identity. This is possible because while the form of Indian politics is secular, its style is essentially casteist.Some caste leaders play a different game.

Caste can take various forms in politics:

* When parties choose candidates in elections, they keep in mind the caste composition of the electorate and nominate candidates from different castes sa as to muster necessary support to win elections. When governments are formed, political parties usually take care that representatives of different castes find a place in it.
* Universal adult franchise and the principle of one-person one vote compelled political parties to mobilize people on caste lines.
* vote bank politics

**Politics in Caste :** The worst aspect of casteism is expressed at two levels.One, when the upper castes try to deny to the backward castes, the avenues of progress and the right of equality. Second, when the landed jatis, in order to maintain their traditional hold on land, wealth and power, try to deny to other backward castes their rights and opportunities given to them by the Constitution, the laws and by the community welfare schemes. They try to siphon off the welfare schemes meant for backward castes serve a two-fold purpose. First it denies them an opportunity to grow at par with them. Second, it serves a warning to other similar social groups posing challenge for the Upper castes. To sum up, the negative impact of casteism on India’s political system is:

* that it violates the basic principles enshrined in the Constitution for promoting a new democratic polity, namely the principle of justice, equality. And above all fraternity;
* that it has politicized the castes as a divisive factor, counterposing one caste or a group of castes against the rest;
* that it has vitiates the atmosphere of elections, by projecting ascriptive identities, promoting narrow loyalties, thus weakening the modernization of polity;
* that by building caste associations, pressure groups and lobbies, it seeks to retain outmoded and outdated caste cohesion in national and state politics, which is an impediment in building up a secular society;
* that it adversely affects the grass-root Panchayati Raj system, by seeking to retain the traditional mould of dominant and the dominated castes, and thus frustrate the emergence of the new democratic culture of free and equal citizenship, irrespective of caste, creed or birth;
* that it creates tension, suspicion, fear and an atmosphere of violence by building militancy and organizing political rallies on caste lines; and
* that in party politics and in ministry formation its role contributes to avoidable bickering, narrow bargaining and jockeying for power, which often leads to political instability and confusion.

The chronic political instability; the changing complexion of political verbose are all negative outcome of the extreme caste based politics. However there are political thinkers like Rajni Kothari, Yogendra Yadav, who interpret the impact of caste on politics in secular way, i.e., caste and its usage in politics has pushed the agenda of social justice to the fore and thereby providing a hope to the marginal and weaker sections of the society. This is what prof. Kothari terms as politicization of caste versus castization of politics. These binary opposites have been used in order to explain the complex process of caste and politics and their influence on each other and what and how exactly they have influenced each other is, indeed a matter of infinite research.

**Impact of Religion on Indian Politics**

Religion has been the most important part of Indian civilization since time immemorial and some of the import commandment that subserves our moral as well as social behavious has been foregrounded in the belief that religion purifies, in the words of Mahatma Gandhi, not only our heart but soul, too. Its importance can be understood in the sense that it has played a dominant role in the contours of world oldest and greatest civilization. Historians have dutifully analyzed this aspect by dividing the timeline as per the growth and resurrection of the beliefs at a particular moments of life. However the danger of intrusion of religion into public life has also been felt and at times it resulted in deep communal hatred spiraling into uncontrolled violence and posing the challenge for the unity and integrity of the society. This idea in politics has been called up as “communalism” and certainly it had a harmful effect on the society and polity. Now we are going to discuss as to how the religion played out its role in the polity and its concomitant impact on the health of a nation.

**Communalism:** Communalism is based on spreading feeling of fear, insecurity, and separatedness and, above all, antagonism and animosity among followers of different religions. Communalism broadly means the division of a society into racial, religious or caste based groups. Communalism is a political orientation that recognizes religious community and not the nation or the nation-state as the focal point of political allegiance. More specifically communalism is apolitical strategy opposed to nationalism as a process of integration of multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual communities. Communalism is opposed to secularism as a pattern of socio-cultural co-existence. The phenomenon of Communalism can be defined as a confrontation of identities and interests, basically emerging from matters of faith but extending to material interests, between two or more communities. According to Prof. K.N.Panikkar, communalism has two dimensions-communalism ***as a state of consciousness*** and communalism ***as an instrument of power***.

**Communalism as a state of consciousness**: This has to be understood in terms of the manner in which communal awareness, a sense of being communal, is constructed in society, or, how people become aware of being communal. It is rightly said that being religious does not necessarily mean being communal. Believing in one’s own religion does not mean that one is opposed to the members of other religions. Despite this, religion plays a role in creating a communal consciousness. In fact, religion is used in a decisive way in creating communal consciousness.

**Communalism as an instrument of power**: It is about a strategy by the political party to capture power. Here the concept of power is more fundamental. The communal forces aim to capture power through the establishment of social power by capturing the minds of the people. It is as much a cultural agenda as a political agenda because in the attempt to capture power, the deployment of culture, the manner in which they want to invoke becomes crucial element. In India, the problem of communalism has signified Hindu-Muslim conflict though issues like Sikh separatism and Christian proselytisation have not been completely absentOn the one hand, communalism was perceived to be primarily located in the divisive doctrine espoused by imperialism. The divisive nature of communalism stems from its characteristic of giving people a sense of identity through tightly constructed boundaries defined by religion. It has thus provoked violent attacks involving numerous victims and resulted in extensive damage to private and, especially, public property.

Communalism exploits both religion and politics, and is born out of a real or an imaginary fear of the other communities, either due to ignorance or due to misrepresentation. Communalism is often conceived in bifocal terms as ***majority communalism*** and ***minority communalism.*** They are mutually reinforcing, i.e. being fed by each other. Many times, because of patronizing minority communalism by the parties, there are demands for secession from the country. And the majority communalism results in fascism. Jawaharlal Nehru once described communalism as the Indian version of fascism. Communal riots which are episodic in character are the end product of communal politics. Riots take place at certain points of time because of an intensification of communal politics. However, communal politics and Ideology and not communal riots are the main form or content of communalism. The virus of communalism could erupt and express itself in the following forms:

1. Communal Violence: India has a huge population of minorities and hence face acute problem of communalism which had led to more than nine thousand communal riots in the country since independence. In fact, between 1967-1978, every year there have more than 170 incidents of communal riots.
2. Sectarian Riots: In addition to the communal riots, there have been sectarian riots as well.
3. Destruction and Forcible Occupation of Religious Places.
4. Misuse of Religious Place for Political Purpose.
5. Political mobilization on religious lines is another frequent form of communalism. This involves the use of sacred symbols, religious leaders, emotional appeal and plain fear in other to bring the followers of one religion together in political arena.

**Growth of communalism :** Independent India established a structured government committed to secularism and democracy. Its constitution guarantees equal treatment before the law to all individuals regardless of community or background. In the first twenty years after independence, The Congress Party consistently articulated its support for the equal recognition of all religions and communities. Despite state sanctioned support for secularism and nondiscrimination, conservative religious organizations sought to give a communal orientation to political debates revolving around language issues, the protection of religious symbols, and the maintenance of religious personal laws. While the Congress party often conceded to demands made by such groups over linguistic, religious and legal issues, it remained rhetorically committed to nondiscrimination and secularism in the political process.

A perceptible shift in the communalization of politics can be traced back to the 1976, as Congress party has started declining and many other political parties come to the fore on this or other divisive agenda. And by the 1990s the communal violence reached unprecedented level. At the level of rhetoric, the claims to be committed to secularism and nondiscrimination. But the history of major communal riots in the last decade or so repeatedly exposes the deep complicity of the political parties and to an extent the support of those in power with communal forces. Though analogy to this has been drawn to the fascist movements that Europe witnessed earlier in this century, this is uniquely an Indian phenomenon.

**Causes of Communalism in India:** The causes of communal politics are multi-faceted. It is argued that phenomenon of communalism is inherent to the politics of representational government operating in a pluralistic society. Communalism is also seen as an expression of a community’s attempt to create a legitimate space for itself in the public domain in view of the homogenizing pressure of the modern state or an attempt to fight identity-liquidation caused by the homogenizing pressures of globalization. Communalism may mean that the majority community might capture state power jeopardizing the interests of minority community or that the failure of state welfare policies might force individual to look towards their communities for protection and support,

The main causes of communalism in India are as follows:

1. Historical-The colonial legacy of divide et impera.
2. Religious Fanaticism: The problem becomes more acute when religion is expressed in politics in exclusive and partisan terms, when religion and its followers are pitted against another. This happens when beliefs of one religion are presented as superior to those of other religions, when the demands of one religious groups are formed in opposition to another.
3. Social Causes
4. Economic Causes
5. Law Enforcement agencies with Communal Outlook
6. Existence of Communal sectarian Parties and Organization
7. Political causes i.e. the ecology of Indian polity characterized by poverty, illiteracy and unemployment.
8. The framework of multiparty democracy resulting in political uncertainties and frequent elections.

Let us examine the above factors briefly.

***The colonial legacy:*** Basically, communalism was one of the by-products of colonialism, of the colonial character of the Indian economy. Post 1857, the British sowed the seeds of communal hatred among the Indians. In order to perpetuate their rule over the country, they tried to prevent unity of people in India. With this purpose they deliberately followed the policy of ‘Divide and Rule’. Through their various administrative and other institutions they intensified widening of gulf between different communities. By passing Government of India Act, 1909, they tried to separate Muslims from Hindus by providing them separate electorates. In 1932, by the Communal Award, they provided for separate electorates to different other groups in Indian society like the untouchables. India had to suffer bitter results because of this deliberate policy of Britishers to patronize one or other group. Communalism in India, thus, is the direct result of consciousness evolved during the colonial period among the Indians. in 1947 and the subcontinent witnessed the worst type of communal riots at that time.

***The ecology of Indian polity :*** The overall atmosphere in which Indian politics operates is one of immense economic scarcity resulting in large scale deprivation. The economic frustration makes people susceptible to unscrupulous manipulations by political leaders and clergy. The prevalence of mass illiteracy; growing evils of urbanization like congestion, slums, unemployment, pronounced economic inequalities, identity crisis, mob psychology, economic uncertainties; administrative corruption and on top of that unholy politician-criminal nexus etc. directly or tangentially fuelled the growth of communalism as a subterfuge to failure of politics as a whole. Several Commissions of Inquiry reports mention politician and involvement of state apparatus in instigating communal riots on many occasions. Communalism is, thus, considered as the politics of opportunism because of the overwhelming majority of Indians are either tolerant, liberals or too engrossed in livelihood problems to risk communal tensions.

***Competitive and vote-bank politics: The*** vote bank politics and political mobilization by the political parties create hatred among the groups leading to minority and majority communalism. Because of minority communalism, the cultural minorities are converting themselves into political minorities in order to secure recognition and protection of their distinctive identities, claim autonomy, self-governance. Some time they demand segregation and even secession also. The majority communalism, in reverse, tries to suppress the minority identities and sometimes it leads to fascism.

The communal politics by the political parties also affects the society deeply. Political parties are more interested in short term gains subordinating the national interests. Since the parties are more interested in power politics, the communal lobbying by them leads to fracturing the national unity. Communalism is basically a part of a strategy to capture power and has become an ideology of politics. Many politicians who really do not have support base use this bogey of the communal state in order to reinforce their power. Communal divide along with caste differences prevalent in social structure provided a lucrative weapon to our political elite to mobilize the masses. It provided them en block vote bank.

Politics of communal opportunism is best illustrated by the fact that the way Bhindranwale was encouraged by a particular political party, only to outdo the growing Akali power in Punjab politics.

**Combating Communalism:** First and foremost there is an urgent need to recognize at the individual, collective and national level that communalism is the biggest threat to the basic values of our life, to the working of our state, and to the new evolving civilization, because it is inimical to the vision of a secular and democratic India that we had promised to ourselves. This realization should become an integral part of our consciousness. For combating the menace of communalism, appropriate and effective instrumentalities should be enjoyed as a concerted, simultaneous national action, covering six major arenas of national life, namely:

1. State and Government-Legislature, Executive, Judiciary and Electoral system;
2. Administration-Central, State, District and Local: covering, punishment to police personnel found encouraging communal violence
3. Political parties, socio-cultural groups, Trade Unions and civil society groups-De recognition of political parties
4. Press and Media; avoid coverage of news and view likely to promote communalism
5. Educational Institutions Removal of communal orientation in textbooks and reading materials
6. Citizens

Thus, in nutshell, we can say that we should strive to banish the menace of communalism from the society and, equally importantly, the rulers should show an unflinching commitment to secularism which is the cornerstone of our democratic setup. Governance should be oriented towards development, democracy, and progress of all people. Peace and prosperity of the nation depends upon the elimination of communalism.Prof. Varshney in his path-breaking study of communal violence in India, calls for reinvigorating the civic bonds through existing networks, to be precise, inter-communal network of civic life or associational forms of engagement, would promote peace. Business associations, professional organizations, trade unions, sports club, trade unions, festival organizations and cadre based political parties are the best examples of this form.[[1]](#footnote-2) To end with, the antidote to communalism is, as stressed by Gandhi, true local empowerment i.e. creating secular communities at local level. Secularism for India is not only a point of view but also a question of survival. If communalism rules unchallenged then the future of this nation is in peril.

**Impact of Language on Indian Politics**

Language has played a dominant role in the Indian politics. Since independence in 1947, linguistic affinity has served as a basis for organizing interest groups; the "language question" itself has become an increasingly sensitive political issue. Efforts to reach a consensus on a single national language that transcends the myriad linguistic regions and is acceptable to diverse language communities have been largely unsuccessful.

Historically, the very boundary of the state has been drawn on the basis of language and it has been blown out of proportion when the Britishers had arrived in India so much and so forth that even today it is the biggest challenge before India. Sometimes the deep anguish and frustrations of the people has allowed the growth of regionalism.

 Regional languages are an issue in the politically charged atmosphere surrounding language policy. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, attempts were made to redraw state boundaries to coincide with linguistic usage. Such efforts have had mixed results. Linguistic affinity has often failed to overcome other social and economic differences. In addition, most states have linguistic minorities, and questions surrounding the definition and use of the official language in those regions are fraught with controversy.

 States have been accused of failure to fulfill their obligations under the national constitution to provide for the education of linguistic minorities in their mother tongues, even when the minority language is a Scheduled Language. Although the constitution requires that legal documents and petitions may be submitted in any of the Scheduled Languages to any government authority, this right is rarely exercised. Under such circumstances, members of linguistic minorities may feel they and their language are oppressed by the majority, while people who are among linguistic majorities may feel threatened by what some might consider minor concessions. Thus, attempts to make seemingly minor accommodations for social diversity may have extensive and volatile ramifications. For example, in 1994 a proposal in Bangalore to introduce an Urdu-language television news segment (aimed primarily at Muslim viewers) led to a week of urban riots that left dozens dead and millions of dollars in property damage.

In 1965, many people died and immolated themselves in Anti-Hindi riots in southern India by ethnic Dravidians, whose languages has little in common with the Aryan languages spoken in the north.

 Even regions with a long history of agitation for a linguistic state sometimes have found the actual transition less than smooth. For example, proponents began lobbying for a Telugu-speaking state in the early twentieth century. In 1956 the central government formed a single state, Andhra Pradesh, composed of the predominantly Telugu-speaking parts of what in British India had been the Madras Presidency and the large polyglot princely state of Hyderabad. Although more than 80 percent of the residents (some 53 million people as of 1991) of Andhra Pradesh speak Telugu, like most linguistic states it has a sizable linguistic minority. In this case, the minority consists of Urdu speakers centered in the state's capital, Hyderabad, where nearly 40 percent (some 1.7 million people in 1991) of the population speak that language. Linguistic affinity did not form a firm basis for unity between the two regions from which the state had been formed because they were separated by cultural and economic differences. Although there were riots in the late 1960s and early 1970s in support of the formation of two separate states, the separation did not occur.

 The violence that broke out in the state of Assam in the early 1980s reflected the complexities of linguistic and ethnic politics in South Asia. The state has a significant number of Bengali-speaking Muslims--immigrants and their descendants who began settling the region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Muslims came in response to a British-initiated colonization plan to bring under cultivation land left fallow by the Assamese. By the 1931 census, the Assamese not only had lost a hefty portion of their land but also had become a disadvantaged minority in their traditional homeland. They represented less than 33 percent of the total population of Assam, and the Muslim immigrants (who accounted for roughly 25 percent of the population) dominated commerce and the government bureaucracy.

 Assamese-Bengali rioting started in 1950, and in the 1951 census many Bengalis listed Assamese as their native tongue in an effort to placate the Assamese. Further immigration of Bengali speakers after the formation of Bangladesh in 1971 and a resurgence of pro-Bengali feeling among earlier immigrants and their descendants reawakened Assamese fears of being outnumbered. Renewed violence in the early and mid-1980s was sufficiently serious for the central government to avoid holding general elections in Assam during December 1984. Even today it leads to have a visceral kind of poltics over the issue of language and its promotion and protection.

Though language is the potent force nevertheless it takes into account rather getting compounded by multiple other factors to draw a division among the population. Its important, therefore, to understand the bases and growth of regionalism and how it had resulted into the creations of states. Immediately after the independence the issue of language drew the attention of Nehru government when they faced huge uprisings in Hyderabad and had to order the Constitution of a State Reorganization Commission to arrive at an amicable solution to these contentious matters. In order to have a clear grasp of the matter, it is pertinent to understand the Regionalism as one of the dominant product or say an outcome of the impact of language on Politics.

**Regionalism in Indian Politics**

Regionalism has remained perhaps the most potent force in Indian politics ever since independence. Regionalism is rooted in India’s manifold diversity of languages, cultures, tribes, communities, religions and so on, and encouraged by the regional concentration of those identity markers, and fuelled by a sense of regional deprivation. The country of more than a billion people inhabitating India’s broad regions, socio-culturally speaking, are distinct from one another. For instance, southern India (Dravidian cultures), which is itself a region of many regions, is different from the north, the west, the central and the north-east. Even the east of India is different from the North-East of India comprising today seven constituent units of Indian federation with the largest concentration of tribal peoples.

India is a vast country inhabited by people of different races, speaking different languages, having many religions that are further divided into various castes, sub-castes and sects and sub-sects. Geographically also it is of a continental size. Some of the ethnic, religious and linguistic groups have a concentration of population in certain areas which they regard their own. They are primarily interested in the economic development of these and at the same time want to preserve their economic interest; they do not want outsiders to settle there. All these economic, political and cultural factors have combined together giving birth to regionalism which appears in various forms. In India, regionalism

or the acute sense of loyalty to the particular region manifested itself variously. D.C.Burman views regionalism in India both as a doctrine that implies decentralization of administration on a regional basis within a nation, a socio-cultural counter movement against the imposition of a monolithic national unity, a political counter-movement aiming to achieve greater autonomy of sub-cultural region. In this context it would be pertinent to note that regionalism is a complex phenomenon and to reduce it to either as a movement for autonomy vis-à-vis centre or as a reaction against federal administrative imbalances is tantamount to simplification.

Before engaging the discussion on regionalism as a concept at the theoretical level, it is pertinent to understand the term ‘region’. The concept of region, in essence, lies at the very core of any conceptualization of regionalism in the sense that this concept provides the existential basis for the emergence of the phenomenon of *regional loyalty* that everyone gets articulated in the political form of regionalism. Though territoriality provides the basis for partial understanding of regionalism, the social scientists have been more concerned with the non-geographical factors, as, for them, region has always been more an analytical category than a geographical entity. ***Regionalism, therefore, denotes a territorially based identity consciousness rooted in the shared language and culture of people living on a more or less compact territory***. However, there is a tendency among mainstream political scientists to equate regionalism with negative term such as ***‘parochialism’*** or ***‘provincialism***’ which leads to exclusiveness and separatism. In other words, it is viewed as a fissiparous force capable of hampering and, perhaps, disrupting the ongoing process of nation-building in India. There is another school of thought which equates regionalism with casteism and communalism as factors which enfeeble India’s national unity.

It has often expressed itself in antagonistic terms to that of the nation, fuelled as it is by the sense of enduring deprivation due to long-term neglect in development, and resource redistribution. Regionalism has often expressed itself in terms, which are opposed to national unity and integrity, and challenging to the legitimacy of the state

As for the socio-cultural aspect of region it is considered as a nucleus of social aggregation for differing purposes. In this view, a particular territory is set apart acquiring distinctiveness, over a period of time, when different variables operate in different degrees. These variables include the factor of geography, topography, religion, language, customs, social, economic and political stages of development, common historical tradition and experience etc.Broadly speaking, the social scientists have identified four types of regions in India: historic region based on common social symbols and myths related to pasts; linguistic region based on common language; cultural region-based on cultural homogeneity and lastly the structural region-distinguished on the basis of certain structural principles like caste ranking and community status. It follows that *regionalism emerges primarily because of the differing perceptions of the regions by respective political leadership and the popular masses*.

In case of India regionalism has been analyzed by broadly classifying it into the following manner:

* as a manifestation of centre-state relations;
* as an outcome of internal colonialism;
* as a subsidiary process of political integration;
* in terms of the conflicts involving the political elite;
* as a product of the imperatives of the electoral politics;
* in contrast with sub-regionalism; and
* in the context of increasing competitiveness among the regions in a liberalizing economy.

**Form of regionalism :** Internal self-determination of community, whether linguistic, tribal, religious, regional, or their combinations, has remained the predominant form in which regionalism in India has sought to express itself, historically as well as contemporaneously. Most often, self-determination has been couched in terms of statehood or state autonomy.

**Factors responsible for the growth of Regionalism are**:

1. uneven Economic Development of the country;
2. Widespread Inequality;
3. Emergence of Identity politics;
4. Decline of Congress as a national party and consequently the rise of regional political party
5. Growth of regional consciousness;
6. historical antecedents;
7. culture pattern;
8. psychological make-up and felt-consciousness of group identity

**Regionalism and regional party :** Themost obvious consequences of the regionalism is the emergence of many regional blocks or parties espousing the demands for autonomy or development etc.There are several Indian political parties formed to propogate the feelings and ideology of regionalism. Their immediate aim is to secure a political identity or at most autonomy and they employ several strategies to achieve their aim.Some of the major regional parties are-DMK,TDP,Akali Dal, TRS etc.In early 1950, say 1953 a State Reorganisation Commission(SRC) under the chairmanship of Sh.Fazl Ali was constituted to see whether the states could be reconstituted and the Commission was of the view that 16 states should be formes along linguistic lines which was mostly accepted by the the Cental Government.

As a recent study points out, “regionalism in Indian Politics has generally been regarded as anti-system, anti-federal and against the basic interest of a well-integrated and well-developed polity”[[2]](#footnote-3) Whatever be the effects and outcome of regional movements, one thing is certain that regionalism has given way to the emergence of regional parties in many parts of the country.

 Many Indian nationalists originally intended that Hindi would replace English—the language of British rule (1757-1947)—as a medium of common communication. Both Hindi and English are extensively used, and each has its own supporters. Native speakers of Hindi, who are concentrated in North India, contend that English, as a relic from the colonial past and spoken by only a small fraction of the population, is hopelessly elitist and unsuitable as the nation's official language. Proponents of English argue, in contrast, that the use of Hindi is unfair because it is a liability for those Indians who do not speak it as their native tongue. English, they say, at least represents an equal handicap for Indians of every region.\*

1. Ashutosh Varshney,Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life, Hindus and Muslims in India, OUP,2002 p.3, [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. *, S. Bhatnagar and Pradeep Kumar(eds.), “Regional Political Parties in India’ p.2.* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)