

RISE AND GROWTH OF REGIONAL PARTIES IN INDIAN POLITICS

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Summary:-

The emergence of regional parties as major centers of power in Indian politics is one of the most important developments in the post-independence history. It is believed that the main reason for the origin of regional parties was public dissatisfaction with national parties. Unbalanced regional development, competition and ethnicity to religion sentiment etc. worked as ghee in this fire.

Key Words- Regionalism, Non Congress Dialogue, Caste, Society, Religion, Language, DMK, Akali, BSP, SP, Rashtriya Lok Dal, Kurmi, Jat, Lingayat.

Introduction

After Prime Minister Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru and later Indira Gandhi, the public felt the need to increase regional representation. This, in turn, fostered the rise of several regional parties. Regionalization of Indian politics has been taking place on the basis of pluralism in terms of cultural diversity and class-ethnicity of India. For example, Jats in Haryana, U.P., Bihar, Yadavs and Kurmis in Rajasthan, Reddys and Kammas in Andhra Pradesh, Vokka Ligga and Lingayats in Karnataka, etc. Similarly, the linguistic reorganization of India led to the emergence of regional identities. Uneven development due to Green Revolution, prosperity in some areas and backwardness in others and Emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi in 1975 also gave birth to new parties. Self-interest of some former maharajas and zamindars, national politics or failure of the central government to meet regional aspirations, also led to splits between major parties based on ideologies and political disagreements. These parties usually operate in a state or a particular region with a limited electoral base. They work for regional interest on ethnic, cultural and linguistic lines. For example, demand for reservation of seats in jobs only for the natives of that state. They usually focus on local and regional issues. They are not interested in forming the government at the Centre. They desire more political autonomy in India.

The period from 1952-64 was the Nehru era and Congress dominated in all the states. But after Nehru's death, the situation was not the same in the 1967 elections. In the Lok Sabha elections, the Congress did not get a majority in eight states and its total seats in the Lok Sabha were reduced to 54. In the period 1964-1977, there was a split in the Congress and later the movements of Morarji Desai in Gujarat and Jayaprakash Narayan in Bihar spoiled the party's position.

Especially in 1975, Indira Gandhi had to impose emergency. This emergency was the first and only one in the country to be imposed due to deteriorating political situation. When many regional parties were formed in the country between 1980-89, the internal discord of the Congress was said to be more responsible for this, or it can also be said that Congress has been the mother of most of the regional parties. The regional leaders were not happy with his activities and when extreme, they formed their own party. Mamta Banerjee and Sharad Pawar have been an example of this.

From 1952 to 1989, as long as there were single party governments at the Centre, regional politics could not dominate the federal system. Although it was not the case that regional politics was completely marginalized. Andhra Pradesh's freedom fighter Potti Sriramulu was the person who forced the then Nanehru government to set up the State Reorganization Commission in 1953 by fasting for 58 days and sacrificing his life. Then states were formed on linguistic basis.

Different regional parties have been formed from time to time in India and they have been playing their role in the country's parliamentary democracy. Some parties like Shiromani Akali Dal and Jammu and Kashmir National Conference were formed even before the country became independent in 1947. But most of the other regional parties were formed after independence. The growth of the regional parties was particularly rapid in 1967, when the Indian National Congress Party, which played a key role in the country's freedom struggle, began to loose its hold on the country's voters. In the fourth general elections of 1967, anti-Congress fronts were formed in many states with the concept of non-Congressism. Many Congress leaders formed regional parties. Chaudhary Charan Singh, a well-known leader of the farmers, created his own separate base within the middle and backward classes of Uttar Pradesh while being in the Congress and formed the 'Bharatiya Kranti Dal' as soon as he separated from the party. After the general elections held in 1967, the Congress government was formed at the Centre, but it could get majority only in 9 out of 17 states. The era of coalition governments of regional and non-Congress parties started in the politics of the states.

The regional parties gained popularity and presented a challenge to the national parties. They made the political and economic neglect of a particular region or state on behalf of the national parties their base and moved forward. From 1989 to 2009 i.e. from 9th Lok Sabha to 15th Lok Sabha, no national party was able to form the government at the center without the support of regional parties. Regional parties could not do much in the assembly elections held in five states in late 2013, but the emergence of the Aam Aadmi Party in Delhi was a significant event. In Punjab, it even got success in the 2017 elections. In the 2022 elections, the Aam Aadmi Party government was formed in Punjab.

According to the Election Commission of India, there are over 2000 political parties in India, including eight 'recognised national' and over 50 'recognised state' parties. 8 national parties - Indian National Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party, Nationalist Congress Party, Communist Party, Bahujan Samaj Party, Rashtriya Janata Dal, All India Trinamool Congress and National People's Party, apart from most of the major parties of the country are recognized as 'state parties' by the Election Commission has been classified. These are commonly known as regional parties. Yet these parties need not be regional in their ideology or approach. Some of these parties are all India parties, which have been successful only in a few states. There are about two dozen parties which have not been recognized till now. Some of them are in power

in their respective states while some are waiting for their turn. Even though the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), Bahujan Samajwadi Party (BSP), Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD of Bihar), Trinamara Congress (TMC), according to the calculations of the Election Commission And the National People's Party are such 'national' parties.

Due to the growing existence of regional parties, there was an era of coalition governments for almost two decades before 2014. In the two general elections of 2014 and 2019, a single party (BJP) got absolute majority, breaking the compulsions of 25 years of coalition politics. Although the government is still made up of a coalition of several political parties. But after the 2019 general elections, Maharashtra, Haryana, Jharkhand in December 2020 and West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Kerala assembly election results in March-April 2021 proved that the existence of regional parties is not going to end yet. Rather, there are limitless possibilities for their development.

Conclusion:-

The rise of regional parties has unquestionably changed the nature of electoral politics in India. A common myth about regional parties is that their rise is, by definition, erasing and steadily reducing the stature of national parties. But in fact, after the phenomenal rise in the status of regional parties in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the pattern of electoral competition at the national level has yielded a surprisingly stable balance of power.

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