

ADDENDUM/CORRIGENDUM

Answer/Comment on Query A

The thesis as observed is probably more descriptive than analytical. However the last three chapters are based on field surveys and hence analytical. I will keep the point in mind while revising the thesis for publication or taking up any other research work in future. In this addendum I attempt an analysis of regionalism in India and the regionalist discourse in Sikkim and note how the regionalist discourse is similar or different from the nationalist discourse.

The growth of regionalism in Indian Politics after independence can be traced to the 1960's after the re-organization of the states in 1956. Many regional political parties and organizations emerged with the demand for separate statehood, for more autonomy within the Indian federal set up, recognition of their language etc. Thus the phenomenon of regionalism and regionalization of politics that we witness today is not new in India. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) of Tamil Nadu, formed immediately after independence was the first well organised regional political party to come to power at the state level in India in 1967. Ever since then a trend of regional politics has been evident in Indian Politics. Regional political parties are actively participating in the coalition governments formed at the national level in the country since the 1990's. It is because of the growth and expansion of regional political parties we witness a decline in the Congress dominant one party dominated political system at the state as well as at the national level.

In contemporary India Regional political parties have greater impact on national politics as these parties try to make necessary

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negotiations with the national political parties for holding important portfolios so that they can bring necessary financial benefits to their regions. While discussing about regional political parties, their growth and their intense participation in Indian politics, it is important to note that a regional political party can be a party with a regional political presence that is a party which contests and wins elections in one state on the basis of a regional agenda. For example, political parties like the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) of Assam, the Akali Dal of Punjab, the National Conference of Jammu and Kashmir, the Telugu Desam Party of Andhra Pradesh and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) of Tamil Nadu contest on regional issues.

The development of regionalism in India in some cases is due to the Indian Constitution which makes it easy in breaking the existing ones for the formation of separate states. Since the re-organisation of states in 1956, there have been altogether 28 states of the Indian Union. The last time new states were created was in 2000 when Jharkhand was created out of Bihar, Uttarkhand out of Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal out of Madhya Pradesh. Basically the creation of new states somehow has been the result of long established demands for separate statehood. The demand for Bodoland by the Bodo's in Assam has settled down with the formation of Bodoland Territorial Council. The recent demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland seems to have settled down with the signing of the Accord for the formation of a Gorkhaland Territorial Administration.

Regionalism in India was once treated as a great danger to national integration and unity, but this feeling has gradually disappeared as regional parties and other organizations also have an integrating role to play at the national level. In Sikkim, the concept of national integration was not the major concern of the political parties as

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they were always focusing on the ethnic-cultural issues in the state which existed even during the merger. Only very recently the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) in its election manifesto talked about national integration. The party (SDF) also claims that the former government under Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP), a regional political party, did not make any effort for national integration with the Union. Therefore, the Party has promised to work for national integration which was not done earlier. Hence it can be said that regional parties contribute to national integration.

In recent years we note that there has been a phenomenal growth of regional political parties in the Indian political system. The expansion of regional parties has brought a major change not only in the state party systems but also at the national party system in the country. As a result of the growth of regional parties the party system at the national level has shifted from a one party dominant Congress system to a 'multi-party system' which is also referred to as a 'coalition politics'.

On the emergence and growth of regional parties in Indian political system, there are different opinions among different authors. For some regionalisation of politics is due to developmental process at the state level, uneven economic development that led to the growth of regional disparity that gave rise to new classes after independence and the decline of the dominant Congress Party. One important factor can be cited and that is there was dissatisfaction among the dominant regional groups which failed to gain substantial benefits from the Congress ruling party at the centre. These factors have contributed to the emergence of regional parties in India.

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There are some other reasons which are considered as factors that had contributed to the growth and expansion of regional parties. To Paul Brass (1995)¹ the growth of regional parties is a natural growth in a country which has a diverse ethno-cultural-linguistic based and socially fragmented society. Sudha Pai (1990)² argues that the rise of regional parties is due to the complex interplay between the regional consciousness and social, political and economic developments that has taken place since independence. To writers like Bhambri (1998)³ the splits in the Congress party and decline in its organisation since 1967 contributed largely to the growth of Regional parties. He further argues that regional parties are getting prominence and have acquired significant position and strength in recent times partly because of the weakness and failures of the national party system in the country and also due to the failure of national parties in responding to the demands of the regional people.

The emergence of Regional parties is also closely linked with the process of regionalization of Indian politics. Basu and Mukhopadhyay (2003)⁴ argue that this "regionalization of Indian politics at one level is a reaction to the centralization of political power structure within the Congress party itself.. The Congress party has dominated the Indian politics for a long period of time since independence. It is understood that regionalization could be viewed as a consequence of the political ascendancy of the capitalist class. The Congress dominated government policies both at the state and the Centre fostering the rise of this

¹ Paul R. Brass, 1995. *The Politics of India since Independence*, New Delhi: Cambridge University Press.

² Sudha, Pai, 1990. 'Regional Parties and the Emerging Pattern of Politics in India' *Indian Journal of Political Science*, July-Sept.

³ C. P. Bhambri,, 1998. *Indian Politics since Independence*, Vol.1, Delhi: Shipra Publications.

⁴ Subho Basu & Surajit, C. Mukhopadhyay, 1998. "The Crisis of the Centralised Nation State: Regionalisation and Electoral Politics in 1990s" in Subho Basu & Suranjan Das (ed.), *Electoral Politics in South Asia*, Calcutta: K. P. Bagchi & Company

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segment of rural society which ultimately saw steady erosion in the support base of the Congress. Another factor for the rise of these parties is that some of the opposition parties like Janata Dal also contributed substantially to the regional parties. The formation and rise of Bharatiya Janata Party can be related with regionalization in India. The Bharatiya Janata Party's attempt to foster a homogenized Hindu national identity devoid of internal cleavages also strengthened the process of regionalisation of Indian Politics' (Basu & Mukhopadhyay, 2000, pp.207-208).

Harish Khare⁵ in his article discusses the reasons for the growth of Regional parties from the 1970s and their expansion since the early 1990s. Khare relates the growth of regional parties in the context of regional parties that have become successful in catching up the support of the people with local demands and issues which the Congress party have failed in some Congress ruled states. The shortcoming of the Congress party is that it has failed to deliver the goods, as a result there was a widespread sense of deprivation and frustration among the people which further created more distance with the centre. Khare comments that with the economic liberalisation in 1991, the regional parties have negotiations with the national parties for the allocation of financial benefits and regional interests in the state (Khare, 1998, p.56-57).

The expansion of Regional and state-based parties have been tremendously seen since the 1990s. Even though some of the regional parties had emerged even prior to independence, like the Akali Dal in Punjab or the National Conference in Jammu & Kashmir however, it was only in the 1967 general election that the growth and influence of these

⁵ Harish, Khare, 1998. Parties, National and Regional: Institutions of Governance, P.R., Chari (ed.) *India Towards Millennium*, New Delhi: Manohar.

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parties was greatly felt. The political parties like the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra and Bengal Congress in West Bengal are some of the political parties which were formed just before the fourth general elections. It was in this fourth general elections, the Congress party suffered massive setbacks in most of the Congress dominated states. Its votes dropped by almost 5 percent. In the larger states like- Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, Madras and Kerala the Congress lost the election and failed to form governments. The election was won by the regional and state based parties either as a single majority party, for example the DMK in Madras or in alliance with other political parties. This was probably the first time in Indian politics that Regional parties contested elections but also formed governments at the state level after elections.

Though regional parties became popular and played a significant role in 1967, but the Congress party in the subsequent elections which were held in 1971 and 1972 retained back its power at the centre. It was only after 1977 election, the regional parties became more visible in various states and in coalition politics in India. For example, the Akali Dal formed the government in alliance with the splinter group of Congress in Punjab, in Jammu and Kashmir, the National Conference returned to power after almost a decade. Parties like AIADMK also became prominent in the state of Tamil Nadu. The regional parties like the DMK and the Akali Dal were partners in the Janata Party government at the national level. This was in fact the first instance when Regional parties shared power at the national level in the country.

The rise and growth of regional political parties in the 1990's changed the entire course of party politics in India. It shifted the political power from the Congress party system to regional politics and

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more importantly to a multi-party coalition politics. The regional parties have acquired importance at the national level due to the fact that they have increased their presence in the national legislature since the 1996 elections and due to this they have come to play a very crucial role in the making and unmaking of governments at the central level. Until 1991 regional parties had less number of seats in the Lok Sabha but in 1991, regional parties occupied 56 seats whereas in 1996 it increased to 137 seats, 161 seats in 1998, 188 seats in 1999 and increased to total 159 seats in 2004 elections which is slightly less than 20 percent of the total votes. In the 2011 Parliamentary elections the state parties contested 394 seats securing 146 seats with 14.30 percent of votes.

Regarding the significance and the position of these parties in state legislatures it is evident that they have increased their strength considerably and are playing a crucial role in the national politics in recent years. According to Lawrence Saez (2002), as many as twelve states of the Indian Union Regional parties (including state parties) occupied a prominent position in the state legislatures and also formed governments at the state level. The political parties like the Shiv Sena (SS) for the first time came to power in Maharashtra along with its ally, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1995 which remained in power till 1999. The Asom Gano Parishad (AGP) similarly returned back to power for the second time in Assam in 1996 by dislodging the Congress party. The National Conference (NC) came to power in 1996 with a large majority in Jammu & Kashmir. The Dravidian parties, the DMK and the AIADMK alternated power among themselves in the state of Tamil Nadu in the 1990s. The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) returned to power and formed the government in 1995 and remained in office till 2004. The Akali Dal (AD) also formed a government in the state of Punjab in 1997 in an alliance with the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP). Thus, these regional parties have been increasingly successful both at the state level and in

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forming the coalition government at the national level. Hence it is noticed that these parties have been continuously playing an important role in Indian politics since 1990s and formed governments almost at the same period starting from 1995 and all the parties remained in office until the end of their term.

Regionalism in Sikkim is distinct from that of any other part of the country. The phenomena of regionalism can be better understood on ethnic-cultural lines in this state. Sikkim is predominantly inhabited by the three ethnic communities; the Bhutia's, the Lepcha's and the Nepali's. The Nepali's can be further divided into various sub-groups. The phenomenon of regionalism in Sikkim is much stronger than the other states of the Indian Union. Sikkim merged with India only in 1975. It was a small independent Himalayan Kingdom before its merger and was away from the influence of British India and the Indian Union before 1975. Since its merger Sikkim has been ruled by regional political parties more particularly by the Sikkim Janata Parishad from 1979 to 1984, Sikkim Sangram Parishad from 1984 to 1993 and Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) from 1994 onwards. Though the first government was formed by a national political party in 1974, but it could not survive for long. Sikkim, which is a plural society with different ethnic-cultural-linguistic groups right from the period of Namgyal dynasty have always witnessed confrontation between various communities regarding the issue of distinct cultural and social values. These groups often claim for separate recognition as a distinct community as well as constitutional recognition. For example, the Limboo's and the Tamang's claim that they are a separate socio-cultural community and therefore they are different from the Nepali's which can be broadly categorised into Aryans and Mongoloids (Gurung, 2011,

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p.156).⁶ The preservation of regional identity more particularly among the Bhutia's and the Lepcha's was evident even before the merger period. There are reports that the Lepcha's and the Tsoong's (Limboos) often resented Bhutia domination in Sikkim which lasted for 333 years (1642-1974). The formation of a political party- Sikkim Independent Front Party by Ruth Karthak in 1966 which concentrated in the articulation of social, economic and political grievances of the Lepchas in Sikkim also provides evidences to this. Thus, the ethnic divisions and feeling of community identity is not a new phenomenon in Sikkim. All this got accentuated after the merger of Sikkim with the Indian Union after the growth of regional political parties in the state.

Taking the advantage of Sikkim which is traditionally a plural society as said earlier, the regional political parties are organised on traditional bonds and relations. These political parties use ethnic mobilisation for their support base and eventually they become successful in capturing political power. The people belonging to different communities support parties in order to attain their objectives. The fear of negligence of their community has also been one of the reasons why people always supported some or the other regional political parties in the state. Another factor also may be noted here that as in many parts of the country it is the regional political parties, which was able to bring necessary developments to the region. That is also the reason why national political parties have been functioning with a regional base.

With the inception of democracy in Sikkim in 1975 it was expected that politics based on ethnic-cultural identity would gradually disappear. But as far as political mobilisation is concerned, ethnic-cultural identities still rules the political scene in Sikkim. During the regime of Nar Bahadur Bhandari some of the Sikkimese communities

⁶ Suresh Kumar Gurung, Sikkim: Ethnicity and Political Dynamics, A Triadic Perspective, Kunal Books, New Delhi, 2011.

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like Rai, Tamang, Manger, Limboo, Gurung, Sunuwar and so on were excluded from the status of Other Backward Class category in the state. This created the feeling of alienation and discrimination among various groups. Sikkim Democratic Front, a regional political party was formed which campaigned on the issue of the identity of the left out communities from the OBC list. SDF also came up with the issue of giving the constitutional status/ ST status to the Tamang and Limboo communities. Therefore in Sikkim regional feeling is much stronger than in any part of the country except in some North East States. The existence of national political party and their survival story is seldom told as these political parties have failed to become popular among the Sikkimese people. Another important factor to be noted in the context of the national political party being unpopular in the state is that, Sikkim a young state of the Indian Union has always been away from the real state structure of India. National integration is very loose and we do not find any regional political party talking very strongly in terms of national integration. National political parties had also not tried to bridge the gap. The regional parties in the state have their focus on regional issues only.

Sikkim has witnessed demands for the recognition of ethnic languages as an official language in the state. In 1995-96 six languages of Nepali sub-groups were granted official status (Gurung, 2011, p.416). Political parties in Sikkim have always resorted to ethnic-political mobilisation. More particularly the regional parties like Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) and Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) which have ruled Sikkim for more than a decade have mobilized on ethnic lines for their electoral gain and political purposes. Many other political parties in Sikkim have also been founded on distinct regional lines. The parties like the Sikkim Congress (Revolutionary) have been formed with a distinct regional base. The smaller political parties which have not been successful in elections function more or less like a pressure group.

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The parties like the Sikkim Congress (Revolutionary) and the Sikkim Gorkha Prajatantrik party have their base on supporting the interest of a concerned community contributing for the regional bias in the state.

The demand of Sikkimese identity is a long debated issue which was presented in a different way in the pre-merger period and after the merger of Sikkim. The issue of Sikkimese identity became prominent in 1940's with the rise and the growth of many political parties and socio-cultural organisations. For political parties like Sikkim Sangram Parishad, Sikkimese identity was associated with the issue of De-merger of Sikkim with India. For the existing ruling regional political party, Sikkimese identity includes the socio-cultural and political aspects of all the three ethnic groups in the state. This has led to the concentration more on the community interest and emergence of community identity consciousness which has further led to the formation of organisations on ethnic lines. For instance, the Renjyong Mutanchi Rong Ong Seyzum (Sikkim Lepcha Youth Association) demands for separate identity for the Lepcha's who are considered to be the original inhabitants of Sikkim and their protection against the Bhutias. Akhil Sikkim Kirat Limboo Chumlung, the Limboo organisation claims that Limboos are not Nepali's and the other organisations being the Bhutia Organisation like Survival Sikkimese and SIBLAC- Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha Apex Committee, Sikkim Sherpa Association etc.

Therefore the identity factor in Sikkim is seen to be interwoven with various communities. It is noted that political parties operate within ethnic lines and the political parties rely on these communities for electoral support in the state. In Sikkim, regional political parties identify themselves with one or the other ethnic communities. For example, the National party, Congress (I) is always backed by the Tribal's in Sikkim, the Sikkim Sangram Parishad was the party of the Upper Caste community and the Sikkim Democratic Party is termed to

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be the party of the OBCs. Thus in Sikkim politics centers on ethnic identity and issues.

In Sikkim party politics right from its inception centers more around communities rather than on Sikkimese as a whole. Political parties in Sikkim have been operating on ethnic lines for electoral gains. Party politics on ethnic lines has further led to social divisions in the state which paves the way for the formation of various communal organisations that demand for separate cultural identity within the state. The factors that is leading the state into such social resentment can be explained in terms of the presence and demand of linguistic and cultural differences among various ethnic groups, the absence of an organised opposition political party in the state and the dominance of one regional political party for more than a decade. The regional political parties based on ethnicity- cultural identity are primarily concerned with the demands based on language, caste, community or region. These parties mainly identify itself with the interest of a particular area or community or a linguistic or cultural or religious group. Regional political parties like the SSP and the SDF has developed due to the presence of socio-economic-religious-cultural plural society.

Answer to Comment/Query No. B

In response to the second query I would like to state the following:

The SDF came to power in 1994. Before this Sikkim's electoral politics was dominated by individual leaders like Nar Bahadur Bhandari of Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP), a regional political party. SSP was a party which revolved around an individual person and the person was Bhandari. The party failed to develop and maintain a strong organisational structure at all levels in the state. This in turn indicates that the party had very little involvement of the supporters and activists in party activities. Unlike the SSP, SDF could build a strong

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organisational base. The party has set up party committees in all the four districts of the state. The establishment of party offices and committees at all block levels has ensured the involvement of people belonging to all the sections of society in the party. In fact, fronts like youth fronts, women fronts has helped the party in building its organisational structure even at the rural level.

Politics in Sikkim revolves around individuals as the leaders are personalistic leaders. In Sikkim the connection between the leader and the followers is mostly based on direct personal contact and not completely at the organisational level. The political parties in Sikkim, more importantly the SDF has direct contact with the supporters. The party organises meeting at all levels and mobilises the rural masses. The leader constantly demonstrates their closeness to the common people, face to face contact with the masses through television and other means. The leaders show personal interest in solving the problems of the people. By doing so the party stands for the upliftment and development of the rural masses. It is obvious that all these personal interest makes the leader a popular leader among the people. Thus, during the elections people vote for the leader as well as the party.

Political parties in Sikkim, more particularly the SDF plays a crucial role in the political scenario of the state. National political parties were virtually washed away in the 2004 assembly elections as the SDF enjoyed more popularity among the voters of the state. It could win 31 out of total 32 seats in the Legislative Assembly. Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) is the single largest of the state level political parties in Sikkim. It has met with success in the assembly elections of 2004 that is almost unbelievable for a state level party in India, where the national parties dominate the political scenario by and large.

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National political parties like the Indian National Congress, was the most important of all the national political parties in Sikkim which started its journey in the state with great success. Soon after Sikkim was given the status of a state within the Indian democracy, Indian National Congress in Sikkim emerged as the most prominent national party. But soon the party lost its support with the rise of regional political parties and regional issues and demands dominated state politics. This led to the success of the state level parties in Sikkim mainly the SSP and the SDF. Other national political parties in Sikkim includes the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM) which have only very little presence in the state.

With the disappearance of the SSP from the political scene in Sikkim, SDF claimed and operated as the only political party which could take the people of Sikkim into prosperity. The strong organisational structure of the party and its close relation with the common people converted the party to a "People's Party" in the state. More than the urban sector, the party gets people's support from the rural sector because about 75% of the Sikkimese population live in the rural areas and the rural people are less educated and illiterate. The lowest level of local self government, that is the rural panchayats and the panchayats wards are under the control of the party.

The support base of the SDF is the rural masses. Most of the developmental schemes and policies pursued in the state is for the rural sector. For instance, the party promised to allot 70% of the annual budget for rural development, grant financial aids, medical aids, and loans to the farmers at lower rate of interest to purchase modern technological equipments and instruments, distribution of rice at cheaper rates, more benefits to the people living below the poverty line etc. More than this in class terms the substantial support which it

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enjoys among the OBCs was the major reason for the success of the party. SDF is more dependent upon OBCs which constitutes around 70% of the Nepali population; remaining 30% are the upper caste people which backed the SSP. The party has among its supporters mostly the rural voters and the uneducated lot in the state. The SDF draws heavily on Sikkimese identity but more particularly identifies with the poorer sections of the state. It has been observed that earlier regional political parties attracted voters belonging to only a section of the Nepali community. The other regional political parties like Sikkim Himali Rajya Parishad (SHRP) work in alliance with other National political parties in the state. In the 2004 assembly elections, SHRP teamed up with the BJP, INC and a few other regional parties to form the Sikkim National Liberation Front. It stood fourth in the only assembly constituency in which it fought. So it is evident from the fact that it is only the SDF that has been able to build a strong well organised political party which could gather support from the majority. Since its formation in 1993 the party has been able to win the support and trust of the people which would lead Sikkim out of disparities but it has also developed a good organisational base.

The SSP, a regional political party in the state before the rise of SDF, came up with the issue of 'De-merger', i.e., to retain the lost identity of the Sikkimese people. It was termed to be the party of the upper caste Nepalis in Sikkim. The organisational structure of the party was not very strong at different levels in the state. Pawan Chamling, the party President of the SDF was the minister in the SSP government before he formed a new party of his own. Chamling was aware of the SSP government's flaws which helped him to build his party into a strong opposition regional political party to the ruling party in the state. It also helped him to form the party and organise the party to spread its wings to the grassroots levels. Chamling was aware that the party would get more support if it stretches and reaches the rural base.

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Therefore, the party decided to catch the rural mass for his support base. Chamling, himself being a rural person realised the conditions in the rural areas and made necessary policies to uplift the rural people. He started schemes like, land Bank Schemes in 1995 whereby surplus land owned by private parties were purchased by the government and distributed to the landless and poor Sikkimese people. Land under Khasmal and waste land under forest department were acquired by the government and distributed to the homeless and landless people in the state. To make the rural base strong the government under the party initiated the process of decentralisation. Efficient implementation of the 73rd Amendment Act, 1992, by the state government also enhanced the participation of the rural people at a much higher level. The policies which the party initiated like, reservation of seats to the weaker sections of the society and to different sections of population in government employment and educational institutions helped the party in building its position in the state.

SDF came to power in 1994 with a popular slogan like 'Janta ko Raj ma Jantai Raja' which means that the people are the real ruler in democracy. The party posed itself to be the real guardian of the people, mainly the rural poor. Chamling's government was termed as 'Khali-Khutte Sarkar' (barefooted government) which also projected him as the leader of the poor. The party stood for people's power and initiated many policies which enabled the intense participation of the people in the affairs of the state. Through interviewees with different walks of life in different constituencies of the state it was found that the party (SDF) is the only people's party in the state in contemporary Sikkim. Other political parties, which, raises issue of a particular community are not very active in state politics. They are prominent only during the time of elections. This means that these political parties are not very popular among the people. Thus, it would be right to conclude that the party is a cadre-based party working at the grassroots level.

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