

## **PREFACE**

It is generally admitted that regionalism has become a fairly widespread phenomenon in contemporary Indian politics. A region is defined as "a territorial unit including particular language, ethnic groups, particular social setting and cultural pattern." Thus a region is a kind of social aggregation for multiple purposes.

Many theories have been advanced by social scientists for exploring the causes and the nature of regionalism. While some theories are based on social considerations, others seek to analyse the economic base, cultural factors on linguistic issues.

So far as the Indian scenario is concerned, a wide variety of the manifestations of regionalism can be discovered. The issue is complex and no single theory can explain the root and the exact nature of such movement. It has been very correctly observed that one of the most significant aspects of the Indian polity is that it is an aggregation of regions and sub-regions.

Generally speaking, the important cause behind the rise of regionalism is the uneven social and economic development within the state. Secondly, there may be issues connected with the cultural aspect of the people of a particular region. In many cases, it has been noticed that the people of a particular region suffer from what is known as "identity crisis". The very concept of national integration in India has failed to produce the optimum result since in many cases, integration has become another name for assimilation. Moreover, the so called 'main-stream' concept has also alienated a number of ethnic groups as it is feared that in the name of main-stream of national life, a total

absorption of all would take place. This has given rise to another kind of regional feeling.

Besides, the rise and growth of 'linguistic regionalism' in India has added a new dimension in this sphere. In a multi-lingual situation like India, this aspect has assumed serious proportion. It was thought by the policy-planners that a division of the country on linguistic basis would solve the problem of regionalism. Accordingly, in India states were recognised on linguistic basis. But that also could not satisfy the aspiration of the people of different regions and now it is felt by some that such a step has acted as an agent of further regional feeling.

Another form of regionalism has appeared on the Indian scene. A number of regional movements are launched to create a separate state for the people of a particular region, generally tied by ethnic, cultural or other bonds. It is generally believed that this type of regionalism gained momentum after the reorganisation of states on linguistic basis.

The present study, while making an analysis of the different approaches, meaning and nature of regionalism, seeks to explain this phenomenon in terms of some specific regional movements in the plain region of North Bengal. A number of regional movements can be seen so far as this particular region is concerned. The area, as will be noticed, has a long historical background. It has vast natural resources and man power. The region is full of tea plantation areas. But it is lagging far behind in terms of industrial progress. The economy is essentially agricultural in nature. The result is obvious. The scope for absorbing unemployed youth is very limited. It has created a generation of dissatisfied young people. In other words, the general economic condition of the people in this region is very bad. Moreover, the area being a border region experienced a heavy influx of refugees, which created a very explosive situation so far as the issue of cultural

identity is concerned. Coupled with this is the strategic location of this region as a gateway to Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh.

Against this backdrop, the present study takes into account all the important socio-political and economic variables with a view to examining the general nature of such movements. Not only that, the study also highlights the possible impact of such regional movements on the growing process of the state.

Needless to mention, any study of on-going movements has some limitations. As the movements proceed, newer and newer forms take place, strategies undergo changes and sometimes goals are refixed. As a result, the conclusion that one may draw is bound to be tentative. The present study while admitting such limitations, has tried to provide a tentative projection of the future.