

MIZORAM

POLITICS OF REGIONALISM AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

LALCHUNGUNGA

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AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

LALCHUNGUNGA



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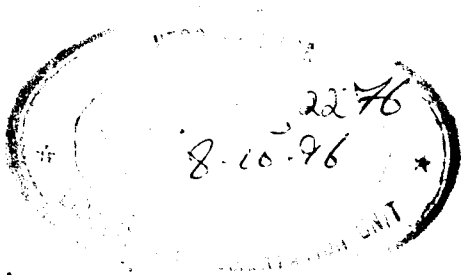
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Chapter – I

The Problem of Regionalism : Different Ways of Looking at it

Regionalism, though a potent force, having had significant bearing on the nature and texture of politics in India, has not received as much attention of scholars as it deserves. The neglect of studies in the field of regionalism is mainly due to the fact that it has been found operating, in most cases, in conjunction with other political forces like linguism and communalism.¹ Over and above this neglect of study in the field, no study is known to have been attempted on the subject with reference to Mizoram. Studies on Mizos left behind by the British Officers, though informative and helpful in their own way, yet do not have direct focus on the problem. The edited works on State Politics in India such as by Myron Weiner (1968) and Iqbal Narain (1976) and on *Tribal Movements in India* by K.S. Singh (1982) make few references and that also of general nature to Mizoram politics. Such is also the case with A.D. Pant and Shiva K. Gupta's edited work, *Multi-Ethnicity and National Integration* (1985). S. Chaube's *Hill Politics in North-East India* (1973) and V.V. Rao's *A Century of Tribal Politics* (1976) deal with Mizo politics at some length as part of the North-eastern politics. But, even these works do not contain sufficient analysis of the problem of Mizo regionalism. The observations and insights given by B.B. Goswami's *Mizo Unrest* (1979) are anthropological in approach. While Nirmal Nibedon's *Ethnic Explosion* (1981) deals with Mizo politics as part of the whole ethnic movements in the North-eastern region, his book, *Mizoram : The Dagger Brigade* (1980) is mainly about the MNF movement presented with some elements of journalistic romanticism. Both works, however, contain much of the relevant information on Mizo politics. There are a few specialised published works on Mizo politics among which mention may be made of Animesh Ray's *Mizoram : Dynamics of Change* (1982) which deals with the problems

1 P.C. Mathur, "Regionalism in India: An Essay in Dimensionalization of State Politics in India" in Ramakant (ed), *Regionalism in South Asia*, Jaipur, Aalekh Publishers, 1983, pp.1-2.

of Mizoram in general in the context of national integration, viewed in the administrative perspective; Amit Kumar Nag's *The Mizo Dilemma* (1984) which is a general presentation of major developments in Mizo political movements; P.K. Bandhyopadhyay's *Leadership Among Mizos* (1985) which is a commendable sociological-anthropological work on the Mizo leadership pattern; B. Lalthangliana's *History of Mizo in Burma* (1975) which is a research into the *History of Mizos*.

Among the few unpublished research works on Mizos, the following have been read by the author and some of the findings and data in these works are incorporated in this thesis with due acknowledgement: Kenneth Chawngliana's doctoral thesis *Christianity and the Mizo Society – The Study of the Impact of Christianity on the Mizo Social Structure* (Poona, 1978), which is of great help in understanding the modernizing effect of Christianity on Mizo culture and society, S.T. Ngaihte's M.Phil Dissertation, *History of Zomi in Mizoram and the Surrounding Area* (JNU 1979) which gives a number of theories about the historical past of the Mizos; C. Nunthara's doctoral thesis *The Politics of Mizo Hills* (DU 1980) which suggests that the various phases of political development in the hill areas of North-east India have occurred on the basis of a dilemma of "integrating with the dominant group at the probable cost of losing their basic identity... or to move away from it at the probable cost of losing the benefits of integration"; H. Thansanga's doctoral thesis *Government and Politics in Mizoram* (GU 1981) which is a vast collection of data relating to the governmental and political history of Mizoram; Sangkima's doctoral thesis *Society and Social Changes of the Mizos* (GU, 1985) which is a systematic analysis of the social structure of the Mizos, factors and areas of change, and response to change.

Besides these, a number of narrative accounts about Mizo political development, society and culture, written by the Mizos themselves, either in English or in Mizo, have been studied with keen interest and made use of in one way or another in this book.

Commendable though they are in their respective fields, none of these published and unpublished works on Mizoram has given any specialised attention to the problem of Regionalism. It is, therefore, felt that an attempt at the study of this field is necessary in order to contribute a mite to our knowledge about the force of regionalism in general and that of Mizo regionalism in particular. The present author wrote an M. Phil dissertation on *Parties and Politics in Mizoram (1946-1981) : A Study of the Development of a Regional Party System* at the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, in 1982, which is, in a way, a groundwork for this book. However, a substantial revision has been done and additional data incorporated in order to improve the presentation, empirical data on,

and analysis and evaluation of Mizo politics with a more specific focus. This work is, therefore, a refined, revised and developed form of the M.Phil dissertation with a more direct focus on the problem of regionalism. The main difference between the M.Phil Dissertation and this book lies in the fact that the latter is analytical while the former is descriptive and general. In terms of subject matter also, the former is a study of the development of party system with a rather heavy application of the One Party-Dominance — Two-Party-Multi-Party models, while the present book is a micro-analysis of a specific problem of regionalism.

1. Definition of "Region"

The question, "What is region?" is simple but difficult to answer. Region appears to be an areal concept falling within the disciplinary boundaries of Geography.²

Joseph E. Schwartzberg, Professor of Geography at the University of Minnesota, USA, defines "region" in 1966 as "a perceived segment of space differentiated from others on the basis of one or more defining characteristics".³ The 'defining characteristics', he elaborates, may be "natural", "political", "economic" and "cultural".⁴ A region "may be defined on the basis of its geography, economic, social structure and the pattern of life",⁵ or "as a cohesive geographical unit with certain economics, linguistic and cultural characteristics which distinguish it from the neighbouring units".⁶ According to Prof. B. Pakem, there are three traditional approaches to the definition of the term 'region' which are of "homogeneity", "nodality" or polarisation around some central place, and "programming" which is concerned mainly with administrative and political coherence, and, on the basis of any of these approaches, the Northeast India cannot be called a region. But, this does not, he contends, make Northeast India a non-region, it is a region 'geopolitically' despite its varied physical features and its different economic, political and social systems.⁷ The problem of defining 'region' was taken up at the National Integration Council sponsored

2 P.C. Mathur, *ibid.*, p.5

3 *ibid.*, p.6

4 *Idem.*

5 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. VIII, 1974, p.481

6 *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, Vol. XIII, 1968, p. 378. As quoted by Ramakant and B.C. Upreti in "*Regionalism in Nepal; A Study of the Tarai Region*" in Ramakant (ed) *Op.cit.*, p. 138

7 Prof. B. Pakem, "Welcome Address" to the UGC-NEHU sponsored National Seminar on '*Regionalism with Special Reference to North-East India*', 2-5 September, 1985, Shillong.

four-day seminar on 'Regionalism and National Integration' organised by the University of Rajasthan during January 25-28, 1970. There, the participants expressed the view that for the purpose of economic analysis of the concept, the existing federal unit viz. the state, need not be *ipso facto* considered as constituting a 'region' because even within a state, there can be considerable intravariations. In the same way there can be a multi-state regionality as in the case of the region of North India in contra-distinction from the region of South India.⁸ In International Studies, 'region' may comprise a number of countries. Others would not believe that India could be described as one country but understand it as a 'region' of many "countries".⁹

On the basis of the implications of these definitions, we can rightly perceive Mizoram as a 'region' perhaps as a result of historical accident. We can take it as a region also on the basis of natural, political, economic and cultural "defining characteristics" of Schwartzberg's model. However, our perception of Mizoram as a region does not strictly follow, as the analysis would reveal, the existing political boundary of the Indian State of Mizoram. This is necessitated by the fact that the present Mizoram does not cover the contiguous area occupied by the Mizos for centuries. Moreover, the political feeling of the Mizos does not confine itself within the limits of the State boundaries of the State of Mizoram as it stands now.

2. The Concept of Regionalism

Regionalism is easily described but hardly defined. Such phenomena as localism, regionalism and community feeling used to be explained with the application of Robert Ardrey's 'instinct' hypothesis.¹⁰ This hypothesis may be valid in the world of the primitive man but, in the world of civilized men regionalism which develops in the sentiments of the people cannot be explained on this hypothesis alone, though some elements of natural attachment to, and feeling for one's own region, cannot be totally ruled out. The formation of social structures has assumed so great a magnitude that we have to look for larger hypothetical framework to analyse the socio-political problems like regionalism. The concept may be defined, in simple words, as "one's love for and feeling of

8 .Satish Chandra, et al. (ed). *Regionalism and National Integration*, Jaipur, Aalekh Publishers, 1976, pp. 177-8.

9 Sir John Strachey, as quoted by K.R. Bombwalll, "Imperatives of Federalism in India" in S.A.H. Haqqi (ed), *Union-State Relations in India*, Meerut, Menakshi Prakashan, 1967, P.8

10 *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* 13: 378-80.

sentimental attachment to one's region of birth and residence over and above other regions". But, this simplistic definition does not go deep enough to identify the factors and ingredients that are involved in modern regional movements. Regional consciousness is taken up as a concept developing from a sense of identity. Regionalism is a social reality whose fabric is woven with the threads of psycho-social behaviour of the individual and community in a region for a number of generations "giving rise to a living tradition in such a society lending meaning to the particular life of that region".¹¹ The eternal varieties of human existence, such as love, fidelity, loyalty, faith and trust between human beings find a particular shape and organise themselves into a distinct set of values.¹² Regionalism involves such diverse problems as those of minorities, administrative and fiscal decentralizations, local autonomy, the cult of homeland and local patriotism.¹³

(a) Components and determinants

Regionalism is said to have Subjective and Objective Components. The Subjective components are the ways of living, customs and traditions, art forms, language and literature, social heritage, beliefs, attitudes and values as related to a group of people termed as regional group. The objective components include the territorial region and the accompanied man-environment complex within which the regional group lives. Together with other factors, the components are the determinants of regionalism.¹⁴

(b) Aspects of Regionalism

On its 'positive' aspect, regionalism connotes a quest for self-identity and self-fulfilment on the part of a particular regional group... which quest is not always antithetical to the process of nation-building. On its 'negative' aspect, it reflects a psyche of alienation from the national mainstream which originates due to excessive centralization and the discriminative attitude of the ruling elite.¹⁵ Chatterji makes a list of four aspects of regionalism thus, (i) decentralization of administration on a regional basis; (ii) a socio-cultural counter-movement against the imposing of monolithic national unity; (iii) a political counter-movement aiming to achieve greater autonomy of

11 R.N. Mishra, *Regionalism and State Politics in India*, New Delhi, Ashish Publishing House, 1984, p.8.

12 Vimala Rao, quoted by Mishra, *idem*.

13 *Idem*.

14 Arun K. Chatterji, "Sociological Context of Regionalism in India: A Conceptual Framework", in Satish Chandra et al. *Op.cit.*, p.31.

15 Iqbal Narain and Selig S. Harrison, quoted by Surendra Nath Kaushik, "Politics of Regionalism in Post - 1971 Pakistan" in Ramakant (ed). *Op. cit.*, p.93.

sub-cultural regions; and (iv) a tendency for separatism to fulfill the political aspirations of a regional group.¹⁶ Regionalism is studied in its various dimensions-territorial, political, psycho-social and economic.¹⁷ D.C. Burman conceives of regionalism as 'functional' and 'dysfunctional'. As a functional concept, it provides a pleasant diversity to the national life; and, in its dysfunctional aspect, it involves a risk of political overtone which leads a nation towards disintegration.¹⁸ To Prof. Pakem, regionalism is a nebulous concept, a multi-dimensional phenomenon in terms of its components, at once geographical, historical-cultural, economic, politico-administrative, and psychic, which can be broadly classified as positive and negative aspects.¹⁹

(c) Perspectives

The probe of regionalism is observed in different perspectives such as Dominant, Defensive-Nationalistic, Assimilationist, Accommodationist, Communicationist, Elitist, Comparative, Competitive and Regionalist perspectives. Though, in the words of M. Bhaskaran Nair, "it is difficult to say where regionalism ends and national perspective begins",²⁰ we may attempt giving the general implications of the above mentioned perspectives.

(i) Dominant Perspective :

This perspective belongs to the Centrist group of people. Viewed in the Dominant Perspective, the "narrow local interest" must be subordinated to the overall interests of the country, for, only when the country is strong and self-reliant, the problems of smaller groups can be resolved. In this view, the dominance of the 'centre' over the 'regions' must precede the 'autonomy' of the regions. Mrs. Indira Gandhi is said to be viewing the problem of regionalism in this perspective as found in the instance of her speech on the occasion of her visit to the Northeastern Region on April 11, 1981 and her views were endorsed by the Conference of the seven Pradesh Congress (I) Committees of the Northeastern Region held on April 10-11, 1981, which considered the various forces developing in the region as "anti-national", "secessionist", "parochial" and "fissiparous".²¹ This dominant

16 Arun K. Chatterji, *Op. cit.*, p. 31.

17 P.C. Mathur, *Op. cit.*, p.4.

18 D.C. Burman, "Regionalism in Bangladesh..." in Ramakant, *Op. cit.*, p. 118.

19 B.Pakem, *Op. cit.*, p.1.

20 Text of Footnote M. Bhaskaran Nair, "The Emerging Middle Class, Regional Parties and Regionalism in Meghalaya", paper, *UGC-NEHU sponsored Seminar*, 2-5 September, 1985, p.6

21 Mohan Lal Sharma, "Elite Conflicts, Regionalism and the Compatibility Crisis..." in Ramakant (ed) *Op. cit.*, p.48.

attitude, according to Mohan Lal Sharma, perpetuates the dichotomized modernity-tradition syndrome which regards nationalism and regionalism as two different categories hostile to each other. The proponents of this view think that the transformation or dissolution of traditional ties are essential for the emergence of a modern developed nation. Sharma thinks that this intellectual tradition is initiated by Max Weber and developed by Parsons. Scholars who belong to this tradition imply that for the growth of a modern nation, 'individual' and not 'social groups' should be considered as unit of participation – which is essential for the replacement of 'primordial' loyalties by 'civil loyalties'. G.S. Ghurye, Clifford Geerts, M.N. Srinivas, Selig Harrison, Brij Mohan and V.S. Naipaul are said to hold this dominant view.²² Khawaja Ahmad Abbas can be considered to belong to this category of scholars because he writes,

Regionalism and parochialism are two other enemies of which we have to be aware. Parochial parties... strike at the very roots of democracy, they make the development of a rational outlook difficult if not impossible. They breed arrogance and the 'I-am-better-than-you' attitude among vast masses of people which is the negation of broad humanism which should be our cherished aim.²³

Those who look at regionalism in this perspective, therefore, tend to show a centrist bias in their approach to the problems arising out of regional movements.

(ii) Defensive Nationalistic Perspective:

Regionalism has also been seen in a perspective with a view that regional movements are inspired by the spirit of 'nationalism' which may be called 'infrantionalism' or 'sub-Nationalism'. Approached from this angle, regionalism is perceived as a problem involving nationality question, emanating from scepticism and fear of losing ethnico-cultural identity. Regionalism is nothing but the operationalisation of the inbuilt defensive-mechanism in the psyche of a culturally defined group, who feel that their identity is at stake in the face of dominant culture. It is a response to an apparent threat from alien rule and demographic influx from outside the region. This is what Amalendu Guha calls "a defensive nationalism".²⁴ The Assamese movement and other hill political movements in Northeast India can be studied fruitfully in this perspective.

22 *Ibid.*, p.49.

23 Khawaja Ahmad Abbas, "Education and National Integration" in Radhey Mohan (ed), *Composite Culture and Indian Society*, New Delhi, Vichar, p.80.

24 Amalendu Guha, quoted in Mohan Lal Sharma, *Op.cit.*, p. 70.

(iii) Assimilationist Perspective :

Those who look at regionalism in the Assimilationist perspective tend to confuse 'unity' with 'uniformity' and perceive the national life in terms of 'mainstream' and 'sub-stream'. They do not sincerely share the belief that there can be a unity in diversity. They dream of a nation where the dominant culture permeates all the parts and regions, submerging the regional cultural traits until all of such traits are dissolved in the sea of the dominant culture. It is a non-nationality view "which holds that the process of modernization as it increases avenues of inter-community encounters should lead to progressive dissolution of regional identities. In that way upsurge of regionalism is described as setting the clock back and, therefore, found incompatible with the demands of modern nation."²⁵ The Assimilationist is always scared of the regional and other movements as detractors of development, democracy and the nation itself."²⁶ Therefore, in the Assimilationist point of view, there can be true national unity only when all the regional identities are wiped out, the sooner the better.

(iv) Accommodationist Perspective :

The Accommodationists, however, perceive India as a multi-nation state and stress on the diversity of Indian nation, not ruling out, of course, the possibility of unity in diversity. According to Prof. Pakem, "India is a multi-racial, multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-national state.... the extent of diversity is greater in India than in any other country.... there is also greater disparity in economic and cultural development among her depressed nationalities."²⁷ In his Welcome Address to the Seminar on 'Regionalism(co-sponsored by UGC-NEHU, 2-5 September, 1985) Pakem observes, thus,

These problems (of regionalism) could have been properly attended to by the powers that be had they taken into consideration the First Clause of the First Article of the Indian Constitution which says 'India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States'. Now, the word 'Union' by itself does not indicate the principle of uniformity. Therefore, the authorities concerned should not, and cannot, expect that there should be uniformity of thought, aspiration, expression, and action in the country. Regionalism has to be accommodated. The old cliché that in India, we have unity amidst diversity has not been worn out yet. As

25 *Ibid.*, p.53.

26 Mohan Lal Sharma, "Ethnicity and Regionalism in North East India...." in A.D. Pant and Shivaji K. Gupta (ed), *Multi Ethnicity and National Integration*, Allahabad, Vohra Publishers and Distributors, 1985, p.149

27 B. Pakem, "Nationality Question in the Hill Areas of Northeast India", paper, *UGC-NEHU Seminar on Regionalism*, 2-5 September, 1985. p.3.

such, any amount of effort to bring about any rule for or procedure of action at the expense of regionalism will be an exercise in futility. We have to realise that the struggle in India is to make the country safe for diversity.²⁸

Mohan Lal Sharma observes that "The Accommodationist championing the cause of multi-nationality State system, holds them (regionalist movements) as natural expressions and expects the Centre to be more charitable towards them."²⁹ Others hold the view that multi-nationalities are a phenomenon of transition from a traditional-parochial to a modern-cosmopolitan society. Mohan Lal Sharma thinks that such view is closer to the assimilationist thinking because even during the transitional stage their emphasis is on preservation of equilibrium which must be maintained by a central authority.³⁰

Thus, while the Assimilationist would not give any prospect for regionalism, the Accommodationist would like to see that a strong bond of unity is evolved through mutual acceptance among regional groups as they respectively are and through the federal administrative relationship with the centre.

(v) Communicationist perspective :

There are those who regard the rise of regionalism to be due to some gap in social communication. In the Communicationist perspective, the problems of regionalism and national integration are thought to have stemmed from the presence of social communication gap between the 'core' and the 'periphery' and among the regions themselves. This view is based on the opinion that in order to have an integrated and cohesive system, there should be a fusing together of relatively different systems or sub-systems through a process of co-ordination by means of pluralist decision-making system.³¹ The emergence of an integrated community is supposed to precede rather than follow the feelings of solidarity.³² Mohan Lal Sharma thinks that the social communication gap produces a situation of 'anomie'.³³ The implications of social communication for the process of development and integration are also spoken about by Karl W. Deutsch (*Nationalism and Social communication*, 1963) and by Lucian W. Pye

28 B. Pakem, Welcome Address, *Op.cit.*, p.2

29 Mohan Lal Sharma, *Ibid.*, p.149

30 *Idem.*

31 J. Das Gupta, "Unity in Diversity: A Clue to National Integration" in M.R. Sinha (ed), *Integration in India*, Bombay, Asian Studies Press, 1971, p.14

32 David Easton, quoted by Mohan Lal Sharma, in Ramakant, *Op.cit.*, p.52.

33 Mohan Lal Sharma, "The Troubled North East : Towards Understanding Anomie in terms of Social Communication Gaps" in Iqbal Narain (ed), *State Politics in India*, Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut, 1976, p.440.

(*Communications and Political Development*, 1972).³⁴ Those who look at Regionalism in this perspective hold the view that the situation of anomie is not something to be scared of or to be responded with massive force, because it is simply a means of communicating to the 'centre' on the part of the 'small' and 'remote' regions. It should be responded with tact and patience inspired by an accommodative spirit through a pluralist approach.

(vi) Elitist Perspective

Another angle from which the concept of regionalism is approached may be called "Elitist Perspective". Viewed in this perspective, "regionalism is not something which is irrational and impulsive, but it is a cover or a plank through which the elites compete and fight for power."³⁵ Mass of the people may be hypnotized by talk of emotive issues, but this is cunningly raised as an ideological plank by a group of elite to generate mass pressures and control levers of power.³⁶ "The new and upcoming elite aspiring for power positions at regional or local level, and finding the moral channels unhelpful in that regard, is likely to support autonomy movements in the name of preservation of ethnic, lingual and cultural identity."³⁷ The assertion on and articulation of regional interests very often serve the purpose of the dominant elite class of the region. A.K. Baruah observes, "Regionalism as a concept develops from a sense of identity within a region and as an ideology..... it emphasizes the distinct physical and cultural characteristics of a homogeneous area..... such an ideology serves the interest mainly of the most dominant section of the people of the region concerned."³⁸

(vii) Comparative Perspective

Regionalism may be observed in the Comparative Perspective by which we can know the difference in the nature and quantity of the components of regional movements in various places. When studied in this context, we can be closer to finding out the variations in such movements. This approach will be of great help in distinguishing one regional movement from another and perhaps in suggesting differential treatments for each of them according to their natures and components. For instance, the difference between the regional movement of the Assamese, with its uni-faceted identity worked out around the language issue on the one hand and the regional movements of the hill people in

34 *Idem.*

35 Mohan Lal Sharma, in Ramakant, *Op.cit.*, p.50.

36 *Ibid.*, p.51

37 Mohan Lal Sharma, in Pant & Gupta, *Op.cit.*, pp. 150-1.

38 A.K. Baruah, "a note on the impact of Regionalism on Parliamentary Democracy in India", a paper, *UGC-NEHU Seminar on 'Regionalism.....'* 2-5, September 1985.

Northeast India with their multi-faceted identity on the other, can be analyzed from this approach.³⁹

(viii) Competitive Perspective

R.N. Mishra explains regionalism as "a motive force for identity formation and a basis for political competition."⁴⁰ The competitiveness of regionalism, according to him, was fostered indirectly by the Indian National Congress's realisation of the regional distinct cultures and its demand for regional reconstruction on the basis of language. The demand for recognition of language as the basis of administrative and political units gives rise to similar demands based on ethnic and other social factors.⁴¹ Added to the problem of states re-organisation on linguistic basis was the problem of dislocation of minorities as a consequence of such reorganisation process. The regionalist movements in the Indian states, particularly in the bigger ones, can be considered to have developed on this basis.⁴² The language riot in Assam, the Telengana movement in Andhra Pradesh, the Jharkhand movement in Bihar and such other movements in bigger states are living examples of the regionalism of this variety.

(ix) Regionalist Perspective

Opposed to the Dominant-Centrist approach to the problem of regionalism is the perspective of the regionalists themselves. The regionalists, in the garb of protecting the basic identity and culture of the region, often show a tendency of looking at everything in a compartmental fashion, thus, becoming over-scared of any national process to take shape in their regions. The result of such attitude can be a disadvantage for the region itself. The 'suitability to the local conditions and acceptability to the local genius' principle is quite sound in formulating plan programmes for the regions. But, it is regarded as best if the national planners and the regionalist planners put their heads together and settle the suitability or acceptability question in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and trust. In the regionalists' view, the centre cannot be strong, stable and prosperous if the regions are weak, unstable and backward. But, the process intended to remove the weakness and backwardness should be managed, in the regionalist point of view, so as not to create the region more unstable in terms of demographic composition and cultural balance. That is why the regionalist is always at a dilemma between the two choices of accepting the development process at the probable

39 R.N. Mishra, *Op.cit.*, p.216.

40 *Idem.*

41 R.N. Mishra, *Op.cit.*, p. 216

42 *Idem.*

cost of losing or disturbing the cultural balance, and of maintaining the regional identity at the cost of the benefits of the developmental process. Here is a vicious circle in which the regionalist always finds himself entangled, that is, if the developmental process is not staged in the region, it is not likely that the people of the region will ever be able to attain the capability to handle this by themselves; and if massive programmes are set going in the region, he fears that the minority and regional identity may be erased. This is specially true in the case of the hill regions of Northeast India.

(d) Factors of Regionalism

From the various works that have been cited in and read for this book, we have identified a number of factors giving rise to and sustaining regionalism in various contexts and situations in India and elsewhere. These factors are: economic disparity, socio-cultural differences, language, religion, ethnicity, geography, historical experience, psychology, lifestyle, habits, race, administrative decentralization, political autonomy, elite conflict, the cult of homeland, sons of the soil concept, demographic composition, local interests and sense of defence of minority culture.

While none of these factors operates independently of the other, their presence vary in different cases of regional movements. The 'success' or 'danger' of the regional movements depends very much on the factor(s) that is involved. Whether any of these factors operate in Mizoram and if so, in what measure, is examined in this work.

3. Worldwide Phenomenon

Regionalism is a worldwide phenomenon and not a thing peculiar to the Indian situation alone. According to Pakem, it began to manifest right from the early human society soon after the Fall of Man from the garden of Eden in a form of struggle between the agricultural sector led by Cain and the pastoral sector led by Abel.⁴³ When the USA was founded, there was a struggle between the Agricultural South led by Madison and the Industrialised North led by Hamilton. The nationalist movements of the Scots and Welsh in UK, the Basque movements in Spain, the Nancy Programme in France (1960), the French-speaking Canadians regional attitude, the Ukraine and the minority problems in former USSR, are some of the instances of the universality of regionalism. In New Zealand it took some time for the biculturalism to be accepted by the native Maori community and the white settlers community. When the developed countries have their own problems with regionalism, the

43 B. Pakem, *Welcome Address, Op.cit.*

developing countries have more of it. Pakistan has problems of regionalism with the Punjabis, Sindhis, Pashtoons and the Baluchis.⁴⁴ Bangladesh is the end result of regionalism and as an independent sovereign state it has regional problems with the ethnic groups living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.⁴⁵ Nepal has problem of regionalism arising out of the hill people's dominance over the dwellers of the Tarai plains.⁴⁶ Sri Lankan politics has been dominated by the problem of the Tamil militant regionalism as a reaction towards the process of Sinhalization.⁴⁷ Philippines has a problem with the Muslim minority who are concentrated in the southern block of Mindanao. The nationality and racial questions are the main components of politics in Africa. Thus, no continent is free from the problem of regionalism.

4. Regionalism in Indian Politics

The north-south antipathy and the mainland-north-east differentiation apart, India has been witnessing one regional movement after another. Though an exhausted list of such movements cannot be attempted here, some of them are mentioned to show that they are so widespread over the country. The Assam movement, the Telengana movement in Andhra Pradesh, the agitations of Vidharbha region in Maharashtra, the Shiv Sena movement, Chhatisgarh regional movement in Madhya Pradesh, the eight hill districts of Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Ladakh regions in Kashmir, Jharkhand movement in Bihar, the conflict between the people of old Mysore and the integrated part of Karnataka, the high land vs. plains conflict in Orissa, the Tamil movement, the Punjab movement, and the various regional movements of the hill people of Northeast India, only show that no part of the country has been free from the direct or indirect effects of regionalism. Apart from the bigger movements, there are local movements as found in the instances of the Zomi in Manipur, the Karbi and Cachar Bengalis in Assam, the Lakher and Hmar demands in Mizoram. The manifestations of regional sentiments in different forms take us to the next question, that is, national unity in the midst of these manifestations.

5. Regionalism and National Unity — the Indian Context

Are all the regional movements in India, *per se* a threat to national unity? Before we attempt to answer this important question, it may be argued that regional movements in India vary from region to region in nature, roots, support and potency. On account of the variations, there

44 S.N. Kaushik, "Politics of Regionalism in Post-1971 Pakistan" in Ramakant, *Op.cit.*, p.92 f.

45 D.C. Burman, "Regionalism in Bangladesh....", in Ramakant, *Op.cit.*, p.116 f.

46 Ramakant & Upreti, "Regionalism in Nepal....." in Ramakant, *Op.cit.*, p. 138 f.

47 Lucy M. Jacob, "Regionalism in Sri Lanka", in Ramakant, *Op.cit.*, p. 173 f.

can be no single and foolproof method which will be effective in dealing with all types of regional movements. While fanatic communal and secessionist movements may have to be dealt with firmly, the genuine demands of the moderate people of various regions may be responded accommodatively. The policy-decision in relation to regional problems can be of any approach: demographic, developmental (in its economic sense), militaristic and political.⁴⁸ Of these approaches, the political method has been found to be the most successful and effective.

Economic Approach handled with planning skill can be an effective means of pacifying and meeting the demands of regional forces. But, economic measure alone is not a panacea for all the problems of regionalism, as Radhey Mohan observes, "Today we often take it for granted that economic changes like industrialisation will break down cultural and social barriers, eliminate cultural tensions and weld a single culture out of diverse elements. If this were true, there should have been no separatist Scottish movement in Britain."⁴⁹ Not only that, the economic process, which is expected to have a magic effect on the regionalistic orientation of the people, can turn out to be the cause of complex problems and tensions in relation to cultural integration and balance. Radhey Mohan is to the point when he says, "In direct proportion to the pressures for larger slice of the economic cake will be the political pressures built around cultural groups. All these tensions would lead to stressing the exclusiveness of cultures and retard the process of integration."⁵⁰

Prof. B. Pakem has rightly observed the futility of careless planning in reference to the hill areas of North-east India. He says that planning is often sloppy and faulty for the Northeastern hill areas which mainly depend upon two sectors viz. Agriculture and Forestry, due to the lack of 'incentive' and 'responsive' factors.⁵¹ He also admits that the hill people of Northeast India are always reluctant to have their areas industrialised on the consideration of the possible negative socio-cultural consequence of the industrialisation of their regions. He warns,

Too much emphasis on industry may lead to more influx of personnel from outside as the hill people are not yet ready nor properly qualified to take up industrialisation seriously.

48 D.C. Burman, *Op.cit.*, pp. 127-131.

49 Radhey Mohan, "New National Ethos Needed", in Radhey Mohan (ed), *Op.cit.*, p.48.

50 *Idem*

51 B. Pakem, "Nationality Question in the hill areas of Northeast India", *UGC-NEHU Seminar* 2-5 September, 1985, p.10.

Influx of outsiders had been one of the main sources of conflicting interests with the hill people. That is why there has been practically a nil response... to ambitious planning having no relevance to the local needs and aspirations.⁵²

There are two polarised views on the question whether regional movements are a threat to national integrity and both views have supporters among scholars of the Indian situation.

To one group, any form of regionalism is a danger to national integrity and it is to be condemned outright. This group of thinkers see more of the 'centrifugal impact of regionalism' in the context of national unity. They seem to be agreed with Arun K. Chatterji who observes, thus,

These trends and centrifugal forces of regionalism are potential dangers to national integration, and if they remain unchecked, may strike at the root of achieving a workable democracy. It is certainly disheartening to note that as yet, perhaps our sense of nationalism is only skin deep. This is all the more significant because in a democratic set up like India's national stability and progress is determined by the unity of the people transcending regional considerations.⁵³

According to this view, therefore, regionalism is a threat to national unity and in order to check the regional forces there should be a strong centre. The supporters of this view would favour the unitary model of national unity than the pluralistic model.

Others do not believe that national unity can be achieved on the unitary model in the midst of "myriad streams of cultures, about 16 major languages, 2000 dialects, a dozen ethnic groups, 7 religious communities... that inhabit 58 socio-cultural sub-regions".⁵⁴ They rather perceive India as a plural society and would expect national unity on a pluralistic model. In other words, they favour the 'unity in diversity' model. R.N. Mishra described his work on Orissa state politics as based on the hypothesis that "a plural integration model is more suited to our experience rejecting the American model of unitary integration."⁵⁵ Prof. Pakem is in support of the pluralist's view.⁵⁶ E.W. Gilbert has said, "...regions can be regarded as separate limbs of the body politic: regional diversity need not be a danger and it can strengthen the unity of the state."⁵⁷

52 *Ibid.*, p.11

53 Arun K. Chatterji, *op.cit.* p.43

54 Rasheeduddin Khan, "The Roots and Origins of Composite Culture in India", in Radhey Mohan, *Op.cit.*, p.1.

55 R.N. Mishra, *Op. cit.*, pp. 22-3

56 B. Pakem, Welcome Address, *Op.cit.*, p.2.

Dr. Pandey Nayak has the view that regionalism is not a danger. What is "dangerous" and "even opposed to sincere intentions of national unity and integration" is, according to Nayak, "to condemn all regionally based movements of people as 'fissiparous' and anti-national."⁵⁸

The plurality of India is stressed by Prof. Rasheeduddin Khan in the following words :

To perceive India as a country is a misnomer, strictly in terms of geography, ethnic identity linguistic homogeneity, even in terms of belief-pattern, as a matter of fact on every term, except that of territorial sovereignty. That India is a country in terms of territorial sovereignty is very well known.... Beyond political identity, there is no other identity, single and universal. This is nothing to be afraid of or feel anxious about... We are plural in the multiple sense of the word. We are the most authentic plural society the world has ever known. This is our strength. Nothing is more repugnant to the culture of India than the attempt to perceive us as a small entity. We are very large.⁵⁹

On the basis of these arguments, therefore, one may suggest that any attempt at national unity or integration on the unitary model and at the cost of regional identities is not only unlikely to succeed but also 'dangerous' because such attempt will rather encourage fissiparous tendencies as a reaction to the attempt because of the pluralistic nature of the Indian society. This is not to say that the pluralists are not aware that there is a danger point at both sides. There can surely be an extreme or fanatic type of regionalism which strains the sovereignty of India which must be dealt with firmly so that the integrity of India is maintained. The Pluralistic view of the problem is, however, realistic and true to the Indian situation. In this context the 'federal balance' theory is more likely to be successful than the 'unitary integration' theory, because the latter model is not suited to the realities of Indian situation.

In the Pluralistic view, therefore, all the regional movements are not dangerous to the unity of the State. They are, simply, manifestations of the pluralistic nature of the country and there is

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- 57 E.W. Gilbert, quoted in B. Subharao, *The Personality of India - Pre & Proto Historic Foundation of India and Pakistan*, M.S. University Archaeology Series, No. 3, Baroda, 1958, p.22.
- 58 Pandey Nayak, "Regionalism, National and Class Questions- Aspects of a Discussion on a Problematic Relation-ship", paper, *UGC-NEHU Seminar on 'Regionalism....'*, 2-5 September, 1985.
- 59 Rasheeduddin Khan, in Radhey Mohan, *Op.cit.*, pp.170-1.

every scope and room for their accommodation within the federal framework.

6. Mizo Regionalism

This book is an attempt to analyse Mizo Regionalism, as expressed in their political movements, from the Pluralistic Approach. This approach has been adopted because in our opinion, it is the most realistic approach to the study of Indian situation. The unitary, dominant and assimilationist perspectives of regionalism are considered unsuitable to be adopted in this analysis because it is felt that these perspectives will not bring us to the objective explanation of the problems arising out of Mizo regionalism. Within this Pluralistic Framework of analysis, we make an attempt to trace the historical roots and the bases of Mizo regionalism; proceeding from there to the analysis of the stands taken by the major political parties on the question of regionalism, and then to the assessment of the impact of mass-media, educational advancement and economic measures on the Mizos towards national integration.

In Chapter Two, an attempt is made to develop the hypothesis that Mizo regionalism takes its roots in their independent historico-administrative experiences.

- Chapter Three seeks to discuss and examine the proposition that Mizo regionalism is sustained by a number of factors; and in doing that, the bases of Mizo regionalism are identified. It also contains an attempt whether and how Mizo regionalism has been an expression of elite conflicts. The contributions of such factors as culture, traditions, ethnicity, religion, psychological difference, language, economic and geography to the sustenance of Mizo regionalism are examined one by one.

Chapter Four deals with the various strands of Mizo regionalism seen in the orientations and movements of major political parties of the Mizos, as an attempt to test the hypothesis that regional sentiment is very strong among the Mizos that all the parties have to appeal to it in order to get the support of the masses.

In Chapter Five, we make an attempt to assess the impact of the various forms of the national integration process on Mizo sentiment examining thereby whether the economic development, educational advancement and the mass-media have made the Mizos feel more drawn to the Union and whether their sense of being alienated from the dominant culture has been reduced or not.

Chapter Six contains the Conclusion of the findings to see whether the hypotheses tested in the Chapters are valid or invalid or partially valid.

The Concluding Chapter is followed by a good number of Appendices containing the tables of figures which constitute the primary data obtained by means of randomized sample survey conducted by the author in the field of the research. A Bibliography is given at the last part of the book to help readers locate the reference made in the book and to guide them for related further readings.

7. Methodology, Scope and Objective of the Book

Scholars conducting research on their own communities or place of residence are often suspected to be biased in their judgement. Remembering the possibility of such opinion being held by others, the researcher has tried to be as objective as possible within the limitations, in this respect, of all social science disciplines. On the other hand, research conducted on any given community by a non-member of the community can also be found lacking in exactness, which is an important demand of scientific analysis, because he may not be familiar enough with the intricacies of the relationships occurring within the group. In this respect, a research conducted within one's community can be much more reliable than the work on the same community by an outsider.

Following the example of the Cretan prophet who did not hesitate to describe his countrymen as 'liars', 'evil beasts' and 'lazy gluttons',⁶⁰ we have not failed to make an objective assessment of the Mizo leaders and parties.

In order to avoid subjective judgement, we have tried our best to make the analysis as factual, empirical and impartial as possible. The primary survey data incorporated in this work were collected by means of questionnaire in Aizawl Town, Kawnpui and Thenzawl villages, among cross-section groups, during February to May, 1986, taking responses from as many as 800 persons. One of the findings we have made from the survey which may indicate the reliability of the research is that the percentage, from the responses, of those who favour regional parties, was 61.25, which was negligibly less than the percentage of votes polled by all the regional parties in the Assembly Elections held in the month of February, 1987, which was 64 percent. Interview method has been limitedly resorted to. It was done only in such case where a question was so controversial and obscure that we needed to have the first-hand information from the person concerned. Otherwise, interview was avoided for the simple reason that interviewees often tended to be biased in order to cover up certain

60 Paul's letter to Titus, Chapter 1 Verse 12, *The Holy Bible*

things* unwanted by them or to give too much importance to their role in Mizo politics. This is more so with irresponsible politicians.

Scholarly works on parties, party systems, comparative politics, regionalism, integration, Mizo history and political movements, which are not easily available in the market were read in various Libraries including those of Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi University, American Center, Public Enterprises Centre for Continuing Education, all located in New Delhi; in the Central Library of NEHU, Shillong, and the Aizawl College Library, Aizawl.

In order to get abreast with the current trends of events, various journals, periodicals and dailies were not only read but press cuttings were done wherever possible.

The author visited party offices and made himself present at the general meetings of the parties to be in direct contact with the movements and feelings of the Mizo people. Such exercises are found to be really helpful in obtaining data on real situations.

Note-taking from various speeches of public leaders, from press releases of the Government and parties, and from Government and party publications and from rare (some of them banned) documents, was found useful in getting to know the depth of the political feelings and movements. But, such material which is of controversial and sensitive nature and which could have caused personal ill-feeling between people is carefully left out of the analysis.

The scope of the book is deliberately set within the limits of the subject-matter viz. Politics of Regionalism. Developments in Mizo politics which are significant by themselves but do not have direct or indirect relevance to our subject-matter are deliberately left out. The period covered is from the Pre-British occupation of the Mizo Hills upto the 1987 Assembly Elections. To cover such a long period is felt necessary in order to make the analysis complete. A large scope is still left open for others to conduct research into the politics of Mizoram.

The main objective of the book is to present a true picture of Mizo regionalism with some incorporation of insights given by historical, sociological and anthropological studies on Mizos; and to find out how regional sentiment has affected the political orientation, inclination, movement, aggregation and articulation of interests. Apart from this, we have wanted to add something to our knowledge about the various ramifications of the problem of regionalism and to contribute something to the study of the Indian Political situations.

It is, therefore, hoped that this book will be a contribution to the study of Northeastern politics in general, and to Mizoram politics in particular, perhaps challenging some past findings and confirming other observations made by a few scholars who have studied the politics of the Mizo people.