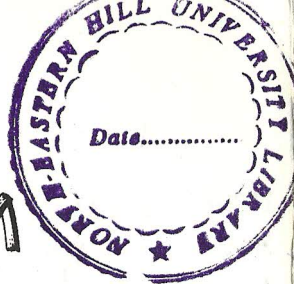


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REGIONALISM IN MEGHALAYA

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PREFACE

Regionalism is a multi-dimensional composite phenomenon meaning different things to different people and as such, various perspectives may be used for the understanding of regionalism. In this book, my attempt will be to explore these perspectives to arrive at a definition of regionalism. It also appears that regionalism has assumed different forms in different parts of India. In North East India, long-standing grievances among large sections of the people against policies followed by the Central Government towards this region as well as homogeneous cultural processes among some specific communities seem to have strengthened the urge for autonomy and independent living. This in turn has led to the formation of political parties for the articulation of regional inspirations. In Meghalaya, for instance, a number of regional parties like All Party Hill Leaders' Conference (APHLC), Hill State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP), Public Demands Implementation Convention (PDIC) and Hill People Union (HPU) have been formed to ventilate regional grievances. In view of this steady growth of regional parties in Meghalaya, it seems interesting to examine the nature of regionalism in Meghalaya as well as to examine the reactions of some of the national parties towards regionalism. *The main focus of this book, has, therefore, been on a study of four regional parties in Meghalaya, viz., All Party Hill Leaders' Conference, Hill State People's Democratic Party, Public Demands Implementation Convention and Hill People Union.* Although three more regional parties have joined the political fray in Meghalaya in recent years, these regional entities are still in a state of flux. Hence, the book will confine itself to a study of the four parties mentioned above.

As far as regionalism in Meghalaya is concerned, it may be noted that no comprehensive study embracing an analysis of the programmes and support-structure of the regional parties of the State has been attempted so far. Relationship between regionalism and nationalism in

VIII PREFACE

Meghalaya as well as the attitudes of regional parties towards nationalism and those of national parties towards regionalism have also remained unexplored hitherto. The present work has, therefore, been undertaken to examine these interesting issues.

The rapid growth of regional consciousness throughout the country has made the question extremely relevant as to whether regionalism in the North East has reached the periphery of secessionism or is simply a product and expression of centrifugal forces within the Indian Union. I have sought an answer to this question in this book. An attempt has also been made to analyze the economic and political programmes of the regional parties for understanding the nature of regionalism in Meghalaya. The book has sought to throw light on the support structures of the regional parties which sustain the ideology of regionalism. In order to examine the reaction of the national parties to the emergence of regionalism in Meghalaya, I have chosen to highlight the response of the Congress(I) and the Communist Party of India because of their active and continuous participation in the electoral politics of the State.

The book has sought to examine from a theoretical perspective the various dimensions of regionalism as a concept. In this book, a content analysis of the policy statements of the regional parties of Meghalaya has been taken up. The book has been based mostly on primary data, viz., the Constitutions of national and regional parties, their policy resolutions and Election Manifestoes and data generated by discussions with party leaders. Information has also been gathered from Census documents, Statistical Handbooks of Meghalaya as well as Government Gazettes of Meghalaya and Assam.

Shillong

SUSMITA SEN GUPTA

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