

1. DISCUSS THE IMPACT OF REGIONAL PARTIES ON INDIAN POLITICS.

Ans. Since 1980's, we have seen emergence of many regionalist parties as reflected by the growing size of ballot papers. These parties try to build their vote bank on the basis of regionalism, religion, caste, language etc. They try to showcase themselves as a representative or rather protectors of interest of one community. Some showcase themselves as protectors of yadavs or backward castes or minority communities like Muslims (RJD, SP), some go as protectors of dalits, (BSP), some are formed on the basis of hindutva (Jana Sangh, Shiv Sena), some try to bring out linguistic or caste appeal (MNS, AIADMK, DMK, TDP). List is endless.

This has been one of the developments of Indian democracy since 1967, when the monopoly of the Congress started slipping over the country. The process was accelerated in 1989, when the Congress lost the Lok Sabha elections. Since then, so called allies have been dictating terms to successive governments. Sure, the rise of regional parties also reflects the health of Indian democracy in a way because they have replaced national parties, who could not fulfill local and regional aspirations. Because the people of Andhra Pradesh felt insulted, NT Rama Rao could form the Telugu Desam and ride to power.

Since, regional parties claim that they have a better understanding of what voters want- in contrast to lumbering national parties-surely they can announce that they will support any policy that promotes access to education, health, sanitation and employment opportunities for the poor and the deprived. Literally from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, these are issues that engage the voters, who are desperate to share the benefits of globalisation.

India now stands at the crossroads. Being a democracy, elections are inevitable and so is political instability. Equally unstoppable for the time being is the rise and rise of regional parties. Perhaps for the first time, India's regional parties have an opportunity to create history. Not by merely forming a third front and repeat the instability and incoherence of the Deve Gowda and Gujral Government between 1996 and 1998. But, by insisting that power and policy making actually shifts from Delhi to local districts and villages.