Regionalism has been an important feature of Indian politics since the dawn of independence. But the regional claims for separation and autonomy grew so strong that they became a serious threat to the unity and integrity of the country in the late sixties and seventies. The politics of Indian states is influenced to a great extent by a number of non-political factors. These factors have been described as the determinants of state politics. Amongst these factors the most important are caste, religion, language and regionalism which provide a basis for what is termed as sub-nationality. The influence exercised by these factors on the state politics differs from state to state and also within various areas of the same state. It is also wrong to assume that all these factors exercised similar or uniform influence on all the states.

Region means an area which can be distinguished from other such areas by a number of factors such as language, culture, religion, political, geographical, historical and socio-economic life.
The term regionalism means the intensive love for a particular region or state in preference to the country as a whole or even a region in preference to a state of which the region forms a part. It may refer a part of the district, a district, a part of a state, a state or even a zone. The feelings of regionalism may arrive or crop up when a particular area or region is neglected for a long time by the ruling authority. Even within a region when a particular area is developed and the others remain neglected then also the feelings of regionalism become acute. Regionalism in India is an essential product of the diversity of religion, language, culture and socio-economic, political background, group consciousness of being neglected, deprived and discriminated by the majority or those in authority. The factor of diversity makes the people of a particular area of region distinct from others and the concept of disparity creates in their minds a sense of social and economic injustice. Thus diversity and disparity appear to be the cause of regionalism. Regionalism in a narrower sense refers to a movement directed against centralisation which gives much importance to the interest of the local people and thereby it becomes similar to localism or sectionalism. But regionalism is quite different from sub-regionalism which is based on some very narrow interest of a class or community within a region, the feelings of regionalism among the people of coastal and western part of Orissa constitutes the case of sub-regionalism. As a result, the movement of sub-regionalism some times gives birth
to some political parties or pressure groups like the Ganatantra Parishad and Kendu Leave Traders in Orissa which shows parochialism in political field than the state-wide-parties.

The feeling of regionalism continues to be a paramount factor in the politics of India and penetrates deep into the state politics. The political leaders of a particular area may also encourage the feeling of regionalism with a view to acquire strong hold over the area. Regionalism has influenced the politics of India since independence but the demand for separate or full statehood grew stronger in the mid-seventies.

For this regionalism Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India herself was ultimately assassinated because she did not yield or concede to the demand for Khalistan, a state for Sikhs. Generally, the feeling of regionalism has found outlet in four forms viz. demand for secession from Indian Union, demand for separate statehood, demand for full statehood and exclusive possession of certain areas. Regionalism in India has appeared in the form of a demand for the creation of separate state with a view to attain a distinct political entity for the people of a particular region on the basis of language, culture and religion. The Telengana movement in Andhra Pradesh, the Chhattishgarh movement in Madhya Pradesh the demand for Khalistan and the coastal versus western conflict in Orissa are some of the important examples of such
a tendency in Indian politics.

It is evident from the above discussion that Regionalism has been a prominent feature in politics of India. Obviously a question comes to mind as to why the feeling of regionalism exists in India. Regionalism originates in India due to one or more of the following reasons.

Firstly, the people were greatly dissatisfied with the limited progress made by the country after independence. During the freedom struggle people fed on the idea that all their miseries were due to British rule and all their sufferings would come to an end when the Britishers leave the country. But the Government of India could not give equal attention to all the states for which the people were greatly disappointed. They found it difficult to attain all these benefits at national level and started concentrating on the progress of their own region. In a federal state like India, regionalism can appear in different regions to attain greater autonomy or greater degree of self-government.

Secondly, the Union Government was not giving equal attention to all the industries, factories, River-valley projects and allocation of funds for which a sense of negligence was growing among the people of backward states.

Thirdly, the political leaders were partly, though not fully,
responsible to create the sentiment of regionalism in order to promote their selfish interest; they often provoked and incited the people to demand a separate state in the name of religion, language or region and instigated them to agitate. The union government is also partially blamed for the existing regional sentiments of the people of the country which is mainly due to the imbalanced economic and social development of the different regions with different linguistic and cultural background. The Dar Commission was appointed in 1948 to give expert opinion on this important matter. Justice Dar vehemently opposed the idea of political reorganisation of the country on linguistic basis, on the assumption that it would create serious problems and do harm to national unity. In 1956, parliament passed the States Reorganisation Bill which recommended that the states were reorganised on the basis of language but this did not solve the problem of regionalism rather it made it more complicated. The creation of linguistic states according to the States Reorganisation Commission Report on 1st November, 1956, in most part of the country has strengthened the barriers between them. The S.R.C. neglected other important principles of reorganisation such as size, administrative viability, economic standard and social homogeneity. Not only this, even after the political reorganisation of the country on linguistic ground, we find that the people of one part of the state have a sense of separateness from those living in another part of the same state. Thus agitation and movements for the cause of regional
Interest of such type demanded a Saurashtra in Gujarat, a Jharkhand in Bihar and Orissa, a Darjeeling in West Bengal. The feelings of regionalism became more intense on linguistic grounds when Bombay was bifurcated into Gujarat and Maharashtra in 1960, Nagaland was constituted in 1963 and states of Punjab and Haryana were created out of the former Punjab state in 1966. The extreme form of regionalism has been witnessed in the south in the form of a demand for a separate south Indian state. The language agitation in south during 1965 against the imposition of Hindi as the official language which led to the "three language formula" and the Official Language Amendment Act of 1967. The demand by some extremists for the creation of an independent Khalistan since the beginning of the 80's has reached the climax of regionalism. It was a form of regionalism tinged with extreme communalism of some misguided Sikh elements. Regionalism became more stronger in Indian federal set up during the period of post-1967 elections, when the Congress Party as a centralising force lost its credibility in eight of the 17 states where non-congress governments were installed with regional support-base.

Three different forms of regionalism is found in Indian politics in the words of Prof. Iqbal Narain which may be termed as supra-regionalism, inter-state regionalism and intra-state regionalism. Supra-regionalism is an expression of group identity of several states in a region which join hands for the recognition of a specific issue as in the case of south vs. north on such
issue as language. The inter-state regionalism resulted in rivalry and competition among the states under the federal set up. There have been frictions among the states relating to river water disputes and border disputes between Maharashtra vs. Karnataka, Punjab vs. Haryana and Andhra Pradesh vs. Orissa can be cited as examples. Finally there is intra-state regionalism which is found within the state boundaries where the people of one part of the state have a sense of separateness from those living in another part of the same state. Thus agitations for the cause of regional interest took place. The regionalist movement of western vs. coastal areas in the state politics of Orissa or what Iqbal Narain terms it a intra-state regionalism has led to a persistent agitation between the people of these two regions. Each of those forms of regionalist movement has acquired in different parts of the country in different periods of India's history before and after independence.

Geographically, the state of Orissa may be divided into two main regions such as the coastal plains and the highlands. There are some basic geographic, demographic and cultural differences between the hilly and the coastal areas. The hilly areas are sparsely populated and are rich in forest and minerals, where fewer people are literate and many are backward. But the coastal area is relatively more developed part of a state with regard to communication, literacy and industrialisation. Out of the
13 districts only 4 are in the plains and the rest 9 in the high lands. The coastal area which stretches over about one fourth of the total area of the state is densely populated and contained almost half of the total population of the state. The spread of education is higher in coastal districts than the high lands as these area are conquered by the Britishers much earlier than the high lands. The leadership of the Congress also came from the coastal areas. The high lands which covers about three fourth of the total areas of the state are relatively back-ward due to poverty stricken and a large proportion of the population belong to scheduled caste and scheduled tribe. The high lands formerly constitute the princely states which are merged with Orissa in 1948. This region had no political participation or dominance in the state politics of Orissa.

From 1952 to 1961, for nearly a decade the leadership of the state has been exercised by the people belonging to coastal areas. The western region has been neglected due to poor representation in the council of ministers of the state formed during the aforesaid period. All these factors are very much favourable for the growth of regional consciousness.

Administrative detachment or difference with regard to socio-economic development between different parts did not encourage the growth of unified leadership in the pre and post independent
Orissa. There were different kinds of movements in different regions of Orissa and their problems differed from each other. All these differences between the sub-regions affected the state politics for a long period and high land versus the plain conflict is still an active force in Orissa. The feeling and sign of regionalism manifested itself in Orissa politics and led to the rise of a regional political party known as Ganatantra Parishad which was formed under the leadership of two powerful ex-rulers of the princely states of Bolangir and Kalahandi who were popular among the people for their enlightened administration before the merger and supported by the middle class of the high land. The party was born in 1950 and it merged with the Swatantra Party in 1962 after long period of its active participation in the government and politics of the state. Ganatantra Parishad was originated out of sub-regional differences between the coastal plains and the western high lands. The Parishad took active part in SRC movement of 1956 and revived the oriya nationalism for the restoration of Saraikala and Kharsuan which was merged with Orissa and later transferred to Bihar. The merger of princely states with Orissa forced the ex-rulers to unite together to form a regional party and the initiative of merger first initiated by the Congress government of Mahtab. Similarly, the people's movement or the Praja Andolan Movement was not as intense in the western Orissa as it was in the coastal districts. On the other hand the ruling chief of western part of Orissa under the leadership of late R. N. Singhdeo, the Maharaja of Patna, in order...
to draw the attention of the people of Sambalpur, started encouraging the movement made against the construction of Hirakud. The people of western Orissa claimed a distinct identity based on history, tradition and culture which later influenced the pattern of politics of Orissa. The ex-rulers of western Orissa were not autocrats so the people of this hilly areas showed their great loyalty to their rulers. As a matter of fact the influence of Ganatantra Party was localised in the high land districts particularly in the western party of the state for a long time. The Congress on the other hand is a party of the coastal plains. The friction between the two regions created such a trend in the electoral pattern during the 1st and 2nd general elections that it caused a great deal of political instability. In the subsequent period the congress achieved limited success largely due to the emergence of regional parties, as a result of which the state had to pass through a period of acute political instability during the period of 1952 to 1961 and it was the period of explicit or tacit coalition in Orissa politics. The aforesaid period witnessed the rapid influence and popularity of Ganatantra Parishad over the state politics and the gradual decrease in the popularity of the Congress Party. At last with the co-operation of Ganatantra Parishad, the Congress formed coalition government in 1959 under the guidance of Mahtab and R. N. Singhdeo, the two arch rivals of the two distinct regions. The Ganatantra Parishad became increasingly popular in the high land region and it mainly fought the
cause of the people of western Orissa by ventilating their problems on the floor of the legislature\textsuperscript{22}. So the Ganatantra and the Congress, the two main political parties actually represent two main regions, culture, socio-economic and historical developments of Orissa. The friction between the two regions has given rise to frequent clashes and controversies and was quite distinct when the "Paschim Orissa Gana Samukhya"\textsuperscript{23} was formed in 1973 consisting of all the non-congress parties of the region. This united front reproved the governmental leadership of the coastal area and blamed the government, of making it unequal regional investment and deliberately encouraging regional imbalances in the state. The regionalist sentiment of Western Orissa found expression when something goes wrong with the government in respect of any part of the region\textsuperscript{24}. During the time of election, the candidates contesting for MPs and MLAs appealed the people or voters in the name of Western Orissa or the regional party. The regionalist activities is mainly found in Sambalpur which is quite popular in propagating and inciting the growth of regional consciousness among the people of high land region. They are affected by this dreadful regionalist complex to such an extent that it gradually entered into the various educational institutions and spoiled the integrity of the state in particular and the country in general.

Even at present the regionalist sentiment of western Orissa has not been disappeared rather it is penetrating deep in the
minds of the people of western Orissa. They feel quite insecure and neglected by the ruling authority since the dawn of independence.

Equalisation of socio-economic base should be followed by the Government of Orissa to remove the feelings of regionalism between the two regions. The Government should provide uniform investment for the development of these two regions, so that disparities and deep rooted economic inequalities will be removed to some extent. Though Orissa is administratively divided into 13 districts, it should be viewed as one state in the context of balanced regional development. It is well-known that these two regions, the coastal and the highlands are extremely diverse not only in size and population, their density and sparsity but also in natural endowments like climate, fertility of soil, minerals, forestwealth and water resources etc. Obviously, this has contributed in creating wide and acute disparities in the development of the two regions of the state. Even the western part of Orissa possessing abundant natural resources, thus remain backward due to the lack of transport and communication facilities.

With the dawn of Independence it was hoped that eradication of imbalances and inequalities would be the first concern of the state. Effective measures to curb the growth of regionalism would be taken in hand. But since independence the Government of
Orissa fails to eradicate growing inequalities between the two regions which has aggravated social tensions and made the political situation explosive. The Government of Orissa collected a large amount of revenue from the western part of Orissa but it does not give much attention to its various development in comparison to the all round development of the coastal region. The overall disparities have also widened rather than bridged, the magnitude of difference between the coastal and hilly regions. Further, while the ruling authorities are paying great attention in improving the coastal areas, the backward western parts remain in their earlier positions or rather worsened. So under the existing arrangement a sense of frustration is growing fast among the people of western Orissa.

It is evident from the above analysis that inter-regional cleavage and not-class-conflict that characterised the politics in Orissa. The strong regional feelings of the people of Western Orissa did not check them to demand the creation of a separate linguistic state for the people of Western Orissa.

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