



DR. Md. Ali Hussain

Principal, Mirza Galib College, Gaya jee (Bihar) India

Received-06.04.2026,

Revised-13.04.2026,

Accepted-20.04.2026,

E-mail:mdalihussain099@gmail.com

Regionalism : Types, Causes and Suggestive Measures

Abstract: Subject to contextual and conceptual variation, a region is generally conceived as a permanent and definite area. The concept of region varies with the criteria chosen for its demarcation. However the regional analysis pioneered by Walter Christaller has been increasingly appropriated by other social scientists. Before Christaller, regions were defined as natural systems created by topographical features. But Christaller defined them in terms of social relationships and organizational principles. Christaller's primary concern appeared to be analysing the relative sizes, locations and hierarchical relationship among human settlements or central places. Skinner extended the regional analysis to social and cultural phenomena. Regional analysis was further extended to new questions concerning kinship, religions, ethnicity, politics and class by considering questions of history and evolution; and by developing certain new principles of analysis.¹

Key words: Regionalism, contextual, conceptual variation, topographical feature, cultural phenomena.

"If only physical characteristics of the land such as land forms, climate, soil, vegetation, etc. form the basis of delineation, we get a physical geographic regions. When dominant economic activities are considered as criteria, we arrive at economic regions. And when purely cultural factors like language, religion, etc., are considered as basis of classification we get socio-cultural regions. When all the factors are taken together into account we get a "Compage". All these concepts are based on the concept of areal homogeneity."²

Berry and Hankin have recognized three types of regions.³

1. The region in general sense in which the region is given a priority.

2. A homogenous or uniform region-This is defined as an area.....within which the variations and co-variations of one or more selected characteristics face within some specified range of variability around a norm, in contrast with areas that fall outside the range.

Such a region, unlike previously described, but like the functional region, is the result, of the process of regionalisation and is not given 'a priori.'

3. A region of "coherent organization" or a 'functional region.'-This region is defined as one in which one or more selected phenomena or movement connect the localities within it into a functionally organized whole."

Regionalism has been interpreted as extreme loyalty or love to a particular region which may undermine the interest of the nation or the state of which the region is a part. "There is always a natural tendency towards the primacy of regionalistic over nationalistic, though one does not usually pose the two as an either/or situation." This may be characterised by the commonness of cultural, linguistic or historical and social background.

Definitions. Marshall E. Dimock considers regionalism "as a clustering of environmental, economic, social and governmental factors to such an extent that a distinct consciousness of separate identity within the whole, a need for autonomous planning, a manifestation of cultural peculiarities and a desire for administrative freedom, are theoretically recognized and actually put into effect. Regionalism is something which remains to be realised and further developed, as well as a phenomenon which has already appeared and taken form. In one sense, and perhaps the best one, regionalism is a way of life, it is a self-conscious process."⁴

According to W.P. Scott. "Regionalism is an approach to study the behaviour that emphasizes the geographical region as the unit of analysis, stressing the relationship between man and his immediate physical environment. Economic social and cultural organisations are analyzed in terms of their interrelationships and functions within the geographic region."

In the Indian Scenario, regionalism may be viewed from a couple of dimensions positive and negative. From the positive angle regionalism embodies a quest for self-identity and self- fulfilment on the part of the domiciles of a region. In negative terms, "regionalism reflects a psyche of relative deprivation on the part of people of an area not always viable in terms of rational economic analysis. It is mostly believed that deprivation is purposefully inflicted by the powers.

Characteristic Features-

1. Regionalism is a psychic phenomenon.



2. It is built around as an expression of group identity, as well as loyalty to the region.
3. It presupposes the concept of development of one's own region without taking into consideration the interest of other region.
4. It prohibits people from other regions to be benefitted by a particular region.

Types of Regionalism-Though the typology of regionalism is an overlapping concept, a state is widely accepted as a unit for evolving the types of regionalism. Three main types of regionalism may be conceived on that basis.

First type of regionalism may be designated as supra-state regionalism which is an expression of group identity of several states. In this type of regionalism, the group of states join hands to take common stand on the issue of mutual interest vis-a-vis another group of states or at times against the union. The group identity thus forged is negative in character and based on specific issue or issues. It is not an instance of permanent merger of state identities in the collective identity. Even at times inter-group rivalries, tensions, and conflicts may tend to persist, simultaneously alongwith their cooperation. North Eastern states in India may be said to have possessed the supra-state regionalism. The Second type of regionalism may be designated as inter-state regionalism which is coterminous with provincial territories and involves juxtaposing of the identities of one or more states against another. It is also issue specific. The issue is highlighted because it sabotages their interest. Disputes between Karnataka and Tamilnadu over the distribution of Kaveri water may be construed as inter-state regionalism.

The Third type of regionalism refers to intra-state regionalism wherein a part of the state strives for self identity and self development and therefore, it is taken in a positive sense. In negative terms it militates against the collective interest of the state as well as the nation. As for instance there is always a feeling of coastal region and western region in Orissa.

The Causes of regionalism in India- Regionalism in India is a multidimensional phenomenon as it is a complex amalgam of geographical, historical, cultural, economic, politico- administrative and psyche factors. It is not possible to indicate exactly any particular factor, which has been solely responsible for the phenomenon of regionalism. Therefore, all these factors need to be explained briefly.

(i) Geographical Factor: The territorial orientation based on geographical boundaries relate to the inhabitants of a particular region which are symbolic, at least in the Indian context. This is more so because of the linguistic distribution along geographical boundaries. The topographic and climatic variations alongwith differences in the settlement pattern induce in people the concept of regionalism.

(ii) Historical and Cultural Factors: In the Indian scenario the historical or cultural factors may be considered the prime components of the phenomenon of regionalism. The historical and cultural components interpret regionalism by way of cultural heritage, folklore, myths, symbolism and historical traditions. People of a particular cultural group also derive inspirations from the noble deeds and glorious achievements of the local heroes. Nevertheless there are sudden political and economic realities which can be covered under the gamut of historical and cultural factors.

(iii) Caste and Region: Caste system and religion in Indian society play only a marginal role in causing regionalism. Only when caste is combined with linguistic preponderance or religion it may cause regional feeling. In the like manner religion is not so significant except when it is combined with linguistic homogeneity or based on dogmatism and orthodoxy or linked with economic deprivation. However, regionalism is usually a secular phenomenon in a relative sense and it can cross-cut the caste affiliation or religious loyalties.

Economic Factors- In the present times, uneven developments in different parts of the country may be construed as the prime reason for regionalism and separatism. There are certain regions in the country where industries and factories have been concentrated, educational and health facilities are sufficiently provided, communication net work has been developed, rapid agricultural development has been made possible. But there are also certain areas where the worth of independence is yet to be realised in terms of socio-economic development. Of course, the British administration may be held responsible for causing such wide regional variations due to their suitability for the purpose of administration, trade and commerce. But in the post-Independence era, efforts should have been made for regional balance in matters of industrial, agricultural and above all, economic development. This disparity has caused the feeling of relative deprivation among the inhabitants of economically neglected regions. It has manifested itself in the demand for separate states such as Bodoland or Jharkhandaland, Uttarakhand, etc.

Political-Administrative Factors- Political parties, especially the regional political parties as well as local leaders exploit the regional sentiments, regional deprivation and convert them to solidify their



factional support bases. They give place to the regional problems in their election manifesto and promise for political and regional development. In the present day Indian political scenario some regional parties have strongly emerged and captured power in some states like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Assam (Regional parties like ADMK, AIDMK, in Tamil Nadu, Telegu-Desam in Andhra Pradesh, Assam Gana Parishad in Assam). That apart some other regional parties like Akali Dal in Punjab, Jharkhand party in Bihar, etc. have posed constant threat to the nation.

Suggestive Measures- In order to eliminate the regionalism and achieve national integration the following suggestions may be given.

1. Doing away with regional imbalance: It has been experienced that the regional imbalance has been the main cause of disgruntlement among the inhabitants of a particular region for regionalism. If the national resources are distributed in a balanced manner, the problem of regionalism will be mitigated.

2. Abolition of regional parties: The regional parties play a dirty role in exploiting the regional feelings of people. This solidifies the base for regionalism. Therefore efforts should be made to ban all regional parties posing threat to national unity.

3. Top priority to the economic development of deprived zones: Due to uneven development of different areas of the country, political issues have been made (As in case of Telengana in Andhra Pradesh and Vidarbha in Maharashtra) and enmity between different regions increased. Therefore if top priority is given to economic development of those areas where the people have developed the feeling of relative deprivation, the situation will improve and they can be drawn into the national mainstream. The experience of the past shows that it is the human element which is crucial in development. This requires a multipronged approach including social, economic and structural changes to free the poor from the visible as well as invisible fetters.⁵

4. Restructuring the society: The social structure of the developing societies at the national or regional level is essentially anti-development.⁶ India is no exception to it. "The benefits of increased investment in economic and social activities in this society often go to those who need them the least and the majority is the deprived section. But the irony is that the beneficiaries set the deprived mass against the nation showing the plea of regionalism. Hence our social structure needs to be restructured. In a modified social structure the low level of development can be taken care of through growth and anti-national feeling through regionalism.

5. Acculturation : The regional groups of people also maintain their cultural distinctiveness. This delimits the interaction between different regional and cultural superiority for each group. Frequent cultural contacts should be promoted to break the regional barriers and to develop the nationalistic spirit. This is quite possible because although each region has its own distinct folk or tribal music, mutual influences are not rare. There are also popular ballads on heroic themes of folk tales and legends in different parts of the country. In the like manner, all over the country, songs are heard and musical instruments are found with slight local variations. Indian culture can be truly understood only if we understand its unique composite character and this can be achieved through the modification of regional culture in course of contact with one or more cultures and the acquiring or exchanging of culture-traits.

6. Developed means of Transport and Communication: Most of the backward regions of the country do not have proper link with the rest of the country through transport and communication system. Due to this reason their interaction and contact with other regional groups become restricted and they develop a feeling of alienation. In comparison to other countries, motor transport is of recent growth in India. Railway occupies a very important position among all the system of transport in each and every country of the world and its wide expansion greatly helps in the achievement of economic development and social upliftment. Therefore transport and communication system should be developed in the backward areas in order to bring economic and social development.

7. Proper Education: The Indians as a people have great reverence and love for education. Since their first appearance in authentic history, they have enjoyed the reputation of being learned people. There is no country where the love of learning had so early an origin or has exercised so lasting and powerful influences as in India⁷ Therefore, education may be construed as a very powerful agent for doing away with the separatist tendencies and for flourishing the sense of nationalistic spirit among the country men.

8. Appeal through mass media: Today mass media have become very powerful agents of change. If both direct and indirect appeals are made highlighting the concept of equality of opportunity to every region for their development and the concept of national unity through various programmes like 'Mera



Bharat Mahan', people will be motivated to cut across regional boundaries and come forward for national development.

REFERENCES

1. Caral A. Smita Duke University.
2. R.P. Mishra: 'On the concept of Region and Regional planning.
3. Berry and D. Honkin (1963): 'A Bibliographic Guide to the Economic Regions of United States, Chicago: University Press, Deptt. Of Geography Research paper No. 87.
4. M.E. Dimock: "Falk, Region and Society by K. Jocher et cl. (eds) p. 163.
5. R.P. Mishra (1922): "Social Dimensions of Regional Development, Delhi, Concept publisher co.
6. Ibid. p. 507.
7. S.K. Kochar (1963): "Pivotal issues in Indian Education, New Delhi : Sterling, p. 1.
