Chapter 4

Regional Classification of India

The Indian Union and the Pakistan Dominion together form one geographical unit or major region but it is too large and too diverse and must be subdivided into minor natural regions while each of these regions can be further subdivided into smaller regions. The smallest region is that which has a climatic and economic unity. Even a cursory study of the Geography of India reveals the existence of distinct regions with contrasting human attitudes and natural resources. To the geographer, a region is an entirety of human space relationship with no sharp boundaries but including within it a number of cultural and racial regions. The landscape personalities of the Kashmir Valley, of the Thar Desert, or of the Shillong Plateau, of the Mysore Plateau, are quite different from one another.

Several attempts have been made by geographers and non-geographers to divide India into different regions. Professor L.D. Stamp and Professor J.N.L. Baker are the pioneers in the field of regional divisions of India.


THE NATURAL REGIONS OF INDIA

According to J.N.L. Baker and others. (See Map No. 2)

1. West Coast - (a) North (b) South
2. Deccan Region
   (a) Bombay Deccan
   (b) Deccan Southern

According to Dudley Stamp (See Map No. 3)

14. West Coast - (a) North (b) South
21. Deccan Lavas Region
21. Deccan Region Proper (Western part included in the Deccan Lavas Region Eastern part in Godaveri Valley).

Included in the Deccan Lavas.
NATURAL REGIONS
OF INDIA
BY
ARDEN WOOD
J.N.L. BAKER
F.J. RICHARDS

MAP No.
3. Higher Plains of Berar and Nagpur.
4. Central Highlands
   (a) West
   (b) East
5. Chattisgarh Plain
6. Berar-Orissa Highlands
7. East Coast
   (a) North
   (b) South
8. N.W. Frontier Region
9. The N.W. Dry Area
10. Kathiawar and Gujrat
    (Transition between dry regions of Sind and wet ones of the West Coast)
11. Aravalli-Vindhya Uplands
12. Indo-Gangetic Plain West
13. Indo-Gangetic Plain East
14. The Delta Lowlands
15. The Assam Valley
16. N.E. Hill Tracts
17. The Sub-Himalayan Region
18. The Himalayan Region
   (a) Eastern
   (b) Western
   (Not included here)
22. (a) Central Indian Highland
    (b) Chota Nagpur Plateau
22. (b) Chattisgarh Plain
22. (c) Eastern Ghats Region
16. Northern Circars Region
15. Tamil Region
5. N.W. Dry Hills Region
7. Lower Indus Valley of Sind
17. Thar Desert
8. Punjab Plains (part)
13. Kathiawar and Gujrat
18. The Rajputana Uplands
8. Punjab Plains (part)
9. Upper Ganges Valley
11. Lower Ganges Valley or Delta Region
12. The Brahmaputra or Assam Valley
1. The Eastern Hill Region
5. The Sub-Himalayan Region
   (a) Eastern
   (b) Western
2. The Himalayan Region
   (a) Eastern
   (b) Western
4. Tibetan Plateau
6. Baluchistan Plateau
There is considerable overlapping of boundaries and uncertainty of homogeneity in the above (Geography Vol., XIV-1927-28 pp. 44 ff.).

The cultural regions of F.J. Rickards (Geography Vol., XV-1929, pp. 20-29) strikes a modern tone. A scheme of broad regions was also used by McFarlane (vide Eco. Geog., 1933 - p. 298) as under:

1. N.W. Mountain Borderland.
2. Himalayan Region.
3. N.E. Hill tracts.
4. Lower Ganges - Brahmaputra Plain.
5. Middle Ganges Plain.
6. Upper Ganges Plain.
8. Sind Plains.
10. East Coastal Area.
11. West Coastal Area.
12. South Archaean Deccan.
13. N.E. Archaean Deccan.
15. Gujrat Lowland.
16. Deccan Trap area including Kathiawar.

Walkenburg has also divided India into natural regions in his Agricultural regions of India (vide Economic Geography-1934). There is a general correspondence of regions in all these schemes of natural regions. There can be no difference of opinion on
regions like the Himalayas, the Indo Gangetic Plain, and the Plateau and in the case of the east coast and west coast regions, though the actual boundaries may be questioned in respect of the last named regions. Professor Pithawala of Karachi suggested a scheme of physiographic division of India and another was proposed by Professor K.S. Ahmad.

Professor S.P. Chatterjee of Calcutta University suggested a scheme of natural regions for Bengal, chiefly based on climate and soils. Climatic or rainfall divisions had been made by the Meteorological Department of India. A number of Indian provinces had been divided into natural regions for census purposes. A tentative scheme for Regionalism in India has been proposed very recently in the pages of the Calcutta Geographical Review (March 1950-Vol.XII No.1) vide Geographical Notes - 'A Tentative Scheme for Regionalism in India.'

The tentative divisions suggested by the authors are as follows:

1. Tribal Agro-Pastoral Zone.
2. Ladakh Pastoral Zone.
3. Himachal Timber Zone.
4. Sutlej Plain.
5. Upper Gangetic Agro-Industrial Zone.
6. Middle Gangetic Plain
7. Duar Plantation Zone.
8. Brahmaputra Valley.
A Tentative Scheme for Regionalism in India
10. Eastern Agro-Industrial Zone.
12. Malwa Mixed Farming Zone.
13. Central Agricultural and Forest Zone.
15. Gujarat Agricultural Zone.
16. Trap Agro-Industrial Zone.
17. Godavari Agro-Industrial Zone.
18. West Coast Plantation-cum-rice Zone.
20. Tinnevelly-Mysore Agro-Industrial Zone.
21. Upper Kistna Agro Industrial Zone.

The nomenclature adopted in the above scheme is based on
human occupations arising out of the different factors of environment
(see Map No. 4). It must be mentioned here that this scheme like
that of F.J. Richards also strikes a different tone in that occupancy
pattern and the significant regional factors are the base of
regional division. As the authors of this scheme themselves state,
the scheme is tentative, and, as such, is open to revision.

All the above schemes are analytical and follow no single
principle. They are instructive and thought-provoking and each
scheme has its own features and limitations. Some of them are based
on meagre data, as for example, Professor Pithawala's scheme of
Physiographic Division of India. These schemes indicate the direction
but there is much scope for improvement. The future schemes should
be based on detailed and more accurate data and method should be synthetic instead of analytical.

In recent years, several useful attempts have been made to present regional classifications of India which may serve as tools in the strategy of national and regional development. One such scheme of Resource Development Regions has been recently proposed by the National Resources Division of the Planning Commission, Government of India. In this scheme, Dr. V. Nath has made an effort to take advantage of earlier classifications and has brought together data obtained at the census of 1961 and in other recent enquiries, both on the economic side and in relation to physical conditions and agricultural resources. This scheme divides India into 15 regions. In turn, each region comprises one or more Divisions, the Divisions being drawn up so as to fall within the territorial limits of particular States and Union Territories. In summary form, the scheme of Resource Development Regions is as follows:
NAMES OF REGIONS.

1. Western Himalayan Region.
2. Eastern Himalayan Region.
3. Lower Gangetic Plain Region.
4. Middle Gangetic Plain Region.
5. Upper Gangetic Plain Region.
6. Trans-Gangetic Plain Region.
7. Eastern Plateaus and Hills Region.
8. Central Plateaus and Hills Region.
9. Western Plateaus and Hills Region.
10. Southern Plateaus and Hills Regions.
11. East Coast Plain and Hills Region.
12. West Coast Plain and Hills Region.
13. Gujjarat Plain and Hills Region.
14. The Western Dry Region.
15. Islands - Region.

Dr. Nath's scheme, like others before it, should be regarded essentially as an attempt to comprehend the physical and economic characteristics of different parts of the country and to relate them to plans and perspectives of development for the future.
At the Conference of Productivity and Innovation in Agriculture in the under-developed Countries which was organised by the Centre of International Studies at the M.I.T. in 1964, a broad yet significant attempt was made to identify policies for increasing agricultural productivity in relation to four major ecological regions. These were (1) the wet rice region, (2) the rain-forest Tropics, (3) the monsoon-tropical region, and (4) high altitude region.

These regions are based, as it were, on a world view and could be applied to a vast country such as ours in order to bring to bear much fuller and more precise knowledge in relation to the agricultural regions of India, for teaching purposes.

At the symposium of the Tropics which was organized by the Department of Geography of Liverpool University in early 1964 as a preliminary to the Twentieth International Geographical Congress held in London in July 1964, several essays were read among them being one by L.S. Bhat of the Regional Survey Unit attached to the Indian Statistical Unit, New Delhi India.
The essay entitled "Aspects of Regional Planning in India" deals with some geographical considerations with regard to planning regions in India.

After the partition of the sub-continent in 1947 and the re-organization of States in 1956, Zonal Councils were suggested to facilitate Inter-State co-ordination of administration and economic planning, since this was necessary for such things as transport, irrigation and power development. These zones were as follows:

1. Western Zone: Gujarat, Maharashtra and Mysore
2. Southern Zone: Andhra, Madras and Kerala
3. Eastern Zone: Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal and Assam
5. Central Zone: Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh
The Analysis of various distribution patterns of resources permits a synthesis to be made of various related elements and the identification of distinct regions for development. To this end a map of boundary girdles was prepared from the individual maps of natural environment, patterns of crops and the distribution of urban centres, natural resources and major industries by Bhat and Rao in 1962. Eleven major regions and fifty-one sub-regions were identified and their characteristics and regional norms of development were qualitatively stated. But it must be remembered that these regions for resource development are dynamic and their character changes during the phases of economic development, with technological developments and changing policies.

The Resource Regions and sub-regions according to the authors mentioned above are as under:

I. West Coast: (a) North.
   (b) Central.
   (c) Southern.
II. Western Ghats: (a) North
   (b) Central
   (d) Southern.

III. Central Plateaus: (a) Malwa Plateau.
     (b) Khandesh.
     (c) Balaghat.

IV. Eastern Ghats: (a) North.
     (b) Central.
     (d) Southern.

V. East Coast: (a) North.
     (b) Mahanadi Delta.
     (c) Central.
     (d) Krishna-Godavari Delta.
     (e) Southern.
     (f) Godavari Delta.
     (g) Ramnad Coast.

VI. North Eastern Plateaus: (a) Chhatisgarh.
     (b) Chota Nagpur.
     (c) Orissa Hills.
     (d) Dandakaranya.
VII. Ganga Plain: (a) Upper Ganga Plain.
(b) Middle Ganga Plain.
(c) Lower Ganga Plain.
(d) Hooghly Delta.

VIII. Assam: (a) Brahmaputra Valley.
(b) Assam Hills.

IX. Gujarat: (a) Gujarat Plain.
(b) Saurashtra.
(c) Cutch.
(d) Gujarat Highlands.

X. Rajasthan: (a) Western.
(b) Eastern (Arravallis).

(b) Montana U.P.

OTHER SUB-REGIONS.

1. Godavari Trough.
2. Telangana.
3. Rayalaseema.
6. Chambal Ravines.

The framework of regions suggested above indicates the regional characteristics and potentialities which are basic for planning development. The salient features of these resource regions could be taken as their personalities for teaching purposes.

Another recent classification of India takes into consideration some major aspects of planning, like the development of basic and heavy industries which are vital to the national economy as well as to the acceleration of regional development. But as the natural resources like minerals, forests and power resources are highly localized so the regional grouping of resources would include groups of States and even parts of different States for purposes of efficient production and utilization of these resources.

From the studies that have been made, seven macro-regions emerge, based on the distribution of resources (including power resources) and the possibilities of developing regional production complexes.
The seven Macro-Regions of India are:

1. **South India** which includes Mysore; Kerala, Madras, and Andhra with parts of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. This region is based on the three industrial complexes which are likely to develop around Bhadravati, (iron ore, manganese, power and forestry resources) Neyveli-Salem (iron ore and lignite) and Hospet-Sandur (iron ore, with coal from the Singareni fields).

2. **Western India** which includes major parts of Maharashtra and Gujarat. The industrial complex here is associated with textile and allied industries and the recently developing oil fields.

3. **East-Central India** which includes parts of Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Maharashtra and Andhra. This region has potentialities for developing industrial complexes based on iron ore from Chanda-Bastar and coal from Singareni and the Damodar fields.

4. **North-Eastern India** which includes Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Assam. The industrial complex of Damodar and the City of Calcutta form the foci of the region.
5. **The Middle Ganga Plain** which includes the whole of Uttar Pradesh except the foothills of the Himalayas. The complex here is agricultural specialization and associated industries.

6. **North Western India** which includes Rajasthan, part of the Punjab and the Union Territories. The industrial complex here is based on the minerals from the Aravalis Hills, power from the Bhakra-Nangal Project and coal and oil from Rajasthan.

7. **Northern India** which includes parts of the Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir. The canal irrigation system and the power supplied from a common grid provide the complex for the region.

This classification, like the previous ones, could also be utilised when teaching the Geography of India, taking the complexes as the geographical personalities of the regions under study.

Thus we see that India is a land of geographical contrasts and the basis of study of Indian geography should be regional as it serves to co-relate the physical, social, economic and historical phases of Indian life. Teaching of geography on the regional
basis not only reveals the regional circumstances but also points out the external relations of the regions under study.