CHAPTER - 3

REGIONAL DISPARITIES SINCE INDEPENDENCE TILL 1991

After tracing the historical roots of regional disparities in India through all periods of its history, it becomes imperative to look into the evolving scene of regional disparities since Independence.

A sound basis for a federal polity like India is to have a spatial system of development that negates the continuance of manageable regional disparities, inherited from the colonial legacy, or left unattended since Independence, or inherent in the unequal resource disposition of its different regions (Krishan, 1998). A stark reality is that despite all the planned efforts since Independence, India remains a country of glaring regional disparities. Its cosmopolitan mega cities are a stark contrast to the remote primitive tribal belts. The Green Revolution of Northwest India is to be contrasted with the shifting cultivation on the Eastern hills. The developed states of Punjab and Haryana have per capita income four times higher than that of Bihar or Orissa.

This chapter looks at the identification and interpretation of regional disparities in India during 1947-1991. The disparities would be examined as existing in the early fifties, when the era of planned development was ushered in and in the early sixties by which time the first two Five Year Plans had been completed; in the early seventies when the Green Revolution started paying off; for the eighties when the Centre-State relations had taken a serious turn in some parts of India; and in the early nineties so as to build a base for examining the impact of the New Economic Policy. The discussion here is based primarily on the findings of available research studies covering the period 1951-91. For the 1991-2001 decade, quantitative data by individual states, union territories and districts has been collated and studied to discern the recent trends in detail. The discussion on this period is reserved for the next chapter.
Regional Disparities in the 1950’s:

Amongst the pioneer works on regional disparities in India after Independence, the most prominent was the one by Schwartzberg (1962). He used three approaches to the mapping of economic development in India, viz., the development approach, the consensus approach and the subjective integrative approach. Based on the Census 1951 data and other indicators, four pairs of weighted and unweighted standardized regional scores were derived, following the development approach. The regions were further classified into five groups by weighted scores (Map 3.1A). Vindhya Pradesh was found as the least developed and West Bengal as the most developed one. While using the consensus approach, about 250 survey questionnaires were circulated, among which 52 responses were received, 30 from economists and 22 from geographers. The states were ranked and mapped on the basis of scores given by the respondents (Map 3.1 B). The North frontier zone, consisting of Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhal hills and the hilly terrain of the Northeast, that is virtually the macro-region of the Himalayas, was noted as the least developed. The Northern Plain, from Punjab in the West to West Bengal in the East, with the exception of the Middle Ganga Plain, emerged as relatively developed. South India was observed at a higher level of development than Central India and the Rajasthan desert. However, there was discordance between the two maps, one based on the development index approach and the other on consensus approach. For example, South India showed much greater spatial differentials in its development level on the indices approach than that represented by the consensus approach. In any event, these peculiarities suggested that the Map 3.1B, based on the consensus approach, was not a reliable guide to the regional analysis of economic development in India (Schwartzberg 1962).

Finally, Schwartzberg attempted to provide a realistic regionalization of the country through the subjective integration approach to the mapping of levels of economic development in India. The resultant map (3.1C) suggested categories
of several successive stages of economic growth. Six types of regions were identified, as characterized by:

(i) **isolated tribal economy**, which covered the tribal belts of the Himalayas and the North-East, the tribal belts of Southeastern uplands, desert areas and pockets of tribal concentrations which were essentially independent of the economy of the nation at large and economic decisions were made within the context of relatively small tribal organizations;

(ii) **subsistence peasant economy** including parts of the country which bordered on tribal areas and wherein commercial activity was negligible, though a few pockets, such as Bundelkhand centering on western Vindhya Pradesh, were found surrounded entirely by areas of great commercialization;

(iii) **incipient commercialization** included the areas of modest urbanization and some development of cash cropping, such as the northern interior and one stretching across the centre of peninsular India;

(iv) **advanced commercialization**, typical of areas were associated with large marketable surpluses of single major crops like tea in Assam, jute in Bengal, sugar in small parts of Western Bihar and Northeastern Uttar Pradesh, wheat in Punjab and a small irrigated part of Rajasthan, cotton in Bombay, Deccan part of Madhya Bharat and parts of South India, oilseeds in the Telengana area of Hyderabad, rice in the Krishna-Godawari delta, Madras and surrounding areas, and coffee in Upland Mysore;

(v) **economic diversification** in areas having large populations in non-agricultural pursuits, such as Punjab-Delhi, Western Uttar Pradesh, Saurashtra, Malabar Coast, parts of Krishna-Godawari delta, as also Madras region; and
Map 3.1

INDIA: Regional Disparities during the 1950's

Development Indices

Overall development indices
Average of development scores for three key indicators: production, education, infrastructure.

- 8.5 - 15.4
- 5.5 - 8.5
- 3.5 - 5.5
- 1.5 - 3.5
- Data not available

Source: After J. E. Schwartzberg, 1961

Development Level

C

Organization of Economic Space

Source: After J. E. Schwartzberg, 1961
(vi) **large scale organization**, such as in big cities like Calcutta, Bombay and Ahmedabad and extended out from these cities to Damodar Valley, to Poona and to Surat respectively.

Any generalization of regional disparities in India in the 1950’s can be directly linked to the six-fold distribution of economies above.

A peculiar feature of India’s development map in the fifties was the existence of scattered, important manufacturing, commercial or administrative centers, the level of growth of which did not reflect the level of their surrounding areas. These included the cities like Kanpur, Hyderabad, Jaipur and centres of iron and steel Industries. Areas with tribal economy in the Himalayas and central tribal belts were least developed. Areas with subsistent peasant economies and incipient commercialization lay between the two extremes of development.

**Regional Disparities in the 1960’s:**

Following Schwartzberg’s regionalization of development levels of India during the 1950’s, a number of studies tried to capture regional disparities in India during the 1960’s. Among these, the works of Mitra (1964, 67), Horton et al. (1970), Nath (1970), Rao and Bhat (1971) deserve a consideration. These were based essentially on the 1961 Census of India.

Taking a stock of regional disparities situation in early sixties, with the help of ranking method, Mitra (1967) classified all the districts of the country into four equal groups on the basis of their level of development (Map 3.2A). The more developed districts were located in the Punjab–Haryana plain, Western Uttar Pradesh, Calcutta region, Malwa plateau, Gujarat plain, Bombay-Poona and Bombay-Nagpur belts, Southern Karnataka, Godavari – Krishna delta and the Kaveri basin. In contrast, the most backward districts were found in the Himalayas, deserts of Rajasthan, Middle Ganga Plain, Central India and interior peninsula. It was observed that, fortunately for the country, the regional disparities in India were not along the ethnic or sub-cultural lines.
Map 3.2

INDIA: Regional Disparities during the 1960's

A

Level of Development 1961

Levels of development
- First or lowest level
- Second level
- Third level
- Fourth or highest level
- Data not available

Source: A. Mitra, 1967

C

Socio-Economic Development (by districts) 1961

Factor score
- $< -2.01$
- $-2.01$ to $-1.01$
- $-1.01$ to $1.01$
- $1.01$ to $2.01$
- $> 2.01$
- Data not available

Source: Horten et al., 1970

B

Population/Resource Regions 1961

Categories
- Problem regions
- Prospective regions
- Dynamic regions
- Data not available

Source: Census of India, 1964

D

Socio-Economic Development (by states) 1961

Categories
- Less developed states
- Relatively developed states
- Data not available

Source: V. Nath, 1970

The North-South polarization, as one finds in Europe or America, was also absent. However, the newly raised planned industrial centres, like Bhilai, Rourkala and Durgapur, failed to fully demonstrate the multiplier effect on their environs. These places lacked necessary transport linkages with their surrounding areas. The Middle Ganga plain comprising North Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh, received little stimulus for its internal growth despite its active contact with the more developed parts of the country through continued out-migration.

Nath (1970), in his state level analysis of the levels of economic development and rates of economic growth in India, found a gap in economic development of the western states vis-à-vis their eastern counterparts and also the North central and eastern states (Map 3.2B). Most of the western as well as southern states were recording higher rates for both agricultural output and increase in value added industry.

Horten et al, (1970), in their district level study of spatial patterns of socio-economic structure in India, identified five dimensions of India’s socio-economic structure; that is socio-economic development, socio-economic underdevelopment, incipient commercialization, rural manufacturing and agricultural intensity. The first dimension was defined by the positive correlation of per cent literate population, per cent urban population, per cent population employed in manufacturing, per capita income and per cent income from agriculture. These indicators reflect the degree of socio-economic development (Map 3.2C). The high positive values were found in scattered metropolitan areas, Bombay urbanized area, the Calcutta - 24 Parganas - Hooghly - Howrah conurbation, and industrial districts of Ahmedabad, Indore, Kanpur, Bangalore and Hyderabad. High negative scores were associated with desert areas of Rajasthan, primitive forested areas of Southwest Orissa, hilly areas of Uttar Pradesh, and much of Assam. These were the remote areas, with little urban or commercial development, primitive agriculture, and poor communication facilities.
In another study, Roy (1974) defined three types of ‘economic areas’ on the physiographical map of India: depressed, transitional and developed (Map 3.2D). Among 315 districts, 221 displayed the characteristics of depressed areas, followed by 90 districts which were transitional and 34 were developed. These developed areas were spread over large parts of Punjab and Haryana, Coastal Plains, and Tamil Nadu Uplands. The Transitional areas were located mostly on the periphery of the developed areas, such as the Eastern Haryana, Upper and Southern Ganga plain, North Kerala coast, and the Krishna-Godavari Delta. Depressed areas covered a large part of the country, covering North-East and Central Uplands, in particular.

The picture of levels of development in the sixties was not much different from that of the fifties. High levels of development were found in scattered metropolitan areas and their conurbations. Apart from these centers, large parts of Punjab and Haryana, Coastal Plains, and Tamil Nadu Uplands were also noted for high levels of development. This development was based on industry in former group of places, and on agriculture in the latter category of areas. The newly raised planned industrial centres, such as Bhilai, Rourkala and Durgapur, however, failed to demonstrate their spread effects on their surroundings.

**Regional disparities in the 1970’s:**

Studies at both the all India and state levels helped examine the patterns of regional disparities during the 1970’s. Raza (1978), Kundu and Raza (1982) looked at the existing regional disparities in India largely as a continuation of their spatial structure as evolved during the colonial phase and Sundram (1983) elaborated the geography of underdevelopment in India. At the state level, Gosal and Krishan (1984) took the case of Punjab to highlight the issue of regional disparities within a developed state. Raman and Sarma and Kayastha and Singh carried out block level analyses to explain disparities in Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, respectively.
INDIA: Regional Disparities during the 1970's

Level of Development (By states) 1971

Level of Development (By districts) 1971

Source: A. Kundu and M. Raza, 1982

Source: K. V. Sundaram, 1983
Raza (1978) provided a vivid account and in-depth analysis of the regional disparities as prevalent in India during the seventies (Map 3.3A). Based on data for 58 National Sample Survey Regions, the indicators of agricultural development, industrialization process, and space organization were put in service. The Green Revolution led to the accentuation of inter-regional disparities in agricultural development, Northwestern India covering, Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh recorded remarkable strides in agriculture, but central parts of the country remained chronically underdeveloped. On the industrialization front, Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and Delhi as also the Jamshedpur-Dhanbad and Ludhiana-Jullandhar tracts were noted for concentration of industry. This process was not successful in contributing to the growth of regional economies at large.

The space organization, manifested in a fragmented hierarchical system of rural and urban settlements, was dysfunctional in the process of production. The impulse of growth originating in urban areas failed to diffuse spatially in their respective regions. Kundu and Raza (1982) elaborated this version of their ideas in the form of a book.

Sundram (1983) in his analysis of the levels of development in India based on the 1971 Census of India data, highlighted the fact that the relatively less developed districts of India were concentrated in the East, centre and middle South of India (Map 3.3B). Urban nodes of Ajmer, Kota, Gwalior, Ujjain, Bhopal, Agra, Kanpur, Lucknow, Allahabad, Varanasi, Patna, Raurkela, and Jabalpur looked like islands within the underdeveloped areas. The tribal belts of Bastar and Kalahandi, Chottanagpur plateau and desert of Rajasthan, were the most backward. The contiguous areas of medium and high level development were located in the West and the South, extending from Gujarat down through Maharashtra, which is further linked up with the southern districts of Karnataka, Kerala and entire Tamil Nadu; in the northwest, comprising Punjab, Haryana and Delhi, Western Uttar Pradesh and adjoining parts of Rajasthan; in the East,
from Calcutta through the Damodar valley industrial belt; and in Mahanadi Delta in Orissa, and the Krishna-Godavari deltas in Andhra Pradesh.

The picture of regional disparities in India brought out the role of the Green Revolution in accentuating the inter-regional disparities in agricultural development, wherein Northwestern parts covering states of Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh recorded remarkable strides in agriculture. By contrast, the central parts of the country remained chronically underdeveloped. It was highlighted, thus, that the relatively less developed districts of India were concentrated in the East, centre and middle South of India.

**Regional Disparities in the 1980’s:**

Studies dealing with patterns of regional disparities during the eighties were contributed by Krishan (1989), Guha andDasgupta (1989), Dubey (1990), and CMIE (1988). At the regional levels, Joshi (1987) analyzed the district-wise situation of regional disparities in Uttar Pradesh and Kaur and Ghuman (1992) took a note of the situation in Punjab.

Analyzing the 1981 Census of India data at the district level (Map 3.4A), on indicators of urbanization, female literacy and rural non-agricultural workers to represent the economic, social and rural development respectively, Krishan (1989) highlighted that:

(i) The peripheral parts of India coinciding largely with the coastal areas, were more developed than the interior mainland, and incidentally the coastal states happened to be all non-Hindi speaking while the mainland states were largely Hindi speaking;

(ii) The territories coinciding with the erstwhile British administered provinces, such as Punjab, Bombay, Madras and Bengal were relatively more developed than those coinciding with the former princely states, such as Hyderabad, Rajasthan and Jammu & Kashmir;
(iii) Tribal areas, located in the North-East Himalayas, central Indian belt, Western and Eastern Ghats and parts of Western Himalayas, remained backward, due to their high degree of isolation from the mainstream of national life; and

(iv) The patterns of economic and social development did not necessarily coincide with each other; Punjab was ahead of Kerala in economic development and Kerala bettered Punjab in social development.

Guha and Dasgupta (1989) analyzed the regional disparities in levels of well-being in India, based again on the 1981 Census of India data (Map 3.4B). A composite score of 22 variables was worked out. The patterns and processes identified at the intra and inter-regional levels were noted as exhibiting a domination of few cities at the national space, followed by a large number of big sub-regional centres at the secondary level, and further surrounded by a host of smaller centres and a large rural periphery. The northern region was dominated by Delhi, the western region by Bombay, the southern region by Madras and the eastern region by Calcutta. A dismal picture of lower levels of well-being is obtained in the case of large parts of Rajasthan, Jammu & Kashmir, Central Plateau, North-East India and the tribal belts.

Again on the basis of the 1981 Census of India data by districts, Dubey (1990) challenged some prevailing notions about the ‘hungry belly’ of the Ganga Plain, as propounded by Raza (1978) and of ‘Bimaru India’ as acronymed by Bose (1988), while referring to the backwardness of the states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The study underlined that in the measurement of regional disparities, a judicious selection of indicators and an appropriate choice of spatial units were crucial factors. In the Indian case, where development was segmented, or selection of bigger units such as state or NSS region for assessing the development level would give a distorted picture of
ground realities. That is the trap in which the propounders of the ‘hungry belly’ and ‘Bimaru states’ were caught (Map 3.4C).

Using a composite Index of nine data series (two for agriculture, three for mining and manufacturing and four from the service sector), the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) examined regional variations in poverty and income levels in India (Map 3.4D). All the districts were grouped into four categories, two above national average index value of 100 and two below, and these were designated as developed, moderately developed, less developed and least developed. The 17 developed districts, namely Bombay, Madras, Delhi, Calcutta, Hyderabad, Chandigarh, Ahmedabad, Gurgaon, Pune, Coimbatore, Nilgiri, Nasik, Vadodara, Dhanbad, Faridkot, Ludhiana and Patiala, were scattered all over the country, and did not form a contiguous region. Moderately developed districts were situated along the East and West coasts, in Haryana, Western Uttar Pradesh, and Gujarat, apart from few cities like Kanpur, Patna, and Jaipur. The rest of the country or nearly two thirds of the area were identified as less developed or underdeveloped. It covered the whole of the Hindi speaking belt, the tribal areas, hilly tracts and crowded, predominantly rural regions in the Ganga Plain.

Regional disparities in India during the 1980’s found that industrial towns had started advancing more than agricultural development. Earlier the northwestern parts covering states of Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh registered impressive advances in agricultural developments, but now the metropolitan cities, along with the four national metros, like Bangalore, Hyderabad, Ahmadabad, were emerging.

Evidently, there was a high degree of similarity in identification of areas at their respective level of development in India. The most notable feature of India’s map was the dominance of some large cities, especially the capital and industrial ones. The countryside, barring the irrigated ones which experienced the Green Revolution, remained less developed, by and large.
Regional Disparities in 1991:

Studies pertaining to patterns of regional disparities in India on the eve of the adoption of the New Economic Policy are few in number. Krishan (1998, 2001) made an attempt to analyze the patterns of regional disparities by using district level data. The Census of India (Government of India 1995) also prepared a paper on the regional patterns of economic development, based on the 1991 Census.

Krishan (2001) observed that in the Indian context, economic development, social advancement, rural transformation and modernization parameters of development were the most critical ones to consider. With that conceptualization, he made a composite standardized and weighted development index for each district on the basis of four representative indicators: per capita income for economic development, female literacy for social development, rural non-agricultural workers for rural transformation and urban population for the modernization effect. It was found that regional development disparities continue to prevail, as highlighted in previous studies, between a weak heart-land and a strong periphery, between less developed mainland and more advanced coastal regions and between the lagging tribal belts and better placed non-tribal areas. The Punjab-Haryana plains and the western coast were the most developed parts of the country. He also made an attempt to look into the intra-state disparities finding the less developed states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh characterized by a high degree of intra-state disparities and the developed states of Punjab, Kerala, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh marked by a low order of intra-state disparity. Disparity was found to have a negative relationship with development levels and a positive relationship with physical size.

Based on indicators like percentage of literates, percentage of urban population, percentage of workers engaged in non-agricultural activities and density of population in persons per sq. kilometer, the Census of India, analyzed patterns of economic development in 1991 (Map 3.5B).
INDIA: Regional Disparities during the 1990's

Source: Census of India Atlas, 1994

Index of development

251 and above (Very High)
201-250 (High)
151-200 (Moderate)
101-150 (Low)
100 and Over (Very Low)
Data not available

Level of Economic Development

Source: G. Krishan, 1998

Source: Census of India Atlas, 1994
Principal Component Analysis was used to represent the relative position of 452 districts. Only 56 districts could be assigned a ‘very high’ level of development and another 35 were at a ‘high’ level of development. In general, all the big cities and their adjoining regions showed high or very high levels of development. Punjab, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal shared most of these districts. By contrast, almost two in every three districts in India were at low or very low levels of development. These districts were distributed among the states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and the Northeastern states.

Noticeably, on the eve of the adoption of the New Economic Policy in India, regional development disparities were prevalent to the extent that the Central and eastern parts of India having tribal, rural and interior locations were the most backward parts of India. The States of Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Western Uttar Pradesh and the western coastal areas of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and districts along the million plus cities were relatively more developed. Similarly the agriculturally and industrially developed areas were noted for high levels of development. By contrast, the non-irrigated tracts, industrially backward areas, physically challenged regions as also the interior tribal and rural countryside were less developed.

The overall picture emerging from the analysis of above studies from 1950’s till 1991, shows that more or less, spatial patterns of development level in India after Independence have remained almost the same, of course, with some exceptions. Moreover, the earlier developed areas got further developed and the backward areas stagnated over time.

- During the fifties, a peculiar feature of India’s development map was the existence of such centers, the level of development of which were not reflected through the level of development of their surrounding areas. During this time West Bengal was the most developed state and Vindhya Pradesh was the least developed state of India. Areas with advanced
commercialization, economic diversification and large scale organization were more developed. Isolated tribal economies emerged as the most backward.

- The picture was not much different from the earlier levels of development during the sixties. High levels of development were found in scattered metropolitan areas and their surrounding conurbations. Agriculturally developed areas of the North West, and the Godawari-Krishna delta on the one hand and the industrially developed areas of the western Coastal region and Tamil Nadu Uplands were noted for relatively high levels of development. The newly planned industrial centres, created within the tribal areas were, however, unsuccessful in stimulating the regional economies around them.

- Patterns of regional disparities in India during the seventies showed that the Green Revolution had led to the accentuation of inter-regional disparities in agricultural development. The Northwestern parts of the country recorded remarkable strides in agriculture and the central part remained chronically underdeveloped. On the industrialization front, a concentration of industry was noticed in the four metros and their nearby areas. Eastern, central and middle South regions of India recorded a concentration of relatively lesser developed districts.

- During the eighties, patterns of regional development remained almost the same with certain exceptions. Developed districts were scattered all over the country, and did not form any contiguous region. Majority of them were located in the North western parts, metro cities and industrial townships. Most of the moderately developed districts gravitated to the more developed districts while less developed districts were identified with areas that were agriculturally and industrially backward.

- In 1991, on the eve of the adoption of the New Economic Policy, the scene of regional development disparities was not dissimilar to earlier
patterns. Wide regional disparities prevailed between the 'less developed' and the 'more developed' India. Weak heart-land and a strong periphery; less developed mainland and more advanced coastal regions; lagging tribal belts and better placed non-tribal areas presented two extremes of the development continuum of the country. In general, the agriculturally developed states of Punjab and Haryana; industrially developed states of Gujarat and Maharashtra; socially developed states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu had relatively higher districts in the category of more developed areas. Districts with moderate level of development were located close to areas of high levels of development, and most backward districts having low and very low levels of development were distributed over the Central, Eastern and North-Eastern States including Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, and North-Eastern States.

**Trends in Regional Disparities, 1951-1990:**

Thus, it is established that, even if identified on varying sets of indicators, regional disparities in India persisted considerably in the framework of a rigid spatial structure. The Green Revolution areas of Punjab, Haryana, and Western Uttar Pradesh; the urban-industrial belt of the Western Coastal region; the deltaic areas of Godavari-Krishna and Kaveri; and Calcutta conurbation emerge as the more developed parts of India. By contrast, the middle Ganga Plain, the Central heartland, the tribal belt of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, and adjoining areas in Rajasthan, and Gujarat, and large parts of the Himalayas defined the less developed parts of the country.

Some newly emerging trends have also been cited: (i) development process showed a high degree of diffusion in areas of commercial agriculture, including Punjab, Eastern Haryana, Western Uttar Pradesh, the Godavari-Krishan delta and the Kaveri delta; (ii) an incipient tendency towards corridor development along the trunk railway lines connecting Delhi, Bombay, Madras and Calcutta.
with each other was taking shape; (iii) gaps between the development levels of the erstwhile British administered territories and of former princely states were gradually getting blurred; (iv) the union territories were recording fast development due to liberal investments by the central government; and (v) disparity between urban and rural areas was widening (Krishan, 2001).

The above observations are supported by a ranking of the 17 major states of India, each with a population of at least five million in 1991, in terms of their per capita income over the four decades since 1951 (Table 3.1, Figure 3.1)). It is observed that Punjab, Haryana, Maharashtra, Gujarat and West Bengal held one of the top five ranks for all the decades and Karnataka made an entry into this group only during the 1989-90 period on the sliding down of West Bengal. Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Orissa were among the bottom five for most of the period. Figure 3.2 reveals that Bihar had the dubious distinction of remaining always at the bottom and Punjab maintained its rank as the first, after its lift to the second place in 1950-51.

Greater shifts in the ranks were noted among states at the medium level. Karnataka recorded an elevation in its rank from 8th in 1950-51 to 5th in 1989-90; Himachal Pradesh from 10th to 6th; and Tamil Nadu from 14th to 9th. On the other hand, West Bengal which was at the top in 1950-51 slipped to 7th place in 1989-90; Assam from 6th to 12th, Kerala from 7th to 14th and Uttar Pradesh from 9th to 13th. Other states, however, moved up or down within a small range.

These shifts in the relative ranks of various states in their level of development based on their per capita income signify relative differences in their growth performance. On the eve of Independence, West Bengal was on the top because of its industrial development. After Independence this industrialization suffered due to loss of jute producing areas to East Pakistan. Meanwhile it has been receiving a large influx of migrants from East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, putting severe pressures on already depleting resources.
### Table 3.1 Ranking of Major States on Per Capita Income

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>471(1)</td>
<td>462 (3)</td>
<td>722(5)</td>
<td>793(5)</td>
<td>1956(7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>444 (2)</td>
<td>458 (1)</td>
<td>1070(1)</td>
<td>1354(1)</td>
<td>3658(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>381 (3)</td>
<td>403 (4)</td>
<td>829(3)</td>
<td>904(4)</td>
<td>2629(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>373 (4)</td>
<td>480 (2)</td>
<td>783(4)</td>
<td>957(3)</td>
<td>3281(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td>364 (5)</td>
<td>396 (5)</td>
<td>877(2)</td>
<td>1060(2)</td>
<td>3193(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>335 (6)</td>
<td>428 (7)</td>
<td>535(13)</td>
<td>558(12)</td>
<td>1650(12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>304 (7)</td>
<td>326 (8)</td>
<td>594(9)</td>
<td>621(9)</td>
<td>1560(14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>287 (8)</td>
<td>313 (9)</td>
<td>641(8)</td>
<td>687(7)</td>
<td>2109(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>271 (9)</td>
<td>292 (12)</td>
<td>486(14)</td>
<td>519(14)</td>
<td>1572(13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Himachal Pradesh</td>
<td>270 (10)</td>
<td>295 (10)</td>
<td>651(6)</td>
<td>711(6)</td>
<td>2098(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>258 (11)</td>
<td>289 (13)</td>
<td>585(10)</td>
<td>647(8)</td>
<td>1770(10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>256 (12)</td>
<td>272 (14)</td>
<td>645(7)</td>
<td>537(13)</td>
<td>1705(11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>252 (13)</td>
<td>268 (15)</td>
<td>485(15)</td>
<td>477(16)</td>
<td>1557(15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>245 (14)</td>
<td>344 (6)</td>
<td>581(11)</td>
<td>584(11)</td>
<td>1864(9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>236 (15)</td>
<td>293 (11)</td>
<td>484(16)</td>
<td>517(15)</td>
<td>1909(16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jammu &amp; Kashmir</td>
<td>227 (16)</td>
<td>248 (16)</td>
<td>548(12)</td>
<td>642(10)</td>
<td>1954(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>181 (17)</td>
<td>222 (17)</td>
<td>402(17)</td>
<td>441(17)</td>
<td>981(17)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ashok Mathur (1994).

Note: State per capita Incomes for 1950-51 and 1960-61 are at 1960-61 prices (NCAEF), for 1970-71 and 1980-81 are at 1970-71 prices (SSB) and for 1989-90 are at 1980-81 prices (SSB). Figures in the parentheses are the ranks of the respective states.
Figure 3.1 India: Ranking of Major States on Per Capita Income

<table>
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<td>Rajasthan</td>
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**Figure 3.2 India: Grouping of Major States on Level of Per Capita Income**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Gujarat</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
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<tr>
<td>1960-61</td>
<td>Punjab</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maharashra</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>West Bengal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gujarat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Haryana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-71</td>
<td>Punjab</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Haryana</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gujarat</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maharashra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>West Bengal</td>
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<tr>
<td>1980-81</td>
<td>Punjab</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Haryana</td>
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<td>Maharashra</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gujarat</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>West Bengal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989-90</td>
<td>Punjab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maharashra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Haryana</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gujarat</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Karnataka</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Derived from Table 3.1

Punjab suffered the brunt of the Partition, but after Independence in 1947 the Bhakra irrigation-cum-power project transformed agriculture. The state moved from the second position to the first during the 60's and retained it for successive decades. Likewise, Haryana, which was earlier a part of Punjab, also moved up in rank on the basis of agro-industrial development. The states of Gujarat and Maharashtra also marked rapid strides in industry, agriculture and trade and ranked among the top five.
Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Orissa constituted the bottom five group in virtually all decades. Contrarily rapid industrialization and urbanization in Tamil Nadu and upscaled tourism, horticulture and infrastructure development in Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh which consequently led to their upward shift on the development ladder. The political instability in Assam caused a fall in its rank from 6th in the 50’s to 12th in the late eighties. In relative terms, Kerala suffered a fall in rank from 7th in the 1950’s to 14th in the 1980’s. The economic development of the state was not concomitant with its rate of demographic growth.

The above description of the shifting ranks of different states is based only on per capita income. There is a need to have a more comprehensive view of the issue by using a number of representative indicators to have a firm view of the relative development behavior of different states. This task is reserved for a discussion as a part of the next chapter.

SUMMING UP:

Following findings emerge from the analysis of studies on regional disparities in India from Independence to 1991:

- The spatial contours of development persisted on the map of India, during the period.
- Though development indicators used in different studies differed, the patterns that emerged were similar or almost overlapping in most cases.
- Punjab, Haryana, Maharashtra and Gujarat were progressive and in contrast Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh remained less developed and stagnating.
- In the fifties, patterns of development noted the existence of scattered, important manufacturing, commercial or administrative centers, the level of growth of which was far above the level of their surrounding areas. Areas of advanced commercialization, economic diversification and large
scale organization were more developed. Areas with isolated tribal economy were least developed. Areas with subsistent peasant economies and incipient commercialization were between two extremes of development.

- The picture of the sixties was not much different from that of the fifties. The high levels of development were found in scattered metropolitan areas and their conurbations. Agriculturally as well as industrially advanced areas were more developed parts of the country. One of the peculiar features of patterns of development was that the regional disparities in India were not along ethnic or sub-cultural lines. There was no North-South polarization.

- The seventies noted an accentuation in the inter-regional disparities through agricultural development spear headed by Green Revolution in the mid sixties. Areas with irrigation facilities, in the North western parts and the Godawari-Krishna delta region, recorded remarkable strides in agriculture. On the industrialization front, four metros and also the Jamshedpur-Dhanbad tract and Ludhiana-Jullandhar tracts were noted for concentration of industry and higher levels of development. In contrast, however, the central part of the country remained chronically underdeveloped. Relatively less developed districts were found to be concentrated in the eastern, central and middle South parts of India.

- The eighties witnessed almost similar patterns of regional development in India. Domination of a few cities at the national level followed by a large number of large sub-regional centers at the secondary level were observed and found to be surrounded by a host of smaller centers and a large rural periphery. The developed districts were scattered and did not form a single contiguous region. A majority were located in the North western parts, western coastal areas, million plus cities and industrial townships. Also moderately developed areas surrounded the areas of high levels of development. Most of the less developed districts were
concentrated in the central tribal belts, densely populated countrysides of the middle Ganga plains and areas with desert or rugged topographies.

- In 1991, too wide regional disparities were prevalent between ‘less developed’ and ‘more developed’ India. Noticeably, the agriculturally developed states of Punjab and Haryana; the industrially developed states of Gujarat and Maharashtra; and the socially developed states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu were noted for relatively higher levels of development. Districts with moderate levels of development were located close to areas of high levels of development, and most backward districts having low and very low levels of development were distributed over the Central, Eastern and North-Eastern States of India.

- The trends in regional disparities revealed that even if identified on different groups of indicators, the regional disparities in India persisted considerably in the framework of a rigid spatial structure. The Green Revolution areas of Punjab, Haryana, and Western Uttar Pradesh, the urban-industrial belt of the Western Coastal region, the deltaic areas of Godavari-Krishna and Kaveri, and Calcutta emerged as the more developed parts of India. Contrarily, the middle Ganga Plain, the Central heartland, the tribal belt of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, and the adjoining areas of Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, and large parts of the eastern Himalayas comprise the less developed parts of the country.

- The ranking of the major states of India, in terms of their per capita income over the four decades since 1951, observed that Punjab, Haryana, Maharashtra, Gujarat and West Bengal held one of the top five ranks for all the decades. Karnataka made an entry into this group only during the 1989-90 period on the sliding down of West Bengal to the second group. Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Orissa were among the bottom five for most of the period, wherein, Bihar remained last on all counts.