

**AN ANALYSIS OF REGIONAL DIMENSIONS OF DEVELOPMENT IN  
KARNATAKA STATE****Dr. B.S.Venkatesh**

Associate Professor

Department of Economics

Maharani Women's Arts, Commerce and Management College

Bangalore 560001.

The State of Karnataka is situated in the western part of the Deccan Peninsular region of India. it lies between 11.5" and 19" north latitudes and between 74" and 78" east longitudes. it has a vast seacoast of 286 Kms., in the West and is land-locked by the States of Kerala and Tamil Nadu in the South, Andhra Pradesh in the East, Maharashtra in North and Goa and Diu and Daman in the North-west. it occupies about 5.84 per cent of the total geographical area of India.

The State came into existence on 1st November 1956 under the States' Reorganisation Act. it acquired its present name on 1st November 1973 till which date it was known as the State of Mysore. The total area of the State is 1,91,791 Sq. Kms and the total population was 4,48,06,468 as per the 1991 Census. The State is composed of 4 administrative divisions with 20 districts, 175 talukas, and 27,066 inhabited villages (seven new districts have been created during 1997 and at present, the State consists of 27 districts). Physiographically, the State can be divided into four homogeneous regions, each of which has its own unique physical features.

**Coastal region**

The Coastal Region, situated between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea, is about 320 km long. it is a narrow strip of plain, which is 13 to 32 km wide in the North and 50 to 65 km in the South. The average height of the plain is generally 75 meters above sea level, but at some places, the height is about 150 meters. The area of the Coastal plain is approximately 7,770 Sq. Km. it has a difficult terrain with many rivers, creeks and isolated peaks. Lateritic and alluvium soils are found in this region. it receives abundant rainfall, exceeding 2,500 mm per annum. The main crops of the region are paddy, coconut, areca nut, cashew-nut and casuarina. The districts of Uttara Kannada and Dakshina Kannada fall into this region.

**Malnad Region**

Malnad, "the region of hills" has a thick forest cover. it is about 6.50 km long from north to south and 50-60 Kms wide. it is a land-locked area with a height of more than 152 meters above sea level in the west, which gradually rises towards the east. This region also receives heavy rainfall ranging from 1,000 to 2,500 litres per annum. The region mainly possesses lateritic soil with average fertility. The hot and wet climate of this region is quite suitable for paddy, coffee, areca nut and coconut. Sandalwood for which the State is known world over is found in the southeastern fringes of the region. 'this region is composed of Kodagu, Chikmagalur, Shimoga and parts of Hassan, Mysore, Dharwad and Belgaum districts. in the present study entire Hassan district has been included under this region.

**Northern Maidan**

The Northern Maidan lies to the east of Malnad and stretches to the northern and eastern boundary of the state. This region is drained by Krishna, Bhima and Tungabhadra river systems. It is supplemented by tanks, wells and canals. It has a landscape of extensive plateau covered with rich black cotton soil and generally has open treeless fields. The region receives rainfall to the extent of 350 to 900 mm per annum and the soil has a high capacity of moisture retention. Jowar, Wheat and Cotton are some of the major crops of the region. It has rich deposits of iron and Manganese. The districts of Belgaum, Dharwad, Gulbarga, Bijapur, Bidar, Raichur and Bellary fall into this region.

**Southern Maidan**

Southern Maidan constitutes most of the area of old Mysore State. It is situated on a fairly high-level rolling plateau broken in the south and east by the tributaries of the Tungabhadra and Cauvery rivers respectively. The red soil found here is suitable for Paddy and Ragi, which are the chief crops of the region. The districts of Mysore, Mandya, Bangalore, Tumkur, Kolar, Chitradurga and parts of Hassan fall into this region.

The physiographic features narrated above clearly bring out the extent of regional diversity across the State. There are differences in geography, climate, rainfall and soil. Naturally, these diversities influence the socio-economic life of people residing in the different districts falling in these regions.

With this background, this paper proposes to study two important aspects of regional development with the following objectives:

The first objective is to describe the conditions of regional diversities in Karnataka. The second objective is to bring out a picture of regional disparities across all the regions of Karnataka. Descriptive and tabular methods have been used to understand the problem. Relevant indicators are used and a composite index of development as prepared by the planning department of Karnataka has been relied upon to get the authentic information.

The physiographic classification of the State and the district profile clearly bring out regional dimensions of Karnataka's economy. There is both regional diversity and regional disparity. There is diversity in natural features like climate, rainfall, forest, soil, minerals and rivers. There is also the problem of regional disparity caused by the human factor in pursuance of socio-economic activities.

The climate of the State is of tropical monsoon type with an active combination of the South-west and northeast monsoons. There is high humidity in the Coastal region whereas dry weather prevails in Northern Maidan. Southern Maidan experiences moderate temperature with chilly winters.

There is considerable variation in the extent of rainfall across the four regions. The normal State rainfall average is 1,200 mm. it ranges between 3,932 9 mm in Dakshina Kannada to just 5229 mm in Bijapur

The forest resources in the State is unevenly distributed. Uttara Kannada, Kodagu, Mysore, Shimoga, Dakshina Kannada and Chikmagalur districts are endowed with rich forest cover, However, it is quite negligible in the districts of Bidar, Bijapur, Gulbarga and Raichur.

There is marked diversity in the type of soil in each of these regions depending upon the parent rock and the climatic conditions The laterite and lateritic soil are found in parts of Western Ghats and the districts of Belgaum, Dharwad, Chikmagluru, Shimoga, Dakshina Kannada, Uttara Kannada and Kodagu Northern Madan is endowed with black soil whereas red loam and sandy soils are commonly found in Southern Maidan. Alluvial soil is mostly found in the river valleys and in some parts of the Coastal region. The State possesses a mineral wealth of economic and industrial importance but it is concentrated only in a few districts.

These diversities are quite disadvantageous for the harmonious development of all the regions of the State. They are natural constraints and they will have to be accepted as such. But what is more worrying for the planners and the policymakers is the problems caused by glaring regional disparities across different districts. This is because Karnataka's economy when looked at spatially has a considerable diversification. The spread of agricultural, mineral, industrial and service activities, the latter including banking, commerce and public sector functions such as education, medical care or irrigation is quite complex. There is some major conjunctions of activities but there are also areas where marginal subsistence farming is common. An alarming rise in the rate of population, unemployment, low literacy level, low productivity, lopsided concentration of industries and infrastructure and modern civic amenities in few urban centres pose grave problems for the overall development of the state. These observations clearly speak about the magnitude of the problem. The root of the problem can be traced back to the re-organisation of the State on 1st November 1956.

The princely State of Mysore was the pioneer in implementing several developmental programs having far reaching consequences for the all round development of the State. In fact, it was regarded as 'the Model State' under the dynamic leadership of Mysore rulers and their dewans, Sir M. Visveswaraya, Seshadri Iyer and Mirza Ismail. However, the same momentum could not be maintained in the past three and half decades, resulting in slowing down of economic development. This has led to marked inter-district and Intra-district regional disparities in Karnataka.

The major factor for widening disparities was the integration of relatively backward areas into the Mysore State from the neighbouring provinces. They were severely neglected by their respective erstwhile provincial governments and were comparatively backward in various socio-economic aspects As early as June 1954, the Government of Mysore had appointed a fact-finding committee to make an assessment of the level of development in various Kannada speaking areas, which were to be integrated. After an in-depth study on the level of development in them, the Committee came to the conclusion that they had not reached the same standard of development as the old Mysore State. It added that considerable leeway could have to be made to bring them to the level of their counterparts in Mysore State. It particularly indicated that the areas joining from Hyderabad were more backward than others. This entire part has come to be called as 'Hyderabad - Karnataka region'.

With the introduction of five-year plans in the State, the planners began to accord greater importance to the regional perspective underlining the importance of local needs, in general, and the development of potentialities of the backward areas in particular. Attempts were made to measure the relative levels of development attained by different districts and to evolve planning machine at the district level. With this objective in mind, the Planning Department of the State tried to prepare a composite measure of development. All the districts were ranked according to the degree of development with the help of 13 indicators under fourth five year plan and 22 indicators in the fifth five-year plan . They were assigned weights, which were based on the previous plan period, Percentage share of sectoral outlay.

The indicators were classified under six categories: Demographic. Occupational pattern, Land utilisation pattern, productivity, industrial development and infrastructural facilities and the weights used were 8, 12, 15, 12, 8 and 45 respectively. A composite index of development was prepared and based on the index value the districts were ranked and compared. for the two time-points 1960-61 and 1979-80. Proceeding on the same line, the draft Sixth Five-year plan ranked the districts according to the index value for the years 1974-75, 1976-77. and 1979-80. The Table 1 gives us some idea of the comparative position of districts for the two time-points, 1960-61 and 1979-80. Without going into the questions of methodological correctness or otherwise of this exercise from the Planning Department we could get some idea about the inter-district developmental trends from the Table1

Table 1: Composite index of development of districts for the year 1960-61 and 1979-80

| Districts   | 1960-61 |    | 1979-80 |    |
|-------------|---------|----|---------|----|
|             | A       | B  | A       | B  |
| Bangalore   | 218     | 2  | 198.57  | 1  |
| Belgaum     | 91.12   | 12 | 91.97   | 12 |
| Bellary     | 89.23   | 14 | 94.98   | 11 |
| Bidar       | 64.28   | 17 | 82.11   | 17 |
| Bijapur     | 71.66   | 16 | 87.02   | 15 |
| Chikmaglur  | 123.74  | 7  | 90.16   | 14 |
| Chitradurga | 100.24  | 11 | 101.36  | 9  |

|                  |        |    |        |    |
|------------------|--------|----|--------|----|
| Dakshina Kannada | 230.21 | 1  | 176.69 | 2  |
| Dharwad          | 118.54 | 8  | 96.28  | 10 |
| Gulbarga         | 60.1   | 19 | 65.77  | 19 |
| Hassan           | 90.03  | 13 | 91.19  | 13 |
| Kodagu           | 124.15 | 6  | 105.84 | 7  |
| Kolar            | 136.53 | 4  | 103.81 | 8  |
| Mandya           | 114.7  | 10 | 118.87 | 5  |
| Mysore           | 124.6  | 5  | 124.45 | 3  |
| Raichur          | 63.04  | 18 | 80.72  | 18 |
| Shimoga          | 180.15 | 3  | 120.44 | 4  |
| Tumkur           | 84.52  | 15 | 85.91  | 16 |
| Uttara Kannada   | 118.24 | 9  | 106    | 6  |

Note: A- Development index, B- Rank

Source Government of Karnataka. Planning Department, Draft Sixth five year plan, Bangalore.

The Table.1 clearly brings out the extent of regional disparities in Kamataka. if we look at the index values we can clearly notice that there was a wide gap between the most developed and least developed districts during both the time-points, During 1960-61 the difference between the index values of Dakshina Kannada and Gulbarga districts was as high as 170.11. Similarly, the difference was quite high during 1979-80. If we calculate the difference between Bangalore Gulbarga districts, the difference being 132.8.

Another disturbing trend that emerges from the Table.1 is that though there was an increase in the index values of backward districts over these two decades, most of the developed districts registered considerable decline. This is clearly a negative trend in that the narrowing of the gap between developed and backward districts has been brought about mainly due to the slower

rate of progress of developed districts. For instance, the districts of Bangalore, Dakshina Kannada, Dharwad, Kodagu, Mysore, Shimoga and Uttara Kannada which are usually regarded as developed districts in Karnataka have recorded negative growth in their index values in 1979-80 compared to that in 1960-61. The coefficient of variation value calculated in the two periods has showed a decline from 40.55 per cent to 29.51 per cent indicating reduction in inter-district disparities. However, this reduction is not a healthy trend as it was brought about by a decline in the index values of the developed districts, as stated earlier.

The Table.1, of course, raises doubts on some vital points, For example, why there was such a drastic decrease in index values in cases of Dakshina Kannada and Shimoga districts? Whether the data used were reliable? Whether the index is really comparable? Whether the procedure followed in both the time-points is consistent? Whether criterion of objectivity in assigning weights is met? These are the issues that need further consideration. For the time being, the Table 3.1 could be referred as our a prior reason on some of the issues related to regional development and inter-district disparities in the State that goes along with it, in general.

All these facts and figures have brought out clearly the pattern of economic development in Karnataka, which has compelled the State government to undertake specific measures to attain a greater degree of equality in the levels of the development. It is experimenting with programs such as Drought-Prone Area program (DPAP), Command Area Development Programme, Western Ghat Development Plan, Tribal Sub plan, Two-tier Planning and Block Level Planning. Besides these programmes, the Planning Department has identified growth centres at four levels. It has also identified 6 growth belts, 3 growth pole belts, 35 growth centres, 177 market cum-service centres and 359 service centres. Various programmes have been initiated to attract entrepreneurial activities in these identified locations such as tax concessions, subsidies and infrastructural facilities.

Of late, the Government has also constituted some regional authorities for the systematic and scientific development of selected regions. The Bangalore Metropolitan Region Development Authority (BMRDA) started functioning since December 21st 1987. It is an apex body, coordinating the activities of the Bangalore Development Authority, Bangalore City Corporation, Bangalore Water Supply and Sewage Board, Karnataka Electricity Board and Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation. Its main objective is to plan, coordinate and supervise the development of the metropolitan region.

As far back as 1941 itself, Malnad development committee was appointed and on its recommendations, Malnad Development Board was constituted immediately after State re-organisation. However, the board could not play the role envisaged for it, due to lack of adequate resources. The Board has been revived during the Eighth Five-year plan to promote infrastructural facilities of the Malnad region.

Continuing the same policy, the State Government decided to set up the Hyderabad-Karnataka Development Board during 1989-90. The Board which was constituted on the recommendations of Fact Finding Committee of 1954 and Dharam Singh Committee of 1980, to meet the long standing demands of the people belonging to Bellary, Bidar, Gulbarga and Raichur districts. The Board has been assigned the responsibility of developing the thrust areas like roads and bridges, education, water supply, health and minor irrigation.

The Government of Karnataka has prepared a blueprint for raising the standard of infrastructure under Karnataka State Border Area Development Programme during 1990- 95. The programme is in operation in 52 border talukas spread over 15 districts.

All these efforts indicate the sincerity of both the State Government and its Planning Department in recognizing the problem of regional disparities and in spending a considerable amount of resources to reduce the same. A number of policies and programmes have been evolved for the Development of backward districts and for greater spatial dispersion of growth.

### **Conclusion**

Thus it is necessary to understand, how far these programmes are successful in achieving greater parity in development. Whether such policies are really effective. Whether the overall strategy that is being followed is appropriate. Proper understanding of regional dimensions help us to find solutions and to evolve suitable developmental strategies.

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