

Regionalism and Issues: Understanding Indian Unity in Diversity through Literature

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Abstract

To understand regionalism, we need to know various dimensions of the region. Region as a social system, reflects the relation between different human beings and groups whereas a geographical unit, is delimited from each other. Regionalism is an ideology and political movement to advance the causes of regions. At the international level, regionalism refers to transnational cooperation, at national level refers to a process in which sub-states become increasingly powerful. Regionalism is defined as a feeling of loyalty to a part of a country and a wish for it to be more politically independent. Positive regionalism means love towards one's culture, region and language. Negative regionalism may pose a threat to the unity and integrity of the country. In the Indian context, the term regionalism has been used in the negative sense. INDIA, a country of 29 states, 1500 language, 6400 castes, approximately 6 religion and 29 major festival, a lot of variety further divided in different directions, people and cultures. It is universally assumed that literature mirrors the society. We believe that traditions are all static, stable and unalterable, traditions change with the time. Regional literature portrays changing traditions, keeps us in touch with ancestors, with the world at present and gives hope to make our world better. A strong characteristic of the Indian regional literature is the sublime influence of regional Katha, fables, stories and myths such as Panchatantra, which later developed and termed as the 'regional literature'. The journey of regional literature of India is long, yet rich; it unveils the saga of the changing tradition *of India, whilst murmuring about the recognizable past of India and its gradual progress.*

Keywords: Tradition, Indian Culture, Indian Panorama, Fables

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Introduction

Roots of regionalism is in India's manifold diversity of languages, culture, ethnic groups, communities, religions and so on, and encouraged by the regional concentration of those identity markers and fueled by a sense of regional deprivation. For many centuries, India remained the land of many lands, regions, cultures and traditions. Regionalism has remained perhaps the most potent force in Indian politics ever since independence (1947), if not before. First, in the 1950s and 1960s, intense mass mobilization, often taking on a violent character, was the main force behind the state's response with an institutional package for statehood. Regional literature is a branch of literature which primarily deals with the portrayal of regional life with a language and atmosphere that is completely regional in its true spirit. To understand the soil of a country, there can be no better medium than the regional literature. It is this regional literature which demonstrates, through its peculiar and specific portrayal, the true spirit of land to which one belongs. India has always been very rich in regional literature whether it is regional fiction or regional poetry or regional drama. As a matter of fact, regional literature has always been the bedrock of Indian literature. It is what gives a real recognition to Indian literature. The reason is that it is this regional literature which helps us to paint the true spirit of our land. In other words, it can be said without the fear of contradiction that regional literature is the treasure of all our traditions and culture which seem to whether today in the modern scientific world of chaos and confusion. Regional literature performs this invaluable task of keeping all our ancient kathas and fables safe and secured. Writers like R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand have given a unique expression to regional flavor in their novels of exquisite beauty. Their literature reflects the true beauty of Indian traditions and culture.

Regionalism and India

Regionalism could have flourished in India, if any state/region had felt that it was being culturally dominated or discriminated against. Regional economic inequality is like a time bomb directed against national unity and political stability. But this potential cause did not take shape of regionalism, because of government steps, which focused on the balanced regional development and fulfilled the aspiration of states. Few of them are – Industrial Policy of 1956, National Integration council act of 1961 and Transfer of financial resources to poor states on the recommendation of Finance commission.

Why regional disparity persists in India

Low economic growth: The economic growth of India has been fluctuating since Independence as with respect to High population growth, the economic growth has been not enough to catch the development with full speed.

Socio-economic and political organization of states: The states have been unable to do the adequate land reforms and the feudal mentality still persist. The political activities in the backward states were limited to vote bank politics and different scams.

Lower infrastructural facilities: The level of infrastructural development, such as—power distribution, irrigation facilities, roads, modern markets for agricultural produce has been at back stage.

Low expenditure by states on education, health and sanitation: These subjects are core for human resource development. The states which have invested heavily on these subjects, fall under the developed and advanced states,

Political and administrative problems: This is source of tension and gives birth to sub-regional movements for separate states. Split of states like Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand and Telangana are result of these failures only. All these are political, social and economic conditions but we will discuss Indian English Fiction in the light of unity in diversity in India.

Regionalism and Fiction

Taking regional fiction into consideration, it can be said that the regional novel emphasizes the setting, speech, and customs of a locality, not merely as local color, but as important conditions affecting the temperament of the characters, and their ways of thinking, feeling and acting. Both the regional and local color literature are concerned with an accurate depiction of the manners, morals, dialects and scenery of a geographical area, but “regional” usually implies a wider interest because a regional novel tends to be centered in a geographical area, but it has also a more general interest. Regional fiction is generally realistic and is likely to concern itself with life in rural areas or small towns rather than urban centers. The regional novel is the national novel carried to one degree further of sub-division; it is a novel which, concentrating on a particular part, particular region of a nation, depicts the life of that region in such a way that the reader is conscious of the characteristics which are unique to the region and differentiate it from others in the common motherland. In any nation, then were completely homogeneous, regional novels could not arise within her literature. But where within the limits of a national culture there is a considerable diversity, a considerable variety corresponding to geographical divisions, of patterns of life, in such a nation there exists considerable material for regional novels; and at one period or another of the national history, writers will be stimulated by the presence of that material to handle it. That the regional novel is the novel which depicts the physical feature, life, customs, manners, history etc. of some region or locality does not mean that regionalism is mere factual reporting or photographic reproduction. The region artist emphasizes the unique features of a locality, its uniqueness, the various ways in which it differs from other localities. But as in all other arts, so also in regional art, there is a constant selection and ordering of material. In other words, regional art is also creative. Through proper selection and ordering of his material the novelist stresses the distinctive spirit of his chosen region and shows, further, that life in its essential is the same everywhere. The differences are used as a means of revealing similarities; from the and the local, the artist rises to the general and the universal. The selected region becomes a symbol of the world at large, a microcosm which reflects the great world beyond. The greatness of a regional novelist lies in the fact

that he surmounts the bounds of his chosen region and makes it universal in its appeal. That explains the continuing and world-wide popularity of regional novels.

Fiction Writer's contribution to Regionalism

Thomas Hardy is one of the greatest writers of regional novels in English. Hardy spent his childhood in the country side of Dorsetshire. The characters in his novels belong to the south western part of England which he renamed as Wessex. The locale chosen by him for his novels was also the south-western part of England. Hardy gave a description of the countryside and the clothes and manners of the people living in the countryside. In English, Maria Edgeworth was the inventor of the regional novel. She created a new kind of fiction. The novelists belonging to the eighteenth century lacked a sense of place and did not go beyond London and Bath. It was Maria Edgeworth who gave to fiction a local habitation and name. She discovered that Ireland and the Irish peasant could be used in fiction.

As a matter of fact, a regional novel deals with and emphasizes the unique features of a locality. As in Indian fiction, Raja Rao's famous novel entitled *Kanthapura* introduces the readers to a village in southern part of India and gives a vivid and graphic description of the village and the people living in the village called *Kanthapura*. So, the novel can be classified as a regional novel. As in England, Sir Walter Scott writes about the border countries, William Wordsworth sings of the lake districts of Cumberland. Maria Edgeworth and Hardy's novels are regional novels. Similarly, R.K. Narayan, father of regional novel in Indo-Anglican fiction, writes about the town of *Malgudi* and its surroundings in his novels and short-stories. Art is a synthesis of reality, myth, fantasy and imagination. There is constant selection and ordering of material because a regional art is also creative and giving message. Regionalism is not mere factual reporting. The novelist stresses the distinctive spirit of his chosen region and shows further that life in its essentials is the same everywhere through proper description. The selected region becomes a miniature representation of the place at large.

Raja Rao says in the preface to the novel entitled *Kanthapura*, "There is no village in India, however mean, that has not a rich *sthala-purana*, or legendary history of its own. In this way the past mingles with the present, and the gods mingle with men to make the repertory of your grandmother always bright. In fact, *Kanthapura* is the name of a small village in the southern part of India. There are legend and stories attached to this village. It is a typical Indian village and, in this matter, also it is not different from other Indian villages in general. Life of Indian villages can be easily understood with these novels. We read him not only for academic pleasure but also for understanding our country, India and its unique feature of Unity in Diversity.

R.K. Narayan, born in 1906 in Southern India, is a novelist of common people and common situations. His plots are built of incidents and situations which are neither heroic nor extra ordinary, but they are near the life of common people. He is the regional novelist for excellence. His *Malgudi* is like Lake District of Wordsworth, Wessex of Thomas Hardy and Pottery Town of Arnold Bennett. His *Malgudi* is the symbol of

transitional India and its traditions which is the blend of age-old eastern traditions with the acceptance of modern western trends. The core of his novels is quiet and subdued. His heroes are average human beings who have no heavenly qualities, but their simplicity attains greatness in life. His characters are not as great as Shakespeare but as simple as Jane Austen one of the axioms of Narayan in his Indianness. He and his combination of east-west themes touches the height of traditional Indian life. Although he has been recognized in India after west had given him a thumping reception. His description of Indian Town can be easily understood with the description of Malgudi, an imaginary town of his creation. His characters are Typical Indian human beings in character, spirit, sense of wearing and working, they have notions and feelings, taboos and morale of Indianness. The symbols used in these novels are also typical Indian as Temple, Chakra, Rivers etc. Even the household items are also typical Indians. Habits, treads and culture also reflected in the novels is also quite Indian as Hospitality. People discussed are not of same caste or breed but have different religious, language and even they wear different clothes, but this diversity does not at all mean and divisions. Rather Indian Unity in diversity can be very easily understood with description of characters, place, traditions and situations. He captures peculiarities of India too—flora and fauna, caste system, social and political conditions. His symbols are the best reflection of Indian life. We see hikes as symbol of Eternity and continuity, Temples as symbol of peace and serenity and comparison between Honesty and dishonesty as a path of righteousness in life and Malgudi is the symbol of Authentic picture of India where many people's life with different habits, profession, qualities having different good habits, different clothes, speaking in their regional language but united when it comes to country.

Conclusion

To understand India, its culture, traditions, colors, political diversity and other aspects through these regional novels is really very easy. These Indo Anglican novelists painted pictures of Indian life so vividly that Unity in Diversity can be visualized. Regionalism in positive sense is healthy and can bring positive change in the society as well as national level. Whereas negative aspects can also be erased when we understand them through these novels. R.K. Narayan's novel are a harmonious blend of realism and fantasy. He has given in his novels a milieu of Malgudi as mini India. He exposes social evils and many vices too with storing mythology and fantasy. The difference between diversity of life unity of life is that of tolerance and sharing. The term unity in diversity in Indian context refers to the state of togetherness or oneness despite presence of immense differences. The differences can be in race, ethnicity, gender, age, status, socio-economic conditions, religious beliefs, political dogmas etc. but diversity means understanding that every citizen is unique with differences. We must respect each.

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