

## Creating Newer States: How Desirable?

Given the way demands for creation of newer states keep cropping up from time to time, it seems that the reconfiguration and reorganisation of the Indian State could go on forever. One felt that no such political demand centreing around creation of a separate state would come up after the last such exercise undertaken in the year 2000. The same resulted in the birth of three new states, namely Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Uttaranchal. However, Telangana is the newest state of the Indian Union—consequent to subsequent statehood movement by the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS).

The country has witnessed many such demands in recent times, as also borne out by the fact that as many as nine such demands are now pending with the Central Home Ministry. These *inter alia* include demands for a separate Mithilanchal in Bihar, Saurashtra in Gujarat, Coorg in Karnataka, a Harit Pradesh in UP, Gorkhaland in West Bengal, Bundelkhand comprising areas from UP and MP, and a Bhojpur carved out of Eastern UP, Bihar and Chattisgarh.

The demands have been raised by disparate political organisations like Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJMM) pitching for a separate Gorkhaland state. The demand for creation of Bundelkhand comprising districts of Banda, Chitrakoot, Jhansi, Lalitpur and Sagar of UP and MP has also been pending with the Home Ministry for quite some time.

The creation of a separate state of Saurashtra in Gujarat, one of the most prosperous states in India, is said to be pending with the Ministry for several years now. The Centre has also received representations for creation of a Harit Pradesh or a Kisan Pradesh consisting of several districts of western UP. The Central Home Ministry is also said to be in receipt of formal demands for creation of a Mithilanchal or a Mithila state comprising territories in Bihar, Greater Cooch Behar out of parts of West Bengal and Assam, Vidarbha in Maharashtra, and a state for the Coorg region of Karnataka from different political and non-political organisations.

Before acceding to or even considering such demands, we should not forget as to how India broke into fragments after the decline and degeneration of the Mughal Empire. Many ex-Governors of the Mughal principalities, called 'subahs', declared their independence. And

by the middle of the 18th century, there were congeries of 'rajas' and 'nawabs' who held sway over 600 principalities across the sub-continent. It was this India that Robert Clive defeated and subjugated after the historic battle of Plassey in 1757. This established the British Raj in this country that lasted for about 200 years.

What was notable in all this was the fact that Robert Clive could emerge victorious with the help of a faction of army of Nawab Sirajudaullah. These 'fifth columnists', not bound by any feelings of nationality, did not deem it an act of treachery to let their Nawab down. This was again repeated 100 years later in 1857 when the English were able to stave off the challenge to their rule from the Indian forces by using different factions of Indian forces through their notorious and reviled policy of 'divide and rule'.

These forces, who supported the English, thought nothing while siding with an alien power as the feeling of Indian Nationhood or an overarching sovereign Indian State was conspicuous by its absence. There were Marathas, Sikhs, Muslims, Rajputs, Biharis and Jats, but there were no Indians. The famed 'Aryavarta' or 'Hindustan' was nothing but a geographical connotation. Today's India actually emerged out of the womb of the British Raj. In fact, one of the unintended benefits of the Raj is said to be the integration of India which ultimately gave rise to the extant Indianness even though the concept of a 'Bharat' was always there as also mentioned in Kautilya's Arthashastra.

It was this feeling of Indianness which was responsible for catalyzing our freedom struggle, thereby paving way for the creation of a pan-Indian Nation. It is this Indianness that Jawaharlal Nehru discovered, Mahatma Gandhi nurtured, and Sardar Patel consolidated. We have only been fostering, cherishing and relishing the fruits of a free and sovereign Indian State that our forefathers bequeathed to us.

Now, we need to ponder whether we can allow this hard-earned unity and nationhood to be dented or destroyed by new parochial demands for creation of smaller states based on ethnicity, culture, or linguistic factors. There is also a considered view that creation of new states never means that no such further demand would be made in future. In fact, their creation is actually said to be an encouragement to more such fissiparous forces, who make and pursue such demand if only to grind their own axe.

After the creation of Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Uttaranchal, there are still newer demands to further divide these states, e.g. the demand for Harit Pradesh in UP and that of a Mithilanchal in Bihar. Once Saurashtra is carved out of Gujarat, there is no guarantee that the Kutchis would not demand their own state. In fact, there is already such a move by the erstwhile Maharaja of Kutch. In Andhra Pradesh, the creation of Telangana has already caused uneasiness in the Rayalseema region which wants its own separate state. The Muslims in Hyderabad region also yearn for an Urdu state of their own. This is a never ending vortex into which the celebrated Indian Nation might get sucked forever.

Some observers believe that many such demands are merely political in nature, being made as part of populist politics rather than being genuinely rooted in popular demands. Before becoming a reality, such a demand should not only be reflective of a genuine popular desire, but also needs the backing and recommendation of the local state government. No

such recommendation has so far been made by any of the concerned state government, without which they remain mere wishful thinking. But the Indian parliament does have an overbearing power under Article 3 of the Indian Constitution to bypass the will of the constituent state governments with respect to creation of a new state to be carved out of a particular state's extant geographical area.

However, many argue that some of the Indian states are still very large and need to be broken up into manageable units without being swayed by any consideration of petty politics. They also argue that there is indeed a case for a second State Reorganisation Commission (SRC) to consider all such demands dispassionately with a view to better governance and faster development of the country as a whole. Without being judgemental about the advisability of newer states, one does feel that any such move for creation of a new state should be predicated on the practical considerations of geographic, administrative, and economic viability rather than being rooted only in populist politics.

The central government in consultation with the states could think of constitution of a second SRC for considering all pending demands once and for all to complete the unfinished tasks of state-building forever. The same would not only help in better governance but would also be in keeping with the spirit of consociation of the Indian federation to further consolidate Indian nationhood. If we could do this, the Indian democracy shall further shine as an example to successfully resolve its internal contradictions through a spirit of mutual trust and dialogue.

### Salient Features

- It was felt that no political demands for creation of a separate state would be put after the year 2000. Many such demands are now pending with the Central Home Ministry.
- India broke into fragments after the decline and degeneration of the Mughal Empire. Many ex-Governors of the Mughal principalities called 'subahs' declared their independence.
- The famed 'Aryavarta' or 'Hindustan' was nothing but a geographical connotation.
- Feeling of Indianness was responsible for catalysing our freedom struggle.
- Some of the Indian states are still very large and need to be broken up into manageable units without being swayed by any consideration of petty politics.
- The central government in consultation with the states could think of constitution of a second SRC for considering all pending demands.

### Glossary

**Congeries:** a collection of items or parts in one mass

**Stave:** a stick, rod

**Fissiparous:** reproducing by fission (splitting into parts)

**Yearn:** to have an earnest or strong desire

**Vortex:** a whirling mass of water

**Consociation:** the act of uniting in association