

## Center—State Relations in India

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The handling of political situations in Goa, Jharkhand and Bihar by the UPA government and the removal of governors appointed during the NDA rule once again raised the issue of Centre-State Relations in the country. It is really unfortunate that political expediency rather than constitutional guarantees should govern the whims and actions of the party in power at the Centre. This gives rise to avoidable debates and turmoil on the issue of the very federal structure of the country.

The makers of the constitution of India had assured the unity of the country. They made the central government so powerful that the states could not afford to defy the Centre or make an attempt to secede from the mainstream of the country. That is why, in spite of powerful centrifugal forces and vast diversities of culture and language in the different parts of the country, India had remained intact. India is a federal state, a fusion of different states into a single unit. Each component enjoys autonomy in several matters but is tied to the union in matters of common interest. The component states are not mere delegates or agents of the union government. They draw their authority from the constitution of the land. The strong central bias, however, is a boon that keeps India together even in the face of strong forces of separation raising their ugly heads every now and then in several parts of the country.

While secession of any state is illegal under the constitution, it is the sacred duty of the central government to see that conditions in any state are not allowed to deteriorate to such an extent that controversial drastic steps need to be taken or a 'surgery' becomes essential. Many a time, the Centre fails to read or honour the proper aspirations of the people of a state in performing such surgical operations. This gives rise to unrest, violence and a feeling of distrust against the Center.

Such feelings of distrust gave rise to separatist movements like that of Khalistan in Punjab, ULFA in Assam, separatist demands in the North eastern states or in Jammu and Kashmir, linguistic chauvinism in some Southern states and the talk of the 'sons-of-the-soil' theory in some other parts of the country. The Union Government must not forget that as a constitutional authority, it is its duty to safeguard and respect the interests and sentiments of the people of all states in the country. Similarly, political expediency should not guide their actions especially in matters pertaining to the appointment or removal

of governors, dissolving or suspending of the elected state assemblies and placing the states under President's rule.

In case the successive Union governments fail to rise above or political considerations, in larger interests of the unity and integrity of the country, they might have to face the charge that their actions have been responsible for the dismemberment of the country. They must read the writing on the wall before it is too late.