

Fresh Reorganization of States

Synopsis: The need for fresh reorganization of states is being felt for many years as there has been a constant demand for a number of separate states. Obviously, smaller states can be more viable, efficient and responsible to the need of the people in some of the cases. The demand and arguments of separate state like Uttarakhand in Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand in Bihar, Vidarbha in Maharashtra, Telangana in Andhra Pradesh etc. are not without logic, sound reasoning and analysis and so deserve serious, due and objective consideration. It is the need of the hour that a commission is appointed to go into detailed merits of the issue and suggest how best the political and administrative map of India can be re-drawn. The earlier it is done, the better.

The Republic of India comprises of 25 States and 7 Union Territories. Areawise, Madhya Pradesh is the largest State with 443, 446 sq.km. area and Goa the smallest with 3,702 sq.km. Madhya Pradesh covers 13.48 percent of the whole country. Population-wise Uttar Pradesh is the biggest state with 139,112,287 population followed by Maharashtra and West Bengal 68,077,965 people. Thus, there are many States which are too big to be efficiently managed and so need restructuring and reorganization administratively. For example, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh are three large States and are least developed in the Union. Division of these into smaller units deserves serious consideration. Smaller States are naturally more cohesive, viable and effective both politically and administratively.

There has been a popular demand for a few new States for quite some time underlining the need for fresh reorganization of States. There have been demands for separate Gorkhaland in West Bengal, Uttarakhand in Uttar Pradesh, Chhatisgarh in Madhya Pradesh, Telengana in Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand in Bihar and for separate Vidarbha in Maharashtra. The people of these regions feel discriminated against because they suffer from neglect, social and economy problems and lack of development being parts of big States. They feel that younger and smaller States are more viable, efficient, responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people living there. For example, Haryana with just an area of 44,212 sq. km. and population 16,463,618 was created on 1st November, 1966 as a result of the reorganization of the old Punjab State into two separate States on the linguistic basis. Since then Haryana has become India's one of the fastest growing States with the third highest per capita income. Agriculture

and industrial development in the State have been tremendous. It was the first state to introduce crop insurance scheme in north India in 1992-93.

The urgency of redrawing the political and administrative map of India has been felt for a long time but the centre and concerned States have been dilly-dallying for they lack insight, political will and fairness. Bhartiya Janta Party is the only political party which has favoured the formation of separate States in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra etc. In Uttar Pradesh there has been a long struggle and agitation for a separate hill state. The northern hill regions comprising eight districts of Uttarkashi, Tehri Garwal, Garwal, Chamoli, Pithoragarh, Almora, Nainital and Dehradun have undergone long suffering, neglect, exploitation and deprivation. When BJP was in power in UP, it was the first to recommend the creation of separate state of Uttarakhand. And then on 15 August, 1996 making his maiden speech from the ramparts of historic Red Fort in Delhi the then Prime Minister Deve Gowda declared the creation of separate hill state. But then it turned into a ball game between the Centre and the UP Government and so far the long cherished dream of the people still remains unrealized reminding the proverbial truth of many a slip between the cup and the lip.

Similarly, the people of Telengana in Andhra Pradesh have been agitating for a separate state which is likely to be more compact, homogenous, viable, satisfying and result-oriented. According to the people of the region the Telugu Desam Government has been neglecting the backward areas of the State. They say that Naxalite problem and insurgency are the direct fallout of this neglect, backwardness, poverty and unemployment rampant in the area. The Naxal and PWG movement will automatically disappear once a separate State is granted and development begins, say the leaders of the area.

The people of the hill area of Darjeeling under the leadership of Subhas Ghising of Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), have been demanding a separate State of their own for fairly long time. They assert that creation of Gorkhaland is an irreversible process. In support this demand some dissident CPI-M leaders, from the region, have quit their party to form their own communist party on the lines of revolutionary Marxists. After the promise of separate hill State of Uttarakhand by H.D. Deve Gowda, as the Prime Minister, the Gorkhas of Darjeeling have renewed their demand and agitation. They are not satisfied at all with the tripartite Darjeeling Accord of 1988, under which the autonomous Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council was formed.

The demand for a separate State of Vidharba is exceptional in the sense that it is part of a rich and prosperous State of Maharashtra. But the people and

their leaders of the region allege regional imbalances in the State. If we leave the case of Vidharba aside for a moment, all other regions agitating the separate States have been really backward in respect of education, per capita income, employment, industrial and agricultural development etc. They are on the lowest rung of the ladder in several respects. These facts should urge political leaders to create new, smaller, compact, viable and homogenous States out of the large, loose and imbalanced States.

The tribals of Jharkhand in Bihar under the banner of Jharkhand Mukhti Morcha have been demanding formation of a separate State Jharkhand to ensure social, economical and cultural development of the region. The Morcha leaders allege discrimination, exploitation, neglect and violence against the tribal population of the area. At last on August 6, 1995, the Bihar Government created the Jharkhand Area Autonomous Council consisting of 90 members as a result of an agreement reached earlier between the Union Government and Jharkhand leaders. But because of lack of sincerity on the part of Bihar Government the working of the Council has created a lot of confusion, and dissatisfaction and the people feel disillusioned and again the demand for separate tribal state of Jharkhand is being raised and agitation started anew. The Council was a provisional body and so far elections for the new council have not been held nor sufficient funds and authority have been transferred to the Council.

Thus, the arguments for formation of new States, are not without logic, sound reasoning and analysis and so deserve due and serious consideration. Therefore, it is the need of the hour that a commission is appointed for a fresh reorganization of States. The earlier it is appointed, the better. The Fazl Ali Commission was the last to submit its report on reorganization of States on linguistic basis in 1955.