



Federal Polity and Demand for Smaller States in India: A relative study since Independence

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ABSTRACT

Demand for smaller states in India is not a recent phenomenon. Such demands were very much persistent in Indian society. Having smaller states is considered to be important for administrative purpose as well as for developmental issues.

Democratic ethos is said to be maintained along with federal polity with the smaller regions within the Indian union. This paper tries to bring out facts of the above phenomenon with the help of content analysis and some interpretations of data and tables that are gathered as secondary source of data collection. In conclusion would like to give a positive thought on smaller states and with the explanation and analysis, the article tries to cite examples of different demands with special reference to Telangana. This article is divided into three segments first part deals is the introduction which highlights historical analysis of re-organisation of states and the reasons for the demand for smaller states, second segment deals with different state's demand and a comparative study, third segment holds the concluding part that is an optimistic view on smaller states with allusion to Telangana.

Keywords:

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INTRODUCTION

The demand of new states in India started soon after the independence and such demands remained a chronic feature in Indian politics. The creation of new states is seen as an answer to preserve the ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences by various groups, who feared the emerging trends of Indian politics may create a challenge to their identity. Having smaller states is also considered important for developmental challenges that various regions of the country is facing now.

The problem of Indian cultural and ethnic differences and underdevelopment still seems unsolved and many new demands for separation and creation are in line. The question is do we need more states to strengthen our democratic and federal structure and bring development in the regions still lying unnoticed. The reorganization of Indian states can be broadly divided into three phases. The first demand for separate state started in 1952 when Potti Sriramulu started his fast unto death for a separate state on basis of language. The demand to have separate state for Telugu speaking people remains alive even after his death and in December 1952, the formation of Andhra Pradesh was accepted. The first reorganization commission approved the principle of reorganization of state on the basis of language. In 1956, boundaries were redrawn and state of Andhra Pradesh, Bombay, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh and state of Mysore were created on line of language. State of Bombay was divided into Maharashtra and Gujarat on the basis of language during 1960s. (Chadda, 2002)

Second phase of state reorganization in India started with new states demand on ethnic differences in north east region. Many ethnic, tribal and religious groups with different languages after independence began to protest against unity and demanded



autonomy and statehood. In 1970s north east was divided into Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura, followed by statehood of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Goa in 1980s. The problem in north east is not settled and demand for autonomy is still a recurrent phenomenon.

The third phase of state reorganization led to creation of three new states of Chhattisgarh out of Madhya Pradesh, Uttaranchal out of Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand out of Bihar. However Prof Harihar Bhattacharyya in his article 'India creates three new states' (2001) said that the cultural differences and development were not the sole reason, language also played little role.

The first demand for statehood was based on language in 1950s. The state reorganization commission formed in 1956 recommended the re-organisation of state on linguistic lines giving a rationale that creation of such cultural homogeneous states would create a sense of security among diverse cultural groups in India.

Another reason for creation of new states was that it would strengthen the federal structure of the country. Formation of states on ethnic, cultural and other grounds has been justified on the ground that it will strengthen the federal structure. Indian response to the movement for separate state reorganization has strengthened the federal structure and helped in nation building.

The supporters of state reorganization had an opinion that reorganization of states on cultural, ethnic and language grounds will help to promote democratic ethos. It has been argued that the smaller states will be administratively more efficient and would be easy to manage. This connotation is not true in the new states created to bring efficiency as they are still caught in bureaucratic and political autocracy. Reshuffling of



states boundaries have been done in India on the rationale that it would help to promote economic development. Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Uttaranchal is said to be based on the criteria of economic development. Ethnic and cultural groups reside side by side in various states and so it is illogical to draw boundaries on the basis of ethnicity.

Demand for separate statehood in India has spurred up from time to time and there have been many reasons for these demands. The first factor was there was no rational basis of statehood at the time of Independence. At the time of Independence, India was divided into 10 British provinces and 565 princely states. These were further divided into 27 states under three category; Part A states were the former Governors' provinces of British India and were ruled by elected Governors and comprised state legislature. Part B states were the former princely states governed by Rajpramukh, who were earlier rulers of states. Part C states included both, British provinces and princely states, governed by chief commissioner appointed by the President. Thus we see that there was no rational basis for state formation in India at the time of Independence.

Second factor was lack of democratic and decentralized system of governance. Concentration of authority and resources at central and state has created the problem of developmental imbalance and ignorance of certain portion of population. The issue of having state language on the basis of majority led to the thought that certain sections of population can dominate and challenge the cultural and ethnic identity. Government failed to rule out these insecurities and in some way fueled to increase suspicion. This was also an undemocratic move as it did not take into consideration the will and concerns of the minority population living there.

Third important factor for demand for new states was lack of government attention



towards the development issues. Government of India failed to pay equal attention towards the development of all the regions and help to promote balanced growth of all the states. We can see as the case of North-East so the case of Telangana. The government both central and state paid no heed towards the development of the region knowing the fact that the region needs attention. Political conflicts in Telangana and Gorkhaland broke out after failure in redistribution of resources.(Ashutosh Kumar,2010)

Another important factor that created and instigated the demand for separation is election propoganda to win votes. Various demands for statehood were politically motivated and the political groups made it an electoral issue to gain votes or gain power in newly formed states. Sanjib Baruah in his work 'On Evolution of Ethnic Conflicts in Assam' has argued that the State was ruthlessly divided to serve the electoral objectives of congress party. Harihar Bhattacharyya in his article 'India creates three new states' said that the creation of Chhatisgarh is an example to this where the two major political parties (Congress and BJP) made it an issue of electoral promise.

The last factor that propelled such demand is identity issue. The identity differences in India were never projected by the political class in a correct manner. Language, ethnicity and cultural differences have been looked upon for empowerment and therefore became a benchmark to attain development, peace and prosperity. India has always been divided on such basis and this appealed the people.

Let us now see the reasons behind the reorganization of states in India in detail:

One important reason behind state reorganization was that separate statehood on the basis of cultural and language differences will promote a sense of security among



various identity groups. The first demand for statehood was based on language in 1950s. The state reorganization commission formed in 1956 recommended the re-organisation of state on linguistic lines giving a rationale that creation of such cultural homogeneous states would create a sense of security among diverse cultural groups in India. Creation of states on basis of language did not prove effective and the ethnic clashes within states are still taking place. In various states some language groups comprises two to five percent of the population and they feel threatened by the majority language groups.

Another reason for creation of new states was that it would strengthen the federal structure of the country. Formation of states on ethnic, cultural and other grounds has been justified on the ground that it will strengthen the federal structure. Indian response to the movement for separate state reorganization has strengthened the federal structure and helped in nation building. Federalism does not mean having more states on any irrational ground. If we understand federalism in the sense that each identity group should have its own states, this form of federalism in such a heterogeneous society in India is hard to establish. J.S. Mill in Representative Government (1861) argued that, a language is a nation, and has sought the example of German and Italian nationalities. India cannot follow this to achieve the concept of the nation state has come under scrutiny over the past half century or so.

The supporters of state reorganization had an opinion that reorganization of states on cultural, ethnic and language grounds will help to promote democratic ethos. Reorganization of states and creation of new states been advocated in India on the basis that it would ensure greater participation of the marginalized sections of population and encourage democracy. This rationale for state reorganization was not



effective. Voting percentage is low in Indian states. There is widespread corruption and the outcomes of economic prosperity and development have not reached the lower strata. The tribal and vulnerable groups in Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and other states are still in the margins either in terms of development or political participation.

A COMPARATIVE STUDY

It has been argued that the smaller states will be administratively more efficient and would be easy to manage. This connotation is not true in the new states created to bring efficiency as they are still caught in bureaucratic and political autocracy. Many big states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Punjab and Karnataka are comparatively more administratively efficient than the north east, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh. Having smaller states does not mean divorcing that small unit from the main administrative structure. Further the small units are more politically unstable than the larger ones. In Jharkhand and Uttaranchal many government had fallen which led to stumbling the development of the State. For example in Jharkhand six people has served as State's Chief Minister since formation (2000). Babulal Marandi of BJP then Arjun Munda (BJP) longest serving Chief Minister over five years across three terms, Shibu Soren (Jharkhand Murti Morcha [JMM]) ten days, then Madhu Koda (independent). In between their reign the state has been under President's rule three times. Raghubar Das (BJP) completed his term and Hemant Soren (JMM) the incumbent Chief Minister. In Uttarakhand since formation nine Chief Minister served the state. Six of them, Nityanabd Swami and Tirath Singh Rawat represented Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) rest was from Indian National Congress (INC).

Reshuffling of states boundaries have been done in India on the rationale that it would



help to promote economic development. Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Uttaranchal is said to be based on the criteria of economic development. The reorganization of states in the North East region has been done to address the challenge of development in the region. These states have become spot of scams and corruptions. The marginalized class has got very less in terms of development.

We can see from the above rationale behind state reorganization have failed to bring changes in the Indian system. It has further worsened the situation and resulted into further demands on irrational grounds and pose a threat to democracy.

Prof. Ashutosh Kumar in his article titled 'Exploring the Demand for New States' (Kumar, 2010) has spoken about four measures while looking at an appropriate policy framework.

A permanent entity second State Reorganisation Commission may be considered as a constitutional body with quasi – judicial power. Popular support can be ascertain to amend the constitution so that any legislative measures to alter, diminish, increase and create a new state should not arise from the state legislature and not from centre.

Apart from political considerations economic and social viability must be given primacy. Certain clear cut parameters to check the demands that are now cropping up in the wake of the Telangana episode, it should be better to allow democratic concerns like development, decentralization and governance rather than religion, caste, language or dialect to be the valid basis for the demands for a new state.

Studies that employ interstate comparative method to look for the commonalities and differences in the politics of two or more comparable states, and then armed with their



findings, reflect and theorize on a broader canvass would fall into the third category. These studies are based on the assumption that the regional states in India provide an ideal environment for the purpose of a comparative analysis, provided that the units are autonomous and homogeneous for the purpose of the study and the cases are selected in a manner that minimizes bias. To avoid generalization, a comparativist working on India would do well to undertake concrete analysis of specific situations in two or more regions that are highly localized and then look for differences and not merely adding up the similarities. It would not only enable to reframe the whole debate but also interrogate the conventional formulation of ideas that have derived from an analysis that took region state as unit of analysis. Regions within the states are not merely politico-administrative instituted constructs but any meaningful comparative study of the regions would amalgamate political sociological and political economy approaches from different disciplines and not merely from political science. Taking small regions within states would give a view that smaller pictures are not lost amongst the bigger ones and it would further enrich the discipline of state politics.

A new state succeeds or does not succeeds depends upon specific combination. 1) the presence of a strong popular movement 2) a history of systematic neglect of the region 3) the existence of a distinct socio - cultural identity. History speaks in favour of small states for success story like Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. The creation of the above three new states had definitely led to imbalance in the infrastructural facilities but highlight of all positive points with no disadvantages cannot be the magical connotation so both has to be accommodated.

The three states Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Uttaranchal came to be formed on three grounds according to Louise Tillin, first, change arose from the way in which the new



social movements formed in many parts of India in early 1970's. Statehood demands gradually received support from parts of historic social movements and a newer generation of non- Congress politicians. Second, changes relates to the challenges to upper caste political dominance in the Hindi heartland, a process that has been described by Christophe Jaffrelot as a 'silent revolution'. Third, BJP changed their approach to federalism and states reorganization as they negotiated their emergence as a national party that could convincingly challenge Congress as a claimant to power in New Delhi.

The politics of statehood debates in Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra underlines the fact that the story of state creation in 2000 had root in political changes underway in Hindi heartland states in 1980s and 1990s with the mobilization of lower castes. With linguistic communities of Telegu and Marathi speakers made it less likely that state division would become a subject around which political consensus would emerge, because the existence of strong regional pan-state electoral coalitions. Like Telangana the four districts of Marathwada were part of Hyderabad state. Both the merger involved the linguistic angle, the Congress party interest and above all, purported to the cultural, economic and political differences which had existed for hundreds of years. The condition of merger, the Gentlemen's Agreement on Telangana is similar to the Nagpur Agreement. But unlike the former the latter was enshrined in Article 371(2) of the Constitution in 1956. Again in 1994, Presidential Order was issued making the Governor responsible for supervision and allocation of Plan funds to Vidarbha and Marathwada again unlike in Telangana.

Vidarbha and Telangana show us that culture, politics and development are very local and when such alliances do not work satisfactorily over five decades, separation is



better than to continue with bitterness.

Prof Bibek Tamang and Sangmu Thendup of Sikkim University, Gangtok in a piece 'Demerger and Statehood' have written about the demand for a separate Gorkhaland and how it is similar to Telangana movement. They said that, instead of calling it separation it should be called as demerger. Both Telangana and Gorkhaland were merged with Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal in the initial organization of states. And now they are just being demerged. Separation invokes anger, violence etc whereas demerger is just a much more normal process. This article argues against the use of the term separatism to describe the demand of the Indian Gorkhas and instead suggest the terms "merger" and "demerger".

It can be said that though Gorkhaland Movement is a movement for separate state but as long as the Nepalese and the Bengalis can live peacefully in this multicultural set up autonomy is not desired. Telangana peoples' movement demanded a separate state for Telangana and it was created as desired as greater Andhra always took advantage over Telangana region.

In Bodoland, the discriminatory, oppressive and violent Bodo rule has not provided any protection to the ethnic or linguistic minorities or provided them with any scope in the governance of the region. To be precise, the BTC (Boroland Territorial Council) has delivered misgovernance: dismal law and order, the failure to arrest persistent violence, very discriminatory delivery of services to the non-Bodos and soon. The region has seen displacement and death of hundreds of thousands of people.

Like the Telangana case, the Bodoland case underscores the inadequacy of language as a basis to hold people together in a state. More importantly, it reflects the



implications of the process of granting territorial recognition in a complicated multiethnic demographic region and the limits and pitfalls of the territorial autonomy principle at work. In fact, the case study clearly reflects that grant of territorial recognition to nearly any identity marker is a very poor adaptation of Indian federalism which paves the way for political opportunism and short-sighted policies which are self-defeating.

If we compare Telangana and Bodoland volatile coalition politics served as a political opportunity structure in which ethnic rebels and elites could mobilize of their own and provided the common ground in their formation. Telangana being a very old case, statehood could not be achieved during the dominance of the Congress party at the Centre. The Bodoland demand also grew out of a very specific history, memory and experience in Assam, but here too ethnic elites used coalition governments at the state and Central level in order to seek political opportunities and shifted their focus from recognition of a cultural identity to political recognition. In both cases, no specific principle but a combination of factors was followed in conceding statehood or sub-statehood. In Telangana, the majority and dominant Telegu speaking elites got their state; in Bodoland, an ethnic minority was elevated to a political majority in the BTC at the expense of a numerical majority in Bodoland and the rest of Assam. Both of these cases also illustrate that ethnic conflicts have been sought to be resolved by territorializing them, which is a long-standing method of conflict solving in India.

In Jharkhand and Uttarakhand movement politicians sought to achieve a variety of goals including demobilization of mass protest, the undercutting of potential opponents in the electoral sphere as well as attempting to capitalize on the sense of moral community engendered by activity of the social movement. The distinctiveness



of the Uttarakhand movement was that it was not confined to a particular segment of society, but rather it cut across regions, castes, classes and political parties. We do not find such a vast attribute in case of Telangana movement, though it was a movement of the people but it was mostly confined to a particular segment of people either students took an active part or the leader of the local party or the ministers in the parliament. So, mostly the upper class people took an active part. Uttarakhand movement gathered momentum with the help of national parties. As far as the leadership is concerned unlike the Telangana movement the Uttarakhand movement was spearheaded by national parties like Communist Party of India (1952), the Janata Party in 1970s and the Bharatiya Janata Party since 1990s.

The Telangana and Uttarakhand experience brings to the forefront the definite changes in dynamics of the movements in terms of character, focus, leadership and above all, the criteria of granting Statehood to regional movements. The nature of identities has shifted from culture to economic concern. Globalization has brought competition among and between various states, this has developed the regional identities who feel that until and unless their voices are raised they will be silenced by the dominated regions. The Telangana and the Uttarakhand experiences truly show that globalization has led to greater federalization of regions by the new identity consciousness grounded in the need for socio- economic development. The competitive attitude of the regions for autonomy in globalised era has led to the erosion of primordial loyalties, which was noticed in Uttarakhand movement shaped by the politics of rights, resources and recognition. Telangana emerged as a state of the Indian Union in 2014, and the Garwal-Kumaon region has already been successful in bringing about its autonomy within a broad constitutional framework through the formation of a separate state in 2000.



In case of the reassertion of the Jharkhand Statehood demand the factors which come up are:

- a) The election of a non–Congress government in Bihar after Emergency in 1977, and of ex-Jana Sangh politicians in Jharkhand as part of this government, created space in electoral politics for a reconsideration of the Jharkhand demand.
- b) Competition within the Jharkhand movement itself.
- c) From the late 1980's the BJP began to consolidate its presence electorally in Jharkhand at a time when it was expanding nationally.

The third factor explains the preeminence of the statehood demand in the 1980's was the rise of BJP. In 1980 elections BJP won eleven seats to the Bihar State Assembly. JMM (Jharkhand Murti Morcha) also contested for elections for the first time in 1980. The local leadership pushed BJP to adopt the demand for statehood in order to be able to better compete with the JMM. But in case of Telangana the ascendancy of a regional party with an electoral appeal lessened the likelihood that the state would or could be bifurcated in 2000. The answer to the question of why BJP did not pursue the creation of Telangana once it came to power was that the central government was reliant on the support from outside, of MPs from the Telegu Desham Party led by Chandrababu Naidu, which was opposed for bifurcating Andhra Pradesh. It should be notified that in the BJP's election manifestos in 1990 once the party began to provide official backing to individual statehood demands elsewhere the creation of Telangana was absent from its manifesto. This was surprising as because the demand for statehood for Telangana in the late 1960s which has encouraged Jana Sangh to start to embrace abstract arguments in favour of state reorganization. The Telangana movement in spite of



being in momentum within the region BJP did not even favour the creation of separate state as in 1980's and 1990's BJP was weak across Andhra Pradesh.

Unlike the case of Jharkhand, the BJP itself had a weak electoral base in Andhra Pradesh in 1980's and 1990's. When BJP did substantially increase the number of seats contested in 1994 still it did not make inroads by winning seats. In 1997, the BJP's state executive passed resolution for Telangana statehood, in 1998 local politicians found no place in its national election manifesto.

BJP came to power in 1998 and moved ahead by creating new state in Jharkhand, it had not laid the kind of ground work in Andhra Pradesh as it had in these regions. This helps explain why the demand for Telangana was not high up the BJP's agenda.

Unlike Jharkhand and Uttarakhand, statehood was given to region in which public clamour for a change in state borders had been historically extremely limited. The idea of statehood in this region has delineated the competing ideologies and political motives that influenced a number of actors to float the idea of statehood, or to appeal to a Chhattisgarh identity. From the earliest call for a separate state, the demand has been often raised by politicians, often kurmis, resentful of the dominance of Congress politics in the region by a narrow identity. A Chhattisgarhi identity has been used to denote a large set of social groupings falling into category Schedule Castes (SC), Schedule Tribes (ST), Other Backward Castes (OBC) categories that are seen as local by contrast with the outsiders. Who occupy upper echelons of both Congress and the BJP? The effect of convergence in the favour of statehood by late 1990s was to weaken the strong association of any particular social group. The idea of statehood took place in a period of political transition, in which party competition had opened up with the rotation of power between Congress and BJP.



So from the above discussion we find that there was no such movement or demand for statehood took place as it took place in Telangana .Conditions were rather different than those which faced the BJP led NDA (National Democratic Alliance) government when it created Chhattisgarh. It must be remembered that the states created in 2000 was not created in close proximity to intense pro-statehood agitations, so the longer term future of Telangana may look different.

Once the BJP came behind the demand for Chhattisgarh fully, an attempt to create state with an expansion of the party's social base was downplayed. In some way, support for Chhattisgarh's statehood was a way for the BJP to adapt a post-Mandal environment though the BJP's official rationale for statehood highlighted the question of 'regional neglect'. In Telangana statehood demand has been back on the political agenda since the early 2000. During the 2000s, the idea of statehood for Telangana became pawn in electoral competition in Andhra Pradesh. Political parties in opposition at state level made opportunistic use of the Telangana issue as they sought to put pressure on the leadership of the state. This was not seen in case of Chhattisgarh state formation.

From the above discussion of statehood of the three states we can conclude by saying that the statehood emerged between historic social movements and political parties representing different socio-economic interests in the regions of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand. Statehood was granted after some grass-root mobilization (not in Chhattisgarh). The achievement of statehood was not necessarily experienced on the ground as the direct or tangible outcome of popular struggle. The result of state creation reflects some of the ambiguity involved in the process itself. The creation of new states has not necessarily produced federal units with more homogeneous



preferences.

The Telangana problem may be brought up for the pertinent grounds of inequality, backwardness, lack of development, discrimination in the distribution of funding for irrigation and job creation, as well as the persistent deceit of politicians. Telangana has been treated unfairly in terms of resource distribution, development initiatives, and job creation since Andhra Pradesh was created. (B. Janardhan Rao: 1997: Development Disparities and the people of Telangana: 20) Denying Telangana and Telanganites participation in economic, political, social, and cultural decision-making is another example of injustice and prejudice. Telangana is actually more than just a territorial conflict. It is the outcome of uneven development over a number of historical eras. Telangana state separation efforts have been continuous. The writer (Sreenivas, T.: 2018: The Demand for New states in Indian Federalism: A Case Study of Telangana State: International Journal of Science and Research: 839) tries to bring out the demand for separate Telangana through field survey in the districts of Mahaboobnagar & Warangal and Universities of Palamoor and Kakatiya also in view to analyze the opinion of rural people at panchayat level and understand the aspirations of students, TJAC (Telangana Joint Action Committee) activists who have played crucial role in the Telangana movement over the requirement of separate statehood was also highlighted.

Through the study the writer (T. Sreenivas) tries to bring out an important thing that the demand for statehood needs to be addressed firstly with the feeling of discrimination among the people, along with the real and existing discrimination as well. Moreover, it is not possible to suppress the demand for smaller states across the country permanently. Though oppressed for time being, genuine steps need to be taken to



solve the known differences and imbalances between the regions otherwise it is impossible to stop the upcoming demands for statehood. The TRS (Telangana Rashtra Samiti) government has fulfilled the symbolic and emotional needs of the people for recognition of their identity through realization of separate state of Telangana.

CONCLUSION

Demand for and formation of new states had become a regular phenomenon in democratic polity of our country. The constitutional provision under Article 3 was incorporated with a generous idea to realize geographical and economic unification aspirations of people and an instrument to achieve electoral gains. This situation has given the scope of frequent demands for the creation of new states. The formation of the new states on the regional sentiments always has been a sensitive issue in Indian Union. It needs to be addressed with care and understanding with different problems that exists. Vulnerability towards national unity has been a strong factor for hesitation of the union government from creation of newer states despite strong demands for it.

This article therefore points out the rationale for the demand for smaller states in India. Telangana movement has been compared with that of other movements for separate states. While comparing the movements it was noticed that no movements were so much long lived like that of Telangana. And in comparing the three (Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Uttarakhand) states in terms of development we find that the newly formed states are more developed than the mother states after bifurcation. So we can say that the Telangana movement was a movement of the people and the participation of the people in each and every sphere though at a small scale, was alluring which resulted in fruitful outcome, i.e. a separate identity, the state.



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