

## **A Review of the Issue of the Reorganization of the States in India**

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**Abstract:** It is a well-known fact that at the time of independence in 1947, India consisted of 571 disjointed princely states and the grouping of states at the time was done on the basis of political and historical considerations rather than on linguistic or cultural divisions, but this was a temporary arrangement. Therefore, in 1953 the first linguistic state of Andhra for Telugu-speaking people was born. There were also similar demands for creation of states on linguistic basis from other parts of the country. Therefore, on December 22, 1953, Jawaharlal Nehru appointed a commission under Fazl Ali to consider these new demands which submitted its report in 1955 and it suggested that the whole country be divided into 16 states and three centrally administered areas. But the government, divided the country into 14 states and 6 union territories under the States Reorganization Act that was passed in November 1956. Then, in 1960, the state of Bombay was bifurcated to create the states of Gujarat and Maharashtra following violence and agitation. The process of bifurcation continued and total number of the states reached at 29 and union territories at 7 till 2014. The present research paper makes a review of the issue of reorganization of the state in Indian federalism.

**Keywords:** Statehood, Linguistic State, State Reorganization Act, Demand for Separate States.

**Introduction:** The fact is that the States of India were originally formed as a result of historical accidents and circumstances because after independence there has been a growing demand for reorganisation of the States on more rational basis, in the context of not only from financial, economic and administrative management of independent India but also due to the growing importance of regional languages. For the first time, the States Reorganisation Commission (SRC) was constituted in 1953 to go into this problem and to recommend the principles and broad guidelines on which the States can be reorganised. The Commission submitted its report

in September, 1955. To give effect to the scheme of reorganisation which emerged from the consideration of the proposals contained in the Report, the States Reorganisation Act, 1956, was enacted by the Parliament under Article 4 of the Constitution of India.

The new States formed as a result of the reorganisation of States in 1956 were Andhra Pradesh, Bombay Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Madras, Mysore, Punjab and Rajasthan. Thereafter the Parliament had also enacted various Reorganisation Acts from time to time i.e the Bombay Reorganisation Act in 1960; The Punjab Reorganisation Act in 1966; the State of Himadhal Pradesh Reorganisation Act in 1970 and North-Eastern States reorganisation Act in 1971. The latest in this category are the Reorganisation Acts of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar which were enacted by the Parliament in November, 2000. Furthermore the state of Telangana was formed in 2014. Consequently there are 29 states and 7 union territories in Indian federal system.

Here it is to say that the case for linguistic states as administrative units was very strong. Language is closely related to culture and therefore to the customs of people. Besides, the massive spread of education and growth of mass literacy can only occur through the medium of the mother tongue. Nehru appointed in August 1953 the States Reorganization Commission (SRC), with Justice Fazl Ali, K.M. Panikkar and Hridaynath Kunzru as members, to examine 'objectively and dispassionately' the entire question of the reorganization of the states of the union. Throughout the two years of its work, the Commission was faced with meetings, demonstrations, agitations, and hunger strikes. But the different linguistic groups clashed with each other, verbally as well as sometimes physically. The SRC submitted its report in October 1955. While laying down that due consideration should be given to administrative and economic factors, it recognized for the most part the linguistic principle and recommended redrawing of state boundaries on that basis. The Commission, however, opposed the splitting of Bombay and Punjab. Despite strong reaction to the report in many parts of the country, the SRC's recommendations were accepted, though with certain modifications, and were quickly implemented. The States Reorganization Act was passed by parliament in November 1956. It provided for fourteen states and six centrally administered territories. The Telengana area of

Hyderabad state was transferred to Andhra; merging the Malabar district of the old Madras Presidency with Travancore-Cochin created Kerala. Certain Kannada-speaking areas of the states of Bombay, Madras, Hyderabad and Coorg were added to the Mysore state. Merging the states of Kutch and Saurashtra and the Marathi-speaking areas of Hyderabad with it enlarged Bombay state.

The strongest reaction against the SRC's report and the States Reorganization Act came from Maharashtra where widespread rioting broke out and eighty people were killed in Bombay city in police firings in January 1956. The opposition parties supported by a wide spectrum of public opinion—students, farmers, workers, artists, and businesspersons—organized a powerful protest movement. Under pressure, the government decided in June 1956 to divide the Bombay state into two linguistic states of Maharashtra and Gujarat with Bombay city forming a separate, centrally administered state.

But even after the SRC submitted its report in 1956 and several states having been reorganised on its basis, the following decades witnessed demands for reorganisation of other states. Maharashtra and Gujarat were created in 1960, Haryana and Punjab in 1966, Nagaland in 1963, several states in the north-east during the years 1970-80 and Goa in 1992 and lastly Chhatisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand in 2000 and Telangana in 2014.

**Constitutional Provisions:** Actually, Indian constitution empowers the Union government to create new states out of existing states or two merge one state with other. This process is called reorganisation of the states. The basis of reorganisation could be linguistic, religious, ethnic or administrative. Article 3 provides the following procedure:

- Presidential reference is sent to State Assembly.
- After presidential reference, a resolution is tabled and passed in Assembly.
- Assembly has to pass a Bill creating the new State/States.
- A separate Bill has to be ratified by Parliament.

**Dhar Commission:** We know it very well that the integration and merger of princely states was purely ad hoc arrangement and there was need for reorganization of states on a permanent

basis on account of the haphazard growth of provinces, disparity between various states and multilingual nature of the states. In 1948, the government appointed a commission under S K Dhar, a judge of the Allahabad High Court, to examine the case for the reorganization of states on the linguistic basis. Admitting the importance of the reorganization of states on a linguistic basis, the commission, however, attached more importance to historical, geographical and economic considerations. It favoured reorganization on the basis of administrative convenience rather than linguistic considerations.

**JVP Committee:** In December, 1948, Congress appointed a committee under Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel and Pattabhi Sitaramayya (known as the JVP Committee) to examine the issue afresh. The committee, in a report submitted in April, 1949, dismissed the idea of reorganization on a linguistic basis. However the committee stated that the problem may be re-examined in the light of public demand.

**First Linguistic State:** In 1953, the government was forced to create a separate state of Andhra Pradesh for Telugu-speaking people following the long-drawn agitation and death of Potti Srimulu after a hunger strike for 56 days. Thus, the first linguistic state of Andhra Pradesh was created under pressure.

**Fazl Commission:** This led to the demand for creation of states on linguistic basis from other parts of country and on December 22, 1953, Jawaharlal Nehru announced the appointment of a commission under Fazl Ali to consider this demand. The other two members of the commission were K M Panikkar and HN Kunzru. The commission submitted its report after taking into account the wishes and claims of people in different regions. It recommended the reorganization of the whole country into sixteen states and three centrally administered areas. However, the government did not accept these recommendations in toto. While accepting Commission's recommendation to do away with the four-fold distribution of states as provided under the original Constitution, it divided the country into 14 states and 6 union territories under the States Reorganization Act 1956. The states were Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Bombay, Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Madras, Mysore, Orissa, Punjab,

Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. The six union territories were Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Lakshadweep, Minicoy and Amindivi Islands, Manipur and Tripura. The Act was implemented in November, 1956.

**Shah Commission:**In 1966, the Parliament passed the Punjab Reorganization Act after an agitation for the formation of Punjabi Subha. This step was taken on the recommendation of the Shah Commission appointed in April, 1966. As a result of this act, the Punjabi-speaking areas were constituted into the state of Punjab with the Punjabi speaking areas and other area into the state of Haryana. Chandigarh was made a Union Territory and was to serve as a common capital of Punjab and Haryana. The two states were also to have a common High Court, common university and joint arrangement for the management of the major components of the existing irrigation and power system. With the division of Punjab, the strength of states rose to 17.

**Demand for New States:**However, the Government of India has taken many effective steps to make a review of the demand for the new states. In this perspective we may point out that in 2011, then UP Chief Minister and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief, Mayawati, passed a resolution in the Assembly to split UP into four smaller states – Purvanchal, Bundelkhand, Awadh Pradesh and Paschim Pradesh – in the interest of providing better administration. The resolution later got stuck with the Congress government at the centre.

**Harit Pradesh:** It consists agriculturally dominated districts of Western Uttar Pradesh.

**Purvanchal:** It is a geographic region of north-central India, which comprises the eastern end of Uttar Pradesh state. It is bounded by Nepal to the north, Bihar state to the east, Bagelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh state to the south, the Awadh region of Uttar Pradesh to the west. Purvanchal comprises three divisions – Awadhi region in the west, Bhojpuri region in the east and the Baghelkhand region in the south.

**Boddland:** The Bodos are the largest ethnic and linguistic community in northern Assam. The agitation for the creation of a separate Bodoland state resulted in an agreement in 2003 between the Govt, the Assam state government and the Bodo Liberation Tigers Force. According

to the agreement, Bodos were granted the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), within the State of Assam under Sixth Schedule.

**Saurashtra:** The movement for separate Saurashtra state was initiated in 1972 by Ratilal Tanna. Lack of better water supply to the region, lack of job opportunities and subsequent youth migration have been cited as major reasons for the demand of statehood. Saurashtra is also linguistically different from the rest of the state.

**Gorkhaland:** It is a proposed state covering areas inhabited by the ethnic Gorkha (Nepali) people, namely Darjeeling hills and Dooars in the northern part of West Bengal.

**Conclusion:** Thus we can point out that the Government of India has fulfilled the demand of the new states on many occasions in the India federation. Likewise, economic and social viability rather than political considerations have been given primacy. Parent states that lose out in terms of physical and human capital have adequately been compensated. However, there are some certain clear-cut parameters and safeguards to check the unfettered demands under the Constitution of India. Therefore, it is better to allow democratic concerns like development, decentralisation and governance rather than religion, caste, language or dialect to be the valid bases for conceding the demands for a new state. Apart from this the fundamental problems of development and governance deficit such as concentration of power, corruption, administrative inefficiency etc. must be addressed. In this regard, the central government should adopt all safety measures for the strong federal system in the country.

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