

# REGIONAL DISPARITY AND REGIONAL ASSERTION: ANALYZING SEPARATE STATEHOOD MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

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*Regional disparities appear to be discreetly guiding some of the separate statehood movements in India. Despite the efforts which have been made by the Finance Commission and the Planning Commission to remove regional inequality, regional disparity has continued. Besides disparities in development at the All-India level, disparities also exist within each state. This inequality has led to sub-regional movements for separate states within the Indian Union, or greater autonomy for the sub-regions within the existing states. These feelings of regional disparities played a key role in the demands for separate statehood of Uttarakhand, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh respectively, though the tribal and linguistic factors were also important. This paper tries to analyze regional disparity and regional assertion as driving forces behind separate statehood movements in India. The demand for state reorganization and creation of new states has to be viewed basically as issues arising out of regional injustice. New movements for separate statehood within the Union of India can be curbed if concrete measures are taken to solve the problem of regional disparities within each state.*

**Keywords:** State, Region, Development.

## INTRODUCTION

### STATEHOOD FORMATION IN INDEPENDENT INDIA

In the period immediately following independence, India retained most of the administrative structure established by the British. The first map of India after independence left the boundaries of the provinces of British India, mainly untouched, with the exception of the merger of their territories with the territories of the princely states. However, the language question did not subside. The speakers of Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada and Marathi began raising the demands for separate statehood. In November 1947, the Nehru Government appointed the Linguistic Provinces Commission headed by Justice S.K. Datta to study the practicality of linguistic provinces. In December 1948, the Datta Commission reported to the Constituent Assembly. Not only did the Datta Commission express itself strongly against any reorganization being undertaken in the prevailing circumstances but also held that the formation of provinces exclusively or even mainly on linguistic considerations would be inadvisable. According to the Commission, in the formation of provinces the emphasis should be primarily on administrative convenience. The Commission stressed that everything which helped the growth of nationalism had to go forward and everything which impeded it had to be rejected or should stand over.

After the Datta Commission had submitted its report, the Indian National Congress Congress appointed at its Jaipur Session, the JVP Committee in December 1948 comprising of Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel and Pattabhi Sitaramayya, President of Congress to examine the question afresh. The JVP Committee did not consider the time opportune for reorganization. However, the Committee admitted that if public sentiment compelled them, they would have to concede to it, bearing certain

limitations in the interest of India as a whole and other conditions specified by them. The JVP Report was followed by popular movements all over the country. The JVP Committee had suggested that a beginning could be made with Andhra. The Committee had however suggested that disputed areas should not be included in the new provinces. A separate state of Andhra Pradesh came into existence in October 1953 with Telugu as its language. However Madras city which was a disputed area was not to form part of Andhra. After the death of Shri Potti Sriramulu, the Government of India announced its decision to establish the State of Andhra “consisting of the Telugu speaking areas of the present Madras State but not including the City of Madras”.

In August 1953 Nehru appointed the States Reorganization Commission (SRC) which submitted its report in October 1955. The Commission consisted of three members – Justice Fazl Ali, chairman Dr. H.N. Kunzru and K.M. Pannikar. The Commission conducted a fact finding survey covering 104 places. It received and examined 152,250 documents from various organizations and individuals. The Commission while framing its recommendation was guided by the considerations of the preservation of unity and security of India, linguistic and cultural homogeneity, financial, economic and administrative considerations, and the successful working of the national plans

The Commission suggested the redrawing of India's map into a total number of 16 states as compared to the present 27. It recommended that the North-East Frontier Agency (the tribal region on the Indo-Burmese border), the islands off Indian shores and Delhi be placed under federal control. However, among the 16 states that the Commission proposed, only two were to be bi-lingual: Punjab and Bombay. The Commission also recommended that out of the present Hyderabad State, three states be formed for the Malayalam, Kannada and Marathi speaking peoples.

The States Reorganization Act was passed by Parliament in November 1956. The Act created 14 states and 6 centrally administered areas. Under the Act, Telangana was transferred to Andhra. Kerala was created by merging the Malabar district of the Old Madras Presidency with Travancore- Cochin. Certain Kannada speaking areas of the states of Bombay, Madras, Hyderabad and Coorg were added to the Mysore State. Bombay state was enlarged by merging the states of Kutch and Saurashtra and the Marathi- speaking areas of Hyderabad with it. In May 1960, Bombay was bifurcated into Maharashtra and Gujarat with Bombay City being included in Maharashtra, and Ahmedabad being made the capital of Gujarat. In 1966, Punjab was divided into Punjab and Haryana with the Pahari-speaking district of Kangra and a part of the Hoshuarpur district being merged with Himachal Pradesh. Chandigarh was made a Union Territory and the joint capital of Punjab and Haryana.

## **REGIONAL DISPARITIES: A KEY FACTOR GUIDING SEPARATE STATEHOOD MOVEMENTS IN INDIA**

From the beginning the National Government felt a responsibility to counter the imbalance in regional development. The Finance Commission and the Planning Commission were intended to remove regional inequality. However regional disparity continued. Besides, disparities in development at the All- India level, disparities have also persisted within each state. This inequality has given rise to sub-regional movements for separate states within the Indian Union, or greater autonomy for the sub-regions within the existing states. Such sub-regional feelings are characterized by the movements for Telanganain Andhra Pradesh, Vidarbha in Maharashtra, Saurashtra in Gujarat, Bundelkhandin Uttar Pradesh, Darjeeling district or Gorkhalandin West Bengal, Bodoland in Assam, and the areas consisting of the old princely states of Orissa. It is because of these regional feelings that Uttaranchal, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh were created out of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh respectively, though the tribal and linguistic factors were also important.

The people of the Chhattisgarh region of Madhya Pradesh felt that a separate state was imperative for development to take place in the region. When the States Reorganization Commission was set up in 1954, the demand for a separate Chhattisgarh was presented to it. However, this demand was not accepted on the grounds that the prosperity of Chhattisgarh would compensate for the poverty of the other regions of Madhya Pradesh. The people's demand which was expressed through democratic channels contributed greatly to the creation of Chhattisgarh.

The state of Jharkhand which came into existence on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2000 as the 28<sup>th</sup> state of the Indian Union is the homeland of tribals which they had dreamt of for centuries. Among the various regional movements for autonomy, Jharkhand movement is the oldest one. It started in the beginning of the second decade of the last century and passed through different stages. The Jharkhand movement for separate statehood had as its basis the lack of development in the Jharkhand region which was inhabited mainly by the Adivasis. The States Reorganization Commission pointed out that the creation of the state of Jharkhand would affect the economy of the existing state. The Commission found no deficiency in the development of the Jharkhand region and saw south Bihar as an industrial complement to the agricultural north Bihar. The Commission did not see any grounds for a separate administrative set-up for the tribal population in south Bihar as they, as they were a numerical minority in the region. Simultaneously it pointed out that the goal of administration and development programme was political and economic advancement of the whole population. Therefore, it was generally satisfied with the existing administrative arrangements in the region. From the viewpoint of the States Reorganization Commission, there was no problem with the development profile of the region. The relative development profile of the Jharkhand region was better than that of Bihar as a whole in the 1950s. It was only from the 1960s onwards that the development of the region suffered a setback or did not progress at the same rate as of Bihar as a whole.

In the political climate of the 1950s, with high expectations from the leaders of Independent India, the leaders of Jharkhand used the arguments of poor developing opportunities in the Jharkhand region and exploitation by Bihar to legitimize their demand for a separate state. Therefore, the issue of development became inevitably linked to the Jharkhandi identity. The development profile of the region of Jharkhand gradually deteriorated over the years and soon reached a point where developmental progress in the region became stagnant. With the passing years, the issue of poor performance of the public-policy delivery mechanism further widened the links between the issue of a separate state, the Jharkhandi identity, and the development issues. Nevertheless, after a prolonged struggle by the Jharkhandis the state of Jharkhand came into existence on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2000.

The Uttarakhand region comprising of the eight hilly districts located in the central Himalayan Zone was among the most underdeveloped regions of Uttar Pradesh. During the first five-year plan period, the Uttarakhand region was not covered under any developmental schemes either by the Central or State Government. With the onset of the third five-year plan, certain steps towards the development of this region were taken. The main objectives in this regard were reduction in inter-regional inequalities in several kinds of opportunities, optimum utilization of natural resources, fulfillment of need of area people and increasing the opportunity of employment and avenues of income in the region. High priority was suggested for the development of horticulture, diversification of agriculture, development of tourism, animal husbandry, minor irrigation, forestry, soil-conservation, development of local resource base industries, augmentation of various infrastructural facilities such as roads, power, marketing and credit and financial institutions and fulfillment of basic amenities such as drinking water, basic education and health facilities [Mehta, 1996, Pp. 181-182]. However, despite all these steps, the socio-economic profile of the region remained the same.

The main reason of the discontent of the Kumaun-Garhwal region was their dissatisfaction with the fact that the plain areas of this huge state have prospered at the cost of the neglect of the hill people. The roots of the movement for a separate state of Uttarakhand could be attributed to the very failure of the state-led developmental process to bring about any significant change in the lives of the poor people of the villages. The so-called hill development projects impoverished the hill districts and also created additional ecological burdens on the people. For instance, when the Union Government began constructing new roads along the Himalayan border to facilitate easy transport of armed personnel and equipment to the border areas, construction work was given to the contractors from the plain land who in turn hire workers from the plains thus denying the local people any employment. If any work was given to the locals, it involved manual labour with very low payment. The people of Uttarakhand have always considered the forests as their basic source of sustenance. However, forest policies denied rights of common property resources which were indicative of the hostile attitude of the State Government. For a very long period of time, scientific forestry symbolized the maximum extraction of timber and forest products from the Himalayas by the Government-sponsored private contractors which brought misery to the hill people. In the guise of progress, the hill areas witnessed large scale deforestation. The paharis ended up being deprived of their right to the forest as a source of livelihood. By the 1990s, the people of the hills were deprived of their rights to water, forests and land. There began the era of privatization of resources from local contractors to rich business contractors in partnership with the State Government [Mukherjee, 2016, Pp 233]. Uttaranchal was formally born on 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2000 as the 27<sup>th</sup> state of the Indian Union. Its creation brought to an end the struggle for a separate state of Uttarakhand, carved out of Uttar Pradesh, comprising the hill regions of Garhwal and Kumaon. It is significant to note that none of the above three states which were created in 2000 were created on linguistic grounds which had formed the basis for state reorganization in 1956. Rather it was mainly the issue of development which provided the momentum for separate statehood movements.

The newest state to be carved out -Telangana- is a classic example of regional injustice spearheading the movement for separate statehood of the region. It was the socio-economic neglect of the region and lack of concern for the marginalized especially the tribals, which spearheaded the movement for separate statehood for Telangana. The history of the Telangana movement may be seen as an unsuccessful exercise in integration of regions with different history, disparities in economic development, elites with varying capacities and conflicting goals. The common language was not able to unite the two regions even after half a century [Pingle, 2009]. Telangana was converted into an internal colony as a result of the economic development pursued by successive governments. Its resources were diverted and utilized for the development of other regions. The movement for separate statehood sought to articulate the demand for a fair share in the resources. It was an outcome of injustice meted out to the region by the successive governments in Andhra Pradesh. Separation was seen as the only answer to these grievances [Ram, 2007, Pp. 90-94].

After the creation of Uttarakhand, demands for several other states have surfaced in Uttar Pradesh. There have been demands for Poorvanchal, Harit Pradesh and Bundelkhand. Poorvanchal (eastern Uttar Pradesh) was one of the poorest regions of the country prior independence and its condition has not changed much after independence. Unemployment and poverty has been on the increase. This region is low in industrial development and agricultural output. The demand for a separate state of Harit Pradesh (Western Uttar Pradesh) began to be raised with regularity in the 1990s. The demand is that a separate state of Western Uttar Pradesh be carved out of present U.P. The agitation for Harit Pradesh is still in its infancy. Nevertheless, the people of this region cutting across socio-economic backgrounds would like to have a separate state of western UP as they feel that it would not only enable them to be nearer to the legal and administrative centres of the state but also provide

job opportunities to all sections of the society. The Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh is full of ravines infested with dacoits. It is sandwiched between the northern plains and the rocky soils of the Vindhya regions. It is unfit for agriculture and industry. The total area is 30 lakh hectares of which 24 lakh hectares is agricultural land, but cultivation is hampered by lack of irrigational facilities. Some of the big dams like Matatila, Rajghat, Sukhwan-Dukhwan and Dhasan have inundated large parts of the fertile land. Most farmers are totally dependent on rains. Unfortunately, Bundelkhand has just 60,000 hectares of forest cover which is fast depleting due to the reckless cutting of trees, and hence this region suffers from scanty rainfall and regular droughts. Regular droughts, crop failure, scanty rains, poor irrigation facilities, burden of agricultural and private loans, damage to dignity and worry about their families' future have led to farmer's suicides in Bundelkhand. Farmers' suicides coupled with other problems have led to demands for a separate Bundelkhand state to end its plight and make it more prosperous. It is worth noting that while the underlying factor guiding separate statehood movements in Poorvanchal and Bundelkhand has been the under-development of the region, in the case of Harit Pradesh it is the relative prosperity of this region vis-à-vis other regions that has been the central theme behind the demand for a separate state.

Vidarbha, the eastern part of Maharashtra is comparatively less developed than Western Maharashtra. The States' Reorganization Commission had suggested that there is sufficient evidence to prove that Vidarbha can be a stable and prosperous State even if it stands by itself. In the new linguistic reorganization of states in November 1956, the Marathi speaking districts of former Madhya Pradesh known as Vidarbha became an integral part of Maharashtra under "one language, one state formula". Since the States Reorganization Commission recommended the creation of Vidarbha State, the demand for Vidarbha state is raised from time to time. The leaders of newly created state of Maharashtra started with great fervor to develop all the regions, but in the process Vidarbha lagged behind [Pitale, R.L., 2009]. It was hoped that people speaking the same language will form cohesive units for rapid and balanced development. But the history of economic development of Maharashtra during the last 50 years has proved otherwise. The Vidarbha region has been systematically neglected as corroborated by the Planning Commission's Fact Finding Team Report while its resources are used for the benefit of the rest of Maharashtra. The grievance in the past and which continues is not only on account of the low productivity of Vidarbha's rainfed rural economy but also the discrimination and inequality between regions [Kumar, 2013].

The Coorg or Kodagu district of Karnataka has been home to a docile yet striking movement for separate statehood. The demand of this district of Karnataka for separate statehood has been guided by the feeling of the distinct socio-cultural identity of the people of this region coupled with the perception that the development of this region has been neglected by the state government. The Linguistic reorganization of states in 1956 united Coorg with the new Kanarese language state of Mysore, later renamed Karnataka. The majority Kanarese of Karnataka relegated Kodagu to the status of a remote backwater, neglected by state ministries and useful only for the coffee and oranges it exported. The neglect continued during the 1960s and 1970s, sparking a national movement beginning in the late 1970s.

## **POST STATEHOOD EXPERIENCES: A FOCUS ON CHHATTISGARH, JHARKHAND AND UTTARAKHAND**

A glance at the performance of the three states in certain critical quantitative areas reveals the progress that the states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand have made post-statehood. A comparison of the figures of 2001 and 2011 census shows that the literacy rates of all the three states have shown an upward trend post statehood. In the realm of employment, the total number of workers has increased. The agricultural production in terms of the yield of total cereals has improved.

The total road length in kilometers of all the three states has witnessed a significant increase. A comparison of the number of internet and broadband subscribers of 2002 and 2011 shows a massive upward trend. The Gross State Domestic Product has witnessed an increase in all the three states post statehood. (See Tables 1 to 6)

**Table 1- Literacy Rate**

State	2001 Census	2011 Census
Chhattisgarh	64.66%	71.04%
Jharkhand	53.6%	67.63%
Uttarakhand	71.60%	79.63%

Source: Census Data, Censusindia.gov.in

A Comparison of the census figures of 2001 and 2011 shows that the literacy rate of the state of Chhattisgarh has increased from 64.66% to 71.04%. The state of Jharkhand has witnessed an upward climb in the literacy rate from 53.6% to 67.63%. The literacy rate in the state of Uttarakhand shows an increase from 71.60% to 79.63%.

**Table 2- Labour/Employment: Total Number of Workers**

State	2001 Census	2011 Census
Chhattisgarh	9,679,871	12,180,225
Jharkhand	10,109,030	13,098,74
Uttarakhand	3,134,036	3,872,275

source: Census data,Censusindia.gov.in

A glance at the census data of 2001 and 2011 shows that the total number of workers in Chhattisgarh has increased from 9,679, 871 to 12,180,225 persons. The number of workers in Jharkhand has increased from 10,109,030 to 13,098,74 persons. In Uttarakhand, the number of workers has gone up from 3,134, 036 to 3,872,275 persons.

**Table 3- Agricultural Production: Yield of Total Cereals (Kg/Hectare)**

State	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Chhattisgarh	619	1,239	685	1,369	1,109	1,254	1,281	1,381
Jharkhand	1,114	1,214	1,078	1,645	1,345	1,159	1,712	1,906
Uttarakhand	1,740	1,777	1,550	1,714	1,745	1,608	1,823	1,852

Source: Central Statistical Organization

Table 3 shows that the agricultural production in terms of yield of total cereals in the state of Chhattisgarh has increased from 619 kilograms per hectare in the year 2000-01 to 1,381 kilograms per hectare in the year 2007-08. In the case of Jharkhand, the agricultural production has increased from 1,114 kilograms per hectare in the year 2000-01 to 1,906 kilograms in 2007-08. In Uttarakhand, the agricultural production increased from 1,740 kilograms in 2000-01 to 1,852 kilograms in 2007-08.

**Table 4 - Transport: Total Road Length in Kms**

State	2001	2011
Chhattisgarh	1,830	93,965
Jharkhand	1,614	23,903
Uttarakhand	1,093	49,277

Source: Central Statistical Organization



Table 4 shows that there has been an increase in the road length in kilometres in all the three states during the years from 2001 to 2011. In Chhattisgarh, the road length has increased from 1830 to 93,965 kilometres. The total road length in Jharkhand has increased from 1,614 to 23,903 kilometres. In Uttarakhand, the total road length has increased from 1,093 to 49,277 kilometres.

**Table 5 - Communication: Number of Broadband and Internet Subscribers**

State	2002	2011
Chhattisgarh	7,827	1,30,708
Jharkhand	11,386	1,36,767
Uttarakhand	10,902	1,45,79

Source: Central Statistical Organization

Table 5 shows that in the realm of communication, with regard to the number of broadband and internet subscribers, all the three states have showed an upward trend. In Chhattisgarh, the number of broadband and internet subscribers has increased from 7,827 to 1,30,708. In Jharkhand the number has gone up from 11,386 to 1,36,767 subscribers. The state of Uttarakhand has witnessed an increase in the number of internet and broadband subscribers from 10,902 to 1,45,79 people.

**Table 6 - Gross State Domestic Product at Constant 2004-05 Prices (In Rs Crore)**

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Chhattisgarh	47,862	49,408	58,598	63,644	68,982	71,343	78,903	80,082	86,133	92,205
Jharkhand	59,758	57,848	59,226	71,377	70,129	77,240	89,491	97,896	105,597	114,392
Uttarakhand	24,786	28,340	32,190	38,022	42,832	50,598	55,667	60,870	66,356	72,984

Source: Central Statistical Organization

An observation of Table 6 shows that in terms of Gross State Domestic Product at constant 2004-05 prices, all the three states have shown upward trends. Chhattisgarh has seen an increase from 47,876 crore rupees in 2004-05 to 92,205 crore rupees in 2013-14. In Jharkhand, the Gross State Domestic Product increased from 59,758 crore rupees in 2004-05 to 114,392 crore rupees in 2013-14. The state of Uttarakhand witnessed an increase in Gross State Domestic Product from 24,786 crore rupees in 2004-2005 to 72,984 crore rupees in 2013-14.

## CONCLUSION

The developmental experiences of the three states –Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand-post-statehood demonstrates that they have definitely benefitted from their status as new states. While they were part of their parent states- Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh-it appeared that these regions lagged behind because of regional disparities. Statehood has corrected the problem of regional disparities in these three states. With the creation of the new state of Telangana, its journey towards correcting regional disparities has also begun. If there has to be a permanent solution to the problem of demands for new states, the problem of regional disparities has to be dealt with seriously within each state, particularly in those states where separate statehood movements are raising their head frequently. The responsibility to correct regional imbalances lies with the respective state governments. They have to ensure that the funds meant for development are distributed equitably among all the regions within the states. Correcting regional imbalances would be a long-term solution to the problem of regional assertion which threatens to undermine the federal structure of the country.

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