

## Is creation of smaller states the right solution?

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The continuous agitation of Telengana for a separate state has led to a nationwide debate on the controversial topic of division of larger states into smaller states on the pretext that such divisions could lead to better governance and the feeling of neglect of certain areas or portion of a state can be solved by division of such state. In support of this argument it is also often cited that the U.S.A. having a population of approximately 300 million has as many as 50 states as against ours having much larger population of 1.1 billion with only 29 states and hence we should not have reservations on further sub-division of states having larger population.

When the first major reorganizing of the boundaries of states took place in the mid-fifties, the main criteria was the language and this certainly had some merit or logic as vast majority of our country's illiterate population could only converse in the local language (the truth still holds good to a large extent today) and for effective participation of people in the governance of the state, the same was considered a necessity by our erstwhile leaders including Mahatma Gandhi & Others.

**However, the criteria that larger states are too difficult to be governed and hence smaller states would result in better governance seems to be too far-reaching and also misconceived.** The case history of U.P., Bihar and Madhya Pradesh were often cited in the past in this regards as illustrations of misgovernance. (In fact, on the same parameters it can be generalized that large countries need to be divided into smaller countries for better governance which is certainly far from the truth). What we really need is the improvement in the quality of governance and check on the ever increasing rampant corruption at all levels of public life which our present parliamentary system has miserably failed to provide. The corruption among the politicians has reached mind-boggling proportions and coupled with red-tapism the governance at local and state level is ever-deteriorating.

The impact of good governance on the growth and progress of State is very evident from the example of Bihar which has achieved an increase in GDP of nearly 10-11% per annum under Shri Nitish Kumar in the last 6 years, as against near stagnation in growth of the State during Lalu Prasad's regime. Even Gujarat is a shining example of impact of good governance on the progress and prosperity of State. His controversial role in communal riots notwithstanding, Gujarat under Shri Narendra Modi's tenure as Chief Minister has achieved growth in GDP consistently in the range of 10-12% per annum which is highest in India and the demand for separate states for Saurashtra and Kutch has not gathered any momentum.

The protagonists or champions of division of the country into smaller states often forget that while the USA too has several tiny states including states like Delaware or Rhode island having a population of less than one million there are much larger states like California, Texas and New York

in the USA having a population of 37 million, 24 million and 20 million respectively. Even area wise the two largest states viz. Texas and California are as big as 2,67,000 and 1,58,600 sq.miles respectively as against a mere 1214 sq.miles of Rhode Island and 2050 sq. miles of Delaware. However, the direct election of executive head as adopted under the Presidential System of Democracy by the electorate of entire state and providing these elected heads with a freedom to select the best talent available in the cabinet with a built-check on the executive from both the houses of Parliament has resulted in a much effective and better governance in the USA and there has been no demand from any of these bigger states in the USA for division into smaller states. The progress of these 3 largest states narrated above has been atleast as good or even slightly better than many of the smaller states. An executive head directly elected by the entire state is also bound to have a broader vision for governance for the state as a whole and the complaint of neglect of certain areas frequently made in our system is rarely heard in the USA. In states such as California or Texas there are large pockets of Spanish speaking Mexican population but the complaints of neglect of these areas is rarely heard. It should be also remembered that the agitation for split in our country is often sparked off by local politicians who have many a times vested interest in the division of the state.

Some of our smaller states have a terrible record of political defections and opportunistic rule e.g. Goa had as many as 14 governments during a 10 year period between 1990-2000. The Chief Minister's post was rotated like a musical chair on 7 occasions between Ravi Naik, Pratap Singh Rane and Wilfred D'souza. Meghalaya had as many as 12 governments during a 15 year period between 1997-2007. The history of Jharkhand where Madhu Koda had milked the state to the tune of Rs.2500 crores speaks for itself. Because of lesser no. of legislators in these smaller states, our unscrupulous politicians have found it easier to bypass the criteria of 1/3 nos required for engineering defections in a party which often leads to hoarse trading on an unprecedented scale in these states.

**It is hoped that rather than sub-dividing the states, we seriously concentrate on the issue of revamping of our present parliamentary system with a better alternative which would provide better governance and minimize corruption.**

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