

Orissa and the re-organisation of States

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ABSTRACT

This research paper will focus on the Reorganisation of State and Political development after 1956 in Orissa. The States Reorganisation Commission was set up in 1953 to examine issues of reorganisation. At that time the Oriya people prepared different memorandum, petitions and submitted to the State Reorganisation Commission for the amalgamation of their dismembered territories. But ultimately the report of State Reorganisation Commission which was published in 1955 frustrated the people of Orissa. One of the most important issues had been that of reorganising the states. During the British period, there were practically two Indias, one British India and the other Indian India. Indian India was ruled by the native princes, who were hundreds in number while British India was divided into administrative provinces which were done by the military, political or administrative exigencies or conveniences of the movement. Up to 1937, British India had a unitary government in which the centre was all important. Though the provinces were given the right to self-government under the government of India act, 1919 for finance they were dependent on the centre. Though the government of India act 1935 established the principle of federalism also known in British India as 'diarchy', but the outbreak of war centralized the administration.

Key Words : Orissa, Reorganisation of State, Singbhum, Seraikella and Kharsawan

On August 15, 1947, British India was granted independence as the separate dominions of India and Pakistan. An important change since 1947 has been integration of the princely states into India. 'The constitution of India which went into effect on January 26, 1950 made India a sovereign, democratic, republic and a union of states (replacing provinces) and territories. The states would have extensive autonomy and complete democracy in the union while the union territories would be administered by the government of India. The Constitution of 1950 distinguished between three types of states.¹

Part A states which were the former governors' provinces of British India were ruled by an elected governor and state legislature. The Part-A nine states were Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, Bombay, Madhya Pradesh (formerly central provinces and Berar), Madras, Orissa, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh (formerly United Provinces). The Eight Part-B states were former princely states or groups of princely states, governed by a 'rajpramukh', who was often a former prince, along with an elected legislature. The 'Rajpramulch' was appointed by the President of India. The Part B states were Hyderabad, Saurashtra, Mysore, Travancore-Cochin, Madhya Bharat, Vindhya Pradesh, Patiala and East Punjab States Union (PEPSU), and Rajasthan. The Part-C ten states included both the former chief commissioners' provinces and princely states, and were governed by a chief commissioner. The chief commissioner was appointed by the President of India. The Part C states included Delhi, Kutch,

Himachal Pradesh, Bilaspur, Coorg, Manipur, Ajmer-Merwara and Tripura.

Jammu and Kashmir had special status until 1957. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands was established as a union territory, ruled by a lieutenant governor appointed by the central Indian government. So the total number of administrative as well as federative units is 27. Hence a Reorganisation on the basis of uniform administrative units with equal powers and status is a necessity if the country as a whole is to progress. After this unionisation of the princely states, the conditions demanded a fresh approach to the problem of re-organisation, so that disparities among the federal units would not encourage disruptionist tendencies. Though, the question of re-organisation of federal units, on the rational and well accepted basis, was the core of the early political demands of the Indian National Congress in the struggle for self-governance. The demand was basically for redrawing state boundaries on the basis of linguistic and cultural homogeneity. In such circumstances, a State Reorganisation Commission was set up on December 22, 1954 under the chairmanship of Fazal Ali with two members Shri. H.N. Kunzru and Shri. K.M. Panikkar, to examine the issue of reorganisation. It submitted its report in September, 1955. The commission acted as a 'neutral' body. Different demands were made on the basis of linguistic and cultural factors and other considerations. The commission was constituted to suggest broad principles on which Reorganisation of states should be affected. The appointment of this Commission suggested that the Government was in favour of the reorganisation of States on a rational basis and the task of the commission was to recommend what should constitute the rational basis.

The state Reorganisation commission pointed out that there is a wide variation in our life but the strength of the nation is undoubtedly the sum total of the combined strength of the people of the component states.

Reorganisation aimed at two objectives :

- Firm discouragement of disruptive sentiments such as provincialism or 'linguist fanaticism.'
- Consistent with national solidarity, provision of full scope for the unhampered growth of the genius of each group of people. They pointed out that the states constituting the union of India were very unequal in size, population and resources; they were unequal in status also. The classification in part A,B, and C states was adopted essentially as a transitional expedient and was not intended to be a permanent feature of the constitutional structure of this country. The commission proposed the elimination of the existing distinction between part A and part B States and the disappearance of the part C States and reduction in the number of States. But it made it clear that reorganisation though had a legitimate place in India, yet its limitation must be reorganized.

The commission recommended that the component units of the Indian union can be classified into two categories (a) states forming primary constituent units of the Indian union having a constitutional relationship with the centre on a federal basis. These units should cover virtually the entire country (b) 'Territories' which for vital strategic, or other considerations, cannot be joined to any of the states and are, therefore, centrally administrated.

The commission realised that the theory of one language in one state was neither always justified nor practicable. It suggested that the practice of linguisticism needed certain constitutional and ideological correction. The resources — financial, administrative and technical should be the criterion along with language. The commission was conscious of the importance of language and culture of an area as they represent a pattern of living. But there are other factors which are of importance. "The first essential consideration is the preservation and strengthening of the unity and security of India. Financial, economic and administrative considerations are almost equally important, not only from the point of view of each state but for the whole nation. India has embarked upon a great ordered plan for her economic cultural and normal progress. Changes which interfere with the successful prosecution of such a national plan would be harmful to the national interest. "The commission stated that "the

states based on languages only are intolerant, aggressive and expansionist in character.”²

The Congress working committee, in November 1955, after discussing the recommendations of the State Re-organisation Commission suggested that the commission’s recommendations should be generally accepted except in cases where it is possible to find alternate solutions which receive a more general agreement or in certain cases of adjustments of boundaries. The congress working committee clarified its stand that “the re-organisation of states is only a means to an end, the basic objective being the unity of the nation and prosperity of the people”³

Older Approaches to Re-organisation :

Regarding the existing structure of States, the States Reorganisation commission writes that “it is partly the result of accident and the circumstances attending the growth of British power in India and partly a byproduct of the historic process of the integration of the former Indian states”. The division of India during the British period into British provinces and Indian states was itself fortuitous and had no basis in Indian history. The formation of provinces had been mainly governed by considerations of administrative convenience and economy and by various military strategy and security to the extent that there was a conscious or deliberative design behind the demarcation of the territories of administrative units, it was grounded in imperialist interests or the exigencies of a foreign government and out in the actual needs, wishes or attitudes of the people.

During the British period, territorial changes were mainly governed by imperialist interests. The factor of language in territorial adjustment did not come before 1903. Even when Sind and Bombay constituted into one province for administrative purposes, linguistic affinity was not the guiding factor. The Montague-Chelmsford report (1918) did not consider the idea of the formation of sub provinces on a linguistic and racial basis as practicable.

The Indian statutory commission, after twelve years considered race, religion, economic interest, geographical contiguity, etc. as relevant factors for provincial individuality. The Indian national congress supported the Reorganisation of provinces on linguistic basis up to 1947. But in 1920, at the Nagpur session, the congress accepted the linguistic redistribution of the provinces as a clear political objective and in the following year, the principle was adopted for the purpose of its own organisation. In 1928, the Nehru Committee of the all parties’ conference supported for the linguistic principle. According to the committee, “language as a rule -corresponds with the special variety of culture, of traditions and literature. In a linguistic area all these factors will help in the general progress of the province”.⁴

Re-organisation issue since independence :

Since the attainment of independence there has been lot of difference from the older standpoint. The British Government was never guided by the question of linguistic or cultural affinity. To them administrative interest was more important. But the congress was always in favor of linguistic provinces. With the attainment of independence, however, the senior most congress leaders began to deviate widely from their older approach. This was indicated by the linguistic provinces commission, also known as the Dar commission appointed at the recommendation of the drafting committee of the constituent assembly.⁵ The arguments which Dar commission had given in favor of Reorganisation on linguistic provinces were the result by commitment of congress to it.

Nobody denies the fault, but that can be an argument only if and when it is accepted once and for all that the congress has never erred and that the congress had divine sanction to dispense with the destiny of 350 million people in any way it liked.- The congress itself realized that its decision could not be implemented at that time in 1948-49 and that was postponed.⁶

According to Dar commission, a linguistic area must satisfy a number of criteria before it could be formed into a province. The criteria are geographical contiguity, financial self sufficiency,

administrative convenience, capacity for agreement among the people concerned.⁷

The Jawaharlal-Vallabhai, Pattavvi linguistic committee appointed at Jaipur session in 1949 in its report deviated from the old policy of the Congress. It maintained that the need is that of ensuring security stability, strength and unity of India, as rapidly as possible.

In particular, we should avoid taking any step which may delay or come in the way of this consolidation. The context demands above everything, the consolidation of India and her freedom, the progressive solution of her, economic problems in terms of the masses of her people, the promotion of unity in India and of close co-operation among the various provinces and States in most spheres of activity. The committee further observed. It is impossible to have clear and rigid demarcation on linguistic area when conditions are more static and the state of peoples' mind calmer, the adjustment of these boundaries or the creation of new provinces can be undertaken with relative ease and with advantage to all concerned language was not only considered as a binding force but also as a separatist one.⁸

Basic Considerations Behind State Re-organisation Commission Proposal :

The State Re-organisation Commission said that their balanced approach would appear to be

- To recognise, linguistic homogeneity as an important factor conducive to administrative convenience and efficiency but not to consider it as an exclusive and binding principle, without paying regard to other considerations-administrative, financial or political;
- To ensure that communicational, educational and cultural needs of different language groups, whether resident in pre-dominantly uni-lingual or composite administrative units, are adequately met;
- Where satisfactory conditions exist, and the balance of economic, political and administrative considerations favour composite states to continue them with the necessary safeguards to ensure that all sections enjoy equal rights and opportunities;
- To repudiate the 'home land' concept, which negates one of the fundamental principles of the Indian constitution for instance, equal opportunities and equal rights for all citizens throughout the length and breadth of the union;
- Finally, to the extent that the realization of unilingualism at state level would tend to breed a particularistic feeling, to counter-balance that feeling by the positive measures so as to give a deeper content to Indian Nationalism; and to reinforce the link between the centre and the state in order to work out national policies and programmes⁹.

With these objectives in the mind, the state Reorganisation approach each case in the light of the principles discussed above. The primary task was to simplify the heterogeneous units of the federal union. The integration of the former princely states had been taken place, but the present units were largely the result of expediency. The existing pattern was inadequate to meet the future progress of the country. The state reorganisation commission first tried to determine the basic pattern of the constituent units before recommending the changes in the states territories so that each unit could have a uniform relationship with the centre. Thus, looking at the problem from this angle, the commission recommended two understandable categories replacing four categories of the states in the original constitution. One was that of full fledged states as primary units of the federation, under the second categories, there was union territories over which the central governments would keep its supervision. Out of the existing twenty-nine states, only sixteen states were recommended by the commission to be full fledged states. These were Madras, Kerala, Karnataka, Hyderabad, Andhra, Bombay, Vidarbha, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Assam, Orissa and Jammu and Kashmir. Apart from these, the State Reorganisation Commission recommended three centrally administered union territories-Delhi, Manipur, Andaman and Nicobar. As a result, no distinction remained between pan-A and Pan-B states and Part-C states disappeared.

The recommendations of the commission were accepted by the government of India with minor

modifications. The changes were embodied in the State Reorganisation Act of 1956. The necessary amendments were made in the constitution by the Seventh Amendment Act of 1956. The amendment in the first schedule of the constitution brought about large changes in the constituent units and simplified the political map of the country. The State Reorganisation Act created fourteen full fledged states, including the state of Jammu and Kashmir, Hyderabad and Vidarbha, which were recommended by the commission, were not mentioned in the act and Andhra was formed a big state, including Hyderabad. Marathi speaking areas of Madhya Pradesh and Hyderabad and Gujarati speaking Saurashtra and Kuch were added to the new and bigger Bombay state. A new Mysore State was created in place of Karnataka, by merging the Mysore state, Coorg, Raichur, Bidar districts of Hyderabad and Kannada speaking areas of Bombay. Apart from the full fledged units, the commission had recommended that Delhi, Manipur and Andaman and Nicobar should be Centrally Administered Areas. The Seventh Amendment Act added three more union territories namely, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh and Lakshadweep.”¹⁰

While keeping in view the principle objective, the commission had examined each case on its own merit and gave its verdict after taking into account “totality of the circumstances”. By and large, the linguistic principle received recognition in the formation of most of the state, but other considerations as communal harmony, economic viability and planning did not allow the strict application of the linguistic principle. Apart from language the other factors which the progress of the people of each unit depends could not be ignored. The language test proved quite practicable in the fixation of the political boundary of the states in South India. The commission had recommended five states in the south-Hyderabad, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra and Madras. All of them except Hyderabad were accepted in the State Reorganisation Act by the government. These were constituted as linguistically homogeneous units. The exception of the linguistic principle was permitted in the case of Bombay and Punjab. The commission recommended that Bombay should be bi-lingual state considering the cosmopolitan character of the Bombay city and taking in to account the interest of both Marathi speaking and Gujarati speaking communities.”¹¹ There are cases where the commission did not attach any particular significance to the linguistic factor, but serious violation of linguistic principle was with regard to Bombay and Punjab where the commission favoured the status quo. Despite the strong reaction to the report in many parts of the country, the State Reorganisation Commission’s recommendations were accepted though with certain modifications and were quickly implemented.

The State Reorganisation Commission and the Case of Orissa :

The last of the territorial unit in respect of which proposals for Reorganisation was considered, is Orissa. The province of Orissa was created in 1936 in terms of Government of India (constitution of Orissa) order. But the enquiry which deals with the question of its boundaries preceded this order and was spread over a period of about thirty years that is from 1930, when the circular which dealt with the regrouping of provinces was first addressed. The question was also considered by three important committees in very considerable detail. Those were Philip-Duff committee reported in 1924, the Attlee Committee, which was constituted by the Simon commission and the O’Donnell committee in 1932. On the basis of the reports of these committees the detailed correspondence between the government of India and the Secretary of State was considered.

Orissa was carved out of the neighbouring areas, after a review of its boundaries. This resulted in simplifying the task of the re-determination of the boundaries of Orissa State. The major claims made on Orissa were:

- The three northern districts of Maurbhanj, Sundargarh and Kconjhar which was claimed by Bihar on the ground that the people of these areas desire to be associated with Chota Nagpur, and (ii) The Andhra Pradesh State claimed the whole of Koraput district, the Parlakimcdi estate and the

Parlakimedi Maliahs of the Ganjam district, and a portion of the Chatarpur and Bcrhampur taluks of Ganjam constituting a coastal belt in this district extending from the present Andhra boundary up to Rushikaulya river.

On the other hand the principal claims made for or on behalf of Orissa were:-

- A costal belt and agency tracts consisting of predominantly Oriya and aboriginal areas in Srikakulam district right up to the Vamsadhara River.
- The Phulijhar and Bindra-Nawagarh ex-zamindari areas of the Raipur district, a part of ex-zamindari areas of Chandrapur now in the Bilaspur district and a portion of the Bastar district
- The Singhbhum district of Bihar, particularly Seraikella and Kharsawan and
- A portion in South West Midnapore district of west Bengal.¹²

The controversies over Saraikella and Kharsawan are comparatively more recent. Orissa's claim to these areas rests mainly on the ground that Oriya is the largest single language group. The two States, however, have formed part of the Singhbhum district Since May, 1948, and the historical abilities of the two states with the Porahat raj in Singhbhum district.¹³ When the State Reorganisation commission was setup in 1953 to study the boundary of the province, the people of Orissa expected for the amalgamation of their dismembered territories. Radhanath Ray who was then the minister of finance, education and welfare, prepared a memorandum on behalf of Orissa government and presented it to the State Reorganisation Commission. At that time a new party, the Ganatantra Party was the main opposition party in the provincial legislature. It also submitted a memorandum to state Reorganisation commission entitled " the case of transfer of Singhbhum to Orissa" that provided a comprehensive picture of Orissa's historical, geographical and cultural connection with Singhbhum.

At the same the Ganatantra Party had won elections in several constituencies and was in power. They now decided to revive the Utkal Union conference for the amalgamation of the outlying Oriya tracts. The president of the Ganatantra Prishad was the former ruler of Patna Rajendra Singh Dev, who was also a Member of Parliament. The party wanted to achieve three objectives by leading the amalgamation movement, the return of the dismembered Oriya speaking tracts, winning Seraikella and Kharsawan for Orissa and the isolation of the congress in Orissa which of course was a consequence of the first two. Several steps were taken to revive the Utkal Sammilani in order to strengthen the campaign in the outlying Oriya speaking tracts. In Singhbhum, two branches of the Utkal Sammilani were formed, with Mrutunjaya Das as the president of the 'Singhbhum Utkal Sammilani and Tikayat Nrupendra Narayan Singh Dev of Saraikella who was the elder brother of Rajendra Narayan Singh Dev, as also the president. These two branches played a significant role in the amalgamation movement.¹⁴

Tikayat Tikayat Nrupendra Narayan Singh Dev who had written a book entitled ' Singhbhum, Saraikella and Kharswan trough the Ages' submitted it to the State Reorganisation Commission in which Radha Kamud Mokerjee wrote " it is to be hoped that the commission appointed for the reorganisation of the States in India on the basis of linguistic, cultural, economic and administration consideration will go fully into the case of these two states for their incorporations in the state of Orissa in the light of every relevant documents and material presented in the book." The concluding part of the book described, in peace and prosperity in war and adversity, in calamity and catastrophes, in habit and customs, in ceremonies and obsequies, in hopes and disappointments, in dress and demeanor, in culinary and coiffure in dance and drama in act and literature, the people of Saraikella-Kharswan- Singhbhum express themselves in the same way and in same details as their brothers in Orissa."¹⁵ The Singhbhum students and teachers who were living in Cuttack formed a 'Singhbhum. students union'. A memorandum was submitted to the State Reorganisation Commission by Vivekananda pati who was the president of the union.

Similarly a number of leader like R.N. Singh Deo, Kalahandi Maharaj pratap Keshari Deo, the

deputy leader of the opposition in the Orissa assembly, Godavaris Mishra, shyam sundar Mishra played their part to strengthen the Oriya movement in Singbhum on the eve of the enquiry by the State Reorganisation Commission. R.N. Singh Deo appealed to the people to organise themselves for the amalgamation Movement and to represent their case strongly before the State Reorganisation Commission. The formation of the State Reorganisation Commission revived the conflicting territorial interests of the three neighbouring provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Bengal claimed some bordering territories of Bihar such as Manbhum, santal pargans, s and also portions of pumea.

Oriya leaders were taken into confidence that if they supported Bengal's claim on Dhalbhum, Bengal would make it sure that Seraikalla and Khakswan and also the Singbhum Sadar went to Orissa.¹⁶ Bihar campaigned against the claims of Bengal and Orissa. The tribal issue was projected as the key point; the tribal people were of the belief that whether in Bengal or in Orissa, they would have to learn another language in addition to their mother to -ngue and Hindi. Bihar also dismissed Orissa's claim on the Singbhum Sardar as per the decision of the O'Donnell Committee. Consequently they pointed out that if Seraikella and Kharsawan be transferred to Orissa, these regions would face immense difficulties to be in touch with the headquarters in Orissa because of the circuitous and long route and bad road system. Being in control of the administration over the region, it was not difficult for the Bihar provincial machineries to marginalise the Oriya agitation. In the meantime, Jaipal's Jhtc -hand party was a force to reckon with and was carrying on vigorous agitation for a separate province. The interest of Seraikella and kharsawan would have been adversely affected by the same as well.

The report of State Reorganisation Commission was published in 1956. The report did not have any positive offer for Orissa. The most frustrating was the refusal to rc —transfer Seraikalla and kharsawan. The then chief minister stated in the Orissa Assembly that the recommendations of the State Reorganisation Commission were a great danger to Orissa." Moving a motion in the Lok sabha, R.N. Singh Deo said on 23 December 1955... The State Reorganisation Report is more political than judicious." Its chief characteristics are of lack of Clear principles, Policy of appeasement of the strong and influential, neglecting the claims of the weak and its recommendations are vitiated apart contradictions our main grievance is that it has not only dismissed Orissa's claims on most superficial and unmemorable grounds, it has not only summarily rejected or claims, but it has completely ignored even to consider our claims.

Also R.N. Singh suggested constituting a boundary commission, to examine orissa's claim on Seraikalla and Kharswan, and the sadar sub division of Singbhum, Phuljhar and other areas in Madhya Pradesh, and certain other portions of Southern areas such as a part of Mandasa, Jalantra, Budharsing, and Udyakhand. Ultimately on 18 January 1956, a four member committee headed by Prime Minister thoroughly examined the state Reorganisation report and gave the final verdict. In its report the state Reorganisation Commission said, "language by itself does not, in our opinion provide sufficient justification for breaking up a district, and above all, in view of the recommendations which we make for the transfer of part of the Manbhum District to west Bengal, the transfer of the Seraikalla Subdivision, or any part thereof to the state of Orissa will convert the Dhalbhum Sub division in the east into an enclave which will not be physically contiguous to the rest of Bihar." 1s The Oriyas were confident that Seraikalla and Kharsawan and some other outlying tracts would come to Orissa. But Seraikalla and kharsawan went to Bihar. It was also believed that Orissa congress Ministry would resign if the two states were not made part of Orissa. But the Union Government directed the Orissa congress to remain in office.

Confident of the support of the ruling party, the congress leaders all over Orissa called upon the general public including the students to join the protest against the report of State Reorganisation Commission especially, its decision against Seraikella and Kharswan. On 19th January 1956 there were violent demonstrations in Puri. There were picketing and strikes all over the province of Orissa. There were public demonstrations in Samblapur, Mayurbahnj and Ganjam. During this short lived

'Boundary Agitation' that lasted from 19th January 1956 to 27th January 1956 there were wide spread violence and firing.¹⁷

There was widespread movement both against the State Ministry and against the Union Government. There was general strike. Shops were closed, transport system was blocked. At Puri the railway station was burned and houses of some officials were attacked.¹⁸ On 21 July, 1956 there was picketing in front of the radio station at Cuttack. Some students lost their life in police firing and therefore, public meetings were forbidden.¹⁹ 21 But the leader of the Ganatantra party did not obey and some of them were arrested. Later some members of Ganatra party and independents resigned from the Assembly and Parliament against the decision of the States Reorganisation Commission".²⁰ There were arguments and counter arguments on the floors of the Orissa Assembly and in the media even after the agitation subsided. The ruling party was accused of inefficiency and betrayal and the opposition for instigating violence. The Home Minister of India held the erstwhile rulers of the Orissa states responsible for the anarchy prevailing in the province. The State Re-organisation Commission did not bring any change to the territorial outlines of Orissa."²¹ The State Reorganisation Commission movement was a short lived one but there was intense agitation by the people of Orissa. The movement did not succeed in achieving its objective but it demonstrated the solidarity, resilience and maturity of the people of Orissa.²²

Conclusion :

There seems to be no end to Political turmoil in different parts in India, as well as in Orissa. It is because Indian Union is not the result of any treaty or agreement but India is 'Union of States' which came into existence as a result of merger and integration of Indian States with the British Provinces. Till 1956 the States were divided into A, B, C and D parts. The first Reorganisation took place in 1956 under the State Reorganisation Act 1956. Second reorganisation took place in 1971 under the North Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971 when the Eastern States were reorganized. Article 3' was needed after Independence because the process of merger and integration was taking place and there was no need to reorganise Units. Article 3 played its role somewhat successfully but still demands kept on and still keep on from various areas for reorganizing and changing the boundaries mainly on linguistic basis. Even already formed linguistic States demand more adjustment in their boundaries. In case of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh, there is still some conflict about Berhampur area. The demand for Gorkhaland and Bodoland states have added new dimensions- ethnic, and tribal interest for Reorganisation and changes in the boundaries of states. The State Reorganisation Commission was a one Party commission. Had the Congress government called all parties together and had arrived at a common formula, then much of the agitation and trouble existing in various parts of India could have been avoided.

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