

Federalism: Lessons from India

Indian federalism is the simultaneity of two processes – the *unionization process* and the *regionalization process*. Ajay Kumar Singh

Bishnu Pathak, PhD.

Introduction

India became independent in 1947. Its parliament, also serving as a Constituent Assembly (CA), drafted the new constitution that came into effect on January 26, 1950, establishing the federal union of India.

India is the 7th largest country by geographic area, 2nd most populous, 4th largest in GDP (Purchasing Power Parity), has the 3rd largest military force¹, and is the 12th largest economy in the world. India is a republic consisting of 28 states and seven unions² with a parliamentary form of democracy. A country the size of a continent, with an area of 13,654,000 sq. miles, India is comprised of 16 percent Dalits, known as scheduled castes. Around 8 percent of the population belongs to one of 461 indigenous *adivasi* groups. Many Indians speak more than one language. The Indian census lists 114 languages (22 of which are spoken by one million or more persons) that are further categorized into 216 dialects (mother tongues) spoken by 10,000 or more speakers. There is significant cultural diversity within the nation, as 40% of the population belongs to disadvantaged groups; i.e. the scheduled castes (11.6%) and scheduled tribes (31.8%).

An estimated 850 languages are in daily use, and the Indian Government officially lists 1,652 dialects. The teaching of Hindi and English is compulsory in most states and union territories. Twenty-two languages are legally recognized by the constitution for various political, educational, ethnic-cultural, and regional purposes: Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Dogri, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Santhali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu. About 80.5 percent of the population is Hindu, 13.4 percent Muslim, 2.3 percent Christian, 1.9 percent Sikh, 0.8 percent Buddhist, and 0.4 percent Jain and others³. India's literacy rate is 65%. The government represents 1.17 billion people comprising 17 percent of the world population.

The States Reorganization Act of 1956 was formed on an ethnic-linguistic basis. Besides states, India was further divided into 610 districts for basic governance and administration, which were further divided into villages. Ethnic tensions were resolved reorganizing the state

Table 1: Geo-political, demographic, and ethno-cultural population of India

State	Area km ²	dis.	Population	Official language	Ethnicity/religion	Established	Etymology
Andra Pradesh	275,608	23	76,210,007 (5th)	Telugu, Hindi, Urdu	Telugu 56.75%, Hindi 8.23%, and Urdu 30.63%	November 1, 1956	Sanskrit ⁴
Arunachal Pradesh	83,743	16	1,091,117 (26th)	Assamese, Bengali, and Hindi	50 distinct languages and dialects	February 20, 1987	Sanskrit ⁵
Assam	26,655,528 (14th)	27	26,655,528 (14th)	Assamese, Bodo, Bengali	115 ethnic groups ⁶	August 15, 1947	Mahabharata ⁷
Bihar	99,200	38	82,998,509	Hindu and	Hindi 83% and	1912	Vihar (abode)

			(3rd)	Urdu	Islam 16.5%,		in English word) in Sanskrit word ⁸
Chhattisgarh	135,194	18	20,795,956 (17th)	Chhattisgarhi, Hindi ⁹	-	November 1, 2000	Number ¹⁰
Goa¹¹	3,702	2	1,400,000 (25th)	Konkani		May 30, 1987	Portuguese language ¹²
Gujarat¹³	135,194	26		Gujarati 71% and Hindi 29%		May 1, 1960	Ethnic Gujjars ¹⁴
Haryana	44,341	21	21,082,989 (16th)	Hindi 84%, Muslim 15% Sikh 1%	Hindus 84%, Sikhs 15%, and Muslims 1%	November 1, 1966	Sanskrit ¹⁵
Himachal Pradesh	56,019	12	6,077,248 (20th)	Hindi and Punjabi	Hindu 95%	January 25, 1971	Geography (Mountains) ¹⁶
Jammu and Kashmir	222,236	22	10,143,700 (18th)	Urdu, Kashmiri, Dogri	Hindu 65%, Muslims 31%, and Sikhs 4.	October 26, 1947	Geography (Jammu and Kashmir mountains) ¹⁷
Jharkhand¹⁸	74,677	24	26,909,428 (13th)	Hindi and Santali	Hindu 68.5%, Islam 13.8%	November 15, 2000	Sanskrit ¹⁹
Karnataka	191,976	29	52,850,562 (9th)	Kannada, speaks by 65%	Hindu 83%, Muslim 11%, and Christian 4%	November 1, 1956	Land (black region) ²⁰
Kerala	38,863	14	31,948,619 (12th)	Malayalam	Hindu 56%, Islam 25%, and Christianity 19%	November 1, 1956	Culture ²¹
Madhya Pradesh	308,252	50	60,385,118 (7th)	Hindi	Hindu 91% and Muslim 6%	November 1, 1956	Geography ²²
Maharashtra²³	307,713	35	96,752,247 (2th)	Marathi	Hindu 80%, Muslim 11%, and Buddhists 6%	May 1, 1960	Sanskrit ²⁴
Manipur	22,347	9	2,388,634 (22nd)	Manipuri (Meiteilon) and English	Meiteis and the nagas groups	January 21, 1972	Sanskrit (ethnicity) ²⁵
Meghalaya	22,720	7	2,306,069 (23rd)	Khasi, Garo, and Jaintia	Christianity 70% and Hindu 13%	January 21, 1972	Sanskrit (language) ²⁶
Mizoram²⁷	21,081	8	888,573 (27th)	Mizo, English	Christianity (Mizos) 87% and Hindu 4%	20 February 1987	Ethnicity ²⁸
Nagaland²⁹	16,579	11	1,988,636 (24th)	English ³⁰	Christianity 90% and Hindu 8%	December 1, 1963	Ethnicity (Kirant) ³¹
Orissa	36,706,920	30	36,706,920	Oriya	Hindu 95% and Christian 2%.	April 1, 1936	Ethnicity ³²
Punjab³³	50,362	20	24,289,296 (15th)	Punjabi	Sikh 60% and Hindu 37%	November 1, 1956	Geography (River) ³⁴
Rajasthan³⁵	342,269	33	56,473,122 (8th)	Rajasthani	Hindu 89% and Muslim 9%	November 1, 1956	Language ³⁶
Sikkim³⁷	7,096	4	540,493 (28th)	Nepali and English	Hindu 61%, Buddhism 28%, and Christian 7%	May 16, 1975	Geography and language ³⁸
Tamil Nadu³⁹	130,058	32	66,396,000 (7th)	Tamil	Hindu 88%, Muslim 5%, and Christianity 5%	November 1, 1956	Ethnicity ⁴⁰
Tripura	10,453	4	3,191,168 (21st)	Bengali, Kokborok	Hindu 70% and Muslim 23%	November 1, 1956	king and water ⁴¹

Uttar Pradesh	243,286	71	190,891,00 (1st)	Hindi and Urdu	Hindu 80% and Muslim 19%	November 14, 1834	Geography ⁴²
Uttarakhand	53,566	13	8,479,562 (19th)	Hindi, Kumaoni, and Garhwali	Hindu 85% and Muslim 11%	November 9, 2000	Holy land (Sanskrit) ⁴³
West Bengal⁴⁴	88,752	19	80,221,171 (4th)	Bengali	Hindu 72% and Muslim 23%	May 1, 1960	Language ⁴⁵

into ethnic and linguistic lines by means of the Act⁴⁶. Several new states have been created out of existing states since 1956. Bombay State was split into the linguistic Gujarat and Maharashtra states on May 1, 1960 by means of the Bombay Reorganization Act. The Punjab Reorganization Act of 1956 divided the Punjab into linguistic and religious lines that created a new Hindu and Hindi-speaking state of Haryana, converting the northern districts of Punjab into Himachal Pradesh.

Nagaland was made a state in 1962, Meghalaya and Himachal Pradesh in 1971, Tripura and Manipur in 1972. Sikkim joined the Indian Union as a state in 1975. Similarly, Mizoram was made a state in 1986, and Goa and Arunachal Pradesh in 1987. However, Goa's northern enclaves of Daman and Diu became separate union territories in 1987. Goa, which comprises one-third of the population, is primarily Christian, but it is not a Christian State⁴⁷.

Chhattisgarh was created on November 1, 2000 from eastern Madhya Pradesh; Uttaranchal was renamed Uttarakhand on November 9, 2000 which created the Hilly regions of northwest Uttar Pradesh; and Jharkhand was created on November 15, 2000 out of the southern districts of Bihar. However, the demand for a separate state of Chhattisgarh arose in the 1920s⁴⁸. Jharkhand is now advancing economically much faster than its northern neighbor, Bihar. Unlike some other Indian states, Jharkhand's reduction in poverty was faster in the rural areas than in the urban ones. Uttarakhand is comprised of the Garhwal and Kumaon Divisions, which has become the 27th state in India. In August 2006, the Uttaranchal state assembly and leading movement members renamed Uttaranchal State, Uttarakhand.

Besides the 28 states in India, there are seven union territories; Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, Lakshadweep, Pondicherry, and the National Capital Territory of Delhi. A Union territory is a sub-national administrative division of India, in the federal framework of governance. Unlike the states, union territories are ruled directly by the federal central government, the president appoints an administrator or governor in each territory. However, the capital of Delhi, the Union territory of Delhi, and Pondicherry have been given partial statehood⁴⁹.

All of India was not satisfied when it declared itself a republic through a New Constitution. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee in India and PM, Jawaharlal Nehru, were in favor of unitary state. Sardar Patel, then a powerful Home Minister, played a pivotal role in the cause of federalism. When the New Constitution was adopted in 1950 by the CA, India had large federal states, including Assam, Jammu-Kashmir, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Orissa which were formed on geo-political foundations, with the exception of Orissa. Orissa was developed along ethno-cultural lines. Notably, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar had already been practicing semi-autonomy before the constitution came into effect.

In 1956, eight new federal states emerged based on ethnic-linguistic diversity, following the State Reorganization Act of that year. They are: Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Tripura.

In between 1960 and 1966, five new federal states such as Gujarat, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Nagaland, and Haryana were established. Similarly, Meghalaya, Manipur, and Himachal Pradesh were made states between 1971 and 1972. Sikkim, the ethnic Nepalese majority state by Lepcha and Limbu, finally merged with India and became the 22nd Indian state on May 16th, 1975 when 59 percent of the Sikkimeli voted in favor of the merge through referendum.

In 1987, three states were formed; namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, and Mizoram. Goa is India's smallest state in terms of area, it is located on the west coast of India. The Portuguese first landed there as merchants in the early 16th century, and conquered it soon thereafter. The Portuguese overseas territory existed for about 450 years, until it was annexed by India in 1961. Consequently, it still exhibits the influence of Portuguese culture⁵⁰. Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, and the Chhattisgarh have become India's 26th, 27th, and 28th states.

Insurgency within Federalism

India was colonized from powerful European powers such as Portugal, the Netherlands, France, and the UK, starting in the 16th century and continuing to 1947. On August 15, 1947, India attained independence from British rule, but ceded Muslim-majority areas to Pakistan soon after. The transitional phase was ended in January 1950 when India became a federal republic officially in its constitution.

However, India has faced several challenges such as religious violence, caste discrimination, Naxalism as well as terrorism. Regional separatist insurgencies continue, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir as well as Northwestern and Northeastern India. The territorial disputes with China since the Sino-Indian War of 1962 have not been solved. Sikkim was an Indian protectorate from 1947, but became a full state in 1975.

North-East India became a part of India politically under the *Palas* Empire. Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Meghalaya were just parts of political India, where Assam had been an independent state. Nagaland, Mizoram, and Meghalaya were princely states in terms of history, Manipur, and Tripura. Arunachal Pradesh was beyond the outer line of British India resulting in the Sino-Indian War in 1962, which is not resolved yet. Sikkim was not within the mandate of political British India either. Since 1947, extension of the political apparatus of Indian states has been a challenge.

India has encountered several insurgencies, along with terrorist activities, particularly by Islamic fundamentalists, Sikhs and Naxalites within Punjab, New Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, Mumbai, etc. Naxalites inhabit Central-southwestern India along with independence and autonomy movements in the seven sister states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura⁵¹. The sister states, which lie in north-east India and contain 3.8 of the country's population⁵² have been particularly affected by ethnic and linguistic tension. The northeastern states are small; 25 representatives (4.6%) in the Lok Sabha out of a total of 543 seats. Besides, Sikkim, some parts of North Bengal also fall within north-east India. These states are very distinct from one-another in terms of ethnicity,

language, and culture. As of 2006, at least 232 of India's 608 districts were effected by insurgent or terrorist activities⁵³. In such districts, tension exists between the state governments and tribal people as well as the central government due to local desire for sovereignty⁵⁴. Various groups waging insurgencies due to ethnic and linguistic differences are connected through the "chicken neck" of the Siliguri corridor to the rest of India. Some extreme insurgents demand completely autonomous states.

History of Jammu-Kashmir Violence

The names ⁵⁵ Jammu and Kashmir came into existence when the Mughal Emperor, Akabar, invaded Kashmir in 1586, defeating Turk ruler Yusuf Khan with the support of his generals including his aide, Ramchandra I. Then Akbar appointed Ramchandra I as the governor of the Kashmir. Ramchandra I established the city called Jammu (Hindu goddess *Jamwa Mata*).

In 1780, Jammu and Kashmir were captured by the Sikhs under Ranjit Singh of Lahore and became a tributary to the Sikh power until 1846. Ranjit's grandnephew, Gulab, appointed him as the Governor (*Raja* or king) of Jammu in 1820. Soon, Gulab captured Ladakh. The influential Kashmiri leader, Sheikh Abdullah, who died in 1857, was in a favor of greater autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir within the framework of Indian constitution.

In 1845, the First Anglo-Sikh War, Gulab became an advisor of Sir Henry. Two treaties were held where State of Lahore, west of Punjab, east of Indus River and west of Ravi River was handed over to the British with 1.7 million rupees of indemnity. Gulab's great grandson Hari had ascended the throne of Kashmir in 1925 as an independent state.

On October 20, 1947, Pakistan invaded Jammu and Kashmir. The Maharaja Hari Singh initially fought back, appealing to British Governor-General Louis for assistance, but he agreed on the condition of that the ruler accede to merge with India. When the treaty was signed, Indian soldiers entered into Kashmir with orders to stop any further occupation. India asked the UN to vacate the areas Pakistan had occupied, but Pakistan refused. Because of soured diplomatic relations, three Indo-Pakistani Wars in 1965, 1971, and 1999 occurred. India now controls 60 percent, Pakistan 30 percent, and China 10 percent of the area of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. Since violent groups initiated an insurgency in the late 1980s with the backing of Pakistan, the region has seen a prolonged, bloody conflict between militants and the Indian Army.

Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India

India, particularly the urban centers, has proven an easy target for insurgent and terrorist activities. Some of the insurgent groups include the [Achik National Volunteer Council](#), Al-Badr (Kashmir), al-Qaida (international), Al-Umar-Mujahideen, All Tripura Tiger Force (Tripura), Babbar Khalsa International (Punjab), Communist Party of India (Maoist), Deendar Anjuman (Karnataka, Andra Pradesh, and Maharastra), Dukhtaran-E-Millat, Harakat ul-Mujahidin (Kashmir), Hizbul Mujahideen (Kashmir), International Sikh Youth Federation (Punjab, international), Jaish-e-Mohammed (Kashmir), Jammu and Kashmir Islamic Front (Kashmir), Kanglei Yaol Kanba Lup, Kangleipak Communist Party, Khalistan Commando Force, Lashkar-e-Toiba (international), Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (international), Manipur People's Liberation Front (Manipur), National Democratic Front of Bodoland (Assam), National Liberation Front of Tripura (Tripura), People's Liberation Army, People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (Manipur), Revolutionary People's Front (Manipur), Students Islamic Movement of India (Uttar Pradesh), Tamil Nadu Liberation Army (Tamil Nadu), Tamil National Retrieval Troops (Tamil Nadu), United Liberation Front of Asom (Assam), and United National Liberation Front (Manipur)⁵⁶.

In Bihar, southwestern India, terrorist activities are not considered a major threat by the state. However, groups like the CPI (ML), People's War, MCC, *Ranvir Sena*, and Balbir militias have been a major concern as they frequently attack local security personnel and politicians who are allegedly indulging in corruption, malpractice, or discrimination. Due to poor governance and the law and order situation in Bihar, the *Ranvir Sena* has become quite powerful in Naxalite areas. Its militia represents upper caste groups while victimizing helpless people (including women, elderly and children). Many have been killed in caste massacres. The *Sena's* offensive activities lead to a growing sense of alienation among the low caste. Such violence has encouraged many low caste people to join the CPI (ML), MCC, and People's War to take up arms against the establishment, or appendages of the rich including the *Sena*⁵⁷. The Communist Party of India (Maoist)⁵⁸ has been a severed headache for Indian security forces, as it spreads violent activities through many districts there. It is an underground organization, which was formed from merging the Maoist Political Parties in India – the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) People's War, and the Maoist Communist Centre of India on September 12, 2004 under the leadership of Ganapati as General Secretary. The media and other sectors refer to these groups as “Naxalites,” derived from the Naxalbari insurrection by radical Maoists in West Bengal in 1967.

The Indian Green Revolution, which was implemented during the 1970s by the Sikh community in Punjab to increase economic prosperity, led to the rise of Sikh militants, namely Khalistan. Khalistan sought independence from the India in the 1980s. The government suppressed their activities, alleging that neighboring Pakistan supported the militants. Thus, The Blue Star operation of 1984 was conducted by the order of Indira Gandhi. It culminated in an assault on the Golden Temple complex in a 74-hour firefight, killing 83 Indian army personnel, who were pitted against 493 militants, where 249 armies and 85 militants were injured. That led to the assassination of Indira Gandhi, the then PM of India, in 1984 by the Sikh, aide-de-camp. Similarly, a Sikh militant assassinated the CM (Chief Minister) of Punjab in 1995. In 1985, Sikh insurgents bombed Air India flight 182 from Canada to India, killing 329 people. The Babbar Khalsa, a hardcore terrorist group banned by Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and India, took responsibility. On June 23, 1985 a Boeing 747-237B was bombed by terrorists over Irish airspace and killed all on board. On December 13, 2001, terrorists attacked the House of Parliament. About a dozen people were killed⁵⁹. New Delhi also suffered from a series of bomb explosions on October 29, 2005 and September 13, 2008.

In the course of the Uttar Pradesh conflict, Hindu fundamentalists attacked and demolished the 16th century Babri Masjid at Ram Janmabhoomi in Ayodhya on July 5, 2005. In retaliation, a two-hour gunfight between Lashkar-e-Toiba, Pakistan based terrorists believed to be a creation of Dawood Ibrahim and Indian police, occurred, where six militants were killed. A series of bombs were detonated across Varanasi, the Hindu holy city, on March 7 2006 by the Lashkar-e-Toiba killing more than one dozen innocent people and leaving 101 injured in retaliation of the Babri Masjid attack⁶⁰. Some of these organizations, such as Babbar Khalsa International, Khalistan Commando Force, Khalistan Liberation Force, and Khalistan Zindabad Force, are still active⁶¹.

Northeastern India consists of 7 states, popularly known as the seven sisters, comprising Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Manipur, and Nagaland. However, conflicts exist between these states and the central government as well as amongst the native

tribal/ethnic people, and migrant people from different parts of India. There are territorial disputes between Manipur and Nagaland. Regional movements and insurgent activities are on the rise in the Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Tripura. Some of these organizations demand independent states with regional autonomy and sovereignty.

After the movement in Darjeeling, the most significant insurgency was initiated in Nagaland from the early 1950s. The National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM) demands an independent Nagaland for which they have carried out several attacks on the Indian establishment forces in the region. Between 1992-2000, 599 civilians, 235 security forces, and 862 terrorists have lost their lives in these engagements⁶².

Assam is the most volatile state in the region after the Nagaland. Beginning in 1979, indigenous people led by the All Assam Students Union in Assam demanded the detection and deportation of all illegal Bangladeshi immigrants. The Assam Accord was signed with the central government in August 15, 1985. The accord agreed to enfranchise anyone who entered Assam illegally between January 1966 and March 1971. In Assam, the central government gave special administration of autonomy to indigenous Bodos. The National Democratic Front in Bodoland (NDFB) of Bodos still demands a separate Bodoland.⁶³ This led to a clash between the Bengalis, Nepali origin people, and the Indian military. Originally, the NDFB was called the Bodo Security Force (BSF). The ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam⁶⁴) is also in the forefront of those advocating independence and the establishment of a socialist government in Assam. This has resulted in a huge loss of life and property. India believes that most of the insurgent activities in the Kingdom of Bhutan have a strong link with Nepal's Maoists and the Naxalites. So, The Thimpu government killed more than a thousand alleged terrorists, but the ULFA continues to be active in the region.

The *Ganamukti Parishad* movement led integration with India in 1949 within the Assam state. Tripura, of which the majority of the population is comprised of Hindu Bengalis, came as refugees from East Pakistan after independence in 1947. Tripura became a centrally administered Union Territory on July 1, 1963 and attained full-fledged state status on January 21, 1972⁶⁵. The National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT)⁶⁶ and All Tripura Tiger Force launched terrorist activities in the 1990s in Tripura. New Delhi alleged Bangladesh was providing shelter to these insurgents operating from its territory. The NLFT seeks secession from India and the establishment of an independent state and has been banned in India. It has been alleged that the NLFT produced pornographic films, kidnapping tribal men and women at gunpoint, to support their financial activities. And their leaders are accused of sexual harassment of the female prisoners. It has banned Hindu festivals including Durga Puja and Saraswati puja as 90 percent of It's members are Christians⁶⁷.

In Manipur, The People's Liberation Army, UULF, and PREPAK are active with the goals of uniting the Meitei tribes of Burma and establishing an independent state – Manipur. However, the movement was suppressed by Indian security forces in the mid 1990s. Presently, 19 separate rebel groups are active there⁶⁸.

The Mizo National Front (MNF), Hmar People's Convention-Democracy, and BNLF have been fighting for over 2 decades with the Indian security forces for independence, but the insurgency has been temporarily quelled by force. The Mizo National Famine Front dropped the word "famine" and a new political organization, the MNF was born on 22 October 1961

under the leadership of Laldenga with the specific objective of sovereign independence of Greater Mizoram⁶⁹.

Karnataka lies to the south in India and is considered mildly effected by terrorism, even in the IT hub of Bangalore. However, Naxalites attacked in Bangalore on July 26, 2008. Andra Pradesh has been less effected in terms of insurgency, but suffers from the People's War Group (PWG). The PWG has targeted government officials resulting in about one hundred people, including the insurgents, police, and civilians, being killed each year. It is believed that it has close links with the Nepal's Maoists and the Tamil, LTTE of Sri Lanka. The LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) militants are still active, but less effective in Tamil Nadu in concert with the Tamil Nadu Liberation Army. Similarly, attacks on trains by bombing or sabotage by the insurgents have become very common for Indian Railways.

Over the past few years Mumbai has been witness to a wide range of terrorist activity. A series of bomb attacks, including explosions in local trains were conducted in July 2006. Similarly the most recent and unprecedented attack was of November 26, 2008, where two of the prime hotels and another building, in south Mumbai, were held under siege. Mumbai has been victimized by previous attacks such as on March 12, 1993, December 2, 2002, January 27, 2003, March 14, 2003, July 28, 2003, August 25, 2003, July 11, 2006, and November 26-29, 2008 where a few hundred people were extra-judicially killed, leaving hundreds injured by bomb blasts and gun shots.

Federalism and Autonomy

The North Sentinel⁷⁰ Island in Andaman and Nicobar Islands; Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), and North Cachar Hills Autonomous District Council (NCHAC) in Assam; Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) at Kargil and Leh in Jammu-Kashmir; Garo, Jaintia, and Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (HADC) in Meghalaya; Chakma, Lai, and Mara Autonomous District Council in Mizoram; Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) in Tripura; and Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) in West Bengal exist as autonomous regions in India⁷¹.

The BTC enjoys legislative, administrative, executive, and financial powers in 40 policy areas in the Territorial District Areas within four districts of Assam. This provision was established in 1995 after the peace accord signed between the Government of India and Bodo rebels. Similarly, all the development structures are under the administrative control of the KAAC. Kargil and Leh are one of the three districts of Ladakh, which are controlled by Pakistan now, under the (LAHDC). The LAHDC was created in 1995, accepting the Ladaki people's demands to make Leh district a union territory due to its religious and cultural differences. The TTAADC is an independent council for the tribal areas of the state. The DGHC was established in 1988 due to a strong, long term people's movement demanding, on behalf of the Indian-Gorkha people under the banner of Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), a separate state of Gorkhaland. However, the DGHC has limited autonomy⁷². The Assam

Reorganization (Meghalaya) Act 1969 accorded an autonomous status to the state of Meghalaya⁷³.

The Central Government of India has provided varying degrees of full-semi-and-limited autonomy within the state legislature. The autonomy is based on the sixth schedule to the Constitution of India. Administration of Tribal Areas in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram fall in the category of Autonomous districts and autonomous regions⁷⁴ under the provisions of Articles 244(2) and 275(1) and under the framework of the Indian and local governments.

When, India became independent from the United Kingdom in 1947, the Muslim Nizam of Hyderabad wanted to retain his independence from India, but the people of the region launched the movement to join the Indian Union⁷⁵. After India's independence, the Maharaja of Mysore permitted his kingdom's accession to India, but former *Maharaja* (king) acted as head of state until 1975.

Conclusion

Nepali scholars as well as leaders of the parties talk a lot about European models of federalism. Large sections of the people dream that a new Nepal would be similar to developed European countries. However, leaders and scholars also talk of such models for two reasons; to receive a huge sum of financial assistance and a long tour to Europe. They care less about Europe's homogenous similarities (less diversity) in terms of culture, language, religion, and social security.

With regard to federalism, Nepal would do well to account for geopolitical structure, population density, regional/economic disparity, ethnic diversity, linguistic multiplicity, regional variety, religious heterogeneity, administrative accessibility, unequal development, and spatial elements. India's federal/unitary model may be the best example of federation for Nepali people too due to our similarities in ethno-cultural diversity, regional particularity, political arrangements, and ideological (liberal democratic) notions. In India's context, federal means 28 states with 7 union territories, and unitary means the president of the central government has the authority to impose a state of emergency, ousting the elected government at any time, in case of constitutional/political conflicts, on the recommendation of cabinet. Due to several socio-cultural secessionist insurgencies, India may have to rethink its federal model.

Moreover, Nepal should give extreme attention to national security, foreign affairs, monetary policy, big hydro power, national highways, and an international airport in the course of declaring a Federation of States. Indeed Nepal can neither be "One Himal One Pradesh" nor "One Madhes One Pradesh." Rather, the country needs ethno-cultural-regional states.

Considerably the country rush towards federalism in name, the most inclusively implemented decentralization would be the best option for Nepal and Nepalis for peace, progress, prosperity, and development over the long term. Only that could solidify the concept of unity in diversity. It is not enough to have "participatory democracy." Simply participating without the ability to effect policy is an exercise in frustration. Local populations must be able to not only have their voices heard, but acted upon. Federal states without inclusive democracy

would ultimately lead to the corrosion of Nepalese identity, united strength, and harmony as each would fight for its own supremacy.

Federalism is not, its self, a solution for the people's desire of food, shelter, clothing, education, employment, health, and sanitation. One must remember that poor people seek basic needs as much as basic rights in federation, as they could not fulfill their hopes and expectations of "food and freedom" from the new governments formed after the Jana Andolan (people's movement) I and II.

If Nepal were to introduce federal states without calculating the pros and cons of federalism and without precaution, it would be more vulnerable to socio-cultural 'identity-based' conflict due to the elites' present lack of statesmanship and unclear concept of independence and integrity. Nepal should be aware that India suffers identity-based conflict in 64 percent (18) of its states which may lead toward more secession in the near future.

=====

(*It is my privilege to pay special thanks to **Neil Horning** who has contributed to editing this article. I also express sincere thanks to Professor Ananda Aditya, Surendra Uprety (PhD Scholar), Devendra Uprety, Sugam KC (PhD scholar), Rita Chaudhary, Ganga Puri, and Meena Siwakoti who assisted in this exercise).

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India>

² Majeed, Akhtar (2009) *Working of the Indian Federal System: Federal Studies Monograph Series*. Centre for Federal Studies. New Delhi: Hamdard University

³ *Country Profile: India*. December 2004. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/India.pdf>

⁴ An Andhra Kingdom was mentioned in the Sanskrit epics such as Aitareya Brahmana (B.C.800) and Mahabharata. The Natyasastra of Bharatha (1st Century B.C.E.) also mentioned the Andhra" race. The roots of the Telugu language have been traced to inscriptions found at Bhattiprolu. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andhra_Pradesh#cite_note-5

⁵ Arunachal Pradesh means "land of the dawn lit mountains" in Sanskrit. It is also known as "land of the rising sun" ("pradesh" means "state" or "region") in reference to its position as the easternmost state of India. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andhra_Pradesh#cite_note-2

⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People_of_India_project

⁷ Assam was known as Pragjyotisha in the Mahabharata; and Kamarupa in the 1st millennium. Assam gets its name from the Ahom kingdom (1228-1826), then known as *Kingdom of Assam*. The British province after 1838 and the Indian state after 1947 came to be known as Assam <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assam>.

⁸ The name Bihar is derived from the Sanskrit word *Vihara* which means "abode". The word Vihar is itself derived from the word *Brahmavihaa* meaning "Brahma abidings", or "Sublime attitudes." The region roughly encompassing the present state was dotted with Buddhist vihara

⁹ Chhattisgarhi is a dialect of Hindi language or a language in its own right and it is spoken and understood by the majority of people in Chhattisgarh. A total of 93 dialects or languages are spoken in the state <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chhattisgarh>

¹⁰ 36 (Chattis is thirty-six in Hindi and Garh is Fort)

¹¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goa>

¹² The name *Goa* came to European languages from the Portuguese, but its precise origin is unclear. In the bygone days it came to be known by many names such as *Gomanta*, *Gomanchala*, *Gopakapattam*, *Gopakapuri*, *Govapuri*, *Gomantak*, etc. The Indian epic *Mahabharata* refers to the area now known as Goa, as *Goparashtra* or 'Govarashtra' which means a nation of cowherds. *Gopakapuri* or *Gopakapattanam* were used in some ancient Sanskrit texts, and these names were also mentioned in

other sacred Hindu texts such as the *Harivansa* and the *Skanda Purana*. In the latter, Goa is also known as *Gomanchala*. *Parashurambhoomi* is a name that the region is referred to in certain inscriptions and texts such as the *Puranas*.

13 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gujarat>

14 Situated on the western coast of India, the name of the state is derived from *Gujjaratta* (Gurjar Rashtra), which means the land of the Gujjars . It is believed that a tribe of Gujjars migrated to India around the 5th century. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Gujarat

15 The name Haryana means "The Abode of God" from Sanskrit *Hari* (the Hindu God Vishnu) and *ayana* (home). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haryana>

16 The literal meaning of Himachal Pradesh is *Region of snowy mountains*. Himachal Pradesh was also known as *Deva Bhoomi* (the land of the gods). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haryana#Demographics>

17 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jammu_and_Kashmir

18 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jharkhand>

19 The name Jharkhand comes from the Sanskrit Jharikhanda which is the ancient name of the regions dense forest - Jharikhanda. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jharkhand>

20 Originally known as the *State of Mysore*, it was renamed *Karnataka* in 1973. the generally accepted one is that *Karnataka* is derived from the Kannada words *karu* and *nadu*, meaning *elevated land*. *Karu nadu* may also be read as *Karu* (black) and *nadu* (region), as a reference to the black cotton soil found in the Bayaluseeme region of Karnataka. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karnataka>

21 A 3rd-century -BC rock inscription by emperor Asoka the Great attests to a *Keralaputra*. Around 1 BC the region was ruled by the Chera Dynasty, which traded with the Greeks, Romans, and Arabs. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kerala>

22 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madhya_Pradesh

23 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maharashtra>

24 The antiquity of this region can be traced to approximately the 3rd century BC, which is when the Maharastri language, a Prakrit version of Sanskrit from which the term 'Maharashtra' is derived, was then in use. Marathi, which evolved from Maharastri-Prakrit, has been the *lingua franca* of the people of this area from the 10th century onwards. And, in the course of time, the term 'Maharashtra' was used to describe a region which consisted of Aparanta, Vidarbha, Mulak, Ashmak and Kuntal. The tribal communities of Nags, Munds and Bhills inhabited this area, also known as Dandakaranya, in ancient times. They were joined by the Aryas, the Shakas and the Huns, who came from the North, as well as by foreigners, who arrived by sea. The Dravidians from the South colonised the land, joining a group which collectively became known as 'Marathas.' http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Maharashtra

25 Hindi (*maāipĀra*), from Sanskrit (*maāipĀra*) "abundance of jewels", also the third chakra; derived from (*maāi*) "jewel" (*pĀra*) "abundance". <http://www.allwords.com/word-Manipur.html>

26 The word "*Meghalaya*" literally means "The Abode of Clouds" in Sanskrit and other Indic languages.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meghalaya>

27 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mizoram>

28 The origin of the Mizos, like those of many other tribes in the northeastern India, is shrouded in mystery. The generally accepted view is that they were part of a great wave of migration from China and later moved out to India to their present habitat. It is possible that the Mizos came from Sinlung or Chhinlungan located on the banks of the Yalung River in China, first settled in the Shan State and moved on to the Kabaw Valley. It is also believed that Mizos originated from Mongolia, however there is no written proof. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mizoram>

29 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nagaland>

30 Nagas speak 60 different dialects belonging to the Sino-Tibetan family of languages.

<http://www.angelfire.com/nm/nagalim/origin.htm>

31 Indo-Mongoloid tribal people of North East India

32 The word *Oriya* is an anglicized version of *Odia*, which itself is a modern name for the *Odra* or *Udra* tribes. Orissa has also been the home of the Kalinga and Utkal that played a particularly prominent role in the region's history, and one of the earliest references to the ancient Kalingas appears in the writings of Vedic chroniclers. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orissa>

33 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punjab_\(India\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punjab_(India))

34 *Punjab* in Persian literally means "five" (*panj*) "waters" (*ab*), i.e. the Land of Five Rivers, referring to

the five rivers which go through it. The first mentioning of the Sanskrit equivalent of 'Punjab', however, occurs in the great epic, the Mahabharata (pancha-nada 'country of five rivers').
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Punjab.

35 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rajasthan>

36 The state of Rajasthan is also populated by Sindhis, who came to Rajasthan from Sindh province (now in Pakistan) during the India-Pakistan separation in 1947.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rajasthan#Demographics>.

37 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikkim>

38 *Sikkim* (or *Sikhim*) means *crested land* in Nepali. The term, which was coined by the invading Gorkhas, is derived from the Sanskrit word *Shikhim* which means "crested", and is the most widely accepted origin. Sikkim would thus owe its name to its almost entirely mountainous terrain. An alternative etymology suggests that the name originates in the Limbu words *Su*, which means "new", and *Khyim*, which means "palace". Hence the term *Sikkim* may also mean "New Palace", in reference to the palace built by the state's first ruler, Panchen Namgyal. The Tibetan name for Sikkim is '*Bras mo ljongs*, which means the "valley of rice".

39 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamil_Nadu

40 Tamils are an ethnic group native to Tamil Nadu, a state in India, and the north-eastern region of Sri Lanka. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamil_Nadu#Demographics_and_Religion

41 The origin of the name of Tripura is still a matter of controversy among historians and researchers. According to the 'Rajmala', Tripura's celebrated court chronicle, an ancient king named 'Tripur' ruled over the territorial domain known as 'Tripura' and the name of the kingdom was derived from his name. Many researchers explain the name 'Tripura' from its etymological origin: the word 'Tripura' is a compound of two separate words, 'Tui' (water) + 'Pra' (near) which in totality means 'near water'.
<http://www.indiastudychannel.com/resources/2439-TRIPURA-ORIGIN-AND-HISTORY.aspx>

42 The known history of Uttar Pradesh goes back 4000 years, when the Aryans first made it their home in 2000 BC. This heralded the Vedic age of the Indian civilization and Uttar Pradesh was its home. Madhya Desha (midland) or Aryavarta (the Aryan land) or Bharatvarsha (the kingdom of Bharat, an important Aryan king). In the ages to come, Aryans spread to other parts of the Indian subcontinent, reaching as far south as Kerala and Sri Lanka. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uttar_Pradesh.

43 Literally *North Country* or *Section* in Sanskrit, the name of Uttarakhand finds mention in the early Hindu scriptures as the combined region of Kedarkhand and Manaskhand. Uttarakhand was also the ancient Puranic term for the central stretch of the Indian Himalayas. Its peaks and valleys were well known in ancient times as the abode of gods and goddesses and source of the Ganga River. Today, it is often called "the Land of the Gods" (Dev Bhoomi) because of the presence of a multitude of Hindu pilgrimage spots. Kandari, O. P., and Gusain, O. P. Eds. 2001. *Garhwal Himalaya: Nature, Culture and Society*. Srinagar: Transmedia.

44 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Bengal

45 The exact origin of the word *Bangla* or Bengal is unknown, though it is believed to be derived from the Dravidian-speaking tribe *Bang* that settled in the area around the year 1000 BC. *Heitzman, James and Robert L. Worden, ed. 1989. Early History, 1000 B.C.-A.D. 1202. Bangladesh: A country study. Library of Congress.* <http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/bdtoc.html>.⁴⁶

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/States_and_territories_of_India

47 Frontline. Nov. 2000. *A Conflict Deferred*. New Delhi: The Hindu

48 <http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/programs/aj/police/chhattisgarh/background/default.htm>.

49 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_Territory

50 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goa>

51 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_Sister_States

52 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northeast_India

53 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terrorism_in_India

54 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Insurgency_in_North-East_India

55 The exact origin of the word *Bangla* or Bengal is unknown, though it is believed to be derived from the Dravidian-speaking tribe *Bang* that settled in the area around the year 1000 BC. *Heitzman, James and*

Robert L. Worden, ed. 1989. Early History, 1000 B.C.-A.D. 1202. *Bangladesh: A country study*. Library of Congress. <http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/bdtoc.html>.⁵⁶

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_terrorist_organisations

57

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bihar>

58

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_Party_of_India_\(Maoist\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_Party_of_India_(Maoist))

59

http://news.indiainfo.com/2006/07/11/major_terrorist_attacks_india.html

60

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terrorism_in_India

61

Singh, Nirakhar. Cultural Conflict in India: Kashmir and Punjab. Available on

<http://repositories.cdlib.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1066&context=uciaspubs/research>

62

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terrorism_in_India

63

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Democratic_Front_of_Bodoland

64

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Liberation_Front_of_Asom

65

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tripura>

66

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Liberation_Front_of_Tripura

67

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tripura>

68

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manipur>

69

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mizoram>

70

It is home of the Sentinelese (world's last un-contacted peoples) that resulted untouched by modern civilization.

71

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autonomous_regions_of_India

72

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autonomous_regions_of_India

73

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meghalaya>

74

Paragraph 1 has been amended in its application to the State of Assam by the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution (Amendment) Act, 2003 (44 of 2003),s. 2 , so as to insert the following proviso after sub-paragraph (2), namely: "Provided that nothing in this sub-paragraph shall apply to the Bodoland Territorial Areas District

75

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andhra_Pradesh



Painting: Lona Towsley