

Both the Union and the UP governments have issued a clarification that the formation of Poorvanchal, and by implication, three other states (Bundelkhand, Awadh and Paschim /Harit Pradesh) from within the existing boundaries of UP is not on the anvil in the near future. However, this it does not, in any way detract from the merit of reorganizing UP : India's biggest state with a population of approximately 220 million. It would have been the fifth largest country in the world if it were an independent nation.

Right from the time of its formation the issue of its very large size, compared to other states has made it an outlier. Dr Ambedkar went to the extent of saying that the SRC recommendations in 1956 had led to the 'consolidation of the North and the balkanization of the South'. It must be mentioned that the SRC report was not unanimous, and one of the members - KM Panikkar- went on record to state that the sheer size and geographic extent of UP made it asymmetrical. He felt that it would sooner or later lead to a situation in which UP will have a domineering influence on the administration and polity of the country, which will be resented by the rest!

Earlier in 1995, in his book, *Thoughts on Linguistic States* Dr Ambedkar proposed that UP be split into three states- with Meerut as the capital of the Western Region, Allahabad as the capital of the Eastern Region and Kanpur as the capital of the Central region. Her protégé Mayawati took the idea forward, and in 2007, just after becoming Chief Minister, she called for a three-way split of UP into Bundelkhand, Harit Pradesh and Poorvanchal Pradesh, which, she said, would help in improving the quality of life by making governance feasible in the backward areas of the State. She promised that her government would pass a resolution in the Assembly, while seeking the Centre's approval in this regard (as required under Article 3 of the

Constitution). A similar proposal for the creation of three new states (Braj Pradesh, Awadh Pradesh and Purbi Pradesh had been mooted in 1972 by a powerful group of MLAs when Kamalapati Tripathi was the Congress Chief Minister . However, this did not gain much currency as it was felt that the reorganization with respect to Purbi Pradesh would also impinge the territorial integrity of Madhya Pradesh.

Cut to 2011. Without any explanation , the Resolution moved by Mayawati on the floor of the UP House in 2011 looked at four , instead of three states . The cavalier manner in which the resolution was passed was not inspiring and many political commentators have expressed reservations on the manner in which the resolution was passed . An issue of such vital importance ought to have been deliberated at length , and legislators should have received a White paper outlining the reasons for, and the circumstances which necessitated the reorganization as well as the terms of implementation.

But , for the record , as things stand today, the legislature of UP has passed a resolution in the Assembly to split UP into four smaller states – Poorvanchal, Bundelkhand, Awadh Pradesh and Paschim(Harit) Pradesh – ostensibly in the interest of ‘better administration’. According to Mayawati’s blueprint, Poorvanchal would have the twenty-two eastern districts of the state, including Gorakhpur. Lucknow, the capital, would be a part of Awadh Pradesh; Paschim Pradesh or Harit Pradesh would include Meerut and Ghaziabad; and Bundelkhand would have seven districts. Her critics have alleged that as Mayawati was not from UP – she had no emotional connect with the state . Like Dr Ambedkar, who grew up in Mumbai, she too had

her roots in metropolitan Delhi. That has made her less of a provincial politician with overt emotional attachment to the idea of a unified UP.

The 2001 UP Assembly Resolution was put in the cold store by the then UPA regime, but in the Election Manifesto for the 2014 Lok Sabha, the BJP emphasised the 'recognition of regional aspirations'. In the section titled 'Strengthen the Framework', the party built a case for greater decentralisation through smaller states, and post 2000, the party had indeed endorsed smaller states : Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand and Telangana.

While there is support for both Poorvanchal and Bundelkhand, the popular discourse in Paschim /Harit Pradesh is favourably inclined for merger with 'Greater Delhi'. This proposition has been made time and again since independence with names such as Kisan Pradesh, Indraprastha and Harit Pradesh. The idea is to merge the seventeen districts of western UP (Meerut, Baghpat, Shamli, Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Bijnor, Moradabad, Sambhal, Amroha, Hapur, Ghaziabad, Noida, Bulandshahr, Aligarh, Hathras, Mathura and Agra) with existing Delhi state. That part of New Delhi where Parliament, offices and embassies are situated could be declared Union Territory. This will also resolve the demand of declaring Delhi as a full state and over 80 million people of these districts of western UP will also get a new state. Presently, Delhi Assembly has 70 MLAs and with 90 more MLAs from these districts, Delhi Assembly will be bigger in size with 160 MLAs- ready for a full statehood! The jurisdiction of the existing High Court of Delhi can be extended, and this will be good for the litigants as well as the lawyers who would find it easier to approach Delhi rather than Lucknow. (to be continued)