

UPDATE

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THE MAKING OF UTTRAKHAND STATE

Passage of the UP Reorganization bill saw the formation of Uttarakhand as a separate political entity. Celebrations are on in the region. Processions and sounds of slogans are echoing in the entire region. Views on “Kaun Banega Mukhya Mantri” storm the front pages of the national dailies. However somewhere in this hullabaloo the crucial question of significance seems to have got lost. The only question that is ruling the scenario and being considered as worth pondering upon in the last two months is – ‘who the CM and where the capital?’

What kind of a state will Uttarakhand be? Will it be able to frame pro people policies? Will it be able to solve the development problems of the region? How will the resources be managed? How will proper governance in the new state be ensured?

The intelligentsia, all political groups along with other big and small time political players are all ready to make their millions from this newly found opportunity. In the midst of all this, ‘the great middle class of India’ is desperately trying to find its identity. Information technology, genetic and organic food, agro-farming etc... –an unending array of roles the middle class is trying to carve out for itself in this scenario through various guises. On the other hand, one can feel the happiness of the activists – Unending sacrifices! So many martyrs! A heavy price for giving a real shape to this long lasting dream.

The contemporary situation raises a plethora of issues – after all, what dreams motivated our martyrs to join the struggle? What does history say about this struggle for separate statehood? Who were friends and who the foes? What will be the future of Uttarakhand? Will there be a space for the common man's aspirations? What will be the nature of policies in the new state? Is this the end of the war? Or is it just a step forward in our long journey towards a successful statehood?

This is an attempt to look into the various relevant issues and find some answers in this

Creation of a separate state of “Uttaranchal” instead of ‘Uttarakhand’ and Dehradun as the capital is joy for some and heartburns for many. There is a long history to support this statement. As it has brought many differences not in terms of just the name or the place but the whole idea with which it is created at this crucial stage of the history. The relationships with nature, environment, seeing the region as a home instead of a marketable commodity, are among the basic controversies at the identity and ideological level.

Tracing the History

There have been diverse views and perspectives regarding the history of Uttarakhand. According to one, the entire Indian subcontinent had been a "scene of great upheaval" during the period between the twelfth and thirteenth century. Foreign invaders influenced the Indian culture and tried to replace it with their own. These invaders actively propagated their religion in order to wash out the native one. At such a critical time the people threatened by such a scenario came to this region so as to protect their distinct identity, culture and religion. There was a stream of people from – Punjab, Jammu, Nagarkote, Rajasthan, Central India, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Bengal, Bihar and Delhi. People here co-existed with no much conflict. Unlike the present times, they even established inter regional and inter cultural conjugal relationships. Amicable relations and co-operation among Kannaujias, Gujaratis, Maharashtrians and Punjabis – all migrants in Uttarakhand during the reign of Chand rulers – together present the

best example of community living in the history of this region. Except a few local level conflicts, Uttarakhand had been largely peaceful and economically sound during this era.

The oppressive Gorkha forces disrupted this peaceful environment of coexistence. These invaders completely overthrew the whole social system through their torturous rule. The economic base of the region was completely destroyed. The present scenario of the region is no less than a reflection of this earlier state of bereavement. The oppression by Gorkhas, known as 'Gorkhyani' provided the force for such a pitiable state of the region in some places there are also referred to as 'ranbhooth' (spirit of the worries). It is said, that in order to selectively eliminate the male population in the region, the practice of 'Roza' was initiated. Each day one male member of the village was forced to jump in a round of fire. The material remains of this gruesome ritual (in the form of fireplaces 'Agnikund') can still be seen in various parts of the region. Even now, 'poojas' (prayers) are performed every year to ward off the evil spirits. This and various other reasons, forced the people who were together contributing towards the progress of this region to begin migrating to the plains. (Due to myriad reasons this process of migration still continues).

Ages passed, different rulers had their share of power but the story of oppression and torture seemed unending. Well! The nature of oppression had definitely changed over time.

Initially the Britishers and then the successive governments of Independent India increasingly recruited the youths of this region in the armed forces. The innocence of the people in this region was fully exploited for furthering the apathetic and lopsided priorities of the Britishers and then followed by the very own government. The declaration of 'martial race' and the 'Victoria cross'- were alluring toys selectively used as instruments to win over the innocence of the non-suspicious people and pave the way for their own end. This process had major repercussions for the future development of the region. It selectively arrested the development of art, culture, language, architecture and technology etc. for defining the development in this region. The economic base of the region was almost dead by now. The First and Second World Wars left this region with almost no men to count on.

The withering economy and administrative disorder in the region caught the attention of the Britishers. The 1904 Nainital Gazetteer (Chapter 5) and other documents provide references to this region as a 'Hill State'. Evidences as to the acceptance of this region as a distinct geographical territory are also available. The Montague Chelmsford Report (1918) accepted that smaller, more or less similar and manageable administrative units would make the work of the administration easier. In 1924, S.N. Sapru, the Special Officer of the United Provinces Government gave an account of the backwardness of this region in the 'Industrial Survey of Garhwal' Report. He suggested the proper utilisation of the natural resources in the region for creation of employment opportunities for the local people (*source: DHAD, vol.1*).

The socio-economic condition in Uttarakhand was at its worst. People in this region had started showing their retaliation towards such oppressive conditions.

RAWAIN MOVEMENT

The famous revolt of Rawain took place in the year of 1930 during the reign of Narendershah. The revolt is seen as an offshoot of the forest arrangements that were introduced in the year 1927 – 1928. According to the New Forest arrangements, boundaries of the reserved forest were to be extended and were to include the land and forest that were previously owned by the common people. Such a step proved to be extremely repressive for rural people heavily dependent on forest and agriculture for their livelihood. It was against this background that people of Rawain Jaunpur area rose in revolt and declared the establishment of independent local government (Azad Panchayat). State became extremely concerned about the developments in this region and talked the people into an agreement but did nothing to reduce their plight. For almost two years status quo existed, which frustrated the people of the region, who on the end of May, 1930 set large parts of the forests afire.

When 'Dewan' of the state heard the news, he decided to send the army to repress the revolt. On 30th May 1930, on a field in Tilari, army surrounded the people who had gathered for the meeting of the local Panchayat and shot large number of people. After the shooting, many of those who were engaged in the revolt were tried and sentenced and thus the revolt of Rawain was repressed. Nevertheless, the relevance of the movement is still valid. This was the movement for right over 'Natural Resources' (Jal, Jungle, and Zameen).

The movement had started long time back. However, not politically but in a socio- cultural attire. The first organised step in this direction was the initiation of 'Kumaun Parishad'- a platform to discuss issues of social,

economic, political and academic concerns. The members of the first organising committee were – Rai Bahadur Tara Dutt Gairola, Hargovind Pant, Govind Ballabh Pant and ‘Kurmanchal Kesari’ Badri Dutt Pandey. This organisation contributed immensely towards awareness generation in the hill society. The merger of this organisation with the Congress in 1926 provided a political form to the struggles of the region. These social conflicts reached the peak in the form of Rawain movement.

The demands for an organised separate administrative system for the Uttarakhand region was raised in the Srinagar Garhwal Conference that was organised on 5-6th May 1938 by the Congress Party. This conference was presided over by Pratap Singh Negi and attended by Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru and Vijayalakshmi Pandit among others. The most plausible aspect of this conference was Nehru’s emphasis on hill people’s right to take their own decisions according to the unique features of this hilly region. Following the move, the Uttarakhandis living in Delhi established the ‘Garh Desh Seva Sangh’. Prominent among its founders is Shri. Shridev Suman.

The movement faced a setback due to widening differences in the Congress committee. The reason being a blatant rejection of the demands of the hill people raised especially in the Pauri Political Conference. Consequently the hard-liners formed a different committee –‘Garhwal Jagriti Sanstha’ under the leadership of Pratap Singh Negi and Umanand Barthwal.

Between 1939 to 1946 the people of Uttarakhand actively participated in the National Freedom Struggle. On 5th September 1942, the Almora police forcefully tried to suppress this mass movement. Consequently the region witnessed a major rebellion on the part of the people. Gandhi ji called this as the Bardoli (Satyagrah) of Kumaun.

Following this there was a spurt of ideological streams as per the demand for a separate political unit. In 1946, Shri Badri Dutt Pandey (Kumaun Kesri) raised a demand at the Haldwani conference for the provision of a separate administrative unit for the hill region. Although this proposal was unanimously passed in the conference, it was outrightly rejected by the then Premier of the United Provinces, Shri Govind Ballabh Pant. Once again the Kumaun Kesri – Shri Badri Dutt Pandey, raised the plausible demand for a separate state before the State Reorganisation Commission.

In 1950, the Parvatiya Jan Vikas Samiti was setup in New Delhi to look into the formation of the Great Himalayan State ranging from Kangra to Almora (including Pithoragarh). This organisation was an initiative on the part of the ‘hotel workers’ from this region. A Conference organised at Chandni Chowk was attended by various shades of people from this hilly region. Chowdhary Sherganj from Himachal took the presidential seat while D. P. Uniyal was elected as the General Secretary of this organisation. To provide a platform for voicing the opinions and perspectives of the hill people, the organisation initiated ‘Parvatiya’ – a newspaper published from Turkman Gate, Delhi. The name was subsequently changed to ‘Himalaya Times’. The organisation put forward a proposal to the UP Government for considering separate statehood for this region. However, Chief Minister G.B. Pant once again blatantly rejected this proposal.

In 1952, the CPI raised the separate statehood issue through a proposal by Shri. P. C. Joshi to the Government. He justified the claim by even referring to Nehru's address at the Karachi Convention in 1931. The Indian Government forwarded this proposal directly to the State Reorganisation Commission without any comments.

At the General Assembly of the ‘Parvatiya Jan Vikas Samiti’ on 22nd May 1955 in Delhi, a demand was made to merge the Uttarakhand region with the proposed Himachal Pradesh and form the Great Himachal Pradesh. During this time comrade P.C.Joshi formed the Sarv daliya Sangharsh Samiti. The Samiti demanded an independent administrative status for the Uttarakhand region. Various conferences were organised both in the Kumaun and Garhwal region and consequently an all party front came into existence.

In 1956, the State Reorganisation Commission rejected the proposal regarding separate statehood for Himachal. However, the then Home Minister Shri G.B.Pant exercised his powers and legally accepted the demand for a separate statehood in the case of Himachal. In contrast, the proposal for a separate statehood for Uttarakhand was rejected by the Home Minister inspite of the arguments of Shri Pannicker, a member of the State Reorganisation Bill.

On 26th January 1960, the strategically relevant areas of – Chamoli tehsil of Garhwal District and Uttarkashi tehsil of Tehri Garhwal and Pithoragarh tehsil of District Almora were subsequently changed into three new districts -

Chamoli, Uttarakashi and Pithoragarh respectively. These three districts together were recognised as 'Uttarakhand' in the Government Gazette.

At the Ramnagar (10-11 June 1967) Congress Convention Shri Dwarika Prasad Uniyal forwarded a proposal regarding a separate administrative (Uttarakhand) unit in the presence of Shri Jagmohan Negi, Chandrabhan Gupt and Sucheta Kriplani. A copy of this report was also forwarded to the Government.

Amidst all these big and small movements, seminars and debates, a full-fledged movement took shape during 24-25th June 1967 for furthering the cause of a separate state. For effectively realising this demand, a committee for the Hill State (Parvatiya Rajya Parishad) was constituted under the Presidentship of Dayakrishna Pandey. Shri Govind Singh Mehra was elected as the Vice President while Shri N.D.Sundriyal was given the post of Secretary. As suggested by Parliamentarian Mr. Manvendra Shah, a separate Hill Areas Planning Cell was formed in the Planning Commission. The then Prime Minister also gave consent to this separate planning cell.

The journey for the formation of Uttarakhand – which began with an idea conceived in the Nainital Gazette in 1904 evolved into a full-fledged movement by 1970. In this series:

- ***The 'Kumaun rashtriya Morcha' was formed in 1970, under the leadership of comrade P.C.Joshi.***
- ***The reorganisation of Uttarakhand Parvatiya Parishad in 1971.***
- ***Dharna at the Boat Club.***
- ***Formation of Uttaranchal Parishad in Nainital.***
- ***Demonstrations and arrests of Uttarakhand Rajya Parishad activists at the Boat Club.***
- ***'Padyatra' from Badrinath to Boat Club organised by the Uttarakhand Yuva Morcha in 1978.***
- ***71 people arrested in connection with organising a 'Gherao' near the Parliament.***
- ***Organisation of the Hill People's Development Conference on July 24th and 25th 1979. This provided the basis for the inception of the 'Uttarakhand Kranti Dal', a regional political party.***

In the following years also the struggle has been carried forward and strengthened by people of all ages, castes, classes and religions. To propagate the demand- the 'All India Students Federation' organised a 900-km cycle rally in Garhwal. In 1988, the UKD organised a voluntary arrest campaign in the whole region as a symbol of non-co-operation movement. The same year the BJP also joined the struggle for a separate state. However their conceptual understanding materialised it as Uttaranchal rather than Uttarakhand.

(Reference: DHAD Granth Ayogan- 1)

As the movement progressed, the UKD became a dominant regional political party and started raising its voice against the anti-development policies such as Van Adhinyam. Various other organizations also came up - Uttarakhand Jan Parishad, Uttarakhand Jan Sangharsha Vahini, All Uttarakhand Students' Federation, Uttarakhand Pragatisheel Yuva Manch, Uttarakhand Pragatisheel Yuva Manch, Jan Sangharsh Vahini, Uttarakhand Yuva Shakti Manch, Uttaranchal Pradesh Sangharsh Samiti, Uttarakhand Sangharsh Samiti, Uttarakhand Mukti Morch etc. All these organizations provided the much-needed ignition to further the struggle.

Spirits were high! Struggle was on! The explosive was ready! Need was of a decisive spark for the ultimate war!

The then chief minister of Uttar Pradesh Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav's announcement for 27% reservation in academic institutions for OBCs, provided the ultimate spark. With a revolutionary spirit and motivation to fight till the end, the energetic youth groups were enraged. This move of the U.P government was beyond the tolerance of the already angry people. This provision was completely irrelevant for the region due to its distinct social organization, largely different (the percentage of OBCs in Uttarakhand being only 3%) from the rest of the country. The police lathi charge and firing on student demonstrators provoked the whole population of Uttarakhand. Consequently, all students' associations, parents, teachers, karamcharis, women and children joined hands in this movement. Among them *Uttarakhand Sanyukt Sangrash Samiti., Uttarakhand Sanyukt Chhatra Sangrash Samiti, Uttarakhand Mahila Morcha, Uttarakhand Chhatra and Yuva Morcha, Student and Youth Alliances (SAYA), Uttarakhand Grameen Sangrash Samiti, Jan Sangarsh Samiti, Uttarakhand Sanskritik Morcha and Pragatisheel Mahila Manch*, were the prominent leaders of the movement.. This in turn became a sharpening tool for the separate statehood movement. The realisation dawned that our own system of governance was necessary to take up the relevant social issues; consequently, the spontaneous reaction took a shape of massive and unprecedented people's movement. It was an apolitical, political movement.

Mean while on 24th August 1994, the bill for the 'Uttarakhand State' was passed and sent to the 'Centre' by Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav. The passing of the bill did not affect the sprit and the momentum of the movement. To suppress the movement, the Government tried both political and non-political moves to the extent of gunning down the activist in Khatima (1st september-1994) and Mussoorie (2nd September-1994). This was followed by the infamous Mujjaffarnagar incident exhibiting the Zenith of the police atrocities. There was a sharp reaction to the incident in the Uttarakhand region in which three more lives were martyred. Quite interestingly the Central Government kept mum throughout. But, the movement took a turn now; it shifted from the level of the people to the Political Parties. Everybody played their own game with the issue. The battle, however, was on! People were continuously expressing their resentment through seminars, workshops, rallies and demonstrations.

The political scenario in the country took a volte-face, the power centre in UP could not resist the tremors also, leading to the formation of Uttarakhand (Uttaranchal) along with two new state.

Capital

Just after the declaration of **Dehradun** as the *capital*, the resentment amongst the people spread all the more. It was expressed directly and indirectly throughout the state. Dehradun's selection is a clear indication of once again sanctioning the interest of the mafia and the bureaucrats thus showing indifference to the sentiments of the people of Uttarakhand.

The people's choice of **Gairsain** as capital dates back to the starting of the movement for Uttarakhand. Quite interestingly, prior to this Mr. Kalyan Singh's BJP government opened a government office, thereby giving recognition to Gairsand as capital. Also Kaushik Committee in the leadership of Mr. R.S. Kaushik suggested Gairsand as capital. This was followed by an expensive geological survey of Gairsand, findings of which strengthened the appropriateness of Gairsand. Uttarakhand being a hill state, ideally the capital should also be in hills. Moreover, Gairsand is centrally located, significantly fulfilling all the important criteria.

Mujjaffarnagar Kand

Mujjaffarnagar episode is the worst example of the police and administrative atrocities. What do we call the government machinery when the police fires from AK-47 at the unarmed activists, the SP fires from his constable's rifles, rapes the mothers and the sisters and even snatches their belongings and jewellery. On 2nd October 1994, at 9.30 am in the Mujjaffarnagar hospital a naked women was seen trying to cover her body with her hands only. Many women were seen running only in their petticoats. For over a year, one of the women's breasts was terribly swollen and bruised. In Medpur (Mujjaffarnagar) village, on 2nd October at 5: 30 am, Shri Raj Bal Sharma (a villager) gave away his clothes to two nude girls.

As per the witnesses, ten ex-servicemen and other youth, opposing the rape, were brutally gunned down. Ravinder Rawat (21 year old) one of the student activists died on the spot. The fact that lady police was not deputed anywhere in the scene is an evidence in itself. This planned, systematic and outrageous conspiracy was a slap on the Indian democracy. In spite of the incident occurring near Delhi, the Capital, a grim silence prevailed right from the PM to the major newspapers and also the women's organisations.

On the Mujjaffarnagar episode, N.D. Tiwari, commented that this gruesome event would have long-term consequences. He initiated his campaign (Satyagraha) from Mujjaffarnagar. The congress replaced N.D. Tiwari with Jitender Prasad as the President of U.P Congress. He was the same Jitender Prasad who had made irresponsible remarks on the entire Uttarakhand movement. These comments were no less than the immature remarks made by District Magistrate of Mujjaffarnagar. While on one side N.D. Tiwari strongly voiced for a dismissal of the Mulayam Singh Government, Jitender Prasad continued his support for the government. Finally, BJP's diplomacy won, which helped Mayawati to become the CM of Uttar Pradesh. The whole series of events was used as a platform by the two parties, Congress and BJP, to strengthen their footholds. However, in the entire process Uttarakhand was lost. As far as Congress is concerned Uttarakhand was never an important issue. With the coming of the elections, Uttarakhand was suddenly visible. Similarly for BJP it was just another election issue. The insensitivity reached its height when the BJP made the victimised women agree to make statements only in its presence. Due to lack of full knowledge regarding the entire incident, the MPs from Uttarakhand failed to bring any results. However, the Garhwal MPs took the credit for the downfall of the Mulayam Government. Although, BJP was busy conducting rallies and public meetings for getting the attention of media, however, it never attempted to pressurise the central government. (Source- Dhasmana, R.P.1997, Mujjaffarnagar Kand.—in Shikhray-97, pp-26-34) All through this the CPM and its women's' wing (AIDWA) were safeguarding the interests of the Mulayam Singh government. Ironically, the same ND.Tiwari, who quit Congress, opposing Congress' support to Mulayam's government, formed new party, won two seats out of four in Uttarakhand, then joined hands with Mulayam Singh.

Some Data on Uttarakhand

Serial No.	Name	Geographical Area	Total Population as per 1991	SC Population	ST Population
1	Almora	3074	6,07,920	1,22,695	926
2	Nainital	4767	5,10,542	1,50,399	5649
3	Pithoragarh	7218	4,16,496	92,517	18,189
4	Chamoli	7626	3,54,999	62,643	10,148
5	Uttarkashi	8016	2,39,709	54,594	2,300
6	Pouri	5397	6,82,535	92,261	1,502
7	Tehri	3796	5,00,686	68,364	487
8	Dehradun	3088	10,25,679	1,37,464	84,076
9	Udham Singh Ngr	2027	10,09,950	92,915	84,371
10	Bageshwar	2311	2,28,697	64,742	1,813
11	Champavat	1638	1,69,594	23,315	124
12	Rudraprayag	2252	1,79,339	30,979	128
13	Haridwar	1994	11,24,488	2,42,658	2,026
	Total	53119	70,50,634	12,32,316	2,17,864

Last but not the least

An analysis of the Uttarakhand Movement convincingly portrays that participation in development was the basic question behind the statehood demand. The people had a plausible demand – if the natural resources of the region were being exploited on a large scale for the entire country, then a proper share for this region in the process of national development was absolutely justified. After all, they also have the right to development, right to match their steps with the world!

- The movement was not separatist, instigated by any identity issue. In fact, even today Uttarakhand is well integrated socially, economically and culturally with the rest of the country. The people from this region have left their mark in various occupations. Politics, Government services, Army or any other field– Uttarakhandis have created a distinct identity for themselves. The famous pilgrim places in this region – Badrinath and Kedarnath – have been attracting followers since time immemorial. In this context, it is essential to remember that the people in this region never had a separatist attitude. This is amply evident from the rallies, demonstrations and ‘dharnas’ organised during the movement under the leadership of the national flag. The shameful memories of 2nd October 94, the instigation policies of the government, initially PAC/RAF and subsequently the deputation of Punjab Police – Despite these, the spirit of the patriotic activists, especially women and ex-servicemen was not dampened and never did they let their struggle evolve into a separatist movement. In the present times, the foreign powers are actively networking for the country’s downfall. However, inspite of such suppressive policies of the government, the activists never let the foreign agencies play an actively major role here.
- The movement was more about the rights over land, water and forests. Analytical study of the region’s history clearly indicates a continuing process of exploitation right from the Gorkha rulers to the Britishers and ironically even the governments of Independent India. Felling of trees and illegal possession of land carried on, on a large scale. Earlier, under the guise of development, massive dams were proposed to take hold over the valleys and people were made homeless. Today, in the name of environmental conservation, forests are being preserved/reserved. Earlier, when the environmentally harmful activities were taken up, the people in this region had become homeless. Now again the people are being victimised, but, in the name of conserving the environment. The circle seems to have been completed. Around 88% of the total land does not belong to the people of this region. The ‘Tharu’ tribals in the Tarai forests, had, after our independence, welcomed the refugees from Pakistan with open arms – Today the same tribals are themselves landless. The Bhotia tribe, known for initiating the world famous Chipko Movement (in the 70’s) against the governments policy of indiscriminately cutting of trees or deforestation – Today, for its traditional rights, this tribe has to resort to a Chheeno - Jhpto (Pounce and Snatch) movement. This was clearly a movement founded on the question of rights over – Land, Water and Forests.
- This movement was not about the conflict amongst the upper and the lower castes or the minorities in the region. This is evident through its special physical-geographical and socio-cultural characteristics. One can hardly recognise any mark of exploitation on the backward castes of this region. Nor has there been any major caste conflict in Uttarakhand. In spite of a Hindu majority, this region did not witness any large-scale effects during the countrywide anti-Sikh riot in 1984 and subsequently the anti-Muslim riots during 1992. Indisputably, the entire movement by the people was for furthering their cause for regional development.

Today, Uttarakhand has been politically formed. Considering this as their ultimate win, there is no end to the celebrations of the activists. BJP and Congress are in the process of vying with each other for earning the credit for the formation of the new state.

Among the intelligentsia, there are the contemporary question for debate and discussions.

Is this the ultimate battle won? Or, is it the after effect of the World Bank’s threat, which suggested administrative reforms for dealing with the financial crisis in the large state– UP?

If not, then what could be the cause for merging Haridwar in the Uttaranchal territory – inspite of the opposition of the people in Haridwar, activists and even a cabinet minister in the UP government.

Why, the merger of the sugar belt is being proposed and the concept of a 'Big Uttaranchal' being floated? Why, the land purchases are going on in a massive scale? Why, inspite of repeated opposition Dehradun is being favoured as the capital instead of Gairsan? Why, various hydroelectric programmes/projects are being sold to the region?

Amidst such a scenario, one can almost sense the foul smell of dangerous/dirty politics. Crediting itself for the formation of the new state, BJP, is now directly confronting the activists. BJP workers are behaving indecently with the women in the region (Amar Ujala 21st September -2000). Police lathi charge on students and women activists still continues. Definitely, this is not the ultimate battle won. In fact, the fight is closer now, near the doorstep. Initially the fight was with the Delhi- Lucknow governments and the politicians, now the fight will be in Dehradun, with some Joshi-Pant-Pokhriyal or Rawat – with one's own siblings. *The battle is on!*

Uttaranchal, Uttarakhand and Nityanand Swami

The declaration of Dehradun as the Capital, and the appointment of Nityanand Swami as the first Chief Minister of the newly formed state, once again voices of resistance have started to rise. The entire sequence of events has raised certain pertinent questions, which, if not answered forthwith, will have far reaching consequences.

On analysing the Uttarakhand movement, it becomes clear that it was, a demand for development, a demand for one's right over one's natural resources, a demand for decentralization of power and a demand of self-rule. Now a new state has been formally created, but it is a 'Uttaranchal' which is quite unlike the original demand of 'Uttarakhand'. In a cursory glance, the difference may only seem to be, that of name and spelling, but a meticulous examination will reveal the following facts:-

When the regional masses were struggling for the separate state with the indigenous name 'Uttarakhand', the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) termed them as 'separatist'. Nevertheless, in the late eighties, the BJP joined the movement, but, with its national agenda of 'one country, one culture, one language and one flag'.

It is quite clear from the analysis that the demand of Uttarakhand was never a separatist, but is a demand of development under the philosophy of 'Unity in Diversity'.

In the 'Uttarakhand' and 'Uttaranchal', the name was not the only contentious issue. The question was also those of the relationship with the natural resources, the boundary of the state, leadership and the participation of the common masses - tribals and dalits, in governance.

...Women in Uttarakhand are synonymous to the long lasting struggle. This is a reflection on the majority of women folk in this region. The foremost being – Gaura Devi (Chipko movement), Tinchri Mai (Anti liquor movement), Radha Bhatt (Sarvodaya) This process continued with their leading contribution in the separate state movement.

...The atrocities in the infamous Muzzaffarnagar episode did not dampen their spirits. In fact, they even moved beyond the shoulder level and emerged as the real leaders.

...Unfortunately this goes unnoticed – the women question is conveniently lost on the way. We cannot boast of a single woman council member even after 1994

...At the time of formation of the new state, the women have been sidelined. Are they to be used only as instruments, means to an end? Only to be relegated to the backseat at the final, decisive, turning point.

Underlying the name 'Uttarakhand', there is a philosophy in which a sense of amity between the 'Water, Forest, Land, Nature, Wild Life and People,' (Jal, Jungal, Zameen, Jalwayu aur Janwar), is present. Quite contrary to this, in the philosophy behind Uttaranchal, there is a sense of exploitation of 'Nature and Natural Resources' for the commercial purpose.

The motivation behind the demand for 'Uttarakhand' was to merge the underdeveloped hill regions, establish a centrally located Capital, and thus bring the administration closer to the people of the region. But, on the contrary, Haridwar has been included in the new state Uttaranchal, and an affluent city like Dehradun, is being selected for the capital.

Statistics show that 40% of Uttaranchal's population lives in the plains. This implies that if the constituencies of the Legislative Assembly are demarcated on the basis of population then out of seventy MLAs approximately 28 will be from these developed regions. These MLAs will play a major role in the government. It is quite clear, whose interest such a government will serve, and the end result would be that the hills would once again fall behind in the race of development.

**'-----yautikey naulihan hum balidaninou ko,
dhan mayadi tyara oo bankalal,
dhan uneri chaatein jheligae jo goli,
mari ber leve kaye jo karigey nihal,'**

'-----here we would like to remember the martyrs who braved the bullets and hey mother! we salute your courageous sons'
(A Popular Song from Uttarakhand)

Khatima- (1st september 1994)

1) Bhawan Singh, 2) Pratap Singh, 3) Dharmanand Bhatt, 4) Salim Ahamad, 5) Gopi Chand, 6) Paramjeet Singh, 7) Ram Pal

Mussoorie- (2nd September-1994)

Madan Mohan Mangain, 2) Ram Singh Baigari, 3) Dhan Pat Singh, 4) Bel Mati Chauhan, 5) Hansha Dhanai, 6) Balbeer Singh Negi, 7) Umakant Tripathi

Mujjaffar Nagar (2nd October-1994)

1) Surya Prakash Thapliyal, 2) Rajesh Lakhera, 3) Ravinder Singh Rawat, 4) Rajesh Negi, 5) Satendra Chauhan, 6) Girish Badri, 7) Ashok Kumar, 8) Om Pal, 9) Atul Tyagi, 11) Ram Gopal, 12) Pankaj Tyagi,

Dehra Dun (3rd October 1994)

1) Deepak Walia, 2) Rajesh Rawat, 3) Balwant Singh Sajwan, 4) Jiyand Bahuguna

Kotdwar (3rd October-1994)

Rakes Devrani, 2) Prithvi Singh Bisht

Nainital (3rd October-1994)

Pratap Singh Bisht

Shriyantra Taapoo (10 November-1995)

Rajesh Rawat, 2) Yashodhar Bainjwal,

Rishikesh

Surya Prakash

Pouri

Joga Singh Duggal, 2) Vidhya Dutt, 3) Naveen Bahuguna, 4) Vijayanand Juyal, 5) Jeet Singh Gurung

Chamoli/ Ukhimath

Ashok Kumar

In the demand of Uttarakhand, the vision was to give leadership in the hands of someone, who had grown amid the hills and was familiar with its day to day problems. One who can frame policies that are in conformation with the realities of the hills and can extend benefits to the common people at the lowest rung of development. Exactly opposite to this, a person who has not even seen hills properly, has been sworn in as a Chief Minister of so called 'hill state Uttaranchal'. A person, who, in the 74 years of his life and 50 years of public life, has never supported the separate state movement, but always opposed and create hurdles in the formation of new state.

A person, who, being indifferent in the entire history of the movement, has no vision, no policy for the common masses, who in his very first statement - instead of a popular demand of a liquor free Uttarakhand - talks about a change in liquor policy only.

In other words, it is nothing but an intrigue to make the hill state a carbon copy of Uttar Pradesh.

Issues which need to be addressed by the new government

- The government should respect the original demand of Uttarakhand and the martyrdom of many, and immediately change the capital in a hill region. Gairsain could be a possible site.
- Right of the common people over natural resources – *Jal, Jungle and Zameen* - must be immediately ensured.
- By the imposition of Article- 371, sale and purchase of land by land mafia, should be stopped.
- Land of the indigenous people of Udham Singh Nagar, must be returned to them, from the hand of Land Mafia.
- Land ceiling act must be announced at the earliest, in conformation with the situation of hills. The land thus acquired should be distributed equally among the landless.
- Panchayat Raj Institutions must be strengthened, to insure the decentralization of power.
- Vidhan Sabha seats must be demarcated on the basis of geographical area and not on the basis of population to insure proper representation of backward regions.
- All the sale and purchase of land and property just after the announcement of new state should be reverted.

All the anti-people projects signed by the Uttar- Pradesh government with the World Bank, like ‘Joint Forest Management (JFM)’ and ‘Swajal’, needs to be scrutinized properly.

‘Friends of Uttarakhand’ is a forum of activists, Research Scholars from different institutions and Universities, trying to create an environment of reasoned debate and discussion based on facts rather than mere feeling about development choices, policies, strategies and programmes.

Manisha Joshi, Kamala Dhaulakhandi, and Prem Bahukhandi, key members of the forum, have contributed in putting up the above information. For any further information and solidarity please contact:

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*“Abhi kahan aaraam mujhe, yeh mook
nimantran chalna hai,
arey! abhi toh meelo mujhko meelo
mujhko chalna hai “*

*The woods are lovely dark and deep, but
I have promises to keep and miles to go*