

## **An Analysis of the Viability of the South Asian States; A Study in Political Geography**

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### **Abstract**

A state is said to be politically viable only when its territory and humanity are organized together, as a single unit in terms of a particular, distinctive idea, i.e. the 'state-idea' which justifies the existence of the particular state incorporating the diverse regions into it; the state must have a *raison d'être*-reason for existence. Viability is a measure of the effectiveness with which a state can be administered to fulfill the purposes to which the state was created. Each state, on being created, is required to formulate a set of purposes to which its citizenry must adhere, or can subscribe, which commands widespread support in the state, and is different from the purposes formulated by other states. Such a statement of purposes, with which the citizenry of the state can identify itself, constitutes the 'state-idea'. It is the 'state-idea' that keep the state geopolitically organized, and resists the centrifugal forces, or the forces of disintegration to become active to cause geopolitically disintegration of the state.

The present paper aims to study the level of political viability of the South Asian States, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim and Sri-Lanka, in terms of the fulfillment of the purposes, for which they were created. It, also, studies their *raison d'être*. The paper examines this aspect of the viability, in politico-geographical context, and framework.

**Keywords:** Viability, State-Idea, *Raison d'être*, *Genre de vie*, National-Idea.

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## 1. Introduction

The state-idea<sup>1</sup> concept goes back to Ratzel (1923), and it was revived by Hartshorne (1950). The basic fundamental concept of viability<sup>2</sup> in the present context is the 'function of State', i.e. to make the State viable by bringing together the diverse, but mutually exclusive regions under a common acceptable system, and effectively organizing them in the image of a state-idea, unique to the geography of the State (Kristof, 1968: 347).

Although, a section of political geographers attach more emphasize on the methodology of the world-systems analysis and spatial structure of the world economy, in the politico-geographical studies of contemporary events (Taylor, 1991), but the traditional functional approach, developed decades back, still holds its objective relevance in the analysis of the 'internal', political geography of States, which are badly shaken by dissension, secessionism, and centrifugalize, causing concern to their viability and political stability. The approach is more relevant for analysis to those independent States that came into being after the Second World War, and even after the cessation of the Cold War in the late 80s of the last century.

The present paper concerns itself with 'six' States: India, Pakistan; Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan all these five states are situated in Indian sub-continent, and Sri-Lanka, linked with the mainland of the subcontinent through 'historic' Adams Bridge, thought to have been built thousands years

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1 - State idea is the basic centripetal force, must be some concept or idea justifying the existence of...particular state incorporating...particular regions. It is a complex of traditions, experiences, objectives, which are distinctly national. And it is the characteristic economic, social and political institutions. The State is created to defend and develop the state-idea. It is pre-eminently political, goal-oriented, and brain-child of a more or less sophisticated intellectual ruling elites.

2 - Viability of States is one of the major concerns of the contemporary political geography of the world, as much of the world peace necessarily depends upon the internal stability of the States. An analysis of the viability involves a discussion of the balance between the forces of integration, and forces of disintegration (James, 1968). Viability of States depends upon the successful fulfillment of the 'purposes' that each State presents to its citizenry, to which the citizenry subscribes, and identifies itself, and which has the necessary appeal to command widespread support. The 'purposes' that each State formulates, and puts into its Constitution as inputs to the functioning of the political system, are necessarily distinct from the 'purposes' formulated by other States. Such a statement of 'purposes' constitutes the state-idea.

Viability is a measure of the effectiveness with which a State can be administered to fulfill the 'purposes' for which it was created.

back, during the ‘Ramayana Age.’

India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh (erstwhile East Pakistan) were born from the same Mother Indian Nation, and now stand ‘divided’. They are rightly called ‘partitioned States’, (Waterman, 1987: 154) Partition of British India, or for that matter, partition of Mother Indian Nation was a result of internal communal pressure vis-à-vis the divide and rule policy of the British Government that sought to harden the Hindu-Muslim cleavage to the extent as to have widened the Hindu-Muslim rift of no reconciliation and re-approachment between the two communities.

Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim were old monarchies, and were in existence for centuries, but during the formative phase of the consolidation of the British Empire in the South Asia, these monarchies were made ‘buffer’ kingdoms, with the object of keeping the northern limit of the Empire safe and secured from Chinese expansion. Over time these little Himalayan kingdoms became entirely dependent on the British Government for their internal administration and defense. They became ‘dependent and protectorate’, kingdoms.

Sri-Lanka, formerly Ceylon was a part of the great British Empire in the South Asia. It became independent in 1948, but right from the beginning, i.e. since its independence; it has been passing through a critical phase of political instability and uncertainty.

Thus, all the ‘six’ States of the present interpretation were parts of the same political system, founded by the British Empire, and experienced common historical –political-and social habitation and objectivities for little less than two hundred years.

India, Pakistan Sri-Lanka, and Nepal are passing through a very critical phase of political uncertainty, with Sri-Lanka just recovered from the Sinhalese-Tamil civil war, and thus the nature of political instability appear to threaten the ‘raison d’être<sup>1</sup>’ of these four sub-continental States. Although, the intensity of political uncertainty in Bangladesh, and Bhutan is comparatively quite less, nevertheless, they, too, have political problems, but not to the level as to threaten their existence, or *raison d’être*.

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1- *raison d’être*: A state often has to justify in the eyes of outside world its reason of, and to right to, existence because its existence depends on the consent, willing or unwilling, of other states. A state may lose its *raison d’être* if fails to justify.

## **2. Methodology**

The present paper, therefore, addresses itself with the following two pertinent questions, concerning the viability of these sub-continental States:

1. Do the States have 'developed' state-idea, and *raison d'être*?
2. Are the States politically viable?

## **3. Theoretical Issues**

### **State-Idea and *Raison d'être* of the States**

State-idea and *raison d'être* of a State, in most of the cases, are synonymous and inseparable, because it is the state-idea that sustains the *raison d'être* of a State, or the justification of a state's right to existence depends on the image of the idea that binds the State, or in other words, the State is organized in the image of the idea that justifies the reason of the State's existence. Nevertheless, some political geographers (Dale, 1962: 170-172; Dale, 1968: 503) argue that a state-idea and *raison d'être* are not necessarily the same, that a State may have a *raison d'être* without a developed state-idea (which generally comes latter), and that conversely the state-idea may develop in a country without a strong *raison d'être*.

The state-idea is an amalgam of heritage and traditions on the one hand and 'contemporary' political patterns on the other hand, i. e. pushed by history and pulled by ideal of politics-from a sense of past fulfillment and a duty to fulfill the future destiny.

The 'partitioned' States: India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh (former East Pakistan) were born from the same Mother Indian Nation in 1947; however, Bangladesh was born out of East Pakistan in 1971, when the Bengali nationalism triumphed over the Muslim nationalism. It was obvious that the image of the idea of a united Mother India could not survive, probably, because of Hindu-Muslim communal cleavage that hardened to the extent as to have stood in the way of Hindu-Muslim linkage that any attempt at unity between the two major communities necessarily failed. The Mother India, then, lost its right to existence (*raison d'être*), leading to its partition / division into two Nation-States: India and Pakistan, on the basis of religion / communal pattern, which played the divisive / centrifugal role to cause a change in the political geography of Indian sub-continent.

However, Pakistan suffered disintegration in December 1971, within twenty four years of its creation on August 15, 1947. And a new Nation-State, Bangladesh came into existence, in place of East Pakistan. Failure to

stop the emergence of an independent and sovereign Bangladesh, revealed that Pakistan had miserably failed to organize its territory in the image of an idea, i. e. state-idea, unique to its 'political geography,' revealing a weak *raison d'être* in the eyes of the outside world that finally led to fall of the nation-state, Pakistan.

The Himalayan Kingdoms: Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan were organized in the image of 'religious monarchy, with different systems of beliefs,' however, with a buffer character, sustained by the British, to protect their Indian Empire from the 'northern' enemy.

Sri-Lanka has always remained a 'bi-communal' political entity, where the Sinhalese-Tamil cleavage has spatialized in such a way as to have kept the geography of politics highly conflictual, sensitive, and instable. Even the British rule could not convert the 'cleavage' into linkage, and Sri-Lanka since its independence in 1948, has been beset with a civil war between the two principal communities: Sinhalese and Tamil.

Let us examine whether or not the States and / or the Nation-States of South Asia have developed state-idea and *raison d'être*?

#### **4. Research findings**

**India**, being a land of contrasts, and diversities, both in terms of geographic phenomena and features, and human phenomena, with region and / or area-specific *genre die vie* required to develop a strong image of a state-idea that could fill the entire territorial body of the republic, so that the diverse human phenomena could be bound together, justifying its *raison d'être*. India began its independence movement with a purely 'positive state-idea, i. e. the demand for independence and / or freedom from the British rule'-with the composite Indian people, irrespective of their religious faith, interest, background, historical experience, and *genre die vie* having strong adherence, and subscription to the 'idea of complete freedom from the foreign rule.' But, for the Lahore Resolution of 1940 of the Muslim League, and the 'two-nation' theory, coming out of the Resolution, converted the positive state-idea into a negative state-idea, weakening the entire process of binding together the 'diverse' human phenomena to the extent as to have partitioned the Mother India Nation. Right from the beginning, i. e. from ancient times, if chronology is to be believed, the 'historical' centrifugal forces have always remained active. Since August 15, 1947, the successive Indian governments have attempted to create an Indian image of India-a state-idea expressively unique to its geography.

As mentioned above that a state is created with certain purposes to serve and develop to the extent as to have motivate the entire citizenry to adhere to the purposes, and the purposes to which the entire people adhere, constitute the state-idea, the image of the state. Purposes, though pre-eminently political, do contain traditional and historical elements, and cultural traits, reflective of *genre de vie* of the people, so as to make them acceptable to the entire citizenry.

Many times before independence the Indian National Congress had outlined the basic purposes, objectives and aims of India, even before the Lahore Convention of the Muslim League in 1940, when the perception was to liberate 'India' from the foreign rule. The objectives, purposes, and aims were, however, reaffirmed on countless occasions by then leaders of the Indian National Congress, even after the Lahore Convention of the League, when the partition along the religious lines became inevitable, the Congress leaders continued with those purposes. Jawaharlal Nehru, one of the most eloquent and most loquacious of world leaders, with a great capacity to voice sentiments of his people and to enunciate basic principles, had often spoken of in terms of fundamentals. Two of the most significant statements of aims and objectives were the so-called Objectives Resolution, approved by the Constituent Assembly on January 22, 1947, and the Preamble to the Constitution of 1950.

These two constituted the 'the statement of purposes' that the Congress leaders vis-à-vis the government of independent India presented to their citizenry with the object that the people would strictly adhere to the ideas and images, contained in the Objectives Resolution and the Preamble, so that the new Indian State could be territorially bound together accordingly. The Objectives Resolution was one of the politically significant documents in the history of the independence movement in India. It was especially significant because of the time, the mover and the contents. It seemed to symbolize the successful conclusion of the struggle for freedom from the British rule and the beginning of an independent existence, when the leaders and people of India had to reassess and reaffirm their basic aims and principles and consider seriously the practical problems of government. The nature of document made it appear to be what it was obviously intended to be, namely a statement of the bases on which new Indian State would be established.

The Objectives Resolution that formed the bulk of the bases of the 'statement of purposes,' justifying the *raison d'être* of this new emerging

Indian State, made it clear that: (1) India would be a parliamentary democracy with peoples' participation in the decision-making process at the grass-root level because the independence movement drew its strength from the people irrespective of their faith and belief, (2) it would be a federal state because of the existence of the regionally-grouped federal societies, (3) India would be a republic, with peoples' involvement in the administrative process, because all power and authority would be derived from the people, (4) it would be a secular state because of the presence of the people, belonging to religious minority communities, tribal and scheduled caste communities, (5) it would be a welfare state, (6) it would adopt a neutral approach in its foreign policy with the object of promoting world peace and welfare to mankind (Palmer, 1961).

The Preamble to the Constitution of 1950 is necessarily patterned along the lines of the Objectives Resolution of 1947, and that reads:

*'We, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a Sovereign, Democratic Republic (latter the words, Socialist, and Secular were inserted in the Preamble through amendments) and to secure to all its citizens: Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, assuring the dignity of the individual and unity of the Nation.'*

No doubt, the Objectives Resolution and the Preamble to the Constitution that form the 'statement of purposes' for the new Indian State appear to have been shaped in terms of the objectivity of the Indian traditions and heritage of unity in diversity: consensus and synthesis that the great Indian epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and other ancient literatures and treatise, the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Buddhist and the Jain scripts, and Kautilya's Arthashastra manifest. Since, it was an embryonic stage for the Indian State to consolidate and grow, the Indian people and / or the citizenry enthusiastically identified themselves with the 'image of India', being re-defined in the Objectives Resolution and the Preamble to the Constitution. The Indian image of India so developed reflected the idea: Sarvadharmasamantavs, i. e. respect to all religions and people with different faiths and systems of beliefs. Sarvadharmasamantavs emphasized the characteristic economic, social and political institutions. It also reflected a unified Indian genre de vie, which was disturbed on account of partition along the communal line. It was a blend of politics-bound political idea, and tradition-bound national idea, and was designed to give a wider geographical expression to the federal idea, characteristic to multi-cultural-plural Indian society, with regional identity.

Sarvadharmasamantavs emerged as a state-idea for the new Indian State, and it was required to be developing, nourishing and defending for the unity and integrity of the new nation. There is no denying to the fact that Sarvadharmasamantavs- developed as the state-idea for the new Indian State, necessarily worked as centripetal force to restrict the historical centrifugal forces which had always stood in the way of an integrated and unified India in the historic past and, as a dominant coalescing force implied that effective integration of All-the-‘Indians’ was to be by means of ‘Indianization’- the development of unswerving loyalty and allegiance, and direct attachment to the land-‘secular in form and tradition in content.’

Sarvadharmasamantavs gave a logical justification to India’s *raison d’être*, during that embryonic stage of the Indian federation. This very idea was the basis for the accession of Indian States (which became independent with the lapse of the Paramountcy, following the British withdrawal) to the Indian State well before August 15, 1947, except Jammu-Kashmir, Junagadh, and Hyderabad, which latter acceded. In the words of SriNivasan (1954, 108): ‘...in a little over two years after independence the political geography of India was rationalized by the merger or the consolidation and integration of States...India was unified as never before in her history...’ India did have a ‘state-idea,’ quite developed to defeat the historical centrifugal forces that attempted to split the new State again along the ethnic and cultural lines, and strong enough to justify the *raison d’être* of the new Indian State.

But, with the increasing ‘right sentiments’ of the major and dominant ethnic communities and political units, accompanied by the political process of regionalization of the national polity towards the end of the 70s of the last century, particularly, after the fall of the centralized Congress culture that the image / idea of Sarvadharmasamantavs, started becoming redundant. Centripetal tendencies weakened, while the centrifugal tendencies strengthened. At the moment, India does not have a well-defined and developed state-idea that it had developed during its formative period. Nevertheless, India does have its *raison d’être*.

**Pakistan** was an outcome of the Lahore Convention of 1940 of the Muslim League vis-à-vis the Two-Nation Theory of the Muslim fundamentalists, and at the same time, a product of the British policy of ‘divide and rule,’ that produced ‘religious cleavage,’ breaking the centuries-old Hindu-Muslim communal harmony, and making them mutually exclusive to each other, so hardened that it finally resulted in the partition of the sub-continent



along religious lines. Pakistan may be called an 'arbitrary' State, having been created to fill-up the pre-conceived geographical areas with Muslim majority in the South Asia, however, with a 'fragmented' shape: West Pakistan and East Pakistan each of which was 1500 kilometres apart from each other.

It was at the Lahore Convention of the Muslim League in 1940, the Muslim leader, and the President of the League, Md. Ali Jinnah made it clear that: '...the Muslims of India were not just a minority group, but in fact a separate nation...Mussalmans are a nation, according to any definition of a nation, and they must have their homeland, their territory, and their State.' (Ahmad, 1960. 19-20).

It was at the Lahore Convention of the Muslim League in 1940 that the Two-Nation Theory was given a 'spatial' expression that conceptualized the Muslim nationhood and nationality in a way as to create a separate Muslim Nation, however with a fragmented geographical shape. The Resolution of the Lahore Convention read: '... No constitutional plan would be workable in this country (India) or acceptable to Muslims unless... geographically contiguous units are demarcated on the ... basic principle... that the areas in which Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the northeastern and eastern zones of India, should be grouped as to constitute independent States, in which constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign' (ibid).

The Two-Nation Theory necessarily created a Muslim image or an idea to be conceptualized for the State-in-making, and the new State of Pakistan was proposed to be organized in the image of this Muslim idea. Pakistan was, thus, created to develop and defend the Muslim idea vis-à-vis Muslim nationalism, and that justified Pakistan's *raison d'être*-reason of existence, in the eyes of the outside world.

Since Pakistan consisted of two separate territorial units with separate *genre de vie*: semi-arid West Pakistan with 'frontier' culture, and humid East Pakistan with 'ecumene' culture, the two were, thus, mutually exclusive, and have developed under different ecological conditions over time.

Soon Pakistan's state-idea-*raison d'être* was caught in a conflict between the religious identity of West Pakistan, and linguistic identity of East Pakistan- the Islamic idea could not hold together the two Pakistan's. It was a conflict between a frontier culture-characteristic of a hostile semi arid and arid *genre de vie*, and an ecumene culture-characteristic of humid peace-loving *genre de vie* of the Gangetic delta. This conflict revealed the relative

decline of the relevance of religion in the nation-in-making. Religion has ceased to be a potent factor for the nation-to-be-created (Pounds, 1972.).

The geographical duality of Pakistan, however sustained the rise of two separate images for West Pakistan and East Pakistan-Muslim image of West Pakistan and the Bengali image of East Pakistan, the former was religious and communal, and the latter was secular and all-embracing. The conflict between the Muslim nationalism and the Bengali nationalism finally led to the collapse and / or the fall of the Pakistani state-system in December 1971, and a new sovereign State, Bangladesh came into existence in place of East Pakistan. To quote Ali (1983,): ‘the two-nation theory, formulated in the middle class living-room of United Province and Bihar, was buried with the emergence of an independent, sovereign State, Bangladesh.’

Pakistan, since its creation was caught in a consistent conflict between the ‘idea’ of the State and the nature and the definition of the ‘territory’ it filled-up. President Ayub Khan had once stated that” ‘Pakistan was based more on an idea than any territorial definition. Till then ideologically we were Muslims, but territorially we happened to be Indians and parochially us were conglomeration of at least eleven smaller provincial loyalties. (Wilcox, 1995). The lack of coordination between the idea and the territory that it filled-up, could not convert the ‘cleavages’ into linkages, resulting in its collapse and fall.

Muslim nationalism that constituted the state-idea and *raison d’être* of ‘pre-split’ and / or ‘erstwhile’ Pakistan had always suffered from an inner inherent contradiction because of the lack of coordination between the idea of the Pakistan image and territoriality of the nationhood. The Muslim identity vis-à-vis the Muslimness lost its contextual relevance with the break-up of the Pakistani state-system. Soon, after its break-up, the federal societies in contemporary Pakistan, particularly, Pakhtuns, Baluchis, Sindhis, and Punjabis started quarrelling among themselves and sought to perpetuate their regional distinctiveness over the others. Lack of rich traditions and heritage, uniform iconography and circulation field, and varied genre de vie could be the possible reasons the for failure on the part of the ruling elites of Pakistan to develop a statement of purposes, sufficiently distinct, and strong enough, to motivate the loyalty of its citizenry towards the Central Authority. The contemporary and / or the ‘split’ Pakistan, however, found its *raison d’être* in Islam, which the pre-split Pakistan had not taken care of, while formulating its ‘image’ and state-idea. Pakistan was created in the name of Islam, not in the name of Muslim,

but Muslimness proceeded over the concept of the Islam. Not only the Bengalis, the other federal people, particularly, Pakhtuns, Baluchis, Sindhis, had resented what may be called slow and secular ‘Muslimization’ of Pakistan at the cost of the Islam. In the post-split Pakistan, the Muhajirs (immigrant Muslims from United Province and Bihar, and who were motivating forces behind the two-nation theory vis-à-vis creation of Pakistan) lost their relevance.

President Zia-ul-Haq had once remarked: ‘Pakistan is the only State created on the basis of Islam... Pakistan’s binding force has always been Islam. Without it Pakistan would fall (quoted in Wilder, 1995. 33-34). The military regime carried out an unprecedented Islamization of Pakistan with the object of establishing the Nizame-Mustafa (the ideal governance delineated by the Prophet) which could give a new orientation to the idea of a Pakistani image as Pakistan proceeded to become a confessional State, and the new nationhood came to be defined in terms of the Islam vis-à-vis religious expression to the territorial definition of the state-structure. All other cultural ties required to be surrendered in favour of Islam.... Failing which disintegration would be fait accompli (Fazal, 1999. 180).

To quote Ali (1983): ‘To contain the festering contradiction that lay beneath the surface of Pakistan’s geopolitical; structure on account of internal ethnic conflicts, Islam was found to be only panacea.’

Although, Pakistan has been trying to re-define its state-idea, and an image, also, based on Islamic traits, and ideology with the object of a renewed attempt to furnish a new statement of purpose to re-organize the territory in that image, but it has yet to come out with a well-defined state-idea, unique to its geography. The centrifugal tendencies are more powerful, and geographically wide-spread to restrict the rise of centripetal forces.

The people are indifferent to the State, and do not seem to be enthusiastic to identify themselves with the State. Therefore, the *raison d’être* of Pakistan is at stake. Pakistan is internally weakened by the rise of terrorists group – The Taliban which has already freed a large section of the North-West Frontier Province where it has imposed the Sharriat Law. With the Talibization of a large part, it has emerged as a failed State, lacking in *raison d’être*.

**Bangladesh** is one of the two independent Nations and / or States in the South Asia, which has a well-defined state-idea, and the entire State is organized in the image of that ‘idea.’ Being the part of the great Indian

ecumene, it has a rich heritage of literature, music, paintings, folklore, and art forms and the Bengali language in which things are communicated across the territory. It is often said that the birth of Bengali nation in East Pakistan, in fact, took place on February 21, 1954, when large number of Bengali youths, protesting against the imposition of Urdu were shot dead in Dacca. This incident led to the beginning of the regeneration and re-negotiation of the process of the Bengali nation-in-making, the process of a united Bengali Nation in the South Asia, however, ceased to be operative, following the partition of India in 1947, in the name of Islam. But, this time the process continued till it became a geographical reality. The Bengali image got interwoven with the territorial identity to the extent as to have conceptualized the Bengali nation and nationality.

The Bengali nationality expressed itself as a homogenous cultural-linguistic-territorial entity, and that continued well beyond the split of Bengal in 1947. It is the linguistic identity of a nationality that matters much, rather than, the religious identity. People may switch over to other religion, but cannot change their language. It has been rightly observed by Karna (1999, 83) that: "... a state may be geographically or politically divided, but its language does not break its promise. A nation remains intact if it maintains its distinctive linguistic traditions and heritage." The statement is true in case of the Bengalis. It is their distinctive language and culture to which they are loyal and committed. The Bengali national identity has always been religious-neutral. Being the land of great saints and social reformists, Bengalis, irrespective of their religious affinity have stood for tolerance, freedom, equality, social justice, and democracy. These constituted the statement of purposes of Bangladesh when it came into existence. Bengali nationalism epitomized the rejection of all that Pakistan stood for, such as the Muslimness, communalism, two-nation theory, and the consistent flirtation with the idea of a theological State.

The Bengali national idea is essentially an idealized self-image of the Bengali nation, the acceptable part of the national culture, the heritage, true or imaginary, of which the Bengali nation is proud, and that needs to be emulated. The basic image of Bangladesh lies in its distinctive geography and history based on a conception of a core area, a cradle of Bengali territorial and cultural genre de vie- a manifestation of rice-culture, Rabindra Sangeet (Tagore songs) and Baul Geet (folk songs). Bangladesh came into existence with the object of protecting and defending the religion-neutral Bengali cultural identity and iconography (systems of belief). As a

centripetal force, the Bengali national idea has contained the disintegrating approaches of the Bihari Muslims who were settled in large numbers by the successive governments of Pakistan with an obvious intention of changing the demographic character of East Pakistan. The Urdu was forcefully imposed in East Pakistan, again with the intention of breaking the linguistic-cultural homogeneity of the Bengalis. But the Bengali image was strong and deep-rooted the attempt failed. The state-idea of Bangladesh is, thus, forward-looking and future-oriented, while its *raison d'être* lies in its nationhood and nationality. 'The image of Bangladesh - of the Bengali people, history and geography - on the background of which concrete idea of the Bengali nation and the State was projected and constructed. It has a mixed reality with idealization, embellished truth and invented myths, and has sought inspiration from the past as well as in the legends and folklores, as seen the prisms of facts, and its own imagination,' in spite of being an Islamic State, declared recently.

**Nepal**, Bhutan and Sikkim are the creation of the British frontier philosophy to contain the expansion and pressure of China in the Eastern Himalayas, particularly, when the Russian threats receded in the Kashmir-Ladakh region in the nineteenth century. It was the East India Company that guaranteed the territorial integrity of Nepal and Sikkim, by the Treaty of Sugauli with Nepal in 1815, and by the Treaty of Tataliya with Sikkim in 1816. The Treaty of Sanchula, signed in 1865, guaranteed the integrity of Bhutan. This treaty was signed by the British Government with Bhutan. These three Himalayan Kingdoms were territorially re-structured by the British, and were made 'dependent quasi- sovereign territories,' with freedom in the internal politics. On being situated on the threshold of the great civilizations: Chinese (Sinitic) and Indian (Indic), in the Eastern Himalayas region. The interactions between the Chinese and Indian civilizations had always remained some how cut –off, rather, intermittent. The people of the kingdoms developed a different kind of frontier genre de vie, where monotheism became prevalent. Nepal emerged as Hindu kingdom, while Sikkim and Bhutan became Buddhist kingdoms.

To quote Woodman (1969, 2-3): 'whereas the Himalayas were the Olympus of Hindu and Buddhist cultures, they played no part in the early civilization of China. They are not even a feature in any of the Chinese maps... They form a natural barrier between these two great Asian civilizations, so divergent in almost every aspect.' However, Nepal was

organized in the image of Pushupatinath, i.e. Lord Shiva - a Hindu system of belief, and the Nepalese felt proud to be identified with this Hindu iconography, while Sikkim and Bhutan were organized in the image of the Buddhist monasteries - a distinct system of belief, i.e. sheela, meaning righteousness, and morality. Nepal emerged to protect and develop Hinduism in the Himalayan region, while Sikkim and Bhutan were organized to protect and develop Buddhism.

Since, they were created as buffer zones by the British against the Chinese expansion and pressure in the Eastern Himalayan region, their *raison d'être* lay in their buffer character. The state-idea and the *raison d'être* of these Himalayan kingdoms were at variance with each other, not necessarily the same. To quote East (1960): "...weakness, vulnerability, and indefensibility, may ensure the survival of these kingdoms, but their state-idea would seem to reside in their national traditions and cultures." On account of being 'dependent territories' of British India, they became 'dependent territories' to new Indian State, when the latter became a successor State to British India on August 15, 1947. India, however, reviewed the earlier treaties they had with British India and, then, renewed this 'political dependency' status of these Himalayan kingdom's through 'peace and friendship treaties' signed with them in 1950. Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan continued with their traditional state-idea and *raison d'être*, till Sikkim merged with Indian Union in 1975.

Recently, political changes have occurred in both Nepal and Bhutan. Nepal has ceased to be a Hindu kingdom, and the monarchy stands abolished. It is a secular democratic State, now, as the Maoists claim. The King has been asked to leave and / or to vacate the Palace. The Maoists have taken over, following their landslide victory in the recently held election. Nepal is, now, very close to China vis-à-vis India, and, therefore, its buffer character has also ceased to be operative, putting its centuries-old *raison d'être* jeopardized, and meaningless. Similarly, it has to re-orient its image and state-idea to keep the state organized and bound together.

Bhutan has switched over to democracy, and elections have occurred to elect peoples' representatives, nevertheless, it has not abandoned its age-old state-idea, based on its Buddhist national culture. And its *raison d'être* continues to reside in its buffer character that it has shaped in the nineteenth century.

**Sri-Lanka** (erstwhile Ceylon) is not an ideal type of Nation-State as it

claims to be, although the Sinhalese dominates the state, but not the degree of the 'ideal' category of single nation-state because it has a powerful national minority, mostly in the Tamils: Sri-Lankan and Indian Tamils (Nieleson 1985). Sri-Lankan Tamils are a historical community, inhabiting parts of the Island for centuries, together with the Sinhalese, while the Indian Tamils are migrants from the southern parts of India. They were brought by the Britishers as labourers to work in the tea-gardens. However, the Sinhalese-Tamil conflict is not a recent phenomenon; rather, it was historic also, as it is clear from the ancient Ceylonese chronology Mahavamsa written by a Buddhist Monk in the 5th Century A.D.

However, for long periods it seems clear that both the communities lived peacefully, even symbolically together, but there was always from those days onward a 'special quality of hostility' ready to be called forth in terms of difficulty and stress. This quality arose, and still arises from the special view that the Sinhalese held and still hold of their Island as Holy Lanka (Sri-Lanka) and of themselves as the Chosen people of Buddha, who according to the legend, prayed as He entered nirvana. Thus, they renounce the Tamils. The Sinhalese felt apprehensive of being reduced to minority in the days to come (Ludowyk, 1962. 65).

Sri-Lanka may be cited as an example of a State without a developed and well-defined state-idea unique to its geography, and *raison d'être*, however, since its independence in 1948. The ruling elites, it seemed made no efforts to develop a future-oriented, pre-eminently political image of Sri-Lanka, and as a result, the country could not be organized effectively to thwart the ugly rise of disintegrating forces. Both, the Sinhalese and the Tamils have their own developed cultural heritage- national idea with distinct *genre de vie*, reflecting different objectives, experiences, historic association, and economic, political, social and linguistic-cultural institutions. It seemed, rather, difficult for the leaders of both the majority Sinhalese, and strong minority Tamils to evolve a consensual 'statement of purposes' to be presented to the mixed citizens of the country, with which they could enthusiastically identify themselves. But, this did not happen.

The Sinhalese and the Tamils jealously have preserved their cultural heritage to the extent as to have hardened the 'cleavage' to the extent that any attempt at a unity would result in failure. The centuries-old conflictual relationships between the communities have made Sri-Lanka a 'ramshackle' State with a persistent fear of disintegration and / or split in the near future. For more than two-and-half decades this Island Country is confronted with

deadly civil war, killing several thousand people, and rendering several millions homeless. The Sri-Lankan civil war appears to have its origin in ethnic tension and conflict, far more complicated than those associated with mere regional centrifugalism. The society is plural and is divided along culture, religion, nationality, ethnicity, and territorial identity. Synthesis is impossible, and so is tolerance.

Farmer (1968:150) attempted to trace out the reasons for this social disharmony between the Sinhalese and the Tamils and said: ‘... Ceylon’s lamentable communal disharmony springs neither from colonialism, nor from the mere propinquity of two or more communities in a relatively small space. The roots of the troubles lie deeper in ethnicity.’ However, to Taylor (2004-Ind. Edn.127) the political rivalry between the Tamils and the Sinhalese in Sri-Lanka is largely a legacy of the British administrative system. The British Empire was the great creator of ‘peoples’ throughout the world, and the legacy of this policy remains with us today in such political rivalries as in Sri-Lanka.

Sri-Lanka is alive because of some kind of ‘inertia’ or ‘geopolitical momentum’ working underneath. It has neither developed a state-idea nor a *raison d’être*, in spite of being little more than half-a-century old.

### **Viability of the States**

A state with a positive state-idea in which the great majority of the citizens adhere with enthusiasm is a relatively viable state. A positive state-idea, strongly held, can overcome the disintegrative effect of differences of language and religion. An analysis of viability, therefore, involves a discussion of the balance between the forces of integration, and the forces of disintegration.

**India** was a viable State during its formative stage, i.e. till the 70s of the last century, when the Congress culture collapsed. Although Kashmir and the North-East parts of the Republic were not fully emotionally integrated and organized in the image of the idea of *sarvadharmasamantav*s, but the majority of the Indian citizenry, irrespective of their religious identities greatly subscribed to the idea. Purposes and / or the objectives of the Indian State, mentioned in the Objectives Resolution and the Preamble to the Constitution were given wider spatial expression which showed their impacts on the political landscape of the new India State. Integrating forces were strong enough to defeat the disintegrating forces. The federal and the



secular idea, based on the image of sarvadharmasamantavs strengthened the bonds of linkages which got loosened following the partition of India along the religious lines.

Reorganization of internal federal boundaries and the territories in 1956 further strengthened internal coherence and unity. Peoples' participation in decision-making processes provided the necessary inputs to strengthen the 'participatory-democracy' in India. India's non-aligned geopolitical code based on the principle of Panch-Sheela (five principles of peace) found its global acceptance, despite the contemporary world being divided along the two ideological - military blocks. India was a viable state with a positive state-idea of sarvadharmasamantavs - an Indian image of India that largely compensated the disintegrating effects of religion, language, sub-nationalism, and tribalism.

With the collapse of the Congress culture, however, the viability of the Indian State became weakened and that greatly affected and hurt the nation-building process, resulting in the rise of 'distinctive nationalist politics' in different regional, and linguistic, and tribal areas, and leading to 'spontaneous' construction of ethnic identities. Construction and development of ethnic 'spaces,' particularly in the North-West and in the North-East regions made the idea sarvadharmasamantavs redundant.

'Linkages' formed between the ethnic communities during the formative periods of the Indian State turned into 'cleavages', and in most of the regions of the federation, except the Hindi and / or the Cow Belt of the great plains, that lie between the hills of the Aravalies in the west, and the Rajmahal hills in the east, and between the Himalayan foothills in the north and the mountains of the Satpura- -Vindhyanchal in the south, the territorial pattern of ethnicity has risen and conceptualized in a manner as to reflect their 'right sentiments' in a violent and aggressive manner. This has led to regionalization of the national polity, with the result that the citizenry, no longer, enthusiastically adheres to the grand idea of the sarvadharmasamantavs, rather, the people of different regions and constituent states of the Union feel proud to be identified by their respective 'regional idea'.

The Sikhs had sought for an independent 'Khalistan State,' in the 80s of the last century, and almost for ten years, there was violence of unspecified dimension against the Non-Sikh population. However, movement was suppressed through a military operation, called the 'Operation Blue-Star' in 1984.

The Kashmiris have been fighting the Indian army and other paramilitary forces for independence for more than two-and-half decades. Several thousands have been killed in the war of independence, or what we call officially 'terrorism.' They want nothing except independence. In the North-East, regional movements have given rise to 'separation' nationalism. The tribal of this region of India are all set to begin a war of independence collectively against the Indian State. Each tribal community in the North-East has its own militant organization to carry on insurgent activities from the soils of the neighbouring countries. Ethnic cleansing is very much a part of the tribal movement in the North East. North Indians are victims of the ethnic cleansing, here, in the region, for the several years. Separation movement and / or the war of independence and / or demand for total independence from the Union of India in the Kashmir region, and in the North-East, simply manifests the failure of the successive ruling elites to effectively organize these regions in the image of India, and over decades of ignorance and negligence by the central authority, these two frontier regions have developed into 'hot-spots' of secessionism.

With the revival of 'cultural' nationalism, i.e. Hindu nationalism, the idea, or the image of sarvadharmasamantavs is put to test. The demolition of the 'Babri Masjid' in 1992, and the communal flare-ups throughout State after the demolition, and the Gujarat communal riot in 2002 are indicative of the fact that the idea of sarvadharmasamantavs, for which the Indian State came into being, and or created, now appears to be redundant. Tolerance-secularity aspect of the Objectives Resolution and the Preamble to the Constitution that necessarily conceptualized the purpose(s) of the Indian State or the state-idea, now stand shaken.

The welfare purpose of the Indian State also runs 'shaken' when the official statistics reveal that out of 600 districts, 160 'contiguous' districts with a total population of 180 million- roughly 26.66 percent of the total population of India now stand 'liberated,' and are under the complete control of the Naxalite, i.e. an Ultra-Left organization, looking after the welfare of the deprived, hungry, shelter-less and exploited tribal population of Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh. Untouchability is still practiced in most of the states of the Union. Caste cleavages may be attributed to this inhuman practice in Indian society. Centrifugal or the disintegrating forces have virtually taken over the centripetal or the integrating forces, making the 'unifying' sarvadharmasamantavs idea redundant. India is not a viable State, given the

definition of viability in political geography, and her *raison d'être* is now put to test. Centrifugal forces now appear to have spread over wider areas of the Indian Union while the territorial pattern of the centripetal forces is becoming continued to limited areas.

**Pakistan** was created as a result of the Lahore Resolution of the Muslim League in 1940 vis-à-vis the Two-Nation Theory with a specific objective to protect the Muslim nationalism in the South Asia, and to champion the cause of the Muslims in the region. Its geographical duality, accompanied by different *genre de vie* of the units had restricted the rise of an integrated Pakistani image of Pakistan vis-à-vis a state-idea unique to its geographical duality. East Pakistan with its secular Bengali identity was completely different from West Pakistan which had a religious identity with the fundamentalists holding the precedence over the secularists. Nevertheless, the geographical distance between West and East Pakistan had remained a powerful centrifugal force to cause mutual hatred between the two units, leading to the collapse of the state-structure. According to Ahmad (1991:15-16) Pakistan also stood for 'democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance, and social-justice as enunciated by the Islam,' but these were not allowed to be operative, because Indian State stood for these the mind set was there were the part of the 'Hindu' tradition of 'consensus-tolerance-synthesis,' which Pakistan could not expect to carry on, being a Muslim state. Lack of an integrated image with an 'acceptable' state-idea to justify the reason of the existence of the two separate territorial units, was the main cause of the collapse of the Pakistani state-structure in December 1971.

The new Pakistani State that emerged in December 1971, also, suffers from inherent inner contradictions with regard to its image. The conflict between the Islamic identity and the Muslim identity that 'post-split' Pakistan inherited from 'pre-split' Pakistan has intensified the 'idea-territory' conflict to the extent as to restrict the rise of an all Pakistan state-idea, providing inputs to the territorial pattern of centrifugal forces in a much greater way. This conflict between the Islamic identity and the Muslim identity vis-à-vis the idea / image –territory conflict has conceptualized a 'negative' state-idea for post-split Pakistan, which has led to the rise of secessionist movement in the provinces of Baluchistan, Sindh, and in North-West Frontier Province. A large segment in North-West Frontier Province now stands completely liberated. There is no centripetal force and / or a unifying idea in contemporary Pakistan to hold together

Pakistan as a nation-state. Pakistan is internally so weakened to be called a nation, because of the Talibanization of its territory, which has now threatened its right to existence. It is on the verge of collapse.

**Bangladesh** with a positive state-idea is a viable State, given the definition of viability in political literatures. It justifies its right to existence in the eyes of the outside world. The birth of the Bengali nationhood though occurred on February 21, 1954, but the sovereign Nation-State came into existence in December 1971. There is a perfect relationship between Bengali image and the territory, and as a result the 'effective national territory' necessarily corresponds with the entire geographical area. Bengalis are committed to their national idea and the land so dearly that it is difficult to distinguish the idea-land / territory chain. Bengali nationalism is the unifying idea, organizing the entire territory in the image of that idea, thwarting the centrifugal forces in the form of fundamentalism. The Bengaliness has triumphed over the Muslimness. It is a democratic country in which peoples' participation in the decision-making processes is ensured in the Constitution. It has successfully fulfilled the purposes for which it fought for independence, and won it. Bangladesh continues to nourish its Bengali image, nationhood and nationality, and its *raison d'être* resides in it. There is stability in the geography of its state-structure.

**Nepal and Bhutan** are the two surviving Himalayan Kingdom's (herein States). Sikkim lost its *raison d'être* much before to become a federating unit of the Indian State in 1975. Nepal and Bhutan continued with their nineteenth century image of buffer kingdom until recently, when they witnessed political upheaval and change. Monarchy has been abolished from Nepal. Nepal is no longer a Hindu kingdom, rather, it has been proclaimed as secular republic, while in Bhutan a peaceful transfer of power has occurred following the election to the national assembly. However, it continues to be a Buddhist Kingdom with the King as the Constitutional Head. Bhutan's *raison d'être* continues to reside in its buffer character, which lies in its 'vulnerability and indefensibility' in the face of India and China. So long Bhutan continues with this image, it will remain as a viable political entity in the South Asia.

Ever since the Maoists have tightened their grip in Nepal, it has ceased to be a buffer State. Its image as a Hindu nation-state has equally suffered on account of being proclaimed as a secular state. So long the

Monarchy continued in Nepal, it did have a state-idea, and a *raison d'être*, being sustained by its religious distinctiveness, locational weakness, vulnerability, and indefensibility vis-à-vis India and China. But, Nepal, at the moment lacks both a state-idea and a *raison d'être*, because of its close affinity with China at the expense of India, on account of being an emerging communist state in the Himalayan region. There is political unrest in Nepal. The citizenry is divided along the supporters to the Monarchy and the opponents to the Monarchy and / or the supporters to the China-backed Maoists / communists. Centrifugal forces now hold precedence over the forces of integration in Nepal. Nepal might suffer a division in the future or, might accede to China, as did Sikkim in 1975, when it merged with Indian Union.

**Sri-Lanka** is still alive as a 'divided' nation-state (not yet broken into two separate independent nations), in spite of being badly involved in a deadly civil war for more than two-and-half decades. It would have suffered territorial split along the ethnic / communal pattern long back, but for the 'geopolitical momentum' or 'inertia' (geo-political motion of rest) left by the British administrative legacy, the disintegration of the Island State has been contained till date. Sri-Lanka could not develop a federal-idea to effectively organize its ethnically-divided territory, and that has a bad impact on its right to existence. It continues with a negative state-idea from the very beginning and that has stood in the way of its ethnic unity and coherence since long. Sri-Lanka has two mutually exclusive images: one of the Sinhalese corresponding to the lower parts of the wet zone in the south-western districts of the Island and the other of the Tamil in the northern districts, however, mostly in the north-eastern areas and each of the images has territorial identification- a strong sense of territoriality. Each of two has competing set of purposes, i.e. the Tamils in the north and north-east and the Sinhalese in the south-west have different state-ideas, to which each of two ethnic groups enthusiastically adhere / subscribe, and at same time, identify themselves. The disintegrating effect of this situation is dangerous to sustain. Sri-Lanka has never been a viable State, on account of the presence of two separate set of purposes, images and / or the state-ideas strongly held by the Sinhalese and the Tamils separately ever since Sri-Lanka became independent in 1948.

## 5. Conclusion

India used to be a viable State during its formative phase when there was an Indian image of India, largely because of the idea of sarvadharmasamantavs, which reflected the set of purposes (Objectives Resolution and the Preamble to the Constitution) for which the Indian State was created. This very idea necessarily justified the *raison d'être* of the new Indian State. But, the contemporary Indian State is not viable State as it used to be in the recent past. The image and / or the idea of sarvadharmasamantavs together with the *raison d'être* now stands shaken. The territorial pattern of centrifugal forces spread over a wider area of the Union with the centripetal forces being confined to limited areas.

Ever since it's split in December 1971, Pakistan has been consistently confronted with the problem of its image because of the persistent conflict between the Muslim image and the Islamic image. While the State favours a Muslim image, the federating communities stand for the Islamic image for Pakistan. The idea / image-territory conflict is still there, and no attempt seems to have been initiated even after the split to inter-weave the Pakistani idea / image with its geographical territory that it occupies. Pakistan is all set for further split in the near future. The Talibanization of the Pakistan polity has made it a 'failed State', making its *raison d'être* redundant in the eyes of the outside world.

Bangladesh is the only State in the South Asia which has developed a strong, forward-looking and future-oriented Bengali image, and the nation is organized in that image. It has a strong *raison d'être* not only in the region but, also in the world, or in the community of the nations.

With Nepal becoming a secular republic, its centuries-old state-idea and *raison d'être*, based on national culture and buffer character now stand redundant. There is much instability in the political geography of Nepal. Bhutan, in spite of experiencing a change in its political system, it has not abandoned its centuries-old Buddhist image, and buffer character. Therefore, it is viable in true sense of the term, with no threat to her *raison d'être*.

Sri-Lanka is a ramshackle State, waiting for a split into two separate nations-states: Sinhalese nation-state and Tamil nation-state. Ever since its independence in 1948, Sri-Lanka (the erstwhile Ceylon) has been divided along the Sinhalese-Tamil ethnic patterns, which led to the rise of two separate images, with competing state-ideas mutually exclusive to each other, in the Island Country. It has neither a state-idea nor a *raison d'être*,

true to its geography, but it is 'alive' till date, because of some geopolitical 'inertia,' or 'momentum,' working underneath. It is merely a 'geographical expression', at the moment.

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