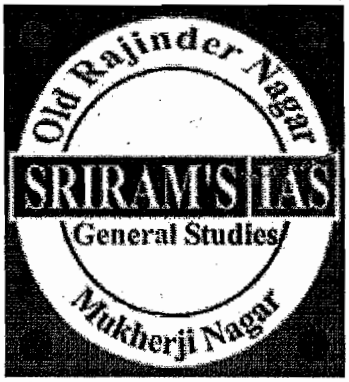
SRIRAM'S IAS



GENERAL STUDIES

HISTORY

(Post Independence Consolidation ,
Reorganization Within the Country, Decolonization
And
World History)

11A/22; 1st Floor; Old Rajender Nagar; New Delhi -60
Ph. 011-25825591; 42437002; 9811489560
73-75; 1st Floor; Ring Road; Beside GTB Metro Station
Kingsway Camp; New Delhi.
Ph. 08447273027

Post-independence consolidation and reorganization within the country.

Integration of States

Princely States in British India

The early history of British expansion in India was characterised by the co-existence of two approaches towards the existing princely states.

- The first was a policy of annexation, where the British sought to forcibly absorb the Indian princely states into the provinces, which constituted their Empire in India.
- The second was a policy of indirect rule, where the British assumed suzerainty and paramountacy over princely states, but conceded some degree of sovereignty to them.

In 1858, the policy of annexation was formally renounced, and British relations with the princely states thereafter were based on indirect rule, whereby the British exercised paramountacy over all princely states with the British crown as ultimate suzerain, but at the same time respected and protected them as allies.

During the 20th century, the British made several attempts to integrate the princely states more closely with British India, creating the Chamber of Princes in 1921 as a consultative and advisory body, transferring the responsibility for supervision of smaller states from the provinces to the centre in 1936, and creating direct relations between the Government of India and the larger princely states superseding political agents. The most ambitious was a scheme of federation in the Government of India Act 1935, which envisaged the princely states and British India being united under a federal government. This scheme came close to success, but was abandoned in 1939 as a result of the outbreak of the Second World War. As a result, in the 1940s, the relationship between the princely states and the crown remained regulated by the principle of paramountacy and the various treaties between the British crown and the states.

Reasons for integration

The Saurashtra and Kathiawar regions of Gujarat were home to over two hundred princely states, many with non-contiguous territories. The termination of paramountacy would have in principle meant that all rights that flowed from the states' relationship with the British crown would return to them, leaving them free to negotiate relationships with the new states of India and Pakistan "on a basis of complete freedom". Early British plans for the transfer of power, such as the offer produced by the Cripps Mission, recognised the possibility that some princely states might choose to stand out of independent India. This was unacceptable to the Congress, which regarded the independence of princely states as a denial of the course of Indian history, and consequently regarded this scheme as a "Balkanisation" of India.

The Congress had traditionally been less active in the princely states because of their limited resources which restricted their ability to organise there and their focus on the goal of independence from the British, and because Congress leaders, in particular Gandhi, were sympathetic to the more progressive princes as examples of the capacity of Indians to rule themselves. This changed in the 1930s as a result of the federation scheme contained in the Government of India Act 1935

and the rise of socialist Congress leaders such as Jayaprakash Narayan, and the Congress began to actively engage with popular political and labour activity in the princely states. By 1939, the Congress' official stance was that the states must enter independent India, on the same terms and with the same autonomy as the provinces of British India, and with their people granted responsible government. As a result, it insisted on the incorporation of the princely states into India in its negotiations with Mountbatten.

Accepting Integration the Princes' Position

The rulers of the princely states were not uniformly enthusiastic about integrating their domains into independent India. Some, such as the kings of Cochin, Bikaner and Jawhar, were motivated to join India out of ideological and patriotic considerations, but others insisted that they had the right to join either India or Pakistan, to remain independent, or form a union of their own. Bhopal, Travancore and Hyderabad announced that they did not intend to join either dominion. Hyderabad went as far as to appoint trade representatives in European countries and commencing negotiations with the Portuguese to lease or buy Goa to give it access to the sea, and Travancore pointed to the strategic importance to western countries of its thorium reserves while asking for recognition. Some states proposed a subcontinent-wide confederation of princely states, as a third entity in addition to India and Pakistan. Bhopal attempted to build an alliance between the princely states and the Muslim League to counter the pressure being put on rulers by the Congress.

A number of factors contributed to the collapse of this initial resistance and to nearly all princely states agreeing to accede to India. An important factor was the lack of unity among the princes. The smaller states did not trust the larger states to protect their interests, and many Hindu rulers did not trust Muslim princes, in particular Hamidullah Khan, the Nawab of Bhopal and a leading proponent of independence, whom they viewed as an agent for Pakistan. Others, believing integration to be inevitable, sought to build bridges with the Congress, hoping thereby to gain a say in shaping the final settlement. The resultant inability to present a united front or agree on a common position significantly reduced their bargaining power in negotiations with the Congress. The decision by the Muslim League to stay out of the Constituent Assembly was also fatal to the princes' plan to build an alliance with it to counter the Congress, and attempts to boycott the Constituent Assembly altogether failed on 28 April 1947, when the states of Baroda, Bikaner, Cochin, Gwalior, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Patiala and Rewa took their seats in the Assembly.

Mountbatten's role

Lord Louis Mountbatten played an important role in convincing reluctant monarchs to accede to the Indian Union. Mountbatten believed that securing the states' accession to India was crucial to reaching a negotiated settlement with the Congress for the transfer of power. The princes also believed that he would be in a position to ensure the independent India adhered to any terms that might be agreed upon, because Jawaharlal Nehru and Patel had asked him to become the first Governor General of the Dominion of India.

Pressure and diplomacy

Vallabhbhai Patel as Minister for Home and States Affairs had the responsibility of welding the British Indian provinces and the princely states into a united India. By far the most significant factor that led to the princes' decision to accede to India was the policy of the Congress and, in particular, of the two key figures in the States Department, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and V. P. Menon. The Congress' stated position was that the princely states were not sovereign entities, and as such could not opt to be independent notwithstanding the end of paramountacy. The princely states, it declared, must therefore accede to either India or Pakistan.

Instruments of Accession

Patel and Menon backed up their diplomatic efforts by producing treaties that were designed to be attractive to rulers of princely states. Two key documents were produced. The first was the Standstill Agreement, which confirmed that the agreements and administrative practices that existed as between the princely state in question and the British would be continued by India. The second was the Instrument of Accession, by which the ruler of the princely state in question agreed to the accession of his kingdom to independent India, and to granting India control over specified subject matters. The nature of the subject matters varied depending on the acceding state. The states which had internal autonomy under the British signed an Instrument of Accession which only ceded three subjects to the government of India—defence, external affairs, and communications, each defined in accordance with List 1 to Schedule VII of the Government of India Act 1935.

Rulers of states, which were in effect estates or talukas, where the Crown exercised substantial administrative powers, signed a different Instrument of Accession, which vested all residuary powers and jurisdiction in the government of India. Rulers of states, which had an intermediate status, signed a third type of Instrument, which preserved the degree of power they had under the British.

The accession process

The limited scope of the Instruments of Accession and the promise of a wide-ranging autonomy and the other guarantees they offered, gave sufficient comfort to many rulers, who saw this as the best deal they could strike given the lack of support from the British, and popular internal pressures. Between May 1947 and the transfer of power on 15 August 1947, the vast majority of states signed Instruments of Accession. A few, however, held out. Some simply delayed signing the Instrument of Accession. Piploda, a small state in central India, did not accede until March 1948. The biggest problems, however, arose with a few border states, such as Jodhpur, which tried to negotiate better deals with Pakistan, with Junagarh, which actually did accede to Pakistan, and with Hyderabad and Kashmir, which declared that they intended to remain independent.

Junagarh: Although the states were in theory free to choose whether they wished to accede to India or Pakistan, Mountbatten had pointed out that "geographic compulsions" meant that most of them must choose India. In effect, he took the position that only the states that shared a border with Pakistan could choose to accede to it.

The Nawab of Junagadh, a princely state located on the southwestern end of Gujarat and having no common border with Pakistan, chose to accede to Pakistan ignoring Mountbatten's views, arguing that it could be reached from Pakistan by sea. The rulers of two states that were subject to the suzerainty of Junagadh—Mangrol and Babariawad—reacted to this by declaring their independence from Junagadh and acceding to India. In response, the Nawab of Junagadh militarily occupied the states. The rulers of neighbouring states reacted angrily, sending their troops to the Junagadh frontier and appealed to the Government of India for assistance.

A group of Junagadhi people, led by Samaldas Gandhi, formed a government-in-exile, the Aarzi Hukumat ("temporary government"). India believed that if Junagadh was permitted to go to Pakistan, the communal tension already simmering in Gujarat would worsen, and refused to accept the accession. The government pointed out that the state was 80% Hindu, and called for a plebiscite to decide the question of accession. Simultaneously, they cut off supplies of fuel and coal to Junagadh, severed air and postal links, sent troops to the frontier, and reoccupied the principalities of Mangrol and Babariawad that had acceded to India.

Pakistan agreed to discuss a plebiscite, subject to the withdrawal of Indian troops, a condition India rejected. On 26 October, the Nawab and his family fled to Pakistan following clashes with Indian troops. On 7 November, Junagadh's court, facing collapse, invited the Government of India

to take over the State's administration. The Government of India agreed. A plebiscite was conducted in February 1948, which went almost unanimously in favour of accession to India.

Kashmir: At the time of the transfer of power, Maharaja Hari Singh ruled Kashmir, although the state itself had a Muslim majority. Hari Singh was equally hesitant about acceding to either India or Pakistan, as either would have provoked adverse reactions in parts of his kingdom. He signed a Standstill Agreement with Pakistan and proposed one with India as well, but announced that Kashmir intended to remain independent. However, Sheikh Abdullah, the popular leader of Kashmir's largest political party, the National Conference, who demanded his abdication, opposed his rule. Pakistan, attempting to force the issue of Kashmir's accession, cut off supplies and transport links.

Shortly thereafter, Pathan tribesmen from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan crossed the border and entered Kashmir. The invaders made rapid progress towards Srinagar. The Maharaja of Kashmir wrote to India, asking for military assistance. India required the signing of an Instrument of Accession and setting up an interim government headed by Sheikh Abdullah in return. The Maharaja complied, but Nehru declared that it would have to be confirmed by a plebiscite, although there was no legal requirement to seek such confirmation.

Indian troops secured Jammu, Srinagar and the valley itself during the First Kashmir War, but the intense fighting flagged with the onset of winter, which made much of the state impassable. Prime Minister Nehru sought U.N. arbitration, arguing that India would otherwise have to invade Pakistan itself, in view of its failure to stop the tribal incursions. The plebiscite was never held, and on 26 January 1950, the Constitution of India came into force in Kashmir, but with special provisions made for it in the Constitution's Article 370. India did not, however, secure administrative control over all of Kashmir. The northern and western portions of Kashmir came under Pakistan's control in 1947, and are today referred to as 'Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir'.

Hyderabad

Hyderabad was a landlocked state in south-eastern India. While 87% of its 17 million people were Hindus, its ruler Nizam Osman Ali Khan was a Muslim, and Muslim elite dominated its politics. The Muslim nobility and the Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen, a powerful pro-Nizam Muslim party, insisted that Hyderabad must remain an independent state and stand on an equal footing to India and Pakistan. Accordingly, the Nizam in June 1947 issued a firman announcing that on the transfer of power, his state would be resuming independence. The Government of India rejected the firman, terming it a "legalistic claim of doubtful validity".

The Nizam was prepared to enter into a limited treaty with India, which gave Hyderabad safeguards not provided for in the standard Instrument of Accession, such as a provision guaranteeing Hyderabad's neutrality in the event of a conflict between India and Pakistan. India rejected this proposal, arguing that other states would demand similar concessions. A temporary Standstill Agreement was signed as a stopgap measure, even though Hyderabad had not yet agreed to accede to India.

The situation deteriorated further in 1948. The Razakars ("volunteers"), a militia affiliated to the Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen and set up under the influence of Muslim radical Qasim Razvi, assumed the role of supporting the Muslim ruling class against upsurges by the Hindu populace, and began intensifying its activities and was accused of attempting to intimidate villages. The Hyderabad State Congress Party, affiliated to the Indian National Congress, launched a political agitation. On 13 September, the Indian Army was sent into Hyderabad under Operation Polo. The troops met little resistance and between 13 and 18 September took complete control of the state. The Nizam was retained as the head of state in the same manner as the other princes who acceded to India.

Laccadive Islands, or Lakshadweep

The Laccadive, Minicoy, and Amindivi Islands, now Lakshadweep, were in 1947 British possessions in the Laccadive Sea which administratively formed part of the Madras Presidency. In accordance with the Indian Independence Act, the islands transferred automatically to the Union of India. On the orders of Vallabhbhai Patel, a ship of the Royal Indian Navy was sent to the Laccadives to hoist the Indian national flag and ensure the islands' integration into the Union of India, aiming to thwart any similar attempt by Pakistan.

Four-step integration

Merger

The bulk of the larger states, and some groups of small states, were integrated through a different, four-step process. The first step in this process was to convince groups of large states to combine to form a "princely union" through the execution by their rulers of Covenants of Merger. Under the Covenants of Merger, all rulers lost their ruling powers, save one who became the Rajpramukh of the new union. The other rulers were associated with two bodies—the council of rulers, whose members were the rulers of salute states, and a presidium, one or more of whose members were elected by the rulers of non-salute states, with the rest elected by the council.

The council from among the members of the presidium chose the Rajpramukh and a deputy Rajpramukh, or Uprajpramukh. The Covenants made provision for the creation of a constituent assembly for the new union, which would be charged with framing its constitution. In return for agreeing to the extinction of their states as discrete entities, the rulers were given a privy purse and guarantees similar to those provided under the Merger Agreements.

Through this process, Patel obtained the unification of 222 states in the Kathiawar peninsula of his native Gujarat into the princely union of Saurashtra in January 1948, with six more states joining the union the following year. Madhya Bharat emerged on 28 May 1948 from a union of Gwalior, Indore and eighteen smaller states. In Punjab, the Patiala and East Punjab States Union was formed on 15 July 1948 from Patiala, Kapurthala, Jind, Nabha, Faridkot, Malerkotla, Nalargarh, and Kalsia. The United State of Rajasthan was formed as the result of a series of mergers, the last of which was completed on 15 May 1949. Travancore and Cochin were merged in the middle of 1949 to form the princely union of Travancore-Cochin. The only princely states which signed neither Covenants of Merger nor Merger Agreements were Kashmir, Mysore and Hyderabad.

Constituent Assembly

The Constitution of India classified the constituent units of India into three classes, which it termed Part A, B, and C states. The former British provinces, together with the princely states that had been merged into them, were the Part A states. The princely unions, plus Mysore and Hyderabad, were the Part B states. The former Chief Commissioners' Provinces and other centrally administered areas, except the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, were the Part C states. The only practical difference between the Part A states and the Part B states was that the constitutional heads of the Part B states were the Rajpramukhs appointed under the terms of the Covenants of Merger, rather than Governors appointed by the central government. In addition, Constitution gave the central government a significant range of powers over the former princely states, providing amongst other things that "their governance shall be under the general control of, and comply with such particular directions, if any, as may from time to time be given by, the President". Apart from that, the form of government in both was identical.

Reorganisation

The distinction between Part A and Part B states was only intended to last for a brief, transitional period. In 1956, the States Reorganisation Act reorganised the former British provinces and princely

states on the basis of language. Simultaneously, the Seventh Amendment to the Constitution removed the distinction between Part A and Part B states, both of which were now treated only as "states", with Part C states being renamed "union territories". The Rajpramukhs lost their authority, and were replaced as the constitutional heads of state by Governors, who were appointed by the central government. These changes finally brought the princely order to an end. In both legal and practical terms, the territories that formerly were part of the princely states were now fully integrated into India and did not differ in any way from those that were formerly part of British India. The personal privileges of the princes the privy purse, the exemption from customs duty, and customary dignities survived slightly longer, but were abolished in 1971.

Colonial enclaves

The integration of the princely states raised the question of the future of the remaining colonial enclaves in India. At independence, the regions of Pondicherry, Karikal, Yanam, Mahe and Chandernagore were still colonies of France, and Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Goa remained colonies of Portugal. An agreement between France and India in 1948 provided for an election in France's remaining Indian possessions to choose their political future. A plebiscite held in Chandernagore on 19 June 1949 resulted in a vote of 7,463 to 114 in favour of being integrated with India. It was ceded to India on 14 August 1949 and de jure on 2 May 1950.

In the other enclaves, however, the pro-French camp, led by Edouard Goubert, used the administrative machinery to suppress the pro-merger groups. Popular discontent rose, and in 1954 demonstrations in Yanam and Mahe resulted in pro-merger groups assuming power. A referendum in Pondicherry and Karaikal in October 1954 resulted in a vote in favour of merger, and on 1 November 1954, de facto control over all four enclaves was transferred to the Republic of India. A treaty of cession was signed in May 1956, and following ratification by the French National Assembly in May 1962, de jure control of the enclaves was also transferred.

Portugal, in contrast, resisted diplomatic solutions. It viewed its continued possession of its Indian enclaves as a matter of national pride and in 1951; it amended its constitution to convert its possessions in India into Portuguese provinces. In July 1954, an uprising in Dadra and Nagar Haveli threw off Portuguese rule. The Portuguese attempted to send forces from Daman to reoccupy the enclaves, but were prevented from doing so by Indian troops. Portugal initiated proceedings before the International Court of Justice to compel India to allow its troops access to the enclave, but the Court rejected its complaint in 1960, holding that India was within its rights in denying Portugal military access. In 1961, the Constitution of India was amended to incorporate Dadra and Nagar Haveli into India as a Union Territory.

Goa, Daman and Diu remained an outstanding issue. On 15 August 1955, five thousand non-violent demonstrators marched against the Portuguese at the border, and were met with gunfire, killing 22. In December 1960, the United Nations General Assembly rejected Portugal's contention that its overseas possessions were provinces, and formally listed them as "non-self-governing territories". Although Nehru continued to favour a negotiated solution, the Portuguese suppression of a revolt in Angola in 1961 radicalised Indian public opinion, and increased the pressure on the Government of India to take military action. African leaders, too, put pressure on Nehru to take action in Goa, which they argued would save Africa from further horrors.

On 18 December 1961, following the collapse of an American attempt to find a negotiated solution, the Indian Army entered Portuguese India and defeated the Portuguese garrisons there. The Portuguese took the matter to the Security Council but a resolution calling on India to withdraw its troops immediately was defeated by the USSR's veto. Portugal surrendered on 19 December. This take-over ended the last of the European colonies in India. Goa was incorporated into India as a centrally administered union territory and, in 1987, became a state.

Sikkim: The former princely state of Sikkim, located at a strategically important point on the border between India and China, was integrated into India in 1975 as its 22nd state.

Three princely states bordering India—Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim—were not integrated into the Republic of India in the period between 1947 and 1950. Nepal had been recognised by the British and the Government of India as being de jure independent. Bhutan had in the British period been considered a protectorate outside the international frontier of India. The Government of India entered into a treaty with Bhutan in 1949 continuing this arrangement, and providing that Bhutan would abide by the advice of the Government of India in the conduct of its external affairs.

Historically, Sikkim was a British dependency, with a status similar to that of the other princely states, and was therefore considered to be within the frontiers of India in the colonial period. On independence, however, the Chogyal of Sikkim resisted full integration into India. Given the region's strategic importance to India, the Government of India signed first a Standstill Agreement and then in 1950 a full treaty with the Chogyal of Sikkim which in effect made it a protectorate which was no longer part of India. India had responsibility for defence, external affairs and communications, and ultimate responsibility for law and order, but Sikkim was otherwise given full internal autonomy.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Chogyal, supported by the minority Bhutia and Lepcha upper classes, attempted to negotiate greater powers, particularly over external affairs, in order to give Sikkim more of an international personality. Kazi Lhendup Dorji and the Sikkim State Congress, who represented the ethnic Nepali middle classes and took a more pro-Indian view, opposed these policies. In April 1973, an anti-Chogyal agitation broke out; the agitators demanded the conduct of popular elections. The Sikkim police were unable to control the demonstrations, and Dorji asked India to exercise its responsibility for law and order and intervene.

India facilitated negotiations between the Chogyal and Dorji, and produced an agreement, which envisaged the reduction of the Chogyal to the role of a constitutional monarch and the holding ofelections based on a new ethnic power-sharing formula. The Chogyal's opponents won an overwhelming victory, and a new Constitution was drafted providing for Sikkim to be associated with the Republic of India. On 10 April 1975, the Sikkim Assembly passed a resolution calling for the state to be fully integrated into India. This resolution was endorsed by 97% of the vote in a referendum held on 14 April 1975, following which the Indian Government amended the constitution to admit Sikkim into India as its 22nd state. Thus, Sikkim was merged with the Indian Union as its 22nd State.

*****

Consolidation of India as a Nation

A major problem, perhaps the most serious one that India has faced since 1947 has been of national unity or consolidation of the nation. The problem is also sometimes referred to as national integration or the integration of Indian people as a political community.

Unity in Diversity

The Indian nation is the product of a historical process and has been therefore in the making for very long, at least some five centuries. The roots of India's nationhood lie deep in its history and also in its experience of the struggle for independence. Pre-colonial India had already acquired some elements of common existence and common consciousness. Despite its immense cultural diversity, certain strands of a common cultural heritage had developed over the centuries, knitting its people together and giving them a sense of oneness, even while inculcating tolerance of diversity and dissent. As the poet Rabindranath Tagore put it, the unity of India is the 'unity of spirit'. Elements of political, administrative and economic unity had developed especially under the Mughals. The politics of the rulers and their territorial ambitions often cut across regions and were, at their most ambitious, subcontinental in their reach. Also, despite backward means of transport and communication, a great deal of India-wide trade, specialization of production and credit networks developed, especially during the late medieval period. A feeling of Indianness, however vague, had come into being, as testified by the currency of the concepts of Bharat Varsha and Hindustan. As pointed out in an earlier chapter, the colonialization of the Indian economy, society and polity further strengthened the process of India's unification. From the middle of the nineteenth century, Indians were more and more sharing common economic and political interests and social and cultural development even though they continued to be differentiated by language and ethnicity.

The national movement, as seen in Chapter 3, played a pivotal role in welding Indians together politically and emotionally into a nation and integrating them into 'a common framework of political identity and loyalty'. The depth, duration and deep social penetration of this movement carried the feeling of unity and nationhood to the mass of the people.

The leaders of the national movement realized that the making of the nation was a prolonged and continuous process, and one which was open to continuous challenges and interruption, disruption and even reversal. One such disruption had already occurred in 1947. As founders of the republic, these leaders were therefore fully aware that after independence too the process of unifying India and national integration was to be carefully sustained, promoted and nurtured through ideological and political endeavours. In fact, the leaders of India after 1947 saw the preservation and consolidation of India's unity as their biggest challenge. As Nehru put it in 1952, 'the most important factor, the overriding factor, is the unity of India'. To quote him again: 'Personally, I feel,' he said in 1957, 'that the biggest task of all is not only the economic development of India as a whole, but even more so the psychological and emotional integration of the people of India.

India's complex diversity is legendary. It consists of a large number of linguistic, cultural and geographic-economic zones. It has followers of different religions, Hindus, Muslims, Christians. Sikhs, Parsis, Buddhists and Jews, apart from tribals with myriad belief systems. In 1950, the Indian constitution recognized fourteen major languages, besides hundreds others, many of which were spoken by just a million persons. The 1961 Census listed 1,549 languages as mother tongues. The tribals, constituting over 6 per cent of the population, are dispersed all over India.

Given this diversity, the leaders of the national movement realized that the Indian nation had to be built on a very broad foundation.

India could be unified and its segmentation overcome only by accepting this immense diversity and not counterposing it to the process of nation-in-the-making. The emergence of a strong national identity and the preservation of India's rich diversity were seen as simultaneous processes. Regional cultural identities would develop not in conflict with but as part of the all-India identity. This entire outlook was epitomized in Nehru's approach who wrote in early 1951: 'We have to remember always that India is a country with a variety of cultures, habits, customs and ways of living ... It is very necessary, I think, for all of us to remember that this wonderful country of ours has infinite variety and there is absolutely no reason why we should try to regiment it after a single pattern. Indeed that is ultimately impossible. At the same time, the hope as well as the answer were there: 'But India is far greater, far richer and more varied than any part of it. We have to develop an outlook which embraces all this variety and considers it our very own.'[4] Thus, the differences in language, culture, religion and ethnicity were to be seen not as obstacles to be overcome, not as antithetical to national consolidation, but as positive features that were sources of strength to emerging nationhood. Consequently, the consolidation of independent India was to occur around the concept of 'unity in diversity'.

It was, however, recognized that the diversity of India could also be a source of weakness. Diversity could be used for divisive purposes and transformed into disruptive tendencies, such as communalism, casteism and linguistic or regional exclusiveness. The problem of integrating diverse loyalties was therefore quite real, especially as rapid social changes led to increase in the scale and number of social conflicts. The issues of jobs, educational opportunities, access to political power and share in the larger economic cake could and did fuel rivalries and conflicts based on religion, region, caste and language. Special efforts were necessary, different from those in other parts of the world, to carefully promote national unity. The broad strategy for national consolidation after 1947 involved territorial integration, mobilization of political and institutional resources, economic development and adoption of policies which would promote social justice, remove glaring inequalities and provide equal opportunities.

The leadership evolved a political institutional structure conducive to national consolidation. At the heart of this structure lay the inauguration of a democratic and civil libertarian polity. The argument was rejected that democracy and national integration were not compatible in the case of newly liberated and developing countries, and that an authoritarian political structure was needed to hold together such a diverse nation as India. On the contrary, precisely because India was so diverse it needed democracy rather than force or coercion to bind it. Nehru repeatedly warned his countrymen that in India 'any reversal of democratic methods might lead to disruption and violence'. India, he underlined, could only be held together by a democratic structure with full freedom as also opportunity for the diverse socio-economic, cultural and political voices to express themselves.

The constitutional structure established in 1950 encompassed the demands of diversity as well as the requirements of unity. It provided for a federal structure with a strong Centre but also a great deal of autonomy for the states. The makers of the constitution kept in view the difference between decentralization and disintegration and between unity and integration and centralization. The constitutional structure was not only conducive to national integration but provided the basic framework within which the struggle against divisive forces could be carried on. The political leadership was to use elections both to promote national consolidation and to legitimize its policies of integration. The parliament was the institution where basic and ultimate power resided and which acted as the open arena where different political trends could express themselves as also contend for power. Invariably, the issues and problems, as also programmes and policies, debated there were all-India in scale. As Asoka Mehta put it, the parliament acted as the great unifier of the nation.

Also, political parties acted as a great integrating force. All the major post-1947 political parties Socialist Party, Communist Party of India, Jan Sangh and later the Swatantra Party were all-India in character and in their organization and ideology; they stood for the unity of the country. They strove for national goals and mobilized people on an all-India basis and on all-India issues even when their capacity to do so was limited to particular regions. All this was perhaps even more true of Congress in the post-independence years. It had a strong and large organization covering almost all parts of the country. It was able to maintain internal party coherence and unity, and was also willing to play the role of a cementing force in society and polity. It is important to remember that immediately after independence, with the rapid marginalization of the communal parties, the major divide in Indian politics and among the intelligentsia was on political and ideological grounds rather than on the basis of caste, religion or language. It is also significant that the major vocal social groups and classes the bourgeoisie, the working class and the intelligentsia were all-India in outlook and stood for national unity. Indian nationalism, both before and after independence, had little difficulty in coming to terms with the emerging class consciousness as also class organizations such as trade unions and Kisan Sabhas on one side and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) on the other. No section of Indian society or polity saw loyalty to a class or class organization as threatening national cohesion.

The role of the leadership and its manner of functioning in nation-making and national consolidation is quite important. The leaders of the national movement thought in national terms and were fully committed to national unity and consolidation, and this commitment was widely accepted. Further, the prominent leaders of independent India Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad, Rajendra Prasad were not associated with any one region, language, religion, or caste. This was also true of the prominent Opposition leaders such as Jayaprakash Narayan, J.B. Kripalani, Rammanohar Lohia, Syama Prasad Mookerjee, B.T. Ranadive and Ajoy Ghosh.

A major asset of the Congress leadership was that it was well versed in accommodative politics. It had been able to keep united diverse political and ideological trends during the anti-imperialist struggle. Following this, after 1947, despite near-total political dominance, it was willing to conciliate and accommodate, to listen to and appease the Opposition parties and dissenting groups. In particular, it was quite sensitive to popular rumblings on linguistic or other cultural issues. Reacting strongly to violence, it responded, often sympathetically, to demands pressed through non-violent means and mass backing. Nehru, for example, was willing to persuade and accommodate the Communists once they gave up recourse to violence. Other political parties too, including the CPI, came to share after some time the same means, methods and values for resolving social conflicts, differing only in rhetoric.

The Indian army and administrative services were also a force for forging national unity. India developed after 1947 a national administrative service with recruitment to its top echelons, the IAS, the IPS, and other central services, taking place on the basis of individual merit, irrespective of caste or religion, from all regions and linguistic areas. These services were all-India in character and sentiment and all officers selected were given common training and owed allegiance to the central government, which also had the ultimate power to promote or discipline them. The central services, as also the state services, were basically non-political and accepted the authority of the party which was voted to power by the people. Likewise, the army was a national force whose officers and ranks were recruited from all parts of the country.

The Indian economy, national market, and transport and communication networks were further unified after 1947. Industrial development was promoted on a national scale and dams, steel mills, fertilizer plants, cement factories, and heavy machinery and electric plants soon became symbols of national endeavour as well as national unity.

Jawaharlal Nehru and other leaders saw economic development as essential for national consolidation. Soon after independence, the government set up a Planning Commission and took active measures for planned economic development. Though the government and the Planning Commission did not succeed in putting an end to regional economic disparities, they did avoid inequality in the distribution of economic resources among states. In general, the central government followed accommodative policies towards the states. Consequently, though there was constant grumbling and plenty of grievances there was no serious discontent in the states and regions on grounds of discrimination by the central government and therefore no separatist feelings on that account.

National integration also required policies which would promote social justice and greater social and economic equality. The national movement had also linked the process of nation-in-the-making with socio-economic changes in the interests of the oppressed and the deprived. Consolidation of the nation after independence had to be judged in terms of how it affected their lives. The entire Indian people and not merely the middle and upper classes had to benefit from the coming of independence and processes of economic development and political democracy.

The constitution laid the basis for reduction of social disparity by putting an end to any discrimination on grounds of religion, caste or sex. Redeeming the national movement's major pledge to the depressed sections of society, it provided reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in educational institutions, employment and in the legislatures. Soon after 1947, a number of social reforms and welfare laws were passed. Landlordism was abolished and there was some redistribution of land. A law was passed making untouchability an offence. Unfortunately, no struggle against the hierarchical caste system followed, so that, on the one hand caste discrimination and oppression continued, on the other, casteism or the use of caste solidarity for electoral and other political purposes began to grow. The momentum of social reform was lost by the early 1950s. Removal of social oppression and social discrimination and exploitation, based on caste, religion, language or ethnicity, and of gross economic inequality has remained the weakest part of the agenda for national integration.

From the start, the founding fathers stood for secularism as the basis for the nation. Undaunted by Partition and the accompanying riots, they remained loyal to the secular vision of the national movement. They also dealt firmly with communal violence and on the whole succeeded in protecting the religious minorities. Independent India's foreign policy served as another unifying force. The policy of non-alignment and anti-colonialism and Nehru's growing stature as a world figure contributed to a sense of national pride in India among all sections of people all over the country and irrespective of their political alignment.

At the moment of freedom, the need for unity was urgent but also present was the problem of integrating diverse loyalties. The strategies and approaches promoting integration required time but the people were in a hurry and there was plenty of scope for conflicts. Many observers, in fact, predicted growing disunity and even break-up of the country. In the next section and the following chapters we will study some of the areas of diversity which produced conflicts and the manner in which these differences were sought to be resolved.

The Language Problem

The language problem was the most divisive issue in the first twenty years of independent India, and it created the apprehension among many that the political and cultural unity of the country was in danger. People love their language; it is an integral part of culture. Consequently, linguistic identity has been a strong force in all societies. This is even more true of a multilingual society like India's. Linguistic diversity would inevitably give birth to strong political currents around issues linked to language, such as educational and economic development, job and other economic opportunities and access to political power.

The Indian constitution recognizes twenty-two major languages, including English and Sanskrit. In addition, there are a myriad languages spoken by the tribals and others, with or without their own scripts. The model that independent India has adopted is not that of assimilation into, or suppression of, the many languages by one of them. This is in any case impossible in a democratic polity. The feasible option is to accept and live with this 'multiplicity' in a manner that conflict situations do not emerge or persist for long.

The problem posed to national consolidation by linguistic diversity has taken two major forms. These are discussed here in two separate sections: (i) the dispute over official language of the union and (ii) the linguistic reorganization of the states.

The Official Language

The controversy on the language issue became most virulent when it took the form of opposition to Hindi and tended to create conflict between Hindi-speaking and non-Hindi-speaking regions of the country. The dispute was not over the question of a national language, that is one language which all Indians would adopt after some time, since the view that one national language was essential to an Indian national identity had already been rejected overwhelmingly by the secular majority of the national leadership. India was a multilingual country and it had to remain so. The Indian national movement had carried on its ideological and political work through the different Indian regional languages. Its demand then was for the replacement of English by the mother tongue as the medium for higher education, administration and courts in each linguistic area. Jawaharlal Nehru had clearly put across this view in 1937: 'Our great provincial languages . . . are ancient languages-with a rich inheritance, each spoken by many millions of persons, each tied up inextricably with the life and culture and ideas of the masses as well as of the upper classes. It is axiomatic that the masses can only grow educationally and culturally through the medium of their own language. Therefore, it is inevitable that we lay stress on the provincial languages and carry on most of our work through them . . . Our system of education and public work must therefore be based on the provincial languages.

The issue of a national language was resolved when the constitution-makers virtually accepted all the major languages as 'languages of India' or India's national languages. But the matter could not end there, for the country's official work could not be carried on in so many languages. There had to be one common language in which the central government would carry on its work and maintain contact with the state governments. The question arose what would be this language of all-India communication? Or what would be India's official and link language? Only two candidates were available for the purpose: English and Hindi. The Constituent Assembly heatedly debated which one should be selected.

But, in fact, the choice had already been made in the pre-independence period by the leadership of the national movement, which was convinced that English would not continue to be the all-India medium of communication in free India. For example, even while appreciating the value of English as a world language, through which Indians could access world science and culture and modern Western ideas, Gandhiji was convinced that the genius of a people could not unfold nor could their culture flower in a foreign language. In fact, Gandhiji, during the 1920s emphasized that English is 'a language of international commerce, it is the language of diplomacy, it contains many a rich literary treasure, and it gives us an introduction to Western thought and culture'. But he argued English occupied in India 'an unnatural place due to our unequal relations with Englishmen'. English 'has sapped the energy of the nation ... it has estranged them from the masses . . . The sooner therefore educated India shakes itself free from the hypnotic spell of the foreign medium, the better it would be for them and the people.' And he wrote in 1946: T love the English tongue in its own place, but I am its inveterate opponent if it usurps a place which does not belong

to it. English is today admittedly the world language. I would therefore accord it a place as a second, optional language. Nehru echoed these sentiments in his 1937 article on 'The Question of Language' and also during the Constituent Assembly debates.

Hindi or Hindustani, the other candidate for the status of the official or link language, had already played this role during the nationalist struggle, especially during the phase of mass mobilization. Hindi had been accepted by leaders from non-Hindi-speaking regions because it was considered to be the most widely spoken and understood language in the country. Lokamanya Tilak, Gandhiji, C. Rajagopalachari, Subhas Bose and Sardar Patel were some of Hindi's enthusiastic supporters. In its sessions and political work, the Congress had substituted Hindi and the provincial languages in place of English. In 1925, Congress amended its constitution to read: 'The proceedings of the Congress shall be conducted as far as possible in Hindustani. The English language or any provincial language may be used if the speaker is unable to speak Hindustani or whenever necessary. The proceedings of the Provincial Congress Committee shall ordinarily be conducted in the language of the Province concerned. Hindustani may also be used.' Reflecting a national consensus, the Nehru Report had laid down in 1928 that Hindustani which might be written in the Devanagari or Urdu script would be the common language of India, but the use of English would be continued for some time. It is interesting that ultimately the constitution of free India was to adopt this stand, except for replacing Hindustani by Hindi. The real debate in the Constituent Assembly occurred over two questions: Would Hindi or Hindustani replace English? And what would be the time-frame for such a replacement to happen?

Sharp differences marked the initial debates as the problem of the official language was highly politicized from the beginning. The question of Hindi or Hindustani was soon resolved, though with a great deal of acrimony. Gandhiji and Nehru both supported Hindustani, written in the Devanagari or Urdu script. Though many supporters of Hindi disagreed, they had tended to accept the Gandhi-Nehru viewpoint. But once Partition was announced, thesechampions of Hindi were emboldened, especially as the protagonists of Pakistan had claimed Urdu as the language of Muslims and of Pakistan. The votaries of Hindi now branded Urdu 'as a symbol of secession'. They demanded that Hindi in the Devanagari script be made the national language. Their demand split the Congress party down the middle. In the end the Congress Legislative Party decided for Hindi against Hindustani by 78 to 77 votes, even though Nehru and Azad fought for Hindustani. The Hindi bloc was also forced to compromise: it accepted that Hindi would be the official and not the national language.

The issue of the time-frame for a shift from English to Hindi produced a divide between Hindi and non-Hindi areas. The spokespersons of Hindi areas were for the immediate switchover to Hindi, while those from non-Hindi areas advocated retention of English for a long if not indefinite period. In fact, they wanted the status quo to continue till a future parliament decided to shift to Hindi as the official language. Nehru was for making Hindi the official language, but he was also in favour of English continuing as an additional official language, making the transition to Hindi gradual, and actively encouraging the knowledge of English because of its usefulness in the contemporary world.

The case for Hindi basically rested on the fact that it was the language of the largest number, though not of the majority, of the people of India; it was also understood at least in the urban areas of most of northern India from Bengal to Punjab and in Maharashtra and Gujarat. The critics of Hindi talked about it being less developed than other languages as a literary language and as a language of science and politics. But their main fear was that Hindi's adoption as the official language would place non-Hindi areas, especially South India, at a disadvantage in the educational and economic spheres, and particularly in competition for appointments in government and the public sector. Such opponents tended to argue that imposition of Hindi on non-Hindi areas would lead to their economic, political, social and cultural domination by Hindi areas.

The constitution-makers were aware that as the leaders of a multilingual country they could not ignore, or even give the impression of ignoring, the interests of any one linguistic area. A compromise was arrived at, though this led to the language provisions of the constitution becoming 'complicated, ambiguous and confusing in some respects'. The constitution provided that Hindi in Devanagari script with international numerals would be India's official language. English was to continue for use in all official purposes till 1965, when it would be replaced by Hindi. Hindi was to be introduced in a phased manner. After 1965 it would become the sole official language. However, parliament would have the power to provide for the use of English for specified purposes even after 1965. The constitution laid upon the government the duty to promote the spread and development of Hindi and provided for the appointment of a commission and a Joint Parliamentary Committee to review the progress in this respect. The state legislatures were to decide the matter of official language at the state level, though the official language of the Union would serve as the language of communication between the states and the Centre and between one state and another.

Implementation of the language provisions of the constitution proved to be a formidable task even though the Congress party was in power all over the country. The issue remained a subject of intense controversy, and became increasingly acrimonious with the passage of time, though for many years nobody challenged the provision that Hindi would eventually become the sole official language.

The constitution-makers had hoped that by 1965 the Hindi protagonists would overcome the weaknesses of Hindi, win the confidence of non-Hindi areas, and hold their hand for a longer period till such time they had done so. It was also hoped that with the rapid growth of education Hindi too would spread and resistance to Hindi would gradually weaken and even disappear. But, unfortunately, the spread of education was too slow to make an impact in this respect.

Moreover, the chances of Hindi's success as an official language were spoilt by the proponents of Hindi themselves. Instead of taking up a gradual, slow and moderate approach to gain acceptance of Hindi by non-Hindi areas and to rely on persuasion, the more fanatical among them preferred imposition of Hindi through government action. Their zeal and enthusiasm tended to provoke a counter-movement. As Nehru told parliament in 1959, it was their overenthusiasm which came in the way of the spread and acceptance of Hindi for 'the way they approach this subject often irritates others, as it irritates me'. Hindi suffered from the lack of social science and scientific writing. In the 1950s, for example, there were hardly any academic journals in Hindi outside the literary field. Instead of developing Hindi as a means of communication in higher education, journalism, and so on, the Hindi leaders were more interested in making it the sole official language.

A major weakness of the Hindi protagonists was that, instead of developing a simple standard language which would get wide acceptance or at least popularize the colloquial Hindi as spoken and written in Hindi areas as also in many other parts of India, they tried to Sanskritize the language, replacing commonly understood words with newly manufactured, unwieldy and little understood ones in the name of the 'purity' of language, free of alien influences. This made it more and more difficult for non-Hindi speakers (or even Hindi speakers) to understand or learn the new version. All India Radio, which could have played an important role in popularizing Hindi, instead took to so Sanskritizing its Hindi news bulletins that many listeners would switch off their radios when the Hindi news was broadcast. Nehru, a Hindi speaker and writer, was to complain in 1958 that he was unable to understand the language in which his own Hindi speeches were being broadcast. But the purifiers of Hindi did not relent and resisted all attempts to simplify the Hindi of news broadcasts. This led many uncommitted persons to join the ranks of the opponents of Hindi.

Nehru and the majority of Indian leaders, however, remained committed to the transition to Hindi as the official language. They believed that, though the study of English was to be encouraged, English could not continue forever as India's official language. In the interests of national unity as

also economic and political development they also realized that full transition to Hindi should not be time-bound and should await a politically more auspicious time when the willing consent of the non-Hindi areas could be obtained. The non-Hindi leaders also became less and less open to persuasion and their opposition to Hindi increased with time. One result of this alienation of non-Hindi-language groups was that they too were not open to rational arguments in favour of Hindi. Instead they veered towards an indefinite continuance of English.

Sharp differences on the official language issue surfaced during 1956-60, once again revealing the presence of disruptive tendencies. In 1956, the Report of the Official Language Commission, set up in 1955 in terms of a constitutional provision, recommended that Hindi should start progressively replacing English in various functions of the central government with effective change taking place in 1965. Its two members from West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterjee and P. Subbaroyan, however, dissented, accusing the members of the Commission of suffering from a pro-Hindi bias, and asked for the continuation of English. Ironically, Professor Chatterjee was in charge of the Hindi Pracharini Sabha in Bengal before independence. The Commission's report was reviewed by a special Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC). To implement the recommendations of the Committee, the President issued an order in April 1960 stating that after 1965 Hindi would be the principal official language but that English would continue as the associate official language without any restriction being placed on its use. Hindi would also become an alternative medium for the Union Public Service Commission examinations after some time, but for the present it would be introduced in the examinations as a qualifying subject. In accordance with the President's directive, the central government took a series of steps to promote Hindi. These included the setting up of the Central Hindi Directorate, publication of standard works in Hindi or in Hindi translation in various fields, compulsory training of central government employees in Hindi, and translation of major texts of law into Hindi and promotion of their use by the courts. All these measures aroused suspicion and anxiety in the non-Hindi areas and groups. Nor were the Hindi leaders satisfied. For example, Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, an eminent linguist and a former staunch advocate and promoter of Hindi, stated in his dissenting note to the Report of the Official Language Commission that the outlook of the commission was one of the 'Hindi speakers who are to profit immediately and for a long time to come, if not forever'. Similarly, in March 1958, C. Rajagopala-chari, ex-president of the Hindi Pracharini Sabha in the South, declared that 'Hindi is as much foreign to the non-Hindi speaking people as English to the protagonists of Hindi'. On the other hand, two major champions of Hindi, Purshottamdas Tandon and Seth Govind Das, accused the Joint Parliamentary Committee of being pro-English. Many of the Hindi leaders also attacked Nehru and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the Minister of Education, for dragging their feet in implementing the constitutional provisions and deliberately delaying the replacement of English. They insisted that the deadline for the changeover to Hindi laid down in the constitution must be rigidly observed. In 1957, Dr Lohia's Samyukta Socialist Party and the Jan Sangh launched a militant movement, which continued for nearly two years, for the immediate replacement of English by Hindi. One of the agitational methods adopted by the followers of Lohia on a large scale was to deface English signboards of shops and in other places.

Fully aware of the danger that the official language issue could pose to Indian polity, the leadership of the Congress took the grievances of the non-Hindi areas seriously and handled the issue with great care and caution. The attempt was to work for a compromise. Nehru, time and again made it clear that an official language could not and would not be imposed on any region of the country and that the pace of transition to Hindi would have to be determined keeping in view the wishes of the non-Hindi people. In this he was supported by the leaders of Praja Socialist Party (PSP) and Communist Party of India (CPI). PSP criticized Hindi extremism and said that it 'might severely strain the unity of a multilingual country like India'.

The highlight of Nehru's approach was a major statement in parliament on 7 August 1959. To allay the fears of the non-Hindi people, he gave a definite assurance: 'I would have English as an alternate language as long as the people require it, and I would leave the decision not to the Hindi-knowing people, but to the non-Hindi-knowing people.' He also told the people of the South that 'if they do not want to learn Hindi, let them not learn Hindi'. He repeated this assurance in parliament on 4 September 1959. In pursuance of Nehru's assurances, though with delay caused by internal party pressures and the India-China war, an Official Languages Act was passed in 1963. The object of the Act, Nehru declared, was 'to remove a restriction which had been placed by the Constitution on the use of English after a certain date, namely, 1965'. But this purpose was not fully served as the assurances were- not clearly articulated in the Act. The Act laid down that 'the English language may . . . continue to be used in addition to Hindi'. The non-Hindi groups criticized the use of the word 'may' in place of the word 'shall'. This made the Act ambiguous in their eyes; they did not regard it as a statutory guarantee. Many of them wanted a cast iron guarantee not because they distrusted Nehru but because they were worried about what would happen after Nehru, especially as the pressure from the Hindi leaders was also growing. The death of Nehru in June 1964 increased their apprehensions which were further fuelled by certain hasty steps taken and circulars issued by various ministries to prepare the ground for the changeover to Hindi in the coming year. For example, instructions were given that the central government's correspondence with the states would be in Hindi, though in the case of non-Hindi states an English translation would be appended.

Lai Bahadur Shastri, Nehru's successor as prime minister, was unfortunately not sensitive enough to the opinion of non-Hindi groups. Instead of taking effective steps to counter their fears of Hindi becoming the *sole* official language, he declared that he was considering making Hindi an alternative medium in public service examinations. This meant that while non-Hindi speakers could still compete in the all-India services in English, Hindi speakers would have the advantage of being able to use their mother tongue.

Many non-Hindi leaders in protest changed their line of approach to the problem of the official language. While previously they had wanted a slowing down of the replacement of English, now they started demanding that there should be no deadline fixed for the changeover. Some of the leaders went much further. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and C. Rajagopalachari, for example, demanded that the constitution should be amended and English should be made the official language of India.

As 26 January 1965 approached, a fear psychosis gripped the non-Hindi areas, especially Tamil Nadu, creating a strong anti-Hindi movement. On 17 January, the DMK organized the Madras State Anti-Hindi Conference which gave a call for observing 26 January as a day of mourning. Students, concerned for their careers and apprehensive that they would be outstripped by Hindi speakers in the all-India services, were the most active in organizing a widespread agitation and mobilizing public opinion. They raised and popularized the slogan: 'Hindi never, English ever.' They also demanded amendment of the constitution. The students' agitation soon developed into statewide unrest. The Congress leadership, though controlling both the state and the central governments, failed to gauge the depth of the popular feeling and the widespread character of the movement and instead of negotiating with the students, made an effort to repress it. Widespread rioting and violence followed in the early weeks of February leading to large-scale destruction of railways and other Union property. So strong was the anti-Hindi feeling that several Tamil youth, including four students, burned themselves to death in protest against the official language policy. Two Tamil ministers, C. Subramaniam and Alagesan, resigned from the Union cabinet. The agitation continued for about two months, taking a toll of over sixty lives through police firings. The only eminent central leader to show concern for the agitators was Indira Gandhi, then Minister for Information and Broadcasting.

At the height of the agitation she flew to Madras, 'rushed to the storm-centre of trouble', showed some sympathy for the agitators and thus became, after Nehru, the first northern leader to win the trust of the aggrieved Tamils as well as of the people of the South in general.

Efforts were made by the Jan Sangh and the Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP) to organize a counter-agitation in the Hindi areas against English, but they did not get much public support.

The agitation forced both the Madras and the Union governments and the Congress party to revise their stand. They now decided to yield to the intense public mood in the South, change their policy and accept the major demands of the agitators. The Congress Working Committee announced a series of steps which were to form the basis for a central enactment embodying concessions and which led to the withdrawal of the Hindi agitation. This enactment was delayed because of the Indo-Pak war of 1965, which silenced all dissension in the country.

With the death of Lai Bahadur Shastri in January 1966, Indira Gandhi became the prime minister. As she had already won the trust of the people of the South, they were convinced that a genuine effort would be made to resolve the long-festering dispute. Other favourable factors were the Jan Sangh's muting of their anti-English fervour and the SSP's acceptance of the basic features of the agreement worked out in 1965.

Despite facing economic problems and the weakening of the Congress's position in parliament in the 1967 elections, Indira Gandhi moved the bill to amend the 1963 Official Language Act on 27 November. The Lok Sabha adopted the bill, on 16 December 1967, by 205 to 41 votes. The Act gave an unambiguous legal fortification to Nehru's assurances of September 1959. It provided that the use of English as an associate language in addition to Hindi for the official work at the Centre and for communication between the Centre and non-Hindi states would continue as long as the non-Hindi states wanted it, giving them full veto powers on the question. A virtually indefinite policy of bilingualism was adopted. The parliament also adopted a policy resolution laying down that the public service examinations were to be conducted in Hindi and English and in all the regional languages with the proviso that the candidates should have additional knowledge of Hindi or English. The states were to adopt a three-language formula according to which in the non-Hindi areas, the mother tongue, Hindi and English or some other national language was to be taught in schools while in the Hindi areas a non-Hindi language, preferably a southern language, was to be taught as a compulsory subject.

The Government of India took another important step on the language question in July 1967. On the basis of the report of the Education Commission in 1966 it declared that Indian languages would ultimately become the medium of education in all subjects at the university level, though the time-frame for the changeover would be decided by each university to suit its convenience.

After many twists and turns, a great deal of debate and several agitations, small and big, and many compromises India had arrived at a widely accepted solution to the very difficult problem of the official and link language for the country. Since 1967, this problem has gradually disappeared from the political scene, demonstrating the capacity of the Indian political system to deal with a contentious problem on a democratic basis, and in a manner that promoted national consolidation. Here was an issue which emotionally divided the people and which could have jeopardized the unity of the country, but to which a widely acceptable solution was found through negotiations and compromise. And it was not only the national leadership provided by the Congress, with some hiccups on the way, which came up to the mark; the Opposition parties too measured up when it came to the crunch. In the end, the DMK, in whose rise to power the language issue played an important role, also helped by cooling down the political temper in Tamil Nadu.

Of course, no political problem is solved for all times to come. Problem-solving in a nation as complex as India is bound to be a continuous process. But it is significant that Hindi has been making rapid progress in non-Hindi areas through education, trade, tourism, films, radio and television. The use of Hindi as an official language has also been growing though English is still dominant. Simultaneously, English, as a second language, has been spreading fast, including in the Hindi-speaking areas. A witness of this is the number of private English-medium schools, however poor in staff and other facilities, which now dot the countryside from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. The standards of spoken and written English have fallen but the English-knowing classes have multiplied manifold. Both English and Hindi are likely to grow as link languages just as regional languages are more and more occupying the official, educational and media space. The proof of the growth of Hindi, English and regional languages lies in the rapid growth of newspapers in all of them. In fact, English is not only likely to survive in India for all times to come, but it remains and is likely to grow as a language of communication between the intelligentsia all over the country, as a library language, and as the second language of the universities. Hindi, on the other hand, has so far failed to perform any of the three roles. Of course, the ideal of making Hindi the link language of the country remains. But the way in which the enthusiastic protagonists of Hindi promoted Hindi's cause, they pushed back the chances of this happening for a long time to come.

*****

The Linguistic Reorganization of the States

The reorganization of the states on the basis of language, J. a major aspect of national consolidation and integration, came to the fore almost immediately after independence. The boundaries of provinces in pre-*1947* India had been drawn in a haphazard manner as the British conquest of India had proceeded for nearly a hundred years. No heed was paid to linguistic or cultural cohesion so that most of the provinces were multilingual and multicultural. The interspersed princely states had added a further element of heterogeneity.

The case for linguistic states as administrative units was very strong. Language is closely related to culture and therefore to the customs of people. Besides, the massive spread of education and growth of mass literacy can only occur through the medium of the mother tongue. Democracy can become real to the common people only when politics and administration are conducted through the language they can understand. But this language, the mother tongue, cannot be the medium of education or administration or judicial activity unless a state is formed on the basis of such a predominant language.

It is for this reason that, with the involvement of the masses in the national movement after 1919, Congress undertook political mobilization in the mother tongue and in 1921 amended its constitution and reorganized its regional branches on a linguistic basis. Since then, the Congress repeatedly committed itself to the redrawing of the provincial boundaries on linguistic lines. Just five days before he was assassinated, Gandhiji, while urging the people to 'discourage all fissiparous tendencies and feel and behave as Indians', also argued that 'the redistribution of provinces on a linguistic basis was necessary if provincial languages were to grow to their full height'. It was therefore more or less universally assumed that free India would base its administrative boundaries on the linguistic principle.

But the national leadership had second thoughts on the subject immediately after independence. There were various reasons for this. Partition had created serious administrative, economic and political dislocation; and independence, coming immediately after the War, was accompanied by serious economic and law and order problems. Also there was the vexed Kashmir problem and a war-like situation vis-a-vis Pakistan. The leadership felt that the most important task for the present was to consolidate national unity; and any effort undertaken immediately to redraw the internal boundaries might dislocate administration and economic development, intensify regional and linguistic rivalries, unleash destructive forces, and damage the unity of the country. Speaking on the lirtguistic question, Nehru clearly stated on 27 November 1947: 'First things must come first and the first thing is the security and stability of India.' Hence, while still committed to linguistic states, Nehru and other leaders accorded the task of redrawing India's administrative map a low priority. The task, they felt, could wait for some years.

The question of the linguistic reorganization of India was, however, raised quite early in the Constituent Assembly. It appointed in 1948 the Linguistic Provinces Commission, headed by Justice S.K. Dar, to enquire into the desirability of linguistic provinces. The Dar Commission advised against the step at the time for it might threaten national unity and also be administratively inconvenient. Consequently, the Constituent Assembly decided not to incorporate the linguistic principle in the constitution. But public opinion was not satisfied, especially in the South, and the problem remained politically alive. To appease the vocal votaries of linguistic states, the Congress appointed a committee (JVP) in December 1948 consisting of Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel and Pattabhi Sitaramayya, president of the Congress, to examine the question afresh. This committee advised against the creation of linguistic states for the time being, emphasizing on unity, national security and economic development as the needs of the hour.

Yet, the Congress leadership would not oppose any popular demand. In the JVP report, as well as afterwards, the Congress leadership laid down that where the demand for a linguistic state was insistent and overwhelming and where other language groups involved were agreeable to it, a new state could be created. The JVP report was followed by popular movements for states' reorganization all over the country, which persisted with varying degrees of intensity till 1960. The demand for a separate Andhra state for the Telugu people was an example. The demand had been popular for nearly half a century and had the support of all political parties.

The JVP accepted that a strong case for the formation of Andhra out of the Madras Presidency existed, particularly as the leadership of Tamil Nadu was agreeable to it. But it did not concede the demand immediately, because the two sides could not agree on which state should take Madras city. The Andhra leaders were unwilling to concede Madras even though on linguistic as well as geographic grounds it belonged to Tamil Nadu.

On 19 October 1952, a popular freedom fighter, Patti Sriramalu, undertook a fast unto death over the demand for a separate Andhra and expired after fifty-eight days. His death was followed by three days of rioting, demonstrations, hartals and violence all over Andhra. The government immediately gave in and conceded the demand for a separate state of Andhra, which finally came into existence in October 1953. Simultaneously, Tamil Nadu was created as a Tamil-speaking state.

The success of the Andhra struggle encouraged other linguistic groups to agitate for their own state or for rectification of their boundaries on a linguistic basis. Nehru was not in favour at that time of continuing with the redrawing of India's internal administrative boundaries, but he was too much of a democrat to sternly and consistently oppose the demands. As Nehru's biographer, S. Gopal, has put it: 'He felt that it would be undemocratic to smother this sentiment which, on general grounds, he did not find objectionable. Indeed, a linguistic mosaic might well provide a firmer base for national unity. What concerned him were the timing, the agitation and violence with which linguistic provinces were being demanded and the harsh antagonism between various sections of the Indian people which underlay these demands.'

To meet the demand halfway and to delay matters, Nehru appointed in August 1953 the States Reorganisation Commission (SRC), with Justice Fazl Ali, K.M. Panikkar and Hridaynath Kunzru as members, to examine 'objectively and dispassionately' the entire question of the reorganization of the states of the Union. Throughout the two years of its work, the Commission was faced with meetings, demonstrations, agitations and hunger strikes. Different linguistic groups clashed with each other, verbally as well as sometimes physically. As the Commissioners reported in sorrow: 'It has been most distressing to us to witness ... a kind of border warfare in certain areas in which old comrades-in-arms in the battle for freedom have pitted against one another in acrimonious controversy . . . Deliberate attempts to whip up popular frenzy by an appeal to parochial and communal sentiments; threats of large-scale migration; assertions such as that if a certain language group is not allowed to have an administrative unit of its own, its moral, material and even physical extinction would follow as an inevitable consequence; ... all point to an acute lack of perspective and balance.'[4] The SRC submitted its report in October 1955. While laying down that due consideration should be given to administrative and economic factors, it recognized for the most part the linguistic principle and recommended redrawing of state boundaries on that basis. The Commission, however, opposed the splitting of Bombay and Punjab. Despite strong reaction to the report in many parts of the country, the SRC's recommendations were accepted, though with certain modifications, and were quickly implemented.

The States Reorganisation Act was passed by parliament in November 1956. It provided for fourteen states and six centrally administered territories. The Telangana area of Hyderabad state was transferred to Andhra; Kerala was created by merging the Malabar district of the old Madras

Presidency with Travancore-Cochin. Certain Kannada-speaking areas of the states of Bombay, Madras, Hyderabad and Coorg were added to the Mysore state. Bombay state was enlarged by merging the states of Kutch and Saurashtra and the Marathi-speaking areas of Hyderabad with it.

The strongest reaction against the SRC's report and the States Reorganisation Act came from Maharashtra where widespread rioting broke out and eighty people were killed in Bombay city in police firings in January 1956. The Opposition parties supported by a wide spectrum of public opinion students, farmers, workers, artists, businessmen organized a powerful protest movement. Under pressure, the government decided in June 1956 to divide the Bombay state into two linguistic states of Maharashtra and Gujarat with Bombay city forming a separate, centrally administered state. This move too was strongly opposed by the Maharashtrians. Nehru now vacillated and, unhappy at having hurt the feelings of the people of Maharashtra, reverted in July to the formation of bilingual, greater Bombay. This move was, however, opposed by the people of both Maharashtra and Gujarat. The broad-based Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti and Maha Gujarat Janata Parishad led the movements in the two parts of the state. In Maharashtra, even a large section of Congressmen joined the demand for a unilingual Maharashtra with Bombay as its capital; and C.D. Deshmukh, the Finance Minister in the central cabinet, resigned from his office on this question. The Gujaratis felt that they would be a minority in the new state. They too would not agree to give up Bombay city to Maharashtra. Violence and arson now spread to Ahmedabad and other parts of Gujarat. Sixteen persons were killed and 200 injured in police firings.

In view of the disagreement over Bombay city, the government stuck to its decision and passed the States Reorganisation Act in November 1956. But the matter could not rest there. In the 1957 elections the Bombay Congress scraped through with a slender majority. Popular agitation continued for nearly five years. As Congress president, Indira Gandhi reopened the question and was supported by the President, S. Radhakrishnan. The government finally agreed in May 1960 to bifurcate the state of Bombay into Maharashtra and Gujarat, with Bombay city being included in Maharashtra, and Ahmedabad being made the capital of Gujarat.

The other state where an exception was made to the linguistic principle was Punjab. In 1956, the states of PEPSU had been merged with Punjab, which, however, remained a trilingual state having three language speakers Punjabi, Hindi and Pahari within its borders. In the Punjabi-speaking part of the state, there was a strong demand for carving out a separate Punjabi Suba (Punjabi-speaking state). Unfortunately, the issue assumed communal overtones. The Sikh communalists, led by the Akali Dal, and the Hindu communalists, led by the Jan Sangh, used the linguistic issue to promote communal politics. While the Hindu communalists opposed the demand for a Punjabi Suba by denying that Punjabi was their mother tongue, the Sikh communalists put forward the demand as a Sikh demand for a Sikh state, claiming Punjabi written in Gurmukhi as a Sikh language. Even though the demand was supported by the Communist Party and a section of the Congress, it had got mixed up with religion. But Nehru, as also the majority of the Punjab Congressmen, felt that the demand for a Punjabi state was basically a communal demand for a Sikh-majority state 'dressed up as a language plea'. Nehru and the Congress leadership were clear that they would not accept any demand for the creation of a state on religious or communal grounds. The SRC had also refused to accept the demand for a separate Punjabi-speaking state on the ground that this would not solve either the language or the communal problem of Punjab. (The several powerful movements for a Punjabi state are discussed separately in the chapter on the Punjab crisis.) Finally, in 1966, Indira Gandhi agreed to the division of Punjab into two Punjabi-and Hindi-speaking states of Punjab and Haryana, with the Pahari-speaking district of Kangra and a part of the Hoshiarpur district being merged with Himachal Pradesh. Chandigarh, the newly built city and capital of united Punjab, was made a Union Territory and was to serve as the joint capital of Punjab and Haryana.

Thus, after more than ten years of continuous strife and popular struggles the linguistic reorganization of India was largely completed, making room for greater political participation by the people. Events since 1956 have clearly shown that loyalty to a language was quite consistent with, and was rather complementary to, loyalty to the nation. By reorganizing the states on linguistic lines, the national leadership removed a major grievance which could have led to fissiparous tendencies. States reorganization is, therefore, 'best regarded as clearing the ground for national integration'. Also, even though during the agitation for states' reorganization the language of warring camps was used, language has not subsequently defined the politics of the states.

Equally important, linguistic reorganization of the states has not in any manner adversely affected the federal structure of the Union or weakened or paralysed the Centre as many had feared. The central government wields as much authority as it did before. The states have also been cooperating with the Centre in planning and economic development. Hardly any person complains of discrimination in the raising or expending of resources on grounds of language. If anything, the national government has been strengthened by the creation of coherent state units. To quote W.H. Morris-Jones: 'The newly fashioned units, it is true, have a self-conscious coherence, but they are willing, thus equipped, to do business with the centre, to work as parts of a whole that is India.'

Thus, states' reorganization has not only not weakened the unity of the country but as a whole strengthened it, thereby disappointing the prophets of gloom and removing the apprehensions of the friendly. To quote the political scientist Rajni Kothari: 'In spite of the leadership's earlier reservations and ominous forebodings by sympathetic observers, the reorganization resulted in rationalizing the political map of India without seriously weakening its unity. If anything, its result has been functional, in as much as it removed what had been a major source of discord, and created homogeneous political units which could be administered through a medium that the vast majority of the population understood. Indeed it can be said with the benefit of hindsight that language, rather than being a force for division has proved a cementing and integrating influence.'

States' reorganization did not, of course, resolve all the problems relating to linguistic conflicts. Disputes over boundaries between different states, linguistic minorities and economic issues such as sharing of waters, and power and surplus food still persist. Linguistic chauvinism also finds occasional expression. But the reorganization has removed a major factor affecting cohesion of the country.

Minority Languages

An important aspect of the language problem has been the status of minority languages. Unilingual states were not possible in whatever manner their boundaries were drawn. Consequently, a large number of linguistic minorities, that is, those who speak a language other than the main or the official language of the state, continue to exist in linguistically reorganized states. Overall nearly 18 per cent of India's population do not speak the official language of the states where they live as their mother tongue. There is of course a great deal of variation among the states on this count. According to the 1971 census, the percentages of linguistic minorities to total population ranged from 4 in Kerala to 34 in Karnataka, 3.9 in Assam to 44.5 in Jammu and Kashmir.

From the beginning, the important point to be decided upon was the status and rights of these minorities in their states. On the one hand, there was the question of their protection, for there was the ever-present danger of them being meted out unfair treatment, on the other, there was the need to promote their integration with the major language group of a state. A linguistic minority had to be given the confidence that it would not be discriminated against by the majority and that its language and culture would continue to exist and develop. At the same time, the majority had to be assured that meeting the needs of the linguistic minority would not generate separatist sentiments or demands and that the minorities would develop a degree of state loyalty.

To confront this problem certain Fundamental Rights were provided to the linguistic minorities in the constitution. For example, Article 30 states that 'all minorities, whether based an religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice' and, more important, 'that the state shall not, in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language'. Article 347 lays down that on a demand being made on behalf of a minority, the President may direct that its language shall be officially recognized throughout the state or any part thereof for such purposes as he might specify. The official policy since 1956, sanctioned by a constitutional amendment in that year, has been to provide for instruction in the mother tongue in the primary and secondary classes wherever there is a sufficient number of children to form a class. The amendment also provides for the appointment of a Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities to investigate and report regularly on the implementation of these safeguards. On the whole, the central government has tended to play a very positive role in defence of the rights of the minorities, but the implementation of the minority safeguards is within the purview of the state governments and therefore differs from state to state. In general, despite some progress in several states, in most of them the position of the linguistic minorities has not been satisfactory. The constitutional safeguards have quite often been inadequately enforced. The Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities has in his reports regularly noted innumerable cases of discrimination against linguistic minorities in matters of schooling, admission to technical and medical institutions and employment in the state public services because of lack of proficiency in the official language of the state. However, a redeeming feature is that quite often facilities for primary education in the mother tongue of the minorities have been provided, though these may be inadequate in terms of competent teachers and textbooks. But even here the big exception is the all-round failure in the case of tribal minority languages.

Among the minority languages, Urdu is a special case. It is the largest minority tongue in India. Nearly 23.3 million people spoke Urdu in 1951. Urdu speakers constituted substantial percentages of the population in Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) (10.5), Bihar (8.8), Maharashtra (7.2), Andhra Pradesh (7.5) and Karnataka (9). Moreover, an overwhelming majority of Muslims, India's largest religious minority, claimed Urdu as their mother tongue. Urdu is also recognized as one of India's national languages and is listed in the Eighth Schedule of the constitution.

While nearly all the major languages of India were also the official languages of one state or the other, Urdu was not the official language of any state except the small state of Jammu and Kashmir where the mother tongues were in any case Kashmiri, Dogri and Ladakhi. Consequently, Urdu did not get official support in any part of the country. On the contrary, it faced official discrimination and hostility both in U.P. and Bihar. We may briefly take up the case of U.P., though the position was no different in Bihar. The U.P. government decided early on to declare Hindi as the only official language of the state; the subterfuge was that Hindi and Urdu were not two separate languages and therefore there was no need to make Urdu a second official language! In practice, Urdu began to be abolished in many primary schools. Its use as a medium of instruction was also increasingly limited. For example, in 1979-80, only 3.69% of primary school students received instruction in Urdu while the number of Urdu speakers in 1981 was 10.5 per cent. The Hindi protagonists also began to eliminate Urdu words from written Hindi. The neglect of Urdu in the state led the well-known left-wing Urdu critic S. Ehtesham Husain, to complain: 'Urdu is being constantly termed as only an off-shoot or variety of Hindi, a foreign language, a language of the Muslims, an instrument of communal hatred and an enemy of Indian unity. All these contrary things are said in the same breath, to suppress it.'

Urdu speakers, therefore, were persistent in demanding that Urdu should be recognized as the second official language in the states where it had a large presence, especially in U.P. and Bihar. The U.P. government was equally consistent and successful in opposing the demand; its

main justification being that the SRC had recommended that at least 30 per cent population in a state should speak a language before it could be made the second official or regional language.

Jawaharlal Nehru, in particular, was very supportive of Urdu and critical of the anti-Urdu thinking and activities of a large number of persons, including Congressmen, in northern India. 'Urdu,' he told parliament, 'is an example of integration in India, not only of languages but of minds, literatures and cultures. It is cent per cent an Indian language.' He pointed out that Urdu had 'enriched Indian culture and thought'. He asked the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh to declare Urdu as a second official language in districts where it was widely used and in other areas to give it the full facilities of a minority language. But even when Nehru succeeded in persuading the Uttar Pradesh government to agree to take certain steps in this regard, they were nullified by laxity in their implementation. The Uttar Pradesh government refused to pass legislation giving legal sanctity to the rights granted to Urdu on the ground that such a step might lead to communal riots.

The governments of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka were more supportive of Urdu. In Andhra, Urdu has been recognized since 1968 as an additional language for the Telangana region. And in both the states, adequate facilities are provided for instruction through the medium of Urdu in the primary stage and for instruction in Urdu at the higher school stages.

Two other aspects of Urdu's position may be noted. First, unfortunately the question of Urdu has got entangled with the communal question. While many Muslims regard it as the language of their community as such, many Hindu communalists are hostile to it because of their anti-Muslim ideological position. Second, despite active hostility of many and official neglect, Urdu continues not only to exist but even grow in terms of literary output, journals and newspapers and especially as the language of films and television because of its inherent vigour and cultural roots among the Indian people.

*****

Integration of the Tribals

The task of integrating the tribal people into the mainstream was extremely complex, given the varied conditions under which they live in different parts of the country, and their different languages and distinct cultures. The 1971 Census recorded over 400 tribal communities numbering nearly 38 million people and constituting nearly 6.9 per cent of the Indian population. Spread all over India, their greatest concentration is in Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, north-eastern India, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan. Except in the Northeast, they constitute minorities in their home states. Residing mostly in the hills and forest areas, in colonial India they lived in relative isolation, and their traditions, habits, cultures and ways of life were markedly different from those of their non-tribal neighbours. Nevertheless, except in the Northeast, the two had for centuries interacted culturally, socially, economically and politically.

In most parts of the country, colonialism brought radical transformation of the tribals as their relative isolation was eroded by the penetration of market forces and they were integrated with the British and princely administrations. A large number of money-lenders, traders, revenue farmers and other middlemen and petty officials invaded the tribal areas and disrupted the tribals' traditional way of life. They were increasingly engulfed in debt and lost their lands to outsiders, often being reduced to the position of agricultural labourers, sharecroppers and rack-rented tenants. Many were forced to retreat further into the hills. Belated legislation to prevent alienation of land by the tribal people failed to halt the process. Verrier Elwin, who lived nearly all his life among the tribal people in central and north-eastern India and who was one of the formative influences in the evolution of the new government's policies towards the tribals, was to refer to the fate of the tribal people under British rule as follows: 'But now they suffered oppression and exploitation, for there soon came merchants and liquor-venders, cajoling, tricking, swindling them in their ignorance and simplicity until bit by bit their broad acres dwindled and they they sank into the poverty in which many of them still live today.'[1] Simultaneously, 'missionaries were destroying their art, their dances, their weaving and their whole culture'.

Colonialism also transformed the tribals' relationship with the forest. They depended on the forest for food, fuel and cattle feed and for raw materials for their handicrafts. In many parts of India the hunger for land by the immigrant peasants from the plains led to the destruction of forests, depriving the tribals of their traditional means of livelihood. To conserve forests and to facilitate their commercial exploitation, the colonial authorities brought large tracts of forest lands under forest laws which forbade shifting cultivation and put severe restrictions on the tribals' use of the forest and their access to forest products.

Loss of land, indebtedness, exploitation by middlemen, denial of access to forests and forest products, and oppression and extortion by policemen, forest officials, and other government officials was to lead to a series of tribal uprisings in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for example the Santhal uprising and the Munda rebellion led by Birsa Munda and to the participation of the tribal people in the national and peasant movements in Orissa, Bihar, West Bengal, Andhra, Maharashtra and Gujarat.

Roots of India's Tribal Policy

The preservation of the tribal people's rich social and cultural heritage lay at the heart of the government's policy of tribal integration. As Jawaharlal Nehru, the main influence in shaping the government's attitude towards the tribals, put it: 'The first problem we have to face there [in the tribal areas] is to inspire them [the tribal people] with confidence and to make them feel at one with India, and to realise that they are part of India and have an honoured place in it.' At the same time, 'India to them should signify not only a protecting force but a liberating one'. Indian nationalism, Nehru thought, was capable of accommodating the uniqueness of the tribal people.

There were two major approaches regarding the place to be accorded to tribals in Indian society. One approach was to leave the tribal people alone, uncontaminated by modern influences operating outside their world and to let them stay more or less as they were. The second approach was that of assimilating them completely and as quickly as possible into the Indian society all around them. The disappearance of the tribal way of life was not to be regretted; it was to be welcomed for that would represent their 'upliftment'.

Jawaharlal Nehru rejected both these approaches. The first approach, of treating the tribal people 'as museum specimens to be observed and written about', was, he said, 'to insult them'. The tribal people, he wrote, 'could not be left cut off from the world as they were'. Isolation was in any case impossible at this stage, for the process of penetration by the outside world had already gone too far and 'it was not possible or desirable to isolate them'. The second approach of allowing them 'to be engulfed by the masses of Indian humanity', or of their assimilation through the operation of normal outside forces was also wrong, according to Nehru. This would lead to the loss of the tribals' social and cultural identity and of the many virtues they possessed. In fact, he pointed out, 'if normal factors were allowed to operate, unscrupulous people from outside would take possession of tribal lands . . . and forests and interfere with the life of the tribal people'. This would also 'upset their whole life and culture, which had so much of good in them'.

Instead of these two approaches, Nehru favoured the policy of integrating the tribal people in Indian society, of making them an integral part of the Indian nation, even while maintaining their distinct identity and culture. There were two basic parameters of the Nehruvian approach: 'the tribal areas have to progress' and 'they have to progress in their own way'. Progress did not mean 'an attempt merely to duplicate what we have got in other parts of India'. Whatever was good in the rest of India would 'be adopted by them gradually'. Moreover, whatever changes were needed would be 'worked out by the tribals themselves'.

The problem was how to combine these two seemingly contradictory approaches. Nehru stood for economic and social development of the tribal people in multifarious ways, especially in the fields of communication, modern medical facilities, agriculture and education. In this regard, he laid down certain broad guidelines for government policy. First, the tribals should develop along the lines of their own genius; there should be no imposition or compulsion from outside. The non-tribals should not approach them with a superiority complex. Rather, the understanding should be that they had an equal contribution to make to the evolution of the common culture and social and political life of the country.

Second, tribal rights in land and forests should be respected and no outsider should be able to take possession of tribal lands. The incursion of the market economy into tribal areas had to be strictly controlled and regulated. Third, it was necessary to encourage the tribal languages which 'must be given all possible support and the conditions in which they can flourish must be safeguarded'.

Fourth, for administration, reliance should be placed on the tribal people themselves, and administrators should be recruited from amongst them and trained. As few as possible outsiders should be introduced as administrators in tribal areas and they should be carefully chosen. They should have a sympathetic and understanding approach, and should not consider themselves superior to or apart from the tribal people. They should be prepared to share their life with the tribal people among whom they work. Fifth, there should be no over-administration of tribal areas. The effort should be to administer and develop the tribals' througl them own social and cultural institutions.

Nehru's approach was in turn based on the nationalist policy towards tribals since the 1920s when Gandhiji set up ashrams in the tribal areas and promoted constructive work. After independence this policy was supported by Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India, and other major political leaders.

To give shape to the government's policy, a beginning was made in the constitution itself which directed under Article 46 that the state should promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the tribal people and should protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation, through special legislation. The governors of the states in which tribal areas were situated were given special responsibility to protect tribal interests, including the power to modify central and state laws in their application to tribal areas, and to frame regulations for the protection of tribals' right to land and also their protection from moneylenders. The application of the Fundamental Rights was amended for this purpose. The constitution also extended full political rights to the tribal people. In addition, it provided for reservation of seats in the legislatures and positions in the administrative services for the Scheduled Tribes as in the case of the Scheduled Castes. The constitution also provided for the setting up of Tribal Advisory Councils in all states containing tribal areas to advise on matters concerning the welfare of tribals. A Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was appointed by the President to investigate whether the safeguards provided for them were being observed.

Legislative as well as executive action was taken by the state governments to prevent loss of tribal lands to non-tribal people and to prevent exploitation of the tribals by moneylenders. The central and state governments created special facilities and organized special programmes for the welfare and development of the tribal areas and the tribal people including the promotion of cottage and village industries and generation of employment among them. Large expenditures were undertaken and large sums set apart in the Five-Year Plans for the purpose. The funding for tribal welfare significantly increased after 1971.

In spite of the constitutional safeguards and the efforts of the central and state governments, the tribals' progress and welfare has been very slow, and even dismal. Except in the Northeast, the tribals continue to be poor, indebted, landless and often unemployed. The problem often lies in weak execution of even well-intentioned measures. Quite often there is a divergence between central and state government policies, the latter being less in tune with tribal interests. In particular, state governments have been relatively ineffective in administering the positive policies and laws laid down by the central government or by the state governments themselves, as repeatedly shown by the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and in the reports of the Planning Commission. Quite often the funds allocated for tribal welfare are not spent or are spent without corresponding results, or are even misappropriated. One of the watchdogs of tribal interests, the Tribal Advisory Councils, have not functioned effectively. Often the administrative personnel are ill-trained or even prejudiced against tribals. But sympathetic officials are also known to be quickly transferred out of tribal areas under the pressure of traders, moneylenders, forest contractors and land grabbers.

A major handicap from which tribals suffer is denial of justice, often because of their unfamiliarity with the laws and the legal system. Laws preventing transfer of land to outsiders have continued to be evaded, leading to alienation of land and eviction of tribals. Rapid extension of mines and industries has worsened their conditions in many areas. While deforestation proceeds apace through the cooperation of corrupt officials and politicians with forest contractors, the tribals' traditional right of access to the forest and its produce is continuously curtailed. Forest laws and regulations are also used by unsympathetic and often corrupt forest officials to harass and exploit the tribal people. As a result of loss of land, deforestation and restrictions on the access to the forest, the tribal people have been facing growing unemployment and have been increasingly driven into more inaccessible stretches of hills and jungles.

The progress of education among the tribal people has been disappointingly slow. In many areas, primary education through the tribal languages has taken place, but in others the state governments have tended to neglect tribal languages and education through their medium.

Tribal society almost everywhere has also been gradually developing class differences and a class structure with those belonging to the upper crust often joining forces with the upper crust of the outsiders. Further, the major gains of whatever development takes place in the fields of education, employment in administration, economy and political patronage are reaped by the small segment of the tribal elites which has slowly emerged and grown.

On the whole, though there are a few danger signals, certain positive developments in the tribal sphere have occurred since 1947. Legislation to protect tribal rights and interests, activities of the tribal welfare departments, Panchayati Raj, spread of literacy and education, reservations in government services and in higher educational institutions, and repeated elections have led to increasing confidence among the tribal people and greater political participation by them or at least by the growing middle classes and intelligentsia among them in the constitutional political processes. They are now insisting on a greater and more active political role for themselves, and acquiring increasing representation in different political structures and institutions. Above all, they are demanding a greater share in national economic development.

Protest movements have sprung up among tribals out of their frustration with the lack of development and welfare. These are bound to produce positive results in time. The government policy has usually been conciliatory, though not necessarily successful in redressing tribal grievances. But some of the protest movements have taken to violence, leading to strong state action against them. Little ground has been gained by them, though they have often dramatically drawn national attention to the tribal condition.

The growing tribal antagonism towards the non-tribal people or outsiders living in tribal areas has been another unfortunate development. Undoubtedly, some of the outsiders like traders, moneylenders, landlords and government officials have been a scourge of the tribal areas, but, over decades, many other outsiders peasants, workers, teachers, doctors and other middle- and lower-middle-class persons have now settled there, outnumbering the tribals in almost all tribal areas outside the Northeast. The mass of the tribals and non-tribals are equally poor and have a common interest in economic and social development as also social and economic justice. Besides, most of the middle-class non-tribals, including many of the traders and industrialists, do perform useful economic functions in the tribal areas. Any undue antagonism and antipathy between the tribals and non-tribals would be inimical and even dangerous to both. It is no longer true that the only relationship that can exist between the two is an exploitative one. Tribals cannot expect to revert to isolation from their non-tribal neighbours or to prevent massive interaction with them, including their in-migration. In fact, the two can protect and promote their interests only through mutual cooperation.

Tribals in the Northeast

The tribes of north-eastern India, consisting of over a hundred groups, speaking a wide variety of languages and living in the hill tracts of Assam, shared many of the features and problems of the tribal people in the rest of the country. But their situation was different in several respects. For one, they constituted the overwhelming majority of the population in most of the areas they inhabited. Then, non-tribals had not penetrated these areas to any significant extent, though economic contacts between the tribal and the non-tribal areas had been developing over time. This was because of the British policy in the late nineteenth century.

The tribal areas occupied by the British then formed part of the Assam province but were given a separate administrative status. Their socio-political structure was not disturbed and a deliberate policy of excluding the outsiders from the plains was followed. In particular, no non-tribal plainsmen were allowed to acquire land in the tribal areas because of which the tribals suffered little loss of land.

At the same time, the British government permitted and even encouraged the Christian missionaries to move in and establish schools, hospitals and churches and to proselytize, thus introducing change and modern ideas among some of the tribal youth. The missionaries, in turn, collaborated with the colonial authorities and helped keep the nationalist influence out of the tribal areas, besides encouraging their isolation from the rest of the population of Assam and India. In fact, immediately after independence, some of the missionaries and other foreigners even promoted sentiment in favour of separate and independent states in north-eastern India. The virtual absence of any political or cultural contact of the tribals in the Northeast with the political life of the rest of India was also a striking difference. A powerful factor in the unification of the Indian people as a nation was the common bonds forged in the course of the anti-imperialist struggle. But this struggle had little impact among the tribals of the Northeast. To quote Jawaharlal Nehru: 'The essence of our struggle for freedom was the unleashing of a liberating force in India. This force did not even affect the frontier people in one of the most important tribal areas. And again: 'Thus they never experienced a sensation of being in a country called India and they were hardly influenced by the struggle for freedom or other movements in India. Their chief experience of outsiders was that of British officers and Christian missionaries who generally tried to make them anti-Indian.

The tribal policy of the Government of India, inspired by Jawaharlal Nehru, was therefore even more relevant to the tribal people of the Northeast. 'All this North-East border area deserves our special attention,' Nehru said in October 1952, 'not only the government's, but of the people of India. Our contacts with them will do us good and will do them good also. They add to the strength, variety and cultural richness of India.

A reflection of this policy was in the Sixth Schedule of the constitution which applied only to the tribal areas of Assam. The Sixth Schedule offered a fair degree of self-government to the tribal people by providing for autonomous districts and the creation of district and regional councils which would exercise some of the legislative and judicial functions within the overall jurisdiction of the Assam legislature and parliament. The objective of the Sixth Schedule was to enable tribals to live according to their own ways. The Government of India also expressed its willingness to further amend the constitutional provisions relating to the tribal people if it was found necessary to do so with a view to promote further autonomy. But this did not mean, Nehru clarified, that the government would countenance secession from India or independence by any area or region, or would tolerate violence in the promotion of any demands.

Nehru's and Verrier Elwin's policies were implemented best of all in the North-East Frontier Agency or NEFA, which was created in 1948 out of the border areas of Assam. NEFA was established as a Union Territory outside the jurisdiction of Assam and placed under a special administration. From the beginning, the administration was manned by a special cadre of officers who were asked to implement specially designed developmental policies without disturbing the social and cultural pattern of the life of the people. As a British anthropologist who spent nearly all his life studying the tribal people and their condition wrote in 1967, 'A measure of isolation combined with a sympathetic and imaginative policy of a progressive administration has here created a situation unparalleled in other parts of India. NEFA was named Arunachal Pradesh and granted the status of a separate state in 1987. While NEFA was developing comfortably and in harmony with the rest of the country, problems developed in the other tribal areas which were part of Assam administratively. The problems arose because the hill tribes of Assam had no cultural affinity with the Assamese and Bengali residents of the plains. The tribals were afraid of losing their identities and being assimilated by what was, with some justification, seen to be a policy of Assamization. Especially distasteful to them was the attitude of superiority and even contempt often adopted by non-tribals working among them as teachers, doctors, government officials, traders, etc. There was also a feeling among them that the Assamese government failed to understand them and

tended to neglect their interests. This feeling represented not so much the reality as the failure of the political leadership of Assam to redress tribal grievances in time and with deep concern.

Soon, resentment against the Assam government began to mount and a demand for a separate hill state arose among some sections of the tribal people in the mid-1950s. But this demand was not pressed with vigour; nor did the Government of India encourage it, for it felt that the future of the hill tribes was intimately connected with Assam though further steps towards greater autonomy could be envisaged.

But the demand gained greater strength when the Assamese leaders moved in 1960 towards making Assamese the sole official language of the state. In 1960, various political parties of the hill areas merged into the All Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC) and again demanded a separate state within the Indian Union. The passage of the Assam Official Language Act, making Assamese the official language of the state, and thus the refusal of the demand for the use of the tribal languages in administration, led to an immediate and strong reaction in the tribal districts. There were hartals and demonstrations, and a major agitation developed. In the 1962 elections, the overwhelming majority of the Assembly seats from the tribal areas were won by the advocates of a separate state, who decided to boycott the State Assembly.

Prolonged discussions and negotiations followed. Several commissions and committees examined the issue. Finally, in 1969, through a constitutional amendment, Meghalaya was carved out of Assam as 'a state within a state' which had complete autonomy except for law and order which remained a function of the Assam government. Meghalaya also shared Assam's High Court, Public Service Commission and governor. Finally, as a part of the reorganization of the Northeast, Meghalaya became a separate state in 1972, incorporating the Garo, Khasi and Jaintia tribes. Simultaneously, the Union Territories of Manipur and Tripura were granted statehood. The transition to statehood in the case of Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh was quite smooth. Trouble arose in the case of Nagaland and Mizoram where secessionist and insurrectionary movements developed.

Nagaland

The Nagas were the inhabitants of the Naga hills along the Northeast frontier on the Assam-Burma border. They numbered nearly 500,000 in 1961, constituted less than 0.1 per cent of India's population, and consisted of many separate tribes speaking different languages. The British had isolated the Nagas from the rest of the country and left them more or less undisturbed though Christian missionary activity was permitted, which had led to the growth of a small educated stratum.

Immediately after independence, the Government of India followed a policy of integrating the Naga areas with the state of Assam and India as a whole. A section of the Naga leadership, however, opposed such integration and rose in rebellion under the leadership of A.Z. Phizo, demanding separation from India and complete independence. They were encouraged in this move by some of the British officials and missionaries. In 1955, these separatist Nagas declared the formation of an independent government and the launching of a violent insurrection.

The Government of India responded with a two-track policy in line with Jawaharlal Nehru's wider approach towards the tribal people discussed earlier in this chapter. On the one hand, the Government of India made it clear that it would firmly oppose the secessionist demand for the independence of Naga areas and would not tolerate recourse to violence. Towards a violent secessionist movement it would firmly follow a policy of suppression and non-negotiations. As Nehru put it, 'It does not help in dealing with tough people to have weak nerves.'[16] Consequently, when one section of the Nagas organized an armed struggle for independence, the Government of India replied by sending its army to Nagaland in early 1956 to restore peace and order.

On the other hand, Nehru realized that while strong and quick military action would make it clear that the rebels were in a no-win situation, total physical suppression was neither possible nor desirable, for the objective had to be the conciliation and winning over of the Naga people. Nehru was wedded to a 'friendly approach'. Even while encouraging the Nagas to integrate with the rest of the country 'in mind and spirit', he favoured their right to maintain their autonomy in cultural and other matters. He was, therefore, willing to go a long way to win over the Nagas by granting them a large degree of autonomy. Refusing to negotiate with Phizo or his supporters as long as they did not give up their demand for independence or the armed rebellion, he carried on prolonged negotiations with the more moderate, non-violent and non-secessionist Naga leaders, who realized that they could not hope to get a larger degree of autonomy or a more sympathetic leader to settle with than Nehru.

In fact, once the back of the armed rebellion was broken by the middle of 1957, the more moderate Naga leaders headed by Dr Imkongliba Ao came to the fore. They negotiated for the creation of the state of Nagaland within the Indian Union. The Government of India accepted their demand through a series of intermediate steps; and the state of Nagaland came into existence in 1963. A further step forward was taken in the integration of the Indian nation. Also, politics in Nagaland since then followed, for better or for worse, the pattern of politics in the other states of the Union.

With the formation of Nagaland as a state the back of the rebellion was broken as the rebels lost much of their popular support. But though the insurgency has been brought under control, sporadic guerrilla activity by Naga rebels trained in China, Pakistan and Burma (Myanmar) and periodic terrorist attacks continue till this day. We may also refer to one other feature of the Naga situation. Even though the record of the Indian army in Nagaland has been on the whole clean, especially if the difficult conditions under which they operate are kept in view, it has not been without blemish. Its behaviour has been sometimes improper and in rare cases even brutal. Too many times innocent people have suffered. But then it has also paid a heavy price through the loss of its soldiers and officers in guerrilla attacks.

Mizoram

A situation similar to that in Nagaland developed a few years later in the autonomous Mizo district of the Northeast. Secessionist demands backed by some British officials had grown there in 1947 but had failed to get much support from the youthful Mizo leadership, which concentrated instead on the issues of democratization of Mizo society, economic development and adequate representation of Mizos in the Assam legislature. However, unhappiness with the Assam government's relief measures during the famine of 1959 and the passage of the Act in 1961, making Assamese the official language of the state, led to the formation of the Mizo National Front (MNF), with Laldenga as president. While participating in electoral politics, the MNF created a military wing which received arms and ammunition and military training from East Pakistan and China. In March 1966, the MNF declared independence from India, proclaimed a military uprising and attacked military and civilian targets. The Government of India responded with immediate massive counter-insurgency measures by the army. Within a few weeks the insurrection was crushed and government control restored, though stray guerrilla activity continued. Most of the hard-core Mizo leaders escaped to East Pakistan.

In 1973, after the less extremist Mizo leaders had scaled down their demand to that of a separate state of Mizoram within the Indian Union, the Mizo district of Assam was separated from Assam and, as Mizoram, given the status of a Union Territory. Mizo insurgency gained some renewed strength in the late 1970s but was again effectively dealt with by the Indian armed forces. Having decimated the ranks of the separatist insurgents, the Government of India, continuing to follow the Nehruvian tribal policy, was now willing to show consideration, offer liberal terms of amnesty to the remnants of the rebel forces and conduct negotiations for peace.

A settlement was finally arrived at in 1986. Laldenga and the MNF agreed to abandon underground violent activities, surrender before the Indian authorities along with their arms, and re-enter the constitutional political stream. The Government of India agreed to the grant of full statehood to Mizoram, guaranteeing full autonomy in regard to culture, tradition, land laws, etc. As a part of the accord, a government with Laldenga as chief minister was formed in the new state of Mizoram in February 1987.

Jharkhand

Jharkhand, the tribal area of Bihar consisting of the Chota Nagpur and the Santhal Parganas, has for decades spawned movements for state autonomy. In this area are concentrated several major tribes of India, namely, Santhal, Ho, Oraon and Munda. Unlike traditional tribes, nearly all of these practice settled plough agriculture on the basis of family farms. Economic differentiation has set in; there are a significant number of agricultural labourers and a growing number of mining and industrial workers. The landholding pattern among tribals is as unequal and skewed as among non-tribals. A large class of moneylenders has also developed among them. The tribal society in Jharkhand has increasingly become a class-divided society. Most of the tribals practise two formal religions Hinduism and Christianity.

The Jharkhand tribes, however, share some features with other Indian tribes. They have lost most of their land, generally to outsiders, and suffer from indebtedness, loss of employment and low agricultural productivity. They organized several major rebellions during the nineteenth century; and many of them actively participated in the national movement after 1919.

In 1951, the Scheduled Tribes constituted 31.15 per cent of the population in Chota Nagpur (30.94 in 1971) and 44.67 per cent of the population in the Santhal Parganas (36.22 in 1971). Thus, nearly two-thirds of Jharkhand's population in 1971 was non-tribal. The overwhelming majority of both tribals and non-tribals were equally exploited poor peasants, agricultural labourers and mining and industrial workers. Inequality in landholding and the moneylender menace were equally prevalent among the two as was the commercialization of agriculture and commercial activity.

With the spread of education and modern activity in the tribal areas, a movement for the formation of a separate tribal state of Jharkhand, incorporating Chota Nagpur and the Santhal Parganas of south Bihar and the contiguous tribal areas of Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal, started during the late 1930s and 1940s. Realizing that the interests of the tribal people could be best promoted and their domination by non-tribals ended if they had a state of their own within the Union of India, the Jharkhand party was founded in 1950 under the leadership of the Oxford-educated Jaipal Singh. The party achieved a remarkable success in the 1952 elections when it won 32 seats in Chota Nagpur and emerged as the main Opposition party in the Bihar Assembly. It won 25 seats in 1957.

But the Jharkhand party faced a major dilemma. While it demanded a state where the tribal people would predominate, the population composition of Jharkhand was such that they would still constitute a minority in it. To overcome this problem the party tried to give its demand a regional character by opening its membership to the non-tribals of the area and underplaying its anti-non-tribal rhetoric, even while talking of the empowerment of tribals and their dominance of the new state. The States Reorganisation Commission of 1955, however, rejected the demand for a separate Jharkhand state on the ground that the region did not have a common language. The central government also held that tribals being a minority in Jharkhand could not claim a state of their own.

By the early 1960s the rank and file of the party began to get disheartened and frustrated. The Jharkhand party could win only 20 seats to the Bihar Assembly in 1962. In 1963, a major part of the leadership of the party, including Jaipal Singh, joined Congress, claiming that by 'working

from within Congress' it stood a better chance of getting its demand for a separate state accepted by the government.

Several tribal parties and movements developed in Jharkhand after 1967, the most prominent being the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), which was formed in late 1972. The JMM revived the demand for the Jharkhand state, but it made two innovations. It recognized the hard reality that nearly two-thirds of the population of Jharkhand was non-tribal and that, therefore, a movement which appealed only to the tribal people could not acquire the requisite political strength. The JMM, thus, began to assert that all the older residents of the Jharkhand region, whether tribal or non-tribal, were exploited, discriminated against and dominated by north Bihar and the recent migrants. It put forward the demand for a separate state as a regional one on behalf of the peasants and workers of the region. Concentrating on economic issues, it also acquired the support of the non-tribal poor, several non-tribal leaders and political activists joined it, though the bulk of its following was still that of tribals. The tribal leaders felt that despite the minority character of tribals in the projected Jharkhand state, they would have a far greater representation and weight in the new state than they had in Bihar as a whole.

The JMM turned to a radical programme and ideology. Joined by other groups, especially leftist groups such as the Marxist Coordination Centre, it organized several militant agitations on issues such as recovery of alienated land, moneylenders' exploitation, employment of tribals in mines and industries and improved working conditions and higher wages in the latter, police excesses, high-handedness of forest officials and increasing liquor consumption. Shibu Soren emerged as the charismatic leader of the JMM during the early 1970s.

Cooperation with the leftists did not, however, last long; nor did the tribal-non-tribal alliance. The movement for the Jharkhand state underwent constant ups and downs and splits over the years with new groups coming up every so often. Major differences among the Jharkhand leaders pertained to the question of cooperation or alliance with the main all-India parties. Many of them believed that in parliamentary democracy, a small number of MPs or MLAs could not on their own easily get their demands accepted. Shibu Soren, his followers and some others were also aware of the futility of permanently confronting state power and the inevitable recourse to violence and armed struggle as advocated by the movement's ultra-leftist fringe.

The movement also found it difficult to shift completely from tribal to class-based regional politics, since it was basically built around tribal identity and tribal demands. In particular, the policy of reservations for tribals contained the seeds of continuing differences between tribals and non-tribals. Tribal society was also not homogeneous; it contained landlords, rich peasants, traders and moneylenders. However, for various reasons, Jharkhand finally came into existence as a state on 15 November 2000. Simultaneously Chhattisgarh and Uttaranchal were created out of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh respectively and given the status of states on \ November and 9 November 2002.

*****

Regionalism and Regional Inequality

In the 1950s, many saw regionalism as a major threat to Indian unity. But, in fact, regionalism at no stage was a major factor in Indian politics and administration; over time, it tended to become less and less important. What precisely is regionalism needs to be first understood for appreciating its role in Indian politics.

Local patriotism and loyalty to a locality or region or state and its language and culture do not constitute regionalism, nor are they disruptive of the nation. They are quite consistent with national patriotism and loyalty to the nation. To have pride in one's region or state is also not regionalism. A person can be conscious of his or her distinct regional identity of being a Tamil or a Punjabi, a Bengali or a Gujarati without being any the less proud of being an Indian, or being hostile to people from other regions. This was put very well by Gandhiji in 1909: 'As the basis of my pride as an Indian, I must have pride in myself as a Gujarati. Otherwise, we shall be left without any moorings.'

The Indian national movement too functioned on this understanding. From the beginning it functioned as an all-India movement and not as a federation of regional national movements. It also did not counterpose the national identity to regional identities; it recognized both and did not see the two in conflict. Aspiring to or making special efforts to develop one's state or region or to remove poverty and implement social justice there, is not to be branded as regionalism. In fact, a certain inter-regionalrivalry around the achievement of such positive goals would be quite healthy and in fact we have too little of it. Also, local patriotism can help people overcome divisive loyalties to caste or religious communities.

Defending the federal features of the constitution is also not to be seen as regionalism. The demand for a separate state within the Indian Union or for an autonomous region within an existing state, or for devolution of power below the state level, may be objected to on several practical grounds, but not as regionalist, unless it is put forward in a spirit of hostility to the rest of the population of a state. If the interests of one region or state are asserted against the country as a whole or against another region or state in a hostile manner and a conflict is promoted on the basis of such alleged interests it can be dubbed as regionalism.

In this sense, there has been very little inter-regional conflict in India since 1947, the major exception being the politics of the DMK in Tamil Nadu in the 1950s and early 1960s. The role of the DMK is discussed in Chapter 22, but it may be observed that the DMK has also increasingly given up its regionalist approach over the years. Some cite the example of Punjab in the 1980s, but, as we shall see in Chapter 24, Punjab's was a case of communalism and not regionalism.

Regionalism could have flourished in India if any region or state had felt that it was being culturally dominated or discriminated against. In 1960, Selig Harrison, US scholar and journalist, in his famous work, *India The Most Dangerous Decades,* had seen a major threat to Indian unity because of conflict between the national government and the regions as the latter asserted their separate cultural identities. But, in fact, the Indian nation has proved to be quite successful in accommodating and even celebrating in Nehru's words India's cultural diversity. The different areas of India have had full cultural autonomy and been enabled to fully satisfy their legitimate aspirations. The linguistic reorganization of India and the resolution of the official language controversy have played a very important role in this respect, by eliminating a potent cause of the feeling of cultural loss or cultural domination and therefore of inter-regional conflict.

Many regional disputes, of course, do exist and they have the potential of fanning interstate hostility. There has been friction between different states over the sharing of river waters: for example, between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, Karnataka and Andhra, and Punjab and Haryana

and Rajasthan. Boundary disputes have arisen out of the formation of linguistic states as in the case of Belgaum and Chandigarh. Construction of irrigation and power dams has created such conflicts. But, while these disputes tend to persist for a long time and occasionally arouse passions, they have, as a whole, remained within narrow, and we might say acceptable, limits. The central government has often succeeded in playing the role of a mediator, though sometimes drawing the anger of the disputants on itself, but thus preventing sharper inter-regional conflicts.

Economic Imbalances and Regionalism

Economic inequality among different states and regions could be a potential source of trouble. However, despite breeding discontent and putting pressure on the political system, this problem has not so far given rise to regionalism or feeling of a region being discriminated against.

At independence, the leadership recognized that some regions were more backward than others. Only a few enclaves or areas around Calcutta, Bombay and Madras had undergone modern industrial development. For example, in 1948, Bombay and West Bengal accounted for more than 59 per cent of the total industrial capital of the country and more than 64 per cent of the national industrial output. Under colonialism, agriculture had also stagnated, but more in eastern India than in northern or southern India. Regional economic disparity was also reflected in per capita income. In 1949, while West Bengal, Punjab and Bombay had per capita incomes of Rs 353, 331 and 272 respectively, the per capita incomes of Bihar, Orissa and Rajasthan were Rs 200, 188 and 173 respectively.

From the beginning, the national government felt a responsibility to counter this imbalance in regional development. Thus, for example, the 1956 Industrial Policy Resolution of the Government of India asserted that 'only by securing a balanced and coordinated development of the industrial and agricultural economy in each region can the entire country attain higher standards of living'. Similarly, recognizing 'the importance of regional balance in economic development as a positive factor in promoting national integration', the National Integration Council of 1961 urged that 'a rapid development of the economically backward regions in any State should be given priority in national and State plans, at least to the extent that the minimum level of development is reached for all states within a stated period'.

From the beginning, the central government adopted a whole range of policies to influence the rates of growth in poorer states and regions so as to reduce their economic distance from the richer states and regions. A major government instrument in bringing this about was the transfer of financial resources to the poorer states. Important in this respect was the role of the Finance Commission, provided for in the constitution and appointed periodically by the President. The Commission decides the principles on which disbursement of central taxes and other financial resources from the central government to the states occurs. Various Finance Commissions have tried not only to do justice among the states but also to reduce interstate disparity by giving preferential treatment to the poorer states, by allocating larger grants to them than their population would warrant and by transferring resources from the better-off states to them.

Planning was also seen as a powerful instrument that could be used to remove regional inequality. The Second Plan reflected this objective and it was reiterated in the succeeding Plans. The Third Plan explicitly stated that 'balanced development of different parts of the country, extension of the benefits of economic progress to the less developed regions and widespread diffusion of industry are among the major aims of planned development'. For this purpose, the Planning Commission allocated greater plan assistance to the backward states. This assistance is given in the form of both grants and loans on the basis of a formula which assigns an important place to the degree of backwardness of a state. Moreover, bias in favour of backward states in the devolution of

resources from the Centre to the states, in the form of both financial and Plan transfers, has tended to increase with time.

Public investment by the central government in major industries such as steel, fertilizers, oil refining, petrochemicals, machine-making, heavy chemicals and in power and irrigation projects, roads, railways, post offices and other infrastructural facilities, has been a tool for the reduction of regional inequality. India has relied heavily on public investment since the beginning of the Second Plan in 1957 and an effort has been made to favour backward states in regard to this investment.

In the planning and location of the public sector enterprises balanced regional growth has been an important consideration, though this has entailed a certain economic cost to the enterprises concerned. Bihar and Madhya Pradesh have gained the most from such investment; Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and the north-eastern states have also benefited a great deal from the development of infrastructure, especially roads. Government incentives have been provided to the private sector to invest in backward areas through subsidies, tax concessions, and concessional banking and institutional loans at subsidized rates. The system of licensing of private industrial enterprises, which prevailed from 1956 to 1991, was also used by the government to guide location of industries in backward areas.

Following nationalization of banks in 1969, the expansion of the network of their branches was used to favour backward areas. Banks and other public sector financial institutions were directed to promote investment in these areas. Also, various ministries have evolved schemes for development of backward areas. In particular, poverty eradication programmes, such as the Food for Work programme and the Integrated Rural Development Programme, adopted since the 1970s, and to some extent education, health and family planning programmes and the public distribution system have favoured poorer states.

One sector where the principle of the reduction of regional disparity has not been kept in view is that of investment in irrigation and subsidies to agricultural development. This has been especially so since the 1960s when the Green Revolution began and investment in rural infrastructure and technological innovation was concentrated in Punjab, Haryana and western U.P., namely, areas where irrigation was or could be made available readily. In particular, investment in and development of rain-fed dry land agriculture was neglected. The result was an increase in regional agricultural disparity. The spread of the Green Revolution technology during the 1970s to Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, eastern U.P. and parts of Rajasthan, and during the 1980s to the eastern states of Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Assam has redressed the regional imbalance to a certain extent.

Economic mobility of population through migration of unskilled labour from the backward regions and of skilled labour to them can also contribute to the lessening of regional disparity; and the Indian constitution guarantees this mobility. There has been a great deal of migration from one state to another. Some states Himachal Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar and Kerala have benefited from out-migration just as Bengal, Gujarat and Maharashtra have benefited from in-migration. Certain other states, like Punjab and Karnataka, have had the benefit of both out-migration and in-migration. Unfortunately, as we shall see in the next section, efforts have been made by some states to put checks on interstate migration.

It would be appropriate here to ask how far have the various efforts of the national government succeeded in reducing regional inequality. The picture that emerges is a mixed one. There has been a marginal improvement but regional inequality, especially in terms of per capita income, continues to remain a prominent feature of the Indian economy. Possibly, the situation would have been much worse but for the government's actions which has prevented the widening of the economic

gap between states and regions. There are also other dimensions to be observed with regard to the impact of these policies.

For one, there has certainly been a decline in interstate industrial disparity, especially in the organized manufacturing sector. There is also less disparity in terms of social welfare as represented by life expectancy, infant mortality and literacy, though a few states like Kerala and Tamil Nadu have moved far ahead. As we have seen above, the increased disparity in agriculture is also gradually getting redressed though the rain-fed dry areas are still lagging behind. While the percentage of people below the poverty line has steadily declined in all the states, it is in the advanced states that maximum progress has been made, so that the inter-regional disparity in the distribution of poverty has been growing. Overall, while there has been economic growth in all states, the rates of growth of different states have been highly differential, leading to interstate disparities remaining quite wide.

Some backward states have managed to pick themselves up, while others have failed to do so, with the result that there has been a change in the hierarchy of states in terms of development and per capita income. Thus, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa are still at the bottom. Kerala, Punjab and Gujarat continue to remain on the top. There has been an improvement in the position of the previously underdeveloped states of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, while there has been deterioration in that of Assam, West Bengal, Maharashtra and U.P, with U.P. moving to the bottom level and West Bengal to the middle. Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan have stagnated, remaining just above the bottom level. On the whole, Haryana is an example of states which have improved their position and Bihar of one of those whose position has worsened.

Why then does regional inequality persist on such a wide scale? What are the constraints on its decline? Or why have Bihar and U.P. performed so poorly. It emerges that the constraint is not essentially of geography, that is, of inequality in size or natural resources. Bihar, U.P. and Orissa are, for example, very well endowed by nature; their people well known for their industriousness because of which they are welcomed in the rest of the country, and indeed overseas in the West Indies, Mauritius and Fiji to where some have migrated.

The major reason, at the all-India level, for the continuing regional disparity has been the low rate of economic growth. To make a dent on this requires a high rate of national growth so that large revenues can be raised and devoted to the development of the backward regions without adversely affecting national growth itself. The rate of growth of the Indian economy was around 3.5 per cent till the end of the 1970s and around 5 per cent in the 1980s. This was not high enough to have a significant impact on regional inequality despite policies consciously designed to favour backward regions being followed. It is only in the last few years that the rate of growth of the economy has touched 8 to 9 per cent, while population growth has also slowed down. A reduction in economic inequality may come about, provided the right type of regional developmental policies continue to be followed.

We, however, feel that the roots of some states' backwardness lie in their socio-economic and political organization itself. For example, the agrarian structure in Bihar and eastern U.P. is still quite regressive and in many parts of these states land reforms have been inadequately implemented. (This was also true of Orissa till recently.) The feudal mentality is still quite strong. Also, in Bihar and Orissa land consolidation has been tardy, though ongoing, which played an important role in the agricultural development of Punjab and Haryana. The backward states have a lower level of infrastructural facilities, such as power, irrigation, roads, telephones, and modern markets for agricultural produce. These are essential for development and have to be developed by the states themselves being mostly State subjects.

States also have a low level of social expenditure on education and public health and sanitation, which are also state subjects. Besides, they suffer from a lack of financial resources to meet Plan

expenditure. Increased central financial assistance is unable to offset this weakness. A vicious cycle is set up. A low level of economic development and production means less financial resources and limited expenditure on infrastructure, development planning and social services. And this low level of expenditure in turn leads to low levels of production and therefore of financial resources.

Political and administrative failure also bolsters backwardness. Bihar and U.P. are classic cases of states bedevilled by high levels of corruption, sheer bad administration, and deteriorating law and order. As a result, whatever central assistance is available is poorly utilized and often diverted to non-development heads of expenditure. Further, development of infrastructure, including roads and electricity, is neglected and the existing infrastructure is riddled with inefficiency and corruption. All this turns away the private sector, which is a major source of development in the advanced states. The role of greater administrative efficiency is also proved by the better rates of economic growth in the relatively better administered states of South and western India as compared to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

In passing, it may be mentioned that disparities in development also exist within each state. In many cases, this inequality has become a source of tension and given birth to sub-regional movements for separate states within the Indian Union, or greater autonomy for the sub-regions within the existing states, or at least special treatment and safeguards in matters of employment, education and allocation of financial resources. Examples of such sub-regional feelings are the movements in Telangana in Andhra Pradesh, Vidarbha in Maharashtra, Saurashtra in Gujarat, Bundelkhand in Uttar Pradesh, Darjeeling district or Gorkhaland in West Bengal, Bodoland in Assam, and the areas consisting of the old princely states of Orissa. It is because of these regional feelings that Uttaranchal, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh were created out of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, though the tribal and linguistic factors were also important.

Undoubtedly, regional economic inequality is a potent time-bomb directed against national unity and political stability. So far, fortunately, it has been 'digested', absorbed and mitigated because it is not the result of domination and exploitation of backward states by the more advanced states or of discrimination against the former by the national government. It is noteworthy that the politically important Hindi-speaking states of the Indian heartland Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, with nearly 37 per cent of the seats in the Lok Sabha are economically backward. On the other hand, Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat and Maharashtra, with only about 17 per cent of the seats in the Lok Sabha, are the high-income states. It is, therefore, impossible for anyone who talks of the Hindi-belt states' domination of the others to be taken seriously.

On the other hand, the backward Hindi-belt states wield so much political clout that it is impossible for them to accuse the central government or non-Hindi states of dominating or discriminating against them. It is interesting that so far accusations of central domination have come from the relatively developed states of Punjab and West Bengal obviously for political and not economic reasons. However, one hears less and less about central domination in these states too.

In the all-India services too, like the IAS, the Hindi areas are not advantaged. It is Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and West Bengal which have a higher representation than their population warrants.

Another reason for the lack of regionalism and feeling of discrimination among the poorer states has been the consciousness of their intelligentsia that their poverty and backwardness are basically the result of the actions of their own political and administrative classes. After all, feelings of deprivation and lack of progress are essentially articulated by the intelligentsia. At the same time, the vast majority of the people in the poorer states are blissfully unaware of their backwardness and poverty in comparison with other states. This leads both to absence of discontent with their

position as also to a lack of effort to reach equality with the more advanced states. However, with the spread of education and the reach of the visual and print media, such as television and newspapers, this state of affairs is likely to change.

Nevertheless, as was fully realized by the founders of the Republic, it is necessary to first contain regional inequality within politically and economically reasonable and acceptable limits and then to gradually move towards its elimination, by raising the rates of growth of the poorer states by all available means including greater central assistance as also greater self-effort by them. This also, of course, means that, as Ajit Mozoomdar has argued, the national government needs to wield 'greater authority than in industrialised countries, to be able to devise and implement strategies of economic and social development, and to deal with the problems of regional disparities, which are more acute'. It also must have the authority 'to mediate and resolve conflicts between states over the appropriation of natural resources' and 'to effect significant resource transfers from richer to poorer states'.[4]

Sons of the Soil Doctrine

Since the 1950s, an ugly kind of regionalism has been widely prevalent in the form of the 'sons of the soil' doctrine. Underlying it is the view that a state specifically belongs to the main linguistic group inhabiting it or that the state constitutes the exclusive 'homeland' of its main language speakers who are the 'sons of the soil' or the 'local' residents. All others who live there or are settled there and whose mother tongue is not the state's main language, are declared to be 'outsiders'. These 'outsiders' might have lived in the state for a long time, or have migrated there more recently, but they are not to be regarded as the 'sons of the soil'. This doctrine is particularly popular in cities, especially in some of them.

Unequal development of economic opportunities in different parts of the country, especially the cities, occurred in the surge of economic progress after 1952. Demand or preference for the 'local' people or 'sons of the soil' over 'outsiders' in the newly created employment and educational opportunities was the outcome. In the struggle for the appropriation of economic resources and economic opportunities, recourse was often taken to communalism, casteism and nepotism. Likewise, language loyalty and regionalism was used to systematically exclude the 'outsiders' from the economic life of a state or city. The problem was aggravated in a number of cities or regions because the speakers of the state language were in a minority or had a bare majority. For example, in Bombay, in 1961, the Marathi speakers constituted 42.8 per cent of the population. In Bangalore, the Kannada speakers were less than 25 per cent. In Calcutta, the Bengalis formed a bare majority. In the urban areas of Assam, barely 33 per cent were Assamese. After 1951 the rate of migration into the cities accelerated.

The important questions that arise are, why did the 'sons of the soil' movements develop in some states and cities and not in others, why were they directed against some migrants and linguistic minority groups and not others, why were some types of jobs targeted and not others, why technical and professional education as against the so-called arts education? Conflict between migrants and non-migrants (and linguistic minorities and majorities) was not inherent and inevitable. In general, the two have lived harmoniously in most of the states. Clearly, there were specific conditions that precipitated the conflict.

The 'sons of the soil' movements have mainly arisen, and have been more virulent, when there is actual or potential competition for industrial and middle-class jobs, between the migrants and the local, educated, middle-class youth. The friction has been more intense in states and cities where 'outsiders' had greater access to higher education and occupied more middle-class positions in government service, professions and industry and were engaged in small businesses, such as small-scale industry and shopkeeping. Active in these movements have also been members of the lower-

middle class or workers, as well as rich and middle peasants whose position is unthreatened, but who increasingly aspire to middle-class status and position for their children. All these social groups also aspire to give their children higher education, especially technical education, such as engineering, medicine and commerce. The economy's failure to create enough employment opportunities for the recently educated created an acute scarcity of jobs, and led to intense competition for the available jobs during the 1960s and 1970s. The major middle-class job opportunities that opened up after 1952 were in government service and the public sector enterprises. Popular mobilization and the democratic political process could therefore be used by the majority linguistic group to put pressure on the government to appropriate employment and educational avenues and opportunities. Some groups could then take advantage of the 'sons of the soil' sentiment for gaining political power. This was not of course inevitable. The Communist Party refused to use anti-migrant sentiments in Calcutta because of its ideological commitment, one reason why the city has not witnessed any major 'sons of the soil' movement. Similarly, though Congress may have taken an opportunist and compromising stand when faced with major 'sons of the soil' movements, it has not initiated or actively supported them.

'Outsiders' have been often far more numerous in rural areas as agricultural labourers or as workers in low-paid traditional industries, such as jute or cotton textiles, than in the cities. Here, however, the 'sons of the soil' sentiment was absent, nor hostility towards the 'outsiders' manifested because no middle-class jobs were involved. The 'locals' also did not compete with the 'outsiders' for these jobs. Consequently, there has been little conflict with the 'locals' when there has been large-scale migration of labourers from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh to Punjab and Haryana or Bombay city, or of workers from Bihar to the jute and other mills of Calcutta, or of workers from Bihar and Orissa to the tea plantations in Assam and Bengal, or of Oriya building workers to Gujarat, and domestic workers all over India. Such migrations have not posed a threat to the local middle classes; and in the last case that of the domestic workers the middle classes have been the chief beneficiaries as also promotees of the migration. However, more recently, because of the higher salaries and education and skill involved, competition between migrants and the 'locals' has tended to develop for employment in the technologically advanced industries.

Another factor that has influenced the emergence or non-emergence of anti-migrant movements in an area or region has been the existence or non-existence of a tradition of migration. When people of a state, especially the middle classes, have themselves migrated, there has been little opposition to immigration. This has been the case with West Bengal, Kerala, Punjab, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh; On the other hand, 'sons of the soil' movements have flourished in Maharashtra, Assam and the Telangana area of Andhra Pradesh, the people of which have not had a tradition of migration.

The Indian constitution is to some extent ambiguous on the question of the rights of the migrants. Article 15 prohibits any discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. Article 16 prohibits discrimination in the employment or appointments to any office under the state on grounds of 'descent, place of birth or residence'. However, parliament, though not any state legislature, can pass a law laying down the requirement of residence within a state for appointments under that state. Under political pressure and taking advantage of the ambiguity in the constitution, many states in fact reserve jobs, or give preference for employment in state and local governments and for admission into educational institutions to local residents. The period of residence is fixed or prescribed in such cases. Also, while the constitution permits reservation or preference in state jobs only on grounds of residence and not language, some state governments have gone further and limited the preference to those local residents whose mother tongue is the state language. They have thus discriminated against long-term migrants, their descendants, and even the residents who can speak the state language but whose mother tongue is a minority language in the state. This has, of course, been in clear violation of the constitution. Many state governments have also given directions to private employers to give preference to local persons for employment in their enterprises.

The main argument put forward for reservation in employment and education for the local persons has been that in the states concerned they are socially, economically and educationally backward and are not able to compete with the more advanced migrant communities. Also, in technical colleges and universities, the more backward local students would be overwhelmed by the more advanced students from other states. It is because of this, in the post-Nehru era, even the central government has tended to support preference for residents of a state in employment in central public sector enterprises below the level of a certain technical expertise and in colleges and universities. Reservations on grounds of residence have also been approved by the courts. However, as brought out earlier, reservations for the tribal people are in a separate category.

While reservation of jobs in state administrations and seats in institutions of higher education for the backward local residents was undesirable from the point of view of national integration, some justification could be found for it. However, there was none for the anti-migrant movements of the 1960s which tried to restrict the flow of migrants from other states and which openly proclaimed antagonism and generated hostility against them. These militant anti-migrant and 'sons of the soil' movements were mainly centred in the urban areas of Assam, Telangana in Andhra, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Orissa.

The worst case was that of the movement led by the Shiv Sena which appealed to extreme regional chauvinism and assumed fascist proportions. Founded in 1966, under the leadership of Bal Thackeray, the Shiv Sena demanded that preference in jobs and small businesses should be given to Maharashtrians, who were defined as those whose mother tongue was Marathi. Raising the slogan of 'Maharashtra for the Maharashtrians', the Shiv Sena organized a militant, and often violent movement against South Indians, especially Tamils, who were declared to have a disproportionate share of office jobs such as clerks and typists in private firms and small businesses such as tea shops and eating places. In 1969, the Sena gave Bombay city a taste of fascist violence when it organized arson and terror against South Indians, looted and destroyed their tea-stalls and eating places, overturned cars of Tamils and tore off Tamil signs from shops. The Shiv Sena could not, however, sustain its hate-South Indian campaign or become a major political force outside Bombay city or get the support of any all-India political party. It, therefore, soon shifted its ideological base to Hindu communalism. Gaining a wider political constituency, it was then able to ally itself with the Bharatiya Janata Party.

The 'sons of the soil' movements in Assam and Telangana, which also assumed serious proportions and were quite complex, had some additional and distinctive features. Both these movements will therefore be discussed in the chapters on state politics.

While protective and preferential regulations have been widespread since the late 1960s, antagonism, hostility and violence against migrants have abated in recent years. The problem posed by the 'sons of the soil' doctrine is still a somewhat minor one and there is no ground for pessimism on that score. Even at its height, only a few cities and states were affected in a virulent form, and at no stage did it threaten the unity of the country or the process of nation-in-the-making. Besides, its effects on the Indian economy have been negligible: migration within the country has not been checked; interstate mobility is in fact growing. But the problem is likely to linger till economic development is able to deal effectively with unemployment, especially among the middle classes, and regional inequality.

Looking back at the divisive issues of the post-independence period, the linguistic reorganization of the states, the integration of the tribals, and regional inequality and regionalism, it is to be observed that the prophets of gloom and doom have been disproved. Linguistic states have strengthened not weakened Indian unity, even while permitting full cultural autonomy to different linguistic areas. Hindi and English are growing as all-India languages. Regional movements like

the DMK have been doused after 1967 and are content to rename Madras state as Tamil Nadu and Madras city as Chennai. Tribals feel secure in the Indian Union regarding their cultural and economic autonomy, and have also gained greater strength themselves, as also political support in the country over time. The process of nation-in-the-making is being pushed forward. A national identity, that of being Indian, has come to be accepted by all on the subcontinent, and the fact of Indian unity is irreversible.

This should not suggest that all problems related to these issues have been resolved for all time. Further social and economic development, spread of education, deepening of democracy and politicization, as has been seen elsewhere, could create new sources of tension and conflict leading to disrupture tendencies. Optimism is to be tempered with a continuing concern for threats to Indian unity. Yet, India's past experience in overcoming disruptive forces may be instructive for the future. The role and legacy of the freedom struggle, the quality and wisdom of the leaders, the leadership's correct understanding of India's diversity, the leadership's rejection of secessionist demands, while respecting those within the constitutional framework, the democratic political structure, and the acceptance of the need for a strong national government within a federal structure have all contributed to promote Indian unity. Here, it must be added that a strong state should not be mistaken for an authoritarian one. A strong national government does not entail weak state governments or a national government that rides roughshod over the federal provisions of the constitution. Federalism does not mean a weak national government, rather *a* non-dominating national government which observes the federal features of the polity. A strong but democratic nation state is a necessity for a developing country with strong federal features. What it does with its strength depends on the political nature of the government and the ruling party of the day.

*****

Decolonisation and the Birth of New Nations in the Post-War World

The World War II was undoubtedly the single biggest convulsion to ever shake the mankind. In a previous Chapter we have seen how much devastation it caused in terms of human life and economies. It also provided tectonic changes in the career of nations and civilisations. One of the single biggest impact it had was to ring out the colonial order, which for the previous few centuries had caused so much human misery and conflict.

Decolonisation

There is no doubt that had the World War II not occurred, the great European Empires would not have dissolved at the rapid rate they did after 1945. Though nationalist opposition created problems for Britain in India and the French in Vietnam, these constituted more the exception than the rule because in most of the colonies held by the European powers the gulf between the ruler and the ruled was top wide. Most of the colonial people lived in Utter poverty. There was so much awe of European power based on the rule of the gun and foreign-origin laws that the, colonials in most parts of the empires could n H dream of ever upsetting the status *quo*.

In 1945, Britain's Empire was the largest of all consisting of the entire Indian sub-continent, Burma (Myanmar), Malaya (Malaysia) which included Singapore, huge tracts of Africa, Cyprus, Hong Kong, islands in the Caribbean Sea (the West Indies), islands in the Pacific like Fiji, the Falklands and Gibraltar. The French (Francophone) Empire 'was' second biggest comprising large territories in Africa, Indo-China and the Garibbean. Together, the two European giants also held strategic places in West Asia takenFrom Turkey after the World War I. Britain held Jordan and Palestine while France had Syria (known as 'mandated territories'). Besides, Holland had colonies like Indonesia and the Dutch East Indies, Belgium had Congo and Rwanda; Portugal controlled Angola, Mozambique, Guinea and Goa; Spain clung on to Morocco, Spanish Guinea, Ifni and Spanish Sahara, and lastly, Italy had Libya, Somalia and Eritrea.

The World War II's aftermath began a shakeup that lasted for the next three decades. By 1975, there was transfer of power to-'national governments in most of these countries and new nations were born put of old colonies. The Dutch and' the French did not always shed power willingly as was seen in Indonesia and Indo-China respectively.

Causes of the End of the Colonial Empires

The World War II certainly rang the bell on the Imperial order. Where there were existing nationalist struggles, it gave the oppressed people new stimulus. The sight of an Asian power, Japan, humbling the armies of Britain, France and Holland in Malaya, Hong Kong, the Dutch East Indies and Indo-China shattered the myth about European invincibility. When the Allies were humbled, the local people in Indo-China and Indonesia took up arms against their Japanese conquerors. After the War ended, they did not meekly accept their former masters back, but continued with their resistance'. Besides, the Allies relied a lot on recruits in their armies to fight the Germans in Europe and Japan in Asia. These soldiers returned after the War with a resolve to address the problems of their countries. Their European masters could no longer take their loyalty for granted.

The European powers were also weakened by, the World War II. The cream of their own youth was lying in graves across the world. A sense of fatigue had replaced the old vigour with which they defended their Empires. All these countries themselves went under the shadow of the United States, a country which did not quite tolerate colonialisation. During the War itself President Roosevelt had prevailed upon the Allied powers to accept the Atlantic Charter (1941) that formed the template on

which the post-War world was to be reorganised. It contained two points, i.e. nations should not expand by taking territory from other nations, and all people should have the right to choose their own forms of government. Though the British under Churchill, a committed imperialist, tried to interpret this in their own way saying the Atlantic Charter applied only to Nazi Germany, Roosevelt made it clear that the alms went beyond. It was to apply all over the world. The next US President, Harry S. Truman, who worked with Churchill's successor Clement Atlee of the Liberal Party applied pressure on Britain to bow out of India. Though the British left India before long, it delayed giving independence to other countries. The US, on the other hand, maintained diplomatic pressure for two reasons.

Firstly, Washington feared that communism sponsored by Moscow would Inspire liberation struggles of the colonials. There was a second and more commercial interest involved. The Americans eyed prospective markets for their goods in the newly Independent world. Not surprisingly, the newly created United Nations, which right from the outset was dominated by the US, issued periodic statements against colonialism. We will now run through the individual accounts of some important nations which won their independence in the aftermath of the World War II. Form the history of the last two years of India as a colony, how forces of nationalism received new energy and suffered the tragedy of partition that created two nations, is well known. We shall see how the Indian experience in fact anticipated events in many other countries in their own hour of freedom.

West Indies, Malaya and Cyprus

The British West Indies was the collective term given to a large assortment of islands to the Caribbean Sea. There are large islands like Jamaica and Trinidad, while others like Grenada, St. Vincent, Barbados, the Seychelles, Bahamas and Antigua are small. The British had Honduras in Central South America and Guyana in the north-east of the continent. The total population in these islands was roughly 6 million. There were doubts whether the small islands like Grenada, St. Vincent and Antigua which had populations of less than 100,000 each, would be viable as Independent states.

The British at 'first thought of transferring power to a federation of these islands. But Honduras .and Guyana wanted to retain their separate identities. Jamaica and Trinidad were also unwilling to join the federation. The British government nevertheless established the West Indies Federation in .1958. But there was resentment as these Islands had few things in common. Jamaica arid Trinidad withdrew from this collective in .1961. In the following year, Britain granted independence separately to each of these islands. Jamaica and Trinidad-Tobago were the-first, to get independence. Guyana followed in 1966 and one by one; the others followed quit until Bahamas which took the name of Belize in 1981, and the tiny Islands of St. Kitts and Nevis became free to 1983. Though these countries rejected the concept of a federation, they soon realised the virtues of regional co-operation. They formed tile Caribbean Free Trade Association In 1968 and the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) in 1973 in which, all the former British colonies except Guyana and Belize joined.

Malaya was liberated from. Japanese occupation in 1945. There was a problem of ethnic rivalry in the country between the Malayas and the Chinese. It also had a strong population of Indian origin and European population. As a step towards-Independence, the British encouraged the country's nine states, each ruled-by a Sultan, and Its own territories of Malacca and Penang to form a Federation of Malaya in 1948. Each state was given its own legislature for governing local affairs while a central government had overall control: But Singapore was retained as a colony at that stage.

However, communist insurgents began to make trouble. Led by Chin Pen, a guerilla leader who had put up resistance against the Japanese, they began to foment violence and strife in the country. The British declared a state of emergency in 1948 which remained in force till 1960. During this period, the communists were effectively dealt with. Meanwhile, the dominant Malaya population gained the political ascendancy under Tunku Abdul Rahman and rapidly mobilised the support of

the non-communist sections of the Chinese and Indian population. The British finally transferred power in 1957. In 1963, a Federation of Malaysia was established: Brunei's Sultan however did not join it and formed a separate sultanate which got independence in 1984. Singapore initially joined the Federation, but the largely Chinese dominated island was left to chart its own independent career in 1965. The rest of the Malaysian federation remains intact to this day.

The issue of Cyprus was the most complicated problem. The British Labour government's attempts to grant it independence were thwarted by the resistance from within. The country had 80 per cent Greek Orthodox Christians and 20 per cent Muslims of Turkish origin. The Greek Cypriots wanted to unite with Greece but this was resisted by the Muslims. When Winston Churchill returned to power in 1951, he caused further misgivings by slowing down the process of Cyprus' independence. This caused strong anti-British feeling, particularly among the Greeks. Astruggle for freedom broke out under Archbishop Makarips. A guerilla movement under General Grivas, called *Eoka*, waged constant war against the British troops after it became clear that the British were no longer interested in granting Cyprus its Independence, but retain it as a military base for strategic reasons. More than 35,000 British troops were stationed in the country. The problems were exacerbated by the Muslims who started a campaign to divide the country along religious lines.

Finally to avoid a civil war the British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan granted Cyprus full Independence in 1960. Archbishop Makarios dropped the idea of merger of Cyprus with Greece arid became the country's first President. But peace lasted only for three years and civil war broke out again. In 1974, Turkey intervened to establish a separate state in the north of the country. The country is still divided with Greek Cypriots controlling the South and the United Nation's peacekeepers keeping peace between the two groups.

Hong Kong's Accession To China

Before 1842. Hong Kong was a tiny island inhabited by fishermen. As it had little economic importance, the rulers of China ignored it. But its strategic location was first recognised by the British who needed a naval base in the eastern Indian Ocean. At the end of the First Opium War in 1842, China ceded Hong Kong to Britain permanently. In 1860, the area known as Kowloon which falls in mainland China opposite Hong Kong was ceded *by* China to Britain under the Peking Convention. These two areas would still have been under the British had not the Second Opium War concluded with another treaty in 1898 resulted in the British converting the freehold into a 99-year lease. The British did this because they got more territory on the Chinese mainland which was of great strategic importance to them. Beginning 1900, Hong Kong saw a steady influx of immigrants who were fleeing the civil war in mainland China, Over the next 90 years, the island came to be heavily populated by people from all over the world seeking jobs in the island's service-oriented economy. The biggest wave came after mainland China became communist in 1949. Hong Kong's rule under Britain was not democratic. The island's *Governor* was nominated by the British Prime Minister.

In the 1980s, Britain grew alarmed at the approaching end of its leasehold over. Hong Kong. By this time living standards in the island was one of the highest in Asia. There was concern that the spirit of free enterprise which made Hong Kong prosperous would be terminated under communist rule. The people of Hong Kong were mostly of Chinese origin and they began to Emigrate to Britain, Australia, Canada and other countries fearing an end to their freedom.

Britain made a formal request to China to renew the leasehold, but the communist chairman in Beijing, Deng Xiaoping, refused and demanded Britain to return the whole of Hong Kong to China. Not willing to challenge the Chinese, Britain agreed. In 1984, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and her Chinese counterpart, Zhao Ziyang, signed a Joint Declaration requiring Britain to transfer sovereignty of-Hong Kong to China at midnight on 30 June 1997.

In return China agreed to grant Hong Kong and its people a higher degree of freedom and autonomy. Most significantly, it was allowed to retain its capitalist system up to 2047. But the road to the transfer was not smooth. It was marked by much bickering. After the Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing which was ordered by China's totalitarian regime to suppress a peaceful democratic demonstration, the people of Hong Kong. grew understandably nervous. Thousands of Hong Kong citizens applied for British citizenship. To stem this the British tried to introduce democratic reforms, but these meant very little at that stage because China would nullify them anyway after the transfer.

In July 1997, Chris Patten, the last British Governor of Hong Kong, left. The Chinese government installed an interim legislature to replace the old colonial chamber. All the last minute humanitarian and democratic .measures introduced by Patten were abolished. Hong Kong was declared a Special Autonomous Region (SAR) and a-businessman, Tung Chee-hwa, was named the Chief Executive. He got a second term to February 2002.

Independence of British Africa

By 1945, the breeze of nationalism was blowing across Africa. During the World War II, colonial troops fought on the Allied side and imbibed this spirit. For some decades preceding this a new generation of African youth were getting educated In Britain and were assimilating the ideas of democracy and nationalism. The British Labour government under Atlee was willing to transfer power to the colonies. Atlee nursed the dream of Britain continuing to dominate the economic affairs of its former colonies through a process that Is known as neo-colonialism. This phenomenon, which' took *k* larger shape in the rest of the developing countries, also known as the Third World, will be discussed in a subsequent Chapter. But in the African context, Britain did not wish to transfer power immediately. Rather, the tendency was to linger the process as much as possible.

The British had three kinds of colonies in Africa In 1945. In West Africa, it had the Gold Coast, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Gambia: This region had minimum British or even European presence. Granting independence to these countries was therefore quite simple. Sierra Leone became. Independent in 1961 and Gambia in1965. In the East African colonies of Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika on the other hand, matters were more Complicated. There was a large population of British and Asian settlers' who were apprehensive of going under the 'native rule; The 'settler factor' was most serious in the third category of colonies, i.e. Nyasaland and Northern and Southern 'Rhodesia in Central Africa, where the Europeans controlled the local economies, owned huge tracts of land, and kept the locals marginalised from the profits generated In their own countries.

In Tanganyika (renamed Tanzania in 1964) Julius Nyrere, the leader of the Tanganyika 'African National Union CTANU), led the campaign for an African. Government which he promised would be tolerant towards the whites. The British granted independence in 1961. Uganda became independent in 1962 with Milton Obote as the Prime Minister. But the country suffered much from tribal rivalry.

The most complex problem in East Africa was Kenya because the white .settlers there refused to live under black majority rule. Jomo Kenyatta's Kenya African Unity Party was the true representative of the Kenyans. The British government tried to trick the Kenyans by giving them only six seats in a Legislative Council which had 54 members. African .patience ran out and a secret society called .the Mau Mau started' attacking the White settlers. This gave the British the excuse they needed to prolong their rule. They stationed more than 100,000 troops in the country and brutally suppressed nationalist elements. Kenyatta became the symbol of African nationalism when he was jailed for six years. The British displayed Nazi like brutality when they opened concentration camps to prevent the Kikuyu tribes from getting, organised. Finally, international pressure forced Britain to give up. They released Kenyatta and pulled out of the country in 1963. Kenyatta did not wreak vengeance on the whites. Kenya has since been a moderate state.

Central Africa represented more problems in the process of transfer of power. It was in this region that white settlers were most concentrated. Anticipating African independence, the white population of Nyasaland, Northern and Southern Rhodesia proposed to Churchill to allow them to set up a Central African Federation in which they would find strength in numbers and effectively keep the Africans out of power, The British allowed them to have a Federal Parliament in Salisbury, the .capital of Southern" -Rhodesia. The Africans got incensed at this strategy to marginalise them. Under three .visionary leaders, Kenneth Kaunda of Northern Rhodesia, Joshua Nkomo of Southern Rhodesia and Hastings Banda of Nyasaland, they began a campaign for black majority rule. In 1960* the Labour government set up a commission to go into the problem. The Commission recommeded universal suffrage, an. end to racial discrimination and the rights of territories: to leave the federation. In 1963, Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia became fully independent and assumed the names Malawi and Zambia respectively.

Southern Rhodesia saw fierce clashes with the whites who wanted to preserve their privileges. "The British backed them, but at the same time tried to mollify world opinion by impressing upon the Rhodesian Prime Minister, Ian Smith, that Africans should be given at least 'one-third of the seats in. the Parliament. This was a ridiculous proposal because only about 200,000 whites were to- get two-thirds of the seats, while four million Africans would get only one-third. Cornered, Smith declared independence for Rhodesia in 1965. The United Nations condemned this and all member states were encouraged to boycott trade with the illegal regime. Neighbouring South Africa and Mozambique, were sympathetic to Smith and offered Rhodesia the chance to survive the international boycott. The sanctions were also flouted by |he United States whose corporations could not resist Rhodesian chrome, which was the cheapest in the world. This hypocrisy displayed -by the world powers helped the Smith regime declare' itself a republic in 1970 and continue with its suppression of the Africans.

The situation suddenly improved after Portugal left Mozambique in 1975. Its President, Samora Machel, applied economic sanctions against Rhodesia. and allowed Zimbabwean nationalists to operate from guerilla bases in Mozambique, Smith tried in vain to resist the Zimbabweans by even hiring foreign mercenaries. Robert Mugabe's guerilla, Zimbabwe African National Council controlled most parts of the country by 1979. Smith was forced to negotiate. In December 1979, under British mediation, it was resolved that a new republic, by the name' of Zimbabwe would be created .and in its Parliament 80 out of'100 seats would be reserved for the Africans. Zimbabwe officially became independent in 1980 under Mugabe as its Prime Minister.

It must be conceded that of all the colonists, Britain at least made efforts to gracefully exit from their occupied territories. The French, Dutch and Portuguese were, in the most part', not concerned with the winds of change sweeping the world and tried to cling to, their possessions for as long as possible. The French, on regaining their country after four years of German occupation in 1944, adopted the infamous Brazzaville Declaration which clearly ruled out any autonomy or self-rule for its colonies, thereby making the choice of being forced out as we shall now see.

Independence of the French Colonies

French Indo-China comprised the modern nations of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. The region went under Japanese occupation during World War II when the French were thrown out. The Vietnamese communists, under their charismatic leader, Ho Chi Minh put up tough resistance against the Japanese occupiers. 'Naturally, when the French tried to return to their former colonies after the World War H, the Vietnamese people revolted. For eight years, a war of independence was waged. Finally, in 1954, when it became clear that the French cannot hold on, the liberal premier of France, Pierre Mendes-France sued for peace. At the July 1954 Geneva Conference, Vietnam, -Laos and Cambodia were granted independence.

In Tunisia, the French faced a guerilla, movement led by the *New,* Destour group of Habib Bourghiba. The French sent more than 70,000 troops into Tunisia, imprisoned Bourghiba, and tried to brutally Suppress the nationalist struggle there. But the infiltration of communists caused concern in Paris. The French realised that unless they accepted Tunisian Independence under a moderate leader like Bourghiba, worse trouble would be in store for them. Therefore, they released the popular, leader and granted Tunisia independence in March 1956. A similar situation faced them in Morocco where the nationalist party, the *Istiqlal* and the trade unions opposed the French. The French government realised that it could not wage wars in Indo-China and Africa at the same time. So they allowed King Muhammed V to return to the country from exile and grant Morocco independence in 1956.

Algeria represented a bigger problem for France as there were more than 1 million French settlers there. At first the Independence movement of the natives was peaceful. But after the World War II, it became more militant under the leadership of Ben Bella's National Liberation Front. A full-scale war broke out in which more than 700000 French troops tried to suppress the Algerians in a most barbaric manner. This war also caused problems within the French society at home. There was so much resentment to this brazen attempt at perpetuating colonialism that the Fourth Republic of France, established in 1944, fell and civil war seemed imminent, The army urged General Charles de Gaulle, the hero of the World War II, to lead the country as it was convinced that he would never give up French claims in Algeria.

In October 1958, the Fifth Republic commenced in France .under Charles de Gaulle. The French Army, meanwhile, was facing, major reverses in .Algeria. Charles de Gaulle had the pragmatism to realise that outright victory was Impossible for the French and began to negotiate with Ben Bella. The generals of the French Army sponsored a terrorist movement called the OAS, which began a terrorist campaign both inside France and Algeria against those who favoured Algerian independence; The French became tired of war and there was widespread approval for De Gaulle's peace moves. In July 1962, the French withdrew arid Ben Bella became independent Algeria's first President. Charles de Gaulle was truly in favour of reconciliation with the colonies. He terminated the post-World War II policy of treating, colonial, territories as a part of France and preferred giving them outright independence. The events in Indo-China impressed upon him the need to form a new plan. In 1958 soon after coming to power he proposed that the 12 colonies of French West' Africa and French Equatorial Africa have their own self government for local affairs under elected Parliaments while the policies regarding their taxation and foreign affairs would be determined in Paris. A referendum was held in each of these countries. France offered liberal aid to those countries which accepted tills Plan while the ones which opted for independence were denied French assistance. Only Guinea, under President Sekou Toure, opted for outright independence. This inspired the people of Togo, Cameroon and Madagascar to follow suit. They became independent in 1960.

Dissolution of Other Empires

The other empire-building European nations viz., Holland, Belgium, Spain and Portugal, showed more obstinacy than France In bowing to international opinion and leave their colonies. The Dutch exploited the, East Indies (Indonesia) and did little to alleviate the sufferings of the people. Ahmed Sukarno was the nationalist leader of the country. When the Japanese invaded Indonesia in 1942, the Dutch allowed Sukarno to administer the country and promised full Independence after the War. When the World War II ended, Sukarno declared full independence of Indonesia.

Holland made a weak bid to regain possession of Indonesia by sending its army But the United Nations also asked Holland to grant. Indonesia its independence. In 1949, Indonesia became free but Holland retained West Irian and the Dutch crown was recognised. But in the following year. Sukarno broke out of the union and expelled Europeans, from West Irian. The other Dutch possession Surinam, became free in 1975.

Belgium had colonies in Africa, i.e. Belgian Congo and;Ruanda-Urundi. They were quite brutal colonisers who denied the local people any education and played one tribe against the other. In Ruanda-Urundi, the Meets, of the rivalry between the majority Tutsi and the Hutu tribes, is still raging.

But nationalist movements broke out-in 1959 in Leopoldville, the capital of Belgian Congo. After suppressing it for some time, the Belgian government suddenly decided that it would grant the country independence. In June, 1960, Congo became free-under Patrice Lumumba. Ruanda-Urundi was given its independence in 1962 after -its division into two states, Rwanda and Burundi, both governed by the Tutsis. Spain had Spanish. Sahara, Spanish Morocco, Ifni and Spanish Guinea, The Spanish dictator, General Franco, did not resist the- nationalist movements as he had no interest in colonies. He gave up Spanish Morocco for unification with the newly independent and former French; Morocco in 1956. Ifni was given, the choice to Join Morocco, which it did in 1969. Guinea became independent as Equatorial Guinea in 1968. However, in the case of Spanish Sahara, Franco made an exception as It had rich resources pf. phosphates. But after Franco's death In 1975, it was given up, Portugal; was also opposed to giving its colonies in Africa viz., Angola, Mozambique and Portuguese Guinea, their Independence. They 'also owned the eastern half of the island of Timor on the Indian Ocean. The Salazar government in Lisbon kept the colonials backward and illiterate. But revolts broke but in Angola in 1961 where Agostinho Neto's MPLA (People's Movement for Angolan Liberation) was the main nationalist movement. The USSR backed this uprising as the MP.LA had Communist leanings. Portugal fought a bitter war which by 1973 was costing the country nearly half its annual budget. Naturally, the common people of Portugal, who were sick of this policy, resisted. In 1974, the Salazar dictatorship was overthrown by a military coup. Soon Portugal freed all its colonies

Italy was the only colonising nation which- accepted the indigenous independence demands with any grace. Moreover, after the World War II, it no longer had the international clout to resist independence movements. Ethiopia was handed back to the rule of Emperor Haile Selassie who had been forced into exile in 1935 when the Italians invaded the country. Libya was given, independence in 1951, Eritrea was handed over to Ethiopia in 1952 but allowed to maintain a large degree of autonomy. Italian Somaliland was merged with British Somaliland to form the independent republic of Somalia in 1960.

The British Commonwealth- Of Nations And Neo-Colonialism

The British Commonwealth of Nations had existed in the form of having special relationships among the white dominions of Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa since the early partofthe20th century. After the World War II, when the Labour government decided to free the colonies one by one, there was a huge demand from domestic industrial lobbies of Britain to maintain preferential trade ties with the newly independent countries. It was perceived that since these countries are inherently weak as their economies had been devastated by centuries of colonisation and largely because of untrained workforce and managements and inexperienced governments, Britain would be able to maintain long-distance control over their affairs to its advantage. This was the genesis of neo-colonialism. The British Commonwealth of Nations was thus extended to include every former colony: The latter continued associating with each other and with Britain as sovereign nations. Some, however, still relied on Britain as their only overseas market British companies enjoyed virtual monopoly over vital sectors of their economies well into the 1980s. This continued extraction of wealth from its former colonies made Britain maintain its aloofness from the moves to form the European Economic Community. Britain was content with supreme rights over an international market of 800 million.

It must, however, be conceded that the British Commonwealth did not evolve into a pernicious system only to exploit the former colonies. As a body it took a bold stand against the racist regime

of South Africa in 1961 and promoted economic, scientific and technical cooperation among the member states. The British monarch remains a symbolic head of the forum.

In contrast, the French implemented neo-colonialism with vigour. As we have noted earlier, France was initially quite reluctant to give independence to its colonies. When the pressure from the forces of nationalism became too great, it gave up direct political control but at the same time ensured that French economic interests, even monopolies remained protected. That was one of the reasons why Tunisia, and Morocco were made free quite early. Under President Charles de Gaulle, neo-colonialism became an article of faith. He persuaded the French conservatives to agree to his decision to give up political hegemony over Algeria in return for continued indirect French control overits economy. The independence of the other African republics was also not quite complete in this respect. All of them discovered, to their dismay, that Frances still influenced their economic and foreign policies.

The United States, because of its overarching influence over the former empire-building western European powers, also participated in neo-colonialism. The newly independent countries became heavily dependent on their investments, markets and were thus sucked into debt traps. The worst hit countries were the African nations which were either badly prepared or quite unprepared to manage their own affairs. They had few literate, leave alone skilled people to carry out effective governance and thus got quickly trapped by the bribes and inducements offered to them by western companies and governments. The lot of the common people, therefore, did not show much improvement. As many of these countries had artificial boundaries, drawn up by the European colonizers in the 19th century to suit their own interests, they inherited many conflicts, Forinstance, in Nigeria and the former Belgian Congo, tribal differences quickly escalated into a civil war. In some countries, the governments made attempts to introduce socialist reforms like nationalisation of their industries. The western powers led by the US, branded these governments as 'communist' and therefore, unjustly out off aid, plunging them into deeper political and economic crises. This happened in Indo-China, Indonesia, East Timor, Chad., Angola, Mozambique, Zaire and Jamaica.

Thus, we find that the World War II had, in general, a salutary influence on the destinies of more than half of the world's population which was groaning under the yoke of colonialism. It also changed the geographical contours of nations permanently. New ones were born on the ruins of old and many such processes are still on.

*****