

Regional Aspirations

⇒ Region And the Nation

- In 1980 may be seen as a period of rising regional aspirations for autonomy, often outside the framework of the Indian Union.
- Many struggles and negotiated settlements or accords between the central government and the groups leading the movement for autonomy.

⇒ Indian approach

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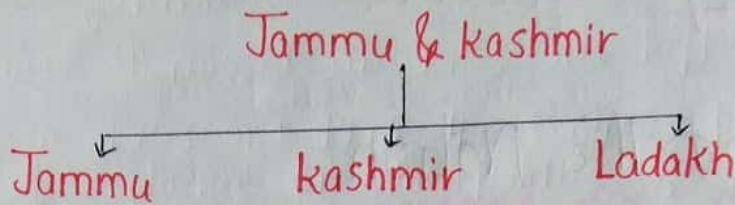
- India adopted a democratic approach to diversity.
- Democracy allows the political expressions of regional aspirations.
- Democratic politics allows parties and groups to address the people on the basis of their regional identity, aspiration and specific regional problems.
- Therefore, political conflicts over issues of power of the regions, their rights and their separate existence are common to nations and retain unity.

⇒ Areas of tension

- Soon after independence, the issue of J&K came up, similarly in some parts of the north-east created problem.
- In the north, there were strong pro-Hindi agitations demanding that Hindi be made the official language immediately.

⇒ Jammu and Kashmir

- Kashmir issue has been always a major issue between India and Pakistan.



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- The heart of the Kashmir region is the Kashmir valley.
- The people are Kashmiri speaking and mostly Muslim with a small Kashmiri speaking Hindu minority.
- Jammu region has speakers of various languages.
- The Ladakh region is mountainous, has a very little population which is equally divided between Buddhists and Muslims.
- The issue of Kashmiri identity known as **kashmiriyat**.

⇒ Roots of the problem

- Jammu and Kashmir was a Princely State.
- Hari Singh, the ruler of Kashmir did not want to merge with India or Pakistan and have an independent status for his State.
- Pakistani leaders thought the Kashmir region 'belonged' to Pakistan, since majority is of Muslim.
- But people saw themselves as Kashmiri above all.
- The popular movement in the State, led by Sheikh Abdullah of the National Conference, wanted to get rid of the **Maharaja**, but was against joining Pakistan.
- In October 1947, Pakistan sent tribal infiltrators from its side to capture Kashmir.
- This forced the Maharaja to ask for Indian military help.

- Indian extended the military support and drove back the infiltrators from Kashmir valley, but only after the Maharaja had signed an 'Instrument of Accession' with the GOI.
- Sheikh Abdullah took over as PM of the State of J&K in March 1948.

External and internal disputes

- Pakistan invaded state in 1947, as a consequence of which one part of the state came under Pakistani control.
- And this part known as 'Azad Kashmir'.
- Kashmir was given a special provisions under Article 370 and 371.
- Article 370 gives greater autonomy to J&K compared to other states of India. And it has its own Constitution.
- All provisions of the India Constitution are not applicable to the state.
- Laws passed by the Parliament apply to J&K only if the state agrees.
- A section of Kashmiris have expressed at least three major grievances—
- The promise and accession would be referred to the people of the state after the situation created by tribal invasion was normalised, has not been fulfilled, this has generated the demand for a "Plebiscite".
- Secondly, there is a feeling that the special federal status guaranteed by Article 370 has been eroded in practice.
- Thirdly, it is felt that democracy which is practiced in the rest of India has not been similarly institutionalised in the state of J&K.

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⇒ Politics since 1948

- Sheikh Abdullah initiated major land reforms and other policies.
- But there was a growing difference between him and the central government.
- He was dismissed in 1953 and kept in detention.
- Between 1953 and 1974, the Congress party exercised a lot of influence on the politics of the state.
- National Conference remained in power and later merged with the Congress.
- There were several attempts to reach an agreement between Sheikh Abdullah and GOI.
- Finally in 1974 Indira Gandhi reached an agreement and Sheikh Abdullah became CM of state.
- Elections held in 1977, he prevailed with majority.
- Sheikh Abdullah died in 1982 and Farooq Abdullah his son became the CM.
- But he soon dismissed by governor and a breakaway faction of the National Conference.
- This created resentment among Kashmiris towards Congress.
- In 1986, National Conference in agreed to have an electoral alliance with the Congress, the ruling party in the centre.

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⇒ Insurgency and after

- In 1987 Assembly election took place.
- Coalition government of National Conference - Congress formed and Farooq Abdullah returned as CM.
- This did not reflect people's choice and generated a political crisis in Kashmir which became severe with the rise of insurgency.
- By 1989, the State faced militant movement for a separate Kashmiri nation, supported by Pakistan.

- In 1977, 1986, 1990-96, 2002, 2008-11, 2015, 2016 the State was under President's rule.
- Jammu and Kashmir experienced a very fair election in 2002.
- National Conference failed to win a majority and was replaced by People's Democratic Party (PDP) and Congress Coalition government.

⇒ Separatism And Beyond

- There are various strands of people -
 - a) Some groups want Kashmir to merge with Pakistan
 - b) Some groups want within the Indian union.
 - c) And the idea of autonomy attracts the people of Jammu and Ladakh regions in a different way.
- Therefore, the demand for intra-State autonomy is as strong as the demand for the State autonomy.

⇒ Punjab Studyship with Krati

- Punjab had to wait till 1966 for the creation of a Punjabi speaking state (Haryana and Himachal Pradesh carved out)
- The Akali Dal, which was formed in 1920 as the political wing of the Sikhs, had led the movement for the formation of a 'Punjabi Suba'.

★ Political context

- The Akalis came to power in 1967 and then in 1977, in coalition government.
- Their government was dismissed by the Centre mid-way through its term.
- They did not enjoy strong support among the Hindus.

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- The Sikh community, like all other religious communities was internally differentiated on caste and class lines.
- It was in this context that during the 1970s a section of Akalis began to demand political autonomy for the region.
- And for this a resolution passed at their conference at Anandpur Sahib in 1973.
- The resolution was a plea for strengthening federalism but it could also be interpreted as a plea for a separate Sikh nation.
- Akali Dal government had been dismissed in 1980, Akal Dal launched movement on the question of distribution of water.
- Some of extreme elements started advocating secession from India and the creation of 'Khalistan'.

★ Cycle of violence

- Soon, the leadership of the movement passed from the moderate Akalis to the extremist elements and took form of armed insurgency.
- These militants made their headquarters in the Golden temple, Amritsar.
- In June 1984, the Government of India carried out 'Operation Blue Star' code name for army action in the Golden temple.
- But this action damaged the historic temple and deeply hurt the sentiments of the Sikhs.
- Sikhs wanted to take revenge for Operation Bluestar and on 31 October 1984 PM Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards.
- And this broke violence against Sikhs in Delhi, Kanpur, Bokaro and Chas.

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- 20 years later, in 2005, PM Manmohan Singh expressed regret over these killings in Parliament.

⇒ Road 2 Peace

- New PM Rajiv Gandhi in July 1985 to moderate initiated a dialogue, and finally signed an agreement with Harchand Singh Longowal (President of Akali Dal) known as **Rajiv Gandhi-Longowal Accord or Punjab Accord**.
- It was agreed that Chandigarh would be transferred to Punjab and also provided for compensation to and better treatment of those affected by the militancy in Punjab and withdrawal of Armed Special Forces Powers Act in Punjab.
- Central government imposed presidential rule in Punjab in
- Elections were held in **Punjab in 1992**.
- The first normal elections in the state was conducted in 1997, the alliance of Akali Dal (Badal) and the BJP scored a major victory.

The North-East

- North-East states also referred as the **'Seven Sisters'**
- The region has 4% of India population but two of its area.
- A small corridor of about 22 kilometers connects the region to rest of the country.
- The region shares boundaries with China, Myanmar and Bangladesh and serves as India's gateway to South East Asia.
- Nagaland was created in 1963
- Manipur, Tripura and Meghalaya in 1972
- Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh in 1987

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- Three issues dominate the politics of North-East
 - i) Demands for autonomy
 - ii) Movements for secession
 - iii) Oppositions to outsiders

⇒ Demands for autonomy

- At independence the entire region except Manipur and Tripura comprised the state of Assam.
- Non-Assamese formed the Eastern India Tribal Union which later transformed into a more comprehensive All Party Hill Leaders Conference in 1960.
- Central government had to create **Meghalaya, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh** out of Assam.
- Tripura and Manipur were upgraded into states too.
- The reorganisation of the North-East was completed by 1972.

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⇒ Secessionist movements

- The Mizo's anger led to the formation of the Mizo National Front (MNF) under the leadership of Laldenga.
- In 1966 the MNF started an armed campaign for independence.
- The IMNF fought a guerilla war, got support from Pakistani government and secured shelter in the then East Pakistan.
- Laldenga came back from exile in Pakistan and started negotiations with the Indian government.
- In 1986 a peace agreement was signed according to this Mizoram was granted full-fledged statehood with special powers and the MNF agreed to give up secessionist struggle.

- In Nagaland, Angami Zaphu Phizo, a section of the Nagas declared independence from India way back in 1951.
- Naga National Council launched an armed struggle for sovereignty of Nagas.
- Thus, they signed agreement with the Government of India.

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⇒ Movements against outsiders

- The Assam Movement from 1979 to 1985 against illegal Bengali Muslim settlers from Bangladesh.
- In 1979 the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) (not affiliated to any party) led an anti-foreigner movement.
- The movement demanded that all outsiders who had entered the state after 1951 should be sent back.
- After six years, the Rajiv Gandhi led government entered into negotiations with AASU leaders and signed an accord in 1985.
- With the successful completion of the movement, the AASU and the **Asom Gana Sangram Parishad** organised themselves as a regional political party called **Asom Gana Parishad (AGP)**.
- Problem has not been solved hostilities of the local population to Chakma refugees in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

⇒ Accommodation and National Integration

- Lessons we draw from chapter are:-
- Regional aspirations are very much a part of democratic politics. Nation building is an ongoing process.
- The second lesson is that the best way to respond to regional aspirations is through democratic negotiations.

rather than through suppression.

- The third lesson is about the significance of power sharing. It is not sufficient to have a formal democratic structure. Groups and parties from the region need to be given share in power at the state level.
- The fourth lesson is that regional imbalance in economic development contributes to the feeling of regional discrimination. Regional imbalance is a fact of India's development experience.

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