
UNIT 8 MOVEMENTS FOR SEPARATE STATEHOOD*

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8.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit discusses the movements for creation of new states in India. After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the meaning, features and causes of movements for separate states in India;
- Discuss the constitutional provisions about reorganization of states;
- Contextualise the politics of separate movements; and
- Analyse the response of the state to the demands for separate states.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Indian states consist of different linguistic, religious and cultural groups existing along with unequal level of regional development within a state. In certain context, these diversities become the grounds for generation of regional consciousness within a state. Those having such consciousness underline that within the existing administrative arrangement, their region is not given fair treatment by the state government, central government or other regions within their state. And solution to their grievances can be found if their region becomes a separate state from the state in which such region exists. Such new state would enjoy autonomy to take decisions and run administration. Often, advocates of new states engage themselves in collective action or movements to get them. In India, statehood demands have been coming up from the 1950s onwards. New states have been

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created in the 1950s, 1960s-1970s, 1980s, 2000 and in 2014. Creation of new states has not ended the efforts for more such demands in India. According to estimate by A.K. Singh (2009), there are more than thirty statehood and autonomy movements in India.

8.2 MOVEMENTS FOR SEPARATE STATES: MEANINGS AND SCOPE

The movements for restructuring power relations among administrative units in an area within one or more states are also regional movements as they address regional grievances. These movements generally assume three forms: statehood movements, autonomy movements and secessionist movements. Statehood movements seek separate state consisting of a region from one or more existing states. Autonomy movements, like statehood movements also want administrative autonomy to run their affairs. But, as you will read in unit 6, unlike the statehood movements, they do not want a separate state of out an existing state. Rather, they want autonomy within the existing state. Secessionist movements, unlike the statehood and autonomy movements seek to secede from the Union of India and get a sovereign state. It is important to note that while Indian constitution has provisions for creation of separate states and autonomy within the states, it does not permit secession.

8.3 THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

According to Article 3 Indian constitution has provisions for creation of new states out of one or more existing states. Constitutionally, it is the President who has the power to initiate the process for creation of new state or states. He can do it on his own or he can do it in consultation with the state from which new state has to be carved out. Such state or states can request the President about its willingness to carve a new state out of its/their existing size. The concerned state or states do so by passing a resolution in the state legislature to this effect. In the light of the resolution, the President may ask the Union government to present a bill for passage in the both houses of Parliament. If passed by the both houses, it is sent to President for getting his/her consent, after President gives consent, the (bill/decision) is notified and the process of creation of the new state begins. It is important to note that often political expediency impacts the interpretation of Article 3. Despite the President having power to initiate the process for creation of new states, he does so in consultation (resolution) of the state government. The passage of the resolution also depends on political bargaining or assessment of political implications by political parties in power and in opposition. It has generally been observed, that while in opposition, the parties have supported the demand for creation of new states. But they have opposed it while in the government.

8.4 REASONS FOR THE RISE OF SEPARATE STATEHOOD MOVEMENTS

Since the demands for creation of new states are raised in specific regions within one or more states, the factors that cause the rise of such movements can be

found in the grievances of such regions. These are multiple factors that become the basis of grievances. The factors are related to language, culture, customs, religion, historical background, and level of development. The advocates of new states allege that their regions are discriminated or remain neglected on the grounds of such factors. Together, they become the basis of formation of regional identities, which result in general of movement for creation of separate states. It is important to note that though the multiple factors become the reasons for generation of movements for separate states, some of these factors are more important in some movements than the other factors. In some movements, language is more determining factor than others; in some it is development, in some it is ethnicity and in some it is religion. The relative effectiveness of these factors has varied according to different phases of movements and different regions.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of the unit.

1) What is statehood movement and how is autonomy movement different from it?

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2) According to which Article of the constitutions a new state can be created? Explain.

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8.5 THE CASES

During the post-Independence, there have been several examples of statehood movements in India. They can be grouped in the phases: 1. Movements in the 1950s-1960s or linguistic organization; 2. Reorganization of northeast India: 1963, 1971-72 and 1985; 3. Movements in the Hindi belt 1990s-2000; 4. And the Telangana movement.

8.5.1 Movements in the 1950s-1960s or Linguistic Organization of States

In the 1950s, there were statehood demands based on language. The first linguistic state to be formed after Independence was Andhra State. It was formed on October 1, 1953 after the death of Potti Sriramulu due to fast which he had undertaken demanding creation of the state. Andhra State was formed of Telugu speaking districts of Madras State. In the pre-Independence period, in 1937 Orissa and Sind were formed on the linguistic basis: in these examples the British has deviated from their usual formula of reorganization of provinces which was done on linguistic and military considerations. In the 1920s, even the Congress had established its provincial committees on the basis of language. But after Independence, the government was reluctant to reorganise states based on language. Indeed, this was deviation from Congress policy to set up its provincial units on linguistic basis. The reasons for the shift in the government's policy lay in the changes in the circumstances. Since the country faced multiple challenges after Independence: large scale communal violence following partition, influx of refugees, etc. Under these circumstances the leadership felt that India needed a strong centre, and linguistic organization would weaken it. This deviation led Potti Sriramulu to undertake fast for creation of Andhra State.

After the formation of Andhra State, the Government of India appointed in 1953 a commission known as State Reorganization Commission (SRC) under the chairmanship of Justice Fazal Ali. The SRC submitted its report in 1955. It is important to note that even prior to the appointment of the SRC, the government had set up in 1948 Dhar Commission to look into the language as the basis of state formation. The Dhar commission did not favour the language to be the basis. Again, to examine the Dhar Commission report, a committee consisting of Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel and Pattabi Sitaramaya (JVP committee) was appointed. The JVP committee agreed with the Dhar Commission Report and advised against language being the criterion for reorganization of states. The SRC recommended that states could be reorganised on language basis. On the recommendations of SRC several states were reorganised were created on linguistic basis between 1956-1960.

The creation of Punjab and along with of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh in 1966 was result of Punjabi Suba movement. The Punjab Suba movement took place for creation of Punjab state in which Punjabi language was to be a criterion. But in this case, religion also got associated with the language as majority of Punjabi Suba movement spoke Punjabi language and practice Sikh religion. Master Tara Singh and Sant Pateh Singh played leading role in the Punjabi Suba movement. After carving out of Punjab, the residue areas of Punjab became separate states of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh where Hindi became the sole language of the state.

8.5.2 Movements for Reorganizations of Northeast India

In northeast India, there are two kinds of movements for reorganizations of power relations within the constitutional framework of India: one, the autonomy movement; two, and statehood movements. You have read about the autonomy movements in unit 6. You will read about the statehood movements in northeast,

in this sub-section. The State Reorganization did not suggest reorganization of north-eastern states. The SRC was against the idea of creating separate hill states out of Assam; it was felt that the reorganization of the regions would accentuate the process of isolation of the hill region which was initiated due to the colonial policy of Inner Line Permit and demarcating “excluded” and “partially excluded” areas. Instead of creating separate states of the hill regions, it suggested that autonomy should be given to various cultural and linguistic groups. The SRC also argued that if hill states were created out of Assam, they would not be economically viable. However, Nagaland became a state in 1963; Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura in 1972; Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram became states from Union Territories in 1985; and Sikkim was annexed into India in 1975.

The Hill State Movement

Tribal leaders from the tribal-dominated hills - Khasi, Jantia, Garo and Lusai hills then part of Assam state wanted creation of hill state. Although the hill state movement was largely supported by other hill districts of Assam, it was confined to Garo, Khasi and Jaintia hills. The demand was reiterated in Tura Conference of Tribal leaders in 1954. They formed a Hill Tribals’ Union with W.A. Sangma as its chairman and B.B. Lyngdoh as Secretary of its ad hoc executive body. In 1955, Hill leaders meet in Aizawl in October 1955 and formed the Eastern India Tribal Union (EITU). In 1960, replacing the EITU, APHLC (All Party Hill Leaders Conference) was formed at the initiative of William Sangma. The passage Language Bill in Assamese Assembly in 1960, which was considered as imposition of Assamese language on the non-Assamese communities, also contributed to acceleration of hill statehood demand. The APHLC wanted unification of all districts, excluding Naga Hill district, mentioned in Part A of the table in Sixth Schedule to the Constitution. The Naga Hill district was excluded because the leadership in the Naga Hills wanted a sovereign state, while the leaders of the APHLC wanted statehood within the Indian Union. In 1960, Nehru offered Scottish pattern of autonomy for the hill areas to the hill leaders, which was rejected by them. However, the offer was accepted by one faction of the APHLC known as Assam Hills Peoples Conference (HSPC). As a result, Pataskar Commission was formed to look into the autonomy concerning the hill areas. The Pataskar Commission recommended against any change in the Sixth Schedule. This aggrieved the APHLC. In protest, it boycotted the 1967 General election. In such situation, when Indira Gandhi visited Shillong on January 11-13, 1967, she promised reorganization of Assam. Consequently, on December 24, 1969, the Parliament passed the 22nd Constitutional Amendment, i.e., Assam Reorganization (Meghalaya) Bill, creating “Autonomous State” of Meghalaya within Assam. In 1971, the President of India passed certain Acts leading to creation of many new states in northeast India such as Manipur, Tripura and Meghalaya, and Union Territories of Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

Movement for Nagaland

You have read about autonomy in unit 6 and insurgency in unit 8. In this section you will read about formation of Nagaland state. The state of Nagaland was formed in 1963. As you have read in unit 7, the movement the preceding formation of Nagaland was not caused due to the imposition of the Assamese in 1960: it started much before for the language agitations. However, the centre responded by making the state of Nagaland in 1963. The same is the case with Mizoram;

like in the Naga hills even in the Mizo areas/Lusai hills, it was not the movement for separate state; rather, it was insurgency which preceded the formation of Meghalaya state.

Assam Accord and Statehood Movements

Assam Accord in 1985 which brought the six-year anti-foreigner movement in Assam also elevated two union territories – Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram to the level of statehood. Thus, we can see that different states were created in northeast India at different point of time. However, following the formation of these states over the years, the demands for separate states have not stopped. The post-Assam Accord period saw the intensification of demand for Bodoland, and for autonomy in KarbiAnlong district. There are several such examples in northeast India.

Other statehood Movements in northeast

Apart from the above movements, there have also been movement for statehood in the areas where Bengali is spoken by majority of population. The Assam language bill of 1960, which provoked language riots in the 1960s boosted up the demand. The Cachar State Reorganization Committee which was set up following the submission of the report of the SRC played main role in statehood demand for Bengali dominated areas: Purbanchal Pradesh.

8.5.3 Statehood Movements in the Hindi Belt

Creation of four new states – of Uttarakhand, Chhatisgarh and Jharkhand in 2000, and of Telangana in 2014 provide the recent examples of reorganization of states in India. Unlike creation of states in the 1950s-1970s, in which language of culture became the basis for creation of new states, from the 1990s, it was the level of development which became basis for their demand and formation of the new states.

Uttarakhand/Uttaranchal

Demand for creation of Uttarakhand was one of such demands for creation of new states out of the state of Uttara Pradesh. The demand for a separate state of UP hills was raised in 1938 in Srinagar session of the Congress. Even as the Independence approached, political leadership from Tehri Garhwal expressed the need for separation of the hill region from plains of UP. In 1946, BadriduttPande, a lawyer and political activist involved in protection of rights of forest dwellers and against *begar*, raised the issues in a public rally held in Haldwani. The demand was sidelined with the merger of Kumaon, Tehri Garwal and British Garhwal with the state of Uttar Pradesh. In 1952, the communist leader, P.C. Joshi demanded in a memorandum to Nehru who sent it to the SRC that UP hills being backward region should be developed into a separate state. Nehru rejected the demand. K.M. Pannikar dissented on making UP a huge state which would be unwieldy to govern. Indeed, three chief ministers from the region H.N. Bahuguna, N.D. Tiwari and G.B. Pant had opposed creation of new state. The ground for opposition by Pant was that since there were no jobs or industries it would be better to retain the region in UP. The demand continued to be raised by elite during the 1960s-1970s. On July 25, 1979 Uttarakhand Kranti Dal, a political party, was formed under the chairmanship of D.D. Pant, a former Vice

Chancellor of Kumaon University. The purpose of UKD was to strive to get separate state to consist of hill districts of Uttar Pradesh. It contested 1980 and 1986 assembly elections. In the late 1980s, the issue was taken by the BJP. Kalyan Singh-led BJP government in 1991, the SP-BSP government in 1994 and the BSP-BJP government in 1997 passed resolution in the legislative assembly for creation of Uttarakhand.

Besides this, on different occasions demands have been raised for creation of Harit Pradesh out of western region of UP, Bundelkhand out of southern parts of UP and some districts of Madhya Pradesh, Poorvanchal out of eastern UP and Oudh Pradesh out of central part of UP. In the first half of the 1990s, demand of Uttarakhand became more popular with participation of people across sections of the society. Initially, the movement for Uttarkahand was not linked with the demand for separate state: it emerged out of a protest movement which was organized against the extension of reservation in 1994 for the OBCs to the hilly regions of UP. Since the population in hilly regions which were then part of UP consisted majority of the high castes in comparison to the OBC, it created an apprehension that the extension of reservation into the region would adversely impact their interests. The people of UP hills protested the government's decision. This resulted in a clash between police and the agitators. The police fired and several people died. This incident is known as Khatima incident. Firing in the Khatima incident further incensed those who argued that they were discriminated in the present state of UP. They asserted that should have their own state to govern themselves. Hence, the demand for Uttarakhand. After the Khatima incident, elections in 1996 and 1998, 1999 Lok Sabha, and 1998 Vidhan Sabha elections became suitable contexts for realization of demand for creation of Uttarakhand. The fact that there were NDA governments both at the centre and UP became suitable for acceptance of the demand.

8.5.4 Movement for Telangana State

The state of Telangana was carved out of the state of Andhra Pradesh in 2014. Prior to becoming a separate, the Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh had an identity which was different from the other two regions of Andhra Pradesh, Rayalaseema and Coastal Andhra. During the regime of Hyderabad Nizam, Telangana was part of Hyderabad state and Rayalaseema and Coastal Andhra were part of Madras Presidency. The Congress and the Communist Party of India had demanded formation of a state Andhra consisting Telangana, and Rayalaseema and Coastal Andhra regions, on the basis of a common language spoken in these regions. In 1953, Potti Sriramulu, a Gandhian, died sitting on hunger strike demanding a creation of Andhra state consisting of Telugu speaking districts of the erstwhile Madras Presidency and Telangana region in Hyderabad state. Following Potti Sriramulu's death, the central government appointed the State Reorganization Commission (SRC) to look into need and criteria to reorganise states. The SRC, which submitted its report in 1955, found that Telangana and other regions Rayalaseema and Coastal Andhra were not homogenous. It recommended creation of separate state of Telangana for five years, and formation after the expiry of the five years of a state of a single state of Telugu-speaking regions consisting of other two regions – Rayalaseema along with Telangana Coastal Andhra regions. But much before the expiry of five years of formation of Telangana state, the state of Andhra Pradesh was created in 1956 on the basis

of common language – the Telugu, consisting of Telangana, Rayalaseema and Andhra regions. The formation of Andhra Pradesh was received with the apprehension in the Telangana region that Andhra region would be placed in dominant position in the new state due to its superior economic position and higher literacy rate than those in Telangana region. The apprehension prevailed despite the commonness of Telugu language spoken in the different regions. An agitation took place against the formation of the Andhra Pradesh State. As a result, with the purpose of safeguarding the interests of Telangana region within the new state, an agreement was signed between the Congress leaders of Telangana and Andhra and Rayalaseema regions in 1956. It was known as the Gentleman's Agreement. Among others, the Gentleman's Agreement had two important assurances: One, a regional committee would be constituted to look into the regional grievances and recommend measures to resolve them; and two, if chief minister of Andhra Pradesh belonged to one region, the deputy chief minister would belong to the other regions. Within a few years of the signing of the Gentleman's agreement, there was resentment in the Telangana region that the promises made in the agreement were not fulfilled. The leaders of the region alleged that Telangana had become an internal colony; teachers, bureaucrats, students, lawyers, businessmen belonged to the Andhra regions; Telangana remained a backward region within Andhra Pradesh. A group of young intellectuals formed Telangana Praja Samiti (TPS) to mobilise support for creation of Telangana state. Initially, the TPS was an apolitical organization. But after some time of its formation, it was joined by politicians such as Chenna Reddy and Konda Lakhsman. The TPS contested 1971 Parliamentary election with creation of Telangana state as its principal goal. In this election, it won 10 out of the 14 constituencies falling in the Telangana region. After the election, the TPS merged with the Congress, and the issue of Telangana went into background, though the central University was established in Hyderabad. The problems of the Telangana region were addressed by N.T. Ramarao-led TDP government in the G.O. 610 passed in 1985. According to the G.O. people from Telangana region were to be given jobs in certain positions. Although the TDP government led by Chandrababu Naidu was opposed to creation of a separate state of Telangana, it appointed one-man commission headed by J.M. Girglani to look into the implementation of the G.O. 610. The Girglani commission observed that in violation of the G.O.610 people from Andhra region were appointed in the positions meant for the people of Telangana region. The demand for creation of Telangana was revived in 2001 with the formation of the Telangana Rashtriya Samiti (TRS) by K. Chandrashekar Rao (KCR). It contested 2004 Lok Sabha and assembly elections in alliance with the Congress on the promise to create the state of Telangana. The TRS-Congress alliance formed the government in 2004 following its victory with chief minister from the Congress. At the centre's level, since the TRS was a partner in the UPA alliance, creation of Telangana was included in its manifesto. And the UPA government appointed a sub-committee consisting of Pranab Mukherjee and Sharad Pawar to look into the demand for Telangana state. Meanwhile, differences grew between the Congress and the TRS in Andhra Pradesh leading to the exit of the latter from the UPA alliance in 2006.

The movement was further revived in 2007 after the exit of the TRS from the UPA alliance. The students, teachers and non-teaching employees of Osmania

University played leading role in the movement. The Telangana issue dominated the 2009 Lok Sabha election with TRS supporting and the Congress opposing it. However, the UPA government at the centre appointed a committee to be headed by Justice Srikrishna to look into the Telangana issue and submit the report by 31 December 2010. Against the background of demand for several years, the Union Cabinet of the UPA government cleared on 7 February 2014 a bill for division of Andhra Pradesh into two states – Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, which was later passed by the both houses of Parliament. And on June 2, 2014, finally the state of Telengana was created.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of the unit.

1) What was the attitude of the Central government towards linguistic reorganization of the states?

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2) Narrate the process of reorganization states in northeast India.

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3) Identify the features of statehood movements in the Hindi belt.

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8.6 RESPONSE OF THE PARTIES AND THE STATE

The responses of political parties have been informed by political expediency. And they have been shaped by political contexts. Generally, movements for statehood become more frequent and intense in the times of elections, political competition, factionalism within the parties. The parties have been supportive to such demands when they were in opposition but have been opposed them when

in power. Even the response of the national and local leadership of principal political parties varied depending the caste group which were raising them.

Except movement for creation of Telangana and Jharkhand, demand for other states such as Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand or Harit Pradesh generally lacked popular mobilization. They were largely voiced by professional politicians through seminars, on the floor of house, passing resolution, etc. According to Paul R. Brass the government accepted statehood demands in certain conditions. According to such conditions, the demands should be supported in both the state from which the state would be created and in the areas where such demands are raised.

8.7 LET US SUM UP

Statehood movements aim to create separate state out of one or more existing states. The new states are supposed to have separate legislative and executive bodies to administer the areas coming under the jurisdiction of new state. New states in India can be created according to Article 3 of Indian Constitution. According to this Article only the centre government has the power to create new states, though it may do so with the consent of the concerned state which is generally given through a resolution passed in the state assembly. There are economic, political, administrative political reasons for demands new states. They could be real and constructed. In India, there have been movements for separate states since Independence. Andhra State was the first state in the country which was formed in 1953 after Independence following the death of PottiSriramulu. It was formed on linguistic basis. Indeed, there were demands from several areas for linguistic reorganization of the state. But the central government was reluctant to reorganize states on linguistic basis. However, it appointed State Reorganization Commission (SRC) in 1953 under the chairmanship of Justice Fazal Ali. The SRC recommended the reorganization of state on language basis in the way that apart from the main language, the state will recognise other languages as well. Following the recommendations of the SRC, several states were formed on language basis. However, more demands arose: and Maharashtra was created in 1960; Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh in 1966, on language basis (Punjab on religion basis). The reorganization of northeast was not part of SRC recommendations. It was done later. And its basis was not language but race, culture and customs in the northeast. Thus, Nagaland was formed in 1963, Meghalaya in 1972. Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand formed in 2000 are the examples of new states created in the Hindi belt, and Telangana in 2014 in south India. The new states have not been created on linguistic basis but on the basis of level of development.

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8.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Statehood movement is a collective action for creation of a separate state from out of a single or more states. An autonomy movement is different from a statehood movement in the sense that it does not aim to get a separate state out of the existing state but autonomy within the state.
- 2) A separate state can be created according to Article 3. Constitutionally, the initiative for this is taken by the President of India. He may do it in consultation with the state out of which new state has to be carved out. The concerned state gives consent through a resolution passed in the state legislature. After this, if the both Houses of Parliament pass it, it gets the assent of the President of the country. It leads to creation of new state.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) After Independence, the central government was not in favour of forming states on the linguistic basis. Since India faced multiple challenges following partition. the leadership believed that such a move would weaken the Indian Union. However, Andhra State was formed on linguistic basis after the death of Potti Sriramulu. Responding to the demands making language as the basis for statehood, the government appointed the State Reorganization Commission (SRC). The SRC recommended linguistic organization of the states. Consequently, in the 1950s linguistic organization took place. Later, government considered to form states in view of popular support to it in the states which were to be affected by formation of new states.
- 2) Reorganization of northeast India took place at different times after Independence. Nagaland was the first state which was formed in 1963. It

was followed by formation of Meghalaya in 1972, and elevation of Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram to the status of states after the Assam Accord of 1985. In the post-Accord demands for Bodoland and other states got accelerated. The reorganization of northeast was not done in the light of the report of the SRC. The basis of reorganization of northeast was development and cultural and ethnic factors.

- 3) In different regions of the Hindi belt in India, there have been demands for statehoods. Most important among these were for division into four states including Uttarakhand in Uttar Pradesh, creation of Chhattisgarh in Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand in Bihar. Principal reason for these states has been level of development in these regions. Excepting demand for creation of Harit Pradesh in western Uttar Pradesh, in other cases in the Hindi belt it has been argued that in the existing states, their regions remain backward due to discrimination by the central and state governments and other regions within their states. Formation of new states will help them develop independently. In the Harit Pradesh case, it was argued it was a developed region and bore expenses for development of backward regions in UP. Except occasional mobilisation, the statehood movements in the Hindi belt lacked popular mobilisation. They were raised by political elite, usually in some political contexts.