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TOPIC: Linguistic Reorganization of Indian States after Independence

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Linguistic Reorganization of Indian States after Independence

Dhar Commission:

The integration and merger of princely states was purely ad hoc arrangement and there was need for reorganization of states on a permanent basis on account of the haphazard growth of provinces, disparity between various states and multilingual nature of the states.

In 1948, the government appointed commission under S K Dhar, a judge of the Allahabad High Court, to examine the case for the reorganization of states on the linguistic basis.

Admitting the importance of the reorganization of states on a linguistic basis, the commission, however, attached more importance to historical, geographical and economic considerations. It favoured reorganization on the basis of administrative convenience rather than linguistic considerations.

JVP Committee:

In December, 1948, Congress appointed a committee under Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabh bhai Patel and Pattabhi Sitaramayya (known as the JVP Committee) to examine the issue afresh. The committee, in a report submitted in April, 1949, dismissed the idea of reorganization on a linguistic basis. However the committee stated that the problem may be re-examined in the light of public demand.

First Linguistic State:

In 1953, the government was forced to create a separate state of Andhra Pradesh for Telugu-speaking people following the long-drawn agitation and death of Potti Sriramulu after a hunger strike for 56 days. Thus, the first linguistic state of Andhra Pradesh was created under pressure.

Fazl Commission:

This led to the demand for creation of states on linguistic basis from other parts of country and on December 22, 1953, Jawaharlal Nehru announced the appointment of a commission under

Fazl Ali to consider this demand. The other two members of the commission were K M Panikkar and HN Kunzru. The commission submitted its report after taking into account the wishes and claims of people in different regions.

It recommended the reorganization of the whole country into sixteen states and three centrally administered areas. However, the government did not accept these recommendations in toto.

While accepting Commission's recommendation to do away with the four-fold distribution of states as provided under the original Constitution, it divided the country into 14 states and 6 union territories under the States Reorganization Act 1956.

The states were Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Bombay, Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Madras, Mysore, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. The six union territories were Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Laccadive, Minicoy and Amindivi Islands, Manipur and Tripura. The Act was implemented in November, 1956.

Concept of Zonal Council:

With a view to promoting cooperation among various states, the act provided for five zonal councils—for the northern, central, eastern, western and southern zone states, respectively. Each zonal council consisted of a union minister appointed by the President; the chief ministers of states in the zones, two ministers of each state in the zone, one member from each union territory nominated by the President (if such a territory was included in the zone), and the advisor to the Governor of Assam in the case of the eastern zone. In addition, the zonal council was to have certain advisors.

Diversion of the State of Bombay:

In 1960, as a result of agitation and violence, the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat were created by bifurcating the state of Bombay. With this the strength of the Indian states rose to 15.

Formation of Nagaland:

In 1963, the state of Nagaland was formed to placate the Nagas. However, before providing it the status of a full-fledged state, it was placed under the control of the Governor of Assam in 1961. With this the strength of the Indian states rose to 16.

Territories from France and Portuguese:

After the acquisition of Chandernagore, Mahe, Yaman and Karekal from France, and the territories of Goa, Daman and Diu from the Portuguese, these were either merged with the neighbouring states or given the status of union territories.

Shah Commission:

In 1966, the Parliament passed the Punjab Reorganization Act after an agitation for the formation of Punjabi Subha. This step was taken on the recommendation of the Shah Commission appointed in April, 1966.

As a result of this act, the Punjabi-speaking areas were constituted into the state of Haryana and the hilly areas were merged with the adjoining Union Territory of Himachal Pradesh. Chandigarh was made a Union Territory and was to serve as a common capital of Punjab and Haryana. The two states were also to have a common High Court, common university and joint arrangement for the management of the major components of the existing irrigation and power system. With the division of Punjab, the strength of states rose to 17.

Further Formation of the State:

1. In 1969, the state of Meghalaya was created out of the state of Assam. Initially, the state was given autonomous status within Assam, but subsequently it was made a full-fledged state. This raised the strength of Indian states to 18.

2. In 1971, with the elevation of the union territory of Himachal Pradesh to the status of a state, the strength of Indian states rose to 19 and then to 21 with the conversion of the Union Territories of Tripura and Manipur into states.

3. In 1975, Sikkim was admitted as a state of the Indian Union. Initially, Sikkim was given the status of an associate state but was subsequently made a full-fledged state.

4. In 1986 it was decided to give Mizoram, a Union Territory of India, the status of a full-fledged state. However, it actually acquired the status of a state in February 1987 and became the 23rd state of the Indian Union.

5. In February 1987 Arunachal Pradesh, another Union Territory of India, was also given the status of a state and became the twenty-fourth state of the Indian Union.

6. In May 1987 the state of Goa was created by separating the territory of Goa from the Union territory of Goa, Daman and Diu. While Daman and Diu continued to be a Union Territory, Goa became the 25th state of the Indian Union. Three new states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttaranchal were created in November 2000.

Present Status of the List of States and Union Territories:

At present, the Indian Union consists of 28 states and seven union territories. These are

States:

Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal and West Bengal. Union Territories Andaman

and Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar haveli, Delhi, Daman and Diu. Lakshadweep, Pondicherry.

Union Territory of Delhi became National Territory of Delhi on February 1992 under 69th Amendment. As a result of this change, the existing Metropolitan Council (with 56 seats) was replaced by a 70 member Legislative Assembly.