

Linguistic State-reorganisation

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- The Linguistic reorganization of India was raised in the Constituent assembly itself. It appointed in 1948 the Linguistic Provinces commission, headed by Justice S.K.Dar, to enquire into the desirability of linguistic province. The Dar Commission advised against the step at the time for it might threaten national unity and also be administratively inconvenient.
- The Congress appointed a committee (JVP) in December 1948 consisting of Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel and Pattabhi Sitaramayya, President of the Congress to look into the linguistic question again. The committee advised against the creation of linguistic states for the time being, emphasising on unity, national security, and economic development as the need of the hour.
- 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 first demand for a linguistic province was raised by the Telgu speaking people of Andhra. On 16 August 1951, Swami Sitaram a Gandhian leader, started a fast unto death in support of the demand for a separate Andhra state, the movement was renewed on 15 December 1952 by Potti Sriramulu, ultimately lost his life after fasting for fifty six days. This caused a political furore and violent clashes broke out in several places. 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. The Andhra leaders were unwilling to concede Madras even though on

linguistic and also geographic grounds it belonged to Tamil Nadu. The government conceded the demand for a separate state of Andhra, which finally came into existence on 1st October 1953. Along side Tamil Nadu was created as a Tamil-speaking state. But despite linguistic unity, Andhra was hardly a homogenous region, as there were significant economic, geographic and cultural differences between the coastal districts known as the Circars and the southern districts known as Rayalaseema. However the tensions within remain unresolved. 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.

- To meet the demand as well as to delay the matters, Nehru appointed in August 1953, the State Reorganisation Commission(SRC) with Justice Fazl Ali, K.M.Pannikar and Hridaynath Kunzru as members, to examine thoroughly the entire question of the reorganisation of the states of the union. Different linguistic groups clashed with each other verbally as well as sometimes physically. The SRC submitted its report in October 1955. While laying down that due considerations should be given to administrative and economic factors, it recognised for most part of the linguistic principle and recommended redrawing of state boundaries on that basis. It opposed however the splitting of Bombay and Punjab. Despite criticisms, with some modifications, the SRC recommendations were accepted.
- The State 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. Under pressure the government decided in June 1956 to divide the Bombay state into two linguistic states of Maharashtra and Gujrat with Bombay city forming a separate, centrally administered state. This move was strongly opposed by the Maharashtrians. In view of the disagreement over Bombay city, the government stuck to its decision and passed the States Reorganisation Act in November 1956. 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 Gujrat, with Bombay city being included in Maharashtra and Ahmedabad being made the capital of Gujrat.
- In Punjab also an exception was made to the linguistic principle. In 1956, the states of PEPSU, had been merged with Punjab, which however remained a trilingual state having three language speakers.-Punjab, Hindi and Pahari-within its borders. The SRC had also refused to accept the demand for a separate Punjabi-speaking state on the ground that would not solve either the language or the communal problem of Punjab. Finally in 1966, Indira Gandhi agreed to the division of Punjab and Hindi speaking states of Punjab and Haryana, with the Pahari speaking district of Kangra and a part of the Hosiarpur 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.

- While until 1970s linguistic demand continued to be the guiding principle for the creation of new states, later, ethnic identity and administrative and financial viability came to be considered as the new criteria for state formation, The issue of ethnic identity became particularly significant in north east India,, where the Nagas led the charge first by not voting in the first general elections, then by turning against the Prime minister during his visit in 1953, and finally by starting an insurgency, forcing the Government of India to concede to the demand for a separate state of Nagaland in 1960, which was with more claims still remaining unresolved, inaugurated in 1963. Other states in the north east followed gradually with more claims remaining unresolved. In 1972, Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura, were accorded statehood, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh being made union territories, later granted statehood.
- Thus after more than ten years of continuous strife and popular struggles linguistic reorganisation of India was largely completed. Linguistic reorganisation 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. States reorganisation 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 ego also finds occasional expression, but the reorganisation has removed a major factor affecting cohesion of the country. Telangana state was formed in 2014. At present there are 28 states and 8 union territories. In August 2019, the Parliament of India passed the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation act 2019, which contains provisions to reorganise the state of Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh effective from 31 October 2019.

- An important aspect of the language problem has been the status of minority languages. To solve this problem certain fundamental rights were provided to the linguistic minorities in the constitution. Article 30 states that ‘all minorities whether based on religion or language , shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice and state shall not make any discrimination in granting aid to them. Among the minority languages Urdu is the largest minority tongue in India .It is listed in the eighth schedule of the Constitution.

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