

CHALLENGES TO NATION BUILDING

CHALLENGES FACED BY INDEPENDENT INDIA:

1. To shape a nation that was united, yet accommodating the diversity in our society. India was a land of continental size and diversity. Its people spoke different languages and followed different cultures and religions. At that time it was widely believed that a country full of such kinds of diversity could not remain together for long.
2. To establish democracy. India adopted representative democracy based on the parliamentary form of government. These features ensure that the political competition would take place in a democratic framework.
3. The third challenge was to ensure the development and well-being of the entire society and not only of some sections. Here again the Constitution clearly laid down the principle of equality and special protection to socially disadvantaged groups and religious and cultural communities. The Constitution also set out in the Directive Principles of State Policy the welfare goals that democratic politics must achieve.

In this chapter, we focus on the first challenge of nation building.

THE TWO NATION THEORY: According to the ‘two-nation theory’ advanced by the Muslim League, India consisted of not one but two ‘people’, Hindus and Muslims. That is why it demanded Pakistan, a separate country for the Muslims.

PROBLEMS IN THE PROCESS OF PARTITION:

1. There was no single belt of Muslim majority areas in British India. There were two areas of concentration, one in the west and one in the east. There was no way these two parts could be joined. So it was decided that the new country, Pakistan, will comprise two territories, West and East Pakistan separated by a long expanse of Indian territory.
2. Not all Muslim majority areas wanted to be in Pakistan.
3. Two of the Muslim majority provinces of British India, Punjab and Bengal, had very large areas where the non-Muslims were in majority. The decision to bifurcate these areas on religious lines could not be made by the midnight of 14-15 August. It meant that a large number of people did not know on the day of Independence whether they were in India or in Pakistan.

4. There was the problem of 'minorities' on both sides of the border. Lakhs of Hindus and Sikhs in the areas that were now in Pakistan and an equally large number of Muslims on the Indian side of Punjab and Bengal (and to some extent Delhi and surrounding areas) found themselves trapped.

Consequences of Partition:

1. There were killings and atrocities on both sides of the border in the name of religion.
2. Cities like Lahore, Amritsar and Kolkata became divided into 'communal zones'.
3. Minorities on both sides of the border fled their home and often found temporary shelter in 'refugee camps'.
4. Thousands of women were abducted on both sides of the border. They were made to convert to the religion of the abductor and were forced into marriage. In many cases women were killed by their own family members to preserve the 'family honour'.
5. Many children were separated from their parents. Those who did manage to cross the border found that they had no home.
6. Even financial assets, and things like tables, chairs, typewriters, paper-clips, books and also musical instruments of the police band! The employees of the government and the railways were also 'divided'.
7. It is estimated that the Partition forced about 80 lakh people to migrate across the new border. Between five to ten lakh people were killed in Partition related violence.

PROBLEM IN INTEGRATION OF PRINCELY STATES:

Just before Independence it was announced by the British that with the end of their rule over India, paramountcy of the British crown over Princely States would also lapse. This meant that all these states, as many as 565 in all, would become legally independent. The British government took the view that all these states were free to join either India or Pakistan or remain independent if they so wished. This decision was left not to the people but to the princely rulers of these states. The ruler of Travancore announced that the state had decided on Independence. The Nizam of Hyderabad made a similar announcement the next day. Rulers like the Nawab of Bhopal were averse to joining the Constituent Assembly.

SARDAR VALLABHAI PATEL:

Sardar Patel was India's Deputy Prime Minister and the Home Minister during the crucial period immediately following Independence. He played a historic role in negotiating with the rulers of princely states firmly but diplomatically and bringing most of them into the Indian Union.

INTEGRATION OF HYDRABAD:

The ruler of Hyderabad carried the title 'Nizam', and he was one of the world's richest men. The Nizam wanted an independent status for Hyderabad. He entered into what was called the Standstill Agreement with India in November 1947 for a year while negotiations with the Indian government were going on. In the meantime, a movement of the people of Hyderabad State against the Nizam's rule gathered force. The peasantry in the Telangana region in particular, was the victim of Nizam's oppressive rule and rose against him. Women who had seen the worst of this oppression joined the movement in large numbers. The Nizam responded by unleashing a para-military force known as the Razakars on the people. murdered, maimed, raped and looted, targeting particularly the non- Muslims. The central government had to order the army to tackle the situation. In September 1948, Indian army moved in to control the Nizam's forces. After a few days of intermittent fighting, the Nizam surrendered. This led to Hyderabad's accession to India.

INTEGRATION OF MANIPUR:

A few days before Independence, the Maharaja of Manipur, Bodhachandra Singh, signed the Instrument of Accession with the Indian government on the assurance that the internal autonomy of Manipur would be maintained. Under the pressure of public opinion, the Maharaja held elections in Manipur in June 1948 and the state became a constitutional monarchy. Thus Manipur was the first part of India to hold an election based on universal adult franchise.

THE FIRST STATE TO BE FORMED ON THE BASIS OF LANGUAGE:

The Vishalandhra movement (as the movement for a separate Andhra was called) demanded that the Telugu speaking areas should be separated from the Madras province of which they were a part and be made into a separate Andhra

province. Potti Sriramulu, a Congress leader and a veteran Gandhian, went on an indefinite fast that led to his death after 56 days. This caused great unrest and resulted in violent outbursts in Andhra region. People in large numbers took to the streets. Many were injured or lost their lives in police firing. In Madras, several legislators resigned their seats in protest. Finally, the Prime Minister announced the formation of a separate Andhra state in December 1952.

FORMATION OF STATE RE-ORGANISATION COMMISSION:

The formation of Andhra Pradesh spurred the struggle for making of other states on linguistic lines in other parts of the country. These struggles forced the Central Government into appointing a States Reorganisation Commission in 1953 to look into the question of redrawing of the boundaries of states. The Commission in its report accepted that the boundaries of the state should reflect the boundaries of different languages. On the basis of its report the States Reorganisation Act was passed in 1956. This led to the creation of 14 states and six union territories.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ON LOOSE SHEETS:

- Q1. Discuss the role of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in the integration of the states.
- Q2. What was the task of the State Reorganisation Commission? What was its most salient recommendation?
- Q3. What was the Vishalandhra Movement?
- Q4. After Independence, why did our leaders change their minds about carving out states on the basis of language? (Find answer on pg 22)
- Q5. How was Manipur merged with the Indian Union?
- Q6. Write a short note on the people's movement of Hyderabad. (What was the Standstill Agreement?)
- Q7. Discuss the problems involved in the integration of the Princely States.
- Q8. Discuss the consequences of the partition.
- Q9. Discuss the principles and difficulties involved in the process of partition.
- Q10. Examine the 3 challenges that independent India faced for nation building.
