

# The Politics of Secession & Accommodation in India

*(Part-1)*

**POLS4009 : Politics in India**



**Dr. Narendra Singh**

Assistant Professor  
Department of Political Science  
Mahatma Gandhi Central University,  
Motihari, Bihar

# EMERGENCE OF REGIONAL ASPIRATIONS



- ❖ 1980s : a period of rising regional aspirations for autonomy, often outside the framework of the Indian Union.
- ❖ these movements frequently involved armed assertions
- ❖ followed by repression by the government, and a collapse of the political and electoral processes.
- ❖ most of these struggles concluded in negotiated settlements or accords between the central government and the groups leading the movement for autonomy.

# APPROACH OF INDIAN CONSTITUTION

Indian Constitution/ nation-building :

basic principle      different regions and linguistic groups retain their own culture.

- ❖ social life with distinctive cultures
- ❖ Indian nationalism: balance of unity and diversity
- ❖ European countries saw cultural diversity as a threat to the nation, but India maintained one nation with diversity



# DEMOCRATIC APPROACH TOWARDS DIVERSITY

## Democracy :

- ❖ allows the political expressions of regional aspirations , not assume them as anti-national.
- ❖ allows multiple political parties and groups to address people's regional identity, aspirations and specific regional problems.
- ❖ considered it Indian strength
- ❖ democratic politics opportunity : regional issues and problems receive adequate attention and accommodation in the policy making
- ❖ Such an arrangement may sometimes lead to tensions and problems.



- ❖ Sometimes, the concern for national unity may overshadow the regional needs and aspirations.
- ❖ Therefore, political conflicts over issues of power of the regions, their rights and their separate existence are common to nations require to respect diversity .

# ISSUES FOLLOWING INDEPENDENCE

- ❖ many difficult issues like Partition, displacement, integration of Princely States, reorganisation of States and so on.
- ❖ Soon after Independence, the issue of Jammu and Kashmir came up.
- ❖ Similarly, in some parts of the north-east, there was no consensus about being a part of India.
- ❖ First Nagaland and then Mizoram witnessed strong movements demanding separation from India.
- ❖ In the south, some groups from the Dravid movement raised the idea of a separate country.

# LINGUISTICS STRAINS

- ❖ the formation of linguistic States : Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Gujarat were among the regions affected by linguistics and anti Hindi agitations.
- ❖ In southern India, particularly Tamil Nadu, protests against making Hindi the official national language of the country.
- ❖ In the north, strong pro-Hindi agitations demanding Hindi official language

From the late 1950s, people speaking the Punjabi language started agitating for a separate State for Panjabis , the States of Punjab and Haryana were created in 1966.

Later, the States of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttaranchal (now Uttarakhand) were created.

Thus ,the challenge of diversity was met by redrawing the internal boundaries of the country.

# Secessionist Movements

The North-  
East

Demands  
for  
autonomy

Movements  
against  
outsiders

Sikkim's  
merger

# JAMMU AND KASHMIR: MAJOR ISSUE



- ❖ The 'Kashmir issue' : major issue between India and Pakistan.
- ❖ Pakistan has always claimed that Kashmir valley should be part of Pakistan.
- ❖ Pakistan sponsored a tribal invasion of the State in 1947
- ❖ one part of the State came under Pakistani control
- ❖ India claims that this area is under illegal occupation
- ❖ Pakistan describes this area as 'Azad Kashmir'
- ❖ Ever since 1947, Kashmir has remained a major issue of conflict between India and Pakistan



- ❖ three social and political regions: Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh.
- ❖ The heart of the Kashmir region is the Kashmir valley
- ❖ language: Kashmiri speaking , mostly Muslim with a small Kashmiri speaking Hindu minority.
- ❖ Jammu region is a mix of foothills and plains, of Hindus
- ❖ Gujjars tribe speak their own language
- ❖ Ladakhi region: Ladakhi, Tibetan, Urdu and Balti are the official languages of Ladakh.
- ❖ Muslims and Sikhs speak various languages.
- ❖ The Ladakh region is mountainous, divided between Buddhists and Muslims

# ROOTS OF THE PROBLEM

- ❖ Before 1947, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) was a Princely State
- ❖ Its Hindu ruler, Hari Singh, did not want to merge with India and tried to negotiate with India and Pakistan to have an independent status for his state.
- ❖ The Pakistani leaders thought the Kashmir region 'belonged' to Pakistan, since majority population of the State was Muslim
- ❖ 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. India extended the military support
- ❖ the Maharaja signed an 'Instrument of Accession' with the Government of India. It was also agreed that once the situation normalised, the views of the people of J&K will be ascertained about their future. Sheikh Abdullah took over as the Prime Minister of the State of J&K (the head of the government in the State was then called Prime Minister) in March 1948. India agreed to maintain the autonomy of Jammu and Kashmir.

- ❖ Kashmir was given a special status by Article 370 in our Constitution
- ❖ Article 370 gives greater autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir compared to other States of India.
- ❖ The State has its own Constitution.
- ❖ All provisions of the Indian Constitution are not applicable to the State.
- ❖ Laws passed by the Parliament apply to J&K only if the State agrees.

### Two opposite reactions :

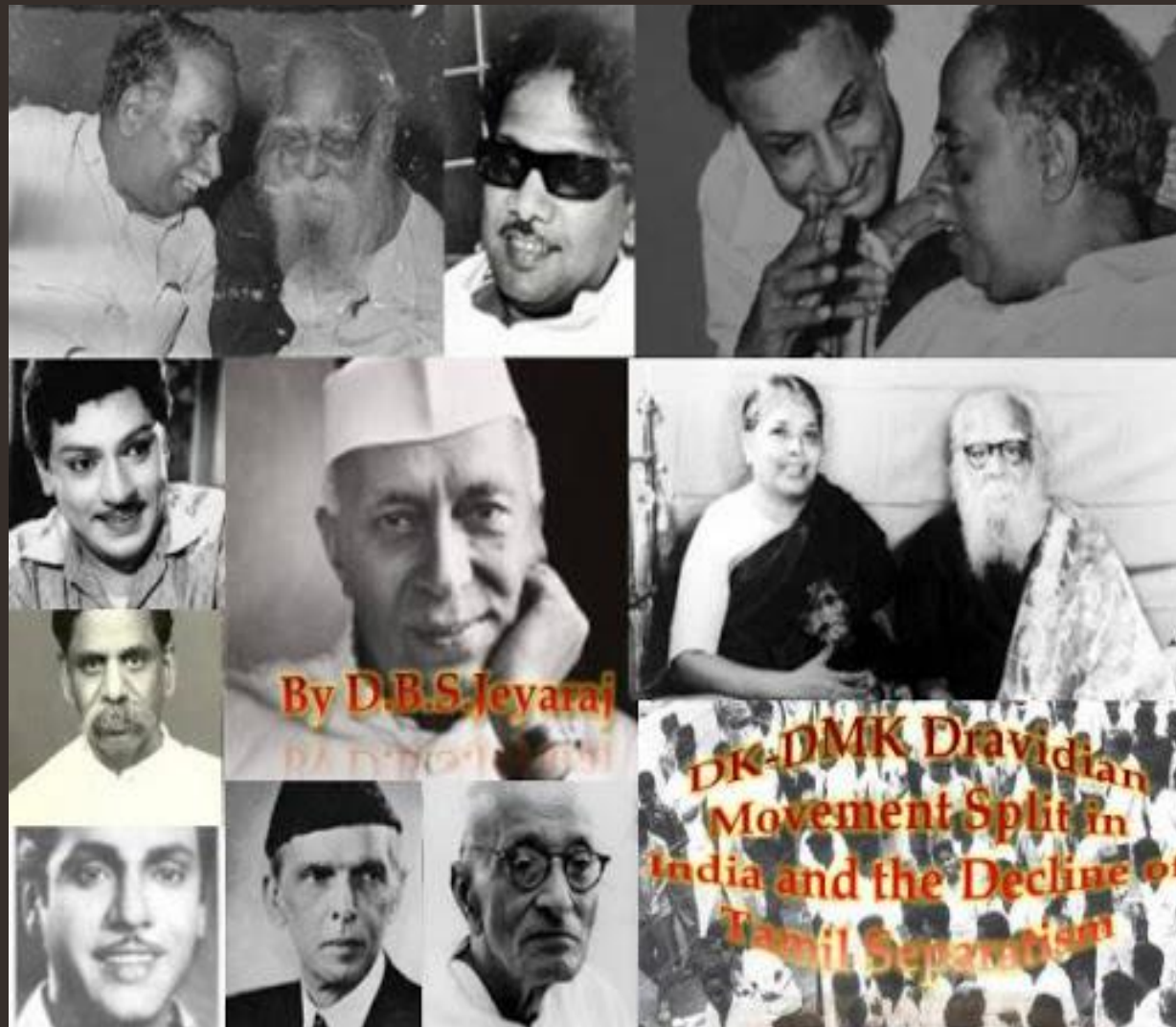
- (a) Outside of J&K believes that the special status of the State conferred by Article 370 does not allow full integration of the State with India.
- (b) Article 370 should therefore be revoked and J&K should be like any other State in India.

# CENTRE REVOKED ART 370

- ❖ By 1989, the J&K State in the grip of a militant movement
- ❖ muslims youth mobilised around the cause of a separate Kashmiri nation
- ❖ The terrorists got material and military support from Pakistan
- ❖ Pakistan build a theory, 'Bleed India with Thousand cuts'
- ❖ The Narendra Modi government revoked the controversial Article 370 of the Indian Constitution
- ❖ bifurcate the state of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories -- Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.
- ❖ Jammu and Kashmir will have a legislature like Delhi and Puducherry, where key subjects like law and order are with the Centre
- ❖ Ladakh will have no legislature like Chandigarh
- ❖ The Governor of Jammu and Kashmir will now become a Lieutenant Governor.



# DRAVIDIAN MOVEMENT



- ❖ “The north thrives even as the south decays”, popular slogan of the Dravidian movement
- ❖ Some sections of this movement ambitious of creating a Dravid nation
- ❖ the movement remained non violent
- ❖ Used democratic means
- ❖ The movement acquired political power in the State and also became influential at the national level.

- ❖ The Dravidian movement led to the formation of Dravida Kazhagam [DK] under the leadership of Tamil social reformer E.V. Ramasami ‘Periyar’.
- ❖ Opposed the Brahmins’ dominance
- ❖ Regional pride against the political, economic and cultural domination of the North.
- ❖ Movement limited to Tamil Nadu.

# PUNJAB UNREST



- ❖ The social composition of the State changed first with Partition and later on after the carving out of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh
- ❖ The decade of 1980s also witnessed major developments in the State of Punjab
- ❖ India was reorganised on linguistic lines in 1950s, Punjab in 1966 became a Punjabi speaking State
- ❖ The Akali Dal, formed in 1920 as the political wing of the Sikhs, led the movement for the formation of a 'Punjabi Suba'
- ❖ The Sikhs became a majority in the State of Punjab.
- ❖ The Akali government dismissed in 1980
- ❖ The Akali Dal launched a movement on the question of the distribution of water between Punjab and its neighbouring States
- ❖ A section of the religious leaders raised the question of autonomous Sikh identity

- ❖ The leadership of the movement sided moderate Akalis to the extremist elements and took the form of armed insurgency
- ❖ These militants made their headquarters inside the Sikh holy shrine, the Golden Temple in Amritsar, and turned it into an armed fortress
- ❖ In June 1984, the Government of India carried out 'Operation Blue Star', code name for army action in the Golden Temple
- ❖ In this operation, the Government could successfully flush out the militants
- ❖ But it also damaged the historic temple and deeply hurt the sentiments of the Sikhs
- ❖ Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated on 31 October 1984
- ❖ Followed by more than two thousand Sikhs killed alone in the national capital, besides in other parts in India
- ❖ Many Sikh families lost their male members and thus suffered great emotional and heavy financial loss. What hurt the Sikhs most was that the government
- ❖ Twenty years later, speaking in the Parliament in 2005, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh expressed regret over these killings and apologised to the nation for the anti-Sikh violence.

# PEACE ACCORD IN PUNJAB

- ❖ Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi came into power in 1984
- ❖ In July 1985, the Rajiv Gandhi – Longowal Accord or the Punjab Accord, a step towards bringing normalcy to Punjab.
- ❖ Chandigarh would be transferred to Punjab
- ❖ A separate commission would be appointed to resolve the border dispute between Punjab and Haryana
- ❖ Tribunal would be set up to decide the sharing of Ravi-Beas river water among Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan
- ❖ Withdrawal of Armed Forces Special Power Act



# THE NORTH-EAST



In the North-East, regional aspirations reached a turning point in 1980s.

This region now consists of seven States, also referred to as the 'seven sisters'.

The region has only 4 per cent of the country's population but about twice as much share of its area.

A small corridor of about 22 kilometers connects the region to the rest of the country.

The region shares boundaries with China, Myanmar and Bangladesh and serves as India's gateway to South East Asia.

The region has witnessed a lot of change since 1947.

Tripura, Manipur and Khasi Hills of Meghalaya were erstwhile Princely States which merged with India after Independence.

The entire region of North-East has undergone considerable political reorganisation.

Nagaland State was created in 1960; Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura in 1972 while Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram became separate States only in 1986.

The Partition of India in 1947 had reduced the North-East to a land locked region and affected its economy. Cut off from the rest of India, the region suffered neglect in developmental terms.

Mizoram :After Independence, the Mizo Hills area was made an autonomous district within Assam.

Some Mizos believed that they were never a part of British India and therefore did not belong to the Indian union.

But the movement for secession gained popular support after the Assam government failed to respond adequately to the great famine of 1959 in Mizo hills.

The Mizos' 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

In 1986 a peace agreement was signed between Rajiv Gandhi and Laldenga.

As per this accord Mizoram was granted full-fledged statehood with special powers and the MNF agreed to give up secessionist way.

Laldenga took over as the Minister. This accord proved important point in the history of Mizoram.

Today, Mizoram is one of most peaceful places in the region has taken big strides in literacy and development.



# DEMANDS FOR AUTONOMY

At independence the entire region except Manipur and Tripura comprised the State of Assam.

Demands for political autonomy arose when the non-Assamese felt that the Assam government was imposing Assamese language on them.

There were opposition and protest riots throughout the State. Leaders of the major tribal communities wanted to separate from Assam. They formed the Eastern India Tribal Union which later transformed into a more comprehensive All Party Hill Leaders Conference in 1960.



They demanded a tribal State to be carved out of Assam. Finally instead of one tribal State, several States got carved out of Assam.

At different points of time the 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. But this was not the end of autonomy demands in this region.

Assam : communities like the Bodos, Karbis and Dimasas wanted separate States, adopted insurgency

❖ Karbis and Dimasas have been granted autonomy under District Councils while Bodos were recently granted Autonomous Council.

Nagaland : Led Angami Zapu Phizo, the Nagas comprising of 17 major tribes and 20 sub-tribes, united under the banner of Naga National Council (NNC) in August 1947 to carry out the fight against India.

NSCM-IM's main demand has been the creation of a 'Greater Nagalim' which will also have several districts of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur.

Phizo turned down many offers of negotiated settlement.

The Naga National Council launched an armed struggle for sovereignty of Nagas.

On Aug. 3, 2015, the government of India and the largest Naga rebel organization, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland – Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM), had reached an agreement on the framework for a peace accord.

This was not acceptable to other rebels.

The problem in Nagaland still awaits a final resolution.



# MOVEMENTS AGAINST OUTSIDERS

The large scale migration into the North-East : the 'local' communities against people who were seen as 'outsiders' or migrants.

seen as encroachers on scarce resources like land and potential competitors to employment opportunities and political power.

This issue has taken political and sometimes violent form in many States of the North-East.

The Assam Movement from 1979 to 1985 : movements against 'outsiders'.

The Assamese suspected that there were huge numbers of illegal Bengali Muslim settlers from Bangladesh.

They felt that unless these foreign nationals are detected and deported they would reduce the indigenous Assamese into a minority.

economic issues , widespread poverty and unemployment in Assam despite the existence of natural resources like oil, tea and coal.

In 1979 the All Assam Students' Union (AASU), a students' group led an anti-foreigner movement.

Against illegal migrations, against domination of Bengalis and other outsiders, and against faulty voters' register included the names of lakhs of immigrants.

The movement demand : all outsiders entered the State after 1951 sent back.

Many tragic and violent incidents leading to loss of property and human lives.

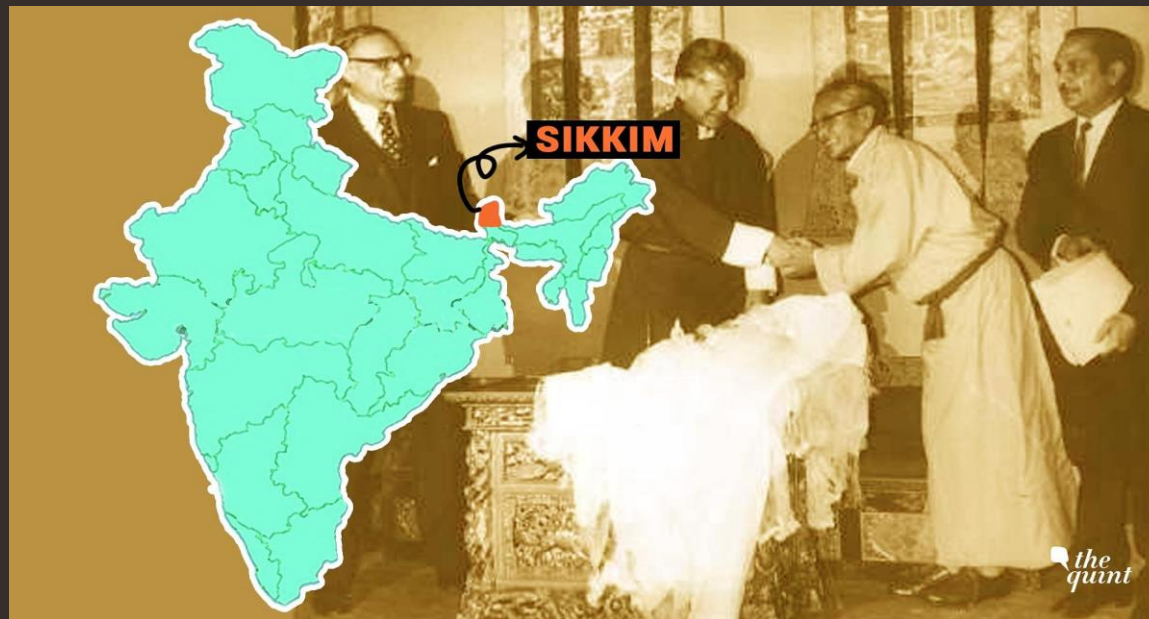
The Rajiv Gandhi government signed an accord with AASU in 1985.

The issue of the 'outsiders' continues to be a live issue in the politics of Assam and many other places in the North-East.

In Tripura as the original inhabitants reduced to being a minority in their own land

The hostility of the local population to Chakma refugees in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

# SIKKIM'S MERGER



At the time of Independence, Sikkim was a 'protectorate' of India not a part of India, also not a fully sovereign country.

Sikkim's defence and foreign relations were looked after by India internal administration under the Chogyal, Sikkim's monarch

The Chogyal : unable to deal with the democratic aspirations of the people.

An overwhelming majority of Sikkim's population Nepali

The Chogyal the rule of a small elite from the minority Lepcha-Bhutia community.

The anti-Chogyal leaders of both the communities sought and got support from the Government of India.

The first democratic elections to Sikkim assembly in 1974

Sikkim Congress came into power, which stood for greater integration with India.

The assembly first sought the status of 'associate state' and then in April 1975 passed a resolution asking for full integration with India.

This was followed by a hurriedly organised referendum that put a stamp of popular approval on the assembly's request.

The Indian Parliament accepted this request

Sikkim became the 22nd State of the Indian union.



**THANK YOU**