

## 8<sup>th</sup> – India After Independence I



**A New and Divided Nation:** When India became independent in August 1947, it faced a series of very great challenges. As a result of partition, 8 million refugees had come into the country from what was now Pakistan. These people had to be found homes and jobs. Then there was the problem of the princely states, almost 500 of them. Each ruled by a maharaja or a nawab, each of whom had to be persuaded to join the new nation.

**Integration of The Princely States:** As already seen, at the time the British left, there were 562 princely states in India. On 1 July 1947, the British cancelled their treaty rights with the princely states, and left it to their choice to either stay independent or to join Pakistan or India. Sardar Vallabhai Patel, the 'Iron Man' of India, took control of the newly created Indian States Departments. His diplomacy and his appeal to their sense of patriotism worked wonders with the princes. Only three states did not agree to become part of the Indian Union—Junagadh, Hyderabad and Kashmir.

The problems of the refugees and of the princely states had to be addressed immediately. In the longer term, the new nation had to adopt a political system that would best serve the hopes and expectations of its population.

India's population in 1947 was large, almost 345 million. It was also divided.

There were divisions between high castes and low castes, between the majority Hindu community and Indians who practiced other faiths. The citizens of this vast land spoke many different languages, wore many different kinds of dress, ate different kinds of food and practiced different professions.

To the problem of unity was added the problem of development. At independence, the vast majority of Indians lived in the villages. Farmers and peasants depended on the monsoon for their survival. So did the non-farm sector of the rural economy, for if the crops failed, barbers, carpenters, weavers and other service groups would not get paid for their services either. In the cities, factory workers lived in crowded slums with little access to education or health care. Clearly, the new nation had to lift its masses out of poverty by increasing new, job-creating industries.

**Unity and development** had to go hand in hand.

**Junagadh** was a small seaport state in Kathiawad (Saurashtra). The Nawab of Junagadh wanted to join Pakistan, while the people of the state wanted to join India. The Indian army was sent to take over the state. The Nawab fled to Pakistan, and Junagadh became part of India.

**Hyderabad** enjoyed a special position as the largest princely state of India. The Nizam declared Hyderabad to be independent. The Indian leaders felt that the future of India as a unified nation would face grave danger if this was allowed to happen. Indian troops were sent to Hyderabad. The government of India announced that it was not a war but 'police action', and Hyderabad was annexed to India.

The case of Kashmir was unique. Unlike Hyderabad and Junagadh, Kashmir had a Hindu ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh, ruling over a majority of Muslim people. Its territory touched both India and Pakistan and hence, it could join either of the two. But Hari Singh had secret hopes of remaining independent. At this time, Kashmir was invaded by Pathan tribes from Pakistan. Hari Singh appealed to India for help and, in return, he agreed to join India. Both Pakistan and the people of Kashmir felt cheated by this decision. The first Indo-Pakistan war broke out in



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1947. Finally, the Kashmir dispute was referred to the newly formed United Nations. In 1948, a UN truce froze the battle line of control between India and Pakistan.

**A Constitution Is Written:** Indians constitution, came into effect on 26 January 1950. One feature of the constitution was its adoption of universal adult franchise.

**A New Constitution:** Framing a new constitution was one of the important tasks before the Indian government. The Constituent Assembly met for the first time on 9 December 1946. It took three years to complete the task of framing the constitution.

All Indians above the age of 21 would be allowed to vote in state and national elections.

India was declared to be a sovereign democratic republic. The constitution ensured equality, justice and liberty for all Indian citizens. The main architect of the Indian constitution was Dr BR Ambedkar. He was greatly influenced by Buddhist concept of the sanghas, which was based on principles of democracy and equality.

This was revolutionary step- for never before had Indians been allowed to choose their own leaders. In other countries, such as the united kingdom and the united states, this right had been granted in stages, first only men of property had the vote. Then men who were educated were also added on. Working- class men got the vote only after a long struggle. Finally, after a bitter struggle of their own, American and British women were granted the vote. On the other hand, soon after independence, India chose to grant this right to all its citizens regardless of gender, class or education.

A second feature of the constitution was that it guaranteed equality before the law to all citizens, regardless of their caste or religious affiliation. A third feature of the constitution was that it offered special privileges for the poorest and most disadvantaged Indians. The practice of untouchability, described as a “slur and a blot” on the “fair name of India”, was abolished. The constituent assembly also recommended that a certain percentage of seats in legislatures as well as jobs in government be reserved for members of the lowest castes.

The constituent Assembly spent many days discussing the powers of the central government versus those of the state governments. Some members thought that the centre’s interests should be foremost. Only a strong Centre, it was argued, “would be in a position to think and plan for the well- being of the country a whole”. Other members felt that the provinces should have greater autonomy and freedom.

The constitution sought to balance these competing claims by providing three lists of subjects: a union list, with subjects such as taxes, defense and foreign affairs, which would be the exclusive responsibility of the centre; a state list of subjects, such as education and health, which would be taken care of principally by the states; a concurrent list, under which come subjects such as forests and agriculture, in which the centre and the states would have joint responsibility.

Another major debate in the constituent assembly concerned language. Many leave India with the British rulers. Its place, they argued, should be taken by Hindi, however, those who did not speak Hindi were of a different opinion. Speaking in the Assembly, T.T. Krishnamachari conveyed “a warning on behalf



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from India if Hindi was imposed on them. A compromise was finally arrived at: namely, that while Hindi would be the “official language” of India, English would be used in the courts, the services, and communications between one state and another.

Many Indians contributed to the framing of the Constitution. But perhaps the most important role was played by Dr B. R. Ambedkar, who was chairman of the drafting committee, and under whose supervision the document was finalized.

**National Language:** India was multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-lingual country. When India became independent, leaders felt the need for a common language that could link people of different regions. After long decision, the leaders chose Hindi was not accepted by other regions, especially the south. Therefore, English continues to be used for official purposes.

**Formation of States:** In 1956 the states were reorganized on the basis of language. Bombay province was divided into Gujarat and Maharashtra; Madras Province was divided into Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh; and Bengal Province was divided into Bihar, Bengal and Odisha. Twenty-two regional language have official status.

**The Indian National Congress-** the main party of the freedom struggle- had promised that once the country won independence, each major linguistic group would have its own province. India had been divided on the basis of religion: despite the wishes and efforts of Mahatma Gandhi, freedom had come not to one nation but to two. As a result of the partition of India, more than a million people had been killed in riots between Hindus and Muslims.

The congress leaders would now go back on their promise created great disappointment. The Kannada speakers, Malayalam speakers, the Marathi speakers, had all looked forward to having their own state. The strongest protests, however, came from the Telugu- speaking districts of what was the Madras Presidency. When Nehru went to campaign there during the general elections of 1952, he was met with black flags and slogans demanding “we want Andhra”. The protest were so widespread and intense that the central government was forced to give in to the demand. Thus, on 1 October 1953, the new state of Andhra came into being, which subsequently became Andhra Pradesh.

After the creation of Andhra, other linguistic communities also demanded their own separate states. A state reorganization commission was set up, which submitted its report in 1956, recommending the redrawing of district and provincial boundaries to form compact provinces of Assamese, Bengali, Oriya, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada and Telugu speakers respectively. The large Hindi-speaking region of north India was also to be broken up into several states. A little later, in 1960, the bilingual state of Bombay was divided into separate states for Marathi and Gujarati speakers, in 1966, the state of Punjab was also divided into Punjab and Haryana, the former for the Punjabi speakers (who were also mostly Sikhs), the latter for the rest (who spoke not Punjabi but versions of Haryanvi or Hindi).

**Planning for Development:** As a result of years of colonial exploitation, the newly formed Indian democracy faced poverty, social injustice, unemployment, illiteracy, absence of industrial growth and agricultural ruin.



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Lifting India and Indians out of poverty, and building a modern technical and industrial base were among the major objectives of the new nation. In 1950, Nehru and the government set up a planning commission to help design and execute suitable policies for economic development. There was a broad agreement on what was called a “mixed economy” model. Here, both the state and the private sector would play important and complementary roles in increasing production and generating jobs. What, specifically, these roles were to be- which industries should be initiated by the state and which by the market, how to achieve a balance between the different regions and states- was to be defined by the planning commission.

The Planning Commission to prepared a succession of five Years Plans for national development. Nehru modeled these Five-Year Plans on those of the Soviet Union. Through these plans, India made great progress in areas like industry, agriculture, irrigation, transport and communication, and social services.

