

# 3 India's Internal Challenges

## Introduction

We shall see some internal challenges like separatist movements, issues of north-east India, naxalism, communalism and regionalism.

### The Unrest in Punjab :

Akali Dal was the major political party in Punjab. In 1973, the Akali Dal passed the 'Aanandpur Sahib Resolution'. The following demands were made in this resolution: Chandigarh should be made part of Punjab, the Punjabi speaking parts in other States should be included in the State of Punjab, recruitment of people from Punjab in the Indian army should be increased, and more autonomy should be given to the State of Punjab. Akali Dal came to power in Punjab in 1977. While taking charge, they asked for a larger share of river waters for Punjab, 'holy city' status for Amritsar, etc. along with their old demands.

In 1980, the movement for 'Independent Khalistan' took root in Punjab. During that period, the leader of the Akali Dal was Sant Harcharan Singh Longowal. He used to direct his activists from the Golden Temple to stage protests. On the other side of the Golden Temple, armed followers started gathering around the staunch Khalistan supporter Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. During that period, terrorist activities had begun. Bhindranwale was arrested in 1981, accused of the murder of newspaper editor, Lala Jagat Narayan. After this incident, the situation worsened. Due to these developments, President's rule was imposed in Punjab in 1983. Bhindranwale went to stay at a religious place called Akal Takht. Bhindranwale's followers captured the Golden Temple and built a barricade of sand bags over there. The area looked like a fort. This greatly disturbed the peace in Punjab. It was a major challenge to Indian democracy.

**Operation Blue Star :** The main task of getting the terrorists out of the Golden Temple was entrusted to Major General Kuldeep Singh Brar. On the morning of 3rd June 1984, the mission 'Operation Blue Star' started. The Operation ended on 6th June. In this military operation, the Indian army functioned with great restraint. The operation ended with the death of Bhindranwale and other terrorists. In 1986, an operation had to be conducted against terrorists in the Golden Temple once more. It was called 'Operation Black Thunder'. After this action was taken, the process of establishment of peace in Punjab picked up momentum.

Did you Know?

1. A military expedition taken up with a particular objective is called an operation. Operation Blue Star was an operation undertaken to evict the terrorists hiding in the Golden Temple.

### Issues concerning North-east India :

North-east India consists of the eight States of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. International borders of India touch each of the States to varying extents. These States are different with respect to ethnicity,

language and cultural diversity. The first Prime Minister of independent India took the lead in bringing the tribes living in these areas into the mainstream of the country.

In 1954, he formed the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA) area, comprising of the territories on the Sino-Indian border and the tribal areas towards the north of Assam. Nehru took the position of bringing about the development of hundreds of tribes in these parts while preserving their culture. Special provisions have been made with respect to these areas in the VI Schedule of the Indian Constitution. In 1965, the responsibility of administering this area was given to the Ministry of External Affairs. The Northeastern Council Act of 1971 was supposed to advise the Central Government regarding aspects of common interest in economic and social spheres, inter-state transport, electricity, flood control, etc.

### **Mizoram :**

The tribes in north-east India have an ancient history. When India became independent, the government gave administrative autonomy to the districts of Mizo majority areas of the Lushai hills. When the States Reorganisation Commission was appointed in 1954, the expectations of the people in this area grew. Mizo leaders started demanding an autonomous 'Mizo' province. In 1959 the territory of Mizoram experienced severe drought. During this famine, Mizo leader Laldenga served the common people a lot.

In 1961, Laldenga established an organisation called Mizo National Front (MNF). He asked for 'Greater Mizoram', an independent nation carved out of Tripura, Manipur and Mizo majority areas from the Lushai hills. In March 1966, Mizo National Front announced the emergence of Independent Mizoram. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi handled the situation firmly and suppressed the rebellion. When the situation calmed down in 1972, the Mizo majority area was given the status of a Union Territory. In 1985, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had an agreement with the Mizo National Front and Mizoram was given the status of a full-fledged State. Laldenga became the Chief Minister of the State.

### **Nagaland :**

The Naga tribe in north-east India is known as a martial tribe. The Naga tribe had settled in Eastern Himalayas, the Naga hills, border areas of Assam and Myanmar. In 1946, some educated Naga youth established an organisation called Naga National Council (NNC). Later they made a demand for an independent State of Nagaland. They were led by Angami Zapu Fizo. In 1954, the Naga National Council announced the establishment of an independent federation of Nagaland. In 1955, skirmishes happened between local Nagas and the soldiers of the Assam Rifles. Military action was taken to suppress the skirmishes. Several rounds of discussions took place between the Central Government and the Naga National Council. Central Government decided to give the Naga majority territory the status of a Union Territory. Nagaland was made a full-fledged State on 1st December 1963 by putting together the Naga majority territory and part of Tuensang.

### **Assam :**

In 1983, there was an intense agitation staged by All Assam Students Union and Assam Ganasangram Parishad over the question of the dominance in Assam of Bengali migrants. In 1985, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, Central Home Minister Shankarrao Chavan and Assamese leader Prafullakumar Mohanto signed an Accord. It was decided to send the Bangladeshi citizens who had infiltrated in Assam back to their original places. In 1986, elections were held for Assam Legislative Assembly and Prafullakumar Mohanto, of the Asom Gana Parishad became the new Chief Minister. Due to this democratic process, it became possible to establish peace in Assam.

**Arunachal Pradesh :** In 1954, NEFA was created. In 1972, it began to be called Arunachal Pradesh (region of the rising sun). On 20<sup>th</sup> February 1987, it got the status of a constituent State. During the period from 1960 to 2000, North-east India has progressed towards a more matured democracy. This area is on the path of progress through industrialisation, spread of education, etc.

## **Naxalism**

**Naxalite Movement :** This movement started at Naxalbari in Darjeeling district in West Bengal. The Naxalites organised the small land holding farmers and land labourers and took charge of their lands, put up red flags and declared that area as free territory in 1967. All those movements that took inspiration from this rebellion are called Naxalite movements. The movement had the objectives of establishing Action Committees to raise a voice against the exploitation of the farmers by the landlords and confiscate the land of the landlords and distribute it among the tenants. Later, the movement strayed away from its objectives. It took recourse to terrorism to prevent any government schemes and welfare policies from reaching the common people. The Naxalites started a parallel system by rejecting the democratic system. This made Naxalism a serious challenge to India's internal security. The movement was mainly located in West Bengal. Later the movement spread to East Godavari in Andhra Pradesh, parts of Vishakhapatnam, Karimnagar in Telangana, Adilabad, Bastar, Rajnandgaon and Sukma in Chhattisgarh, Gadchiroli, Bhandara and parts of Chandrapur in Maharashtra, Balaghat and Mandala in Madhya Pradesh and Koraput in Odisha. In order to maintain their influence, the Naxalites established an organisation called People's Liberation Guerilla Army (PLGA). This conflict is still going on.

## **Communalism**

Communalism is a serious threat to the unity of our country. Communalism emerges out of narrow religious pride. The British sowed the seeds of communalism in our country. People of different religions have happily lived together since many centuries. There is nothing wrong in people of different religions living together in a country while being duly proud of their own religion. But when this pride becomes excessive, then it turns into bigotry. Each one then begins to consider their religion superior and others' inferior. This leads to religious fanaticism. Fanaticism is the base of communalism. It makes one oblivious of national interest. People of different religions don't trust each other. They become suspicious of each other. Compatriots following different religions are looked at as enemies. Even commensality or coming together on festivals becomes rare. As a result, it becomes difficult for everybody to come together and get organised for their demands and rights as citizens. Fanaticism makes the perspective of looking at events and people

prejudiced. Some people begin to think of economic and social questions also in the framework of their own religion. Some people of all religions think that since they belong to a particular religion, they have no influence in politics. They begin to believe that they are being treated unjustly. They hold the idea that government is partial against their religion. In such a condition, they become too sensitive about their religion and their co-religionists. If anybody speaks about the people of their religion or insults the religious symbols knowingly or unknowingly, riots break out because of this kind of thinking. Hundreds of innocent people are killed. Public property worth crores of rupees is damaged. Public peace is destroyed. Due to the bitter memories of the riots, people are estranged from each other and mutual trust receives a setback. Trust between people is the basis of coexistence. If trust breaks, social unity receives a blow. How can national unity be achieved without social unity? Hence it is necessary that we all counter this religious communalism with all our strength. For this we should mix with people of different religions. We should accept the good practices and ideas of each other. We should be able to look at and understand our economic and social problems rationally. We should not mix these questions with religion. We should search for the economic, political or historical reasons that are responsible for disturbing religious harmony. This is the only way to put an end to communalism and strengthen national unity.

## Regionalism

Regionalism means having excessive pride about one's region. It is one thing to introduce oneself as a Bengali or a Marathi person. But if I think that because I am a Bengali or a Marathi, I am superior to others from other provinces; it can be termed as excessive regional pride. The love for one's province turns morbid due to this kind of an excessive regional pride. It is natural to feel love for one's province, but it should not become abnormal. Regionalism thrives on regional imbalance in development. In the post-independence period, some States achieved more progress, while some States remained backward. For example, States like Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab, Tamil Nadu developed economically and industrially; whereas States like Odisha, Bihar, Assam, remained undeveloped economically and industrially. Economic development and reforms are the foundation of progress. As a result, the States that develop economically can also achieve progress in other areas like education, health and culture. The States which have not developed in this manner remain backward in education and civic amenities. The opportunities of development available to people in developed States are not possible for people in backward States. They are harassed by problems of education, backwardness, unemployment, poverty, etc. They begin to think that they are being cheated; they are being kept away from the benefits of development. Because of this, the understanding between States is broken. This in turn has a negative impact on national unity. The economic imbalance that has endangered this understanding needs to be set right. Our government makes efforts in that direction. Regionalism can affect developed as well as undeveloped States. The people of developed States begin to believe that they are superior due to their superior history and culture and hence they have developed that much. Then they begin to look down upon the people of underdeveloped regions. They are not willing to share the benefits of development with the backward States. On the other hand, the people from backward areas need to arouse their regional identity to organise themselves. For this, they

try to unnecessarily glorify local traditions and culture to prove their uniqueness. This leads to regionalism. It endangers national unity. The evil of regionalism can be tackled by reducing the imbalance in development.

