

CHAPTER II

RATIONALE OF REORGANISATION

44. The demand for the reorganisation of States is often equated with the demand for the formation of linguistic provinces. This is because the movement for redistribution of British Indian provinces was, in a large measure, a direct outcome of the phenomenal development of regional languages in the nineteenth century which led to an emotional integration of different language groups and the development amongst them of a consciousness of being distinct cultural units. When progressive public opinion in India, therefore, crystallised in favour of rationalisation of administrative units, the objective was conceived and sought in terms of linguistically homogeneous units.

45. Recent years have, however, seen some shift in emphasis on the linguistic principle and a growing realisation of the need to balance it with other factors relevant to the reshaping of the political geography of India, such as national unity and administrative, economic and other considerations. In the paragraphs which follow, we shall trace the evolution of thought on the rationale and objectives of the reorganisation of States with particular reference to the concept of linguistic States.

The British approach

46. As we have observed earlier, during the British period, territorial changes were governed mainly by imperial interests. However, as an ostensible factor the linguistic principle figured, for the first time, in a letter from Sir Herbert Risley, Home Secretary, Government of India, to the Government of Bengal, dated 3rd December, 1903, in which the proposal for the partition of Bengal was first mooted. Later, in the partition Resolution of 1905, and in the despatch of Lord Hardinge's government to the Secretary of State, dated 25th August, 1911, proposing the annulment of partition, language was again prominently mentioned. The linguistic principle was, however, pressed into service on these occasions only as a measure of administrative convenience, and to the extent it fitted into a general pattern which was determined by political exigencies. In actual effect, the partition of Bengal involved a flagrant violation of linguistic affinities. The settlement of 1912 also showed little respect

for the linguistic principle, in that it drew a clear line of distinction between the Bengali Muslims and Bengali Hindus. Both these partitions thus ran counter to the assumption that different linguistic groups constituted distinct units of social feeling with common political and economic interests.

47. The authors of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, 1918, not burdened with the task of finding *a posteriori* reasoning for decisions taken on political grounds, approached the problem with greater objectivity. They examined the suggestion for the formation, within the existing provinces, of sub-provinces on a linguistic and racial basis, with a view mainly to providing suitable units for experiment in responsible government. Although they rejected the idea as impracticable, they commended the objective of smaller and more homogeneous units. "We cannot doubt", they observed, "that the business of government would be simplified if administrative units were both smaller and more homogeneous; and when we bear in mind the prospect of the immense burdens of government in India being transferred to comparatively inexperienced hands, such considerations acquire additional weight. It is also a strong argument in favour of linguistic or racial units of government that, by making it possible to conduct the business of legislation in the vernacular, they would contribute to draw into the arena of public affairs men who were not acquainted with English".¹

48. Twelve years later, the question of redistribution of provinces was considered by the Indian Statutory Commission, who recognised that the provincial boundaries, as they then existed, embraced, in more than one case, areas and population of no natural affinity and separated those who might under a different scheme be more naturally united. Speaking of the factors which should govern redistribution, the Commission stated:

"If those who speak the same language form a compact and self-contained area, so situated and endowed as to be able to support its existence as a separate province, there is no doubt that the use of a common speech is a strong and natural basis for provincial individuality. But it is not the only test—race, religion, economic interest, geographical contiguity, a due balance between country and town and between coast line and interior, may all be relevant factors. Most important of all perhaps, for practical purposes, is the largest possible measure of general agreement on the

¹ Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms, 1918, para. 246.

changes proposed, both on the side of the area that is gaining, and on the side of the area that is losing, territory"¹

The Commission thus gave only qualified support to the linguistic principle. It attached great importance to agreement amongst the people affected by the changes.

49. The Indian Statutory Commission's view that the question could not be settled by any single test received support from the O'Donnell Committee, which was appointed in September, 1931, to examine and report on the administrative, financial and other consequences of setting up a separate administration for "the Oriya-speaking peoples" and to make recommendations regarding its boundaries in the event of separation. In framing their proposals, the Committee took into account all relevant factors, such as language, race, the attitude of the people, geographical position, economic interests and administrative convenience. But more than all these factors, the Committee claimed to attach "great, indeed, primary importance to the wishes of the inhabitants where they can be clearly ascertained."²

50. Sind came into existence, along with Orissa, in April, 1936, but the demand for this province was conceded mainly to placate Muslim opinion. The Indian Statutory Commission, while expressing sympathy with the claim for the separation of Sind, had taken the view that there were grave administrative objections to isolating Sind and depriving it of the powerful backing of Bombay before the future of the Sukkur Barrage was assured and the major adjustments which it would entail had been effected.³ However, the Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reforms, 1933-34, took note of the fact that separation of Sind had been pressed not merely by the Sindhi Muslims but also by Muhammadan leaders elsewhere in India and recommended it on the ground that "apart from other considerations, the communal difficulties that would arise from attempting to administer Sind from Bombay would be no less great than those which may face a separate Sind administration."⁴

The approach of the Indian National Congress

51. The Indian National Congress lent indirect support to the linguistic principle as early as 1905 when it backed the demand for annulling the partition of Bengal which had resulted in the division

¹ Report of the Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. II, para. 38.

² Report of the Orissa Committee (O'Donnell Committee), Vol. I, para. 6.

³ Report of the Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. II, para. 38.

⁴ Report of the Committee on Indian Constitutional Reforms, Vol. I, p.

of the Bengali-speaking people into two units. Yet another concession to the linguistic principle was the formation of a separate Congress province of Bihar in 1908¹, and of the Congress provinces of Sind and Andhra in 1917. This involved a deliberate departure from the normal organisational pattern which had so far followed the boundaries of the existing administrative provinces. However, at this stage, Congress opinion had not clearly crystallised in favour of linguistic provinces and at the session of 1917 the principle was strongly opposed by the group led by Dr. Annie Besant.

52. It was only some thirty-five years ago that the Indian National Congress was converted officially to the view that linguistic provinces were desirable. It was at its 1920 session at Nagpur that the Congress accepted the linguistic redistribution of provinces as a clear political objective and in the following year the principle was adopted for the purposes of its own organisation.

53. In 1927, following the appointment of the Indian Statutory Commission, the Congress adopted a resolution expressing the opinion that "the time has come for the redistribution of provinces on a linguistic basis" and that a beginning could be made by constituting Andhra, Utkal, Sind and Karnataka into separate provinces. Those supporting the resolution spoke of the right of self-determination of the people speaking the same language and following the same tradition and culture.

54. The question of redistribution of provinces was also examined by the Nehru Committee of the All Parties Conference, 1928. The Committee lent its powerful support to the linguistic principle in the following terms:

"If a province has to educate itself and do its daily work through the medium of its own language, it must necessarily be a linguistic area. If it happens to be a polyglot area difficulties will continually arise and the media of instruction and work will be two or even more languages. Hence it becomes most desirable for provinces to be regrouped on a linguistic basis. Language as a rule corresponds with a special variety of culture, of traditions and literature. In a linguistic area all these factors will help in the general progress of the province".²

55. The Nehru Committee recommended that the redistribution of provinces should take place on the basis of the wishes of the

¹ B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya—History of the Indian National Congress, Vol. I., p. 147

² Report of the Nehru Committee, All Parties Conference, 1928, p. 62.

population, language and geographical, economic and financial principles. Of all these factors, however, in the opinion of the Committee, "the main considerations must necessarily be the wishes of the people and the linguistic unity of the area concerned".¹ It will be of interest, however, to note that the Committee, while recognising that the argument for the separation of Sind was very strong on the grounds that it was a definite linguistic area and that the great majority of the people demanded separation, regretted that they could not take the declaration of the Sind National League to "cut their coat according to their cloth", as a final solution of the financial problem.²

56. Between the years 1928 and 1947, the Congress reaffirmed its adherence to the linguistic principle on three occasions:

- (i) at its Calcutta session held in October, 1937, it reiterated its policy regarding linguistic provinces and recommended the formation of the Andhra and Karnataka provinces;
- (ii) by a resolution passed at Wardha in July, 1938, the Working Committee gave an assurance to the deputations from Andhra, Karnataka and Kerala that linguistic redistribution of the provinces would be undertaken as soon as the Congress had the power to do so; and
- (iii) in its election manifesto of 1945-46, it repeated the view that administrative units should be constituted as far as possible on a linguistic and cultural basis.

57. The Congress election manifesto of 1945-46, which assured the people that provinces would be constituted on a linguistic and cultural basis, not in every case but as far as it was possible in the circumstances of each case, would appear to be the first attempt to qualify the linguistic principle. There was a perceptible change, however, in the outlook of the Congress leaders on the subject with the Partition and the achievement of Independence. These brought in their wake unthought-of problems, giving rise to serious doubts as to whether the old pledges could be redeemed in the new conditions.

58. Speaking before the Constituent Assembly (Legislative) on 27th November, 1947, soon after Partition, the Prime Minister, while conceding the linguistic principle, remarked: "First things must come first and the first thing is the security and stability of India"

¹. Report of the Nehru Committee, All Parties Conference, 1928, p. 61.

². *Ibid*, pp. 68-69.

This was followed by the appointment, on the recommendation of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly, of a Linguistic Provinces Commission, known as the Dar Commission, for the purpose of enquiring into and reporting on the desirability or otherwise of the creation of any of the proposed provinces of Andhra, Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra and fixing their boundaries and assessing the financial, economic, administrative and other consequences in those provinces and the adjoining territories of India. It follows from the terms of reference of this Commission that reconstitution of provinces solely on a linguistic basis was no longer taken for granted.

59. The Dar Commission reported to the Constituent Assembly in December, 1948. It not only expressed itself strongly against any reorganisation being undertaken in the prevailing circumstances but also held that the formation of provinces exclusively or even mainly on linguistic considerations would be inadvisable. The Commission felt that in forming provinces the emphasis should be primarily on administrative convenience. The homogeneity of language should enter into consideration only as a matter of administrative convenience.¹ The Commission emphasised that everything which helped the growth of nationalism had to go forward and everything which impeded it had to be rejected or should stand over.² Among many other factors which should be given due weight the Commission mentioned history, geography, economy and culture.³

60. In the opinion of the Commission, if new States, formed after taking into consideration all these factors, possessed linguistic homogeneity also, that would be an additional advantage.⁴

61. The Dar Commission listed certain "generally recognised" tests which a linguistic area must satisfy before it could be formed into a province. These were:

- (i) geographical contiguity and absence of pockets and corridors;
- (ii) financial self-sufficiency;
- (iii) administrative convenience;
- (iv) capacity for future development; and
- (v) a large measure of agreement within its borders and amongst the people speaking the same language in regard

¹. Report of the Linguistic Provinces Commission, para. 131.

². *Ibid*, para. 147.

³. *Ibid*, para. 131.

⁴. *Ibid*, paras. 151 and 152(4).

to its formation, care being taken that the new province should not be forced by a majority upon a substantial minority of people speaking the same language.

62. Soon after the Dar Commission had submitted its report, the Indian National Congress appointed at its Jaipur Session in December, 1948, a Committee to consider the question of linguistic provinces and to review the position in the light of the report of the Dar Commission and the new problems that had arisen since Independence. The Committee, known as the J.V.P. Committee, which consisted of Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, was the first Congress body to sound a note of warning against the linguistic principle. It stated that:

- (a) when the Congress had given the seal of its approval to the general principle of linguistic provinces it was not faced with the practical application of the principle and hence it had not considered all the implications and consequences that arose from this practical application;²
- (b) the primary consideration must be the security, unity and economic prosperity of India and every separatist and disruptive tendency should be rigorously discouraged;³
- (c) language was not only a binding force but also a separating one;⁴ and
- (d) the old Congress policy of having linguistic provinces could only be applied after careful thought had been given to each separate case and without creating serious administrative dislocation or mutual conflicts which would jeopardise the political and economic stability of the country.⁵

The Committee admitted that if public sentiment was insistent and overwhelming the practicability of satisfying public demand with its implications and consequences must be examined. However, it imposed two limitations on the possible satisfaction of such a demand:

- (i) that, at least in the beginning, the principle might be applied only to well-defined areas about which there was mutual agreement; and

¹. Report of the Linguistic Provinces Commission, para. 10.

². Report of the Linguistic Provinces Committee, Congress, p. 2.

³. *Ibid*, pp. 4, 5 and 15.

⁴. *Ibid*, p. 7.

⁵. *Ibid*, p. 15.

- (ii) that all the proposals which had merit behind them could not be implemented simultaneously.

The report stated that a beginning could be made with the creation of Andhra.¹

63. The J.V.P. Committee's report was adopted by the Congress Working Committee in April, 1949. Since then, the Congress has broadly adhered to the views expressed in this report. This would be clear from the election manifesto issued by the Congress in 1951 and the resolutions passed by it since 1949.

64. The manifesto declared that the decision about the reorganisation of States would ultimately depend on the wishes of the people concerned but expressed the opinion that, while linguistic reasons were important, there were other factors also, such as economic, administrative and financial considerations, which had to be taken into account. As a practical example, the Congress agreed to the formation of the Andhra State because the Andhra Provincial Congress, the Tamilnad Congress and the Madras Government had agreed to it, but withheld support to the proposal for the formation of a Karnataka State for want of agreement of the great majority of the people including the people of Mysore State.

65. A question which has become important since 1951 is the implementation of the five-year plan. This found a specific mention in the All-India Congress Committee resolution adopted at Hyderabad in January, 1953.

66. The latest Congress stand on the subject as announced at the Hyderabad Session in January, 1953, and reiterated in the Working Committee resolution adopted in May, 1953, and further reaffirmed at Kalyani in January, 1954, is that in considering the reorganisation of States all relevant factors should be borne in mind, such as the unity of India, national security and defence, cultural and linguistic affinities, administrative convenience, financial considerations and economic progress both of the States and of the nation as a whole. It may be noted that there was emphasis both at Hyderabad and at Kalyani on the unity of India and national security which, as the Kalyani resolution says, "must be given first priority".

Views of other Parties

67. The linguistic redistribution of States also figured prominently in the election manifestos of other political parties. The Socialist

¹. Report of the Linguistic Provinces Committee, Congress, pp. 15-16

Party expressed itself in favour of the redistribution of States on a linguistic basis consistently with geographical contiguity and economic viability. The Communist Party stood for national States enjoying wide powers including the right of self-determination. The Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party advocated the appointment of a high-power committee to go into the whole question of the redistribution of States including the question of bilingual border areas. The Hindu Maha Sabha believed in the policy of formation of provinces on a linguistic basis but was of the opinion that due regard should be paid to the problem of defence and to other factors like area and economic stability.

The creation of Andhra

68. The post-1947 period also witnessed the formation of the Andhra State. The J.V.P. Committee had suggested that a beginning could be made with Andhra. The Committee had, however, suggested in its report certain general principles, one of which required that disputed areas should not be included in the new provinces. Accordingly, Madras city, which was a disputed area, was not to form part of Andhra. The Prime Minister made it clear in his statements in Parliament in December, 1952, that Government could proceed with the formation of the Andhra State only according to the principles of the J.V.P. Committee. After the death of Shri Potti Sriramulu, the Government of India announced their decision to establish the State of Andhra "consisting of the Telugu-speaking areas of the present Madras State but not including the City of Madras". Shri Justice Wanchoo was appointed to report on the financial and other implications of the decision.

69. In his report submitted in February, 1953, Shri Justice Wanchoo recommended the transfer of the Bellary district to Andhra with the provision that, if and when a Karnataka State was formed, the Kannada-speaking areas of the district should go to that State. However, the Government of India decided to include in Andhra only the three taluks of the district which had a Telugu majority, and to transfer the other taluks, excepting Bellary, to Mysore State. The decision of the Government of India in respect of Bellary taluk was deferred because it was felt that "in view of its very mixed population not only its linguistic composition but certain other matters would also need examination before a final decision is reached".¹

70 Following this decision, Shri Justice Misra was asked to examine and report on the future of the Bellary taluk after taking into

¹. Shri Justice Misra's Report, para. 2, p. 2.

consideration all relevant factors which were to include "linguistic composition and cultural affinity, administrative convenience and economic well-being". On the basis of the recommendations made in Shri Justice Misra's report, the Government of India decided to transfer the whole of Bellary taluk to the State of Mysore.

71. On August 10, 1953, a Bill was introduced in the House of the People "to provide for the formation of the Andhra State". The State of Andhra, which, according to the statement made by the Deputy Home Minister in Parliament on 17th August, 1953, was a province which approximated as much as possible to a linguistic province, came into existence on 1st October, 1953.