In the foregoing Chapters a study of the movement of the reorganisation of provinces in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Assam and Punjab has been made. It was interesting to deal with the specificities and peculiarities that the movement in each of the three States has taken shape.

In this Chapter— the Fifth— a comparative analysis of the three States under study is made. The comparative analysis of the crisis as it evolved over time through different stages in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Assam and Punjab brings out clearly the significance of the economic in combination with the politico-socio-cultural component in understanding the formation of the linguistic-ethnic provinces and identities and the subsequent developments thereof in the three States taken up for study.

Andhra occupies the first position in being carved as a province on the linguistic basis in the post-Independence era, while Punjab came into existence in the last major phase of reorganisation of provinces. In the case of the third State, the already-existent, Assam, it had to 'simply go through an incredible degree of fragmentation, so that what is left can be homogeneously Assamese.' The 'incredible degree of fragmentation' of Assam is perhaps a feature which it shares with Punjab. Punjab has similarly undergone a stupendous population change, related initially to the partition of the Indian subcontinent and subsequent successive reorganisations of the State until it
assumed its present form of a Sikh-majority State in 1966. Thus under focus are three States whose economies can be categorised on a relative scale into three stages: Punjab has a more or less developed economy in terms of its agricultural wealth. The economy of Assam can be termed on a relative basis as 'stagnant' or Underdeveloped.' In between these two economies lies the Andhra economy which is in what may perhaps be called the 'transitional' or rapidly developing phase.

The case of Andhra Pradesh:

Historically the roots of the Andhra demand can be traced to the partition of Bengal in 1905, which perhaps firmly put in place the theory that 'progress of a linguistic group would be hindered by their being under different administrations.' So some Andhras reasoned on similar lines, and thereby launched the struggle against the dispersal of the Telugu people in the Madras Presidency, the Central Provinces and the native States of Hyderabad and Mysore. But the demand for Visalandhra can be said to have gained momentum only during the mid-nineteenth century as a result of the construction of anicuts across the Godavari and Krishna rivers, helping in the growth of agriculture and thereby in the emergence of new classes— the peasantry. It is in these new classes that the demand for Visalandhra grew, as they were directly affected with the Tamil domination and the attendant inadequate economic opportunities and political power. The Madras Government, however, opposed any rearrangement of provinces. But
the demand of the Andhras saw light with the death of Potti Sriramulu in 1952 on account of an indefinite fast.

Prior to its formation, Andhra encountered the issue of exploitation by a different 'nationality' and imbalances in the levels of development amongst the various regions—Tamil and Telugu-majority areas. This culminated in the growing consciousness of the cultural affinity / akinness leading to the Visalandhra movement. Initially a separate State, Andhra could be attained in 1953 with the Coastal and Rayalaseema districts making it the first linguistic entity to be so created in the post-Independent period. The process was however completed in the first major reorganisation of provinces (after Independence) in 1956, with the clubbing of the Telangana region to Andhra, marking the emergence of Andhra Pradesh. But perhaps the failure to correct the disparity in the levels of development between the two regions of Andhra and Telangana, belonging to a single mass of Telugu-speaking people in its post-formative years (since 1956) led to the outbreak of the Telangana and Andhra agitations in the sixties. Or as Weiner opined, "such crisis erupts in a situation when migrants and locals compete for the same jobs, resulting in gains for the migrants, then losses for the natives".¹ In addition to the job market, another situation in which the migrants are regarded as a threat, especially a

political threat, is when "they are numerous, wealthy or politically cohesive".\(^2\) Apparently we witnessed both the fears in the case of Telangana. However sub-regionalism has manifested itself even when the Andhra demand was in the formative stage, in the form of Rayalaseema's plea for 'an autonomous status' on similar grounds of uneven economic development and inadequate political power.

Hence in its pre-organisation period, the gap in the levels of development -economic and political- between regions belonging to two different linguistic groups resulted in a greater stress being put.'on ties of language and of a common Telugu culture'. It was therefore, the eco-politico-cultural factor, which was responsible for integrating the people belonging to the 'same linguistic stock' but subsequently it was the politico-economic variable (i.e. disparity in the political and economic levels of development between different regions within the state) which brought about quite opposite results. The outcome: divisions among the Telugu-speaking people, belonging to the same linguistic group instead of consolidation proved a failure in cementing ties this time.

This brings out clearly that language plays a uniting role only when there are no conflict of issues concerning economic opportunities and political power within a particular given

\(^2\)Ibid., p.355.
region. What necessitated the outbreak of the Telangana agitation was 'the alleged attitude of great betrayal' indulged in by the Andhras towards the Telanganites. The assurances of even overall development of all Telugu-speaking people, so vociferously declared by the leaders of the Visalandhra movement, supposedly remained 'mere empty words'. No major effort seemed to have been initiated to bring the Telangana region on par with the more advanced Andhras thus resulting in the eruption of the Telangana agitation. The subsequent Andhra agitation was perhaps in response to the strong centralising drives initiated under Mrs. Gandhi's rule and the threat of land reforms in favour of capital accumulation than for capital distribution.

The Andhra economy experienced an economic boom with the Green Revolution of the sixties. Green Revolution was one of the responses or concessions to the agrarian unrest articulated by the rich farmers at one level and labour at another. The vast areas of fertile land in the coastal Andhra irrigated by the Krishna and Godavari irrigation projects coupled with modern inputs initiated by the Green Revolution generated considerable surplus. The capital (so generated) in search of better avenues wanted to enter select rich parts of the economically backward Telangana region. But since the capital was apparently in search to appropriate rather than develop the region it was obviously

resisted by the Telanganites. The likely entry of the capital also alarmed the local business community of the Telangana region. The objective conditions for the agitation were thus provided by the general backwardness of the region coupled with the apprehensions of the local entrepreneurs. In other words the growing disparity of the regions and the backwardness of the region was used by the local 'bourgeoisie' to their advantage by whipping-up passions of the Telanganites in the form of the Telangana agitation.

Finally the capital found its way into the construction industry- sky-scrapers and cinema theatres. But since the entire capital could not be absorbed, it naturally led to its logical consequence, witnessing rapid industrialisation from 73-74 onwards, thus giving rise to a new industrial class. Thus by the late-70s, this rising class with interests both in the agricultural and industrial sectors, was looking forward to the emergence of a strong Government at the State level to resist threats of land reforms from the Centre and as well mobilise the local resources for further capital support for the growing industrial base and maintain industrial peace. Thus rose the Telugu Desam Party at this juncture to perhaps play the dual role of the struggle against the Centre as well mobilise the resources locally.\(^4\) But to trace the success of the TDP solely to the new industrial class would render the explanation inadequate as one

\(^4\)Ibid., pp.381-382, 386.
fails to understand as why the poor supported the TDP. Perhaps the explanation could be traced to the fag end of the Telangana agitation when the leadership coopted and the movement subsided with the various formulas like the six-point formula. The sub-regional identities were further knocked-off with the Garibi Hatao programmes of Mrs. Gandhi which gravitated the poor towards her. Thus the poor shifted their identity and loyalty from a regional leader to a leader with a pro-poor bias. In the eighties however the situation was markedly different as both the Janata Party and the initiators, the Congress abandoned the programme. The void so created was quickly filled by N.T.Rama Rao who renewed the anti-poverty stance with his subsidies programmes leading to a shift of the poor from Amma to Anna. Thus NTR with his charisma and populist welfarism managed to sway the people to his side. There was thus a demonstration of interplay of identities. In sum, the Telanganas shifted from a sub-regional identity through an economic programme to a national leader and shifted back through another economic programme to a regional base in the form of the TDP.

In Andhra Pradesh, since the alleged exploiters (i.e. Anihras) in the post-formative phase initially belonged to the same linguistic group as the exploited (i.e. Telanganas) the problem probably rose to a call for greater autonomy. However in the case of Punjab and Assam since the alleged exploiters / discriminators (i.e. Centre) did not necessarily belong to their ethnic-linguistic groups, the movement in these two States rose to grave
proportions demanding an autonomous status altogether which in other words, almost meant 'severance from the Union'.

The case of Punjab."

Historically the demand for a separate Punjabi-speaking State began way back in 1909 under the British rule in the face of special concessions given to the Muslims by the British. Subsequently in the post-partition phase what lent impetus to the movement was the threat of re-absorption into the vast Hindu community. Hence it can be held that the core of the linguistic problem in Punjab is rooted in the question of ethnic identity.

Perhaps no state of India has undergone such a remarkable transformation of its population distribution, composition and complexion since Independence as Punjab. The population change of Punjab was related initially to the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 and resultant transfer of population across the border and later with successive reorganisations of the state till it assumed its contemporary form of a Sikh-majority state in 1966. The latest reorganisation (in 1966) was in response to the Indo-Pak war of 1965 which signaled a shift in the attitude of

the central leadership on account of the enormous contribution made by the Sikh peasants towards helping the frontline Indian troops. It was hoped that the protagonists of the linguistic State would be satisfied. But this hope was belied by the subsequent developments in the State.

Inspite of granting a separate State in 1966 the situation in Punjab continues to be in a state of flux. The Green Revolution in the Punjab has helped it in becoming one of the most prosperous States of India. However it has resulted in unequal sharing of benefits among the various sections and regions within the State and also for the population engaged in agricultural pursuits. Perhaps the growing pauperisation of marginal farmers, the heavy influx of migrating labour forces into agriculture from neighbouring states, the clash of interests between the emerging neo-rich and the national bourgeoisie, the conflict between the bourgeois aspirations among the rural gentry with the bourgeois hegemony of Hindu traders, merchants and industrialists, low industrial investment and activity due to its location as a border-state could be some of the causes said to have triggered the present political crisis that the Punjab has been going through.

The phase from the eighties has been perhaps the most turbulent period in the whole history of the Sikhs. The crisis in Punjab deteriorated to the demand for secession on religious lines- a
separate Sikh Homeland, Khalistan- and autonomous status to protect the group interests of emerging regional interests.

The problem of Punjab has thus spilled into the arena of Centre versus states conflict. The failure by the Centre to develop a long-term perspective of industrial development, economic growth and social change, it has been alleged, has literally reduced the State to the status of a satellite state. Therefore not surprisingly it was felt that the policy of the Centre towards the Punjab state was more or less similar to the one followed by the British Government. Even after three decades of its formation, the Punjab state continues to be in a stalemate thus lending urgency "to the vital need of readjusting the political relations between the Centre and the State, guaranteeing a measure of economic and cultural autonomy to the State and altering the present overall strategy of social, political and economic development".⁶

As compared to Andhra, the problem in Punjab has assumed violent proportions as the economic aspirations coupled with ethnic, linguistic and religious factor started shaping the reality. In Andhra it was on the economic base that the demand was raised. As both the emergent capitalist farmers, traders or merchants and industrialists happen to be ethnically not distinct, the nexus

between these two forms of capital on the one hand and clash of interest at another level keeps the Andhra situation within manageable limits. But in the Punjab the contradiction between the merchant capital and productive capital in agriculture has strong ethnic overtones as the aspirations and expectations of the emerging regional agrarian bourgeoisie came in conflict with entrenched (Hindu) bourgeois interests both at the national and provincial levels. It acquired more of ethnic overtones and gave rise to secessionist tendencies manifested through terrorism and extremism.\(^7\) The attempt at sharing power on a new basis by the national bourgeoisie with the regional bourgeoisie concretised in the Rajiv-Longowal Accord of July 1985 has brought about a perceptible change gradually in the Punjab situation. Thus a political problem necessitated a political solution rather than being viewed as a law and order problem. Perhaps the quantum of force used (by the Centre) in the Punjab indicates the magnitude of the problem.

Probably the linguistic factor combined with the religious, economic and political factors integrated the Sikh people in their fight against the Centre. However in the absence of its merger with religion and ethnicity, the linguistic factor in Andhra failed to have such a foot-hold. But the linguistic factor

as an integrating link cannot be dismissed completely as the phenomena] rise of the Telugu Desam Party seemingly on the basis of self-respect of the Telugus combined with populist welfarism reinforces the belief that language plays a vital role in integrating the people. This model had the potential to subsume, if not swallow, the sub-regional identity.

The case of Assam:

In the third State under focus- Assam, the linguistic question assumed a different form. The issue at stake there was not the carving of a separate state but rather the control of resources within the state and access to national resources by those who consider themselves genuine Assamese.

The effects of partition of Bengal in 1905 was 'indirect' in the case of Andhra and Punjab as it made them just realise the potency of remaining as a linguistic group. But Assamese were directly affected as they got clubbed with Bengal. En the aftermath of the annulment in 1911, Assam was no doubt made into a separate Chief Commissioner's province but with a reduced homogeneity as Sylhet, a predominantly Bengali Muslim district and Cachar, a predominantly Bengali Hindu district were joined to it. In fact the crisis in Assam (the migration factor) can be traced precisely to this inclusion of Sylhet. The exodus into Assam had begun since then as the Muslim League was keen on creating a Pakistan on the eastern flank on the basis or. their numerical strength.
Although in the post-Independent scenario, Sylhet was chopped-off from Assam and clubbed to the newly-created Pakistan, the problem of swarming Muslims into Assam for several reasons like poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, remained intact causing a demographic imbalance. The economic backwardness of the Assamese coupled with the influx of the Bengalis can be said to have: given rise to the identity crisis.

During the initial phases of immigration the generally poor landless peasants from erstwhile East Bengal assimilated themselves with the Assamese as they did not have the numerical as well as cultural viability to resist the process (of assimilation). But over course of time "the concentration of the same group in a particular region sharing the same language and in many cases: a same religion, along with similar economic pattern of existence tended to give a distinct sense of identity" to the peasant, thus putting a halt to further assimilation and the movement gradually transformed from a struggle for occupation of land to an aggressive struggle for a share in power.

Evidently economics alone could not have ignited the ethnic turmoil in Assam. It can rather be regarded as a catalyst: which succeeded in bringing all the Assamese belonging to the same ethnic stock- a single banner, akin to the Visalandhra and Punjabi movements. Thus the retarded development combined with

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the domination of the *bahiragatas* or outsiders (on linguistic basis) in the state's economy may be said to have led to the eruption of the Assam movement. But more significantly the movement may be traced as a struggle of the genuine Assamese for control and access to their own resources. The mass outburst revolved round a long list of neglect, suppression and exploitation- the general complaints figured even in the Visalandhra, Telangana, Punjab and Khalistan movements. What Assam is facing today may be looked as the upsurge of the oppressed groups trying to assert themselves.

We face the peculiar situation in Assam in which "the migrants and local people compete for the same jobs resulting in a situation of gains for the migrants then losses for the natives"⁹ (asinazero-sumgame). A similar situation persists even in Punjab and the Telangana. It is in such a situation that the local population tends to seek restrictions on the free entry of migrants, demand protectionism in the labour market and press for reservations on land.

Another commonalty Assam shared with the Punjab was with regard to the issue of language. Just as the SRC turned down the separate status to Punjab on grounds of the nearness of Punjabi-language to Hindi grammatically and spatially, so also in the case of Assam it took a long time to get out of the

imposition of Bengali and thus assert the distinctness of Assamese.

In the post-Assam accord scenario, we have the cropping of sub-regional demands in the form of Bodoland. The imposition of the Assamese language apparently ignited the Bodo agitation. In the Assamese camp the fear of becoming a minority in their own State led to the emergence of separatist organisations like the Lachit Sena in the sixties and later- on the United Liberation Front of Assam, regarded generally as the direct descendant of All Assam Students Union. The main theme the ULFA appears to harp on is, to quote Prafulla Mahanta, "the tussle between the citizens and the foreigners." The ULFA apparently believes in fighting what it calls the continuing colonialism.

The Analysis:

The comparative analysis of the crisis as it evolved overtime through different States of Andhra Pradesh, Assam and Punjab is a clear pointer to 'struggles for more even distribution of benefits of resources, increase in the share of political power and what they called due recognition of the self-respect and dignity of the groups.' Thus inherent in the movements are three democratic aspirations at the social, economic and political levels, vertically and horizontally striving for "pluralism, regionalism and decentralisation".11

11Brass, Paul: "Punjab Crisis and Unity of India" in Kohli, Atul
The linguistic base in the formation of the State is only a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the overall development and equilibrium. It is precisely the reason why the States of Andhra, Assam and Punjab went on looking for alternatives which are found in different forms of political articulation once the linguistic base has been accepted.

Incidentally the crisis in these states at various stages coincided with the rise of Mrs. Gandhi to power and the subsequent concentration of power at the centre and "the steady erosion of democratic processes and institutions". Perhaps in her zeal "to defend the multi-national status, India during her regime made excessive use of power to centralise decision-making in Delhi, nationalize issues and incessantly intervene in the State and local politics," resorting to force rather than persuasion and negotiation to resolve conflicts. The crisis in the various States is perhaps a defence-mechanism against the use of force by the Indian State.

Apparently centralisation is the by-product of apprehensions and fears of the national elites towards ethnic identities as "harmful cleavages out to undermine national integration,


development and modernisation".\textsuperscript{14} But to treat all who agitate for change in their rights and prerogatives as enemies of the state is anomalous. Rather the various urges and aspirations should be treated as indicating democratic dynamism. Similarly, the cry for greater autonomy by the states need to be viewed as "indicating federal dynamism and not necessarily its negation".\textsuperscript{16} As Rasheed-ud-din Khan aptly opined, "every urge for autonomy is not a divisive but most probably a complementary force; it would not lead to balkanisation but to restructuring of national identity; it is not a fissiparous but a normal centrifugal tendency in a federation; it should not be taken as a call for disintegration of the national sovereignty, but its re-integration".\textsuperscript{17} Moreover, since political sovereignty is an attribute and a privilege of both the centre and the States, hence justifiably the demand for more autonomy.

The process of democratisation thus could not be halted with the formation of the provinces; rather subsequent developments suggest the process (of democratisation) percolated to the lower levels and different classes of society. We have therefore, democratic aspirations at the regional level asserting for more

\textsuperscript{14}Chima, Jugdep S: "The Punjab Crisis: Governmental Centralisation and Akali-Center Relations", \textit{Asian Survey}, October 1994, p.859.
\textsuperscript{17}Khan, Rasheed-ud-din: "The Regional Dimension", \textit{Seminar}, No.164, April 1973, p. 36.
balanced economic development, more share in power and greater cultural autonomy. The assertions of Bodos in Assam, Telanganas in Andhra suggest the manifestation of such aspirations in these classes. Reliance on force and intimidation should give way to a more accommodating approach as the claims of self-determination of any group would be judged only in the light of concrete conditions obtaining in a society and actual practice of the state.

"India thus faces what may be called a democratic paradox: on the one hand nation-building processes emphasize the forces that bring about assimilation into one system and on the other, the dynamics of democratic competition often amplify the need for collective expression by ethnic groups".18

"The state", Brass observed, "sets into play a continuing process of conflict and competition among the main institutions and centrally organised social forces for control over the state which is both a resource as well as a distributor of resources". He viewed the various movements as "attempts to secure their quantum of control over this resource so as to influence its distribution towards the interests they represent".19 "The class

18Chima, Jugdep S, op.cit., p.860.
and ethnic-oriented movements in India, their role in nation building and the democratic process are inter-linked and inter-woven in a complex dynamic relationship, all the time attempting to find and create democratic space".20

Summing-Up:

To sum up the genesis of the prevalent identities can be traced to colonial times when the organisation of provinces was done to suit their administrative convenience: An outcome of the policy was to bring people belonging to different linguistic groups into a single unit as in the case of Assam, or the splitting of people belonging to a particular identity into separate provinces as in the case of Andhra Pradesh (and later Punjab). This inevitably led to its logical corollary: the recognition of linguistic and ethnic ties as a binding factor to amalgamate the dismembered parts of groups belonging to particular linguistic entities.

But it will be irrelevant to trace the genesis to colonial times alone without reference to how and why the British succeeded in their policy of divide and rule. Perhaps the Indian society, with its embedded multiple identities provided the space required to the British to carry out the strategy, it becomes clear from the (comparative) analysis that no one identity can explain a phenomenon all the time. Rather there is shifting or

University, 1992) p.25.

20Mukherji, Partha, op.cit., p.27.
transmutation of identities. At any given point of time an identity asserts depending on the context \ situation. The identities are thus contextual. Thus the linguistic identity in the case of the Telugu-regions of the Madras Presidency or the Visalandhra Movement brought about unification among the Telugu people. But soon after its formation, sub-regional identities in the form of Telangana and Andhra agitations erupted. However in the eighties there is a coalescence of identities as evident from the massive mandate received by the Telugu Desaro Party. But cracks reappeared in the present times with the resurgence of the Telangana movement. Moreover the regional base of Andhra has not been able to absorb the class identities as manifested by the presence of Naxalism in several pockets of the State.21

In the case of Punjab, communal identity became a victim twice, in 1947 and 1951: once the Punjabi Muslims broke away from it and second, the Punjabi-Hindus disowned Punjabi as their mother tongue. Thus there has been a transmutation of identities. A problem thus started as a simple linguistic question in Punjab gradually turned into a communal issue and steadily into a secessionist movement. So also in the case of Assam, a movement apparently begun as a linguistic problem aggravated into secessionist one leading to a call for 'Assam for Assamese only'. In the post Assam accord scenario, however there has been reversal of roles as identities have asserted among the Bodos and

21 The Naxalite movement has not been tackled in the present study.
other tribes calling for severance of ties from Assam. Thus in all these cases there has been multiple identities and the attendant transmutation or transformation of identities.

But the question as to why the regional and sub-regional, movements have become a perpetual feature in the Indian polity assumes significance. Perhaps the answer lies in looking at these movements as a percolation of the deroocratisation process to lower levels and different classes. But the issue of how to treat the various demands for more autonomy has become debatable. Two contradictory views have apparently risen. One to treat any movement for autonomy as a negation of nation-building and the other to view the movements as strengthening the forces of nation-building and thereby indicating federal dynamism. The global scenario offers instances of both the types of regimes centralised and federal states. The state-centred regime in the erstwhile Soviet Russia resulted in disintegration of the state while the position of China gives an opposite picture. However going by experiences faced by India it is clear that some sort of democratic space is a 'must' as whenever there had some sort of squeezing-in as witnessed during Mrs Gandhi's rigorous centralising drives, movements for autonomy multiplied. Perhaps state-centred regime does not provide the answer in the case of India.

In order to place the issues and identities that the reorganisation process has thrown-up, a deeper probe is necessitated. Scholars in India, in fact should adopt a
comparative perspective to analyse all the States in India so as to arrive at a theory to explain a phenomenon of shifting identities and perhaps a lasting solution to the type of disintegrating tendencies that the contemporary India has been witnessing. The present study can perhaps be placed at an intermediate level as it consists of a comparative analysis of three States instead of a case study or an analysis involving all the States.