Mrs. INDIRA GANDHI’S EFFORTS TOWARDS PROMOTING NATIONAL INTEGRATION
“If I die a violent death, as some fear and a few are plotting, I know that the violence will be in the thought and the action of the assassins, not in my dying. But every drop of my blood will strengthen the unity, peace and brotherhood of the Country” Smt. Indira Gandhi in her speech at Bhubaneswar on 30th October 1984—a day before her death.

India observes 19th November, the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, every year, as National Integration Day. Its main aim is to promote among the peoples unity, peace, affection and brotherhood. On 31st October 1984, Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her own body guards. She was the victim of the demand for the creation of a separate state of Khalistan out of the state of Punjab. The commemoration of Mrs. Gandhi birth anniversary as National Integration Day speaks volumes about her commitment and the supreme sacrifice that she made for protecting and promoting the unity and integrity of India.

India, since independence, has been struggling to keep its unity intact. Mrs. Gandhi has done yeomen service for the cause of National Integration. In fact, she had laid down her life for it. She made it amply clear in her last speech on 30th October 1984 at Bubaneswar that she was prepared to go to any length to protect and promote the unity and integrity of the nation. Tho a united India has been a cherished aspiration of many a patriots through the ages. However, India was never one but only for brief spells of time in history. India had been a cynosure of many eyes due to her wealth and prosperity and attracted many invaders.

Several groups of people of foreign origin entered India, as the Christian era advanced, and were integrated into Indian society and culture adding luster and vigor to it. Then, the Muslims came. In the beginning, Islam seemed to pose a challenge to indigenous civilization and to Hinduism. However, the Muslims made India their home. A larger number among Hindus embraced the new faith and swelled their numbers. This led to social interaction and Muslims in turn imbibed the ethos of the land and assimilated it in their own idiom and a composite Indian culture evolved. In art, architecture, literature, philosophy, music, language, the twin systems and beliefs interacted and truly represented synthesizing trends. As an impact of these forces, strong currents of socio-religious movements, such as the Bhakti movement, swept across the country. The teachings of Guru Nanak, Kabir Mirabai, Chaitanya, Namdev and other great poets and saints literally reached every home in India irrespective of religious and caste differences. They preached oneness of God, decried social division among people, attacked the rigidity of caste structure, and other dogmatic and superstitious beliefs, and appealed to people to lead life of
purity imbibing the true spirit of religion. These social reform movements set in motion a new era of mutual understanding, religious tolerance and thus transformed the social consciousness of the people, regenerating their spirit. At the same time, it may be observed that differences of caste and religion in the traditional Indian society were accepted as facts of life, and people lived in peace, harmony and amity, respecting each other’s faith and position in society. In the villages, abundant goodwill existed among its inhabitants oblivious of caste and religious distinctions. Considerable social intercourse took place among them, and mutual relationship developed in their day-to-day life as well as while participating in social and religious functions, festivals, and fairs. They shared the myths, legends and folklore of the land. They struggled together against odds. It is not suggested that the rural society was essentially an idyllic society. Nevertheless, the people by and large led full lives. Social conflicts undoubtedly marred this from time to time but the source of these conflicts and cleavages could be traced to secular causes, to political interactions and economic disparities. If ever there were communal conflicts, they were few and far between. We do not find any evidence of recurrence of communal riots as witnessed during British rule in India.

Indira Gandhi has expressed some of these ideas most appropriately in the following words: “A nation is a mosaic-like work or art. It takes many elements, many textures and many colors to give the total effect of strength and beauty. The Indian nation is such a rich mosaic of people, of dress and diet, of cultures, of languages, of faiths. Yet, this diversity is encompassed with in an intangible quality of Indianness. Our heritage is the mingling of numerous streams, great and small, which have joined the river of India’s progress at different times. To get, all these differing parts make up the whole, to deny or ignore any—even the smallest or the most recent—would be to diminish India.”

Despite many disturbances like foreign invasions and accompanying colossal damages in terms of loss of life and property etc, people to a large extent lived in a spirit of brotherhood and as one nation till the British established their empire in India. The process of nation formation was rudely shaken with the conquest of India by the British. The British rule was characterized by contradictory pulls. It played both a constructive role as well as a destructive one. While it helped in building a modern State, at the same time, it established an exploitative relationship. While, on the one hand, it served as a unifying force, on the other, it assiduously worked for widening the cleavages, which already existed among the different religious groups, castes,
classes and communities in India. It should be mentioned here that Indian society on the eve of British conquest continued to be a plural society. It was also essentially a feudal society, based on inequalities. Instead of weakening the hold of feudal classes over the rural populace, the British policy in India tended to strengthen it as a consequence of which the people were exposed to exploitation.

The national movement threatened the foundations of the British rule. As the struggle for freedom grew in strength and momentum, the British policy sought to widen the social cleavage, which existed in the country. It is significant to note that a host of British authors and administration-scholars emerged in the Nineteenth century and early Twentieth century, who have left a rich corpus of literature about Indian religions, caste people, tribes and other social groups. The main aim of these studies was to expose the weaknesses of the Indian society. After two decades of formation of the Indian National Congress, the Muslim League was born in 1906, followed by the Hindu Mahasabha and later, the Akali Dal came into existence, each claiming separate identity for its constituents. With the introduction of the system of separate electorates and a form of Government which professed to safeguard and promote the interests of sectional, communal and religious groups, Indian politics became more fractured and complicated. Seats were reserved for Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Anglo-Indians, and Indian Christians in the legislatures, municipal boards and corporation. Later, in 1932, the Communal Award granted separate representation to the Harijans or the depressed classes. These developments tended to threaten the unity of Indian people and acute differences among Indians surfaced which had a disastrous effect towards the end of British rule in India. It may not be out of place here to take fresh look at some of the intellectual contributions of the British writers and scholars, who made a great impact on those who were bent upon profiting from the divisive forces operating in Indian society.

Several British administrator-scholars, such as Risley, Hunter, Greisens, Crooke, Ibbotson, Darling were concerned to show the amazing variety in Indian culture and the depth of cleavages that existed among Indian social groups. The intention was to create suspicion and animosity among different sections of the society. It was against this background that nationalist movement in the 1920s was launched. The Indian National Congress was able to forge a powerful united front of Indian people under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi against the British raj. While the divisive forces permeated and weakened the Indian society, yet the
nationalist fervor and patriotism of people overcame these barriers at different periods of nationalist struggle. The Indian National Congress emerged truly as a nationalist organization and a national party in which people belonging to different faiths, castes, and classes converged and participated. This was possible because nationalism as a doctrine of struggle against imperialism was able to bring all classes under its fold. We all know that India evolved into a nation after generations of efforts, and the process of building a healthy and strong Indian nation still continues unabated. Several constraints hinder the growth of nationalism. Yet, the fact remains that the process of building up of a nation-state was continued with great zeal under the Indian National Congress. The Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru opposed these divisive forces and succeeded to a great extent in drawing the masses into the mainstream of the nationalist struggle.

Partition left a trail of bitterness, fear and suspicion in Indian society. It generated much heat and passion. The communal problem which raises its ugly head from time is essentially an outcome of forces unleashed by the partition. The Government of India wedded, as it is, to a secular policy, has shown its determination to stamp out communalism, and it must be stressed that Hindu–Muslim antagonisms have substantially declined. Even during the British rule, parts of India were under the rule of native rulers, while major chunks of the country were ruled by the British, keeping their interests in view. It was only after Independence that India got established as a single entity though parts of the country were truncated in the form of East and West Pakistan. National integration is basic to any development in the sub-continent. If national unity is disrupted, the nation will be torn asunder by communal disturbance from time to time which means digression on the part of the people from the paths of progress.

Jawaharlal Nehru in his great work, ‘The Discovery of India’, wrote: “Through outwardly there was diversity and infinite variety among our people, everywhere there was that tremendous impress of oneness, which had held all of us together for ages past, whatever political fate or misfortune had befallen us. The unity of India was no longer merely an intellectual conception for me: it was an emotional experience which overpowered me. That essential unity had been so powerful that no political division, no disaster or catastrophe, had been able to over-come it.”

The cultural oneness of India transcends barriers of caste, community, religion and language. The unity among Indians is found above all in ideas and values, in common beliefs, attitudes and outlook on life which are deeply embedded in the consciousness of the people as a
whole. The Indian ethos, the perceptions of the commonly-shared experiences of ages, the Indian world-view bind Indians as one people, one country and one nation.

Indian culture was not merely an upper-class affair, but had derived its sustenance primarily from all segments of the society. Indeed, the essential elements of the Vedic precepts or the teachings and philosophy of the epics have been enshrined in the legends and folklore and still vibrate in the memory of rural India giving a philosophical base to the ordering of their lives.

Hinduism was not a monolithic entity. Several sects and creeds continued to co-exist, coalesce and flourish within the fold of Hinduism. With the growth of regional languages, and identity of interests, regional and subcultures developed over a period of time, but they were neither antagonistic to Indian culture nor did these undermine the intrinsic vitality of the culture.

“It is customary for people to think of diversity as a disadvantage and therefore to seek to impose uniformity in the search for unity and strength. In India, we have found that diversity is a source of strength, that the continuity of the Indian civilization for thirty centuries is itself due to its diversity, to its talent for absorbing new elements and tolerating differences. This is how India can have 16 major languages and seven major religions and yet function effectively as one nation.”

When the country was partitioned, communal clashes culminated in the death of thousands of innocent people and in the martyrdom of the father of the Nation. Fifteen years after the independence, the situation was not much better. The then Prime Minister, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, convened National Integration Conference in September-October, 1961 to find ways and means to combat the evils of communalism, casteism, regionalism, linguism and narrow-mindedness, and to formulate definite conclusions in order to give a lead to the country. This conference decided to set up a National Integration Council (NIC) to review all matters pertaining to national integration and to make recommendations thereon. The NIC was constituted accordingly and in 1962, Jawaharlal Nehru convened the first National Integration council to discuss the question of national integration and to evolve the methods of making every Indian realize the importance of national unity. At the time of Chinese invasion of India (1962), the whole country rose as one man, condemned the aggression and was prepared to make any sacrifice in order to save every inch of the country’s territory. When in later years, there was no common enemy to fight with; Indians started quarrelling with one another.
It is extremely significant to note that Indira Gandhi, whenever she talked of national integration, appealed to the people to derive their inspiration from the glorious epoch of nationalist struggle launched under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Her world view of the nationalist phase of struggle was colored by her faith on non-violence, secularism and democratic values, which provided sustenance and inspiration to Indian people as a whole. The Government of India, after the achievement of independence, assiduously sought to promote these values. Indira Gandhi often stressed the efficacy of a policy of right means and right ends following Gandhiji’s philosophy. She said so, so often: “Violence never solved any problem however noble our objectives might be; if we adopt wrong means we cannot achieve these objective satisfactorily”. During our independence struggle”, she continued, “we disproved the belief of those who felt that we cannot achieve independence through non-violence. We proved to the world that it was possible to free our country by means of non-violence. I want to assure you that even economic progress and all big changes can be brought about in our country through non-violence” the other lessons which are derived are secularism and composite cultural ethos prevalent in the society. Speaking eloquently in the National integration Council meeting on 12, November 1980, she said” An occasion such as this, is one for national stock-taking. We should not limit our discussions to the events only of the last few weeks or months. Our concern is what kind of India we shall bequeath to future generation-a strong, harmonious, self-confident India or a feuding, weak, stereophonic India. We talk of national integration. It is not a mere phrase but an awareness of the burden and task that history has placed on our shoulders. I have no doubt that all of us, whatever our party or political creed, hold the freedom and integrity of our country as supreme and dear above all else. But freedom and unity cannot be taken for granted. Eternal vigilance is the price of our integrity, as it is of all liberties. Indira Gandhi identified the tendencies which worked against national integration. She felt that the great menace, the country faced was communalism; She said “After twenty years of Independence and at a time when we had thought that this problem was more or less solved, once again communal clashes are occurring in different parts of the country”. What is Communalism?
It is a belief or ideology according to which all people belonging to one religion have common economic, social and political interests and these interests are contrary to the interests of those belonging to another religion.

There are three stages (degrees), discernible in the development of communalism:

- **Mild**: People following the same religion have similar interests
- **Moderate**: Dissimilarity of interests between people of different religions
- **Extreme**: Interests of people following different religions are antagonistic to each other, based on fear and hatred of other religions.

### Basis of Politics

**Feudal structure (kingdoms) Colonial/Modern society**

When there is slow pace of transition from a feudal structure to a modern set-up, it results in consolidation of religion/caste-based identities because there is dearth of resources and job opportunities. In a limited job market, competition based on religion/caste communal politics is handy to (a) hide economic frustrations, (b) hide the real sources of misery, and (c) mask the relationship between exploiters and the exploited. Sometimes religious/caste distinctions coincide with economic distinctions, e.g., the exploiting sections (landlord, moneylender and merchant) were upper-caste Hindu and the exploited are poor peasants, landless labour, etc., were low-caste or Muslims.

### Common Features of Hindu Communalism and Muslim Communalism

- Came from declining sections of society, landlords and kings
- No struggle against British; subtly encouraged by British
- Congress denigrated and despised
- Supported only by the elites of the communities
- Believed that Hindu and Muslims are separate nations
- Mutual hatred for each other
- Strengthened each other through their politics
- Spread fear against each other
- Believed in hierarchy of caste and gender (feudal value system)
- Opposed to democratic values
• Their politics consolidated the colonialists
• Even currently they are on the side of US imperialist policies

Communal riots have become a distinct feature of communalism in India. Whenever conflicting groups from two different religions, which are self-conscious communities, clash, it results in a communal riot. An event is identified as a communal riot if (a) there is violence and (b) two or more communally identified groups confront each other or members of the other group at some point during the violence, the reason for such a clash could be superficial and trivial, though underlying them are deeper considerations of political representation, control of and access to resources and power. There have been many incidents of riots recorded during the course of British rule and even before that. For example: In Ahmedabad there were riots in 1714, 1715, 1716 and 1750. But according to Bipan Chandra, in his book “Communalism in Modern India”, communal tension and riots began to occur only in the last quarter of the 19th century, but they did not occur in India on any significant scale till 1946-47. before that, the maximum communal rioting took place during 1923-26. A clear relationship between communal riots and politics was established for the first time in 1946, when the Muslim League gave its direct action call on August 16, 1946.

This chronology reveals that communal riots are not caused spontaneously and also that they are rarely caused by religious animosity. They arise due to conflicting political interests, which are often linked to economic interests. There is a significant change in the pattern of communal riots since the 1990s, which could be noticed in the later part of this chronology. This brings forth the shifts that have occurred in the nature of communal riots in India. Moreover, the aim is to underline that religion in most of the cases is not the reason why communal riots occur. The reason for the occurrence of communal violence has been different in the two different phases. During the time of partition, it was the clash of political interests of the elite of two different communities which resulted in communal riots, but, from the 1960s till the late 1980s, the local political and economic factors played a major role in promoting communal clashes. As a result of this phenomenon, there were many macabre clashes in the country resulting in millions of lives lost and property worth thousands of crores destroyed.

From Independence till the martyrdom of Mrs.Gandhi, the were nearly 29-communal riots in the different parts of the country like Calcutta (1947), Amritsar (1947),
Annoyed and puzzled at this tendency for in-fighting in the populace of the country, Mrs. Indira Gandhi convened a meeting of the National Integration Council again at Srinagar in June 1968. Presiding over the three-day meeting in Srinagar, Indira Gandhi referred to the older body and said it was “unfortunate that we were lulled into a sense of complacency because of the tremendous upsurge of unity at the time of the Chinese attack in 1962”. She hoped the new council would live longer and serve the nation usefully. The council had been reconstituted in the wake of serious Hindu-Muslim riots in different parts of the country. In November 1980 and January 1984, she again convened the meetings of National Integration Council, as the specter of communalism was looming large to destroy the fabric of the nation. Speaking on the communalism and its catastrophic consequences, she said, “No true, religion can conceivably teach hatred of other religions, but we have had communal organizations which have persistently given a distorted picture. It is an unfortunate fact of life that these organizations are thriving in many parts of our country. We cannot be helpless spectators but should try vigorously to counteract the influence of such organizations by all political, legal and administrative means that are available. A party may gain when riots occur by blaming the Government, but such a gain is bound to be temporary. It is the people who are the sufferers and no party can make a long-standing gain out of the people's misery.”

Addressing the council, she showed that her approach to any problem was that of a realist and that she would never grow cynical at any of the tendencies found in society. “Divisive forces and tendencies” she said, “have existed in all societies and at all times. Certainly these forces existed in India even during the years of the struggle for freedom, but the main-stream of nationalism was powerful enough to sidetrack them and also to fight them and thus was able to march ahead. During the twenty years since independence, we have had constantly to combat these forces in one form or other. In fact, the struggle for national integration, the struggle for national solidarity, the struggle for safe-guarding the ideals and aspirations embodied in our constitution, has to be waged ceaselessly and tenaciously. I do not think a time will come when these forces will not want to raise their head. But it should be our endeavor to create an atmosphere and to create the conditions in which this will not be possible and in which the whole of society will react against it.”
Mrs. Gandhi strongly believed that the persisting inequalities are another reason for conflict prevailing among different sections of people in the society. “Another serious danger to national integration and perhaps one of the causes of the other menaces which I mentioned is the persistence of inequalities. In law and theory, the ancient discriminations have been abolished, but opportunities have not been growing as fast as the aspirations of backward classes and tribes and minorities and other such groups, another factor which can unite us or create barriers is language.”

The second menace, in her view was regionalism which was evoked by the same sentiments that were behind communalism. Regionalism gives more importance to one’s own region than to one’s nation. When regionalism is linked with language and religion it creates regional interests rather than national interests. This creates parochialism among the people. This problem faced by India was accentuated by the linguistic reorganization of the states.

It is sometimes argued that the reorganization of states carried out in the post-Independence period, giving primacy to language, culture, and economic viability of the region, was a wrong step. It is said that fissiparous tendencies began to raise their head as a consequence of such a step. The issue is debatable. However, it should be noted in a federal democratic republic, like India, it was not proper to resist recognizing the legitimate aspirations of the regions. During the Nationalist struggle, it was agreed that a system would be evolved so that each region could promote socio-economic and cultural development suiting its genius and resources. It was believed that nationalist sentiments binding the Indian people would take care of this problem and regional identities would not threaten Indian unity. Following this principle, as a result of Indira Gandhi’s intervention way back in 1959, when she was President of the Indian National Congress, it was agreed to hand over Bombay to Maharashtra, which eventually was transferred in 1960 and the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat were formed. Similarly, it was Indira Gandhi on whose initiative a Punjabi speaking state was created in 1966. She recalls in My Truth: “There was a demand for Punjabi Suba, the creation of a Punjabi-speaking State. Since independence the Sikh community had been pressing for the linguistic partition of the West Punjab State and the creation of a State in which they would predominate. My father had been strongly opposed to the idea. But I reached the conclusion that only a linguistic reorganization could solve the Punjabi problem.”
That the tragic events in Punjab should have occurred while India Gandhi was all the
time prepared to accept the reasonable demands of the Akali Dal was most unfortunate. The
constructive role played by Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister in the formation of a Punjabi-
speaking State was wholly forgotten. In 1972, again, Indira Gandhi was able to create new States
of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, etc. The fact of the matter is that legitimate
aspirations of each region were conceded by the Government and that should have been indeed
appreciated. Indira Gandhi was conscious of the complexity of nation building process. Indian
society was a complex society, wherein sub-cultures or sub-nationalism owing allegiance to the
language or region, tend to pose a threat to the central authority, which needed to be curbed for
the good of the entire society. Indira Gandhi was in favor of a healthy growth of a region within
the bounds of a healthy nation state as epitomized at the Centre. She was the product of the
nationalist era and despite 37 years of independence, she, at times, felt upset that nationalism so
far had not become a strong component of Indian culture. She also belonged to an illustrious
family which had plunged into the movement wholeheartedly and upheld the values as embodied
in the composite Indian culture.

In 1956, the states were reorganized on linguistic basis. Agitations are going on in many
parts of India demanding states reorganization. Linguistic jingoism has become an important
factor which hinders national integration. Some areas in the country like Telangana in Andhra
Pradesh, Vidharba in Maharashtra, Bodoland in Assam, some states in North Eastern India with
aspirations of separate identity fought for separate statehood during the time of reorganization of
states and continue to do so even now. These have been posing a perennial problem and have
been causing lot of strain to the Indian Union. Indira Gandhi effectively handled these issues
without jeopardizing the interests of the nation. The case of Telangana along with Vidarbha and
states in North–Eastern India will present an effective study as to how she arrested fissiparous
tendencies in Indian Union.

Telangana

In December 1953, the States Reorganization Commission was appointed to prepare for
the creation of states on linguistic lines. The commission, due to public demand, recommended
disintegration of Hyderabad state and to merge Marathi speaking region with Bombay state and
Kannada speaking region with Mysore state. The States Reorganization Commission (SRC)
discussed pros and cons of the merger of Telugu speaking Telangana region of Hyderabad state with Andhra state. and said "The creation of Vishalandhra is an ideal to which numerous individuals and public bodies, both in Andhra and Telangana, have been passionately attached to over a long period of time, and unless there are strong reasons to the contrary, this sentiment is entitled to consideration". Discussing the case of Telangana, it said "One of the principal causes of opposition of Vishalandhra also seems to be the apprehension felt by the educationally backward people of Telangana that they may be swamped and exploited by the more advanced people of the coastal areas." In its final analysis, SRC recommended against the immediate merger. In said "After taking all these factors into consideration we have come to the conclusions that it will be in the interests of Andhra as well as Telangana, if for the present, the Telangana area is to constitute into a separate State, which may be known as the Hyderabad State with provision for its unification with Andhra after the general elections likely to be held in or about 1961 if by a two thirds majority of the legislature of the residuary Hyderabad State expresses itself in favor of such unification." After going through the recommendations of the SRC, the then Central Government led by Jawaharlal Nehru decided to merge Andhra state and Telangana to form Andhra Pradesh State on 1 November 1956 after providing safeguards to Telangana in the form of Gentlemen's Agreement.

**January–April 1969**

In the years after the formation of Andhra Pradesh state, people of Telangana expressed dissatisfaction over how the agreements and guarantees were implemented. Discontent intensified in January, when the guarantees that had been agreed on were supposed to lapse. All the Andhra employees who migrated to capital city in 1956 will be considered 'local' in 1969 after 12 years of residence as per Mulki rules. Student agitation for the continuation of the agreement began at Khammam and spread to other parts of the region. One section of students (which appeared dominant) wanted a separate state of Telangana while the other wanted implementation of safeguards. on 19 January, all party accord was reached to ensure the proper implementation of Telangana safeguards. The Accord's main points were 1) All non-Telangana employees holding posts reserved for Telangana locals will be transferred immediately 2) Telangana surpluses will be used for Telangana development 3) Appeal to Telangana students to call off agitation.
On January 23, protests turned violent when a crowd of about 1000 agitators tried to set fire to a Sub-Inspector's residence. This resulted in police firing in which many people were injured and were admitted to various hospitals. Meanwhile certain Andhra employees challenged the transfer orders promised by the all party accord, by filing a petition in the AP high court. On January 29, the Army was called in by the government to maintain law & order as the agitation quickly turned violent. In February, Mulki rules (local jobs for local people), as promised in Gentlemen's agreement, were declared by high court as void but this judgment was stayed by divisional bench of high court. Quoting statistics of development in Telangana area over the last 12 years, the chief minister maintained that the integration of the state of the Andhra Pradesh was "irreversible" and made an appeal to people to help maintain unity & integrity. Protests continued in March, and a bandh turned violent when protestors burnt buses.

In April, protestors tried to disrupt a meeting of CPI (which was opposed to the division of the state) by indulging in stone-pelting. Police had to resort to firing after their attempts to control the crowd by lathi-charge & firing in the air didn't yield results. In the ensuing firing, 3 people were killed and several injured. Around 354 arrests were made related to various arson incidents during the agitation. Then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi called for a high-level meeting to discuss the issue while ruling out the division of the state. After several days of talks with leaders of both regions, on 12 April 1969, Prime Minister came up with Eight Point plan.

**Eight Point Plan**

After several days of talks with leaders of both regions, on 12th April 1969, Prime Minister’s Camp up with Eight Point plan. This plan included appointment of Five Committees:

1. High-powered Committee would be set to determine financial surpluses to Telangana
2. Telangana Development Committee
3. Plan Implementation Committee
4. Committee of jurists to be consulted on safeguards
5. Committee to look into grievances of Public servants

Telangana leaders were not satisfied with the accord.

**Government spending diversion**
Justice Bhargava committee which looked into Telangana surpluses, found that 283 million rupees was diverted from Telangana to Andhra region between 1956 and 1968. Economist C H Hanumanth Rao further analyzed the data from the committee report and concluded that for Telangana, cumulative surplus with interest during that period was 1.174 Billion rupees.\(^{32}\) during this period, the revenue budget of the state grew from 586 million rupees in 1957 to 2.04 billion rupees in 1968.\(^{33}\) Government employees and opposition members of the state legislative assembly threatened "direct action" in support of the students.\(^{34}\) Purushotham Rao, the Telangana protagonist, was for outright separation, and he supported the student views. He unveiled a map of Telangana in the state assembly.

**Chenna Reddy and Telangana Praja Samiti**

Although the Congress faced some dissension within its ranks, its leadership stood against additional linguistic states. As a result, defectors from the Congress, led by M. Chenna Reddy, founded the Telangana Praja Samithi (TPS) political party in 1969 which intensified the movement. In June, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi came to Hyderabad to discuss the issue with Telangana leaders. Telangana employee unions started strike on June 10 supporting Telangana movement. Major leaders of the movement were jailed in July and released in August upon court's intervention.\(^{35}\)

With the success in bye-elections, TPS become a full fledged political party. Due to Congress party's refusal of formation of Telangana state, TPS decided to contest Parliamentary election alone even though Congress party tried to become its electoral ally. In the May 1971 parliamentary elections, Telangana Praja Samithi won 10 out the 14 Parliament seats in Telangana.\(^{36}\) Despite these electoral successes, some of the new party leaders gave up their agitation in September 1971, after realizing that the Prime Minister was not inclined towards a separate state of Telangana, and rejoined the safer political haven of the Congress ranks.\(^{37}\) In a book written by then Secretary of External Affairs, T.N. Kaul and published in 1982, he mentioned that in 1969, Prime minister Indira Gandhi wanted to commence the process of formation of a separate state for Telangana by instructing Sri P.N. Haksur, her senior secretary in the PMO, but she had to withdraw at the last minute due to intervention by Kaul who dissuaded her from it by reminding that Hyderabad’s case was pending in the Security Council.\(^{38}\) United Nations dropped the Hyderabad’s case on 02 September, 1979.\(^{39}\)
During this period, the Government promised to correct what critics saw as a violation of the promises of the Gentlemen's agreement in the areas of jobs, budget allocations, and educational facilities. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was strongly against the division of the state. On the recommendation of Mrs. Gandhi, P.V. Narasima Rao became the first Chief minister of Andhra Pradesh from Telangana on 30 September 1971. In 1972, candidates of the Telangana Praja Samithi party contested all the available seats for the assembly elections. However, only Thakkalapalli Purushothama Rao got elected, from Wardhannapet constituency in Warangal District.

Despite all the agitations and accompanying chaos, Mrs. Gandhi stood steadfast and refused to yield to separatists. Her speech in the parliament stands as testimony to the strong views on further division of country “all these matters have to be thought of not in terms of emotions but in terms of calm and collective thought. And not in terms of today, or tomorrow or the day after but of what it will mean to them and the country ten years hence, 20 years hence, a hundred years hence.” Former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi impassioned observation in 1972 during the height of jai Andhra makes more sense today than ever. However, the solution to the Telangana issue was found in the bifurcation of the state and accordingly the state of Andhra Pradesh is divided into two.

**Foreigner Issue in Assam**

The people of Assam were fed up of the foreigners issue and they needed a solution to it immediately. Besides impeding the process of socio-economic development of Assam, the foreigners issue generated a feeling of hatred and hostility by a section of people for another.

Migration of outsiders into Assam has a long history. The British administration had encouraged migration of thousands of Biharis to work on the tea-plantations and of hundreds of thousands of Bengali peasants to settle on the vast uncultivated tracts of Assam. Till recently, Assamese landlords had welcomed the hardworking Bengali tenants in the sparsely populated Assam. Between 1939 and 1947, Muslim communalists encouraged Bengali Muslim migration to create a better bargaining position in case of partition of India. Partition led to a large-scale refugee influx from Pakistani Bengal into Assam besides West Bengal and Tripura.

In 1971, after the Pakistani crackdown in East Bengal, more than one million refugees sought shelter in Assam. Most of them went back after the creation of Bangladesh, but nearly 100,000 remained. After 1971, there occurred a fresh, continuous and large-scale influx of land-
hungry Bangladeshi peasants into Assam. But land in Assam had by now become scarce and Assamese peasants and tribal’s feared loss of their holdings. However, this demographic transformation generated the feeling of linguistic, cultural and political insecurity, which overwhelmed the Assamese and imparted a strong emotional content to their movement against illegal migrants in the eighties.

The demographic transformation of Assam created apprehension among many Assamese that the swamping of Assam by foreigners and non-Assamese Indians would lead to the Assamese being reduced to a minority in their own land and consequently to the subordination of their language and culture, loss of control over their economy and politics, and, in the end, the loss of their very identity and individuality as a people. Though illegal migration had surfaced as a political matter several times since 1950, it burst as a major issue in 1979 when it became clear that a large number of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh had become voters in the state. Afraid of their acquiring a dominant role in Assam's politics through the coming election at the end of 1979, the All Assam Students Union (AASU) and the Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (Assam People's Struggle Council), a coalition of regional political, literary and cultural associations, started a massive, anti-illegal migration movement. The leaders of the movement claimed that the number of illegal aliens was as high as 31 to 34 per cent of the state’s total population. They, therefore, asked the Central Government to seal Assam's borders to prevent further inflow of migrants, to identify all illegal aliens and delete their names from the voters list and to postpone elections till this was done, and to deport or disperse to other parts of India all those who had entered the state after 1961. So strong was the popular support to the movement that elections could not be held in fourteen out of sixteen constituencies.

The agitation in Assam had caused great concern and anxiety to Mrs. Gandhi. She has rightly considered this agitation as harmful to the integrity and unity of our nation. The Assamese problem has become a national problem. She was making all efforts to solve the problem through discussions. At the National Integration Council meeting held in November 12, 1980, she declared as follows “I would like our friends in Assam, whether it is the young students, the Parishad or Government employees or any other section of the Assamese people, to think of their problem in the larger context. They themselves keep reminding us that we should treat it as national problem and any such problem is a national problem. But they should also keep in view the national aspect as well as international obligations, national commitments and
humanitarian considerations. Assam must not suffer, India also must not suffer. Nor should hundreds of thousands of human beings suffer. A prosperous Assam cannot be built by striking at the root of national integration, unity and our cherished ideals. The misgivings and apprehensions of minorities cannot be overlooked. In a democracy, such as ours, issues must be resolved through discussions and a solution found, which, if not satisfactory to all, is at least the least unsatisfactory to all concerned.” 41 She did not agree to the sending of so called foreigners from Assam because that would jeopardize the unity and oneness of the nation and also hurt the feeling of Indianness because all Indians have the inherent right to settle in any part of the country and earn their livelihood. In fact, it was after the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi that her illustrious son, Rajiv Gandhi struck an agreement with the Assamese, called the Assam Accord which to some extent found solution to the foreigners issue by repatriating all those foreigners who settled in Assam after 24 March 1971. The Accord did not see the end of the Assamese problems. There were sub-national movements led by Bodos for a separate Bodoland which off late has acquired alarming proportions after the Central Government decided to concede Telangana. Mrs.Gandhi envisioned this scenario where conceding statehood demand to one section of people would accentuate demands from different sections that is why she never conceded the demand for creation of any new state.

Conflict in North-East India

The North-East region of India comprising eight states – Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Tripura and Sikkim, a region poorly connected to the Indian mainland by a small corridor, and surrounded by many countries such as Bhutan, Myanmar, Bangladesh and China, is the setting for a multitude of conflict that undermines the idea of India as a prosperous and functioning democracy.

For instance, the Naga insurgency, which started in the 1950s, known as the mother of the North-East insurgencies, is one of the oldest unresolved armed conflicts in the world. In total, Manipur, Assam, Nagaland and Tripura have witnessed scales of conflict that could, at least between 1990 and 2000, be characterized as low intensity conflicts. However, it must also be mentioned that internal conflicts have been a permanent feature of the Asian political landscape since 1945, of which post-colonial India is no exception. Currently, most of the states in the region are affected by some form of conflict, except for Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Sikkim in which the situation, at the moment is relatively stable. The reasons for the respective
conflicts are wide ranging from separatist movements, to inter-community, communal and inter-ethnic conflicts. Unfortunately, the data and information on the region is not sufficiently analyzed and communicated between the region and the Centre, contributing to further misinformation, mismanagement and alienation. At another level, conflict in the region has been an all pervasive phenomena, and in its violent form, it has not only affected the territorial and political sovereignty of the Indian state, but also the life of the various people living in the region in incomprehensible and inexplicable terms. In a drastic and dreaded sense, there is a “culture” of conflict and unfortunately, people have submitted to such an existence. However, amidst the widespread sense of helplessness, there is also an overwhelming desire and force to be free from such a situation of conflict which cripples the people from all sides. To gain a holistic understanding of the problem that has historical and contemporary dimensions, it is important to assess and understand the various facets of the problem that interact with each other.

**Historical reasons for the conflict**

The historical connections among the traditional tribes in the Northeast are largely of Tibeto-Burman/Mongoloid stock and closer to Southeast Asia than to South Asia. It is ethnically, linguistically and culturally very distinct from the other states of India. Though cultural and ethnic diversity per say are not causes for conflict, but one of the major problem areas is that the North-East is territorially organized in such a manner that ethnic and cultural specificities were ignored during the process of delineation of state boundaries in the 1950s, giving rise to discontentment and assertion of one’s identity. Whereas, the colonial rulers took nearly a century to annex the entire region, and administered the hills as a loose ‘frontier area’, with the result, that large parts of the north-eastern hill areas never came in touch with the principle of a central administration before.

Hence, their allegiance to the newly formed Indian nation-state was lacking from the beginning, accentuated by the creation of East Pakistan (today’s Bangladesh), which meant the loss of a major chunk of the physical connection between mainland India and Northeast India. Interestingly, 99 percent of the Northeast’s boundaries are international and only one percent is domestic boundary.

**Issues of governance**
The Indian Government’s past and the ongoing processes of national integration, state-building and democratic consolidations have further aggravated the conflict scenario in the region. For instance, the eight states comprising the Northeast is populated by nearly 40 million inhabitants who vary in language, race, tribe, caste, religion, and regional heritage. Therefore, most often, the clubbing of all these states under the tag of ‘northeast’ has tended to have a homogenizing effect with its own set of implications for policy formulation and implementation; not to mention local aversion to such a construct.

The politico-administrative arrangements made by the Centre have also been lacking. For instance, the introduction of the Sixth Schedule Autonomous Councils (currently there are ten such Councils in the region and many more demanding such status) ended up creating multiple power centers instead of bringing in a genuine process of democratization or autonomy in the region. Moreover, Para 12 (A) of the Sixth Schedule clearly states that, whenever there is a conflict of interest between the District Councils and the state legislature, the latter would prevail. It is even alleged that it is “a mere platform for aspiring politicians who nurture ambitions to contest assembly polls in the future”.

The AFSPA (Armed Forces Special Power Act) for instance, shows the inability and reluctance of the government to solve the conflict with adequate political measures. The AFSPA passed on 18 August, 1958, as a short-term measure to allow deployment of the army to counter an armed separatist movement in the Naga Hills, has been in place for the last five decades and was extended to all the seven states of the Northeast region in 1972 (with the exception of Mizoram). It was part of a bundle of provisions, passed by the Central Government, to retain control over the Naga areas, in which the Naga National Council (NNC) demanded further autonomous rights. The AFSPA became a powerful measure for the central and the state government to act against actors challenging the political and territorial integrity of India. As a result, the Indian army for the first time since its independence was deployed to manage an internal conflict. But, instead of resolving the problem, it led to an ongoing escalation of the conflict by bringing it on a military level. The regular violations of human rights has led to a radicalization and militarization of the region and weakened also the supporters of a political solution. A fact-finding commission, appointed by the government in 2004, complained that the AFSPA has become a symbol of oppression, an object of hate and an instrument of discrimination and highhandedness.
Though the conflict in the region is mired with complex political-economic issues, such as, struggle over natural resources, migration related issues, displacement, social exclusion, and so on, according to Dr. Clemens Spiess, “The politics of identity lie at the heart of the bigger part of the current conflict constellations in the Northeast”. 43

Mrs. Gandhi left no stone unturned to bring the north-eastern region into the nation’s mainstream. She had invited the leaders from north-east to come to the discussion table times without number. Her conciliatory efforts did not meet with much success. Speaking on the North-eastern problem at the meeting of the National Integration Council, on November 12, 1980, she said “While Government will spare no efforts to see that genuine apprehensions are allayed and economic development of the states of the North East accelerated, a great responsibility rests on political leadership and on the idealistic youth to keep the All-India perspective before the people, and especially in view of their own future, what we hope will be enlarged and growing opportunities”. 44

The efforts of Mrs. Gandhi lie in preventing the North Eastern states, especially, Nagaland from seceding from the Indian union. Successive governments taking clues from Indira Gandhi’s policy have been making relentless efforts to amalgamate the North-Eastern region into the Indian mainstream. The Central Government is trying to address the durable challenges to the integrative and accommodative capacity of Indian democracy. Northeast is an important component, and the government is focusing mainly on the Northeast region of India and aims to support, facilitate and contribute to civil society engagement, participation, and intervention in the region with regard to conflict prevention. Thereby, facilitating intermediation between the various stakeholders involved in the diverse conflict constellations in the region, be it the public, civil society activists, state representatives, journalists, academicians and researchers; and contributing to the promotion of integration and socialization into a democratic political culture through dialogue and civic education. The overall objective of the government is to promote the peaceful coexistence of conflict affected ethnic groups through strengthened democratic processes.
Vidhrabha

Vidarbha, a region in the state of Maharashtra, has been demanding an independent identity in the form of statehood since long. It all started on October 1, 1938 when for the very first time the Central Province (CP) and Berar (pre-independence name of Madhya Pradesh and Amravati) Assembly unanimously passed a resolution for the creation of a separate Vidarbha state. Under the leadership of Jambuwantrao Dhote, a movement was started for separate state. Once known as the “Lion of Vidarbha” for his aggressive stand in support of the statehood demand, Mr Dhote lost his credibility after joining the Congress in the late 70s, under the influence former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. As a candidate of the Forward Bloc, Mr Dhote had contested an election on the separate Vidarbha state issue in 1971 and won with a comfortable majority. It remained only as a demand, which has also lost its sheen and leadership credibility over time. Vidarbha, which happens to be an economically backward region where suicides of farmers has been so common an affair that it fails to draw the attention of the people, has been demanding statehood on the basis of backwardness saying that it had been subject to the neglect of the successive Maharastrian governments and the solution to the malady it was believed was separate statehood. Mrs.Gandhi refused to subscribe to this view that separate statehood was the panacea for backwardness. She paid no heed to the demand and cold shouldered it for the sake of curbing fissiparous tendencies. After the central government conceded the demanded for separate Telangana recently, the issue of Vidarbha has come to the fore again.

Anti Hindi Agitation in Tamil Nadu

The Anti-Hindi agitations of Tamil Nadu were a series of agitations that happened in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu (formerly Madras State and part of Madras Presidency) during both pre- and post-Independence periods. The agitations involved several mass protests, riots, student and political movements in Tamil Nadu, and is concerned with the official status of Hindi in the state and in the Indian Republic. The first anti-Hindi agitation was launched in 1937, in opposition to the introduction of compulsory teaching of Hindi in the schools of Madras Presidency by the first Indian National Congress government led by C. Rajagopalachari (Rajaji). This move was immediately opposed by E.V. Ramasamy (Periyar) and the opposition Justice Party (later Dravidar Kazhagam). The agitation, which lasted three years, was multifaceted and involved fasts, conferences, marches, picketing and protests. The government responded with a
crackdown resulting in the death of two protesters and the arrest of 1,198 persons including women and children. The mandatory Hindi education was later withdrawn by the British Governor of Madras Lord Erskine in February 1940 after the resignation of the Congress Government in 1939. Adoption of an official language for the Indian Republic was a hotly debated issue during the framing of the Indian Constitution after India's independence from Britain. After an exhaustive and divisive debate, Hindi was adopted as the official language of India with English continuing as an associate official language for a period of fifteen years, after which Hindi would become the sole official language. The new Constitution came into effect on 26 January 1950. Efforts by the Indian Government to make Hindi the sole official language after 1965 was not acceptable to many non-Hindi Indian states, who wanted the continued use of English. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), a descendant of Dravidar Kazhagam, led the opposition to Hindi. To allay their fears, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru enacted the Official Languages Act in 1963 to ensure the continuing use of English beyond 1965. The text of the Act did not satisfy the DMK and increased their skepticism that his assurances might not be honored by future administrations.

As the day (26 January 1965) of switching over to Hindi as sole official language approached, the anti-Hindi movement gained momentum in Madras State with increased support from college students. On 25 January, a full-scale riot broke out in the southern city of Madurai, sparked off by a minor altercation between agitating students and Congress party members. The riots spread all over Madras State, continued unabated for the next two months, and were marked by acts of violence, arson, looting, police firing and lathe charges. The Congress Government of the Madras State called in paramilitary forces to quell the agitation; their involvement resulted in the deaths of about seventy persons (by official estimates) including two policemen. To calm the situation, Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri gave assurances that English would continue to be used as the official language as long the non-Hindi speaking states wanted. The riots subsided after Shastri's assurance, as did the student agitation.

The agitations of 1965 led to major political changes in the state. The DMK won the 1967 assembly election and the Congress Party never managed to recapture power in the state since then. The Official Languages Act was eventually amended in 1967 by the Congress Government headed by Indira Gandhi to guarantee the indefinite use of Hindi and English as official languages. This effectively ensured the current "virtual indefinite policy of bilingualism"
Amendment in 1967

Shastri died in January 1966 and Indira Gandhi became prime minister. The election of 1967 saw Congress retaining power with a reduced majority. In Madras State, Congress was defeated and DMK came to power. In November 1967, a new attempt to amend the Bill was made. On 27 November, the Bill was tabled in Parliament; it was passed on 16 December (by 205 votes to 41 against). It received presidential assent on 8 January 1968 and came into effect. The Amendment modified section 3 of the 1963 Act to guarantee the "virtual indefinite policy of bilingualism". (English and Hindi) in official transactions. Mrs. Gandhi respecting the sentiments of the Tamil people and with a view to protect the unity and integrity of India and to promote peace and harmony in the nation bowed to the wishes of the Tamil people and acted as per their wishes and continued the policy of bilingualism by continuing English along with Hindi as the official languages. The leaders who succeeded also emulated her with regard to continuing English as official language along with Hindi

Agitation of 1968

The anti-Hindi activists from Madras State were not satisfied with the 1967 Amendment, as it did not address their concerns about the three language formula. However, with DMK in power, they hesitated to restart the agitation. The Tamil Nadu Students' Anti-Hindi Agitation council split into several factions. The moderate factions favored letting Annadurai and the government to deal with the situation. The extremist factions restarted the agitations. They demanded scrapping of the three language formula and an end to teaching of Hindi, abolishing the use of Hindi commands in the National Cadet Corps (NCC), banning of Hindi films and songs and closure of the Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachara Sabha – the Institution for propagation of Hindi in South India.

On 19 December 1967, the agitation was restarted. It turned violent on 21 December and acts of arson and looting were reported in the state. Annadurai defused the situation by accepting most of their demands.
On 23 January 1968, a resolution was passed in the Legislative Assembly. It accomplished the following. The Three-Language policy was scrapped and Hindi was eliminated from the curriculum. Only English and Tamil were to be taught, the use of Hindi commands in NCC was banned, Tamil was to be introduced as medium of instruction in all colleges and as the language of administration within five years, the Central Government was urged to end the special status accorded to Hindi in the Constitution and treat all languages equally, and was urged to provide financial assistance for development of all languages mentioned in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. These measures satisfied the agitators and normalcy returned by February 1968. The Central Government under Indira Gandhi raised no objection. Thus ensuring peace and tranquility in Tamil Nadu and in the process ensured that National integrity was not threatened.

Secessionist Movements in Punjab and Kashmir

While some regions in the country like Telangana, Vidarbha sought a separate identity in the Indian union in the form of a separate statehood, Some people in states like Punjab and Kashmir wanted to seceded from the Indian union and wanted to form separate nation states. Mrs. Gandhi was very effective in dealing with those separatist movements and to a very great extent could contain them. Her abiding desire to keep the country united made her to pay with her life.

Punjab

The Khalistan movement was a political secessionist movement which sought to create a separate Sikh country, called Khalistan (Punjabi: "The Land of the Pure") in the Punjab region of India. The territorial definition of the proposed country ranges from the Punjab state of India to the greater Punjab region, including the neighboring Indian states and parts of Pakistani Punjab. The Punjab region has been the traditional homeland of the Sikhs. Before its conquest by the British, it had been ruled by a Sikh dynasty for 50 years. However, the region also has a substantial number of Hindus and Muslims, and before 1947, the Sikhs formed the largest religious group only in the Ludhiana district of the British province. When the Muslim League demanded a separate country for Muslims via the Lahore Resolution of 1940, a section of Sikh leaders grew concerned that their community would be left without any homeland following the
partition of India between the Hindus and the Muslims. They put forward the idea of Khalistan, envisaging it as a theocratic state covering the greater Punjab region.

After the partition was announced, the majority of the Sikhs migrated from the Pakistani part to the Indian province of Punjab, which included the parts of the present-day Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. When the Indian government decided to form language-based states, the Sikh political party Akali Dal launched the Punjabi Suba movement, demanding a Punjabi-majority state within India. Concerned that creating a Punjabi-majority state would effectively mean creating a Sikh-majority state, the Indian government initially rejected the demand. After a series of protests and violent clampdowns, the Government finally agreed to partition the state, creating a new Sikh-majority Punjab state. Subsequently, the Sikh leaders started demanding more autonomy for the states, alleging that the Central government was discriminating against Punjab. Although the Akali Dal explicitly opposed the demand for an independent Sikh country, the issues raised by it were used as a premise for the creation of a separate country by the proponents of Khalistan.

In 1971, the Khalistan proponent Jagjit Singh Chauhan travelled to the United States. He placed an advertisement in The New York Times proclaiming the formation of Khalistan and was able to collect millions of dollars from the Sikh diaspora. On 12 April 1980, he held a meeting with the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi before declaring the formation of "National Council of Khalistan", at Anandpur Sahib. He declared himself as the President of the Council and Balbir Singh Sandhu as its Secretary General. In May 1980, Jagjit Singh Chauhan travelled to London and announced the formation of Khalistan. A similar announcement was made by Balbir Singh Sandhu, who released stamps and currency of Khalistan. The inaction of the authorities in Amritsar and elsewhere was decried by Akali Dal headed by the Sikh leader Harchand Singh Longowal as a political stunt by the Congress (I) party of Indira Gandhi.

The Khalistan movement reached its zenith in 1970s and 1980s, flourishing in the Indian state of Punjab, which has a Sikh-majority population and has been the traditional homeland of the Sikh religion. Various pro-Khalistan outfits have been involved in a separatist movement against the Government of India ever since. There are claims of funding from Sikhs outside India to attract young people into these pro-Khalistan militant groups.

In the 1980s, some of the Khalistan proponents turned to militancy, resulting in counter-militancy operations by the Indian security forces. In one such operation, Operation Blue Star
(June 1984), the Indian Army led by the Sikh General Kuldip Singh Brar forcibly entered the Harimandir Sahib (the Golden Temple) to overpower the armed militants and the religious leader Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. The handling of the operation, damage to the Akal Takht (which is one of the five seats of temporal physical religious authority of the Sikhs) and loss of life on both sides, led to widespread criticism of the Indian Government. Many Sikhs strongly maintain that the attack resulted in the desecration of the holiest Sikh shrine. The Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her two Sikh bodyguards in retaliation. Following her death, thousands of Sikhs were massacred in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, termed as genocide by the Sikh groups.\(^{56}\)

In January 1986, the Golden Temple was occupied by militants belonging to All India Sikh Students Federation and Damdami Taksal. On 26 January 1986, the gathering passed a resolution (gurmattā) favouring the creation of Khalistan. Subsequently, a number of rebel militant groups in favour of Khalistan waged a major insurgency against the Government of India. Indian security forces suppressed the insurgency in the early 1990s, but Sikh political groups such as the Khalsa Raj Party and SAD (A) continued to pursue an independent Khalistan through non-violent means.\(^{57}\) Pro-Khalistan organizations such as Dal Khalsa (International) are also active outside India, supported by a section of the Sikh diaspora.\(^{58}\)

Kashmir Conflict

The Kashmir dispute dates from 1947. The partition of the Indian sub-continent along religious lines led to the formation of India and Pakistan. However, there remained the problem of over 650 states, run by princes, existing within the two newly independent countries. In theory, these princely states had the option of deciding which country to join, or of remaining independent. In practice, the restive population of each province proved decisive. The people had been fighting for freedom from British rule, and with their struggle about to bear fruit they were not willing to let the princes fill the vacuum. Although many princes wanted to be "independent" (which would have meant hereditary monarchies and no hope for democracy) they had to succumb to their people's protests which turned violent in many provinces.

Kashmir, because of its location, could choose to join either India or Pakistan. Maharaja Hari Singh, the ruler of Kashmir, was Hindu, while most of his subjects were Muslim. Unable to decide which nation Kashmir should join, Hari Singh chose to remain neutral. But his hopes of remaining independent were dashed in October 1947, as Pakistan sent in Muslim tribesmen who
were knocking at the gates of the capital Srinagar. Hari Singh appealed to the Indian government for military assistance and fled to India. He signed the Instrument of Accession, ceding Kashmir to India on October 26.

Indian and Pakistani forces thus fought their first war over Kashmir in 1947-48. India referred the dispute to the United Nations on 1 January. In a resolution dated August 13, 1948, the UN asked Pakistan to remove its troops, after which India was also to withdraw the bulk of its forces. Once this happened, a "free and fair" plebiscite was to be held to allow the Kashmiri people to decide their future. India, having taken the issue to the UN, was confident of winning a plebiscite, since the most influential Kashmiri mass leader, Sheikh Abdullah, was firmly on its side. An emergency government was formed on October 30, 1948 with Sheikh Abdullah as the Prime Minister.

Pakistan ignored the UN mandate and continued fighting, holding on to the portion of Kashmir under its control. On January 1, 1949, a ceasefire was agreed, with 65 per cent of the territory under Indian control and the remainder with Pakistan. The ceasefire was intended to be temporary but the Line of Control remains the de facto border between the two countries. In 1957, Kashmir was formally incorporated into the Indian Union. It was granted a special status under Article 370 of India's constitution, which ensures, among other things, that non-Kashmiri Indians cannot buy property there. Fighting broke out again in 1965, but a ceasefire was established that September. Prime Minister, Lal Bhadur Shastri, and Pakistani President, Ayub Khan, signed the Tashkent agreement on January 1, 1966. They resolved to try to end the dispute, but the death of Mr Shastri and the rise of Gen Yahya Khan in Pakistan resulted in stalemate. In 1971, a third war was fought, resulting in the formation of the independent nation of Bangladesh (formerly known as East Pakistan). A war had broken out in East Pakistan in March 1971, and soon India was faced with a million refugees. India declared war on December 3, 1971 after Pakistani Air Force planes struck Indian airfields in the Western sector. Two weeks later, the Indian army marched into Dhaka and the Pakistanis surrendered. In the Western sector, the Indians managed to blockade the port city of Karachi and were 50 km into Pakistani territory when a ceasefire was reached.

In 1972, Indira Gandhi, the Indian prime minister, and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, her Pakistani opposite number (and father of Benazir Bhutto, a later Pakistani Prime Minister), signed the Simla Agreement, which reiterated the promises made in Tashkent. The two sides once again
agreed to resolve the Kashmir issue peacefully, as domestic issues dominated. Both India and Pakistan had other important domestic problems which kept Kashmir on the back-burner.

In 1974, Mrs.Gandhi signed an agreement with Sheik Abdulla wherein she agreed to concede maximum powers to Kashmir legislature keeping only those powers which are needed to protect Jammu and Kashmir’s territorial integrity. For instance, The residuary powers of legislation were left with the State; however, Parliament was to continue to have power to make laws relating to the prevention of activities directed towards disclaiming, questioning or disrupting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India or bringing about cession of a part of the territory of India or secession of a part of the territory of India from the Union or causing insult to the Indian National Flag, the Indian National Anthem and the Constitution. Similarly, with a view to assuring freedom to the State of Jammu and Kashmir to have its own legislation on matters like welfare measures, cultural matters, social security, personal law and procedural laws, in a manner suited to the special conditions in the State, it was agreed that the State Government can review the laws made by Parliament or extend to the State after 1953 on any matter relatable to the Concurrent List and may decide which of them, in its opinion, needs amendment or repeal. Thereafter, appropriate steps may be taken under Article 254 of the Constitution of India. The grant of President’s assent to such legislation would be essential. The main intention of Mrs. Gandhi was to keep the Kashmiris in good humor and to make them stay in Indian union and there by protect the territorial integrity of the country and to accord respect to Article 370 which granted special privileges to Kashmir when compared to other states in the Indian union. In 1975, Indira Gandhi declared a state of national emergency, but she was defeated in the 1978 general elections. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was overthrown and hanged in 1977; Pakistan reverted to military dictatorship under Gen Zia ul Haq. The balance of influence had decisively tilted in Pakistan's favour by the late 1980s, with people's sympathy no longer with the Indian union as it had been in 1947-48 and 1965.

The Central Government’s attempts to install puppet governments in state capitals, manipulating the democratic process in the state legislatures, deeply angered the Kashmir’s. The status quo was largely maintained until 1989 when pro-independence and pro-Pakistan guerrillas struck in the Indian Kashmir valley. They established a reign of terror and drove out almost all the Hindus from the valley before the Indian army moved in to flush them out. Meanwhile Indian and Pakistani troops regularly exchanged fire at the border.
Whereas in 1948 India took the Kashmir issue to the UN and was all for a plebiscite, by
the 1990s it hid behind the Simla agreement and thwarted any attempts at UN or third-party
mediation. Over the decades, the plebiscite advocated by India’s great statesman Jawaharlal
Nehru became an unacceptable in New Delhi. These developments have led many to believe that
Delhi has squandered the Kashmiri people’s trust and allegiance. Mrs. Gandhi succeed in keeping
the Kashmir firmly in the Indian Union. However subsequent developments were not
encouraging and as a result militancy grew by leaps and bounds in Kashmir and Kashmir is
being bled red every day. People of Kashmir who were one day staunch supporters of India
seem to have their faith dwindling in Indian Government. Unless remedial measures are taken on
war footing Kashmir may slip into chaos and confusion and mayhem is going to rule Kashmir.
Nehru’s and Mrs. Gandhi’s efforts in keeping Kashmir in the Indian Union may be foiled if the
government of the day fails to win the faith and confidence of the Kashmiri people.

Mrs. Gandhi was an ardent believer in democracy. She always believed in settling issues
through dialogue. She entertained different shades of opinion to emerge and took recourse to that
opinion which she believed would best benefit the nation she always wanted some positive
solution to the persisting problems of regionalism and communalism and not mere jugglery of
words. She herself suggested an approach to the problems and requested the members to give
practical suggestions. She said “our people must be made to understand the evil effects of
Communalism and of regionalism which seems to negate our national will and purpose. We must
also study and expose to public gaze the poisoning of the young mind through misguided
educational processes and ill-conceived text-books. She further said” what we need is a many
pronged attack on forces of disintegration. Merely to say that if we overcome economic
disparities and attain a degree of affluence, we shall solve our problems is not enough. And since
every problem ultimately has its origin in the mind of man, we have to ensure that our
educational processes, the books we read, the radio we hear, the films we see do not distort the
Indian mind but lead it toward integration and solidity

Speaking about her future vision of India, she said “our concern is what kind of India
shall we bequeath to future generations- a strong, harmonious, self-confident India or a feuding
weak, schizophrenic India. We talk of national integration. It is not a mere phrase but awareness
of the burden and task that history has placed on our shoulders. I have no doubt that all of us,
whatever our party or political creed, hold the freedom and integrity of our country as supreme
and dear above all else. But freedom and unity cannot be taken for granted. Eternal vigilance is the price of our integrity, as it is of all liberties”.  

Mrs. Gandhi is of the view that disintegrating forces are highly harmful to the development of a strong harmonious and self confident India. These forces stand in the way of the emotional integration of various groups and sects of people in India. Until and unless the people developed secular attitude and outlook, the malady of disintegration continues. Communal or caste troubles and linguistic movements are initiated by a few persons, who are least bothered about national unity and integrity. Distrust and prejudice, in the opinion of Indira Gandhi, seen to be the causes of communal riots in many parts of the country. Mrs. Gandhi at National Integration Council Meeting held in New Delhi on November 12, 1980 rightly pointed out the causes of communal riots in the following words. “Most riots are provoked by a handful of persons or perhaps by a single person, but because of the prevailing atmosphere of distrust and prejudice, because of the persistence of narrow loyalties of caste, of religion and of language, personal quarrels can soon be transformed into a group clashes and assume a communal color. This is what happened in Moradabad.”

National Integration has been mainly understood in terms of communal harmony and the treatment of Harijan and other backward groups. Developments in the North-East highlighted another aspect of national integration. Having identified the divisive forces in India, Mrs. Gandhi and her Government have taken some steps to combat them. One of the steps taken is that communal organizations are banned by legislation. Another step which is taken is to educate the people to imbibe national spirit and not narrow communal, caste, parochial outlook. On the other hand, Mrs. Gandhi time and again, through broadcast and public speeches has advised the people to develop secular attitude or outlook in the interest of national unity. Her efforts to combat the forces of disintegration, in whatever form they appear, revealed her intense desire to build up a strong India, free from social disharmony. She has undoubtedly become a relentless fighter for national unity and integration.

**Conclusion: Mrs. Gandhi at building a new India**

It was her best of years 1980-81. The year began with Mrs. Gandhi staging her own return from political oblivion after being out of power for 33 months. It was one of the history’s most spectacular come-backs. In a massive upsurge of public opinion in her favor, and also against the mis-rule of the Janata-Lok Dal combine, she clinched a two-thirds majority in India’s
seventh Parliament elections. She rode into office without a semblance of an opposition visible anywhere. Her own party, Congress (I), was a wasteland of leadership where she stood out like a bare monolith. Very few women tasted as much power as she has. She fought her way up in a fiercely competitive and male dominated world. She retained power like a tigress would guard her kill. She led the masses through war and peace, through the rough and tumble of contemporary history. Indira Gandhi would value more the massive vote of confidence that the millions of Indians have given her in the general election of 1980, in full recognition of her lifelong service to the country. The vote is one of confidence not merely in Indira Gandhi’s powers as an administrator but also in her policies and programmes. She was well set to lead the country to real freedom—freedom from poverty, disease and ignorance. As she stood by the common people, they stood by her through thick and thin. Indira Gandhi fearlessly responded to the greatest challenge of her times and with tremendous impact influenced and shaped the country’s well being and energetically and enthusiastically made history. If the past and the present presaged the future, Indians surely had reasons to be confident that speedily march to that progressive order of society which she ardently aspired to attain in no distant future and where all would be assured of a life of dignity, equal and free, peaceful, prosperous and happy.

Mrs. Gandhi believed that we should keep pace with the changing times “Modern India should discard the traditions and irrelevant values, customs, conventions and social systems while retaining the timeless values for which it stood for countries. The time has come for us to make a choice as to what should be retained as an asset and what must be given up in the larger interest of the future of millions of people of this country. This type of change can only be brought about by the courage and fearlessness of the youth. This responsibility must be shouldered by them as they are to take the responsibility to make a bright and prosperous India. I do not believe in looking back. I believe in the future and in looking forward.” 63 “We must prepare the country to continue to follow the path of socialism even if we have to lay down over lives in the process. Let it be known once and for all that we will rather die than change our stand and policies. 64

She was concerned only about ensuring a better life to the people by eradicating the evils of poverty, backwardness and unemployment. She believed that no country could progress without removal of poverty and she said that the fight was against poverty and not against any individual or group. Indira Gandhi had brought stability back to Indian politics. She had charted
a new course, and it was now up to her to steer the nation through the economic and other hazards on its journey to a just social order. The results of the 1980 elections opened up exciting possibilities. Confidence in the Nation’s future was reborn. Indira Gandhi’s vision of a brave new India seemed as though it would take tangible shape in the not-too-distant future. Indira Gandhi was on a political pinnacle where she holds absolute power and could, if she wanted, do without the party. She had achieved that by purely democratic, parliamentary processes. She was in a position to dictate to the nation because she is there by the people’s unfettered will, expressed through free elections. She is a political phenomenon; in a class by herself. Her sanction was the people. The people who voted her to back to power in 1980, expected rapid economic progress, a check on inflation and an improvement in the law and order situations under her leadership. Her solid supporters were the poor people of the country. In the elections they were a force, to be reckoned with.

After she came back to power, she had to do something for those poor people to improve their lot, assure them personal safety because she was beholden to them. She owed a lot to them. In fact she did a lot to the poor people through her policies. Along with it, she also made the supreme sacrifice of giving her life on a platter to the very nation which had not only given her absolute power but also took her to the pinnacles of glory.

Mrs. Gandhi laid down her life for the convictions she believed and the political values she trusted and cherished. She believed that protecting the unity and integrity was her solemn duty and she did it till her last breath. She was assassinated by her own security guards who professed Sikh religion, for her decision to annihilate the terrorists, who were acting at the behest of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale who was advocating secession of Punjab and the creation of independent nation of Khalistan, by wrongly taking shelter in the golden temple in Amritsar and by indulging in terrorist activities. She was never scared of death. The day before her assassination, at a meeting in Bubaneswar, She made it amply clear that she was even prepared for supreme sacrifice. She was a patriotic leader and statesman who believed that nation must come before self. This belief is manifestly evident in all her actions relating to protection and promotion of the unity and integrity of India. She made relentless efforts to weed out communalism, which she believed was pestilence which was eating into the vitals of India. Similarly, she was against the creation of new states be it Telangana, Vidarbha, Bodoland, Gorkaland etc. She mulled that giving credence to such opinions would open more doors and
demands for creation of new states and there would be no end to it. She handled secessionist movement in Punjab deftly and with an iron fist. As a result insurgency is completely rooted from Punjab and peace and normalcy have been restored in that state. With regard to Kashmir, her efforts culminated in the inclusion in the Simla Agreement in 1972 that Kashmir has to be settled bilaterally only by India and Pakistan. Similarly, her agreement with Sheik Abdulla in 1974, gave credence to the belief that Indian government would protect the identity and the interests of the Kashmiris by respecting their separate status as per Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. Similarly, her efforts in the North-East, be it the foreigners issue in Assam or the Insurgency movements in Nagaland, she displayed enough political sagacity and saw to that the situation did not spin out of control and the North-Eastern States continued to be part of the Indian Union Reiterating the fact that Mrs. Gandhi played no small part in protecting and promoting the unity and integrity of India is stressing the obvious. The fact that India continues to exist as one piece in spite of many sharp conflicts present in the polity, is due to the foresight and the measures that were taken by Mrs. Gandhi

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