



FROM TRYST TO TENDULKAR



The History of Independent India

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From Tryst to Tendulkar: The History of Independent India

Balaji Viswanathan

Prelude

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Mumbai, India

At about 4pm, India stopped working. A trillion dollar economy and a billion Indians were waiting. It was the last they would see of one of the greatest legends in Indian sporting history. It was the last of the trademark Cricketing cover drives and hooks you can get a glimpse of.

Sachin Tendulkar could not contain his tears as he walked past the test pitch for the last time. India could not contain its tears either.

India in Crisis Mode

Cricket is an English sport played in whites by whites, trying to kill their idle time while ruling the vast empire. However, this sleepy sport has become a quasi-religion in the subcontinent.

I was about six when Sachin Tendulkar first played for India. It was a different time back then. You had to pay a bribe for everything: scooter, telephone or even foreign exchange. The Indian economy was firmly shut from outsiders and India was fast imploding in every sense.

India was in a state of deep unrest at that time. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi squandered one of the most thumping electoral victories in 1984 to end up being in the opposition party when Sachin Tendulkar took guard for the first time on November 16, 1989 in Karachi, Pakistan.

The nation was deeply hurt by the adventures of the Indian Peacekeeping force in Sri Lanka and the popular scams of the time - buying Bofors guns from Sweden.

The landmark Shah Bano case which denied a Muslim woman of her rights in a messy divorce, and the government's tweaking of laws to placate the communal interests, kept India in a state of unrest. A strange coalition of orthodox Hindus and feminists were aghast at the government for its handling of the issue. To placate the orthodox Hindus, Rajiv opened up the gates of the controversial Babri Masjid.

While internally it was chaotic, there were massive changes in the world around India: the Berlin wall collapsed, students were shot in Tiananmen Square, and the USSR pulled out of Afghanistan in the same year of Sachin Tendulkar's debut. The fall of Communism and India's allies along with that, hurt the Indian economy.

The Start of a New Era

Sachin didn't seem perturbed by any of this. In his first series in International Cricket -

played in India's arch rival Pakistan - Sachin Tendulkar showed signs of becoming a future icon of India. He stood bold against some of the best fast bowlers of all time. By 1991, he was a rising star for India, fresh out of a great tour of India's former colonial masters - England.

While Sachin was growing from strength to strength, India was growing from weakness to weakness. The hodgepodge of right and left parties that took over the power from Rajiv in 1989 were no better at handling either the economy or the polity. The protests following the recommendation for more affirmative action programs by the Mandal Commission, kept the nation on edge.

Another war in the Middle East (a major oil exporter and a major source of dollar remittances to India) started when Saddam Hussein's misadventure in Kuwait skyrocketed prices. In parallel, India's most important trading partner - Union of Soviet Socialist Republics - was no longer a union, nor a soviet, nor a socialist. It had crumbled into a network of 15 new nations.

By the summer of 1991 - India was practically bankrupt. The anti-Congress alliance failed and India was back to the polling booths. The new elections brought a slim majority to Congress. A sullen new Prime Minister and his turbaned Finance Minister were taking charge of India. One of the first jobs for the new Finance Minister was to take India's gold reserves to London and get some precious dollars to pay for the now unaffordable oil.

With nowhere to go, India finally opened up its economy, dramatically reducing taxes and partly dismantling the "License Raj" - an era of excessive government intrusion into the Indian economy. This freed up India corporates and started a new era.

As Sachin Tendulkar started piling up runs and ratcheting centuries, India began one of its fastest growth phases.

India Entering the IT World

While India was handing England its worst defeat on a cricket field in February 1993, a quiet Indian software company attempted to enter the hallowed floors of the Bombay Stock Exchange. It was selling its shares for Rs.98/share (in the next few years this would multiply 2000x). However, the IPO failed and Infosys had to enter the markets through a side route. Even though the IPO failed, things looked quite rosy for many fledgling Indian software companies. In the next decade, these small players would become global players making India a top destination for the global software and services trade.

The year of 1994 was especially great for Sachin as he proved his abilities in the shorter form of Cricket. Incidentally, 1994 was also the year of a huge bull run in Indian stock markets (although now we know that it was quite manipulated). My dad was investing in a bunch of IPOs (mostly bank/insurance IPOs) and it was quite exciting to see the gains.

In short, everyone at home was happy - some for Sachin and some for the stocks. We watched almost every one of his centuries. We cheered every one of his boundaries. We got angry every time he was unjustly given out. We were in tears every time his dismissal brought the end of India's chances of victory. In short, Cricket in India was just a synonym for Sachin's game. Some of the happiest times of my childhood were correlated with

Sachin's form.

Siamese Twins

At the time India exploded its landmark nuclear test in the summer of 1998, Sachin was at his peak, fighting one of the greatest matches in Sharjah. In the spring of 1999, when India fought the last of its major wars in the hills of Kargil in Kashmir, Sachin went through a chronic back pain phase - scaring his supporters all over India.

India smiled when Sachin smiled. India winced when Sachin winced.

September 28, 2014

New York City, NY USA

The crowd of engineers, scientists, oncologists, professors, billionaires, graduate researchers, postdocs, artists, and executives could not contain the hope-laden tears as Prime Minister Narendra Modi finished his speech. There was an exuberance and joy that was uncharacteristic of this hard-nosed crowd. Sitting in the historic Madison Square Garden, I could see the same passion with which people watched Sachin's batting. The same way Sachin led his one man Cricket army, Modi showed a glimpse of a one man political army with a lot of potential.

A truly explosive 70 minutes of speech left the crowd stunned. It infused a new sense of hope and passion among a populace that were growing disenchanted with politics. It reminded this new generation of the challenges that Nehru and his team faced on August 15, 1947. It was as though we were transported back in time to the midnight hours of August 14, 1947.

What this book is about

This book is not just about sports or politics; but about the story of independent India. It is not just a story of politicians, but also of the people who really made India. From Homi Bhaba to Abdul Kalam, Padukone to Tendulkar, and from Nehru and Patel to Modi. This is a story of hundreds of people who really made India what we know today.

This is a book of not just events written in a laundry list, but about the insights into the events. From the integration of Hyderabad to the Shah Bano case - this is a train journey that will take you through Indian history and halting at all important events that shaped the nation.

Welcome to the story of independent India!

Tryst with Destiny

Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, then an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance...

At the dawn of history India started on her unending quest, and trackless centuries which are filled with her striving and the grandeur of her success and her failures. Through good and ill fortune alike she has never lost sight of that quest or forgotten the ideals which gave her strength. We end today a period of misfortunes and India discovers herself again. The achievement we celebrate today is but a step, an opening of opportunity, to the greater triumphs and achievements that await us. Are we brave enough and wise enough to grasp this opportunity and accept the challenge of the future? The past is over and it is the future that beckons to us now.

The appointed day has come - the day appointed by destiny - and India stands forth again, after long slumber and struggle, awake, vital, free and independent. The past clings on to us still in some measure and we have to do much before we redeem the pledges we have so often taken

Yet the turning point is past, and history begins anew for us, the history which we shall live and act and others will write about. It is a fateful moment for us in India, for all Asia and for the world. A new star rises, the star of freedom in the east, a new hope comes into being, a vision long cherished materialises. May the star never set and that hope never be betrayed! We have hard work ahead. There is no resting for any one of us till we redeem our pledge in full, till we make all the people of India what destiny intended them to be.

— Jawaharlal Nehru addressing the Parliament on the first hour of freedom.

Chapter 0: The Road to Freedom

India is the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend, and the great grand mother of tradition. Our most valuable and most astrictive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India only!

— Mark Twain

If there is one place on the face of earth where all the dreams of living men have found a home from the very earliest days when man began the dream of existence, it is India.

— Romain Rolland

At the stroke of midnight on August 14, Britain finally left India. It was a momentous occasion for India that was long awaited. It was a time to live up to Romain Rolland's words above. Nehru gave his landmark speech in front of a packed audience at the Central Assembly, soon to become the Parliament of India.

It was also a confusing period as the nation was partitioned to create the new nation of Pakistan. There was blood all around the nation as people were forced to move between the two nations, depending on the religion they professed.

India didn't achieve freedom in one shot in the darkness of August 15, 1947. Rather, it was a long road of many small victories and big disappointments.

Colonization of India

In 1453 AD, Ottoman Turks captured the city of Constantinople and controlled a major trade route between Europe and Asia. To avoid paying taxes to the Muslims, a number of Europeans started exploring alternate routes to reach India. In this process of exploration, Columbus and others discovered large portions of the Americas and Sub-saharan Africa. Eventually, in 1498, Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama discovered the route to India through the Cape of Good Hope.

In 1510, Portugal captured the major port of Goa in the western coast of India. It was a key trading point that was strongly contested by the Hindu kings of Vijayanagar and the Muslim kings of Bijapur Sultanate. The conquest of Goa enabled Portugal to monopolize Indian trade routes. 16 years later, Afghan king Babur captured Delhi and established the Mughal Empire. Under the Mughals, India reached both its economic heights as well as saw tensions between Hindus and Muslims towards the later stages of the empire.

In 1588, England defeated the formidable Spanish Armada and established itself as the biggest power over the seas. In 1612, the newly established English East India Company defeated Portugal in the Battle of Swally, near the city of Surat. In the same year, Sir Thomas Roe led a mission to Mughal Emperor Jahangir's court. In return for European rarities, Emperor Jahangir promised protection for English factories in the city of Surat. In 1661, England got the key western port of Bombay as dowry for the marriage of King Charles II of England and Princess Catherine of Portugal. The establishment of trading posts in the southern city of Madras (1639) and eastern city of Calcutta (1690) made England as a dominant player in India.

In March 1707, the sixth Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb (grandson of Jahangir) died at the age of 88. During the long reign, he ruled with an iron-fist causing a lot of angst among the Hindu population. It is alleged that over 60000 temples were destroyed during the Mughal rule. The 1679 imposition of Jizya tax on the Hindus and other non-Muslims caused further pain and anger.

Thus, as soon as Aurangzeb died, a number of Hindu kings tried to reestablish themselves. Through most of 18th century, there was a power struggle among various Indian rulers who were all vying to be the successors of the Mughals. The East India Company saw the opportunity to become a major power both to protect its trading assets from the new kings as well as the potential to expand trade.

In the mid 18th century, the company was presented with two major mistakes by Indian monarchs. In 1757, in the Battle of Plassey, the Bengal Nawab didn't cover his gunpowder during a brief afternoon shower. This tactical mistake made his guns wet & misfire - scaring his elephants - leading to the victory of the opponent. In 1761, the biggest claimants to the Mughal throne - the Marathas - overextended themselves and were defeated in the third Battle of Panipat by the Afghan emperor Abhali. Their defeat combined with the defeat of France in the European wars, eliminated the biggest challenge to the East India Company. By the end of 18th century, the company consolidated much of India.

Struggle for Freedom in the pre-Gandhi period

The takeover of the company provoked a lot of tensions, but the response from the locals were very uncoordinated. This helped the company put out the rebel movements in various parts of the country quite easily.

However, in 1857, almost a century after it won the Battle of Plassey, the company was posed its biggest existential challenge. A number of monarchs joined hands after a mutiny broke among the soldiers in the northern city of Meerut. While the rebellion was among the most coordinated attacks on the Empire, the Company eventually won over using the soldiers from various martial clans of India. However, the British Crown under Queen Victoria realized that the company might not be able to withstand further attacks and took direct control of India. The vindictive actions by the Crown following the rebellion silenced India for a few decades.

In 1885, a number of influential Indians came for a meeting in Bombay under the leadership of a Scottish civil servant Allan Octavian Hume. This created the Indian National Congress and consolidated various small regional political outfits created by English educated Indians. Within a few years, the movement grew more radical with some members asking for independence from England. However, a sizable chunk of the party was not ready for a full-fledged freedom movement.

In 1907, Indian Congress split into a Garam Dal (Hot faction) under Bal Ganghadar Tilak and a Naram Dal (Moderate faction) under Gopal Krishna Gokhale. The partition of Bengal in 1905, to reduce the influence of Bengali Hindus in national affairs, formed the lightning rod for the hot faction.

The entry of UK in the First World War in 1914 however changed the dynamics of the equation. UK leaders promised India of self-rule after the end of the war, in return for greater cooperation from Indian leaders. Thus, leaders such as Tilak and the new entrant Mahatma Gandhi (who just returned from a reform movement in South Africa) helped in toning down the anti-colonial activities. The draconian Defence of India Act 1915 made it hard to free espouse anti-colonial sentiments. This brought a period of silence. Another big factor was the massive Influenza epidemic of 1918 that infected nearly 500 million people and killed as many as 100 million people all over the world - a sizable chunk of them in India.

During this period of lull, in 1916 various factions of the Congress and the newly formed Muslim League agreed to put down their differences and form a unified response to the British. They hoped that the end of war would bring out the promised reforms.

Government of India Act 1919

One of the first changes came at the end of the First World War, when the Government of India Act 1919 provided a more direct role for Indians to participate in the government. Although the legislative councils created before that provided some role for India, the 1919 act truly expanded that.

It created a bicameral legislature - with a Central Assembly directly elected by the people and a Council of State elected by members of provincial assemblies and also nominated by the Governor General. This is a precursor to the present Indian parliament consisting of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha.

The Central Assembly would legislate laws that would then be approved by the Council of State and eventually get the approval of the Governor General, appointed by the British Parliament.

At the provincial level, there was a system of dyarchy - where the provinces got the power to legislate items like agriculture, health, education, etc., while the Viceroy/Governor General still had all powers over Defense, Foreign Affairs, and Communications.

A lot of control was still with the Governor General, who was a non-Indian. Indians got some representation and some powers to legislate. The voting rights were not universal, but restricted to those with property or educational qualifications. Only 2% of India could vote. The first elections were to be held in the winter of 1920.

Non-Cooperation Movement

However, Indians were promised much more autonomy and could not digest an overbearing Governor General at the top. This disappointment led Congress to intensify its struggle. Mahatma Gandhi started the non-cooperation movement in 1920 and boycotted the elections.

The non-cooperation movement brought mixed successes as it ended in violence. Mahatma Gandhi and others were sent to jail for sedition. After his release, Gandhi spent most of the 1920s building the base of the Indian freedom movement in the society by emphasizing on boycotting British textiles, fighting the menace of alcoholism in rural India, and getting temple entry rights for India's lowest castes - Dalits.

Civil Disobedience Movement

As India's social base got strengthened, Mahatma Gandhi pushed for the second major political movement. On December 31, 1929, on the banks of River Ravi in northwest India, Jawaharlal Nehru unfurled the tricolor Indian flag. On January 26, 1930, he declared Purna Swaraj or complete independence.

To achieve this goal, Gandhi primarily looked to cut the British tax base in India. Mahatma knew well that power needs money. By cutting the money source, it was easy to cut the power. For years, he worked to cut the British imports of textiles into India - a major source of government's income. But, he wanted to take it further.

On March 12, 1930 Mahatma started the salt satyagraha - openly flouting rules to make salt on the beaches of Dandi in western India. Salt is essential to human existence and the exorbitant tax proved to be a good folly for Mahatma to show how the British taxation was evil. A full-fledged civil disobedience movement continued the process of cutting off taxes to the British government.

Already reeling from the effects of the Great Depression, the British government was practically bankrupt in the early 1930s and forced to concede more autonomy to the Indians.

Government of India Act 1935

This is one of the longest bills ever to pass the British Parliament with 321 sections and 10 schedules. In some ways, it was a step ahead of the 1919 Act and in some ways it was a step backward. In any case, it had a huge impact on the Indian Constitution. Among many things, it created a Federal Court at the top that eventually became the Supreme Court of India. The Act also sought to build a federation among 11 provinces of British India and six big princely states. A national level railway authority was created. It also significantly changed the map of India - by separating Burma from India and also created new provinces: Sindh and Orissa.

Most importantly, the act provided for an expanded role for the provincial legislature. This time, the voting rights were extended to a significant portion of the population (about 14%) and millions of Indians excitedly voted. It was the first big election in modern India.

Elections were held in 1937 and Congress won all the provinces. However, the Muslim League had already showed that it was capable of winning 10% of the total seats and became the second biggest political force in India.

This act formed the reference when India wrote its constitution. However, the act still didn't please Congress enough. The freedom struggle continued.

Cripps Mission, 1942

In 1939, Britain declared India as a belligerent in the Second World War. India was once again forcibly drawn to a war that it had nothing to do with. All the Congress ministers resigned.

The resignation of Congress leaders in 1939 created the political space for the Muslim League that was completely routed in the 1937 elections. Britain sought for native support in India now that Congress was opposed to a war. Jinnah saw a great opportunity in this and in March 1940, at the Lahore resolution, he declared that the Muslim League would push for a separate nation of Pakistan, torn from the western and eastern sides of India.

Congress was baffled by this move, but didn't take this too seriously as they believed they had control over all provinces of India.

In March 1942, Britain sent Sir Stafford Cripps to negotiate a deal with the Indian leaders. Although privately he was prepared to accept a dominion status for India with autonomy, publicly he didn't offer any such solution. Instead, he offered a solution that promised autonomy after the end of the war.

Quit India Movement

Mahatma Gandhi balked at this, calling it a “post-dated cheque” (remembering what happened at the end of the previous war). In August announced the next major freedom movement - Quit India. This move sent the Congressional leaders to jail. The British government also replaced its longest ruling Viceroy - Lord Linlithgow with Lord Wavell, who was the Chief of the Indian Army. This was to send a strong message to the Indians and bring India back under control.

Wavell Plan

As the Second World War was drawing to an end in the summer of 1945, the Viceroy Lord Wavell, decided to keep some of the promises made by the Cripps Mission. His plan included having all Indians in the Viceroy's Executive Council and an autonomy for India over all subjects other than Defense and Foreign Affairs.

The Wavell Plan also provided both religions key powers in the provinces they had a majority in and sought after a loose federation of India. Congress, however, balked at the idea and the last opportunity to avoid the partition was forgone.

As a part of the Wavell Plan, India's elections were held in December 1945 and January 1946. The results showed a huge division in India. Unlike the 1937 elections, the Muslim League swept the separate seats reserved for Muslims at the center and won two of the major provinces - Bengal and Sindh. In Punjab, Congress escaped with a coalition arrangement.

Cabinet Mission

In 1946, Britain started its negotiations with the Indian leaders. The 1945 elections were key as it was with these elected representatives that Britain finally negotiated to keep India within her control. The representatives didn't agree and India was to become free.

Now the question of how India should function. The cabinet mission suggested grouping the Muslim majority provinces of Punjab, Sindh, North-west Frontier Province (NWFP), and Bengal on one side and the Hindu majority provinces of Madras, Bombay, Central Provinces, Orissa, and United Provinces on the other side in a complex balancing act. These provinces would control everything other than Defense, Foreign Affairs, and Currency. The latter three would be left with a weak Central body with equal representation of the Muslims and the Hindus.

Congress didn't agree to this as a grouping of provinces merely by religion was the recipe to a civil war. Also, providing the Muslim League control over half of India, while the Muslim population was less than a fourth and even less supporting the League, was considered preposterous by Congress. Britain then suggested a partition of India that was rejected by Congress.

The Massacre in Rawalpindi

Jinnah was aghast that Congress didn't agree to either of the plans. He held a nationwide strike termed the Direct Action Day to force the Congress to accept the partition of India. On the 16th of August 1946, the Direct Action Day commenced, and thousands of people were killed in religious violence. It was especially severe in Bengal, where many Hindus died in the carnage at Noakhali. Many Muslims died in various revenge riots in the Central Provinces and Bihar.

Britain was completely unprepared to handle this carnage and sent Lord Mountbatten in February 1947 as the last Viceroy of India with an order to transfer power no later than 1948. The growing violence had taken a big toll on Congress and its leaders. Immediately following the Rawalpindi massacre (a major town in Punjab) that resulted in a huge death toll of Hindus, Congress Working Committee agreed to a partition on March 8. However, instead of providing the whole of Punjab and Bengal as demanded by the Muslim League, it asked for a partition of these two major provinces by religion.

On June 3, Mountbatten announced the plan at a crowded Press meeting. It set the date of independence as August 15. The assemblies of Punjab and Bengal were empowered to vote for a partition. The partition of these provinces became the responsibility of cartographer Sir Cyril Radcliffe who was given one month to decide which lands of Punjab and Bengal would go to India and which to Pakistan. The fate of Sindh would be decided by its assembly and NWFP would have a referendum. The rest of the provinces would remain with India, as also British India's UN seat.

Although NWFP had a Congress majority government, the referendum choose to join it to Pakistan, amidst a cry of fraud that only 16% of the people got voting rights. Sindh had expectedly voted to join Pakistan.

Three key factors that contributed to the Pakistan movement

1. On April 1, 1936 Sindh became an independent province separated out of Bombay. Until then, the Muslim League under M.A. Jinnah didn't have a sufficient room to maneuver. He was not able to gain majority in any of the provinces. The Muslim majority Sindh province created among the first Muslim League governments and commenced the process of formation of the separate state of Pakistan.
2. After the failure of the Cripps Mission in 1942, Congress started the final push for Independence - Quit India Movement. This led to the arrest of the entire Congress leadership, while Muslim League was spared as they didn't protest the British rule. Using their freedom, they were able to significantly influence people's opinion.
3. In the provincial elections of 1946, Muslim League had a surprisingly strong position in Punjab and emerged as the largest party. It promised land reforms to poor farmers and cut through the votes of the Unionist party. Although, Congress eventually pulled together an alliance with other parties and took over the government, the victory provided the much needed boost for the Muslim League.

The Partition

On August 15, 1947 India became free. It was also mired by huge tensions that were caused by the partition of Punjab and Bengal. These provinces were never designed to be separated and thus it was really messy. Indian Bengal (West Bengal) lost all the fertile jute lands to Pakistan's Bengal (present day Bangladesh) while retaining all the mills to process the jute. Mughal jewel of Lahore was given to Pakistan despite it being surrounded by Hindus. Sikh Mecca of Amritsar was given to India despite it being surrounded by Muslims.

The weak monsoons of 1947 had already inflated pain among the farming community of Punjab and in the autumn of 1947, they decided to take all this anger out on the other community. Many Hindus and Muslims were caught on the wrong side and over 15 million were forced to move. As many as a million might have perished in the migration - among the largest in human history.

Mahatma fixes Bengal

Unlike the other leaders, the Mahatma didn't attend the independence celebrations in Delhi. He spent most of the time leading up to the partition in Bengal, where he feared the worst of the riots would happen. The region was densely populated and saw the worst of the Jinnah's Direct Action day.

However, in an extraordinary work, Gandhi was able to avoid a big chunk of the violence in Bengal, while its counterpart, Punjab, burned.

Assassination of the Mahatma

After Gandhi put down part of the fire in the east, he turned his attention to the center. In a bid to cool the prevailing bad blood and build a better relationship with Pakistan, Gandhi sought various actions that were thought to be minority appeasing by some Hindus. One of them was the release of Pakistan's share of India's cash balance.

As all assets were divided between India and Pakistan, the cash balance of British India was to be divided too. Pakistan's share of the cash was determined at Rs. 75 crores (1 crore = 10 million) by an Arbitration Tribunal. India released the first share of Rs. 20 crores, but held back the remaining 55 crores due to Pakistan's invasion of Kashmir. Gandhi held a fast to make Indian government pay its balance so that the tension between the nations would go down, forcing Sardar Patel to offer a resignation from his post as the Home Minister. However, Mahatma's point was that he was fasting for the community bonding than the mere cash balance and thus continued even after Nehru's decision.

Various extremists also blamed Gandhi for both the partition and the violence emanating from the partition. It is sadly ironic given that the partition was forced on Congress and it was Gandhi who helped reduce the violence.

On the 30th of January 1948, Gandhi was assassinated by an extremist, Nathuram Godse while the former was proceeding to a prayer meeting at the Birla house in Delhi. Although Gandhi survived many earlier assassination attempts, this time the bullet was shot at point blank range and he didn't survive the bullet wounds.

On that day in 1948, India had sunk to its lowest. Mired by the troubles of partition and the first war with Pakistan over Kashmir, things looked completely bleak. Some even predicted that India would break up, as the key gel that was holding it together had snapped.

However, India would defy their predictions. The darkness of 1948 would give way to light.

Chapter 1: Welding India

India is a geographical term. It is no more a united nation than the equator.

— Winston Churchill (1931)

I can inform the Security Council that on 15 August 1947 the suzerainty of the Crown in the United Kingdom over Hyderabad, and all other Indian States, came to an end. None of the powers previously exercised by the Crown was transferred to the Government of the two new Dominions, that is, India and Pakistan.

– Sir Alexander Cadogan

The Permanent Representative of United Kingdom to the United Nations told the UN that India's various monarchs were free to choose their destiny and could join India or Pakistan or declare independence of their states.

Will India end up as one unit?

13th November 1947

Somnath Temple

Sardar Vallabhai Patel could not contain his tears. He was the iron man, but even he was moved by the occasion. He was in front of the legendary Somnath temple in Junagadh, now reduced to ruins. The temple that had stood glorious for centuries was in shambles. In a sense, Patel saw that the temple perfectly mirrored India's condition.

Just four days ago, his military had entered the princely state of Junagadh that housed Somnath and the famous Gir forest. The Nawab of the state had already signed the instrument of accession to join Pakistan, and it took a lot of boldness to capture the state back. It took a lot of persuasion and a lot of military force, but it was worth it.

The Nawab, known for organizing elaborate weddings for his pet dogs, had already fled three weeks ago. It was time for peace for the state's residents.

Patel asked the audience swarming around, whether they wanted to join India. A thundering 'Yes' was showered. One job done, two more to go!

On August 15, 1947 India was a free nation. However, it didn't end up as a single unit. Muslims got a separate nation of their own. A number of Indian monarchs (numbering more than a 500), who surrendered the autonomy to the British crown centuries ago were looking to create independent nations as the British suzerainty over the Indian subcontinent didn't apply any more. Their regions comprised of nearly a two-fifths of India and over 100 million people. They ruled their nominally sovereign entities called the princely state and they had various degrees of autonomy over their own kingdom. The treaties they signed with the British would expire when Britain left India. Thus technically these monarchs were all now free.

Just before the independence, on June 11, 1947, the princely state of Travancore announced its intention to create a sovereign state, independent of India. On June 12, the

state of Hyderabad followed suit and was setting up foreign missions in Europe and elsewhere. It was going to be a big mess.

While most of the other princely states were quite small - barely more than a few square kilometers - and locked deep inside India, some were quite big. For instance, the Himalayan kingdom of Kashmir was bigger than Austria, Switzerland and Hungary combined. The region of Hyderabad was comparable to the size of whole of UK. The western kingdom of Junagadh was about the size of Jamaica and the southern kingdom of Travancore was about the size of Israel. All of these regions had sizable populations, giving their monarchs a hope that they can stake it alone.

Then there was the question of other colonial powers such as France and Portugal, who still held a few colonies in the subcontinent and planned to hold them. Portugal held the beach-studded province of Goa & couple of small enclaves on the Western coast, while France held a couple of coastal towns, mostly on the Eastern coast.

Together, this arrangement would have made India quite ungovernable geographic mess without a defensible border. India's new leaders had a really big mess at their hands as Britain was handing over the keys to India. If the demands of the different monarchs were met, the subcontinent would end up as 500 nations. If the situation was mismanaged, there was a potential for a brutal chaos and civil war - one that was unequalled in the history of humanity.

Can the Indian leaders prevent the breakup of India?

The State of India just before independence

British India was comprised of 17 provinces directly ruled by the British crown and 565 princely states ruled by Indian monarchs who agreed to the paramountcy of the British crown. The princely states had varying degrees of autonomy over their internal affairs, but had surrendered sovereignty on defense and external affairs.

Major provinces of India in 1947

1. Assam - Originally a part of Burma until 1826 and then became a part of British territory of Bengal. This extreme northeast territory forms the present Indian states of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland.
2. Bengal - Among the oldest and largest provinces in India whose conquest helped East India Company win over India. This province was partitioned with the western half forming the state of West Bengal in India and the eastern half forming the present nation of Bangladesh (until 1971 it was a part of Pakistan).
3. Bihar - This province in central India was originally a part of Bengal and now forms the Indian states of Bihar and Jharkhand.
4. Orissa - This province was a part of the province of Bihar and Orissa until 1946. It forms the present day Indian east coast state of Odisha.
5. Bombay - This western province was among the richest in India and major center of commerce. This currently forms the present Indian states of Maharashtra and Gujarat.
6. Central Provinces and Berar - This came primarily out of the territories of Marathas in central India. It presently forms the states of Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh and parts of western Maharashtra.
7. Madras - The oldest British province in India that was established as a Presidency in 1640. This southern province forms the present Indian states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and parts of Karnataka and Kerala.
8. North-west Frontier Province - This province bordering Afghanistan was originally a part of Punjab and was separated in 1901. It forms the present Pakistani province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
9. Punjab - This is one of the important provinces in northern India. It was among the two provinces that were partitioned [the other was Bengal]. The western half forms core of present day Pakistan and the eastern half forms the present Indian states of Punjab and Haryana.
10. Sind - This province was a part of Bombay and in 1936, it was given a separate state. The separation of Sind from Bombay was significant in Indian history as it paved the way for Pakistan. The Pakistan movement first gained momentum in this province and forms the eponymous province in the southern part of Pakistan.
11. United Provinces - This was among the most populous provinces of India and its present day incarnation of Uttar Pradesh is the biggest state/province in the world by population.

These 11 provinces had their elections in 1946 and the representatives from these

provincial elections decided the fate of partition of India and later formed the Constituent Assembly that wrote India's constitution. 7 of the 11 major provinces became entirely a part of India, while 2 became entirely a part of Pakistan. The other two were partitioned in almost equal halves.

Minor provinces of India in 1947

1. Ajmer-Merwara - Originally part of Gwalior and Udaipur until the mid 19th century. Currently forms the state of Rajasthan in India.
2. Baluchistan - Forms the extreme western province of Baluchistan in Pakistan now. It was ruled by the Khans of Kalat until 1876. Although it forms close to 40% of Pakistan's present area, it has only a little more than 4% of its population.
3. Coorg - This was a small hilly province in southern India. It is part of the present Indian state of Karnataka.
4. Delhi - This was originally a part of the Punjab province, but was given a special status with the creation of the national capital in 1911. Currently forms the National Capital Region (NCR) of India.
5. Panth Piploda - This was the smallest province in British India that had about 5000 people and 65 square kilometers of land. Forms the present Indian state of Madhya Pradesh.

Other than Baluchistan all the others are a part of India now.

Major Princely states of India

There were 562 princely states. Here were the major ones:

1. Hyderabad - The largest and the most powerful of Indian states. Forms a sizable part of south central India now. Ruled by a Muslim ruler, who was among the richest in the world of that time.
2. Jammu and Kashmir - The large Himalayan valley of Kashmir were once ruled by the Punjabi Sikhs before the British bought and sold to local Dogra rulers who ruled the neighboring territories of Jammu and Ladakh. The Kashmir valley is predominantly Muslim, although the territories of Jammu and Ladakh along with the monarch were Hindu/Buddhist.
3. Mysore - One of the most progressive princely states of India. The state had been a leader in technology and education. Ruled by a Hindu monarch.

Smaller, but important ones were:

1. Junagadh
2. Jaisalmer
3. Jodhpur
4. Manipur
5. Sikkim
6. Travancore

Creation of Pakistan

As the freedom of India started appearing quite likely, a section of Muslims started getting worried that they would end up as a minority in a Hindu-majority nation. Nearly three-fourths of India was non-Muslim, and most of the Congressional leadership was Hindu. Thus, the Muslim League feared that the Hindus would take over most of the power in a democratic setup.

Due to the activism of MA Jinnah, the leader of the Muslim League, in the mid 1940s it was agreed that the Muslim-majority regions would be split to form a separate state of Pakistan.

Jinnah's initial demand was to merge all the provinces with a slight Muslim majority - Bengal, Punjab, Sindh, NWFP, and Balochistan along with the key princely states of Jammu & Kashmir and Hyderabad - to form the new nation of Pakistan.

Much to his chagrin, Congress agreed only to the separation of the Muslim-dominated parts of Bengal and Punjab to form Pakistan, instead of the whole province. Thereby, it was agreed to partition the two crucial provinces of Punjab in western India and Bengal in eastern India into two halves - a Hindu one and a Muslim one. The Muslim halves in these two provinces joined with NWFP (the Pashtun province adjoining Pakistan) and Sindh to form the new nation of Pakistan.

India tried a bit to keep the NWFP (now called the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) region out of Pakistan as the Congress party had won the elections there in 1946. However, in a referendum held in 1947, the province decided to join Pakistan. This cut India's access to its historic neighbor, Afghanistan.

Now that the partition of the major provinces was settled, the question shifted to the independence of the princely states. Some of these were quite powerful and their monarchs were very ambitious.

The ones who proved to be the most troublesome were the monarchs of Hyderabad, Jammu & Kashmir, Tripura, Manipur, Sikkim and Junagadh. The monarchs of Travancore, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer and Bhopal were not as vociferous but had bigger ambitions. These princely states initially ganged up under the leadership of the Nawab of Bhopal, Hamidullah Khan. The Nawab opened up dialogue with Pakistan on the possibilities of joining his nation with Pakistan.

India needed a strong leadership to manage this confusion.

The Iron Man of India

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was one of the four famous London-educated lawyers of India who changed the future of the subcontinent - the others being Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Mohammad Ali Jinnah. He was born in a poor farming family in Gujarat and was instrumental in helping the freedom movement reach all parts of India.

In 1946, when Congress was busy choosing the President (who would subsequently become the first Prime Minister of independent India), Patel was the overwhelming favorite among the ranks. However, in April 1946, Mahatma Gandhi put his weight behind Nehru due to a number of reasons:

1. Nehru was a more charming and a less polarizing figure than Patel. Gandhi thought that Nehru would be able to handle a diverse democracy, especially if Patel was able to have his say behind the scenes.
2. Nehru was 14 years younger than Patel and in much better shape when it came to health. It was crucial to choose a new leader who had the energy to rule India for a long time.
3. Nehru was a dreamer and Patel was a doer. Gandhi wanted Indian government to have a dreamer's face and a doer's body.

24 years after independence, one of the major leaders of Indian freedom movement, C. Rajagopalachari, would rue this decision:

When the independence of India was coming close upon us and Gandhiji was the silent master of our affairs, he had come to the decision that Jawaharlal, who among the Congress leaders was the most familiar with foreign affairs, should be the Prime Minister of India, although he knew Vallabhbhai would be the best administrator among them all...

Undoubtedly it would have been better if Nehru had been asked to be the Foreign Minister and Patel made the Prime Minister. I too fell into the error of believing that Jawaharlal was the more enlightened person of the two... A myth had grown about Patel that he would be harsh towards Muslims. This was a wrong notion but it was the prevailing prejudice.

— C. Rajagopalachari (1971)

Thus, Nehru was made the Prime Minister and Patel took the second most powerful post - the Home Minister - in charge of welding India.

The Art of Persuasion

For the most part, Patel was able to get the individual states signed up through the power of persuasion. He was helped in large part by the prevailing pro-Congress, pro-freedom sentiment that was sweeping much of the nation. Nehru and Gandhi were very popular in every part of India and thus many small rulers, especially the Hindu rulers, had no hesitation in joining India.

Besides his persuasive powers, Patel was supported by two people:

1. Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of India, was sympathetic to India's desire of integrating the princely states. He took interest in keeping India as a viable nation, and for his actions he was retained as the Governor General of India even after the British left. Mountbatten was the cousin of the English King and had a lot of influence over the various Nawabs and Maharajas.
2. Mountbatten had a very smart political advisor in VP Menon. Menon had worked as a civil servant for over 30 years and had a very good understanding of India and the various bureaucratic processes that made it. Menon initially wanted to quietly retire in 1947. However, Patel retained him to help the process of the takeover.

The trio drafted two documents:

1. **Standstill document** - this allowed all administrative relationships that the state held with the British crown to be transferred to India.
2. **Instrument of accession** - this turned the suzerainty of the state to India. The monarchs of the states still had autonomy over the internal affairs and were immune to prosecution from the courts in India.

With Mountbatten's influence, Patel's power and Menon's knowledge of the legality, the task of getting the states signed into India became somewhat manageable.

Between June and August 1947, they got all but three of the Princely states to sign the Instrument of Accession. Ultimately, India was able to retain more than 550 of the 565 princely states, leaving only a dozen odd princely states to join Pakistan.

However, the path to get to that point was quite rocky. How did they manage?

Trouble at Travancore

The Maharajah of Travancore was not enthused by the secular outlook of Congress. He was convinced by his Diwan (Prime Minister), Sir CP Ramaswamy Aiyar, that a secular India was not a good place for a Hindu Maharajah. On June 12, 1947, the Prime Minister announced that Travancore would become an independent sovereign state. He even had a plan to set up a trade agent in Pakistan.

Meanwhile, strong Communist currents started brewing in Travancore, and Patel also planned a strong political action within the state to force the hand of the Maharajah. The monarch had already been warned that there would be a strong disturbance when the British exited India. It was conveyed to him that without India's support, Travancore would not be able to withstand the social disturbance.

As though to make a point, an assassination attempt was made on Sir CP on July 25 in Trivandrum. This disturbed the Maharajah a lot and he didn't want to lose his control over his state. On July 27, the Maharajah telegraphed the acceptance to Mountbatten. It was a significant thing as Travancore had clout and its submission got other smaller rulers to resign themselves to fate. Travancore forms a big part of the present state of Kerala.

The Dance of Jodhpur and Jaisalmer

Jodhpur and Jaisalmer were two Hindu princely states that form present-day Rajasthan. Along with Bikaner, they were among the handful of princely states that stood on the borders of India and Pakistan. The monarchs there historically had a very comfortable life with the best of the world's palaces, trains, and forts. They were not going to be too comfortable in the ascetic land of Gandhi. Pakistan promised them wine and women, while India admonished them to take up social development.

Thus, Maharaja Hanwant Singh of Jodhpur took Maharajkumar of Jaisalmer to meet Jinnah and explore joining Pakistan, despite their states being almost completely Hindu. Jinnah was amused at this offer and gave them a blank check - to write whatever terms they wanted. Jinnah had nothing to lose and everything to gain in such an arrangement. Just before the Maharajah of Jodhpur could sign the paper in front of him, his Jaisalmer friend warned that the Maharajah would not be able to side with Muslims if riots erupted in Pakistan. This perturbed the Jodhpur Maharaja and he decided to postpone signing the document.

The Jodhpur Maharaja faced strong resistance from the Hindu nobles and commoners back home. Later, VP Menon took him to meet with Mountbatten; the duo helped the Maharajah understand the reality and also conveyed that they would not concede to any of his outlandish demands. The Maharajah was so irritated that he came quite close to taking the life of VP Menon.

After a few minutes, Lord Mountbatten went out of the room and the Maharajah whipped out a revolver, levelled it at me and said: 'I refuse to accept your dictation.' I told him that he was making a very serious mistake if he thought that by killing me, or threatening to kill me, he would get the accession abrogated.

— VP Menon

Eventually, both the Maharajas decided to sign the accession to India, and their territories eventually formed present-day Rajasthan.

Warring over Junagadh

When India got independence on August 15, 1947 only three princely states - Junagadh, Hyderabad, and Kashmir - were still undecided on signing the instrument of accession. It was time for more serious action.

Junagadh's Nawab was a man who spent heavily on weddings for his dogs. He lived off his poor peasants. Junagadh, presently forming southern Gujarat, was completely surrounded by Indian territories, although unlike Hyderabad it had access to the sea. The distance between its key town of Port Veraval and the then capital of Pakistan, Karachi was under 300 miles. Thus, the Nawab tried to push his luck for joining Pakistan, despite 80% of his population being Hindu.

The Nawab, Muhammad Mahabat Khan Rasul Khanji, invited the Karachi politician Shah Nawaz Bhutto (the father of Pakistan's first elected Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and grandfather of another Pakistani Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto) to be a temporary Diwan of his state.

Bhutto was a master in the art of deception and kept the Indians thinking that Junagadh would join India, while making all arrangements for joining the state of Pakistan. On the 15th of August, his government suddenly announced that the state would be joining Pakistan:

After anxious consideration and the careful balancing of all factors the government of the State has decided to accede to Pakistan and hereby announces its decision to that effect. The State is confident that its decision will be welcomed by all loyal subjects of the State who have its real welfare and prosperity at heart.

This came as a shock to India. Patel was now prepared to use force. Nehru, however, didn't want a war and wanted to give peace a chance. The Indian government thus sent communication to Pakistan to decline the accession stating that the province was not contiguous to Pakistan and that it had primarily Hindu subjects. Pakistan, of course, didn't reply. Why would they give up such an important territory?

India tried to convince Pakistan that the people of Junagadh should be allowed to decide, but that was met with silence.

While all this was happening, two tiny states adjoining Junagadh, hardly more than a few villages each, Marol and Babariawad, decided to join India. The Khan of Marol tried to retract his accession (after much pressure by Junagadh), but Mountbatten refused to take it back. There was a massive legal confusion on who had the authority over these territories and whether these accessions were legal. Junagadh thus invaded these two provinces as the Nawab claimed these two territories as his.

A big mistake!

This worked perfectly for Patel as Junagadh had now invaded two territories that belonged to India, providing ample reason for India to start a war. Nehru was still not ready. However, he agreed to send a brigade of the Indian army to the region on September 24. He also decided to start embargoes on the region by cutting food and other essential

supplies.

Mountbatten suggested taking this issue to the United Nations, but Patel disagreed. Nehru stood by Patel on this.

Unrest started worsening in Junagadh, and over 100,000 Hindus fled the region as refugees. Bhutto tried to get armies from Pakistan, but Jinnah could offer none. The Nawab saw the writing on the wall and fled the state on October 26 (he took all his wives, dogs, and money in the treasury). The Arzi Hukumat, headed by Samaldas Gandhi, was already putting pressure on joining India and quickly took control of many key regions.

On November 9, 1947 India's troops under Captain Harvey Jones marched into Junagadh and took over the administration. It was then found that Bhutto had already fled from the state the previous day.

On February 20, 1948, India held a plebiscite where the residents of Junagadh were given a choice between India and Pakistan: 1,90,779 voted to join India. A whopping 91 voted to join Pakistan.

Junagadh is now a part of India.

The Curious Case of Kashmir

The ancient story of Kashmir is not much different from the rest of ancient India and followed the same pattern. Until the 14th century, various Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms ruled the region. From about 1350-1580 it came under Islamic rule through Turkic and Afghan rulers. In this period, Islam spread through the region much faster than in the rest of India as the rulers actively promoted it. Then like the rest of India, the whole region came under the Mughal empire.

In the 18th century, as the Mughal empire disintegrated, the Kashmir region came under the Sikhs. The Sikhs were defeated by the British, and not knowing what to do with it, they sold the region of Kashmir for Rs.75 lakhs (1 lakh = 100,000), a sum was equivalent to about 100K pound sterling at that exchange rate, to Gulab Singh (a Hindu chieftain who was loyal to the British). The chieftain already ruled Jammu and Ladakh, and Kashmir would complete his state. From 1846 until 1947, the Dogra descendants of Gulab Singh ruled the state.

On the 23rd of September 1925, the last of the Maharajas, Hari Singh took the throne. His territory bordered Tibet, Afghanistan, and Russian Turkestan, besides what would become present day India and Pakistan. The state had four parts: the Hindu-majority Jammu region, the Muslim-majority regions of the Kashmir valley and Gilgit, and finally the Buddhist-majority Ladakh region.

The Maharajah had no intention of joining either India or Pakistan and believed that his state's large size would let him stay independent. Both India and Pakistan gave the Maharajah enough room and didn't pressure him enough. Mountbatten, however, gave the Maharajah the option to choose either of these countries by allegedly pressuring Sir Cyril Radcliffe to award Gurdaspur district in Punjab (through which the only road from Delhi to the state's capital Srinagar passed) to India. Without that sliver of land in Punjab, India would not have had access to Kashmir and it would have become a de facto Pakistani province.

VP Menon, who managed the integration process, mentions that India decided to give enough time to Kashmir as she was already engaged in the messy takeover of Junagadh and faced with the prospect of fighting Hyderabad.

However, Jinnah was not prepared to wait too long. Although Kashmir had entered into a standstill agreement with Pakistan (and not with India) that provided for a temporary truce, Jinnah feared that India had bigger plans. The road connecting Srinagar to Delhi was being developed with a strong sense of urgency. Thus, Jinnah decided to apply pressure by cutting off petrol supplies (the state was more economically connected to Pakistan than India) and promoting border raids.

Jinnah already had to deal with the restive Pathans from his NWFP province who were pouring into his cities. The Pathans populating Western Pakistan and Afghanistan were a feared group, known for their guerilla warfare. All rulers of the region had trouble controlling them [Britain failed, so did Soviet Union in 1980s and the US since 2001]. Jinnah then came up with an intelligent plan to kill two birds with one stone by giving the

Pathans a goal - capturing Kashmir.

Thus, began the invasion of Kashmir on October 22, 1947.

The Pathan warriors called the raiders had little problem in invading vast portion of Kashmir. Most of the Muslim troops defected and welcomed the raiders. On the 24th, they took over the Mahura powerhouse, the only power source of the state, to plunge the state into darkness literally and figuratively. It seemed very likely that the takeover of Kashmir would be very swift and finished by the time of the Eid festival (the most important religious holiday for Muslims worldwide) - the 26th of October. However, fortune worked in favor of India.

1. By the 24th of October, it was clear to India that this was a major invasion. Mountbatten had already received confidential communication from his senior British officers in Pakistan. This was passed across to the Maharajah who was desperate as he knew his time was over. VP Menon flew to Jammu and got the Maharajah to sign the instrument of accession on the 26th of October - the date of Eid. Now, India had the legal authority to send troops into Kashmir.
2. The invading troops were not quite disciplined and were comprised of rag-tag groups put together in an ad-hoc manner. These raiders were more interested in looting and raping than quickly securing the capital of Srinagar. Given their ease of victories, it seemed they would win and they took it easy. Their looting of the towns on the way gave enough time for India to get its act together.
3. Finally, it was the work of a brave commander - Brigadier Rajinder Singh - who led the Maharajah's troops to confront the invaders. With just 150 men, Brigadier Singh was able to arrest the movement of the raiders enough to provide time for India. [For his bravery, he was among the first recipients of the Maha Vir Chakra - the second highest military honor in India.]

When the raiders finally arrived in Srinagar, they found an Indian army unit already flown to the airport. The army units gave the raiders a chase. This eventually precipitated in a major war between India and Pakistan.

The war continued on for a year and there were many stories of bravery on both sides. Major Somnath Sharma, Lance Naik Karam Singh, and many other Jawans performed heroic acts that kept the morale up. However, both nations were quite young and could not afford to keep fighting for too long.

At the insistence of Mountbatten, Nehru took matters to the United Nations Organization. In December 1948 a ceasefire was arranged by the UN and the positions that both sides held that month - now called the Line of Control (LoC) - had since then become the unofficial border in Kashmir. India was able to retain most of the Kashmir valley, Jammu and Ladakh - while Pakistan got almost all of the Gilgit region along with a small part of the valley. China took over a chunk of Ladakh [termed Aksai Chin] in that period and became more formalized after the Sino-Indian war.

India considers Jammu & Kashmir very important, as most of the historic invasions to India have come from the northwest. Since the state's borders are barely hours away from Delhi by road, it was India's strategic interests at play there. Also, the sizable population

of non-Muslims face a major risk if India decides to leave the state.

Operation Polo - War on Nizam

India thinks that if Pakistan attacks her, Hyderabad will stab her in the back. I am not so sure we would not.

— Laik Ali (Prime Minister of Hyderabad)

While Kashmir and Junagadh presented a headache, they were superseded by a much bigger headache in the form of Hyderabad. Hyderabad was smack in the middle of India and commanded a large area of land - about the size of England and Scotland put together. Eighty-five percent of the population was Hindu, but the Nizam - among the richest persons in the world of his time - wanted to join Pakistan.

Unlike Junagadh, Hyderabad was both big and powerful. Unlike Kashmir, Hyderabad had an unfriendly monarch. The Nizam tried hard to get into the UN and British Commonwealth, but Britain declined. They didn't want to get into trouble with India by making governance unviable in southern India. The government of Hyderabad was also transferring money to Pakistan that was at that time fighting a war with India over Kashmir.

While Hyderabad's populace was predominantly Hindu, the army was predominantly Muslim and aided by irregular mercenaries called the Razakars. Together they started terrorizing the populace, and Patel felt compelled to intervene. Junagadh and later Kashmir had taken out India's energy and thus the Hyderabad issue was in contention until Mountbatten left.

On June 21 1948, Mountbatten was replaced by an Indian Governor General - C. Rajagopalachari [Rajaji] - who was one of the top four of Congress at the time of independence along with Nehru, Patel, and Gandhi. He was more aggressive than Mountbatten in this regard and had no issues understanding the need for "Police Action" (terming it a military action would get more attention in the UN, and India sought to avoid that).

India entered Hyderabad on September 13 1948, and in just four days, the operation was done. On the 17th of September, Hyderabad's Prime Minister surrendered after massive casualties on his side. It was among the most one-sided wars world had ever seen. Following the surrender, there was a massive wave of communal violence (as retribution to the acts of the Razakars) and to this day it remains a controversial topic in India.

India was thus able to take over all three troublesome princely states: Junagadh, Hyderabad and Kashmir.

A few other territories was won by mere luck. For instance, the Indian Ocean islands of Lakshadweep was taken over by India by being first to hoist the flag (by the time the Pakistan Navy reached these islands, the Indians already had their flag up and Pakistan didn't consider it worthy to fight this far from their home base).

In a matter of two years, these new territories were dissolved and merged with other provinces. Patel and India had no intention of letting these monarchs have autonomy over their territory.

Takeover of French Territories

Even after the exit of the British, both French and Portuguese continued to maintain their tiny colonies in India. The French territories were primarily in the south and centered around the key coastal town of Pondicherry. The Indian government allowed the people to decide their future, and in the elections held in 1948, people decided to keep their autonomy.

However, in 1954, a key leader in the pro-French group switched sides and allowed the process of merger to proceed. In May 1956, a treaty of cession was signed by India, and it was ratified by France in 1962. For France, their Indian colonies were neither big nor profitable and more importantly France were involved in a major war in Vietnam/IndoChina. The colonies were adjoining India and they knew India could take over with little force. Thus, they didn't resist the takeover.

Operation Vijay: The Case of Goa

While the French proved a little easy, the Portuguese proved not as amenable. Portugal was at the time ruled by a dictator - António de Oliveira Salazar - and he didn't desire giving up his tropical colony of Goa to India. Goa was a key base for Portugal in the Indian Ocean and was key to controlling their colonies in Africa. However, pressure was mounting on Nehru to take over the Portuguese territory. Apart from internal pressures, there was the external pressure from African freedom movements who requested India to take over Goa and cut off Portugal's presence in the Indian ocean.

There were tensions throughout the 1950s as India took over Portuguese enclaves of Dadra and Nagar Haveli in 1954 and talks broke down.

On December 18, 1961 the Indian Army entered Goa. The operation was over in less than two days as Governor General Manuel António Vassalo e Silva realized the numerically superior position of India and surrendered.

The issue was taken by Portugal to both UN and NATO. It was fortuitous that both decided not to act on India. In the UN Security Council, the Soviet Union vetoed any action on India. In case the of NATO, the John F. Kennedy administration used a technicality to avoid acting against India.

Here are a few reasons why they didn't act against India:

1. Distracted US administration: Nehru timed the aggression within months of JFK taking over. The new administration was still learning the ropes and was too busy focused on the botched "Bay of Pigs" operation in Cuba. When India took the administration by surprise, all the President could say was a dignified "Oops!"
2. Colony or Province? There was an argument on whether Goa was a province of Portugal or a mere colony. Given that the US and Canada were colonies once, they were somewhat sympathetic to India's cause in fighting a colonial power despite Portugal's argument that Goa was a province. The US didn't want NATO to be seen as siding with imperial powers and lose political capital and credibility at a very critical time in Cuba and Vietnam.
3. World opinion. Most of the world - from newly liberated colonies in Africa, West Asia, and East Asia to the USSR and Soviet bloc countries to even China - supported India. NATO's targets are usually isolated countries that no longer have friends (such as Milosevic's Serbia or Saddam's Iraq). India had established itself as a leader of the third world, and it was politically very expensive to act against India. This was especially important as IndoChina (Vietnam) was starting to boil and any action against India was bound to escalate tension there. For most countries, Goa was too unimportant compared to the action in other places.
4. British neutrality. Although Britain was a close friend of Portugal, they also sympathized with the Indian cause and decided to stay neutral. Canada, Australia and other Commonwealth members of NATO were also eager to maintain their relationship with India and were against a NATO action.
5. JFK bias. Although the Eisenhower administration (that ruled the US until 1960) was

more friendly to Portugal, the Kennedy administration took over in 1961 was more liberal and more sympathetic to India. Nehru timed his takeover of Goa well (waiting for Eisenhower to leave office). It is questionable whether India would have taken over Goa in 1961 if Nixon had won against Kennedy.

6. UN Veto: Portugal and the US tried to use the UN for an action. Thanks to the USSR's veto, the UN Security Council refused to vote against India. This made things even more complicated.
7. Personality of Salazar. Salazar (dictator of Portugal) was not a likable figure, and as an autocratic dictator he didn't have many friends in the liberal-minded members of NATO.
8. Weakened administration. Although Adlai Stevenson II (US ambassador to the UN) spoke eloquently against India, he had little credibility even in the US. Even his own government did not debrief him regarding the Bay of Pigs crisis and made him appear stupid when talking about the subject in the General Assembly. In short, India's enemies were quite weak at that time and had no political capital to make a significant impact.

The Case of Sikkim

Sikkim was one of the three Himalayan kingdoms sandwiched between India and China. However, unlike Nepal and Bhutan, Britain considered Sikkim to be within the natural domain of India. In 1947, India tried to take Sikkim through a popular vote. However, Sikkim didn't accept India's takeover and thus the Himalayan kingdom became a protectorate of India [where India gets to have a say in her defense, trade, and foreign policy].

In the late 1960s and early '70s, India was ruled by Nehru's daughter Indira Gandhi, who took a much more aggressive stance on foreign policy. India considered Sikkim too important to fall into China's sphere of influence and sought ways to get the state into India. It is alleged that people from the Nepali plains immigrated into Sikkim in large numbers and historically these people were more pro-India.

In 1973, massive anti-government riots erupted in Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim, and the Indian government sent its forces to help restore order. In 1975, the elected Prime Minister of Sikkim was open to joining India as a full state. A referendum was held on April 4 1975, and people overwhelmingly decided to join India [although it is alleged that it was not a fair vote given the presence of the Indian army].

On May 16 1975, Sikkim became an official state of India and the last to do so.

Controversy over Arunachal Pradesh

Arunachal Pradesh is a state in the extreme north east of India. Both India and China have claimed this territory for decades.

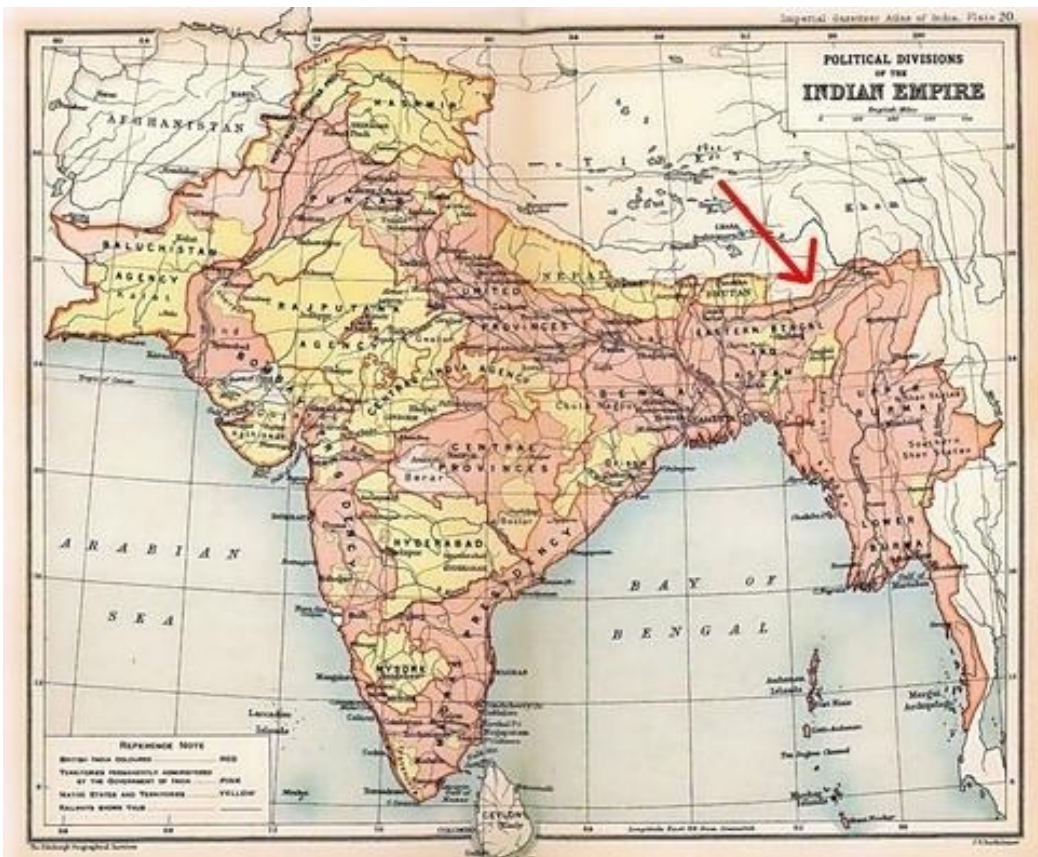
The ancient history of Arunachal is not clear. It borders Assam (a core part of Indian civilizations) and has a few old temples. However, it is also influenced by Tibetan, Burmese, and Bhutanese cultures.

In the 16th century, the most important heritage of the state - the Tawang Monastery - was built. This is one of the most important sites for the Tibetan Buddhists. The area is assumed to have been populated by the Tibetans at that point.

In ancient times, Indian empires and Tibetan empires were in harmony and the exact border was neither drawn nor enforced. But things would soon change.

Modern History

Until 1912, the border between Tibet and India was not quite delineated. Very few people lived there for it to matter. Neither the Mughals nor the British were controlling the region. Even the Tibetans were not that interested. For instance, here is India's map of 1909. It puts the state in Tibet.



Source: *Imperial Gazetteer of India (1909)*

However, here is a map of China and Tibet in 1892. That sort of puts the state in India/Burma.

much interesting going on in the state and it was ignored by everyone.

In 1935, a British administrative office would go back to the convention ruling and unearth the finding. Soon, India would start using the region in her maps.

Who Does it Belong To?

China never recognized Tibet's independence nor the 1914 Simla convention. In 1950, China would completely take over Tibet. Thus, according to China, the Tawang region belongs to her. China especially wanted to hold on to the monastery as that was a leading center of Tibetan Buddhism in India.

According to India, most of the state had ancient Indian influence from Assam, and in 1914 Tibetans signed an agreement to give the state to India. Also, from an Indian perspective, keeping the Tawang monastery within India was the best way to protect whatever remained of Tibetan culture.

In 1962, India and China warred over the region, but the geography clearly favoured India forcing China to pull back from Tawang. Since then India has established complete control over the region. It is now a full fledged state part of India.

Summary

India should be highly thankful to Patel, VP Menon, Nehru, and Mountbatten for forging the modern India. It was a miracle that they could do this without starting a civil war. A complete unification seemed highly unlikely in the summer of 1947, but it was done. They built a great platform for India to run a sustainable society.

Nehru's 1961 takeover of Goa was in sharp contrast to Suharto's (Indonesian dictator) takeover of East Timor in 1975. Both Goa and East Timor were Portuguese colonies taken over by the newly independent nations of India and Indonesia. While Goans were peacefully integrated with the rest of India, East Timorese fought hard against Indonesia's occupation and finally got independence from Indonesia in 2002.

Nehru might get justified criticism when it comes to economic policies and some tactical mistakes, but he is one of the main heroes of this chapter in Indian history. He not only helped capture the provinces, but also helped integrate them in a peaceful manner.

The job was not fully done yet though. The instrument of accession allowed India control only over defense, foreign policy, and currency of the princely states it acquired. The princes still had a lot of power, were practically immune to the Indian courts, and commanded a lot of riches.

The princes were used to an obscenely rich life. Nawab of Junagadh Sir Mahabat Khan owned 1,000 dogs. The Hyderabad Nizam owned a collection of more than 50 Rolls Royces. There were extraordinarily opulent weddings and magnificent palaces built at a time when the nation was still reeling in famines.

How would India manage such a fractious group of monarchs - most of whom didn't care about much more than their personal lives?

Could India afford to give them huge treasuries and a lavish lifestyle while their populace was dying? Would free India keep up the promises to these monarchs?

In short, what about the assurances of autonomy that India promised to these 565 monarchs?

Chapter 2: Making of the Indian Constitution

Fundamental Rights were to be framed amidst the carnage of Fundamental Wrongs.

— Granville Austin (historian of the Constitution)

No Constitution can please all the different sections of any country, let alone a country like India, but, the overall picture, to my mind, is very satisfactory and not disappointing. I have great faith that this man-made Constitution will succeed if men will be genuine and generous enough in the working of the Constitution.

— Jaipal Singh (Member of the Constituent Assembly)

Sir, I see in this Constitution that the despotic rule has come to an end for ever and the day of popular rule has dawned.

— Kaka Bhagwant Roy (Member of the Constituent Assembly)

December 9, 1946

Louisiana, Italy

In this village of northern Italy, was born a baby girl into a family of masons. It would have been very surprising if the poor girl in the tiny village had become a politician in that village. But, it is astonishing that the girl, Edvige Antonia Albina Maino, became the most powerful leader of a country that the family had not even thought about.

Around the hour Ms. Maino (later rechristened as Sonia Gandhi) was born, an eclectic group of Indians met in the library of a grand building in New Delhi. The 207 men and women there embarked on writing a Constitution that would seal the fate of the future citizens of India. There were conservatives, liberals, dreamers, cynics, Hindus, Muslims, northerners, southerners, upper castes, lower castes, rich, poor, capitalists, and communists. However, they were all visionaries in some sense.

All the major luminaries of India's freedom struggle were assembled there, except for the one - Mahatma Gandhi - who was busy dousing religious fires in Bengal. But, again the Mahatma had little interest in committees or paper work and even if he were in Delhi he might not have attended the assembly.

In Mahatma's absence, the veteran freedom fighter Acharya J. B. Kripalani called upon the oldest member of that room, the parliamentarian from Bihar, Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha, to act as the Interim President of the Assembly until a new one was elected. Two days later the assembly would elect another Bihari parliamentarian, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, as the President of the Constituent Assembly.

In the course of the next three years, they would debate to great lengths on the merits of various democratic ideals from all over the world - from ancient Athens to the world of post-Second World War. With an expenditure of 3.4 crores (34 million rupees) they wrote the longest Constitution in the world and disproved the notion that Asiatics cannot rule

themselves through a democratic process. Dr. Prasad later went on to become the first President of India and the Constitution that he helped write has stood the tumultuous 64 years of Indian history.

Why Do We Need a Constitution?

A Constitution defines the structure and scope of a government and articulates the relationship of the people to its government. It provides the rights and responsibilities of the citizens as well as a guideline for the lawmakers to create the laws the citizens will follow.

Some countries do not have a well defined written constitution. The UK, for instance, provides Parliament the full authority to create laws and uses tradition to bring structure and order. Many other commonwealth nations like Canada and New Zealand follow this principle. Then there are countries like Israel that do not yet have a codified constitution as an agreement on the provisions of the constitution eluded consensus.

Before 1947, there were only a handful of countries that had a well defined written constitution and the Indian framers primarily looked to US and Irish constitutions for their inspiration. Until the enactment of the Constitution, India was officially a Dominion of Britain and used the Government Act of 1935 as the official law.

Mr. Basanta Kumar Das (Constituent Assembly member from West Bengal) eloquently put this as:

Mr. President, Sir, there are mainly three factors which have given our Constitution the present shape. I like to call them the three legs of this Constitution, viz.

- (1) The experience gained through the working of Government of India Act of 1935.*
- (2) The needs and aspirations of the people who have become free, and*
- (3) The impact of events occurring in the country and abroad and of those that may be expected during at least the coming 10 years.*

Sir, the Government of India Act, 1935, is an almost perfect mechanism for the smooth running of a Police State and is worded in a very suitably legalistic language standing the test of time. The Constitution has therefore, done well to draw largely from that document so far as its administrative side is concerned.

But with freedom achieved, the State has to pass from a 'Police State' to a 'Welfare State' and along with the peace and security of the country the full growth of the people is to be assured.

The Constituent Assembly

A Constituent Assembly is a key body that creates the Constitution of a nation. Americans were among the first to create such an organized process in creating a constitution and their constitutional convention produced their first draft in 1787 (that still stands). The French followed the American ideals and drafted their Constitution soon after the French Revolution. But, that one didn't really last long.

The idea of a Constituent Assembly for India goes back to 1934 when a radical Communist from Bengal, Manabendra Nath Roy, fervently argued for it. Later in 1946, when the Cabinet Mission was sent to discuss the independence terms with India - the final move to build a constituent assembly for India came.

India's Constituent Assembly was elected by the legislators from the provinces for which elections were held in 1946. Three hundred and eighty-nine members were to be drawn from the various provinces and princely states - 296 from British ruled provinces and 93 from the princely states. However, the princely states had not conducted elections and the Muslim League didn't participate in the Constituent Assembly either. Thus, the inaugural session consisted of only 207 people.

Eventually, the Princely States nominated their representatives and the Muslim League members who were not part of Pakistan joined the Constituent Assembly too. This formed the first Parliament.

The Constituent Assembly then sought to create a Drafting Committee that would get into the legal nitty gritty of the constitution. The articles produced by the drafting committee would then be put to vote by the main body.

There were seven key members of the Constituent Assembly who played a key part:

1. Jawaharlal Nehru - the big dreamer and the Prime Minister who sought to bring a Constitution that would encompass the dreams of all sections of the society.
2. Vallabhai Patel - the home minister, who was instrumental in backroom negotiations. Patel often had much more sway over Congress than Nehru. His right wing slant gave some balance to the assembly - many other leaders leaned left.
3. Rajendra Prasad - he was elected as the head of the Constituent Assembly and later the first President of India. He was a school teacher and a professor of economics. It was his job to reconcile the various arguments that the different sides brought.
4. BR Ambedkar - although he was politically opposed to Congress, Nehru drafted him as a law minister and made him the head of the Drafting Committee. Ambedkar brought a lot of new perspectives as he was from the low castes [most in the assembly were upper caste Hindus], educated in the US [most of the Indian stalwarts were UK educated], anti-Congress, and not from the Gangetic plains [many of the influencers were]. Nehru truly believed that Ambedkar's smartness and new perspectives would make the Constitution much more relatable to a vast chunk of the population.
5. Alladi Krishnaswami Aiyer - an eminent lawyer from Madras who served as the

Advocate General of the state. A key legal luminary and a representative of the south.

6. KM Munshi - a lawyer from Gujarat who found the famed Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan education trust. He was a key representative of the conservative interests in the Constitution.
7. BN Rau - a constitutional expert, who served as a Prime Minister of Jammu & Kashmir. He also helped write the constitution of Burma. Rau was the ultimate constitutional authority in the group and he intimately studied the various Constitutions of the time.

Drafting Committee

The first task of this Assembly is to free India through a new constitution, to feed the starving people, and to cloth the naked masses, and to give every Indian the fullest opportunity to develop himself according to his capacity.

— Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru

The key members started creating the drafting committee which would actually create the various schedules that would then be debated by the broader assembly.

Iyer, Rau, Munshi, and Ambedkar became a part of the drafting committee. They were assisted by TT Krishnamachari, an economist from Madras who later served Nehru as his Finance Minister; Gopaldaswami Ayyangar, who served Jammu & Kashmir as its Prime Minister; Muhammed Saadulah, a former Prime Minister of Assam who represented North East India's interests; and Maadhav Rao, a Diwan of Mysore who provided one of the key voices of the Princely States.

The drafting committee was fairly transparent in its transactions and also asked the public to send their opinions and suggestions. Feedback poured from all over the nation and the committee deliberated on the key issues.

Debate 1: American vs. English vs. Swiss

One of the key debates was regarding the form of the government. There were three primary alternatives before the framers of the Constitution. The British Westminster system provided for the supremacy of the Parliament and the elected executive would be directly responsible to the Parliament. In the American system, there would be a President directly elected by the people and there would be a separate legislature elected in parallel to pass the laws. In the Swiss system, there would be a direct democracy with the people directly electing the ministers.

Firstly, let me deal with the form of Government. Dr. Ambedkar's view is that the British parliamentary executive is preferable to the American non-parliamentary executive on the ground that the former is more responsible though less stable, while the latter is more stable but less responsible.

But if you look at another system of Government, namely, the Swiss form of Government, where the elected parliament again in its turn elects the executive, there the responsibility is emphasized. Having elected its executive, it leaves the executive to work out its schemes in a satisfactory way for a period of four years and the decisions of the Parliament are binding on that executive, unlike in the case of the American Presidential executive. Therefore, if we want both stability and responsibility, the Swiss system of executive is preferable.

— Mahboob Ali Baig Sahib Bahadur(member from Madras)

Ambedkar had a good understanding of the American form of government and he put his weight against it. He believed that an American system could cause a rift between the legislature and the President leading to less responsibility on the part of the President or a perpetual chaos. Both seemed scary for the framers.

They eventually settled for the British-style system, the one they were most comfortable with. However, a number of extra protections were added.

The Constitution provided for a President, who is not directly elected by the people, but through the representatives of various elected bodies, a strong Supreme Court and an independent Election Commission to provide the due checks on the Parliament. While the Parliament is the supreme in Britain, in India the Supreme Court has the power to interpret the Constitution and strike down certain laws.

In the landmark *Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala* case, the Supreme Court of India ruled that the Parliament didn't have the right to amend the basic structure of the Constitution. Article 141 makes the Supreme Court the ultimate authority on law.

Debate 2: Hindi vs. English

The top political hierarchy - Gandhi, Nehru, Patel and Rajendra Prasad wanted Hindustani or Hindi to be the common language that would connect the people of India. They reasoned that a nation should speak a common tongue and English was not accessible to a vast chunk of the population. However, this was strongly opposed by TT Krishnamachari, Madhav Rao, and other members of the southern group.

We disliked the English language in the past. I disliked it because I was forced to learn Shakespeare and Milton, for which I had no taste at all... [I]f we are going to be compelled to learn Hindi... I would perhaps not be able to do it because of my age, and perhaps I would not be willing to do it because of the amount of constraint you put on me. ... This kind of intolerance makes us fear.. Sir, it is up to my friends in U. P. to have a whole-India; it is up to them to have a Hindi-India. The choice is theirs...

—TT Krishnamachari

The framers finally agreed to a 15-year timeline in which English would be used alongside Hindi. At the end of the 15 years, Hindi would become the sole official language. However, in 1965, when the deadline ended, protests engulfed the nation and India terminated its push for Hindi as the sole national language. I will cover this part in later chapters.

Debate 3: Strong Centre vs. a Weak Federation

This was a very critical issue and among the most debated. India was formed by a patchwork of diverse provinces and princely states. There were two options - make a Unitary system - where the central government had most of the powers, like most of Europe and Africa. Or have a Federation - where there would be a central government and a strong provincial government each with their own defined rights. How powerful should the central government be?

In the meetings before independence, the assembly was leaning towards a leaner central government that primarily handled defense, foreign affairs, currency, and communication. The rest would be handled by the states. This was what the British-led Cabinet Mission suggested for India. The US was founded on such a federal structure. India's diversity and vastness meant that a central government would not be able to adequately handle the socioeconomic demands of all the citizens living in every corner of the land.

However, the angst of the partition and the massive issue of resettlement pushed the way for a stronger central government. In fact, even in the US the government at the center had progressively taken more power since 1787.

Brajeshwar Prasad of Bihar spoke of the worry in many people's minds when he eloquently argued against federalism:

We accepted federalism in order to meet the challenge of the Two-Nations theory of the late lamented Mr. Jinnah. We accepted federalism in order to persuade the Indian Princes to surrender a part of their sovereignty. Now the position is entirely changed. This country, Sir, has been unfortunately partitioned. The Princes today have been liquidated. The States today are in a far worse position than the Indian Provinces. Last time when the Constituent Assembly met I had spoken in this House in favour of a unitary State.

A unitary state had its appeal to many nationalists who wanted to build a more homogenous Indian nation that will not be partitioned anymore. In essence, national integration became an overarching principle.

Eventually, the framers settled for a federal system with a few unitary features:

1. In Article 1 (1), Ambedkar explicitly called for India to be a "Union of States" instead of a Federation.
2. While every state in the US has the right to have its own constitution, in India only Jammu & Kashmir has that right through a special provision.
3. There is no separate state citizenship other than the citizenship of India.
4. Article 3 of the Constitution allows the addition and deletion of states and the altering of the boundaries without permission of the State legislature. This power was especially added after the fifth amendment. This is a significant difference from other federal systems like the US and Australia. This provision was used to drastically change Indian provinces as we will see in Chapter 3.
5. Articles 352, 356, and 360 allow for the declaration of emergency that would temporarily change the federal system to a more unitary system. Article 356 is

especially contentious as it allows Parliament to dismiss any state government at will. This was often abused to meet narrow political needs.

Not everyone liked this arrangement:

The Constitution which is nearly complete has made the Centre too strong and much of the owners of the Provinces has been curtailed. The centre has become the great king and the provinces its dependencies.

— K. M. Jedhe(Bombay)

That said, there are enough provisions for federalism, including a clear delineation of Union and State subjects. For instance, only the state legislatures are allowed to legislate in subjects like education and property. In *S.R. Bommai v. Union of India*, the Supreme Court ruled that federalism is an essential part of the Indian constitution.

Debate 4: Rights of the Minorities

Winston Churchill argued against giving independence to India citing that India was dominated by a minority of upper caste Hindus and that the rule of this group was no better than the rule of the British. While Churchill's bias is well recognized, the Assembly didn't want to have a serious questioning of India as a multicultural democracy.

The Fundamental rights provided strong provisions for freedom of speech and religion. Then there was a question of special electorates for women, Muslims, and the "Untouchables" [the bottom of the caste system].

In the case of Muslims, the separate electorates reminded people of partition and thus the Assembly stuck to the historical Congressional stance that ruled against any religious reservation in legislatures or the Parliament. In the same way, the female members of the Constituent Assembly [a very unique sight in the history of constitution-making] argued against any separate treatment of women. The Indian National Congress had already elected two female party Presidents in the decades before that and thus the women felt more secure.

However, when it came to the untouchables, everyone agreed with Ambedkar. It was felt that their participation and development was critical for India's growth. Thus, they were the only group to be given reserved seats to be elected.

Debate 5: Common Civil Code

This was another heated debate - should India have a single law governing all religions? After the various troubles related to religion, the British government was careful not to interfere too much into the religious aspects of Indians. Hindus, Muslims, and Christians were given separate civil laws that affected things like marriage, divorce, alimony, inheritance, etc.

The Constituent Assembly debated long on evolving a common civil code.

Now why do people want a uniform civil code, as in article 35? Their idea evidently is to secure harmony through uniformity. But I maintain that for that purpose it is not necessary to regiment the civil law of the people including the personal law. Such regimentation will bring discontent and harmony will be affected. But if people are allowed to follow their own personal law there will be no discontent or dissatisfaction. Every section of the people, being free to follow its own personal law will not really come in conflict with others.

— Mohamad Ismail Sahib (Madras)

Civil Code, as has been pointed out, runs into every department of civil relations, to the law of contracts, to the law of property, to the law of succession, to the law of marriage and similar matters. How can there be any objection to the general statement here that the States shall endeavour to secure a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India?

—Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar (Madras)

During the 175 years of British rule, they did not interfere with certain fundamental personal laws...In fact, each community, each religious community has certain religious laws, certain civil laws inseparably connected with religious beliefs and practices. I believe that in framing a uniform draft code these religious laws or semi-religious laws should be kept out of its way.

—Naziruddin Ahmad(Bengal)

I know there are many among Hindus who do not like a uniform Civil Code, because they take the same view as the honourable Muslim Members who spoke last. ... A further argument has been advanced that the enactment of a Civil Code would be tyrannical to minorities. Is it tyrannical? Nowhere in advanced Muslim countries the personal law of each minority has been recognised as so sacrosanct as to prevent the enactment of a Civil Code. Take for instance Turkey or Egypt. No minority in these countries is permitted to have such rights. But I go further. When the Shariat Act was passed or when certain laws were passed in the Central Legislature in the old regime, the Khojas and Cutchi Memons were highly dissatisfied.

—KM Munshi(Bombay)

With no agreement in sight, they postponed it by 10 years by making a non-enforcing Directive Principle. With severe opposition from the religious right, the moderates had to cave in on this.

I do not propose to touch on the merits of the question as to whether this country should have a Civil Code or it should not... I quite realise their feelings in the matter, but I think they have read rather too much into article 35, which merely proposes that the State shall endeavour to secure a civil code for the citizens of the country. It does not say that after the Code is framed the State shall enforce it upon all citizens merely because they are citizens. It is perfectly possible that the future parliament may make a provision by way of making a beginning that the Code shall apply only to those who make a declaration that they are prepared to be bound by it.

— BR Ambedkar

Nehru was not happy retaining some of the backward religious laws. Years later against the opposition of many of his own party men, including Rajendra Prasad, he pushed the Hindu Code Bill. In a group of four landmark legislations in 1956, Pandit Nehru enabled the modernization of the Hindu religious code - allowing divorce, adoption, alimony and an equitable inheritance to sons, daughters.

While the Hindu code was reformed, other religions were allowed to keep the 19th century laws (substantially anti-women). Thus, Muslim women had to put up with polygamy, unilateral divorce, and restriction of access to alimony or inheritance.

The Muslim laws had especially been controversial as it allowed polygamy and poor protection to women in matters such as alimony and divorce. I will cover a detailed episode on this as a part of the Shah Bano Case, in latter chapters.

In the Mary Sonia Zachariah case, Judge T. Ramakrishnan opined that:

Indian women of all religions other than Christianity are entitled to get divorced on the grounds of cruelty and/or desertion which are recognized as independent grounds for divorce under the respective enactments applicable to them. For Christians who are governed by the Act, cruelty and desertion are not by themselves independent grounds for divorce.

This came to the front in 1995. A Christian woman was deserted by her husband and the husband had a child out of his other affair. However, the religious law didn't allow for divorce on this ground. In fact, the poor woman was not even able to find her husband.

Eventually the Kerala court ruled that the law discriminated against Christian women. There was some furor in the community, but eventually it was accepted. The rights were further extended in 1997. A Christian woman was arguing for her divorce stating that her husband was impotent. Under Hindu laws and modern laws of the world that is justification enough. However, under Christian personal laws it was not. Thus, the High Court refused to nullify the marriage on that grounds, although they were ok with applying laws on cruelty.

The judge, Chinnappa Reddy, was sympathetic and said:

It was just the other day that a Constitution Bench of this Court had to emphasise the urgency of infusing life into Art. 44 of the Constitution which provides that "The State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India." The present case is yet another which focuses attention on the immediate and compulsive need for a uniform civil code.

Debate 6: God vs. Secularism

Sir, it has been repeated to our ears that ours is a secular State. I accepted this secularism in the sense that our State shall remain unconcerned with religion, and I thought that the secular State of partitioned India was the maximum of generosity of a Hindu dominated territory for its non-Hindu population. I did not of course know what exactly this secularism meant and how far the State intends to cover the life and manners of our people. Gradually it seems to me that our 'secular State' is a slippery phrase, a device to bypass the ancient culture of the land.

— Lokanath Misra (Orissa)

Mr. Misra brought an important point. India's founding fathers were intent on secularism, but for many it was not clear what it really meant. Many nationalists thought India as a Hindu nation and they wanted enough protection for the religion. There was a sharp debate on this. This mainly concerned the Preamble that set the overall tone for the rest of the document.

When I perused the Constitution, I was left with the feeling that there was a void in it. We had forgotten, I do not know why, to invoke the grace and blessing of God.

— HV Kamath (Central Provinces)

The move by Kamath to add an "In the name of God" in the preamble was defeated somewhat more narrowly than expected (68 to 41). To arrive at this compromise, it was also decided to drop "secular" in the Preamble. Thus, the preamble would have neither secular nor God in it.

Another member, Brajeshwar Prasad, wanted to insert "socialist" into the Preamble and that was also overwhelmingly rejected.

During the darkness of emergency in 1976 [covered in later chapters], Indira Gandhi would insert both these words into the Preamble, through the 42nd Amendment, that India's founding fathers declined to include.

Overall, the Constitution maintained a strongly secular character and the Supreme Court had ruled that Secularism is a core part of the structure that cannot be altered.

Debate 7: The Special Status of Jammu & Kashmir

You wish India should protect your borders, she should build roads in your area, she should supply you food grains, and Kashmir should get equal status as India. But Government of India should have only limited powers and Indian people should have no rights in Kashmir. To give consent to this proposal, would be a treacherous thing against the interests of India and I, as the Law Minister of India, will never do it.

— Babasaheb Ambedkar to Sheik Abdullah

In Chapter 1, we saw the history of Kashmir's accession into India and the instrument of accession permitted a wide range of rights for the state. In the eagerness to get the state admitted, Congress didn't think too much about those rights. These came before the Constituent Assembly.

Article 370 of the Indian Constitution deals with the special status given to the state of Jammu & Kashmir. It provides a fairly high degree of autonomy to the state, enables the state to have its own constitution (unique in an Indian context) which permits the state to give some special privileges to its "permanent residents". One such special privilege is that only a permanent resident can buy land in the state and citizens from other Indian states face some restrictions.

The article was enacted with much displeasure to Sardar Patel and Babasaheb Ambedkar. It is a very controversial topic as the region is an international hotspot and the state is the only Muslim-majority state in India.

In this issue, Nehru weighed the opinion of Gopaldaswami Ayyangar - an ex-Prime Minister of Kashmir more than others. Nehru was himself a Kashmiri Pandit and together this duo was allegedly biased towards Kashmir.

Gopaldaswami Ayyangar has been especially asked to help in Kashmir matters. Both for this reason and because of his intimate knowledge and experience of Kashmir, he had to be given full latitude. I really do not know where the States Ministry (Sardar Patel's ministry) comes into the picture except that it should be kept informed for [sic] the steps taken.

— Pandit Nehru to the Assembly

Ayyangar argued that Kashmir was not fully integrated, a third of the state was still in occupation of Pakistan and the matter was with the UN Security Council. Thus, he said there must be special provisions for Kashmir as a stopgap until the state was ready for full integration. Nehru was in the US at the time of framing Article 370 and fully left the matter to Mr. Ayyangar while the constituent assembly was in an uproar.

As originally envisaged, Article 370 gave Jammu & Kashmir complete control over their destiny (except when it came to matters of defense and diplomacy, where the Indian government had control). Fundamental rights and duties, directive principles of the state policy, and even the supremacy of the Indian Supreme Court didn't apply to the state. The state had its own constitution and its own flag.

Along with Article 35A of the Indian Constitution, it allowed the state to prefer the J&K “citizens” for:

- Employment under the State Government;
- Acquisition of immovable property in the State;
- Settlement in the State; and
- The right to scholarships and other forms of aid as the State Government may provide.

However, since 1950, the Indian government slowly eroded on the state’s autonomy (giving Supreme Court jurisdiction over the state and making most of the Union laws applicable to the state). Presently, most institutions of the Government of India apply to the state as a result of The Delhi Agreement, 1952. In 2002, the J&K High court has ruled that daughters of the state would continue to be permanent residents even after marrying people from outside the state (men always had this right).

The key sticking point is that the citizens from other parts of India could not easily migrate to Kashmir nor acquire land in the state. Only “Permanent Residents” of the state could acquire property and other Indians cannot become permanent residents.

The state prides itself in being unique this way and there is a claim that such “uniqueness” breeds further separatism. However, others feel that such a major change would breed further resentment and build more separatism.

Directive Principles

In the Directive Principles of State Policy we have said that although they may not be enforceable in a court of law, they are nevertheless fundamental for the governance of this country.

— Ms. Purnima Banerji (UP)

There were many ideas that the Assembly proposed that the framers didn't want to make mandatory for the government to implement. For instance, Hindus wanted cow slaughter to be banned. Reformers sought an equality of pay for both women and men and protection of wildlife. Gandhians wanted the protection of cottage industries, abolition of alcohol, and maintaining the village panchayats [local councils].

Instead of debating endlessly on these, the framers tucked all these into a “nice to have section” at the end that should theoretically guide the Parliament in its law making. However, these didn't have legal authority on the government.

The Constitution Comes to Power

We are to begin our journey on the 26th January 1950 when we will resolve ourselves to carry out the Constitution in letter and spirit for the good of the people. Equally so the people must also realise their duty to the State and work shoulder to shoulder with the State. The provisions contained in the Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy are ample evidences for the guarantee to the people. Now that alien rule has been eliminated, we give this Constitution to ourselves.

— Dr. V Subramaniam (Madras)

After three years of deliberations, the Assembly finally approved the Constitution on the 26th of November 1949. The three years of effort cost nearly Rs 3.4 crores (34 million). However, it came out with a very satisfying result. Article 13 made the Constitution itself the ultimate authority on land.

The leaders waited two months to properly bring the Constitution to the public. They chose the day of January 26, 1950. It was on January 26, 1930 that Nehru first unfurled the Indian flag in Lahore demanding Purna Swaraj (complete independence). Until 1947, January 26 was celebrated as “independence day”. To keep up with the significance of the day, the constitution came to force on that day and it was now called the Republic Day.

As of July 2014, the constitution has 448 articles, 25 parts, 12 schedules, and 120 amendments. The original 479 page calligraphic edition signed by all the framers is preserved in a helium filled case by Parliament.

The Constitution as it stands today, is the result of heated discussion and long debates carried over thousands of amendments moved by the honourable Members of this House. In fact there is not a single word in the Constitution which has not received the notice of some Member or the other. I can go to the length of stating that even punctuations, viz., comma, semicolon, and full stops, have received due notice.

— Ram Chandra Gupta (UP)

Why Juries are not used in India? An endnote on the Legal System

Although not directly related to the drafting of the Constitution, I would also end this chapter with a brief overview of the Indian legal system.

India follows the Common Law system of Britain that enables the courts to create laws while passing key judgments. In parallel, there were also processes to codify the criminal laws more clearly. In 1860, after much debate, colonial England decided to change India's laws introducing the Indian Penal Code. It was essential as the Crown wanted to have a reasonably fair system to calm the nation after the revolt of 1857. The Indian penal code was then applied in a wide span of land from Nigeria to Singapore.

In most countries following the common law, there is also a provision of juries. These are people selected from the common public who hear the various arguments and pronounce a defendant as guilty or not guilty.

However, in the landmark *KM Nanavati v State of Maharashtra* case, the court finally struck down the jury system.

On April 27, 1959 a popular naval commander shot dead his wife's lover. The question before the court was whether the murder was premeditated or not.

The public rallied in his support (given how conservative India was then) and the jury decided it was not premeditated murder. Later, the Supreme court found the jury to be too influenced by the media leading them to make erroneous judgments. This case proved to be final straw against the jury system in the young democracy.

While people's opinions are to be respected, various thought leaders worried about the fickleness of public opinion that can often make the system hot-headed, unstable and vindictive. Whether outlawing the jury system or adding even more checks on the Parliament, various thought leaders sought to prevent the public from shooting themselves on the foot.

Chapter 3: Reorganizing India

I do believe that we should hurry up with the reorganization of linguistic provinces.

— Mahatma Gandhi (October 10, 1947)

The main advantage of the scheme of Linguistic Provinces which appeals to me quite strongly is that Linguistic Provinces would make democracy work better than it would in mixed Provinces.

— BR Ambedkar (1948)

Our great provincial languages are no dialects or vernaculars, as the ignorant sometimes call them. They are ancient languages with a rich inheritance, each spoken by many millions of people, each tied up inextricably with the life and culture and ideas of the masses as well as the upper classes.

— Pandit Nehru (1937)

August 15, 2011

Hyderabad

I was visiting my relatives in Hyderabad. I have a large extended family in the city. The movement to create a new state of Telangana was at its peak as the activists moved for a final push.

It was a confusing time as it looked like Telangana might be ending what Andhra Pradesh had started in 1953 - reorganizing India on the lines of language. As India's 29th new state entered on June 2, 2014, it is not clear whether that fear would hold.

India was a land of 1,600 languages. After Patel welded India it was a hodgepodge of provinces that were organized not by language or culture, but by the historic conveniences of its rulers.

Nehru had a vision of one India, speaking one language. In 1947, he underestimated the people's passions towards their regional languages, although in 1937 he exhibited a remarkable understanding of the problem.

The remarkably prescient Mahatma Gandhi, however, begged to differ. The Congressional party was built on communication through these regional languages and if Mahatma Gandhi could unite India, while writing primarily in Gujarati and English, there was no reason why India could not be a single nation with dozens of regional languages. For almost a decade, Nehru fought against a linguistic organization of states, but in 1956 he relented.

The linguistic reorganization was one of the bold experiments and it worked great. It strengthened India by enabling strong states and weakening the many separatist movements (that wanted to separate fearing India's imposition of one culture). It is extremely rare to see a strong nation where each state spoke a different language. India pulled off a miracle.

The provinces of India

At the time of independence India's first main task was to give some order to the hodgepodge of the territories India inherited from the British. It was a mammoth task as the British didn't directly rule a big chunk of India.

However, India was incredibly lucky to have Vallabhai Patel. He grouped the variety of territories into three buckets. These were the three types of states that were recognized by our constitution in 1950:

1. Governor Ruled: Former provinces of British India - West Bengal, Madras, Bombay, Central Provinces, United Provinces, Orissa, and Punjab.
2. Rajpramukh Ruled: Groups of princely states united by Patel - Hyderabad, Travancore, Kashmir, Saurashtra, Patiala, Mysore, Madhya Bharat, and Rajasthan.
3. Chief Commissioner Ruled: Small territories that were in between: Ajmer, Bhopal, Himachal, Coorg, Manipur, Tripura, Bilaspur, Kutch, Delhi, and Vindhya Pradesh.

None of these states were formed on linguistic lines. Various leaders starting from Mahatma Gandhi advocated a linguistic organization, but after the death of Mahatma Gandhi his advice was lost in thin air. However, 5 years after Mahatma's death, the goal of linguistically-organized states would materialize.

Part 1: Potti Sreeramulu Sets the Ball Rolling

You will observe that we have disturbed the hornet's nest and I believe most of us are likely to be badly stung.

— Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (1953)

In 1947, the province of Madras was a sprawling one that included its people speaking four different languages - Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam, and Tamil. However, the political control mainly resided with the Tamils - with two Tamil leaders, Kamaraj and Rajagopalachari (Rajaji), having a national level influence.

The problem came to a fore in 1947 when Kamaraj forced T. Prakasam (a Telugu speaker) to resign after he was elected as the Chief Minister of Madras. Three Chief Ministers were changed from 1947-52 as Kamaraj showed power to play politics. At that time the Madras Congressional party was divided into four factions:

1. Rajaji's unit - this had a lot of support from Brahmins - especially Tamil Brahmins.
2. Kamaraj's unit - this had a big control over Tamil Nadu's non-Brahmins.
3. T. Prakasam's unit - this had a big influence over the Telugu group.
4. Pattabhi Sitaramayya's unit - this had a big influence over Telugu Brahmins.

The non-Congressional parties, especially the Dravida Kazhagam, was also split with Annadurai wresting control over the movement by forming a separate party of Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK).

It was in this context that the state elections of 1951 were conducted. With such a fractious split, no one was able to form a government. The Congressional party finally brought Rajaji out of his retirement after he had been in India's highest position of Governor General. Rajaji successfully mended the differences in the coalition. However, many Telugu people were still disturbed at the perceived dominance of Tamils.

The Andhra movement was earlier subdued by the "JVP Committee" comprised of Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhai Patel, and Pattabhi Sitaramayya. Let down both by the central government as well as Andhra Congress groups, some of the Andhra supporters were frustrated.

In 1952 an ex-freedom fighter, Potti Sreeramulu, wanted to take the Gandhian route. He was an engineer educated from the famous VJTI of Bombay who came to the Gandhian movement after losing his wife and only child during a failed delivery. He took part in various fasts to get more rights for India's downtrodden Dalits.

On the 19th of October 1952, he would start his last fast in the city of Madras. India's leadership didn't relent. On the 58th day of the fast, Sreeramulu died. His death sparked wide riots. Within three days of his death on the 19th of December, Nehru announced the creation of a state for the Telugu people. The first linguistically organized state was born.

Fight for Madras

After the Telugus got their state, the fight shifted to the ownership of Madras - the largest city of the south. For centuries, Madras had cultural influences of both the Tamils and Telugus. While the temples that dot the city were primarily Tamil, many of the prominent citizens since 17th century were Telugu. A proposal to partition the city along the river Cooum was put to the table.

For both sides this was a crucial battle. Telugus rallied with the slogan - Madras Manade. Tamils countered with a slogan - Madras Namade (both meaning "Madras is ours" in their respective languages). Nehru appointed the Wachoo Commission to decide on this and the Commission favored an unequivocal inclusion of Madras in the Tamil province - given the population demographics.

An agreement was offered that in return for Telugus dropping their fight for Madras, the Tamil groups decided to drop the demand for Chittor (with the famous temple of Tirupati). Finally, in October 1953, the new state of Andhra Pradesh was formed with Kurnool as the capital.

The Pandora's box was now wide open. Soon, everyone else started to ask for their own state based on their language.

Part 2: West and South Get Altered

Lathi goli khayenge, phir bhi Bumbai layenge.

(We will eat bullets and sticks. But, we will still stick to Bombay.)

— slogan of Maharashtra protesters fighting for Bombay.

Like the Andhrites, the Marathis have long fought for a separate state. The powers of the Bombay Presidency primarily centered around the Gujaratis. Gujaratis were rich, powerful, and better organized. Similar demand came from elsewhere in India.

The central government commissioned a body of experts under the State Reorganization Commission under the leadership of Fazal Ali. The group traveled all over India taking over 15,000 written submissions over a course of three years. In 1956, the modern states were formed on linguistic lines through the landmark States Reorganization Act.

The main change was in the south and west.

1. The Kannada speaking parts of Bombay state, Madras state, and Hyderabad state were merged to form Karnataka.
2. Andhra Pradesh was further enlarged with the addition of Telugu-speaking parts of Hyderabad.
3. Madras and Travancore-Cochin provinces exchanged districts to form the Malayalam-speaking Kerala and the Tamil-speaking Madras state.
4. The Hindi-speaking parts of central India were united to create Madhya Pradesh.
5. Marathi-speaking parts of Central Provinces and Hyderabad were added to Bombay.

In the north, the princely states grouped under Patiala and East Punjab States Union (PEPSU) merged with Punjab. Small Bengali speaking parts of Bihar were merged with West Bengal. However, the Commission refused to change the boundaries in the North East or give a separate state for the Sikhs and Maharashtrians.

Fight for Bombay

In Maharashtra, there was a fight for Bombay similar to the Madras fight. The city was almost evenly divided between the Gujaratis and Marathis, while the surrounding areas were primarily Marathi. The Commission had initially recommended for a joint ownership of the city.

However, violence erupted and the police fought with brutality. Nehru didn't give in and neither did the protesters. On May 1, 1960 the Indian government finally relented and the new states of Maharashtra and Gujarat were created with Bombay going to Maharashtra.

Part 3: North and North East Get Altered

The partition of India left a lot of unfinished business. The Sikhs were among the worst affected in the process and they yearned for a separate state - the Punjabi Suba. In the state of Punjab, they were a minority with just a third of the population. Similarly, in the North East, a lot of dissimilar tribes were grouped into a single province of Assam merely for administrative convenience. Both were to change.

Nehru was worried about the creation of states on religious grounds as the wounds of the creation of Pakistan hurt him. Thus, he ignored the activism of Master Tara Singh (a Sikh convert from Hinduism, who also cofounded Vishwa Hindu Parishad) who was fighting for a Sikh majority state.

Entry of Indira

On January 24, 1966, Indira Gandhi became the third Prime Minister of India. She didn't carry the baggage and wounds of Nehru. In the just concluded 1965 war with Pakistan, Sikhs were among the biggest demographic groups in the Indian Army. Indira's government thus wanted to reward the Sikhs and on November 1, 1966, the state of Punjab was trifurcated.

1. The Sikhs got the state of Punjab with the holy city of Amritsar at the center.
2. The Hindus speaking the Haryanvi dialects were grouped to form the state of Haryana.
3. The Hindus speaking the Pahari dialects and hill tribes got the state of Himachal Pradesh.

Northeast Reorganization 1971

Another war with Pakistan. This time the war was in the east (to split Pakistan and create Bangladesh) and coincidentally the reorganization was also in the east.

The state of Assam was divided into six units - with the creation of the new states of Tripura, Meghalaya, and Manipur and union territory status for Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. Eventually, Mizoram and Arunachal also became full states.

Part 4: Push for Smaller States

In 2000, the BJP government pushed for smaller states to address the development problems in India's large interior states - Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttaranchal, and Jharkhand were created out of larger states.

These states were carved without much issues and might have been the reason for a faster growth of the region since 2000. BJP had always sought for manageable governance units. Even after the division, the state of Uttar Pradesh has more people than Russia, Canada, Australia, and Kazakhstan - four of world's nine largest countries by area - combined. Effective governance demands more manageable units than this.

Part 5: Telangana Gets Created

On June 2, 2014, India had its 29th state (and the last new state at the time of this writing) formed out of the Hyderabad Nizam's provinces in Andhra Pradesh. For the activists of a United Andhra Pradesh, this was a slap in the face of Potti Sriramulu. For the activists of Telangana, this was a new beginning of their socioeconomic interests.

Since this was the most controversial of the state divisions (fought for more than 50 years) I will get into some detail on the pros and cons.

Bad

1. Education. Andhra Pradesh suffers the most as their people are already feeling the brunt of the backlash in Hyderabad. Close to half of erstwhile AP's top engineering colleges are in Telangana. Apart from losing these colleges, AP students have now lost their domicile status in many of the private colleges. For a few years there will be a backlash against their admissions. Until new colleges are built in AP, there will be increased hardships for students and their careers. Especially for the Costas, higher education is a very important issue.
2. Water. I'm from the Kaveri delta and I can tell you what happens if you are a victim of water disputes. The river that once supported the great civilization of Cholas is quite dry and a great region is blighted due to the water wars with Karnataka after the Madras state was divided in the 1950s. I hope the same doesn't happen to the Krishna/Godavari delta given that Telangana now controls the water. As Telangana develops more, dams will be built and water will start to get diverted out of the delta.
3. Emotional battles. As AP starts moving to their fourth capital since independence, emotions will run high. They have been made strangers in their own capital. Hopefully, GOI presses enough on the new Telangana government to treat all Indian citizens the same.
4. Finances. People from all parts of AP put all their eggs in Hyderabad and make the city generate half of the undivided state's revenues. Now, when they lose Hyderabad there will be strain on the state's finances that will curtail many development projects.

Good

1. Better governance. Small states have in general been good for India. The previous division of states (such as Punjab-Haryana, UP-Uttarakhand, and Bihar-Jharkhand) have all been quite successful. Telangana would be able to prioritize its own issues (such as primary education and building an industrial base) while Andhra could aim for rapid development in the services and food sector given that it has a lot of developed districts.
2. Telangana has a historic opportunity. Millions of poor Indians live in land locked states like Telangana. So far, their needs have been ignored. Now they have water, engineering colleges, revenue bases, and thus no longer have an excuse to not develop.

3. Faster development. Telangana could now grow fast as they now have the resources. Andhra could grow faster due to the separation.
4. Well-rounded development. People from all parts of AP invested too much in Hyderabad and too little in Guntur, Rajahmundry, or Nellore. The painful lesson should make everyone in India realize the need for more rounded development instead of putting too much on our metros. The Andhra people will move with a renewed vigor to develop a new capital along with 10 tier-two cities and this will be good for everyone in India.
5. Moving on. For decades, the state was mired in clashes and disturbances. Now that the division is done everyone can move back to focusing on developing top-notch states. Without the Telangana region to hold them back, AP could move fast. In the same way, Telangana could assure more development in Nalgonda, Warangal, and Karimnagar.
6. Handling violence. AP would now be spared of dealing with all the Naxals. Telangana could now make Naxals as the top priority and deal with both peaceful and forceful terms. Some of the Naxal problem is due to a lack of rural development and this could partly be solved now.

Fight for the Cities

Since the start of the civilization, cities have formed the core of culture. In the past 300 years, India has not kept pace with the creation of cities. Thus, there is always a big fight for the important cities. These cities are the only connection to modernity for many regions.

Different linguistic groups tried to wrestle key cities from other linguistic groups. Samyukta Maharashtra groups tried to get a hold of Bombay that was mostly under the control of Gujarati merchants. Andhra movements fought for the control of Madras. Telangana groups fought to control Hyderabad. Punjab and Haryana fought hard for control of Chandigarh.

Overall the lesson for India from these agitations is not to concentrate too much power and revenue generation on a handful of cities. This lopsided development has made states war for key cities (Gujarat-Maharashtra for Mumbai, Tamil Nadu-Andhra for Chennai, Punjab-Haryana for Chandigarh, and now for Hyderabad). If AP had 10 other equivalent cities, maybe they would not have been so vociferous nor would Telangana have been so eager.

I will end the chapter by giving some background on the anti-Hindi riots of Tamil Nadu.

Anti-Hindi Agitations of the South

It would be absurd to make Hindustani the medium of instruction in all the regions and it is still more absurd to use English for this purpose.

—Mahatma Gandhi

India's extreme corners were always somewhat an enigma to the people close to the center. North Easterners are often derisively called as chinki (corruption of the Hindi word for Chinese people). Chennai (the capital of extreme south) is among the most hated cities in India. Given how their histories developed, these states were usually more proud of their independent lineage and this often rankles the other Indians.

On the 26th of January 1965, India was to switch to Hindi as the sole official language of the central government. When India was formulated, Patel, Nehru, and many of the Constitution framers thought of Hindi as the national language. English was supposed to be a transitional language. In 1963, Nehru passed the Official Language Act that provided some assurances that English would continue to stay official. However, the language of the act was too ambiguous for the southern politicians.

In 1963, Annadurai, the leader of Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), launched a new round of agitations that reached a peak when an activist, Chinnasamy, died of self-immolation in Trichy.

After Nehru died in 1964, things were getting worse. Shastri had to back down after the 1965 agitations and finally in 1967 the Official Languages Act was amended. Since then the regional languages have received further protection. As a result of these protests, DMK was able to capture power in Tamil Nadu for the first time and the national parties never captured the state since then.

Long-Term Effects of the Agitation

1. English protected: India's Constitution stipulated the use of English only for the first 15 years (until 1965). English was designated as a transition language. But for the Tamils, English would have ceased to be an official language of India after 1965 and would have curtailed our options in the global market. The agitations kept English relevant in India.
2. End of TN Congress: The agitation was used by the Dravidian parties to create a following and the protests weakened the Congress in TN. In the elections after the 1965 agitations, Congress lost power and has been declining since then. To this day, India's national parties are unable to impact the state in a big way. On the flip side, it has made it almost impossible for a Tamil to become a Prime Minister.
3. Multicultural democracy: The absence of a national language prevented the integration of different states into a common national ethos and identity. However, it strengthened the multicultural tolerance in India.
4. Protection of regional arts and diversity: While the film industries and other cultural elements of states that accepted Hindi got diminished, in states that didn't accept Hindi the regional arts flourished. Thus, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh have the biggest movie industries in India after Bollywood.
5. Hampered national movement of Tamils: While the English acceptance helped the Indians get a wider range of service jobs, it has also made the life of Tamils who want to migrate to the rest of India hard.
6. Withdrawal of Brahmins from Tamil politics: The Dravidian parties blamed Tamil Brahmins for bringing Hindi, despite the fact that many of Brahmin leaders such as Radhakrishnan opposing the Hindi imposition. Since the anti-Hindi agitations, TamBrams have withdrawn from most political activities in Tamil Nadu.

Has the Linguistic Organization Helped India?

1. Strengthened the union: Until the 1950s, many regions of India - including Tamil region wanted to secede from India. The extremists contended that they were never part of Indian kingdoms for most of the history and the separatists in the region wanted to get out of India. However, after getting a separate state for Tamil people, the secession demands have gone away as they have a good level of autonomy. Thus, the Tamils are able to get the benefits of being in India, while still maintaining the Tamil culture.
2. Maintained the diversity: Without the linguistic organization, many of the regional languages could have died. Cultural diversity is a key strength of India and the linguistic organization has protected it.
3. Healthy competition: Although a lot of times the competition turns unhealthy (e.g. the water wars between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu that I will cover later) for the most part the competition is healthy. There is a shadow growth war between southern cities such as Bangalore, Chennai, and Hyderabad. This competition pushes our politicians to care a tiny bit more than the politicians in states that don't have a linguistic rivalry (BIMARU states).
4. Better growth: There is some correlation between states with high linguistic attachment and states with high economic/human development.

On the surface, the linguistic organization seems to go against the “one nation” rule. But, if you look deeper, the strength of our civilization lies in the concept of “one destination, many paths”.

Chapter 4: Ancient Enmities and Troubled Warriors

September 30, 2010

I was in Ayodhya, a holy city in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh. It was really tense and I saw police forces from all parts of the state brought in. I was traveling around India for a few weeks trying to understand a little more about the culture. After I got out of the bus, I took a rickshaw to take me around the place and let me understand the trouble there. It was the day when the Allahabad High Court was to pronounce its verdict on the historic dispute of the temple.

With no effort, I got to a small room in the basement where a key religious leader was boasting about his part in bringing down the mosque 18 years ago. He also took me around the campus where the parts to create a temple were almost ready, just waiting to be assembled. Locals told me that the temple would be ready to be built in 24 hours, if the court gives a go.

All eyes were on the High Court, 160 kilometers south. The court at Allahabad had heard years of arguments on both sides. Amidst tense moments, I tried to get to the controversial site that both Hindus and Muslims claimed to be theirs. However, the police stopped me from getting too close.

Eighteen years before that time, on December 6, 1992 independent India faced its biggest challenge for its secularist credentials when a mob of Hindu karsevaks (volunteers) demolished a 16th century mosque at the place where I was heading to. That was followed by a year of communal clashes and bomb blasts as both Hindus and Muslims were at each other's throats. The most recent violent episode was in 2002 a group of pilgrims returning from the temple were burnt down in the state of Gujarat, sparking a major communal riot.

Hindu - Muslim Troubles

Ancient Trouble at Ayodhya

Lord Rama, the hero of the epic Ramayana, has an important place in the Hindu faith. Devotees look up to him for inspiration and cherish his ideal qualities - honesty, respect for elders, love for his wife, monogamy, affection for his brothers, and a king who treated his subjects in a just way. Scriptures say that he was born in the town of Ayodhya, on the banks of the river Sarayu, 500 kilometers east of Delhi.

The town teems with temples dedicated to the various characters of Ramayana. However, there is one key spot missing - the birthplace of Ram. Many Hindus believe that the temple at the birthplace of Rama was the one destroyed in 1527 by the Mughal king, Babur in the 16th century and built a mosque over it. Various excavations by the Archaeological Survey of India show that there was indeed a Hindu temple and probably even a Buddhist place of worship at the site the mosque once stood.

The fact that a Hindu temple was destroyed to build the Babri Masjid was not an altogether surprising thing. Throughout India, many Hindu and Buddhist structures were erased by various Muslim rulers to propagate Islam. Various holy cities of Hinduism - Mathura, Varanasi, and Somnath - are all witnesses to historical carnage.

Like in Jerusalem, now there are two religious groups who claimed ownership of the site through historical links. The Hindus believed that the site was the birthplace of Ram and for Muslims it was the place where Babar built an important mosque.

The trouble came to the fore during the British rule and in 1853 (four years before India's first war of independence) there was a major religious riot near the site on the ownership. Six years later, the local government erected fences around the site and allowed the Hindus to use the outer court while letting the Muslims use the inner court. In a Court verdict by Judge Chamier of Faizabad in 1886, the judge prevented building a temple just outside the Masjid although he sympathized with the claim.

I visited the land in dispute yesterday in the presence of all parties. I found that the Masjid built by Emperor Babur stands on the border of Ayodhya, that is to say, to the west and south it is clear of habitations. It is most unfortunate that a Masjid should have been built on land specially held sacred by the Hindus, but as that event occurred 356 years ago, it is too late now to agree with the grievances.

— Court verdict of Col. F.E.A. Chamier, District Judge, Faizabad (1886)

Trouble in Independent India

Britain imposed a status quo for decades and there was no major incident for the next six decades. In December 1949, the controversy rose again as a group of idols allegedly sneaked into the now decrepit mosque in the dark of the night.

Hindu priests claimed superhuman intervention while the government could not accept magic. Both the Muslims and Hindus fought and the government decided to lock down the whole site. For years, the matter was fought in the courts.

By mid 1970s, Hindu parties started to get stronger due to the weakness of the center and by 1984 a movement to build the temple at Ram Janmabhoomi (birth site of Ram) was formed.

The Specter of Shah Bano

When the 60-year old Shah Bano Begum filed a case for getting her alimony in a local court, in April 1978, she didn't obviously know that she would change Indian history. She was a mother of five who was married to one Mohammed Ahmed Khan in 1932. Mr. Khan married another woman 14 years after their marriage and in 1978 he deserted his older wife. She was promised Rs.200/month for maintenance and that was not held up. In November 1978, Khan divorced Bano through the Islamic method of triple talaq (all you need to do is utter the word thrice and you are divorced from your spouse).

India had different personal laws for different religions and the government was loathe to change the personal laws of Muslims. However, the lower court took a more sympathetic view of the poor woman who had to support five kids and asked the man to pay a meager sum. The High Court of Madhya Pradesh enhanced the sum in a further appeal in July 1980. The court used the provisions of the Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code that overrode the personal laws of religions.

Various Muslim boards vigorously opposed the court's decision and took the matter to the Supreme Court. On April 23, 1985, the Supreme Court upheld the High Court's decision - Mr. Khan had to pay a monthly maintenance to his wife and children. The court saw it as a humanitarian case and also recommended the government bring a Uniform Civil Code across the nation (applying the same set of civil laws across the nation).

The Court's decision should not have been a shock for any rational person. Of course, an old lady deserted by a husband would have the sympathy. However, Muslim bodies took umbrage at this and believed that the court was encroaching their liberties. They were not ready for modernizing their laws and the government was very careful not to upset the vote banks.

When Mr. Rajiv Gandhi came to power in 1984, he took a leaf out his mother's book - of toying with laws to cut the teeth of the courts. In August 1985, a Parliamentarian Gulam Mohammed Mahmood Banathwala introduced a private member bill in the Parliament to overrule the Court's judgment. Rajiv initially stood ground and voted to defeat the bill. However, he started giving more importance to the conservative Muslims. On the 22nd of November 1985, one of Rajiv Gandhi's men - Z. A. Ansari launched a senseless three hour tirade against the Supreme Court and judge Chandrachud. Famous judges all over the nation reacted in anger.

Rajiv finally gave into the pressure, as he had little political experience. The controversial Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act of 1986 was enacted and the Supreme Court's judgment was nullified. Muslim men were now free to divorce their

wives at any time and just pay 90 days worth of maintenance amount. Civil organizations were aghast. Even many progressive Muslims were stunned. Arif Mohammad Khan, a minister in Rajiv's party resigned.

While the Civil Society made a feeble protest, another group saw a huge opening created out of this. The conservative Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was reduced to ashes in the 1984 elections and this was a time for them to make a move. The conservative organizations and women organizations made a strange coalition and protests were held.

The government was on the back foot and had to do something to balance the favor they did to the Muslims. Rajiv made a smart political calculation a couple of months before the bill was finally passed into a law.

Opening the Gates at the Ayodhya

In January 1986, a petition was filed by a local journalist Umesh Chandra Pandey to open the gates of the Mosque for worship. The issue got the attention of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and his close advisor and cousin Arun Nehru. Both of them saw this as an opportunity to assuage the Hindus.

The government gave a green signal to the local court and the court allowed the opening of the gates on February 1, 1986.

Muslim lawyers fought on, but the government was firm. In 1988, a Muslim parliamentarian Syed Shahabuddin got the government to ban Salman Rushdie's Satanic Verses in return for not taking a rally to Ayodhya. The government once again gave way to pressure groups and banned the book and triggered a controversy elsewhere.

To balance that, in November 1989 the government green signaled the laying of the foundations close to the disputed mosque. The event, organized by the right wing parties was attended by Home Minister Buta Singh and others. Hindu groups believed that the long battle was now coming to a grand finale.

BJP's Rise to the National Stage

BJP used the momentum generated by Ayodhya to get nationwide attention. They got an unexpected help on this from a TV series on the national television.

Just when the Ayodhya issue was climbing into the national scene, veteran film director Ramanand Sagar brought out the epic TV rendition of Ramayana in 1987.

The series featuring Arun Govil as Lord Ram was wildly popular among the middle class kids and parents all over the nation. People all over were glued to the television. While Ram has been always popular among the masses, now the Lord was also firmly in front of the urban middle class.

I was in kindergarten back then, but I have strong memories of the show and how my whole family was attached to it. At school, the key character Hanuman was our addition to Superman, He-Man, and Spiderman TV series that also appeared on Sundays. By the time the series ended in July 1988 (giving way to the equally popular series on Mahabharata)

India was in the spell of Rama.

Never before had such a large percentage of South Asia's population been united in a single activity, never before had a single message instantaneously reached so enormous [an] audience.

— Philip Lutgendorf (Ramayan: The Video)

Time for BJP to shift from the masses to the middle class, who were ready to shift out of Nehruvian secularism. BJP became the party to represent the middle class and Ram's virtues. In the 1989 elections, they took 85 seats in the Parliament from a meager two seats in 1984.

The party head, Lal Krishna Advani, started his famous chariot ride (Hindu epics are full of chariot battles) built atop his Toyota van. The ride started from the holy city of Somnath in Gujarat on September 25, 1990 was to reach Ayodhya on October 30 and begin the construction of the temple. Since Advani's support was crucial to the coalition government at the center, not much was done to stop the ride sooner. He was eventually stopped in Bihar.

Between October 30 and November 2nd, a whole group of karsevaks (volunteers) and sadhus (religious men) gathered on the controversial site. The state government of Uttar Pradesh under Mulayam Singh panicked and police shot dead as many as 100 people in the ensuing riots. There was a national wide press coverage and this action that got him the title of "Mullah Mulayam" which he later regretted.

The events led to the irrevocable split between the VP Singh government and BJP. With nowhere to go, VP Singh resigned a week later on November 10. A lame duck government under the Janata leader Chandrasekar was propped up by Congress until the elections could elect a new government in 1991.

Events Leading to the Demotion of the Mosque

The BJP got further momentum and swept through the Uttar Pradesh (UP) elections, winning 221 of the 425 seats. BJP hardliner, Kalyan Singh, became the Chief Minister and he took a more kinder view of the karsevaks. He acquired 2.77 acres of the land around the Mosque and gave it on lease to the Ramjanmabhoomi trust.

In May 1991, a new Congress government was elected in the center and this time the BJP was even stronger winning 120 seats (a 35-seat improvement from 1989). The Prime Minister had a slender majority and he could not afford to piss off any segment. He was also distracted by the economic crisis [covered in a later chapter] and spent little energy on defusing the growing tension in Uttar Pradesh.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Kalyan Singh, argued for turning over the land around the Mosque to the Ramjanmabhoomi trust. He also refused to take action on the pouring karsevaks into the state. Hindus and Muslims held various rounds of talks throughout the year, mediated by the Home Minister.

December 6, 1992 was set as the day for the volunteer action.

Babri Demolition

The volunteers/karsevaks had started grouping around the mosque since morning. However, the state government refused to use excessive force on the karsevaks. Soon one karsevak escaped the police rope and put up a saffron flag atop the mosque. Taking the signal, the mobs quickly got on to the mosque and started chipping away the decrepit structure. Slowly the mosque started coming down. At 2pm, the first of the domes collapsed and shortly after the rest of the mosque was down.

There was a huge national shock following the demolition. Muslims lamented the loss of their mosque. Some local Hindus were angry that the structure they considered as a temple was destroyed. Many secular Hindus were stunned about where the nation was heading to.

Aftermath

Riots immediately sparked all over the nation. Muslim mobs in Mumbai hit the streets within hours of the demolition. Buses were torched and shops were burnt down. Hindu mobs hit back and a vicious cycle of violence crept all over the city. The next 40 days were the worst in the history of this cosmopolitan city until that time.

By the time it was suppressed, over 575 Muslims and 275 Hindus - mostly innocent bystanders on both sides - were slain. When people thought things came back to normal, on March 12, 1993, the Mumbai underworld headed by Dawood Ibrahim hit the city with the most coordinated bomb terror attacks. To avenge the Muslim deaths, the targets were primarily Hindu-dominated areas. Over 350 people were dead in the bloodiest day of Mumbai history.

Other cities like Surat, Kanpur, Bangalore, Jaipur, Delhi, Bhopal, and Calcutta were also equally hit. Both communities were in fear as the extremists in both sides were quite adept in the art of terror.

The fear that followed the attacks pushed many more Hindus towards the BJP and in 1996 BJP emerged as the single largest party in the parliamentary elections.

2002 Gujarat Riots

For a few years following the dark periods of 1992-94, it appeared that things were heading back to normal. However, in February 27, 2002, the ghosts of Ayodhya would be brought back. A group of karsevaks were traveling from Ayodhya by Sabarmati express heading to Ahmedabad.

As the train waited in the railway station of Godhra in eastern Gujarat, a group of miscreants allegedly threw petrol inside the train and set fire to one of the coaches - S6. The train quickly caught fire and led to the death of 59 people, including 29 women and 15 children. On February 11, 2011, the trial court finally delivered its judgement deciding that it was a conspiracy and sentenced 31 people.

The news of the riots (magnified with multiple exaggerations) spread all over Gujarat, in

no time. Religious leaders spread the frenzy and age old fears were brought up. The specter of partition (Gujarat as a border state suffered in the process) was brought to the front by leaders.

Within 24 hours, the riots spread to the state capital of Ahmedabad and other major cities in the state. Within three days, the communal riots killed over 790 Muslims and 250 Hindus. The state government stood still as some of the government functionaries allegedly were part of the arson. Although the situation was brought to control in two days, fingers were pointed at the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi.

Like in most riots in India, this is a disaster that could have been controlled better with a stronger determination. Many lives were lost needlessly. However, the Supreme Court-appointed Special Investigation Team (SIT) ruled out any criminal intention on the part of Mr. Modi.

In September 2010, the High Court gave a controversial decision to divide contentious land in Ayodhya into three parts - one each for Hindus, Muslims, and Nirmohi Akhara [a sect of Hindus]. All the parties opposed the settlement and the Supreme Court is still handling the case [as of 2014].

One of the most goriest chapters of Indian history seems to have ended for now. However, old wounds could open any time.

Hindu - Sikh Troubles

The second episode in this sad chapter of ancient troubles happened in the prosperous northern plains of Punjab.

In 1995, my parents took to me to Punjab and Kashmir. We spent time visiting religious places as well as the border. I remember my dad giving a huge sigh of relief about the end of violence in that state. The 1980s were one of the brutal periods for the Sikhs, easily the worst since the violence of partition in 1947.

I wondered how this peaceful and entrepreneurial land became trapped in the cycle of violence. To get there we need to see the controversial episode of Bluestar.

Operation Bluestar was an Indian Army operation to flush out rebels/terrorists/freedom fighters from the Sikhism's holiest shrine in Amritsar. The June 1984 operation was among the most controversial events in modern Indian history.

1. Khalistan Movement

Like in many states in India, there were a group of extremists in Punjab who demanded a separate nation of Khalistan for the Sikhs. Given the lack of support among the majority, the idea was dormant until the late 1970s. During the 1950s and '60s, the government at the center completely reorganized India on linguistic lines to help release some pressure and curtail demands of independence.

In 1966, a separate state for the Sikhs was formed (although close to half of the population are non-Sikhs). Since then, the Congressional party has been losing ground to the Sikh nationalist party of Akali Dal.

2. Indian Emergency (1975-77)

In 1975, India's Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared a national emergency, severely curtailing democracy. In 1977, there was a massive wave against Indira Gandhi and her Congressional party. She was overthrown from most of India. In Punjab, her staunch enemies - Akali Dal - formed an alliance with the rebel Janata Dal to be a part of the ruling coalition in Delhi.

Congress was furious and plotted a way to get back. In Punjab, Sanjay Gandhi (Indira's son) and Zail Singh (later the Indian President) went shopping for a Sikh religious leader who would undermine the religious authority of the Akali Dal. They found a disturbed and irrelevant religious leader, who would prove to be a curse on India.

3. Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale

Bhindranwale was a Sikh religious leader who advocated more orthodox rules. He was discovered by Sanjay Gandhi and Zail Singh and was brought to the center of the

attention. In 1977, he was elected to the leadership of a prestigious Sikh religious school with the blessing of Congress.

4. Trouble with Nirankaris and Hindus

In the late 1970s, a series of clashes erupted among Sikhs, Nirankaris (a reformist sect of Sikhs), and Hindus. In 1978, a group of Sikh youth were killed. Justice was not meted out to them and the violators were transferred to the courts in the neighboring Hindu state of Haryana (where allegedly caste rules the most).

The injustice rallied the Sikhs behind Bhindranwale. Call for retribution and revenge spread. The head of Nirankaris and Punjab's police DIG were both murdered. Bhindranwale started proving to be a Frankenstein.

5. Accumulation of Arms

In the period from 1978 to 1983, Bhindranwale created a strong armed militia within the compounds of the Golden temple. Being a sacred religious site, the Indian army and police could not interfere much. Machine guns, rocket launchers, and deadly weapons were accumulated under the militant leader.

Also, Bhindranwale himself had direct communication channels with Indira Gandhi, leading the police and army to be very afraid of dealing with him.

Even when the Indian soldiers were killed, the Indian army was very careful to pick up the bodies.

Time Magazine reported on Nov 7, 1983:

These days it more closely resembles a city of death. Inside the temple compound, fierce Sikh warriors wield submachine guns, guarding against encroachment by government security forces. Outside, the security men keep a nervous vigil, all too aware that the bodies of murdered comrades often turn up in the warren.

6. Operation Bluestar

By 1984, the proverbial shit had hit the fan. Things went out of control in Punjab as Bhindranwale locked himself up in the sacred site while the Akalis went on a rampage outside. Riots and strikes had brought one of the richest Indian states down on its knees.

India's "friendly" neighbor, Pakistan, started getting more involved and fomenting more trouble. The rebels even put out their own currency. There was a scary prospect of Punjab getting ripped from India.

Indira Gandhi is known for her often bold and reckless actions. She would make her final major decision. Bhindranwale and his followers would be smoked out of the temple - dead or alive.

The date of the action was chosen as June 3, 1984. Unfortunately, it happened to be a holy day for the Sikhs (martyrdom day of one of their 10 gurus). The day brought thousands of

innocent pilgrims to the site. The army believed that the pilgrims would be used as human shields by the terrorists.

The militants were made of ex-army men and thus were well trained. They were led by the disgraced ex-Major General Shabeg Singh. Thus, the opponents were no ordinary men.

The army started to ask for a surrender through a public address system. The militants refused to give up. Without a response from the militants, the army entered the holy shrine with tanks and guns. In the next 24 hours, a brutal gun fight ensued.

Bhindranwale's followers were armed to the teeth and were on a suicide mission. This increased the casualties and in all close to a 1,000 persons died - more than 136 were Indian army men. The leader, the disgraced Major general and the whole team were killed. A complete media blackout encircled the state of Punjab with curfews imposed.

7. Aftermath

The Bluestar is controversial for its human rights violations. According to Brahma Chellaney - the only reporter for a foreign magazine in Amritsar that time, there were dozens of Sikh militants who were tied behind their backs before being shot. In the years following the operation, many more thousands would perish in cities and the rural heartland.

During the operation, a number of Sikh literature was destroyed and the temple itself bore the brunt of armed attacks. Later, the Indian government would repair the temple to its pre-1984 state.

Innocent boys were allegedly rounded up all over the state with the ostensible reason of attacking terrorism. As a revenge, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated four months later. One of the Generals who was in Bluestar - General Arun Shridhar Vaidya was assassinated in 1986, further hardening India's stance towards Khalistan supporters.

Just like in the case of Hindu-Muslim violence, there was a vicious cycle if of Hindu-Sikh violence that engulfed the region in the 1980s. Few thousand Sikhs were mercilessly slaughtered in pogroms in October-November 1984. In December 1991, Sikh terrorists massacred a few hundred Hindus in Ludhiana by bombing three trains.

Let's switch to India's third biggest trouble.

3. Trouble in Kashmir

Until the late 1980s, the vale of Kashmir was among the most romantic places on earth, sought after by rich tourists from all over India and elsewhere. The state has a glorious tradition of living in harmony with multiple religions. However, in the late 1980s everything changed.

Tens of thousands have perished in terrorism sponsored by Pakistan. Since January 1990, hundreds of thousands of Hindu Pandits have exited as refugees from the state have fled the state of Kashmir. The once overflowing pipe of tourists have slowed down to a trickle, bringing severe poverty and unemployment.

Horror of 1987

If there was a single worst year in the history of Independent India, there would be a big fight between 1984 (worst pogrom in modern Indian history) and 1987 (epic failures by the policy that disturbed the nation), both during the time of Rajiv Gandhi. Rajiv is often understated, but he would easily take the cake for the title of worst Prime Minister of India.

In the same year he sent the Indian Army to its worst shame in Sri Lanka (Indian Peace Keeping Force would be covered later) and got embroiled in the Bofors scam (one of the most popular scams in modern India), he aligned with the National Conference in Jammu & Kashmir and allegedly rigged the assembly elections. That act changed the future of the state.

After the takeover of the state in 1948, it didn't give too much worry for India, compared to a few other states. Although the insurgency problem was always there, things looked in control until the March of 1987.

In that month, fresh elections were held and the elections brought a lot of youth in the process. Many insurgent groups participated in the elections too under the Muslim United Front. The elections of 1977 were quite popular and an even better turnout was expected.

However, the crowds were disappointed by the final result. Congress and the National Conference were accused of massive rigging and they won the elections by a landslide. The insurgents who almost gave up the arms and the youth who believed in the electoral process felt betrayed.

In the meanwhile, Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) had a change of strategy and felt that they had an opening in the state. It helped foment the trouble and create violent Mujahideen groups.

One of the key first attacks was the kidnapping of Union Home Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's daughter. The government quickly caved in and gave up the militants in jail [the incidents inspired the award winning movie - Roja (1993)]. Partly as a result of the release, violence spiked in the following year.

Exactly 10 years later, militants would hijack an Indian Airline flight from Kathmandu and take it to Afghanistan. Plenty of dangerous terrorists were exchanged for the

passengers, and that again spiked the violence in the following two years.

In 1995, foreign tourists were targeted and that pushed out tourism from the heavenly state. Between 1997 and 2000 five massive episodes of violence targeted the Kashmiri Pandits and Sikhs - in Sangrampora (1997), Wandhama, Prankote, Champanari (1998), Amarnath & Chittisingpura (2000), Raghunath temple, Jammu (2002), Nandimarg (2003) and Doda (2006). Many local attacks have also started due to Hindu-Muslim clashes elsewhere.

The spate of continued attacks on the Pandits has pushed out as many as 700,000 people from the state. The humanitarian crisis among the Hindu Pandits has also hardened the Hindu stand on both the state and on fighting the insurgents. Thus, the state suffers from various controversial laws that the Army argues as necessary to maintain the order in the state and protect the minorities, while the political parties criticized the alleged excesses of military power.

I'm glad that I'm finally able to end the saddest chapter of this book. For decades, Hindus, Muslims, and other communities have killed each other in spate of huge riots. It is time the state puts much more emphasis on riot management and disaster control to quickly manage such crisis of the future.



Chapter 5: Fighting for Water in Troubled Land

December 1991

Kilvelur, Tamil Nadu

Things were tense around there as the whole region was gathered in a massive human chain protest. People stood holding each others arms in a chain that extended hundreds of kilometers long. They were protesting against the neighboring government of Karnataka to implement a tribunal recommendation.

My parents and I were living in the river Kaveri delta region in southern India. It is among the most fertile lands in the country and supported the Chola civilization that built extraordinary works of art. Having been raised in various towns along the Kaveri river, I grew a special affection for the river. It was a central part of the culture in every way and epics were written with the river as the center.

For both the states of Karnataka, from where the river originates, and Tamilnadu, where it runs for the most part, the river is critical. Until 1910, there was no major dispute between the two regions. However, in 1910 a major dam was planned by Sir. M.Visvesvaraya of the Mysore province. He planned to turn the village of Kannambadi into an engineering marvel - the Krishna Raja Sagar dam. In 1924, the Presidency of Madras and the state of Mysore agreed to an arrangement that was to last 50 years.

As both sides started to dam the river, the water that came copious at the delta reduced to a trickle. Since the beginning of the arrangement in 1924, Tamil Nadu began massive irrigations that depended on the water. The question since 1970s was what should be the fair allocation of water between the states. In December 1991, after decades of hand-wringing, the Supreme Court of India ruled to release more water to Tamil Nadu.

This caused an upsurge of patriotism on both sides and massive violence marred the region. The human chain I was watching was one of the protest mechanisms for the farmers to pressure the government into action. As the population and economic development grew on both sides, there was an increasing desperation to get whatever little water running in the river.

India is spread around the Tropic Cancer and this zone is among the driest zones in the world. Think of the Sahara, the southern desert in the US and the Arabian peninsula. However, the monsoons and Himalayas have made the Gangetic plains that should have been a desert into the world's densest populated zones. For the 1,500 million people living in the subcontinent, the precious waters from the Himalayan glaciers and those running off the monsoons in the Western Ghats is a critical lifeline.

Fight over Indus

Indus is a major river system in South Asia and the only main water source for Pakistan and Northwestern India. The sharing of its water is the second biggest issue (after Kashmir) in the India-Pakistan relationship . As water gets increasingly scarce in South Asia, this issue is getting more important than ever.

India is the upstream country and has built a few dams along the rivers. Pakistan feels threatened by some of the dams and disputed this. This is a highly technical issue whose details are debated before international organizations. Some of the disputes such as Baglihar Dam and Kishanganga have been in India's favor, but the key issues are how much India is allowed to draw the water down. The devil is in the details and I'm not an expert in either irrigation engineering or International law to see if India is violating the provisions or not.

Background

There are six main rivers that flow from India to Pakistan. These six rivers form the Indus Water System that gave origin to Indian civilization and her name. Over 300 million people depend on these waters in a water scarce desert. Since India's partition in 1947, both water-short countries were fighting for the scarce water resource.

In 1960, the World Bank brokered a water sharing agreement between these warring nations:

- The three northern rivers in - Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab were awarded to Pakistan. India is allowed to construct projects that don't store water (called the "run of the river" hydroelectric projects).
- The three southern rivers - Sutlej, Beas, and Ravi were completely awarded to India.

Thorny Issues

1. Three rivers to India and three to Pakistan should sound fair enough. But, it has also robbed the state of Jammu & Kashmir of its key water resources (all the three rivers allocated to Pakistan flow through this state). It essentially robbed Jammu & Kashmir to help Punjab and Rajasthan (the bottom three rivers benefit these two states). Thus Jammu & Kashmir is facing a water shortage. The Indian Central government has to redress a part of this grievance under pressure from the state government.
2. India wants to exploit the hydroelectric power potential of the rivers. This is allowed by the treaty. However, the treaty is 53 years old and dam engineering has significantly improved since then. Earlier, they didn't know what to do with the silt that is deposited by the river waters in the dam. Now, the state of dam engineering requires you to "flush" out the silt from the dam using stored water. While the 1960 treaty allows "run of the river" projects that doesn't allow water to be stored, it is antiquated and is not applicable in an era where you are required to remove the silt with stored water.

The Key Dispute

As India wants to build more dams to tap the hydroelectric potential of Indus, its water disputes with Pakistan is worsening. According to India, the treaty allows India to draw power from the rivers and that would mean storing some water to flush the silt that is accumulated in the power projects. This was not originally an issue in 1960 as it was not thought out.

According to Pakistan, the treaty doesn't allow India to store water and "rob" Pakistan of its water. India is violating the treaty in their perspective.

In short, we are dealing with an outdated treaty that has failed to keep up with the developments in irrigation engineering. Both sides are loathe to change the treaty (it takes decades to come to any kind of agreement) and given that both countries are not talking enough with each other, the broken treaty continues to exist as a sticking finger.

Fight over Ganga

If India and Pakistan are fighting over one holy river of the Indus, there is another holy river at dispute on India's eastern borders. The river Ganga is considered the holiest in Hinduism. On the banks of Ganga, evolved some of the major cities of the north - Varanasi, Gaya and Patna.

In 1974, India built a major dam - the Farakka Barrage - just 17 kilometers before the Ganga is to enter the Bangladeshi border. India needs the waters to flush the Kolkata harbor that was getting submerged with silt. Bangladesh needs the water for irrigation.

After the barrage was built, India started negotiations with Bangladesh, but the talks failed after Mujibur Rahman, founder of Bangladesh, was assassinated and a military rule was established. After two decades of fighting, a treaty was finally signed in 1996 after Mujibur's daughter, Sheikh Hasina, came to power in Bangladesh.

Although the 1996 treaty eased some of the water disputes, Farakka Barrage continues to be an emotive issue in Bangladesh and often touches a nerve with India's neighbor.

Fight over Brahmaputra

Brahmaputra is the largest river in India by water flow. It merges with the Ganga after it enters Bangladesh via Assam. Brahmaputra is the lifeline for India's northeast. The river originates close to Indus near Mansarovar in Tibet, China and runs over 1,000 kilometers along Tibet's borders before entering India via the eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh.

Historically, India never worried about the waters of the Brahmaputra as China seemed so far away. However, as China is rapidly building dams all over the region, India is concerned. To make matters worse, there are no existing talks on water between these two countries. In the coming decades, both nations have to take this dispute head on.

Interstate Disputes

The water disputes are not restricted to the international arena. There are 14 major and nine minor interstate rivers in the country and especially in the south there is a big dispute between the upstream and the downstream territories. The Kaveri dispute at the top is one of the dozen interstate disputes.

To manage the disputes, the Central government passed a series of reforms in 1956 that included the Interstate River Water Disputes Act (IRWD), which allowed for tribunals to resolve the disputes among the states and the River Boards Act that created River Boards to manage these interstate rivers. These were based on the Doctrine of Equitable Apportionment practices that the US courts have ruled on various matters.

Some of the major water sharing disputes:

1. Godavari and Krishna rivers - this involves the rights of Andhra Pradesh vs. those of the upstream states like Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Orissa.
2. Mullaperiyar Dam - This is a dispute on the access to the Periyar river and the storage at Mullaperiyar Dam that is leased by the state of Tamil Nadu from the state of Kerala.

The Push for a National Water Grid

India gets 4,000 cubic kilometers of rain water every year. That is about four million liters of water per person or about 10,000 liters of water per person every day. In theory, this should be sufficient for drinking water, agricultural, and industrial needs.

However, more than 80% of this rainfall is received in less than 20% of the year. This leads to a significant water management issue. Moreover, the water is very unevenly distributed in geography. A few regions of North East and Western Ghats get a sizable chunk of this rain. Without sizable reservoirs and canals, most of the water is wasted. Floods in some regions and droughts in other regions wreak havoc in parallel.

Thus, many have sought for a National Water Grid that would move the water surpluses across the nation and also store the water during the lean months. The plan involves moving the waters of Ganga further west - to the drier parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan and interlinking the peninsular rivers of Mahanadi, Godavari, and Cauvery. This would move the water from water-heavy north and east to water scarce south and west.

Key blockers for a national water grid:

1. Heavy investment requirement - moving dirt to produce massive canals across the country requires heavy investment.
2. Displacement issue - India is densely populated and the diversion would require moving people along some of the dense population corridors.
3. Environmental issue - Building thousands of kilometers of canals in a tropical region is bound to burden sensitive ecological zones through salinity and waterlogging.
4. Impact fisheries - creating massive canals could move fish away from some of the catchment places impacting existing fishermen.

While the river linking has a strong support from the BJP that originally mooted this idea, it is opposed by Congressional leaders such as Rahul Gandhi. The grid has become a political issue and needs to deal with a wide range of political rivalries in both state and central level.

With or without a national level river linking, India needs to find ways to preserve and utilize the four quadrillion liters of water that falls in this parched land.

Chapter 6: Fighting for Land in Troubled Waters

May 1991

Kilvelur, India

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us.

— Charles Dickens in “A Tale of Two Cities”

It was the summer holidays at school. I was seven years old and my family was living in a small village 300 kilometers south of Chennai. It was a period of huge change and it looked as though the world would come crashing in front of us.

The US and Iraq were fighting a brutal war in the Middle East. The Soviet Union was imploding. Indian economy was crumbling. Yugoslavia disintegrated into multiple nations. A major civil war started in Somalia. Japanese economy was starting a permanent recession. Nelson Mandela was now free and apartheid in South Africa was coming to an end with repeal of a controversial population registration act. A Tim Berners-Lee was announcing the invention of “World Wide Web” somewhere in Switzerland.

That summer of 1991 was among the most eventual times in human history. I was blissfully unaware of most of these. However, my dad was quite impacted by some of these things. He was managing a government bank in that village and the bank was the center point of about 50 surrounding villages. He was worried about the economy. He was worried about his sister who was caught in the Middle East during the war.

Before schools would reopen in June, my family wanted to take a quick break on the island of Rameswaram - barely a few kilometers away from Sri Lanka. We wanted to take the problems out of our head. The island is known for its grand Shiva temple - considered among the holiest in Hinduism for being the place where King Rama started his Sri Lankan mission to get back his wife.

On the evening of May 21st, we reached the island and checked into a nice hotel there. It was to be a nice fun run over the pristine beaches.

The next morning, we woke up to see the city completely changed; shops were damaged, garbage was all over the streets, and people were tense.

My father initially thought a cyclone had struck the island. He approached the lone shopkeeper in the street who was still bold enough to keep the shop open. The news he heard was shocking.

The prospective Indian Prime Minister - Rajiv Gandhi - had been assassinated.

He was a charismatic leader who was loved by the people, even if his political

inexperience and poor policies had costed India dear during his five-year reign from 1984 to 1989. His death was a huge shock.

More importantly, he was killed by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) - a terrorist organization with goals of splitting the Tamil parts of Sri Lanka to form a separate Tamil nation. Until that time, plenty of terrorists had used the island as their springboard to launch their activities. Thus, the island bore the brunt of the government's fury and was completely cut off from the rest of India.

The cause of Sri Lankan Tamils was always close to Tamil Nadu's hearts. The village I grew up in was closer to Tamil towns in Sri Lanka than the state capital of Chennai (then called Madras). We had a better reception of Sri Lankan TV and radio channels than those from our state capital. The classmates in my school group were dreaming of joining the LTTE and liberating the Tamil lands from the clutches of the Sinhalese.

A whole lot of these was playing in our minds. We were confused, afraid, and hungry.

Before I continue, I will give a brief background to the trouble in Sri Lanka.

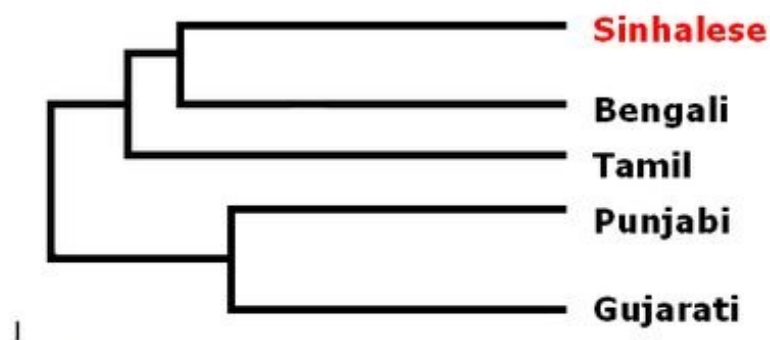
The Sri Lankan Issue and How India Got Involved

One of my friends was always focused on building weapons out of simple things - catapults made out of tree branches and bicycle tire tubes, small projectiles made out of tar balls, and so on. I never understood then why he was such a lunatic.

Part 1: Demographics

There are four main ethnic groups here:

1. Sinhalese - who are predominantly Buddhist or Christian. Seventy-four percent of Sri Lankans are Sinhalese. These people are believed to have migrated from Bengal



Adapted from: Mastana S (2007) "Molecular Anthropology: Population and Forensic Genetic Applications.", *The Anthropologist*, 3:373-383,

2,500 years ago.

2. Sri Lankan Tamils - who are predominantly Hindu. These people have been there on the island since antiquity. According to some people in TN, the Hindu character of Ravan was a Tamil. They form about 15% of the population.
3. Indian Tamils - These are people who migrated from India during the British era to work in the plantations. They are also predominantly Hindu, although there are also sizable numbers of Muslims and Christians here. These were the people worst affected in the war. They form about 11% of the population.
4. Sri Lankan Moors - these are Tamil Muslims with some influence of Arabic in their language. There is a dispute on how they should be counted. Tamils want to count them as just Tamils, as Tamil identity is not based on religion. However, a few of the Moors believes in an Arabic ancestry and thus wanted to carve a separate identity.

Part 2: India and Sri Lanka in Ancient History

In 3rd century BC, the Sinhalese were converted to Ashoka's Buddhism (that originated around the Bihar/Bengal region). On the other hand, the Tamils have always maintained close ties with the kingdoms of Tamil Nadu, and hence Hinduism has been their main religion.

The Tamil kingdoms of south India, especially the Cholas, have always fought the Lankans and have even invaded a few times. However, Lankans were also allied with

another Tamil kingdom called the Pandyas (the arch rivals of Cholas). Both the Tamils and Sinhalese had a lot of genetic influence from the Indian Tamils.

Since these native Tamil kingdoms fell in about the 13th century, Tamil Nadu started having less of an influence over Sri Lanka.

Part 3: Lankan-Tamil Relationships

Things were normal for centuries. When Britain took over the island in 1815, they started their own “divide-and-rule” there. They brought communal representations for each community.

Since the 19th century, the Sri Lankan Tamils became the most progressive community among the major ethnic groups and quickly climbed the ladders of civil service and governance. Even the highest job in the colonial rule was held by a Tamil -Ponnambalam Arunachalam. By 1948, when Sri Lanka got its independence, 60% of all government jobs were held by the Lankan Tamils who constituted less than 15% of the population. This brought plenty of resentment among the Sinhalese who felt disenfranchised and in that year two controversial acts were passed:

1. Ceylon Citizenship Act - Stripped the Tamils of Indian origin, their citizenship.
2. Policy of standardization - Instituted policy minimums that significantly reduced the Tamil involvement in education and civil service.

Since the 1950s, the Sri Lankan government pushed an active form of ethnic cleansing through the Sri Lankan state sponsored colonisation schemes, which effectively meant the Sinhalese had to be distributed in those areas that were Tamil strongholds.

Part 4: Violence Grips Tamils

In 1956, Sri Lanka passed the Sinhala Only Act that effectively made Sinhalese as the official language, stripping Tamil of official recognition. This was followed by a massive riot against the Tamils in 1958 when Ceylon changed its official name to the Sanskritized Sri Lanka (from Ramayana). The riots left 200 Tamils dead.

In 1974, during the International Tamil conference at Jaffna (capital of Tamil Eelam), Sri Lankan soldiers used brutal force and led to the loss of nine lives.

In the 1970s, Sri Lanka banned the import of magazines and periodicals from Tamil Nadu. In 1981, the precious Jaffna Tamil library (one of the biggest in Asia) was burnt. This broke the camel's back.

Part 5: Demand for Separate Tamil Land

By the 1970s, the Tamils had thrown their towel due to the events above. Two different groups of separatists emerged:

Tamil United Liberation Front: who wanted to achieve autonomy through peaceful

means.

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam: who had no hesitation to use violence and force.

In 1983, the worst of anti-Tamil pogroms happened - Black July. This was reportedly provoked by the LTTE's first ambush, where they killed 13 SL soldiers - Four Four Bravo.

Part 6: Indian Involvement: Training the Tigers

As things started to get out of hand in Lanka, India was worried. There was huge pressure from the Tamil Nadu parties for an intervention. Meanwhile, Sri Lanka started moving towards the US and Pakistan, worrying India.

For India, these were the following considerations:

1. Sri Lanka was aligned with the US and Pakistan. India was at that time aligned with the USSR (and it was rumored that the USSR's KGB had a high level of control over Indian bureaucracy. It was at the height of the Cold War (early 1980s), and India had to break the US-SL nexus. LTTE proved an ideal foil for India.
2. The brutality of pogroms in Sri Lanka was forcing droves of refugees into India. Historically, Sri Lankan Tamils had a high level of support in Tamil Nadu, and politicians including MG Ramachandran and Karunanidhi put enormous pressure on the Centre. Indira Gandhi needed one of these to shore up her politics.

Thus, India started involving herself. In the 1970s and '80s, there were camps all over TN that started training the tigers. It is rumored that these were trained in the Arcot districts of TN where there are plenty of forests.

Jain commission revealed that India trained five extremist organizations using its intelligence agency - Research & Analysis Wing (RAW):

1. Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF)
2. Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO)
3. Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students (EROS)
4. Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)
5. People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE)

Each was given its own camps across Tamil Nadu, and some even went to Libya, Syria and Lebanon to get trained. They learned the deadly tactics of suicide bombing (LTTE was the world's most advanced in this deadly skill).

In a short time, severe in-fighting among these groups emerged. In 1982, LTTE supremo Prabhakaran had a shootout against his rival Uma Maheswaran in broad daylight in the middle of Chennai (Pondy Bazar). Although the police arrested him, he was released immediately on bail (allegedly due to the intervention of RAW).

Eventually, the other organizations either merged or were destroyed by the LTTE.

Part 7: India's Volte-Face: Indian Peacekeeping Force

(IPKF)

At the peak of the civil war in 1987, India dropped supplies in Jaffna and foiled an attempt by the Sri Lankan army to win over the rebels. And then on May 1987, Rajiv made an inexplicable move to cozy up with the Lankans through the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord. Under the terms of that accord, India was to deploy a peacekeeping mission. As though to warn that the Sri Lankan government was untrustworthy, a Sri Lankan soldier attempted to assassinate Rajiv when Rajiv was in Colombo as an official guest. He is a successful politician in Sri Lanka now.

A blind trust in the Sri Lankans cost India and Rajiv too dear. Just like his grandfather he labored some grand visions of neighborhood friendship only to appear foolish eventually. India was brutally bruised in Ceylon by both the Lankans and Tamils.

Part 8: Frankenstein Turns Its Head

LTTE was furious at this about-turn by Rajiv, but the monster had already been set loose. Prabhakaran was in a blind rage.

The IPKF was one of the worst shames for the Indian army in the past two centuries. At my college, a couple of ex-military men who were a part of the operation recounted the horror stories of the operation. They told stories of getting lost in tropical jungles and getting shot by a number of different players. However, the IPKF had no power to fight back. By the time the operation ended in March 1990, close to 10K Tamils and 1,200 Indian soldiers had died unnecessarily.

LTTE's sharpshooters and anti-tank mines were extremely good at killing the Indian soldiers. The operation drew opposition from both the Tamils and Sinhalese. However, Rajiv Gandhi was adamant in staying.

Meanwhile, Rajiv Gandhi lost the elections in December 1989. The newly elected VP Singh government was not interested in continuing Rajiv's war. The troops came home in the next four months. India's Vietnam was over.

Planning Rajiv's Assassination

The LTTE had almost forgotten about Rajiv until a popular interview with Rajiv Gandhi in the Sunday Magazine on August 1990. Rajiv explained that he planned to restart the IPKF's mission. This shocked the LTTE and it was then decided to prevent Rajiv Gandhi from coming back to power.

In early 1991, Rajiv got the opportunity to get back to power as the coalition of left and right parties collapsed. Rajiv earnestly began his campaign, and it appeared likely that he would come back to power. In his populist mold, India's J.F. Kennedy (with the same idealism, youth, naivete, and charisma) decided to ignore security rules and began taking risks in public rallies.

On May 21, 1991, he appeared at a rally in Sriperumbudur in the outskirts of Madras. At

about ten past 10pm, a suicide bomber named Dhanu approached Rajiv and triggered the bomb.

Now back to the trouble in the island of Rameswaram. The island's close proximity to Sri Lanka and LTTE (the terrorist organization responsible for his death) meant it received great blows. The mastermind of the plot was a Sri Lankan refugee living in the island before the assassination. Given the Congress supporters' history of randomly destroying anything close to the alleged cause whenever one of their leaders died (1984 Indira's death vs. violence on Sikhs), it was not totally unexpected.

Thus, we planned to leave the island ASAP. All buses and trains out of the island (through a long bridge on the sea) were stopped. We were completely trapped. There was no food given that the hotels and shops were shut. Even the legendary temple at Rameswaram was mostly closed.

It was a scary time and the only silver lining was that we still had a place to stay. Luckily, we found the priest of the temple whose wife was running a small canteen at their home. It is a common practice in many holy towns for the families of poor priests to find any avenue to make ends meet.

They were gracious enough to share whatever little stuff they could make with limited grocery provisions. Food never tasted so good. After about 4-5 days of this curfew life, the Indian government had a partial opening of the railway line and got one train to take away the people trapped there. Although we were initially apprehensive due to the riots, we took a chance. We sat in the footboard of the train and it was a totally different experience. There were around 10,000 people in a single train (10-12 carriages).

Wars with Pakistan

Hindu morale would not stand more than a couple of hard blows at the right time and place.

— Gen. Ayub Khan of Pakistan (1965)

May 27, 1999

The summer vacation was coming to an end and the Cricket World Cup was still on. Breaking all this was the news from India's borders with Pakistan. Pakistan had shot down two IAF fighter jets and taken a flight captain as a prisoner of war. A new war had begun.

Since the brutal partition in August 1947, India and Pakistan had fought three wars. After the period of relative peace for about 28 years, a new war beckoned Indian soldiers.

Most of the Indo-Pak disputes centered around Kashmir. When the nation was partitioned, India's last Viceroy Lord Mountbatten allegedly ensured that there would be road access to Kashmir from both India and Pakistan, by providing a chunk of the district of Gurdaspur in Punjab to India (only road access to the Kashmir valley from the rest of India). Although the claim is unproven, it makes sense as the Viceroy wanted to ensure the economic survival of the state as well as provide it a choice between India and Pakistan. Most of the state of Kashmir was taken over by India, and since then, Pakistan has been eyeing the Indian part of Kashmir.

1948 War

The first war with Pakistan was over Kashmir. As we saw in Chapter 1, Pakistan wanted to annex Kashmir and set off a year-long war with India. At the end of it, both armies were exhausted, and the cease-fire line (called the Line of Control, or LoC) at the end of the war is used to this day as the unofficial border in Kashmir.

In August 1951, over the objections of the UN, India conducted polls to elect a Constituent Assembly for Jammu & Kashmir. The Constituent Assembly created a new Constitution for Kashmir and also ratified the accession of the state to India. Since then India has considered the state people's verdict as the official proof for the accession's legitimacy. Pakistan didn't accept this.

1965 War

In 1965, a second war started after Pakistan started patrolling in India's territorial claims in the Great Rann of Kutch (in Gujarat and 1,000 kilometers away from Kashmir). The Great Rann (Rann means desert in Sanskrit) is among the world's largest salt marshes and is practically barren. India had started controlling the territory in 1956. As Pakistan started patrolling in India's claims in the first week of April 1965, tensions started. In June, British Prime Minister Harold Wilson brokered a peace deal that gave Pakistan 350 square miles of the Rann.

Buoyed by the success of this venture and emboldened by the defeat of India in the 1962 Sino-Indian war, General Ayub Khan of Pakistan started Operation Gibraltar that sent the Pakistan army to infiltrate Jammu & Kashmir and foment extremists there. Nehru was already dead and the General thought it was time to test India's strength under the new leader. Also, the most famous political leader in Kashmir - Sheikh Abdullah - had just visited Pakistan, and it was alleged that he had talked about the growing unrest in the valley.

On August 5, 1965, days before the 18th independence celebrations of both the nations, between 26,000 and 33,000 Pakistani soldiers entered Kashmir. They hoped to get the local populace excited and get them to rise against India.

The local population, instead of rising in revolution as Pakistan expected, tipped off the Indian Army [the same happened in each war]. In the next month, both nations fiercely fought, with India taking over 1,800sq km of fertile Pakistani territory in Punjab and Kashmir and Pakistan taking over 550sq km of desert in Gujarat and Rajasthan. India lost 3,000 soldiers and Pakistan 3,800. A daring commando mission by Pakistan failed miserably with most of the commandos ending up as prisoners of war.

While India held advantage over land, Pakistan had a better success in the air, with its US-bought aircraft. The Indian Air Force was forced to keep several aircrafts in the east front to keep a possible Chinese attack at bay and therefore was not able to sufficiently hit back Pakistan's Air Force. The Indian Navy was also not very successful with the sole aircraft carrier, INS Vikrant, locked up in Bombay harbor fearing submarine attacks and the Pakistan Navy raiding the coastal town of Dwarka.

Both nations claimed victory, but felt that they didn't have enough munitions to go on. Pakistan was on the brink of defeat on land, having also lost more territory, and thus was eager for a ceasefire. India had already fought a war with China just three years before this and feared a possible attack from the Red army. It was also weakened by massive inflation and poor economic conditions. Moreover, its navy and air force were both exposed to much superior weapons. Thus, India was ready for ceasefire too. Both nations were pressured by the US and the USSR to end their business.

India and Pakistan ceased fire on September 23, and both nations met in Tashkent in the USSR then (currently a part of Uzbekistan) in January 1966. On the last day of the conference, the Indian Prime Minister mysteriously died of a heart attack. Both nations went to the pre-war borders.

1971 War

This was among the shortest decisive wars among major nations in history. It led to the creation of Bangladesh out of East Pakistan.

In 1947, Pakistan was created with two halves - one to the west and another to the east of India. The western half dominated by the Punjabis held most of the power while the eastern half of Bengalis, had little say in the matters of the nation.

Unlike the western half, the eastern half had a lot of Hindus. This was because Mahatma Gandhi's peacemaking role in Bengal at the time of partition led to reduced population

exchange between West and East Bengal. Many Muslims continued to live in West Bengal, and many Hindus continued to live in East Bengal.

In November 1970, one of the worst cyclones in recorded history - Cyclone Bhola - hit Bengal. Pakistan didn't respond enough to the plight of the Bengalis, and thus the Bengali-led Awami league swept to power in the national elections of December 1970. It was a shock for everyone in West Pakistan. They didn't believe that the Bengalis would rule over them.

General Yahya Khan - then-President of Pakistan - suspected the Hindus of helping the Bengalis win and started a brutal campaign codenamed Operation Searchlight on March 25, 1971. Lt. General Tikka Khan (nicknamed the butcher of Bengal) was assigned the task of getting rid of Hindus and began a massive pogrom that resulted in over ten million Hindus fleeing to India. Nearly three million Bengalis (Hindus and Muslims) died during the few months of pogrom, although Pakistani reports quoted a much lower number.

On March 26, Mujibur Rahman, the leader of the Awami League, declared independence of Bangladesh. The Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, had also consolidated political power by then and was willing to take a more active action in the crisis. On March 27, Indira put her weight behind the people of East Pakistan and pledged to support their cause for independence. India trained armed rebels under the banner of the Mukti Bahini.

Operation Chenghiz Khan

West Pakistan was filled with the slogan Crush India. Inspired by Israel's daring strike in 1967, Pakistan flew 50 planes to India in a pre-emptive strike focused on neutralizing India's defense infrastructure by attacking 11 airfields in north India. The date was set as December 3, 1971. It was on a Friday evening when IAF controls were changing hands.

This attack was caught by surprise and was forced to quickly cover up key assets like the Taj Mahal.

However, Pakistan was no Israel and India was no Egypt. Like his predecessors, Yahya Khan underestimated India and believed that India would quickly give in. The Operation Chengiz Khan, named in a vain attempt to add luck to the campaign, ended in a massive failure. While many of the Indian airfields were damaged, they were also repaired very quickly. However, Pakistan lost over 50 aircraft and that was terribly damaging to its fledgling military.

The same day, both nations declared war. The war involved all three branches of the military. The Indian navy attacked Karachi under Operation Trident on December 4, while on December 9 the Pakistani submarine PNS Hangor sank INS Khukri that resulted in close to 200 Indian casualties. Eventually, the Pakistani Navy suffered heavy defeats, with more than a third of the force destroyed. On land, India inflicted huge losses too with a 3:1 casualty rate.

Meanwhile, US President Nixon built a three-way alliance (US-Pak-China) against India and the USSR and gave both political and military help to Pakistan. He even asked Iran and Jordan to attack India in an air battle. The US sent its navy under Task Force 74, but the fleet was actively trailed by Russian nuclear submarines and frigates preventing it from getting close to India. Nixon also asked China to attack, but the Chinese felt that the

Indian army was more prepared after the surprise assault of 1962 and didn't want to risk troops. Thus, Pakistan faced a humiliating defeat despite being a US ally.

On December 16, Pakistan surrendered. India had captured 90,000 prisoners of war and 14,000 square kilometers of Pakistani territory. Lt. General Jagjit Singh Arora accepted the Pakistani surrender in the east. Bangladesh won its independence.

In June 1972, India and Pakistan met in the hill station of Shimla to discuss the peace terms. Although India won the war, it didn't push the new civilian government under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. India wanted the Pakistani army to stay off the government and thus didn't want to weaken Bhutto by imposing harsh terms. Instead of settling the Kashmir issue for good, it was left unresolved. Indira missed the game in 1972.

Operation Meghdoot of 1984

The Simla agreement brought peace for awhile. However, in the agreement, there was confusion about the ownership of a glacier in northern Kashmir. The glacier named Siachen was claimed by both the nations, and to prove their claims, both sent mountaineering expeditions. In 1984, Pakistan allowed a Japanese expedition to climb the glacier. The glacier was closer to India's borders with China, and thus India was quite sensitive to this report.

At army headquarters in Rawalpindi, Pakistani generals decided they had better stake a claim to Siachen before India did. Islamabad then committed an intelligence blunder, according to a now retired Pakistani army colonel. "They ordered Arctic-weather gear from a London outfitters who also supplied the Indians," says the colonel. "Once the Indians got wind of it, they ordered 300 outfits—twice as many as we had—and rushed their men up to Siachen." When the Pakistanis hiked up to the glacier in 1984, they found that a 300-man Indian battalion was already there, dug into the highest mountaintops.

— TIME (Jul 4, 2005)

On April 13, 1984, just four days before Pakistan was planning its operation, India sent 300 troops atop this glacier and captured over 2,300sq kilometers of territory. It was a major victory for India, but the region still remains a battlezone. It is the world's highest and coldest battlezone, claiming more deaths by frostbites than bullets.

1999 Kargil War

For over 15 years, the Pakistani army stayed quiet and content with fomenting extremists in Kashmir. In May 1998, both India and Pakistan became nuclear powers. Some thought this would finally end wars as both nations couldn't face a Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) of nuclear weapons. In February 1999, Prime Minister Vajpayee made a landmark peace trip to Lahore in Pakistan, and Indian citizens felt a surging spring of hope. Some even contemplated the reunification of India and Pakistan.

While Vajpayee was traveling to Pakistan, a group of Pakistani soldiers were moving into the frigid hills of Kashmir. The template was the same as 1947 and 1965 - foment trouble and start a rebellion among Kashmiris. The plan was inspired by India's takeover of

Siachen. Given the sudden rise of terrorism in the 1990s, Pakistan was emboldened.

On May 3, local sheep herders reported the intrusions in the Dras sector of Kargil in Kashmir. In the next month, a deep conflict developed as India started attacking the hills now occupied by Pakistanis. The hills were very crucial in controlling the Indian highway NH 1A that connected the eastern and western halves of Kashmir. On July 4, India captured the pivotal Tiger Hills, and the images of beaming Indian soldiers carrying the flag captured the nation's imagination [As an aside, when I joined college some of the notebooks supplied by my college had the capture of Tiger hills as the cover picture. People used the image everywhere]. After the capture, India prepared for a ceasefire, and on July 26, the war came to an end.

Meanwhile, Nawaz Sharif was reprimanded by the US in Washington D.C., and unlike in previous wars, the US had categorically ruled to not side with Pakistan. The G8 nations [world's largest economies] also condemned Pakistan, and for the first time, the world was on India's side in a war. The tide had turned.

India was engulfed in a wave of patriotism, and even the stock market responded handsomely to the victory by surging 30% in the months following the war to end bearish trends.

Israel helped India with tech during the war, and the US was instrumental in bringing the war to an end. The war was thus pivotal in India's relationship with both Israel and the US. India's bad relationship with the rest of the world seemed to end.

Each time Pakistan sent its army into Kashmir, posing as ordinary men, it expected the Kashmiris to revolt in large numbers and the "Hindus" to give up too easily. However, each time it showed that the Kashmiris have little attachment for Pakistan and that the Indians had no intention of giving up Kashmir either.

2008 Mumbai Attacks

While Pakistan avoided fighting direct wars after the Kargil conflict, it continued to foment terrorist acts on Indian soil. In 2001, its terrorists attacked the Indian Parliament, and that incident threatened to bring a nuclear war in South Asia. Luckily, cooler heads prevailed.

The gravest of Pakistan's terrorist attacks was in Mumbai on November 26, 2008. Eleven Pakistan-trained attackers landed in Mumbai and brought a night of violence by attacking the Victoria Terminus railway station, two five-star hotels, a cafe, a hospital and a Jewish centre. The terrorists hijacked a small fishing trawler named Kuber and used that to slip into the city.

The main battle was in the iconic Taj hotel, and the fight lasted for three days and killed 100 hostages. The NSG and Marine Commandos finally brought the crisis to an end by killing ten attackers and capturing one - Ajmal Kasab, who was later hung after a brief court trial.

Like the attacks on New York (2001) and London (2005), this one became etched in the memories of the world citizens. .

War with China

The way to world conquest lies through Havana, Accra, and Calcutta.

— Mao Zedong

It was not a war, but a war. Neither side declared war. No air force or navy were used. There was no termination of diplomatic relationships. It was as though a war didn't exist. But, it existed.

India and China enjoyed a peaceful coexistence for over 5,000 years of civilization. This was enabled by the massive Tibetan plateau that prevented both civilizations from coming together - for good or bad reasons. In October 1962, China would change this while the world was engrossed in a brutal game of nuclear chicken between the US and the USSR.

In a three-week border skirmish, China would hurt the Indian psyche like no other war. For the only time in 200 years, India was on the losing side of the war, fighting its only war with China.

Like the other Himalayan Kingdom of Kashmir, Tibet has been a source of persistent trouble with China.

Sino Indian War = Mapping error + clueless Indian leadership + belligerent China that was trying to prove something.

Formation of the People's Republic of China

Both China and India were great nations with a long history and after the European colonization in 19th century, both were rebuilding in the mid-20th century. But, both nations could not decide how far their borders went as the nations waxed and waned at various times. China's borders peaked under the reign of the Manchu Qing dynasty and many Chinese still wanted their government to claim the territories held by the Qing emperor then.

However, the Qing emperor had overextended himself by capturing deep into territories that never really belonged to China in history. The empire started to weaken and from the start of the 18th century to the middle of the 20th century, China was in a perpetual state of civil war, internal crisis, and later a war with Japan.

On October 1, 1949, Mao Zedong led his Communist Party into Beijing and started a new chapter. He wanted to take China to its past glory. His administration also wanted to regain many of the territories lost after the implosion of the Qing empire.

Tibet Issue

Within a year of the PRC formation, Mao's troops stormed into the nation of Tibet and took over. Although it was a part of the Qing empire, Tibet historically didn't belong to China's empires. Thus, this action shocked people around the world. India was aghast, but Nehru made peace with China in 1954 and refused to intervene in Tibet.

During his visit to India in 1956 to mark Buddha's birthday, the 14th Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso (the spiritual head of Tibet) asked for Nehru's help in seeking asylum. Nehru refused, citing the 1954 peace treaty. In March 1959 a major uprising began in Tibet, at the behest of the CIA, after news was spread that the Chinese were abducting the major leaders of Tibet. Fearing for his life, the Dalai Lama crossed into India on March 30th.

India gave asylum to the Dalai Lama although Nehru didn't let the leader make any public statements. China was however aghast and wanted India to give up the leader. Nehru refused to give up and the Chinese thought this was a backstab. Since then, the relationships between the nations started worsening.

While it was independent, Tibet was used as a buffer state by Britain to insulate India from Central and East Asia. Its borders with India were not clearly demarcated and there were two major issues.

1. Aksai Chin in Kashmir (Western front) — Johnson line
2. Arunachal Pradesh in North East India (Eastern Front) — McMahon line

Source of Contention

Western Front:

In 1834, the Sikh army took over Ladakh, a vassal state of Tibet. Ladakh and Tibet had an uneasy relationship then. Around the same time, the Qing empire had its eyes on Ladakh, while the Sikhs wanted to push into Tibet. The Qings and Sikh fought a war in 1842. The war resulted in a stalemate and the Sikhs held on to Ladakh. After the defeat of the Sikhs in the 1846 Anglo-Sikh wars, the territory of Kashmir along with Ladakh was passed to the British who then sold it off to a Dogra prince of Jammu.

The genesis of the conflict lies in the Johnson line of mid-1865 that put the map of Ladakh far into Xinjiang. This was by an overzealous civil servant named WH Johnson. The Qing and Sikhs had not decided on the boundary near Aksai Chin and since no one lived there, Johnson took some liberty in this drawing. The Qing empire didn't control Xinjiang at that time and thus was not able to officially protest. In 1878, it took control of Xinjiang and asserted its claim over Aksai Chin.

In 1899, the British and Chinese agreed on the more feasible McCartney-McDonald line that put this region in China. After the end of the Qing empire in 1911, the British and the Maharaja of Kashmir went back to putting the disputed region in Kashmir by resorting to the Johnson line. After its independence in 1947 and the takeover of Kashmir, India used the Johnson line as the official border. Tibet was an independent nation then.

China didn't recognize the validity of the Johnson line and started to use the McDonald line. In 1956 it even built a road through the middle of this region to connect Xinjiang and Tibet. For China, Aksai Chin was important as the primary front for connecting these two semi-autonomous regions. The geography didn't favor India and India didn't even realize that a road was built.

Eastern Front:

On the eastern front, the story was tricky. Both China and India have a claim over the land (Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim as it is known internationally and Kham holdouts/Southern Tibet as they are known in China) - although the geography and culture favor India's claim. India considered the Himalayas as the natural boundary and it was also defensible.

We have already seen the issue of Arunachal in Chapter 1. India had the advantage of geography and culture and thus took it. However, in Aksai Chin - a part of Kashmir but not really ruled by anyone - China had the advantage of geography.

The trouble started to brew as Chinese forces killed nine Indian policemen in Aksai China in 1959 and also took a prisoner in Longju. Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai unofficially suggested trading Arunachal Pradesh for Aksai Chin, but Nehru refused. China didn't take further action as both the US and the USSR sided with India.

India began to make forward positions starting from 1961 and in that year, China finally got assurance from the US that the Taiwanese would not attack China. This allowed China to move its forces to Tibet and they allegedly even used the Indian port of Calcutta to move some of the non-military logistics.

Cuban Missile Crisis

The US and the USSR had strong enmity starting from the end of World War II. The USSR wanted to spread a Communist revolution, while the US reportedly wanted a world of free trade. Behind the sound bites were two power-hungry nations that built a string of allies. Both were evenly matched and had the deadliest of weapons.

In October 1962, the USSR brought the crisis close to the US by a planned Soviet deployment of missiles in Cuba (merely miles off the US state of Florida). This was in direct response to the US deploying missiles in Turkey close to the border of the USSR.

The US considered invading Cuba and the USSR warned that an invasion of Cuba would bring an attack from them. The world watched in tension as these nuclear powers threatened to blow up the whole world. The crisis started on October 14.

China Launches a Surprise Attack

As the world watched Cuba, China noticed a window of opportunity. Mao already knew of the Soviet's plans and were thus preparing in advance for this. People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China already had a few engagements with the Indian Army near Arunachal Pradesh.

On October 20, six days after the start of the Cuban crisis, PLA attacked Chip Chap Valley in the Aksai Chin and Nam Chu river in the east.

Recently declassified CIA POLO documents show that besides hurting India in a military sense, Mao also wanted to hurt the prestige of both Nehru and Khrushchev (Russian premier) for backstabbing China.

In the eastern front, PLA reached as far as the outskirts of Tezpur Assam, but pulled back

as it was in the range of the Indian Air Force from Calcutta and PLA had no air support. The Indian government had already released prisoners from a local jail and destroyed currencies; casualties were heavy on both sides, many resulting from the cold weather.

As the Cuban crisis ended in the October, China started feeling pressure and as their objective was achieved (locking their positions and shaming Nehru) China announced a unilateral ceasefire on the 19th of November. It was reported that the Kennedy administration even considered the use of nuclear weapons against China in aid of India. While UAE supported India, other non-aligned nations didn't fully condemn China. This hurt India's pride. After the war, Pakistan and China became closer.

Although India didn't lose a lot of territory and both sides lost heavily (despite having the advantage of surprise China lost 722 soldiers against India's 1,380), the war brought a small internal crisis in India. Nehru was blamed by President Radhakrishnan and the Defense minister Krishna Menon was forced to resign. The war led to a modernization of Indian troops and in the following decade, both China and India tested nuclear weapons.

During the war, India broke its free ethos and interned many Chinese Indians just like what the US did with Japanese Americans during the Second World War. For years, those even remotely connected with China were treated shabbily. That was the real defeat for India - to be forced to be someone we are not.

In the end, India's loss was not in military terms, but in the national psyche. The national pride was hurt and most Indians remember the war, while very few Chinese or other parties still remember the conflict.

I will end this chapter with a current issue.

Can India afford to reduce the military budget?

Why India needs to spend money on aircraft carriers and nuclear submarines?

You have left your toddler at home alone and you are constantly worried while at the office. You are worried whether the door is locked. You are concerned if the stove is off. You are not able to focus on work as you don't know if your son is safe at home or not. Then your mother calls up and says she got home and is going to take care of your son. You know she is responsible and will protect your son the best way. Now, you can take your worries off and focus on the work. Maybe you might be twice as productive now.

The same works for nations. When we are not sure of our borders and when we are not sure whether our military can withstand various attacks, we get paranoid and our economy goes down the drain. But, if we are really assured that we have a strong military that can protect us from a wide range of enemies, we can take off the worries and the nation can go full speed on economy.

Switzerland, Singapore, Israel and US all have amazing militaries that enabled them to historically grow much faster than their neighborhood. Investors and entrepreneurs need this comfort before they can take the risky ventures.

Defense decides destiny

In India's 5000 year+ history, it has seen the follies of having weak defense. We are in a terrible neighborhood and often was the target of invasions.

Indus Valley Civilization probably ended because it didn't maintain a strong army which could have protected a part of it from the natural and man-made disasters. If the Nanda king got along with Puru, Alexander would have never reached the banks of Indus. If the later Gupta kings had not loosened up, they would have been able to protect India's greatest civilization. If we had a strong defense in the 11th century, Nalanda University would not be under ruins now. If the later Cholas after Rajendra had kept up, Tamil territory would not have fallen so deep in the following centuries. Later, when the Mughals were weakened, India was under colonial occupation.

On the other hand, whenever an Indian king got strong, India went to its heights. Ashoka was a very strong ruler. Indian society reached its peak. So was the period under Samudragupta, Raja Raja Chola, Harsha Vardana and Akbar. Our greatest achievements came when our kings and the armed forces were really strong.

When our gates are strongly protected, we could explore the greatness of humanity. On the other hand, when outsiders are constantly jumping into our home, we will have no time for building our achievements. If you don't have a strong defense, you got nothing.

Why India needs to spend so much?

Look at India's massive threats.

1. **Nuclear powers:** India has 3 nuclear powers in its neighborhood and two of them are

hostile powers with which India both borders & have fought wars with. Thus, we need a credible nuclear triad [submarines, bombers, missiles] to defend ourselves. Those are not cheap.

2. **Exploding powers:** The distance between Baghdad and Amritsar is the same as the distance between Amritsar & Kanyakumari. While the Middle East might appear far, it is actually quite close. Thus, IS and all other crazy groups fighting there are a direct threat to Indian interests. Afghanistan is completely broken now that US is leaving it. Most of the terrorists would spill into ours at some point. How would you fight these threats at their source without having long range aircraft?
3. **Superpowers:** India needs the aircraft carriers for a counterattack. In the unlikely case of China circling India & starting an attack on Indian soil [through Pakistan or another neighbor], India needs to deliver the threat of its aircraft carrier directly attacking China's shores. This threat of getting their heart exposed would make the opponent withdraw. Without an aircraft carrier, there is no way for India to take the battle to China. No one dares mess with a nation that has multiple aircraft carriers and sneaky submarines. Of course, India is unlikely to be the nation that is starting the attack.
4. **Pirates:** Indian ocean is bounded by two piracy groups at the Strait of Malacca and Horn of Africa. I will give you a better map of how the pirates are encircling India & threaten trade in India's ocean. How would you go and deliver an attack on Somalia? You need really powerful blue water capabilities. In fact, Raja Raja Chola was a pioneer in building anti-piracy efforts to protect Chola empire's trade in Indian ocean. That greatly helped Tamil Nadu. We need to do that at Indian scale.
5. **Separatists:** India has a had a never ending battle with lunatics and fanatics who want to split India. The separatists of all 100+ groups fighting to split from India put together might be less than 1 crore fighters. In other words, 99%+ of India are peaceful and want to stay in India, while this troublesome 1% threatens the sovereignty of our country. They range from extortionist groups in Northeast who do kidnapping for a living to Kashmiri terrorists exported from Afghanistan & Central Asia to misguided communist/Maoist rebels in central India. India needs advanced helicopters, intelligence agencies and spy satellites keep them under control.
6. **Natural disasters:** Indian plate is increasingly weakening leading to more earthquakes in India's center. The lower part of the Himalayas are prone to brutal land slides. India's eastern seaboard is very vulnerable to massive cyclones. Then there is the threat of disease [remember Ebola]. Who can be relied on to react to all this? Part of the defense budget is used for disaster management.
7. **Border threats:** India has 15,000 kilometers of land borders with countries such as China, Pakistan, Bangladesh & Myanmar. [To put this in context, US with 3 times India's area has well less than 10,000 km of land borders and most if it is with a friendly Canada] With China, India still has an unresolved border. With Pakistan, the problem is terrorism exports. With Bangladesh the problem is illegal immigrants. With Myanmar, there are problems with smuggling. India also has a 7500 km of coastline. Thus, we need to spend a lot on BSF and Coast guard, besides spending on border infrastructure to react quick.
8. **Responsibilities to the world:** We are now among the world's biggest economies and thus have to carry a lot of world's weight. India is a responsible world citizen &

is the among the largest contributor of peacekeeping forces around the world. This again costs a lot of money. Indian Army United Nations peacekeeping missions From West Africa to Middle East, our troops have been at the forefront of maintaining peace. This is important both for India's economy as well as India's morality.

If you are an elephant, no animal dares to mess with you. If you are a deer, you are always hunted.



Chapter 7: Ocean of Tears

Industrial Disasters

December 2, 1984

It was a typical winter night. The million-odd residents of this central Indian town of Bhopal went to their sleep after their usual chores. With no major history of earthquakes, storms, floods, or hurricanes, the residents of Bhopal had no reason to believe that they wouldn't wake up alive the next day.

Most of the poor residents didn't know what the 15-year old Union Carbide factory in the edge of the town was making. Nor did they know about the deadly methyl isocyanate compound kept in its large vats. They had no reason to suspect that the reputed foreign company (now owned by Dow Chemicals) would have such weak safety standards. The company was making pesticides and it is assumed that pesticides are designed to kill the pests, not humans.

The next morning, thousands wouldn't wake up. Many more thousands could wake up, but could not see anything. And even more thousands could no longer breathe properly. That night, 45 tons of the deadly odorless gas spread around the city silently touching 500,000 residents of the city. In the deadliest industrial disaster in human history, between 3,700 and 16,000 people died. Many more suffered crippling lifelong consequences. For the following few years, many women gave birth to dead kids.

The poor residents trusted the company and the government to make sure that the stuff they produced wouldn't kill off the surrounding people. There were 61 hazardous events in the prior four years that affected many workers and even killing one with deadly gas. A good company would have tightened its safeguards or tried to decommission the plant. However, Union Carbide continued the production while also reducing the maintenance work. It was a disaster waiting to happen.

But, the disaster was not over. Led by the worst Prime Minister in independent India's history, the government fumbled unable to properly handle the crisis and bring the guilty to justice. India's armed forces did a heroic job in putting down further leaks and cleaning up around the disaster site. However, the handling was poor in other places. There were human carcasses all over city and many dead bodies were thrown on the nearby Narmada river .

The company CEO, Warren Anderson, was arrested while visiting the country on December 7. However, he was released on bail with enough pressure from the top and he escaped India never to return. The company settled for a \$470 million fine in 1989 and the shares of the company shot up, eventually merging with Dow Chemicals to form the world's largest chemical company. Activists argued that the government let off the company too easily, settling for a paltry sum especially when the company later settled a much larger claim in Texas for a much smaller Asbestos exposure.

While the Bhopal disaster was the single worst industrial disaster in human history, there were also a few other industrial disasters involving coal mines. There were two such incidents in the present Indian state of Jharkhand (then a part of Bihar). The first one was in Dhanbad in May 1965, when an explosion set a major fire and trapped 375 people. The second was in December 1975, when a flooding caused the death of 372 people in the nearby mine of Chasnala. Both these mining incidents fall into the world's top 10 coal mining disasters. In all of the cases, the safety infrastructure and regulatory enforcement of Indian industries were called into question. But, not much changed on the ground.

Transport Tragedies

December 24, 1999

It was the holiday season in India and middle class travelers were making their short trips to Nepal and other neighboring nations. One such group was returning from Kathmandu in the Indian Airlines flight 814. The flight departed from Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport. Captain Saran, who piloted the craft, was planning to be in Delhi in time for Christmas Eve dinner.

However, the flight would not reach Delhi on time. Five armed hijackers from Pakistan took the flight first to Amritsar in the northern state of Punjab. They killed one of the passengers and scared the government into providing the fuel for their next adventure. The flight then took off to Lahore, where they tried to land on a road. India and Pakistan had just finished a major border war in Kargil and things were tense. The plane left Lahore with some more fuel.

The flight was then taken to Kabul and then Kandahar, when Afghanistan was ruled by the Taliban. However, both the airports were found to be incapable of handling an Airbus A300 at night. The flight then finally landed in Dubai. UAE negotiated the release of 25 passengers. On the morning of Christmas, the plane headed back to Kandahar and this time it was surrounded by an army of helpful Taliban.

The hijackers demanded \$200 million without realizing that just one person on that flight could have arranged for that in return for his safe return. Aboard the flight was De La Rue Giori, the Swiss magnate who controlled 90% of the world's currency printing business.

More importantly, the hijackers also demanded the release of some of the deadliest Islamic terrorists languishing in Indian jails. Of the 35 terrorists they wanted released, three were absolutely lethal.

The year 1999 was a terrible year - bad for the economy and bad for the army. It started with an invasion in Kargil and ended with a major hijack. It was a harrowing time for all of India. We had just finished a major war in our lifetime and now there was another tragedy. Already, Pakistan had built long range missiles; Both nations had just gone fully nuclear. Newspapers were full of different ideas, some of which were inspired from Israel's activities. But others helpfully suggested that with a whole bunch of Taliban surrounding the plane even Israel would have negotiated. The Taliban made it clear that they would not let India use force to bring the ordeal to an end.

TIME correspondent Maseeh Rahman reported that:

The Taliban's ruling council has decreed that no foreign military personnel will be allowed onto Afghan soil, and that rules out a commando raid to take out the hijackers.

After a seven-day ordeal, India finally secured the release of 177 passengers in return for giving up Maulana Masood Azhar (who then founded the most violent terrorist organization - Jaish-e-Muhammad), Ahmad Omar Sayeed Sheik (who murdered many Westerners in that region including Daniel Pearl of The Wall Street Journal) and Mustaq

Ahmad Zargar (who trains terrorists in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir).

In 67 years since Independence, India has been through many such ordeals by virtue of its dangerous environment, large size, and relatively weak security infrastructure. A number of hijacks have taken place and mostly involved the airports of the northern cities of Amritsar and Srinagar while eventually heading to Lahore. Such incidents have occurred in 1971, 1981, 1982, 1984, and 1993. Despite such a disturbing frequency involving the same airports, security has not been tightened until after the 1999 hijacks and the September 11 attacks in the US.

While these hijacks didn't result in a lot of passenger casualties, the 1985 bombing of Air India flight 182 in the Montreal-Delhi route was brutal - killing 329 people. Sikh terrorists, at the height of their power, claimed vengeance for the attacks on their community in Delhi.

Natural Tragedies

December 26, 2004

It was my first year in the US as a student. I was holding the Washington Post that had my home town right at the front. It was a long time dream of mine to see my town in that prestigious newspaper. But, this time it was for the wrong reasons. One of the biggest tragedies in human history struck my town as well as plenty others in the Indian Ocean.

I was in a state of panic as my parents were to visit the beach for a concert at the nearby Music Academy. Luckily, they didn't get a ticket to the concert. It was a brutal day, as a region grappled with a natural disaster they had no clue of. A massive undersea earthquake attacked Indonesia and the ripples sent the biggest tsunami ever recorded in South Asia. India lost over 12,000 people and the coastal towns where I studied in school were devastated.

Although the tsunami was a highly unusual event, the coastal belt is known for its massive cyclones that brought unspeakable hardships. This is one reason why you didn't see Indian empires building massive coastal cities or large navies. The Cholas built a naval empire, but ruled from the inland as the ancient Tamil city of Poompuhar was destroyed by the rough seas. The Kalingas and Pallavas all had to abandon their coastal towns at some point.

Through a tragic coincidence, some of the biggest disasters in modern Indian history have all happened in December. Some even use black humor that the Hindu god of death, Yamaraj, wants to close the annual accounts in a hasty way. There was sadness all around.

December 27, 1975 - Chasnala Mining Disaster (India's biggest mining disaster)

December 2, 1984 - Bhopal gas tragedy (world's worst industrial disaster)

December 24, 1999 - IC 814 hijack (most tragic hijack incident for India)

December 26, 2004 - Indian Ocean Tsunami (world's most destructive tsunami)

Despite the millions lost due to various disasters, it is sad that disaster preparedness has never become a major national priority. India doesn't have a single emergency number like 911 that can be called for any disaster. It doesn't educate its citizens on the ways to react to different disaster situations and it has not acquired major tools to extract people out of the rubble.

Chapter 8: Political Calculus: Differentiation and Integration of India's Forgotten Communities

[Naxalbari movement is] the front paw of of the revolutionary armed struggle launched by the Indian people under the guidance of Chairman Mao Tse Tung.

— Radio Peking Broadcast (June 28, 1967)

May 23, 1967

Naxalbari, West Bengal

The village police inspector was killed by the peasants and a major unrest was all around the place. The newly elected Communist government in the state tried to raise an alarm and bring massive police force in. A diehard 49-year old local communist, Charu Mazumdar, wrote a series of eight monographs [known as the historic eight documents] detailing a revolution that was painstakingly smuggled into China to get the support of the Red Army. These ideas were then carried by his comrade, Kanu Sanyal, and spread all around the region. It was to be the start of their Communist revolution, in the line of various such movements in Russia, China, Cuba, and other places.

The Jhargaon village in India's northeast at first didn't appear to have the potential to cause a major revolution in India. Revolutions often start from the cities and this decrepit village was days away from any major city. However, if you looked closer at the map, it seemed the ideal place for any competitor of India to instigate major trouble.

The village, located in the Naxalbari region of West Bengal, is just a few kilometers away from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) with which India fought a war just two years prior. It is about 50 kilometers from the borders of Nepal, Bhutan, and Sikkim (at that time an independent protectorate of India) and about 80 kilometers from the Chinese border - which fought a major border war with India five years prior. There were plenty of forests and mountains to hide and easy getaways through any of the porous borders. It was perfect for any separatist getting foreign help.

If an enemy of India wants to strangle India, it would be at this place. The "chicken neck" - as it is known locally - is the narrow corridor that connects the seven states of India's northeast with the rest of India. If this neck is choked, India's northeast would suffocate and probably secede.

The Naxalbari Movement

About 60 villages of the tribal Santhals are located in this idyllic Naxalbari region adjacent to India's tourist resort of Darjeeling. There were about 1.2 million people at that time and most of the tribals were hired by the landlords - jotedars - in a contract system named adhiar. There was plenty of exploitation of the laborers by the well-connected landlords.

This farmer pain was well amplified by the increasing trend of leftward movement across the nation. In the 1967 elections, Congress significantly lost its position due to the war between Indira and the syndicate of major party warlords [we will see more on this in next chapter]. As inflation and unemployment raged after the two wars [with China and Pakistan] people increasingly became attracted to communism. The Congressional party was overthrown in West Bengal. For the first time, a Communist party led coalition took power in West Bengal.

Although the ruling Communist Party - CPI(M) was initially instigating the protestors, they got cold feet as the tribal militia used their bows and arrows to announce a "liberated land". Police and paramilitary were brought in. After a 52-day confrontation, the police broke the uprising and arrested key leaders like Charu Mazumdar, Kanu Sanyal, and Jagdu Santal.

While the 1967 movement was broken in the Naxalbari area, the communist extremists [termed as Naxalites since then and officially called CPI(Marxist Leninist)] spread over a vast position of central India. Using forest cover and political inaction, they established themselves in 10 states from Bengal to Karnataka. States like Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, and Andhra Pradesh were especially affected.

Students from Calcutta's famous campuses like the Presidency College were drawn in large numbers to provide muscle to the uprising. Poor economic infrastructure and insufficient autonomy to the various tribals provided fuel to the fire. This was then further aided by China and other foreign elements.

In 1971, Indira Gandhi provided a massive counterattack through Operation Steeplechase that temporarily arrested the movement. In the southern state of Andhra Pradesh, renewed action by the state government also helped manage the problem a bit. However, the rise to power of Maoist rebels in neighboring Nepal has strengthened the movement in Central India since about 2000.

As of 2014, the Naxalite problem remains the biggest challenge to the Indian government. Thousands of people die every year from the violence and it has hindered development in a vast chunk of India's interior. Since 2009, Operation Green Hunt by the Indian government involving over 350,000 police and paramilitary forces have been pursuing the extremists and the problem still remains.

The Seven Sisters

On June 8, 1980, a wave of tribes armed with bows and native knives stormed into the village of Mandwi in the north eastern state of Tripura. The tribals complained about the influx of Hindu Bengalis from neighboring Bangladesh. Then they proceeded to execute one of the largest massacres in Indian history. Over two days, the entire village - men, women, and children were ruthlessly massacred. Children's heads were spiked on sticks and there were skulls everywhere. The massacre was yet another grim reminder of the violent struggle between the tribes and settlers from the plains in the region. Twenty years later, the same ethnic group was targeted in another massacre near the same region. A grim reminder of the tension between the hill tribes and the settlers from the plains.

The seven states of the Indian Northeast - Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland, and Tripura are some of the most ignored states due to the geographic isolation and cultural differences from the mainland. Except for Assam, the other states have predominantly tribal languages speaking Tibeto-Burman and Austro-Asiatic languages. They are connected to the rest of India through a narrow Siliguri corridor of northern West Bengal via the Naxalbari region mentioned earlier.

Until the 1970s, the states of the North East didn't have sufficient autonomy. They were controlled either by a government from Assam or through the representatives of the central government. Tribal autonomy and migration are the key issues affecting this region.

Treaty of Yandabo

Throughout most of history, the kingdoms in the intersection of the Arakan mountains and the Himalayas - in India's northeast - were in India's cultural sphere but not in the political sphere. Although the people of the historic Kamarupa kingdom of Assam and the Manipuris follow variants of Hinduism, for the most part India's major dynasties didn't extend that far and were non-overlapping political entities.

In the early 19th century, that would change. The Konbaung Dynasty of Burma was getting quite ambitious and captured the kingdoms of Assam and Manipur, making use of internal tensions in Assam. This got the Burmese kingdom a massive border with Bengal. In parallel, the East India Company had consolidated the rest of India and built its base around Bengal. The East India Company was both threatened by the Burmese expansion and also wanted to get many resources further east of Bengal to feed the growing industrial revolution in Britain.

Another factor was the French. The French had built a strong relationship with Burma and Britain feared that the French would use the Burmese ports to undercut British India. The conflicting interests between East India Company and Burma, put them on a war course.

The First Anglo-Burmese War was fought between 1824 and 1826, ending with a major defeat for the Burmese. At the village of Yandabo, the Company put punitive sanctions on Burma and took over Assam and Manipur. Eventually most of Assam and the other

territories around it were integrated with the rest of India.

As Britain found the plains of Assam suitable for tea plantations and started building estates, they found themselves in conflict with various hill peoples like the Nagas. To protect the commercial interests and to fight tribal practices such as “headhunting”, Britain started showing its presence in the Naga and Mizo hills and eventually it became the present states of Nagaland and Mizoram.

Later, British interests also brought Tripura and Sikkim as protectorates of British India that eventually became integrated with modern India.

Present Issues

After the partition of India in 1947, the northeast region lost connection with the port of Chittagong [in Bangladesh now] and became disconnected with the rest of the world, but for the narrow Siliguri corridor. This has affected their economic development and cultural integration into the rest of India.

Also, the Tibeto-Burmese people of India’s northeast often look alien to some of the other Indians causing discrimination when they move to other Indian cities for work. Thus, there have been many separatist movements motivated both by economic and cultural pains.

Manipur

This was formerly a princely state with one of the longest running monarchies in the world. The predominantly Hindu Vaishnavites of the states coexisted along with the Naga tribes of the hills. However, tensions started when the Nagas were converted to Christianity in the late 19th century. Both groups are in a state of perpetual war and the state’s development often gets victimized through the heavy violence. A local terrorist group - UNLF - has been attempting to secede the state from India through a violent struggle.

Nagaland

Nagas belong to a fierce martial class that defeated the Japanese in the Second World War and prevented the entry of Japan into the subcontinent. The region was given statehood in 1963 and major truce with the central government was secured in 1975. Since then the situation is more manageable in the state.

Assam

This is the core of the northeast. One of the key issue for this region is the unchecked illegal migration from the porous borders with Bangladesh. Militants from the Bodo tribe - National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) and socialist extremist fighters United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) - are a key threat to the state in the region.

The situation in Mizoram, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh have been much more peaceful than the rest.

Armed Forces Special Powers Act

One of the most controversial acts by the Indian government was enacted on September 11, 1958. It was essentially a rehashing of a British act enacted in the wake of the Quit India Movement of 1942. It allowed armed forces very broad powers to tackle violence.

It was enacted after an unofficial plebiscite in Nagaland in 1951 that claimed that 99% of the Nagas wanted to be a free nation. The government wanted a stronger response to the tribal disturbance and didn't want the legal red tape to tie their arms. While the government reasoned that its usage would be temporary, the act has stayed for decades.

While it was temporarily used in Punjab (ended in early 1990s) and Kashmir (since 1990), it is in states like Manipur where the people have borne the full brunt of the act for a very long period. A local activist, Irom Sharmila Chanu, has been working hard to bring public attention to Manipur's plight.

Forgotten Tribals

There are over 120 million people in India who belong to various tribal communities spread around the country. A lot of these people live close to dense forests and hills, gradually pushed to a corner by the people of the plains. The term Adivasi [indigenous groups] is used to refer to these groups in recognition for their migration into India before most other Indians.

These people are isolated from the rest of India due to a variety of reasons:

1. They live in more geographically inaccessible regions - partly because they tend to be more hunter gatherers and partly because of staying safe from the more dominant empires of India.
2. They are economically isolated as they are far from cities and very few government programs are designed to help their needs.
3. They are culturally isolated as they speak languages that are distinct from the languages of the plains surrounding them. They also have distinct religious and other cultural practices, often incomprehensible to the rest of India.

Some of the major tribal groups:

1. **Tribes of Andaman and Nicobar islands:** The Andamans is a chain of islands in the Bay of Bengal that hosted a lot of native cultures. Some of these adivasi cultures are isolated from the rest of humanity for tens of thousands of years. To prevent them from contracting diseases and other afflictions that decimated the aborigines of Australia and native Americans, the Indian government has strict control of the movement of outsiders into these regions.
2. **Munda and Santal people:** These adivasis primarily inhabit the Chota Nagpur plateau of eastern-central India. The region is densely forested and also rich in many minerals - coal, bauxite [aluminum], and iron ore. Naxalism is rampant in this region as the tribals feel isolated and exploited.
3. **Gond tribals:** This is the largest tribal group in central India. They are spread in a region stretching from Uttar Pradesh to Telangana. Their plight is similar to that of the Munda and Santal groups and often caught between the Maoist/Naxalite separatism and India's security agencies.
4. **Tribes of the northeast:** As mentioned in the previous section, India's northeast has a rich collection of native hill cultures who are fiercely protective of their ways of life. Separatism is often very strong among these tribals.
5. **Himalayan peoples:** These are a range of tribes that inhabit the states of Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand, and Himachal Pradesh. Unlike the other groups mentioned above, they are not as much discriminated by Indian society and thus there are very few issues of separatism or Maoism there.

As Indian economy grows, the resource-rich regions of these people get the attention of the rest of India who want to build their mines, hydroelectric power plants, and roads in their lands. In some cases, local government officials and entrepreneurs have misused the

gullibility of these people.

The Dalits

Unlike the tribals, the dalits are a group of suppressed people who primarily lived in the plains along with the rest of India. These are a group of 900 castes that are out of bounds of India's traditional Varna system - grouping people into four categories of profession. They were often given the worst of menial tasks - such as cleaning the toilet and doing anything that castes Hindus traditionally considered impure.

Dalits often lived in isolated quarters of the same village that the caste Hindus inhabited, but were often prevented from accessing the good wells, ponds, temples, or even the main streets. Untouchability - the act of upper caste Hindus not even coming in physical proximity with these people - and various crimes, such as the rape of young dalit girls, were inflicted on these peoples.

After centuries of reform movements by Mahatma Gandhi and others, part of the discrimination in the form of untouchability had ended. Since independence, BR Ambedkar and a few other leaders in the community have taken a stronger activist movement to forcefully get their rights. Despite various actions by the government of India, interior rural regions are still rife with discrimination and tensions between the dalits and caste Hindus, especially in the lower rungs. However, in urban regions untouchability has been mostly put out, although some discrimination is still present when it comes to personal issues like marriage.

Women

In December 2012, a woman later nicknamed Nirbaya [fearless] was brutally gangraped in a private bus in Delhi. The incident shook the nation's consciousness and brought to light some of the key issues women face in India. In his address to the nation on August 15, 2014, Prime Minister Modi put this issue at the top of his priority.

Although India's rape rate is much lower than most places in the world, many of the social stats show that India is among the worst places to be born a girl. The Prime Minister promises to fix the following issues.

1. Increasing rapes in the national capital: Violence against women has been increasing and is one of the few crimes to increase per-capita over time. However, some argue that the increase in rape rates is actually an indicator that women are coming out much more to report the issue and we are just seeing the tip of the iceberg.
2. Murdering the female infant: In many states of India, some parents abort their child once they realize it is female [sex determination scans are illegal, but the law is often violated]. If the baby escapes abortion and gets born, some parents kill through deliberate murder or a lack of care. This has manifested in an alarmingly low sex ratio - for every ten men in India, there are only nine women.
3. Dowry: This is an ancient custom of property division where daughters get the movable properties of the family (gold, jewelry, cash) and sons get the immovable properties (land, home). However, it has mushroomed into a brutal institution that is leading to the deaths of tens of thousands of Indian brides from torture. Despite the government's efforts to outlaw the practice, both in rural and urban India, the law execution is often poor in this.
4. Participation in the workforce: India has among the lowest female participation in the workforce. Female literacy is way lower than males' and families in rural India predominantly take their daughters out of high school to get them married. For a major economy, India has too few women in office, factories, etc. This has hampered India's growth. In Gender Gap index, India ranks at 105 (even Sri Lanka comes at 39). In human development index India ranks at 134.



Chapter 9: The First Female Dictator

The President has proclaimed a state of emergency. This is nothing to panic about.

— Indira Gandhi on All India Radio (July 2, 1975)

She [Indira] listened to them [my views] even when I was five years old.

— Sanjay Gandhi

Politicians, like underwear, should be changed often, and for the same reasons.

— A popular American saying



The Indian middle class has always had a strange fantasy for dictatorship. Controversial dictators like Hitler, Putin, and Mao have strong fans among different factions of urban India. Many sections of the middle class feel that India might have been better under a strong leader.

This sentiment is echoed by this poem by the Vice Chairman of the Delhi Development Authority, who lamented his inability to clean up the capital city, plagued by bureaucratic red tape. He dreamt of the creators of great cities like Paris and Washington D.C. and is sad that he cannot emulate them.

No Haussmann reborn

No Lutyens with a chance

Nor Corbusier with Nehru's arms

I am a little fellow

An orphan of these streets

— Jagmohan (Vice Chairman of the Delhi Development Authority)

In 1975, the Indian middle class would finally get a chance to see what a dictatorship was like. India elected the world's second ever female Prime Minister and made her into the first female dictator. Indian democracy faced its world test as Prime Minister Indira Gandhi imposed emergency, taking the country towards a path of dictatorship.

The 1970s were the saddest time for many democracies all over the world. Amidst high inflation, unemployment, and the Middle East crisis, democracies across the world grappled with plenty of existential crises. In the US, Nixon and Agnew were threatening the foundation of US democracy by outright rigging and corruption. Both the President and Vice President were forced to exit in a period of a couple of years.

Journalists all over the world penned the obvious end of Indian democracy - a complete anomaly. Among the largest nations by population, the USA was the only other democracy and it was an anomaly in itself. And among the poorest nations, none was a democracy. India was both poor and huge. It had no business being a democracy, its detractors derisively wrote.

Mahatma Gandhi brought India's freedom movement to the fore with his Satyagraha in Champaran in the eastern state of Bihar. Another Gandhian, Jayaprakash Narayan, would attempt the same from the same state. Will India survive as a democracy and escape the marauding chaos that was enveloping it?

Rise of Indira Gandhi

For the first 20 years of free India, the Congress party ruled without much competition. Nehru and Shastri had a lot of popularity and were generally accepted as incorruptible men by all parties. However, the death of Shastri brought a lot of power struggles.

India no longer had a consensus candidate as the stalwarts of the freedom movement were long gone or retired from politics. Nehru's long reign (17 years at the top) was partly to blame. This is in sharp contrast to George Washington's principled stand to give up his presidency after eight years at the top. Washington's decision allowed other freedom leaders such as Jefferson, Adams, Madison, and Monroe to have a part in shaping the nation's destiny. Nehru's reluctance to give up the throne meant that there was no viable alternative left. Power went back to his family, like in the case of monarchies.

Nehru groomed his only daughter, Indira, well and she acted as India's official hostess in the absence of her mother (who passed away in 1936). However, Indira lacked the worldly experience of Nehru and did not give the impression that she understood the world very well when she took office for the first time.

Decay of 1967

In 1966, there was the first sign of power struggle. Morarji Desai, a noted freedom fighter, was in line to become the third Prime Minister of India after the unexpected death of Lal Bahadur Shastri in Tashkent. However, powerful Congress bosses (called the “Syndicate”) under the leadership of the Tamil leader, Kamaraj, wanted a pliable leader, and they chose the greenhorn daughter of Nehru. India became the second democracy in the world to elect a woman Prime Minister.

By the early 1960s, Congress had started losing support in several states, starting with Tamil Nadu and Kerala. In the 1967 election, Indira Gandhi got a slender majority (winning 283 of the 520 seats). However, the opposition was too divided to push their challenge much further. This resulted in a period of anarchy, where Indira didn’t have a sufficient majority to command and the opposition didn’t have a sufficient power to push reforms through the Parliament.

The period of 1966 was also the worst for the Indian economy due to a failed monsoon in the aftermath of two major wars. The rupee was substantially devalued and there was stringent restrictions on imports. Inflation soared and there were famines.

The combination of anarchy and the poor economy meant that there was room for the separatists to grow. Since the war of 1962, China had quietly started fomenting trouble in India. Within weeks of the 1967 elections, India’s communist revolutionaries started their violent struggle from the village of Naxalbari in West Bengal as mentioned in the previous chapter.

There were 700 incidents of communal violence between 1966 and 1968. Then there was the issue of state reorganization that was still causing trouble all over the country. The new leader was paralyzed and India was melting down.

India Turns Left

Indira had little in common with other Congress bosses and was desperate to carve out some independence for herself. This is when an old family friend - PN Haksar - turned up. Haksar, like Nehru and Indira, was also a Kashmiri Pandit who settled in Allahabad. He was also a lawyer and a colleague of VK Menon (Nehru's close confidante and India's former Defense Minister). Indira trusted Haksar's views, given his close similarity to her father, and made him the Principal Secretary.

Like Nehru, Haksar had a deep mistrust towards businessmen and merchants. Some people attributed this to the traditional Brahminical antipathy towards men of money. The Hindu caste system divided people into four categories: Brahmins (priests and scholars), Kshatriyas (kings and warriors), Vaishyas (merchants and businessmen), and Shudras (farmers and laborers). Brahmins often cherished the socialist movement due to a religious antipathy towards materialism, a professional antipathy towards anything not to do with "scholarliness", and a cultural antipathy towards commerce.

Although such caste stereotypes are conveniently put forth by casual commentators, this observation is incorrect as equal numbers of Brahmins supported capitalism too.

Morarji Desai grew up with the merchants of Bombay and had much more respect towards entrepreneurs and men of business. Desai wanted India to keep a safe distance from the communist ventures of the Soviet Union and build a better ecosystem for business. He was joined by the veteran freedom fighter, Rajaji, who created the Swatantra party to champion the cause of free enterprise.

Bank Nationalization

To cut their popularity and appease the growing communist rebels mushrooming all over India, Haksar steered Indira towards nationalizing all the banks. On July 19, 1969, Indira Gandhi nationalized 14 of India's biggest banks with over 75% of the deposits. This populist move was cheered by commoners all over India (commoners in all parts of the world hate bankers) and stunned the market. Although her father, Nehru, had nationalized the Imperial Bank in 1955 (becoming the State Bank of India) even he never dreamt of enmasse nationalization of all the major banks.

The move was made without consulting the then Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, Morarji Desai. Without any option, Desai resigned from the government. The nationalization was made through an ordinance prepared by a dismayed head of the Reserve Bank of India, LK Jha, and the secretary in the Ministry of Finance, IG Patel.

The various banks were held by India's business houses and private shareholders. The Tatas owned the Central Bank, the Birlas the UCO bank, and the Thapar group the Oriental Bank of Commerce. In the next two years, all the key industries - steel, copper, insurance, textiles, and oil refining - were nationalized.

The bank nationalization was a part of the dark chapter in Indian economy. Although the nationalization might have helped in spreading India's bank into rural heartlands, it also weakened the professionalism within the banks and made capital allocation much more political.

Indian businessmen were very afraid to grow or show successes in that period as they feared that the government would take away their property. This fear plagued the nation's market for decades and stunted growth.

The government was taken to the court by a member of the Swatantra party, Minoo Masani, and on February 9, 1970, the Supreme Court of India ruled that the nationalization was invalid. Indira Gandhi countered the court by passing a law in the Parliament, and thus begun the long saga of Indira's war with the courts, culminating in the Emergency. In 1970, Indira also abolished the Privy Purses - the annual payment to the royal houses who gave up their states in 1947. The Supreme Court again overruled Indira's law.

Congress Split

With the exit of Morarji Desai, the core of Congress became unstable. Then the Syndicate tried to push through its candidate - Sanjiva Reddy - for the Presidential elections of 1969. However, Indira persisted with VV Giri (who then became the President in August 1969). Haksar had started to take Indira away from the old leadership and there was a panic in the ranks. On November 11, 1969, S. Nijalingappa would take a brave stand to expel Indira Gandhi from the party citing indiscipline.

However, her wave of nationalization already made her very popular among the public. Indira was able to retain her post of Prime Minister and took all the attention to the new Congress - first called the Congress (R) and later the Congress (I) - the "I" standing for Indira.

Two hundred and twenty of the 283 Congress MPs joined Indira with a slogan:

A new light has dawned—Indira has come.

The communists provided some external support so that the government didn't fall due to the lack of majority (261 MPs were needed).

After winning her party, Indira surprised everyone by calling for a dissolution of the Parliament in December 1970 - more than a year before the term of the Parliament ended. Indira wanted to capitalize on the bank nationalization and the bountiful monsoon of 1970 to push out her opponents. Indira also showed her political genius with the slogan Garibi Hatao (remove poverty) by turning around the opposition slogan (Indira Hatao). The fledgling Green Revolution (covered in a later chapter) would also help her cause by substantially reducing hunger before the elections of 1971.

Court vs. the Government

We have already seen that the Supreme Court struck down Indira's move to nationalize the banks and cut the privy purses. The court also threw cold water on her move to take private property. In the landmark Golaknath case, the courts ruled that the government could not take away fundamental rights - rights to property and the right to practice any profession.

In the fifth national elections held in March 1971, Indira Gandhi won with a thumping two-thirds majority. Her populist moves helped her win the socialists in droves. This gave her the sufficient majority to deal with India's courts. She took the route of constitutional amendments.

Through the 24th Amendment, Indira enabled the Parliament's rights to dilute fundamental rights. Through the 25th Amendment, she allowed the state to restrict property rights and take over private property (bank nationalization). Through the 26th Amendment, the Privy Purse was abolished.

Although a few items like the abolishing the "Privy Purse" was a part of legitimate policy, the blatant misuse of constitutional amendments to push policies shocked the courts and the observers of democracy. Indira saw the courts not as a critical pillar of democracy, but as a nuisance in her path. The Supreme Court was kept further in check by the politically motivated nomination of Justice A.N. Ray to the post of Chief Justice of India.

Worsening Economy and Overall Order

While Indira came on the back of a good monsoon, the period of 1973-75 saw a huge crisis all over the world. During the 1973 war in the Middle East, the Arab nations imposed an oil embargo that shot up the price of oil from \$10 to about \$60 in a period of months. This was a spectacular shock that sent economies around the world reeling. For a poor country relying on imports for the most part, this was especially a disaster.

Opposition parties were also getting increasingly strong as the old timers were vexed with the growing corruption and nepotism within Indira's Congress. With no one to check her, Indira hand-appointed all the key posts in India.

On the 18th of March 1974, a bunch of student groups under the banner of Chhatra Sangharsh Samiti rioted in the state of Bihar. This brought in the veteran leader Jayaprakash (JP) Narayan to the center of the struggle. He was hugely respected and was a supporter of Indira Gandhi during the 1969 struggle. JP usually stayed out of governance, but was always an activist at heart - modeling himself after Mahatma Gandhi. He now called for a "total revolution".

In May 1974, India exploded its first nuclear weapon in the deserts of Pokhran in Rajasthan [we will see this in detail in a later chapter]. This helped India buy some time and distract her opponents. While the middle class came behind her, the opposition party under JP was not easily distracted.

On November 4, 1974, JP was manhandled by a group of charging policemen in Patna. A picture of a veteran Gandhian thrown around by lathi-wielding policemen reminded many Indians of the freedom struggle. This caused further unrest all around India. In January 1975, a key aide of Indira, LN Mishra, was assassinated in JP's home state of Bihar, and Indira put the blame on the opposition. This caused further acrimony and distrust between the parties.

In April 1975, Indira's old foe, Morarji Desai, took a Gandhian fast to end the President's rule in the state of Gujarat. Indira relented and elections were announced in Gujarat.

Allahabad Court Drops the Bombshell

On June 22, 1975, the Allahabad High Court gave the final blow. It ruled that the election of Indira Gandhi from the Rae Bareilly constituency in Uttar Pradesh, was invalid based on the case filed by the losing candidate Raj Narain. Justice Sinha found the Prime Minister guilty of misconduct, and this was a shock for a country used to principle politics at the top.

The verdict was made on somewhat flimsy grounds - such as the use of a slightly elevated podium and a couple of government servants. More serious charges of corruption and misuse of state machinery were dismissed by the court. The opposition hailed the victory despite the circumstances. Indira was also now ineligible to contest in elections for six years, although the court allowed her to be the Prime Minister in the interim.

On June 23, Justice V.R. Iyer of the Supreme Court issued a stay on the High Court's order, but didn't allow the Prime Minister to cast a vote in the Parliament. Senior party members and reputed journalists urged the Prime Minister to step down until the Supreme Court could deliver its ruling. There were plenty in the party who could run the government in her absence. Senior lawyers also opined that the two minor charges that the Allahabad Court indicted were unlikely to hold water in the highest court.

Indira was confused and felt besieged on all sides. There was chaos all over the nation that threatened her legitimacy. The Opposition was getting stronger by the day. The economic situation had dramatically worsened. Then, the courts were breathing fire for much of the previous decade.

This time she listened to the counsel of her tweenage son, Sanjay Gandhi. Sanjay had very little world experience and little respect for democracy. However, Indira had a strong respect for her young son. In a period of complete confusion, she would give up and let her son get the best of her. Sanjay, joined by the West Bengal Chief Minister, S.S. Ray, and a weak President in Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, helped Indira take the extreme step.

Emergency Declared

On the 26th of June, four days from the deliverance of the Allahabad verdict, Indira Gandhi declared a national emergency. The Constitution provides this extreme step in case of huge external troubles like wars. However, Indira Gandhi invoked it in the name of internal disturbance.

Within a year, JP and 110,000 other leaders and journalists were arrested without trial. Democracy was suspended and there was censorship everywhere. To keep the news from spreading fast, electricity to all major presses were cut.

Governments of all major states ruled by the Opposition parties were dismissed [Indian Parliament has the power to dismiss any state government through a simple majority]. Amendment 39 of 1975 allowed an Indian Prime Minister to ignore the courts. Thus, the Allahabad High Court order was rendered invalid.

However, the most controversial element of the emergency was the 42nd Amendment of the Constitution.

42nd Amendment

This Amendment provided the government with the following powers:

1. The Parliament could amend any part of the Constitution without restriction.
2. The Supreme Court could be approached only for the rarest issues.
3. The Central Government could use the military for curbing internal violence.
4. The Prime Minister and her office were above the court.

It also altered the Preamble to include the words secular and socialist. Thus, India officially became a “SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC,” and this is a legacy of Indira that India continues to carry as of 2014.

Initial Reaction

While Indira caused a massive alarm among the Opposition and the press, the rest of India carried on as if nothing happened. In fact, when I talk to my grandfather about the episode, he mentions more positives than negatives. He is not alone. Many famed writers like Khushwant Singh were openly in support of the emergency.

India's middle class had a secret love for dictatorship, and Indira's sudden takeover pleased many managers, executives, and other members of the middle class. Amidst the initial shock and the massive arrests, chaos lessened and even inflation was brought down. Attendance in government offices shot up and punctuality was achieved.

TIME Magazine came out with a highly supportive headline:

INDIA: The Emergency: A Needed Shock

Indians will long debate whether Mrs. Gandhi was justified in proclaiming the emergency, but the Prime Minister has won widespread support for seizing a rare opportunity to ram through a score of social reforms.

— TIME (Oct 27, 1975)

However, the Indian press and bureaucrats were much angrier. They were unnecessarily hindered and feared for the future of India.

The course for the Prime Minister, until the Supreme Court pronounces its final verdict, admits of no ambiguity. She must resign forthwith in the nation's and her own interest.

– Indian Express

I am angry. Mrs. Gandhi has used a hammer to kill a fly.

— An Indian Foreign Officer speaks to TIME (July 7, 1975)

Indian Express ran a blank editorial on June 26, 1975 in defiance.

that even the poorest were relatively happy, and Indira might have felt that things were under control.

Euphoria Fades to Face Reality

Sanjay Gandhi started his five-point plan that he believed would take India to the next stage. He was impressed by Malthusian writings (on how overpopulation was going to spell doom for India) and put out his key agenda on five pillars:

1. Forcible family planning
2. Fighting dowry
3. Forcible clearing of slums
4. Afforestation
5. Literacy

If you remove the forced part, all his moves were laudable ones. However, as he began to force things through a corrupt and nepotistic administration, things started exploding.

Bulldozers recklessly moved into slums and smashed away the houses of the poor. Muslims (among others) in various parts of Uttar Pradesh were forcibly sterilized. TIME issue of April 4, 1977, reported that between April 1976 and January 1977 an alarming 7.8 million people were “sterilized”, or deprived of their reproductive potency with an intrusive surgery. Several young, unmarried men were victims of this.

All key positions around the nation were handpicked by Sanjay. All key media - radio, television, and newspapers - carried Sanjay Gandhi’s praises every day.

As all kinds of opposition were silenced, people took to violent means. The government did whatever it could to violate human rights and fill up the prisons. Both the public and international media’s mood drastically changed from the spring of 1976.

Fading Hope in India

...The submission of an independent judiciary to an absolutist government is virtually the last step in the destruction of a democratic society...

— New York Times (April 30, 1976)

As the Emergency dragged on, Indira's friends - both in India and abroad - deserted her. Her loyalists like the respected veteran Jagjivan Ram were forced to defect. Other daughters of freedom fighters, like Maniben Patel, daughter of Sardar Vallabhai Patel, took the route of Satyagraha. Indira's own aunt, Ms. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, who had once served as the President of the UN General Assembly, opposed Indira's policies. Indira was deserted by her own friends.

Ian Jack of Sunday Times wrote a powerful headline:

With Friend Like Son Sanjay, Gandhi Doesn't Need Enemies.

— Montreal Gazette (March 10, 1977)

Ending the Emergency

On January 18, 1977, Indira had a change of heart and called for new elections. No one really knows what exactly triggered this change. It might be a combination of losing friends in India and abroad, getting chastised by people she loved, or craving for love from the common people. There was also intense pressure by Quakers and other mediators who served as India's bridges to the West for a long time.



On March 23, 1977, all political leaders were freed and the darkest chapter in Indian history came to an end. Many believe that the quick end (in 21 months) proved that India couldn't be ruled without a democracy. Indira had unlimited power, but in that two year period, she was not able to improve the country in a substantial way. It might have dawned on her that what prevented India from growing was not the opposition or various institutions. Finally, it was also likely that Indira underestimated the common people's yearning for a change. By silencing all media and opposition, she got out of touch with her subjects.

Elections were held in March, and expectedly, Ms. Indira Gandhi was voted out. For the first time, India would elect a party other than the Congress. Congress was completely wiped out of north and central India, although the south (where Sanjay Gandhi's effects weren't felt that much) gave some solace to the Congress.

Legacy:

1. It was a testimony to the strength of Indian democracy that this dark episode ended in 21 months. Indira's inability to rule without Indian democratic institutions is a strong sign that democracy is indispensable for a highly multi-cultural nation like India.
2. The "second freedom movement" generated a new round of principled leaders (like Atal Bihari Vajpayee) who would then lead India. Without the Emergency, it might have been hard to identify many of the leaders. As an unintended consequence, the Emergency paved way for a more active opposition.
3. The fact that both Indira Gandhi and her son Sanjay Gandhi lost their own parliamentary elections is a reminder of the power of the ballot. Even the poorest had no hesitation in pulling the rug under the most powerful Indians. Contrary to what many outsiders believed, the poor in India were very comfortable with the democratic processes.
4. The fact that the public didn't raise up for the constitutional violation but only for forced family planning is a sobering realization for any lover of democratic India. Had Sanjay Gandhi avoided his controversial move, people might not have hated him this much. This might inspire a future dictator who could be more careful with these elements while destroying the core institutions of democracy.
5. People's memories are short and Indians are too quick to forgive. Indira's excesses were forgotten in two years and she was back to power in 1980.

Indian democracy worked—and with a vengeance.

— A US State Department Official talking to TIME (Apr 4, 1977)

Book of Dreams

The Forest Man

In the Northeastern corner of India lies the river island of Majuli, surrounded by the river Brahmaputra. One of the biggest river islands in the world, Majuli used to be a home to a wide varieties of endangered species until human actions started lead to a massive erosion that threatened the survival of the island and the precious ecosystem contained therein.

In a major flood in 1979, plenty of snakes were washed ashore. The sight of the dead reptiles moved one man. He wept on the sight of seeing so many dead creatures that died in the hot sun without any tree cover. He took upon a massive task in his hands. He decided to reforest the whole island.

Working tireless for 35 years, this man, Jadhav Payeng, has now created a 1400 acre forest. For the threatened species of the island, he is the protector.

The Mountain Man

In 1959, a man in eastern India lost his wife on the way to a hospital. She was injured trying to cross a treacherous hill to bring him water. A hill stood between that man Dashrath Manjhi and modern civilization. The villagers could not get access to modern facilities due to the curse of geography.

But, for a determined man even a big hill is no big impediment. He started slowly chiseling away the hill. Grain by grain, he broke the Gehlour hills and has now created a pathway 360 feet long and 30 feet wide that allows vehicles to reach his village. One man has built a whole road. With his feat, he has reduced the distance between two remote groups of villages in Bihar, Atri and Wazirganj by about 55 km.

It is the unsung individuals like Dashrath Manjhi and Jadhav Payeng who make India run and who provide a hope to a population of 1.25 billion. They have not waited for the governments and other organizations to help them, rather they literally created a path themselves. It is these people who help India forget the gory past and get them see a ray of life.

It is people like them who make Indians dream.

Chapter 10: India's Tryst with the World

The State shall endeavour to - (a) promote international peace and security; (b) maintain just and honourable relations between nations; (c) foster respect for international law and treaty obligations in the dealings of organised peoples with one another; and (d) encourage settlement of international disputes by arbitration.

— Article 51 of the Indian Constitution

Unlike most others, the Indian Constitution makes it an explicit directive for the Indian government to push for international peace and encourage better relations between nations. Although it is a directive policy, not enforceable in a court of law, it gives away the intention of India's founding fathers. They wanted India to play an active role in helping promote world peace. For the most part, India has stayed true to this directive policy.

India's freedom movement was a popular struggle around the world and given the gracious way in which it won freedom, India was always bound to have a healthy relationship with the rest of the world. However, India never lived up to its full potential and often fumbled with diplomacy.

Key Determinants of India's Foreign Policy

1. **Geography:** India is situated right in the center of South Asia, South East Asia, Central Asia, and West Asia. Through the Indian Ocean passes the world's most precious cargo, such as oil to China and Asia's exports to Europe and Africa. It's geographic proximity to superpowers such as the Soviet Union (later Russia) and China meant that the nation had to focus on building adequate deterrence. This has always often run contrary to its idealistic foreign policy intentions of having a nuclear weapon free world.
2. **Economic policies:** Indian leaders grew up in a socialist (of the Fabian type) Britain. They were also deeply inspired by communist revolutions happening around them - such as the Russian revolution. Thus, the early foreign policy was much more biased towards Communist nations. In the West, India was sometimes seen as a client state of the Soviet Union.
3. **Historical and Cultural Factors:** India's occupation by the British Empire had left a huge scar on the freedom fighters and thus a key element of foreign policy was to root out colonialism in the rest of the world. While India was against colonialism, the top leaders of the freedom movement were all educated in Britain and thus had a natural affinity towards the Anglophone nations. India's spiritual past often came in its relations with East and Southeast Asia [the Pancha-Sila policy with China was based on Buddha's five principles].

Foreign Policy Under Different Prime Ministers

Nehruvian Era

Nehru took personal responsibility for foreign affairs, just like he did before independence. He appointed his sister, Vijayalakshmi Pandit as India's main diplomat to the UN. In 1953, Ms. Pandit became the first woman president of the UN General Assembly.

Some of the key elements of Nehru policy:

1. **Maintaining cordial relations with the UK:** India surprised the world by retaining Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of India, even after Independence. It was an indication of the relative smooth transition. India decided to be a part of the British Commonwealth despite having its own head of state. Nehru made sure that India and the UK were in good terms despite the freedom struggle.
2. **Panchsheel policy with China:** As soon as Mao took over China in 1949 after the Communist revolution, India recognized the new government and argued on its side in various International fora. The five principles that Nehru made as the core of his foreign policy with China, held good for a decade, before the growing trouble in Tibet swallowed it.
3. **Active role in developing world:** Nehru wanted India to take a lead role in the new organization - Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) that he co-founded with the leaders of Egypt and Yugoslavia. It was to reduce the tensions surrounding the Cold War between the US and the USSR and build a strong community of developing nations. The active role that he took in criticizing the West in its intervention in Suez and Palestine and the Soviet in its intervention in Hungary, irritated the major powers and often turned India's external relationships frosty.

Nehru built a strong image for India in the world arena, although his idealistic advice to the rest of the world was sometimes seen as hypocritical given India's realpolitik dealings in Kashmir, Hyderabad, Goa, and the Northeast frontier. He helped push colonialism out of Africa and at the 1955 Bandung Conference of Afro-Asian nations, which India helped organize, he tried to build further connections for India.

Shastri's Era

India's second Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri, had a very short tenure of about 19 months, due to his premature death. A lot of the era was focused on defense build up leading up to the war with Pakistan. He is held in a very high regard in India for successfully repelling Pakistan's aggression. His remaining time was spent on handling refugee problems in Burma and Sri Lanka - India's neighbors who were driving out a large number of Indian settlers due to change in regimes.

Indira's Era

India's third Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, was much more assertive and less tied to the idealisms of the founding fathers. She successfully took India nuclear by detonating a nuclear device in 1974. She helped break Pakistan into two - forming the new nation of Bangladesh. She also helped arm the Tamil rebels of Sri Lanka after its government went back on the promises it made to Shastri.

In Southeast Asia, India was on the side of the USSR and supported Viet Cong in its struggle against the US. That made India's relationship with the US-leaning region tough. Indira's period was the lowest point of Indo-US relationships and a high point for Indo-Russian relationship.

In the Middle East, she opened secret channels with Israel through her lieutenant (and later Prime Minister) Narasimha Rao, although overtly she was against Israel. Although India had maintained a good relationship with the Middle East (the region used Indian rupee as their official currency 6 decades ago) the 1971 war with Pakistan brought some trouble in the region. Pakistan portrayed India's help to the Bangladeshi cause as anti-Islamic and was able to convince the orthodox monarchies in the middle east to accept its side. However, India's traditional friendships with more moderate nations like Iran and Egypt prevented that region from taking an action against India.

Rajiv's Era

Indira's son, Rajiv, placed key importance on restoring ties with the major powers. He made a visit to the US within months of coming to the office. However, Ronald Reagan, the President at the time, was still very focused on defeating India's top friend, the Soviet Union. He also made a landmark visit to China, the first for an Indian Prime Minister since Nehru's visit in 1954.

Rajiv's key parts of foreign policy came in the islands of the south. He helped Maldives resist a coup orchestrated by the Tamil rebels. Operation Cactus authorized by Rajiv was decisive in getting the people's rule back to Maldives. However, in Sri Lanka he made a controversial decision to send the Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF). As we saw in earlier chapters, that was a colossal failure and defined Rajiv's era.

Narasimha Rao's Era

Rao came at a time when the Communist world was collapsing. The Soviet Union collapsed and that left India confused. This forced India to open itself to the West both in economic and foreign policies. The ignored relationship with European Countries was now paid attention to.

Narasimha Rao also opened up to America's top ally - Israel. In 1992, one year into his Premiership, he established a full diplomatic relationship with Israel. This proved very critical during India's war with Pakistan in 1999. Another key change came in relationships with South East Asia and East Asia.

Rao was among the best Indian Prime Ministers when it came to foreign policy. A lot of present thrust is a relic of his era.

Gujral Era

Although his reign as foreign minister and Prime Minister combined lasted for less than two years, IK Gujral left a strong impact on India's foreign policy. The Gujral doctrine stressed on the more prudent - "neighbours first policy". The doctrine let the Prime Minister make friendly measures with neighbors without expecting something directly in return.

Key things achieved in that period:

1. Water sharing agreements with Bangladesh
2. Cooling down border dispute with China
3. Expanding people to people contact with Pakistan
4. A landmark visit to Nepal to build roads with a key neighbor

One key criticism of India's foreign policy during such third front parties is that realpolitik takes a hit. For instance, India's intelligence agency RAW's efforts was reportedly impeded in Morarji Desai and IK Gujral regimes.

Vajpayee Era

In this era, a game of cat and mouse was played by Pakistan. India and Pakistan tested their nuclear weapons in 1998 as soon as Vajpayee came to power. The increased tensions was cooled by a landmark visit to Pakistan by PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee in February 1999. However, that trust was broken when it was found in May that Pakistan's army was invading the hills in Kargil in Kashmir, starting a brief war. The truce after the war didn't last long as Pakistan went through yet another coup. In 2001, Pakistan-funded terrorists attacked the Indian Parliament building yet again taking the two countries close to a war.

The biggest victory for Vajpayee came with US President Bill Clinton's visit in 2000. That ended a long era of acrimonious relationships between the two democracies. Clinton ended the sanctions on India and Vajpayee took India much closer to the US in economic, foreign, and military policies. The relationship with Israel also flowered a lot more.

Manmohan Era

Manmohan Singh, for the most part, continued Vajpayee's policies. He improved relationships with the US and also started building key relationships with China, Japan, and Europe. It was in his period that India reached a critical mass and was getting flirtations from powers all over the world.

A key alliance that started this time was BRICS - Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa - the five big stars of the developing world that accounted for half of the world population and a big chunk of new economic growth.

Modi Era

It's been only a couple of months since Modi started at the time of this publication. Modi seems to blend Gujral's doctrine that stressed the "Neighbors first policy" with Vajpayee's realpolitik with the West. Like Nehru, he seems quite adept and comfortable when dealing with foreign leaders. Already there are indications of Japan becoming a key ally in energy.

In September 2014, Modi held meetings with the leaders of the world's top manufacturing powers - US, China, and Japan. Modi has been trying to pursue foreign policy with a primary eye on growing the domestic strength in manufacturing.

Relations with Key Countries

Relationship with the US

The India-US relationship was always a love-hate one where both sides often fumbled in understanding the other side. In 1947, both sides started right with the right rhetoric (democracies, freedom, liberation) but things often became worse when faced with reality.

1. Kashmir issue. The US and the UK tried to mediate on the Kashmir issue, but India didn't want it, fearing what the final verdict would look like. This caused the first friction. TIME Magazine reported the Western world view of how Pakistan is the law abiding party here: The commission's final gesture, an arbitration proposal backed by the US and Britain, had been accepted by Pakistan and rejected by India. Abdullah's delegates passed a resolution denouncing the "arbitration offer sponsored by President Truman and Prime Minister Attlee as "yet another device to deny freedom to the people of Kashmir."

2. China issue. The US wanted India to not recognize Mao Zedong's revolution. India lost no time in recognizing the legitimacy of the People's Republic of China [the West pretended that it didn't exist and dealt only with the rebel government in Taiwan]. India strongly argued for providing China's permanent seat to Mao's government and not to the rebel Chiang-kai Shek's government. This irritated the Americans. However, India acted as the middleman between the US and China during the Korean war, helping both sides bring the war to an end.

3. Joining the Western bloc: As the Soviet Union became the biggest challenge for the US, the government there started an "Us. vs Them" campaign. India was forced to pick sides but didn't. India's neighbour Pakistan had no such compunctions and they did join the Western bloc in 1954 through Southeast Asia Treaty Organization and Central Treaty Organization. Although Pakistan tried hard to use these two treaties to bring the West to war with India, the US refused. However, the relationship was scary for India and India had no option but to look to the Soviets.

4. Soviet Vetoes: As Pakistan entered the Western bloc, the group started ganging up on India in the Security council. During such occasions, India needed the Soviet veto.

5. Nixon and Kissinger: Until the late '60s, the US was not as much against the Indians. Democrats like Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson kept a more healthy relationship. However, the entry of Nixon would change this India-US relationship to a very hostile one with Nixon almost bringing a war on India. In the Bangladeshi war of independence, the US fought hard to avoid a partition of its ally Pakistan, going very much against the self-determination of the Bengalis. He even instigated his new friend China to start a front on India.

6. Afghanistan: The nixing of Nixon brought some respite to India. However, under Reagan a new war started in Afghanistan. Americans sought to drive away Soviet influence and used Pakistan to train Mujahideen - Islamic terrorists. India ended up on the wrong side and eventually ended with the highly anti-India Talibans coming to take

power.

In short, the India-US relationship became a victim of a big geopolitical game played through Pakistan as the pawn. For a long time, India tried hard to dehyphenate the relationship [making the US see India beyond the lens of Pakistan]. Let's see how it goes. Modi will be here in four weeks and I'm attending his speech at Madison Square garden. Let us see how he approaches the Indo-US relationships.

Relationship with Soviet Union/Russia

For the first six years post-independence, India didn't really have a strong relationship with the Soviet Union. Stalin was too headstrong to see India as a strong ally. Nehru was also paying more attention to the West and was not impressed with the Soviet Union's lack of help in Kashmir.

However, in 1949 India's future President S. Radhakrishnan was sent as an ambassador to Moscow and he helped build the relationship between these two countries. The death of Stalin in 1953 drastically altered the relationship. A combination of factors helped here.

1. Nikita Khrushchev, Stalin's successor, was much more sympathetic to India's interests.
2. The formation of US-Pak treaties left India with no alternative.
3. The relationship of both the USSR and India with China was getting worse.

Nehru made a key visit in 1955 and that helped cement this relationship and it proved to be an all-weather relationship for India. During Indira's time, the Soviet relationship proved very important, especially in the 1971 war. However, Rajiv Gandhi's and Narasimha Rao's time saw India moving a little away from the Soviet Union that was disintegrating to form Russia and various central asian republics.

However, since the start of the Manmohan era, Russia had started to get back into its importance as India finds Russia's energy and defense cooperation very important.

Relationship with Pakistan

The relationship with Pakistan is among the thorniest one. The violence around the time of partition in 1947, the still undecided nature of Kashmir and the three full scale wars that were fought between the countries all add to the tensions.

There were many treaties and meetings between the countries to sort out their issues. But, each of them failed to bring long-lasting peace.

1. **Karachi Agreement (1949):** This was at the conclusion of the first Indo-Pak war and done at the behest of the UN. The countries agreed to a cease-fire line in Kashmir. The line runs between the parts of Kashmir administered by Pakistan and India.
2. **Tashkent Declaration (1966):** This agreement was brokered by the USSR and held in Tashkent (now in Uzbekistan). The agreement brought truce after the 1965 war. At the end of the agreement, Indian Prime Minister Shastri mysteriously died, adding to

plenty of conspiracy theories.

3. **Simla Agreement (1972):** This paved the way for the recognition of Bangladesh (previously called East Pakistan). It added some formal recognition to the 1949 cease-fire line in Kashmir (now called the Line of Control) between the two countries. This was followed up by the Delhi Agreement in 1973 where India allowed the return of Pakistani Prisoners of War (PoW).
4. **Non-Nuclear Aggression Agreement (1988):** In 1981, Israeli Air Force made a surprise attack on Iraq's nuclear facilities and crippled the nation's nuclear program. Pakistan was quite worried after this and in 1998, Prime Minister Bhutto invited her counterpart Rajiv Gandhi to Islamabad. They both agreed on a treaty whereby neither nation would aid the destruction of the other's nuclear facilities.
5. **Lahore Declaration (1999):** Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee made a historic journey to Pakistan, a few months after the two countries went nuclear. For a while there was euphoria. With weeks after this agreement, Pakistan's army staged intrusion into Kashmir causing yet another war in the summer of 1999.
6. **Agra Summit (2001):** Yet another time, there was a meeting between the two countries after a long period of lobbying by UN and other powers. Vajpayee invited President Pervez Musharraf to Agra. Within months of the agreement, there was a major terrorist attack on Indian Parliament and the two nations yet again went back to high tensions.

Key issues that hamper relationships:

1. **Kashmir:** Both nations have a claim on Kashmir. Although the monarch of Kashmir had officially acceded to India, Pakistan didn't accept the accession. Both nations see the other's occupation of a part of Kashmir as illegal.
2. **Indus water:** Water is among the most scarce commodities in the dry South Asia. Both countries often fight to make the best utilization of the waters of Indus river that they both share.
3. **World powers:** Pakistan was often a playground for world powers. US used the region for its proxy war against the Soviet Union and the war in Afghanistan. Pakistan is also close to China. India, for the most part, remained on the opposite side - USSR - or part of no side at all.
4. **Terrorism:** From India's side, the key issue is one of terrorism. Since the late 1980s, Pakistan has been exporting terrorism to India and has been unable to contain its support for the insurgents.

When I was about 11 years old, my parents took me to the Wagah border near Amritsar. There is a daily event at the Indo-Pak border that allowed people from both sides to get the glimpse of each other. We looked similar and still there was a big obstacle between us. Outside of India, I have met plenty of people from Pakistan and find that as people we have always got together well. We have even watch Indo-Pak cricket matches together. There is no reason why India and Pakistan can't have a peaceful relationship.

Relationship with China

For thousands of years, civilizations in India and China had little contact of each other and those contacts were always positive. Things changed in 1950, when the People's Republic of China annexed Tibet. This brought the two civilizations too close to each other.

In 1962, India and China fought a border war. Since then, the relationship has often grown tense.

Key issues

1. **Unresolved borders** - India and China are yet to decide their borders in Kashmir and Arunachal Pradesh.
2. **Support for Pakistan** - Since 1962, China has been having an increasingly strong cooperation with Pakistan and this often worries Indian strategists.
3. **Trade imbalance** - Since 1970s, China grew much faster than India and thus exports to India more than it imports from it. Also, India's exports to China is more of raw materials than finished products. This adds some concern for Indian economists.

Relationship with Bangladesh

As a student, my friends and I once had a long journey to Bangladesh capital of Dhaka crossing many rivers and traveling in small buses. It took 4 days for us to complete the journey and we made great friends there. The country looked practically the same as India, but still there was such a barrier between the two countries.

India and Bangladesh started off well. India helped Bangladesh get independence from Pakistan in 1972. However, things started going downhill due to a range of thorny issues.

1. **Sharing of Ganga waters:** After the 1975 opening of Farakka Barrage in West Bengal to divert Ganga water to the port of Calcutta, tensions between both countries rose. India needed the water diversion to prevent the critical Calcutta (now Kolkata) port from getting silted up. Bangladesh fears that its key water source is in danger.
2. **Illegal immigration:** Due to the differences in economic development, many Bangladeshis cross the porous borders to find jobs in India. This has led to plenty of tensions in Northeastern India.

India needs the help of either Myanmar or Bangladesh [preferably both] to fully tap Northeast India's potential.

1. **Ports** - The nearest port for the Northeast is Kolkata. Kolkata is 1500 km from the northeastern cities of Aizawl and Agartala. Not just the distance, the route passes through multiple states and through a lot of mountains. Imagine dragging a heavy machinery through this long, narrow road. This makes trade and manufacturing very hard in the Northeast. Every product that is either produced in Northeast or needed in northeast has to be carried through that one road through Siliguri. On the other hand, Chittagong port is only 200km from the state of Tripura and passes through the mostly flat land. A major Bangladesh railway junction Akhaura is just 10 km from Agartala.

2. **Migration** - Major cities in India's northeast are quite close to the rural hinterland of Bangladesh. For many rural Banglas, it is easy to find jobs in these cities than in Dhaka or Chittagong. Thus, there is a massive migration that is rapidly impacting the demographics

of the Northeast. Many tribes feel marginalized in their own territory. India needs Bangladeshi government's help to arrest the endless flow of migrants.

3. **Separatism** - Tripura alone shares 850 km of border with Bangladesh. Other states like Mizoram share long borders too [a total of 4000+ km of shared borders between Northeast India and Bangladesh]. Given the long and unpatrolled borders, the separatists and troublemakers in this region easily escape to Bangladesh. It is hard to fight the separatism as long as the separatists have such an easy escape hatch. India needs Bangladesh's help in patrolling the borders and also bring the fugitives to justice.

4. **Food movement** - Eastern side of Bangladesh is quite fertile and produces a lot of rice. This can be easily be moved to Tripura, Mizoram and Manipur rather than dragging the food from West Bengal through the Siliguri corridor or air lifting them.

5. Plains and hills - Tripura, West Bengal and Bangladesh are all plains, while the routes between Tripura and West Bengal through Meghalaya are major hills.

6. Risk of Chicken neck - Currently the Siliguri corridor remains the only link between the Northeast and the rest of India. Any problem there - terrorist attacks, natural disasters, etc. - would completely screw the 7 states of North east. Bangladesh help would reduce that risk substantially.

Why a deal with Bangladesh would help?

1. It will enable the easy movement of people and goods to Northeast from the rest of the world. Imagine cutting through Bangladesh to reach Tripura or Mizoram at lightning speed.
2. It will generate a lot of employment through new industries in the northeast. The region will get prosperous.
3. A prosperous region would have little reasons to fight for separatism. India's national security would improve.
4. Bangladesh would get prosperous too with this trade and many of their locals would have a lesser need to jump across to India. That would reduce migration & again improve India's security.

What kind of deals India is looking at?

1. A train link to Akhaura. The distance between Akhaura [in Bangladesh] and Agartala [Tripura's capital] is just 10 km. Linking them with a new line to enable deep links between the two railway systems.
2. Improving the 70 km road between Tripura's town of Sabroom and the Chittagong port. Chittagong is a major international port and this road can enable movement of goods in 1 hour.
3. Bus between Agartala and Kolkata through Bangladesh. This could cut the travel time from about 40 hours to about 4 hours.

Relationship with Myanmar

My maternal grandfather and his father spent time there as traders. There was a long

relationship between the two countries and traders from various parts of India, especially the south and northeast made a good life traveling to Burma.

The same points for Bangladesh also apply here. India has had a long relationship with Burma. There are even many Tamil temples in Burma. Besides, it is deeply connected with Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal. Major cities like Imphal and Kohima are less than 30 minutes away from the Burma border.

What India is doing with Myanmar?

1. Build plenty of new roads to reach Southeast Asia - Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia, etc.
2. Provide a way for the people of restive Manipur and Nagaland to new economic avenues. Manipur especially has a lot to benefit as it currently depends too much on the road through Nagaland through which all its supplies from rest of India come.
3. Pull Myanmar little out of China's reach. India and Myanmar share much more cultural aspects.
4. Increase trade and that will also make Myanmar prosperous. A prosperous neighbor is always a good thing.

Relationship with Israel

India has historically not supported Israel when a Nehru family member was around. Nehru was terribly against Israel and joined the Arabs in condemning the UN resolution. However, whenever a Nehru family member was not around the Indian government made quick moves towards Israel.

Until the 1990s, India was quite anti-Israel. The first change came via the more pragmatic Narasimha Rao who wanted Israel's help in growing the economy and technology. Then, the Kargil war came that changed India's foreign policy.

1. During the 1999 Kargil war with Pakistan, Israel helped India with defense technology and the ruling right wingers loved that. A few news sources in India in May 1998 that claimed that Israel was ready to strike Pakistan's nuclear facilities [before it went nuclear] if India gave a go and supported Israel in its conflicts. None of India's Arab friends really came forward to help India in a moment of crisis. India moved closer to both Israel and the US due to their help in ending the crisis.
2. India is tech hungry and Israel has plenty of tech. For a poor country with a weak agricultural infrastructure, India has plenty to gain in terms of tech transfers and capital equipment sales.
3. Israel sympathizes with India on Kashmir and India realizes that it cannot go too harsh on Israel as it would give more momentum to Kashmir extremists.
4. India historically feared Arab nations due to oil supplies and Indian workers there. However, as oil gets traded in global markets freely and Indian workers are more indispensable for Arab economies, Indian government no longer prioritizes about those issues.

Relationship with Afghanistan

There is a very strong historical connection that runs for thousands of years. Throughout Indian history, major emperors of India ruled Afghanistan and vice versa. Since the start of the 20th century, Afghanistan became a toy in the great game played between Russia and Britain to influence India.

The short-lived Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, formed under the influence of the Soviet Union, had become India's friend. The rebels who were created to fight this new republic and the Soviet influence thus became anti-India and pro-Pakistan.

Until the arrival of Taliban (essentially Pakistan's protege), India enjoyed a strong relationship with Afghanistan. A lot of Afghan leaders, including the current President Karzai studied in India.

India was also close friends with the Northern Alliance that helped topple the Taliban in the aftermath of 2001. Since 2001, India has helped Afghanistan substantially in its reconstruction.

In a Gallup poll done in 2010, the majority of Afghans preferred Indians over both Americans and Pakistanis. Afghanistan stands at #3 when it comes to aid receipts from India.

Relationship with Nepal

In my trip to Nepal for researching material for this book, I once saw a big banner that portrayed India as a big python that was engulfing the nation of Nepal. As I traveled the rural country in local buses, I often sensed a cold relationship towards Indians. However, I also found many other Nepalis quite friendly towards India. Nepal as a country is quite divided in its relationship with India.

The people of plains are more favorable to India than the people in the Himalayan districts. Again the religious divide is also visible with the Hindus a little more pro-India than Buddhists. Then there are also economic divide - with the fast rising Nepali businessmen/middle class a little more pro-India than the Maoists who recently took power. There is a complex socioeconomic dynamics at play in the love-hate relationship between the countries.

Part of this is a failure of India to assure the smaller neighbor that their security and sovereignty would not be compromised. Other than Nehru and Gujral, most Indian Prime Ministers ignored the state and often could be accused of taking it for granted. However, things seems to be changing under Modi's regime with the following issues brought to the center.

1. **Power and Water:** Nepal has a lot of water and electricity potential, and India is hungry for both. In fact, Nepal has the world's second highest hydroelectric power potential and sits right next to India's most populated states.
2. **Geopolitics:** Nepal is critical for India to keep China out of South Asia. It is not an accident that Modi visits Bhutan and Nepal among his first three official visits since

becoming a Prime Minister. Both nations sit between India and China and do a very important job of giving India a buffer. Indian Prime Ministers often took our neighbors for granted and that has allowed India's rivals to set up shop all around India. If your neighbors are not friendly, you will have a terrible time with your security. By charming Bhutan and Nepal, India gets to be the leader in South Asia.

3. **External Security:** China wants to build roads and railways within Nepal and that is dangerous for India, as China could instantly move supplies to Indian borders in a war. If China builds infrastructure in Nepal, that would put Chinese forces much more closer to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. India doesn't want that.
4. **Internal Security:** Communist terrorists (Naxalites/Maoists) are becoming a huge problem for India. Because of the Naxalites, the development projects for 100 million (10 crore) people are blocked. The Naxalites mainly use Nepal as the springboard, along with a bit of China and Bangladesh. Modi wants to first close the Nepal route and eventually deal with Bangladesh and China.
5. **It's business:** Nepal gets all these loans to buy infrastructure, machinery, cement, and vehicles from India. Other than India and China, they don't have any other neighbors to do business with. That benefits a lot of Indian businesses.

4. What Modi Might Do in Foreign Policy?

1. Modi is expected to look east, especially Japan. This is an Indian government policy initiative that first started 20 years ago, but has not been followed up much. As a Chief Minister of Gujarat, Modi developed close links with China, Japan, and other Asian countries. Modi idolizes China and Japan. Japanese Premier Abe and Modi share a lot of similar views on the West, culture, economy, etc. For Japan and the rest of the East and Southeast Asia, he is going to be the most friendly Indian Prime Minister they have ever had.
2. More emphasis on Israel. Like Japan, Israel cultivated a relationship with Modi when he was a pariah in the world. Israel already has plenty of investments in Gujarat. Israel and India would get along quite well as Modi carries no historical baggage like Congress did.
3. More closer to Russia than the US. Modi shares some qualities with Putin. For instance, both leaders care less about what the leaders in the West think of them. Although Putin's communism (or whatever model you want to call that) is not going to sit well with Modi's capitalism, together they are going to step on the gas to collaborate on a massive scale.
4. Modi's play on South Asia will be interesting. Modi had a tough stand on India's neighbors during the campaign. He said he had little patience for the illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, Communist rebels from Nepal, or the terrorists from Pakistan. However, this tough campaign has also given him plenty of room to negotiate. He has already invited the leaders of South Asia to his swearing ceremony - a historic move. Now, he is looking to make Bangladesh (and not the US/Europe) as his first stop.
5. New perspective on Indo-Sri Lankan relationships. For decades, Indian foreign policy on Sri Lanka was controlled by the leaders in Tamil Nadu. For the first time in Indian history, there are not going to be any Dravidian sympathizers in the cabinet. That is going to make things different. Without the need to please the Dravidian parties (although you have that Vaiko guy - who is practically powerless), Modi might take a bolder move in Sri Lanka.
6. Australia will benefit among developed nations. Modi is expected to pay lesser emphasis on the US and Europe than some of his predecessors. However, one developed nation that might benefit is Australia which has had a relationship with Modi since 13 years ago. Australia could even be India's mediator in dealing with the West.
7. Modi will be a cautious friend for China. Modi loves China and he is going to focus a lot on building trade links with China. However, unlike the Prime Ministers of the past, China is going to see an Indian leader who is no-nonsense. He is not going to give much room and compete a lot for Asian leadership, but at the same time is not going to be unreasonable. I'm hoping the Sino-Indian border issues to get resolved in his reign.
8. African relations are going to improve. Modi is going to give China a chase in Africa. The African leaders will now have a new alternative besides China and the West.

Indian businesses are already very active in Africa and Modi is going to push them even more.

9. Obama - Modi is going to be a frosty relationship. Obama is a terrible President from an Indo-US relationship perspective. He has destroyed everything that Bush and Clinton had built and gives little importance to India. Modi is far right than anyone Obama would have encountered from India. Modi is not that hot on the US either. Thus, Modi might until 2016 and hope to rebuild the relationship when a Republican takes up the reins. Republicans are already learning a lot about Modi. That said, Modi is going to make a lot of friendships with US businesses. Modi is very pragmatic about this.
10. Not clear of what or how he will work with the UK. While the Congressional party historically had close relationships with the UK, Modi might not care that much about the history. British liberal media had been doing a very vicious propaganda against both Modi and India in the past couple of years (like the racist comments during India's MARS mission) and that has poisoned the climate a bit. That said, Britain has a large Indian diaspora and has traditionally been a launchpad for Indian Multinationals. Thus, Modi might work with the businesses while ignoring the government.



Chapter 11: Hop, Skip and Jump: The Story of Indian Economy

No power on earth can stop an idea whose time has come.

— Victor Hugo

July 1991

Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao was in a sullen mood. He was in fresh, white dhoti and looked at the three visitors to his residence. The bald, boring, 70-year old man was unlike any hero.

Before him, there were only six years where India was not ruled by a direct descendent of Nehru. He didn't have a lot of power in the party. His Finance Minister was the first ever non-political finance minister, chosen solely for academic merit. Together they were administering one of the most closed, major economies in the world.

The three visitors - Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, Commerce Minister P Chidambaram and Commerce Secretary Montek Singh - looked tired, but really insisted on getting the job done. They asked for the Prime Minister's ok in relaxing the chains that were put by various Indian governments of the past. None of them had any political experience and they turned to Rao, like kittens turn to their mother.

Rao had just sworn in two weeks before, following the elections of 1991. He grew up in Congress mold, under the shadows of Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, without much opportunity to speak. He was not a reformer at heart. But, he was a pragmatist. He was not a Deng Xiaoping or Margaret Thatcher. But, he knew what he should do.

With a polite nod, he said "Yes". Just as he finished, monsoons brought the long awaited rains. And thus began India's saga of liberalization. Not with a bang, but with a whimper.

How Did India Get Into this Position? </p> <p>It was the worst summer for India. Just before the new Prime Minister was sworn-in, the caretaker government had to take a big chunk of India's official gold reserves to London to get an interim loan from the IMF India needed to buy the essential reserves.

The Reserve Bank of India had to airlift 47 tons of gold to the Bank of England and another 20 tons of gold to Union Bank of Switzerland to get an interim loan.

In Indian villages, mothers pledged their ceremonial gold chain as the last resort to usurious moneylenders. Mother India was in the same position.

A combination of factors came attacking at the same time:

1. Loss of Soviet Union as the key trading partner: Most countries in the world depend on the global economy for a wide variety of things. India depends on West Asia for our oil, South Africa for its gold, the US for our technology, South east Asia for vegetable oil, etc. To buy these items from the world market, India needs US dollars - the global

currency of trade. The only way to earn dollars is by selling enough of our stuff in the global economy (exports).

Since the 1960s, India depended on the Soviet Union for our exports - as we failed to develop good economic relationships with the US and Western Europe. It was a good going for a while (India and the Soviets) until the proverbial sh*t started to hit the fan. In the late 1980s, the Soviet Union started to crack and by 1991 they were split into 15 nations (Russia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, etc). Now, India had a major problem because our primary buyer was in turmoil. Exports were down significantly.

2. Oil shock from the gulf war: Meanwhile, there was this guy Saddam Hussein, who had his misadventure into Kuwait in 1990. This led the US to war with Iraq in early 1991. Oil fields started to burn and ships found it hard to reach the Persian gulf. Iraq and Kuwait were our big suppliers of oil. The war led to destruction of India's oil imports and prices shot up substantially - doubling in a few months.

3. Domestic Trouble: In the late 1980s India's political system was imploding. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was involved in a series of troubles - Bofors scandal, IPKF misadventure, Shah Bano case that eventually led to his ousting in 1989. What followed were two more terrible leaders who were as unstable as they were incompetent. This had a huge effect on the Indian economy that was totally forgotten in the political crisis. In 1991, this stop-gap government crashed. Until Narasimha Rao was sworn as Prime Minister in 1991, the Indian economy was left in gross neglect.

Thus, 1991 was the year of perfect storm. This triple crisis brought India on its knees. On the one end, India's primary buyer was gone. On the other hand, its primary sellers were in war. In the middle, its production was effectively stopped by political crisis. India was running out of dollars to buy essential items like crude oil and food from the rest of the world. This is termed a Balance of Payments Crisis - meaning India was not able to balance its accounts - exports were significantly less than imports.

On that eventful night in July 1991, Indian leaders had no choice but to turn volte-face on Nehruvian economics and Indira Gandhi's nationalization drives.

On July 24, 1991, the Finance Minister announced the landmark budget. I was an eight-year-old in a small village, 2,000 kilometers from the Indian capital. However, I could sense people's excitement. Everyone was glued to their television sets. It was more tense than a hypothetical World Cup cricket final between India and Pakistan. History was being made, just as Nehru's.

A new India was born. It was messy, ugly, and little. But, it held a lot of promise!

I do not minimise the difficulties that lie ahead on the long and arduous journey on which we have embarked. But as Victor Hugo once said, "no power on earth can stop an idea whose time has come". I suggest to this august House that the emergence of India as a major economic power in the world happens to be one such idea. Let the whole world hear it loud and clear. India is now wide awake. We shall prevail. We shall overcome.

— Budget Speech, July 24, 1991

1. Companies were allowed to issue stocks and set prices without the government's

approval. Thereby heralding the rise of the Bombay Stock Exchange as a serious institution in charge of helping companies raise money from the public.

2. India did away with many of the import restrictions. Until 1991, it imposed a 400% customs duty on many products. Industries had to beg to get an essential ingredient imported. By 1991, the duties on many products were reduced substantially. This brought new growth in our industries.
3. Import licensing was abolished. Until 1991, you needed a license to import anything and this license was very hard to get.
4. The government did away with the production, licensing in many industries. Until 1991, you needed government's permission in what to produce and how much to produce. In one stroke, the restriction was removed in many industries.
5. Manmohan abolished gold smuggling (a key feature of 1970s & 80s era Bollywood movies) in one go. He effectively allowed Indian expats to bring back five kilos of gold with them with no duty. Now, very few had a reason to smuggle gold and electronics.
6. Singh and Rao allowed foreign investors to come. Until then India was living in the paranoia of the East India company. Many sectors were opened for foreign investment and collaboration. Now, companies like Coke and Microsoft could come in. Suddenly, the Bombay Stock Exchange found a life.
7. The government started selling some of its businesses to the private. This brought cash and a new round of efficiency.

Immediate Euphoria

One of the biggest credits that the Prime Minister should be given is in his assembly of a star team. His team had little experience in politics, but lots in economics and finance. The team was shielded and shepherded by the expert tactician, Rao. The Prime Minister protected his team from external attacks and let them create India's destiny.

1. Communications were opened up. Star TV entered India and suddenly the Dish revolution caught on to India in no time. We found a new way to see the world, besides what Doordarshan gave us.
2. New airlines came up. Until that time we had only Indian Airlines serving the local routes. In 1992, Jet Airways and other private airlines came up. Some of these new airlines (like the East West airlines, Damania, Modiluft) were very good in customer service. In three years from then, they would all be gone though.
3. Stock market freed up. In those times, people used to say "there is only one thing you must always do in the stock market. Buy Reliance." IPO (called the initial issue back then) fever caught on. Suddenly, my parents and all my friends' parents started playing this new game. I found a new interest in this new kind of sports scores. The year 1994 was the peak (when Harshad Mehta ruled the market).
4. Indian entrepreneurs began to dream. People found new ways to deal with the world. One of my uncles got on the cover of Fortune about the rise of Indian executives.
5. Real estate shot up. In the early 1990s, real estate started getting giddy. The market peaked around 1995.

Narasimha Rao was an unlikely hero; but he was a hero!

Mothers and Stocks

Maybe the winds of optimism caught my dad's bosses too. Just as India was changing, my childhood life was also drastically changing. In the summer of 1993, my family moved from a tiny village in the deep south to the national capital. It was a massive shift for me. New language, new culture, new attitudes.

I had never seen so many cars and computers. My neighbor's dad was talking about computer programming and I had no idea that we could buy computers at home. I had touched the computer only once before - in my primary school in 1989 - and at that time it was tightly protected. We touched as though we would touch an idol in a Hindu temple - too sacred, too powerful, too enigmatic.

I dreamed of sitting in front of it someday. But, had to wait two more years to start programming in that gizmo. We didn't even have the resources to buy even a typewriter and my school was quite poor too.

More than the money, it was the pure optimism that was infectious. At about 10, I got quite interested in the stock market. Sachin and stocks seemed to excite the most.

I helped my father invest in the new IPOs of that time - Oriental Bank of Commerce and an another company that I'm having trouble recalling. Some of the investments we did were souring. The mutual funds that my dad's bank forced him to buy - Ind Ratna and Ind Jyoti - went to their heights.

It was a time, the neighborhood aunties would all be busy chatting about the stock market and what to buy. Reliance was a stock that my mom dreamed of buying someday. Some of my father's friends made 100x returns in some of their investments.

The Bubble Burst

By 1994, India's drive for liberalization started dipping. As mentioned earlier, the liberalization didn't come out of a very enthusiastic public display, but came more out of a sullen Prime Minister's pragmatism. As the economy grew, the pressure was no more.

Pragmatism is not a good replacement for a full-blooded positive push. Rao was still a socialist at heart and took care not to hurt the sentiments of Nehruvian loyalists. The ministers carefully kept the Nehruvian language and worked at the corners. But, they could only go so far.

As the pressure from the Prime Minister reduced, the bureaucratic monkey was back on the trees. Indian stock markets and real estate markets collapsed. A number of scams were unearthed.

A number of non-banking financial instruments that mushroomed in the 1992-94 timeframe had disappeared and bam went all the investor money with it. I still remember all the crazy investment schemes on primetime TV that promised extraordinary interest rates (40% and above). They asked their gullible investors to invest into their teak farms, car dealerships, and so on.

1996 Elections

It was a surprise that Rao was able to survive five years with his slim majority. But, he did. What he didn't do was to tout the heroic things he did in 1991-93. The socialist in him took an apologetic tone to his liberalization policies. It was like apologizing for saving a million lives. He literally changed the lives of millions of poor people. I could see it right in front of me in my village.

But, the Prime Minister didn't. And that was the tragedy. In the 1996 elections, economic reform was no longer talked about. The government was on the defensive.

My dad and I were anxiously rooting for the right-wing BJP in the 1996 elections and I even convinced my grandad (a die-hard Congress supporter since Mahatma's times) to vote the same. We were expecting a restart of the engine. However, Vajpayee's government didn't last long.

At that time, my school was quite good at organizing debate contests among students. One of the topics was on the importance of economics. I was furious - should the importance of economics even be a question. In any case, that was the prevailing attitude in India.

Dream Budget 1997

On February 28, 1997, my dad called me to view the budget. I stopped the Cricket game I was playing on the streets in the twilight and joined my dad. It was another historic budget.

Finance Minister P Chidambaram announced a slew of measures to jumpstart the ailing Indian economy. The Asian economic crisis was already taking a toll on India. The reform processes were slowed down. The baby of 1991 still remained a baby. It refused to grow up and join school.

Chidambaram's budget drastically cut down the tax rates and enabled trade and investments to flow. The policies arrested the slide and prevented India from getting on to the Asian Financial Crisis.

In this note, I also want to mention the works of the Reserve Bank of India - one of the most respected institutions in India. The bank was always led by incorruptible, honorable men and while the bank could be accused of excessive conservatism, they can never be accused of recklessness. In the past 20 years, they helped India survive many financial crises around the world.

India Shining

In 1999, Vajpayee would finally get a shot at running a stable government. In the next five years, he would bring further reforms, such as new highways connecting the major cities of India - the Golden Quadrilateral - a major highway system connecting the 4 major metropolitan centers of India.

In 2004, Vajpayee looked all but certain of winning the elections. He campaigned on his record of economic reforms. However, his managers probably overdid the jubilation and that ticked the poor people off. Out of nowhere, the opposition Congress party won the race.

In its first iteration (2004-09) it did well in continuing the reforms of BJP. However, just like 1991-96, the government started slowly decaying over time. In the second term, 2009-14 they were hit by a slew of massive scandals (on allocating telecom spectrum and coal fields) that wrecked them just like it did in 1996.

This time, BJP had a much better answer than it had in 1996. Before we get on to Modi, I will briefly walk you through the economic history of the rupee.

Rupee's History

There were a few major events that changed the currency rates. Rupee has a long history dating back to the 6th century BC when Indian kings were issuing coins for trade - among the first in the world to do so. In the classic treatise of Arthashastra (3rd century BC) Chanakya mentions of Rupyarupa (silver coins) and the ways to govern it.

In 1540, the Afghan king Sher Shah Suri brought a great degree of standardization by introducing 178 gram silver coins called the Rupiyah. This was then followed by the Maratha empire and later by the East India Company.

The standard spread to the rest of Asia, and by the 20th century, Indian Rupee became the most important currency in Asia. The Indian rupee was the official currency of Dubai, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Kenya, Mauritius, Bahrain, Qatar and a few other countries.

However, after the Independence and end of colonization in the rest of Asia and Africa, the rupee's importance diminished. The protectionist attitudes of Indian governments didn't help either. Rs 1 equaled USD \$0.33 in 1947. In 2014, it equaled \$0.016 - falling over 20 times in the past 67 years. Here is how it happened.

1. **June 4, 1966.** First major devaluation. For the first two decades, India had almost a constant peg against the dollar at Rs.4.75/\$. Then things changed in 1966. India had just fought two major wars (with China and Pakistan) and had three prime ministers in three years (Nehru, Shastri, and Indira) after 17 years of one man rule. Then a major drought shook the country. Perfect storm. With nowhere to go and no more dollars, the Indian government announced a 57% depreciation of the rupee overnight from Rs.4.75/\$ to Rs.7.5/\$.
2. **1980s inflation.** From 1966 to 1980, the rupee stayed constant. However, the energy crisis in the late 1970s and gold's skyrocketing prices in early 1980s left India with no place to go (oil and gold were historically India's primary imports). Indian rupee started to slowly decline. From about 7.85/\$ in 1980 rupee reached about 17/\$ by 1991.
3. **1991 crisis.** In July 1991, India hit another major crisis. It was the biggest event in modern Indian economic history. Overnight the rupee was devalued by another 50% from about 17/\$ to about 25/\$.
4. **1993 liberalization.** In 1993, Indian finance minister Manmohan Singh let the rupee float a little freely. Translation: the rupee was allowed to be traded by traders without a forced peg such as the one kept by China. Rupee value started to slide as the government was no longer controlling the prices fully and started to reflect the reality. From about 27/\$ it slid to Rs.35/\$ by 1997.
5. **1997 Asian financial crisis.** One of the biggest events in East Asia as economies such as Thailand and Indonesia collapsed. Panic was all over the place. From about Rs. 35/\$, rupee went down to Rs.39/\$ as investors were quitting Asia enmasse.
6. **Pokhran-II 1998.** Indian Prime Minister announced the nuclear testing. US, Japan and other countries immediately imposed sanctions on India, limiting investments. In just a couple of months, the rupee sank to Rs.43/\$. Then the rupee started moving

sideways and the lowest point was reached in 2002 at Rs.48/\$ (when BSE was its lowest and real estate was listless).

7. **Good times (2000-07).** The rupee started recovering its losses and started moving up and reached about 39/\$ by 2007. Then the shit hit the fan.
8. **Financial crisis of 2007–08.** The financial crisis caused investors to quit all emerging markets, including India and pushed the rupee from 39/\$ to Rs.51/\$ by March 2009. In the next two years, the rupee recovered most of the loss due to economic optimism and rebound in US markets.
9. **European sovereign-debt crisis.** By the fall of 2011, the world noticed another financial crisis. This time in Greece, Spain, and other places. Just like other times, investors started pulling out. Another reason was that the Indian government's budget positions were getting worse (due to profligate overspending). Indian rupee sunk from Rs. 44/\$ in August 2011 to about 56/\$ by June 2012.

As the fate of the rupee danced around, Indian entrepreneurs sometimes danced in joy and other times writhed in pain. No story of Indian economy would be complete without the story of its entrepreneurs.

There are many Indian Entrepreneurs worth noting. One of the icons is Mr. Dhirubhai Ambani - founder of Reliance Industries.

Story of Dhirubhai Ambani

Good entrepreneurs usually have a family background in business. Great entrepreneurs usually have none and start from scratch. Bill Gates is the son of a lawyer. Zuckerberg is the son of a dentist. Larry Page's parents are professors. Look up most great entrepreneurs in history - Larry Ellison, Thomas Edison, Steve Jobs, Henry Ford, George Soros, Jeff Bezos - they were all first generation entrepreneurs who grew from practically nothing.

Dhirubhai Ambani is an Indian icon who did that way. He is a little more special than the American entrepreneurs above as the old world relies on connections and lineage a lot, lot more than the new world.

Dhirubhai started out as a trader importing polyester fabric and exporting spices. The small dowry he got and experience he acquired working in the Middle East, helped him a bit to get started.

Trading was not a sexy thing those days. Only uneducated people and very rich kids without much drive were dabbling in there. There was not enough competition for someone as smart and as fierce as Dhirubhai. Once he mastered polyester trading, he moved upstream to start producing fabric and downstream to directly brand this fabric to customers.

His apparel brand - Vimal - created a sensation in the 1970/80s. Vimal brought in top fashion designers to build the aesthetic appeal, focused a lot on fabric quality, made really sexy promotions and got a whole bunch of top models and cricketers to endorse.

Then he expanded the polyester business and started producing the things needed to make the polyester (as India's import rules were quite harsh) such as petrochemicals.

Besides the product innovation, he also utilized the financial markets to the full extent. His company went to IPO in 1977 (when India's stock markets were very small) and really used the power of common investors. When I was young, my parents would always be chatting about how everyone should own Reliance stock - it took stock markets to the masses.

Dhirubhai had the dream to break in a market with too much connections, the persistence to stay through the Indian government's moronic policies, the innovative ability (both in product and finance) and finally the luck (from the dowry to being at a time when the Indian economy was exploding).

Just as Dhirubhai was shaking up business, a fellow Gujarati had started shaking up Indian politics.

Chapter 12: The Great Political Tamasha

May 16th 2014

None of us at home could sleep that night. Although we were living in Boston, we felt the sense of excitement that was spreading in India. By the end of the day, history was made. Modi became the first Prime Minister in 26 years to have a decisive majority.

It was a sense of victory. Historian Patrick French did a research on Indian MPs of the Parliament elected in 2009 and found it was sliding into hereditary. It was depressing.

- Every MP in the Lok Sabha or the lower house of the Indian parliament under the age of 30 had inherited a seat.
- More than two thirds of the 66 MPs aged 40 or under are hereditary MPs.
- Every Congress MP under the age of 35 was a hereditary MP.
- Nearly 40% of the 66 ministers who are members of the Lok Sabha were hereditary members.
- Nearly 70% of the women MPs have family connections.

In 2014, the situation changed significantly from the past. It was quite a break from the past as Modi, the “conservative”, appealed to modernity, while Rahul Gandhi, the “progressive”, was stuck in the past. In this chapter let us look at some lessons from history-defining elections.

1. A Brief Introduction to Indian Political Parties

Broad ideology:

Since the French revolution, political parties across the world are categorized into left and right. Originally it used to mean the seating arrangement in Estates General of France (people who sat on the right supported monarchy and people on the left sympathized with the revolutionaries).

Left: Parties that support communism/socialism. Sometimes they have a progressive outlook towards science and social values, but have a huge suspicion on businesses. They want government's involvement in businesses and economy, but not as often on the society (civil liberties). CPI and CPI (M) kind of lefties, although they don't believe that much in civil liberties.

Right: Parties that are conservative and believe in the traditional values. They believe in religion, businesses, and capitalism. They want government's involvement in society, but not businesses. BJP is on the right.

No major ideology: This encompasses all the rest of Indian parties. Usually they are anti-business and thus bucketed into the "center-left" category meaning they are a confused lot who sometimes side to the left. Congress falls in it.

Size and Spread: In India, if a party has a sizable presence in four or more states, it is considered a national party. There are officially six of them in India as of 2014: Congress, BJP, Communist Party of India (CPI), Marxist Communist Party (CPI M), Bahujan Samaj party, and Nationalist Congress party. Although there are six official national ones, only two are considered truly national: Congress and the BJP.

Beyond the six national parties, there are a few hundred regional parties. These parties primarily appeal to their own region/language. For instance, DMK/AIADMK believe in Tamil superiority and Trinamool Congress does the same for Bengalis. Regional parties are in general, far more corrupt than the national ones.

Major Parties

Congress Party: A center-left party that was founded by legendary men and women in 1885. To compensate for the positives of the great leaders of the past, the party has elected Ms. Sonia Gandhi. On a more serious note, Congress is dominated by people closely associated with past leaders (sons, grandsons, in-laws, assistants, chamchas). Positives: The party has a better record in avoiding caste-politics and is slightly neutral when it comes to religion.

Bharatiya Janata Party: An offshoot of RSS (a right wing social unit), BJP is a party that rose to power in the 1980s to represent the middle class and conservative Hindus. Somewhere they lost the way and have become a confused lot, torn between pro-business units and pro-Hindutva units. Many of their new crop of leaders are clean and agile (such as a CMs of Goa and Chhattisgarh). Given its conservative stance on a few issues, it is the

party that Indian media loves to bash the most. Disparagingly called the Brahmin-Baniya Party, although the party has recently brought more of other castes. Positives: The party has a good development record and tries to avoid regional fightings.

Communists: They are traditionally dominant in the states of Kerala, West Bengal, and Tripura. Mainly backed by worker unions, student organizations, and confused elites. They are typically anti-business and anti-West. Positives: Arguably they are pro-environment and worker rights.

2. Defining elections

1951 Elections

This was the first national election with the new Constitution. Nehru was virtually unopposed as his primary rival, Patel, passed away the previous year. The elections were held over a very long period - about five months from October 1951 to February 1952. Very few parties had energy to campaign over such a long period.

A range of socialist parties sprung up that started tapping on the general socialist/communist mindset of the world back then. However, these parties were competing against each other and effectively split the votes. Nehru steamrolled the other parties and formed the government.

An interesting thing about the first three elections is that they had multiple seats for some of the constituencies. One constituency in West Bengal even had three seats.

1967 Elections

Nehru had easily won the 1957 and 1962 elections. However, plenty of things happened between 1962-1967. Nehru died in 1964, followed by Shastri who died in 1966. In a span of two years, India had three Prime Ministers. As we saw in Chapter 9, there was a big internal power struggle. Indira Gandhi was able to finally prevail over and bring the increasingly left-turning party members back to the fold.

1977 Elections

For the first 30 years, the Congress party had a relatively smooth sailing. Some external commentators even wondered if India is a real democracy as a single party was totally dominating the center. However, as we saw in Chapter 9, Indira Gandhi declared emergency in 1975 and brought a range of repressive measures. It was time to see if India was a real democracy or not.

And we did see. An anti-Indira alliance led by Morarji Desai swept through almost all of north India, winning 345 of the 542 seats. Indira Gandhi and her son Sanjay Gandhi could not even get elected in their own, safe seats. It was Indian democracy working with a vengeance.

For the first time in decades, India would see a new party dominate the national politics. Unfortunately, this euphoria didn't last enough. The coalition fell apart under its own weight, letting Indira come back in 1980. Since then, Janata Dal was constantly creating new parties.

1989 Elections

Indira's death in 1984 led to a huge sympathy wave that brought Rajiv Gandhi with an unprecedented majority that even his mother and grandfather could not achieve. However, in just five years Rajiv would throw it all away.

Bofors gun scandal, botching up of Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF), and the rising religious tensions following the Shah Bano case and rising frenzy around the Babri Masjid issue all took care to submerge Rajiv's government.

The 1989 elections had many elements of the 1977 elections. Yet again, the socialists and the nationalists came together to form a coalition. Yet again, the coalition would collapse in two years. Interestingly, when such a coalition was formed in 1996, it again collapsed in two years. If you are forming a socialist coalition, two years is an unlucky interval.

1999 Elections

The decade following 1989 was a test of coalitions and political horse trading. Uttar Pradesh leader Mayawati boldly predicted that the Vajpayee government that took power in 1998 would not last more than 13 months, referring to his previous government in 1996 that could just last 13 days. Mayawati was right and she was helped in the assertion by some erratic decision making by the Tamil leader, Jayalalitha.

By September 1999 things however changed. In the previous year, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee boldly took India as a nuclear power by testing nuclear weapons in the desert sands of Pokhran in Western India. He also could claim victory over Pakistan in the mountains of Kargil in Jammu & Kashmir.

Indian people were relatively impressed with Vajpayee's achievements and were in any case tired of constant coalition tamasha. Vajpayee led the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) to 270 seats among 542 seat Parliament. Congress was given the worst drubbing in India's democratic history. Although Vajpayee lost some votes overall, he got 16 more seats than he won in 1998. Still one short of the required count and was saved by Telugu Desam party.

With a much better showing, Vajpayee was able to run a government for the entire term of five years. The coalition partners were more stable this time and they also sensed that they cannot afford to keep spending money on elections every few months.

2004 Elections

After a long time, a government was able to complete the entire term and also end on a relatively high note. The economy was growing and there was a real improvement in the ground. However, BJP got too carried away by such a strength.

They went on a political campaign termed "India Shining" that portrayed India's growing economy. Unlike the more depressing slogans centered on poverty, scandals, corruption and violence, the elections made a significant shift focusing predominantly on optimism. The party was practically confident of winning again gaining confidence by all the poll surveys.

However, the celebration was too soon - both for the economy and for the party. The economic growth had still not reached 90% of the populace and for many Indians the campaign looked like a slap in the face. The overconfidence also cost the party significantly.

Out of nowhere Sonia Gandhi took Congress to victory. There was a minor controversy about whether the Italian born person should become the Prime Minister of India. Finally, she brought her deputy Manmohan Singh as the Prime Minister.

2014 Elections

After 10 years of rule, anti-incumbancy was bound to attack. Congress party that had won quite comfortably in 2009 had gotten itself mired in a range of scandals ranging from the auction of telecom spectrum to coal mines. The leadership was also weakened with Manmohan Singh stepping down and his replacement Rahul Gandhi appeared undercooked to lead either the nation or the party.

BJP's candidate Narendra Modi sensed this opportunity and brought an invincible campaign that brought the full power of technology and social media to the core. His opponents were left clutching outdated microphones and outdated campaign manifestos.

3. Key Trends in Indian elections

Right from the first elections in 1951-52, there was the first sign of a strong socialism - with the 3 top socialist/communist parties winning nearly 20% of the total votes. The same trend continued for the next two elections - 1957 & 1962. Congress won about 45% in each elections and communist groups won 20%.

The revolution of 1967:

Until 1967, Congress had a near total control over in both state and national politics. While the Praja Socialist party took power in Kerala in 1954, Congress still dominated most of India. However, the death of Nehru and Shastri would loosen the grip of Congress. It would happen from many causes.

One reason is that Indira Gandhi called early elections for the Lok Sabha and thus separated the electoral synchronization between the centre and state. Until then, the elections both at the nation and at the regional level were conducted at the same time. This gave more room for national issues. However, by removing this relationship, it allowed much more parochial and caste wise issues to affect the regional level. We are still seeing some of the effects now.

In 1965, the Indian Constitution's protection for English was to end. The Constitution framers negotiated for 15 years of parallel usage of English & Hindi and that 15 years from the enactment of the constitution was to end (1950-65). Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri initially hesitated to continue the protection and that engulfed South India.

Out of nowhere, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam under CN Annadurai took power in 1967, fully leveraging the anti-Hindi agitations. Since then, Congress and national parties of India were never able to win in Tamil Nadu.

In the same year, Congress also lost grip on West Bengal. The lack of speed in land reforms brought out a big communist unrest (Naxalbari revolution) and also broke up Congress in the state to form the Bangla Congress which formed a government with the Communists. With a decade after that, Congress would be completely bundled away from the state.

In 1967, Punjab had Akali Dal taking power. In Uttar Pradesh, Charan Singh led Bharatiya Kranti Dal took power. As a result of all the regional parties arising in various parts of India, Indira Gandhi barely managed a majority in 1967 winning only 283 seats.

Breakup of Congress & Left Shift

Congress was already breaking in 1967 and there were huge differences between the left wing and the right wing of the party. The establishment under Kamaraj initially threw out Indira, but with the power of the rising left wing Indira came back to power under her new party Indian National Congress (R).

Since Indira had the support of the socialists and need to pander to them, she brought a variety of leftie moves such as nationalizing all the banks & a closer cooperation with the Soviet Union. Panic set among Indian industrialists and for two decades the Indian private sector would not recover. Indira won a thumping victory in 1971.

Emergency period

Indira seemed to get a hang of things with a resounding victory over Pakistan in 1971, bursting the Pokhran bomb and supporting the green revolution. However, her past karma caught up with her.

The Allahabad High Court nullified the election of Indira Gandhi over a trifling issue (of having a slightly high rostrum during a rally) and prevented her from standing in elections for a while.

The lady got angry and put India through a very bleak state that got the outsiders to assume that the democracy was over. Fortunately, it was not.

In 1977 elections happened and Indira was voted out. India got out of Congress for the first time. The hodgepodge of left and right won 345 of the 543 seats. Before they could celebrate, their internal rivalries got the best of them and the coalition collapsed.

Indira was back.

Age of Coalitions

After Rajiv absolutely screwed both India and his party in the 1989 elections, a hodgepodge of left and right came to power. The new government brought the OBC politics to the table and signals the rise of a new political power center. The controversy created out of Mandal Commission broke the coalition and Congress was back to power in 1991.

This time, finally we had a guy who is not a member of the Nehru family. India did well in the economy as Narasimha Rao led the country well, especially the first 3 years of his term. The last two years, he was too engrossed in the various scams that eventually took his legacy apart.

In 1996 election, yet another group of third parties came to power and yet another time they failed in 2 years.

Rise of BJP

For a long time, BJP was in the shadows of its parent organization, RSS (National Volunteers Organization). Its organization was mostly run by some hardcore nationalists who were extremely poor in media management. They often gave outlandish, stupid statements and let the media paint them as crackheads. They found it very hard to utilize the public distrust for the Congress party.

In the late 1980s, they got real big push from an unexpected source: a TV series on

Ramayana.

In 1987, Indian TV had its biggest blockbuster - Ramanand Sagar's TV adoption of Asia's famed epic - Ramayan. The roaring success of the TV series brought "Lord Ram" into the households of the educated middle class, which for a while seemed to move completely out of religion.

BJP leader Advani lost no time in running a "chariot" atop his Toyota van all over the nation. India was in "Ram frenzy". In late 1992, they used the frenzy to demolish a dilapidated old mosque in the holy city of Ayodhya. Although, the mosque demolition brought temporary backlash against them, by 1996 they became the single largest party in the Parliament using the leadership of moderate Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

In 1998, it came to power and lost no time in taking India nuclear. In the following year, they were able to withstand a war against Pakistan over the Kashmiri town named Kargil. Nationalism was at its peak and the liberal Atal Bihari Vajpayee took India to one of the longest period of growth. By 2004, Indian economy was among the hottest in the world.

BJP gets carried away & Congress is back

In 2004 BJP appeared a juggernaut. They delivered growth, won wars and the nation was fairly peaceful. However, a big riot in Gujarat in 2002 that involved various BJP leaders was a big black mark for them. More importantly, the leadership was too confident of their victory and went overboard with their ads.

While India was fast growing, a lot of Indians were still poor. Many of them were taken aback by the ad campaign and this opened the door for the old devil. Congress leadership, now under Indira's daughter-in-law Sonia Gandhi seemed to finally fix its leadership trouble. It narrowly won the elections. Sonia appointed a dummy figure head in Dr. Manmohan Singh to avoid bringing controversies about her own past (naturalized citizen who didn't take up citizenship at the first opportunity).

India did a fairly good job in 2004-09 timeframe and people voted them back in 2009, this time with a much bigger margin. Later, a whole lot of massive scams like the 2G spectrum was unearthed and the anti-incumbency factor set in.

Rise of Modi

In 2014, BJP finally had a leader who was able to work the media well. Until Modi's time, almost all media were anti-BJP for the most part. BJP and RSS were often clueless in talking to the media and thus repelled many of their target voters. Modi was adept in the art of media management and forced both BJP and RSS to not give out loose statements. The media tried really hard to bait him to give out self-defeating statements, but Modi was too smart for them. Everyone in RSS and their sister organizations knew that he was the winning horse and all decks were cleared to help Modi in every way.

Modi's rise has reversed a 3 decade trend towards regional politics. Regional parties like DMK, SP, BSP and ADMK were punching well above their league and the trend since 2014 May elections seems to be moving the other way regional satraps.

4. Evolution of Regional Politics

Starting from the 1960s, various regional parties started getting quite powerful in India.

Northeast Politics:

In the case of Northeast, a lot of political movements had their origins in grassroots social movements to protect the identity. The parties are often split along ethnic/tribal/linguistic lines. The need to protect the tribal, linguistic and cultural identities are strongest in this region. In 1961, the Bengali movement in the Barak valley fought hard against making Assamese the sole official language of the state. After much agitations various parts of erstwhile Assam were made into their own states formed along ethnic lines. Many tribal groups, such as the Bodos, are still demanding statehood for their tribes.

In many of the states in Northeast India, the government alternates between Congress and a regional rival such as the United Democratic Party (Meghalaya), Sikkim Democratic Front, Mizo National Front, Manipur People's Party, Nagaland People's Front and Asom Gana Parishad. Tripura is traditionally a communist bastion and Arunachal Pradesh is mostly is a Congress bastion.

In most states, the leaders keep changing often with not many established demagogues. Sikkim is one exception where the incumbent Pawan Kumar Chamling has been holding his ship since 1994 with no one to challenge. There is a heavy influence of socialism/communism among the political parties.

The region experiences a large inflow of migrants of different groups:

1. Bengali Muslims - Mostly from Bangladesh making use of the long porous border with India. They often end up as agricultural laborers.
2. Bengali Hindus - Both from Bangladesh as well as West Bengal, this group often dominates the service sector.
3. Marwari Hindus from various parts of India who compete in trade and commerce.

The resulting unemployment and cultural cleansing thus makes it a very touchy issue. Many regional parties such as the Asom Gana Parishad made their mark by whipping the anti-outsider sentiment.

Key issues that are unique to northeast politics are:

1. Managing migrations. The indigenous tribes often feel threatened by the migration of plains people, especially the Bengalis.
2. Fighting separatism. The region has the most number of separatist groups in India. The region borders 5 different countries and that makes policing quite hard. Many political groups had long fought to secede from India and a lot of them have significantly pacified now. But, tensions remain.
3. The nature of special provisions provided to the armed forces.
4. Protecting the various tribal practices. The region is among the most diverse in India.

5. Religious conversions. Various tribes such as the Nagas and Mizos have mostly converted to Christianity through a major evangelical push a century ago. This had led to tensions with tribes following indigenous religions.

Western Politics:

India's western state politics is often dominated by religious issues. The western states bore the biggest brunt of India's partition in 1947 and thus religious tensions run very high. There are plenty of Hindu refugees from Pakistan who are passionately pro-BJP. Other than Shiv Sena, there are no viable regional parties in the entire Western region.

In the case of Maharashtra, although Congress dominated the state politics for the most part, the regional party of Shiv Sena built around the same anti-outsider platform of many northeastern parties, often held sway over the western part of the state, especially the city of Mumbai.

Gujarat's and Rajasthan's regional elections often mirrored the national elections. These states often held clues of where the nation would head politically. Congress won whenever it won the center and vice versa. However, since the arrival of Narendra Modi in 2001 Gujarat had become the safest one for BJP. Rajasthanis on the other hand, religious vote BJP and Congress in an alternative fashion in the recent 5 elections.

Although Karnataka is geographically a part of the south, in politics it is more closer to western India. Unlike other southern states, national politics hold the sway in the state. Like Maharashtra and Gujarat, the state is often a key battleground between the Congress and the various Janata variants, including the present BJP.

Politics of Kerala and West Bengal:

Although these states are 1000 kilometers apart, Kerala and West Bengal are similar in a lot of ways. From their passion for football to the domination of fish in their diet, these two states stand out in a lot of things from the rest of India. In case of politics, these are the two states that vote for the Communist Party.

In the case of Kerala, the flirtation with Communism started soon after independence with the rise of the veteran socialist Pattom A. Thanu Pillai as the second Chief Minister of the state. Unions hold a very big sway over all political parties and the voters religious alternate between Communist Party and the Congress in every other election. There is not much to differentiate between the two, in this state.

West Bengal politics is somewhat similar, although the voters didn't alternate between the two parties. Between 1977 and 2011, they voted for a single party - Communist Party of India (Marxist) and was often mocked by mainstream media as a communist republic. Long periods of past famines and the lack of speed in land reforms is one reason for people's support for leftist ideas.

Politics of Hindi Heartland

This is the most populous part of India and dominates the national politics. More than any other region, caste mathematics make a very strong influence on the politics here. Both the top national parties - Congress and BJP have had a strong presence here, although since the start of the new millennium, Congress presence is waning. Thus, the recent contests were often fought between BJP and various local parties.

Bihar had a very active political movement and along with the state of UP often decided the national politics. In return, the national government often had a strong grip on the state. However, as Congress started losing control over the Centre, the politics of Bihar went on a roller coaster. In the period between 1968 and 1980, the state was constantly having elections with no party unable to form a stable government. In 1977, Bihar voted out Congress and since then the different variants of the Janata Party have been ruling the state.

Both in the case of Bihar and UP, mindboggling alliances of different castes kept forming at opportune movements and turned the tide. Sometimes, the Dalits and Muslims will join hands to get to power, like in the case of Mayawati (former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh). Other times Brahmins, Muslims and extremely backward Dalits will join a coalition against Dalits and Other Backward Castes. This complex caste dynamic has often made it hard to predict electoral victories.

In the case of UP, the added dynamic is the rise of “Ram politics” that we will see shortly. Religion plays a much bigger role in UP than it does in Bihar or Madhya Pradesh. Given that the state had a central role in both Hindu epics as well as Mughal empire, it becomes a strongly contended territory between Hindus and Muslims.

Politics of North India

Like in the south and northeast, regional parties are quite strong. Jammu & Kashmir is dominated by National Conference, which was instrumental in getting the state to integrate with India. Between 1990 and 1996, the state was directly ruled by the Central government in the heights of insurgency. The Centre argued that the state is incapable of managing law and order. It was among the longest use of the special powers provided by the Indian Constitution.

Just like in the case of northeast, Punjab politics was often driven by identity and there is a constant switch between Congress and the regional party of Akali Dal. In 1966, Indira Gandhi rewarded the Sikhs with their own state following the 1965 war. This was a long agitation as the Sikhs felt disenfranchised in an united Punjab with majority Hindus. The resulting split created the state of Haryana. In the 1970s and 1980s, the state went through a strong separatist movement, until the “super cop” KPS Gill brought the insurgency to an end in the early 1990s.

The politics of Haryana was mostly dominated by the Congress which fought regional factions such as Haryana Vikas Party and Indian National Lok Dal. Like in the case of Bihar, caste politics do play a strong part. Since about 2012, the state political climate is radically changing both due to the influence of neighboring New Delhi and a total disappointment with state politicians. In a surprising show in the October 2014 elections, BJP formed the government.

Politics of South India & Orissa

The three distinguishing characteristics of politics in this region are:

1. Very strong dynastic rule, especially in Orissa, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.
2. Very strong identity towards that state. State/linguistic identity is much stronger than ethnic, caste, tribal and religious identities.
3. Given the strong state level patriotism, the push towards development is a little strong although Orissa and Andhra suffer from a deeply forested interior.

In the case of Orissa, the politics was dominated by two rival Patnaik families - one of late Biju Patnaik and other of JB Patnaik. In the case of Tamil Nadu, the politics switched between the Karunanidhi clan and the MGR clan. In the case of Andhra Pradesh, the family of late NT Rama Rao hold a big sway.

In all the southern states linguistic passions run very high and primary identity is through the language.

5. Key Political Slogans

Econo centric

1. Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan [Hail the Soldier, Hail the Farmer] - In the midst of the 1965 war with Pakistan, the Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri coined this slogan to improve the morale. It is to highlight the two critical aspects of Indian society - the farmers who were reeling from a series of famines and soldiers who were fighting an endless stream of major wars in the early part of 1960s [with Portugal, China and Pakistan]. Congress made use of the slogan in the 1967 elections.
2. Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan, Jai Vigyan [Hail the soldier, farmer and the sciences] - In 1998, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee made an update to Shastri's slogan by adding the sciences part. India tested the nuclear device and there was a high level of nationalism in that period with nuclear & defense tech forming a significant part of people's discussions.
3. Garibi Hato [Abolish Poverty] - In 1971, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi created this catchy slogan to indicate her priority. India was going through its worst economic period and there was a significant pain among the poor all over India. India had turned clearly socialist by then and politicians of all stripe shifted left. The slogan captures that trend. All said, there was very little of poverty abolishing in that era.
4. India Shining - In 2004, the ruling BJP government went on the complete opposite of Indira's slogan. India had turned right by then and Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee wanted to utilize the general sense of euphoria that followed a period of brisk economic growth. However, they declared victory too soon. While India started to shine, it was a long way from actually shining. It spooked the poor and Vajpayee lost the elections.
5. Congress ka Haath, Aam Aadmi ke Saath [The Hand symbol of Congress will always protect the common man] In 2004, Congress was desperate for a misstep by the BJP and they got one with "India Shining". Congress reminded the people that poverty still exists and the party would fight for the proverbial "common man".

Leader centric

1. Indira Hatao Desh Bachao [Remove Indira; Save the nation] - In 1977, Indian society was slowly emerging from the political horror show of Emergency. There was a very real fear that India would follow the autocratic ways of its neighbors. At this critical juncture, veteran politician JP Narayanan coined this slogan and won the election.
2. Ek sherni, sau langur [One Tigress, hundred monkeys] - In 1978 by-elections in the southern constituency of Chikmagalur, Indira was staging a comeback. She was highlighting her bravery and played the victim card of how she was surrounded now. She also explicitly called out the confusing politics at the centre as the anti-Indira coalition found themselves in a pickle - with little common between them.
3. Jab Tak Suraj Chand Rahega, Indira Tera Naam Rahega [As long as the Sun is shining, Indira's name would live] - In 1984, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi wanted rode the sympathy wave following Indira Gandhi's assassination. India was not used

to political assassinations and the only major one before that was the 1948 assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. Thus, people were in a state of shock and the Congress party completely milked the sympathy with a historic majority. Indira's name was everywhere.

4. Sabko Dekha Bari Bari, Abki Bari Atal Bihari [We have seen everyone. Now, it's the turn of Atal Bihari] - In 1996, there was a strong anti-incumbency trend. India has had a variety of coalition governments in the previous 7 years and there was an electoral fatigue. BJP wanted to make use of the clean image of Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The plan almost worked with the BJP emerging as the largest party in the Parliament. However, its government lasted a mere 13 days and had to wait 2 years to form a stable government.
5. Jancha, Parkha, Khara [Tried, Tested, Trusted] In the 1999 elections, Prime Minister Vajpayee ran against Rajiv's widow Sonia Gandhi. He wanted to highlight his experience against the greenhorn Ms. Gandhi. People trusted enough to send him with a much bigger majority than they gave a year ago. He completed the full term without much fuss - a rarity in that era.
6. Ab ki baar, Modi Sarkar [This time, it's Modi's turn] - In 2014, Modi's campaign primarily centered around him and his leadership credentials. This level of leader-centrism is unusual even in a persona-centric Indian politics. The slogan and the campaign was a roaring success.

Social issues centric

1. Ondre Kulam, oruvane thevan [Mankind is one. God is One] - In the 1967 elections, CN Annadurai broke away from the atheistic Dravidian movement to adopt the slogan of the Tamil religious saint, Maraimalai Adigalar. There was a strong anti-caste stream in the first part of the slogan, while the second part of the slogan went against his mentor Periyar's anti-God movement. The slogan eventually took Tamilnadu firmly into Dravidian politics.
2. Tilak, taraju aur talwar, Inko maaro joote chaar [Hit the Brahmins, Banias and Rajputs with shoes] In the 1990s, UP leader Mayawati brought the most casteist slogan of all by going explicitly at the top 3 categories of the Hindu caste system. She rode to power by galvanizing the lower caste votes.
3. Maa, Mati, Manush [Mother, Motherland and Mankind] - In the 2009 elections in West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee ran with this slogan that portrayed her credentials as the proverbial mother fighting to save the state from the Communists. A few other top female politicians like Jayalalitha Jayaram of Tamilnadu also use the sentimental value of the mother.
4. Jai Telangana [Long live Telangana] - One of the longest running statehood movements culminated in 2014 with the creation of the separate state of Telangana formed out of the erstwhile Hyderabad state. It was among the most passionate movements in India with the supporters writing the slogan even on answers sheets in school examinations.

6. Key Issues that influence election outcomes

1. Inflation - In 1998, the price of onion shot up to Rs.40/kg [approx. \$1/kg at that time] in many parts of India. The ruling BJP lost Delhi. In 2003, Congress lost the states of Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh for the same reason. Indian voters are very sensitive to the prices of essential commodities like onion and these often decide outcomes in state elections.
2. Corruption - Since about the early 1980s, scams and corruption have come to the centre stage in political campaigns. In 1989, Congress lost from a historic majority in the previous elections due to the Bofors scam among many other issues. In 1996, Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao amidst a range of of scams such as money laundering Hawala scam. In 2014, a range of scams led by the spectrum auction destroyed the Congress campaign.

7. Lessons from the 2014 Elections

1. Social Media is key to winning the elections. As Americans found out in November 2008, social media is not disconnected from common people and has a strong influence over politics. When the Modi wave started to blow over Twitter, Facebook, and Quora two years ago, critics dismissed that as clueless rich kids blabbering things. They said, Congress still has a grip over the poor people who are beyond the social media. They have all been proven wrong. Social media reflects the opinions of common people, far more than people realize. Also, the rise of Obama and Modi show that marketing political ideas is not too different from marketing apps or content.

2. You can have a political startup that can get India's ears. AAP has performed well, especially in Punjab. It shows that Indian people are open to new political parties.

3. If you get too greedy, you lose your existing position. In January, AAP had a great hold over Delhi. They got a historic opportunity to form their own government. They threw it all away with clown politics and have been swept clear of Delhi. Don't try to bite more than you can chew. Had they put all their energies in just Punjab, Haryana, and Delhi instead of fighting the ghosts of Modi all over India, AAP performance could have been better. Good that they didn't have that common sense.

4. Don't run politics on negative things. Other than Modi, every other politician was anti-something. Anti-corruption, Anti-communalism, blah blah blah. Instead of telling what they will do, they were just saying what they were against. People have clearly shown that they don't like this kind of stuff.

5. It's the economy, stupid. At a time when India was facing a major economic challenge, both Congress and AAP came up with a crappy manifesto that said little of their economic agenda. You don't run a party with a toilet paper manifesto.

6. Exaggerating things doesn't help. In the past five years, many parties have casually thrown around Hitler references to Modi and genocide references to the Gujarat riots. This kind of stupid exaggeration doesn't help anyone and has made people increasingly numb to any accusations against Modi. Even legitimate criticism against Modi was no longer taken seriously. The more they accused Modi with ridiculous terms, the more united India got behind Modi. Had the media and left not used those crazy terms, BJP would have submerged Modi with their own internal rifts. Thanks to the media, Modi could escape from BJP's old faults.

7. Don't forget your voters. For years, Kapil Sibal's gang were running a game of death against social media. In the process, they completely lost track of reality. They became numb to what people thought of them. They thought that their "secular credentials" would win them votes.

8. Don't forget the majority. Throughout this election, politicians talked more about the minority than the majority. They wore skull caps, professed secularism, talked of Dalits and so on. In this process, they ignored the needs and aspirations of the majority. AAP put the rights of the Valmiki community right at the top of their agenda. It is important to fight

for the rights of the oppressed. However, creating a national party with promises to just one community is a very risky gambit and again they have not done anything beyond a lipservice. In the process they also made the majority worried. While Congress, AAP, and Third parties fought hard for the Muslim and Dalit votes, the field became very clear for BJP to take the majority like a piece of cake. Eventually, even the Muslims and Dalits deserted Congress and third front as Modi charmed them with his economic agenda.

9. Personality matters. Throughout the 20th century, there was a move towards institutions. Politics and governance was taken over by parties, business by corporations, and administration by committees. These non-human entities had a big control. However, since the turn of the 21st century, we are returning back to the era of personalities. Although Jobs held only a fraction of Apple's shares, all the business media was fixated on him. Obama built a cult personality in the 2008 election. And now Modi. People like to associate with other humans, than some amorphous entity like a corporation, party, or committee.

10. Start small and then scale it. Until 2014, Modi didn't stand in national elections. He was contended to be a regional politician. He had no interest for party leadership and other BS. However, he did work really hard to create a model state in Gujarat. Since he has put all his energies into just one project, he was able to excel in that. The state is not perfect, but has given the rest of India a clear idea of what Modi could do. And when he was ready to scale what he did in Gujarat, India said yes. Every new political party must learn this from Modi - create a success story in one region and when you are ready to scale ask the rest of India for their votes.

Chapter 13: From Bullock Carts to Mars

February 2003

I was in a state of panic. Life didn't prepare me for this. A week ago I didn't know I would be there. But, there I was sitting in the corridor of the President's office in the palatial Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi. In a few minutes, I would get to meet my idol and hero, President APJ Abdul Kalam. I was sitting alone and had just finished an elaborate etiquette training on how to sip tea in front of the President. Then my time came. I was asked to enter a hallowed office, behind which Dr. Kalam was poring over some research papers. I could not believe that I was sitting in front of the person who helped build Indian space and nuclear tech.

Ten years since then, India launched a spacecraft to Mars and if it lands right will become only the second nation after the US to have a successful Mars landing.

Why is Dr. Kalam so respected? What are the key things that happened? Let's go 40 years earlier. To 1963.

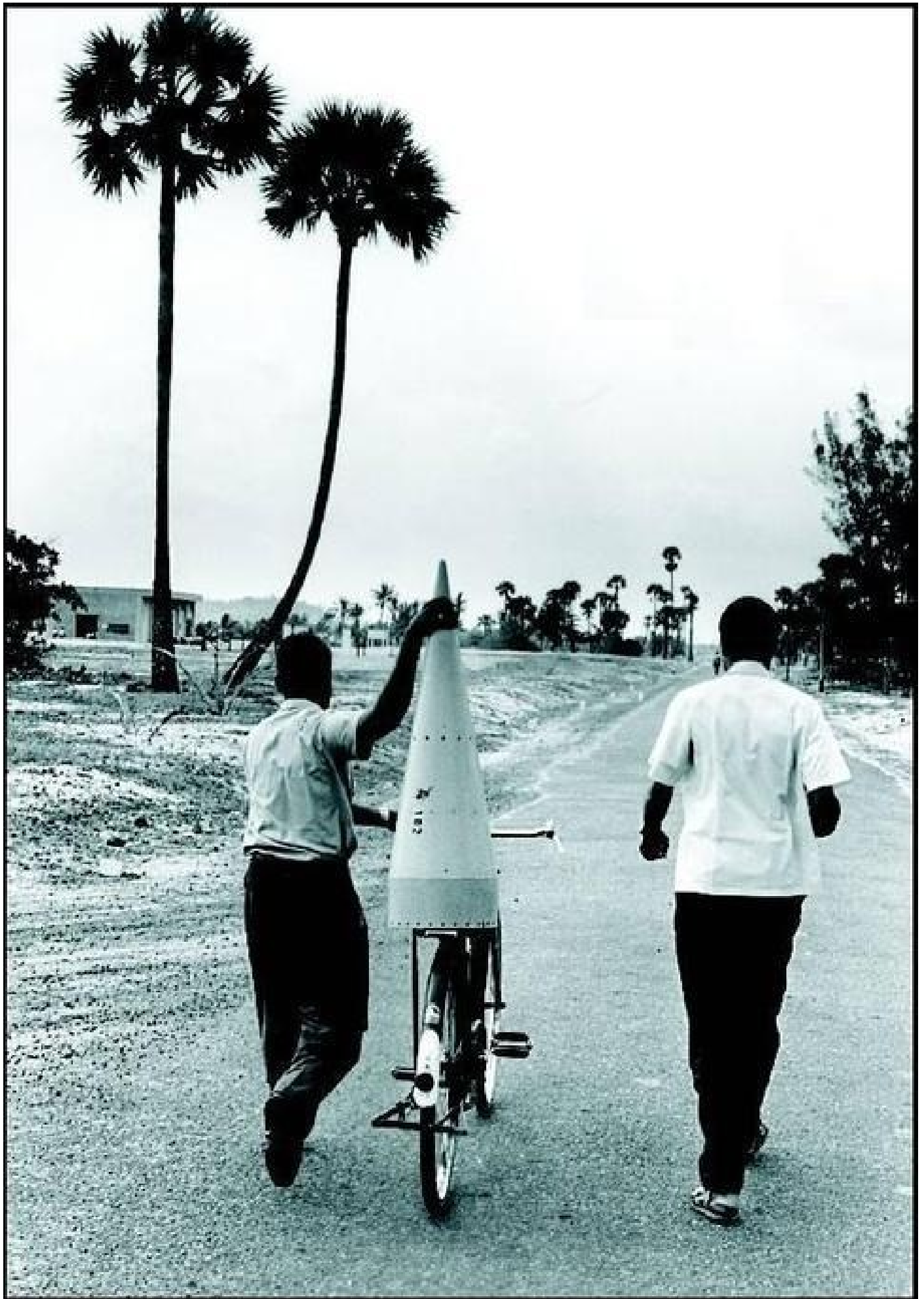
A few months after India's disastrous performance in the 1962 border war with China, a group of scientists led by Dr. Homi Bhabha, father of India's nuclear program and Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, a top physicist wanted India to experiment with space technology. Only a few years before then had the Soviet Union launched its first satellite - Sputnik - beginning a space race.

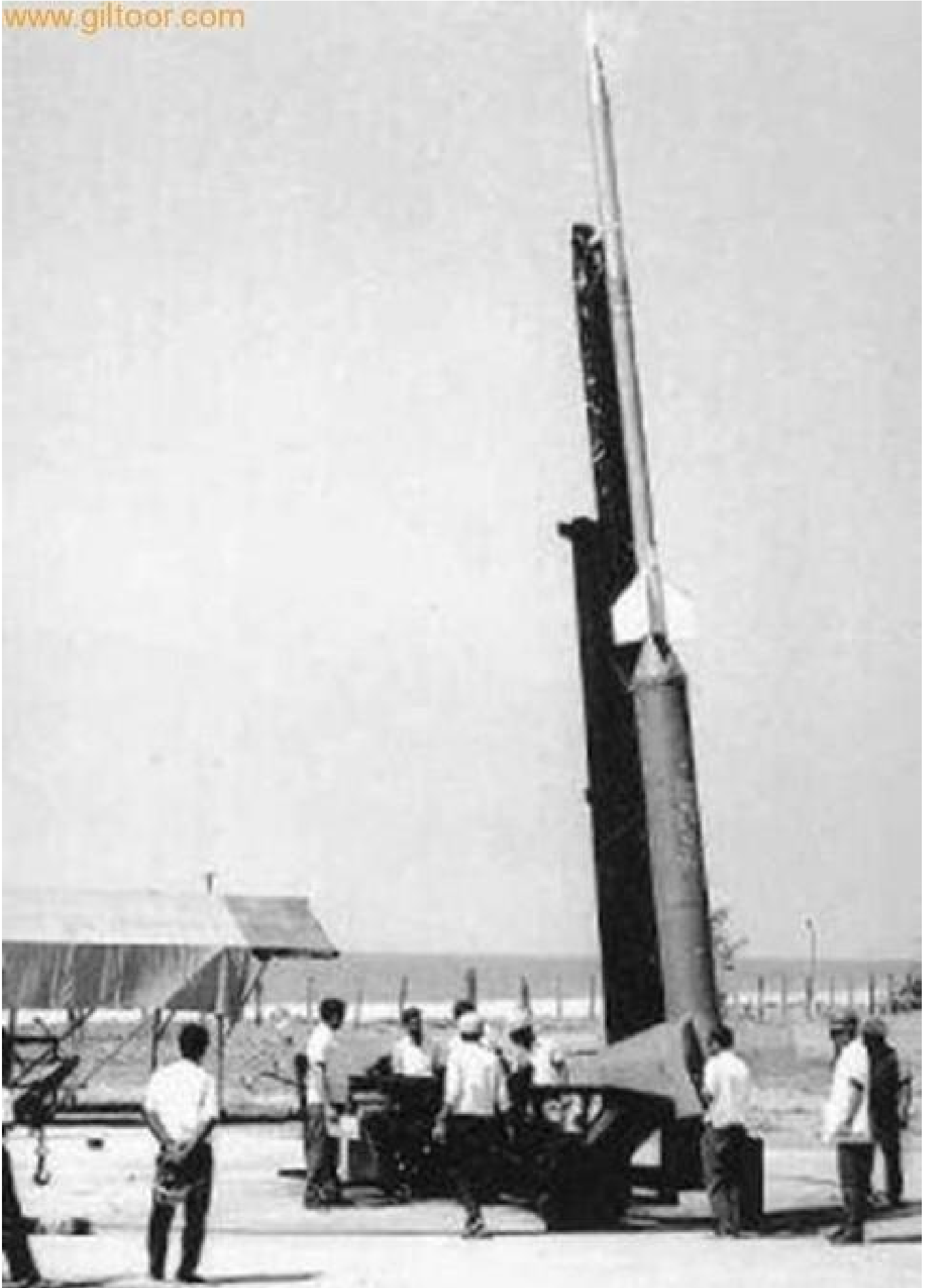
India's ambitions were more humble. The scientists wanted to understand climatic patterns better. For their experiment, they chose a location closer to the southern tip of the country, in the village of Thumba in Kerala. It was a sleepy village surrounded by coconut trees. The location was chosen due to its proximity to the magnetic equator [a little different from its more popular cousin - geographic equator] that allowed a range of experiments to be conducted in the ionosphere of earth's atmosphere.

The first rocket to be launched was a two-stage sounding rocket - Nike Apache - procured from the NASA of the United States. The Kennedy administration was closer to India than any other US administration and thus India got a chance to expand its sciences with a little push from outside.

The place had little infrastructure. The scientists wanted to keep it fairly quiet. This meant that many of the rocket parts had to be carried through unconventional means - like a bicycle. A cattle shed became the temporary location for the rocket scientists to begin their operations.

On November 21, 1963, these scientists had their first success. The Nike-Apache rocket headed up from the Thumba Equatorial Rocket Launching Station [TERLS]. The sounding rocket was a success and thus began India's quest for space. Among the rocket scientists involved in the original mission was the young, bubbly Dr. Abdul Kalam. Over the next 12 years, 350 such rockets would fly into the atmosphere, enabling the scientists to perform a range of experiments to get a better sense of the atmosphere.





Four years from the launch of the first rocket, India its one indigenous rocket - Rohini-75 -

and it was successfully flown in November 1967. On August 15, 1969, days after the Americans first landed on the Moon, India announced the creation of its formal space organization - ISRO - Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO).

While all this was happening, Indo-US relationships were increasingly turning for the worse. In 1971, India and Pakistan went on a full-scale war in which United States was overtly supporting Pakistan. The Indian space program was slowed down by the wars, However, in May 1972, India signed a space agreement with the erstwhile Soviet Union. The agreement allowed the Soviets to access Indian ports and launch vessels, while giving Indian scientists opportunities to launch their satellites from Soviet's bases.

The first of the Indian built satellites, Aryabhata I (named after the famous Indian mathematician - who contributed significantly to the usage of 0 and place value system) was launched on April 19, 1975, from Kapustin Yar in southwest Russia. Within four days of its launch its power system failed. However, it was still a significant achievement for India. It was followed by two more Russian launched, Indian satellites.

In November 1980, India was able to launch its own satellites from its new launch facility at Sriharikota near the southern metropolis of Chennai. In 1984, Rakesh Sharma became India's first Cosmonaut to head to space via a Soviet Intercosmos program.

The successes started pouring down since then. ISRO was able to launch plenty of low cost missions through its indigenous satellite launches such as PSLV and GSLV. In 2008, India's unmanned mission to the moon was able to detect water and contributed to a big breakthrough there.

How Does Spending on Space Help Reduce India's Poverty?

1. India has gotten much better at predicting storms and cyclones thanks to our weather satellites such as the INSAT 3D. That helps the poor get their lives and possessions saved. It is the poor who get really whacked in any natural disaster. Apart from disaster warning, the satellites also help do environmental research to proactively avoid disasters in the future.
2. The satellite data is also used for helping farmers plant the right stuff and fishermen locate the right areas for fishing using satellites such as the SARAL. Since most of our poor are dependent on fishing and farming, this helps directly solve poverty.
3. A lot of our poor are in remote areas and die without access to the right medical resources. When you are sick, you cannot climb out of poverty. ISRO's telemedicine works to help reduce the number of sick and that reduces poverty. Not just curing the disease, but the works on GIS also helps prevent diseases by alerting authorities of disease spread.
4. Just like telemedicine, ISRO works on tele-education. Ten years ago it launched the EDUSAT primarily built for education of the rural poor. You don't say, education doesn't help solve poverty.
5. Remote sensing data helps India tap its natural resources such as water, minerals, and energy better.
6. With the help of our satellites India has gotten better at defense and by strengthening defense we help avoid wars and that helps reduce poverty. Those cribbing about India's need for strong defense should research more on what happened to Indian society when India's defenses were weak in our long history. Heights of Indian development came only when our army was really strong (under Guptans, Mauryas, and Mughals).

Indirect Benefits to the Poor

1. Creates plenty of jobs for the poor engineers. While many of the engineers from urban upper-middle class India seek MNCs, many from poorer backgrounds join ISRO in aiding the nation. ISRO also helps India build a space ecosystem building lakhs of indirect jobs in research, academia, and industry.
2. ISRO helps India stay at the cutting edge of technology and that helps the Indian brand. If you can successfully send stuff to MARS, can't you do advanced tech work? That generates more jobs in sectors unrelated to space.
3. ISRO has built among the most advanced air guidance systems -GAGAN and this helps India in logistics and transportation.

Poverty can be solved only through job creation, technological innovation, and productivity improvement. Our expenditures on ISRO directly help address these.

Fast Forward to 2014.

India has now successfully launched its mission to Mars. The mission was achieved at an extraordinary low price tag of \$74 million - 1/10 of what a similar mission would cost NASA or ESA. If this successfully reaches Mars, India will be the first country to have the Mars mission succeed on the first try. This came under a significant attack from European and American journalists who derisively noted the lack of toilets for a nation launching such "unnecessary" experiments.

Why India Needs a MARS Program

1. It is exciting for the children and teenagers, many of whom might take up a career in science, technology and research. These kids deserve an inspiration in the sky. If we can get a couple of hundred of these kids into hard sciences, the mission would have paid for itself completely.
2. ISRO is already using the technology to help other countries put their equipments in space (for a lucrative fee, of course). If we continue to innovate in cost and speed, we could become a big hub for space projects. That would mean employment for 1000s of engineers and lot of foreign dollars.
3. India needs to prove its technological capabilities as it is building up the technology hub of the future - not just space, but everything. If you could launch a Mars mission at the cost of setting up ERP in an enterprise, you could build anything. There are both direct and intangible effects of this demonstration. This would really benefit India's tech companies. This is actually rocket science! Again more \$\$.
4. India needs to spend on research to master the science of the future. NASA had plenty of spinoffs resulting out of its space program that advanced other fields such as medicine, apparel, food, and navigation.
5. We could have made the "Model T" of spacecrafts - inexpensive and quick. The mission was completed in just 14 months and \$75 million with little prior expertise. More importantly, the mission got off the ground on the first try. China, Japan, and Russia have had to abort Mars missions in the past two decades due to launch failures. That is an outstanding engineering feat worth of salute.
6. Indians have always been fascinated by space since antiquity. Our ancient scientists spent all their lives looking at space. In recent times, scientists such as Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar (Nobel laureate in astrophysics), SN Bose (Boson was named after him) have electrified the field. This mission is deeply fascinating even from a cultural perspective.
7. Imagine the potential it has for humanity if India could launch hundreds of inexpensive missions in our search for alternative life forms and alternative planets. Four years ago, India helped confirm that there is water on the moon - the confirmation of which has eluded global researchers for five decades. This mission sent to detect methane could be the start of a new life for Indian science. Aryabhata and Bhaskaracharya would be really proud of the lads who worked on this mission.
8. India needs its Renaissance. We have to start breaking the chain of poverty by thinking outside the box. That would mean boldly assertive. People in other walks of life can surely draw inspiration from our scientists. This day is so refreshing although I have zero connection with anything ISRO did. If we can reach Mars, we can do anything - from politics and the arts to science and sports.

India's Nuclear Program

As long as the world is constituted as it is, every country will have to devise and use the latest devices for its protection. I have no doubt India will develop her scientific researches and I hope Indian scientists will use the atomic force for constructive purposes. But if India is threatened, she will inevitably try to defend herself by all means at her disposal.

— Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, 26 June 1946

India's nuclear program had a near parallel trajectory to the space program. They both shared some scientists through their history. For instance, Dr. Abdul Kalam is an important figure in both these establishments.

After the Americans went nuclear with Trinity test in July 1945, other major nations followed. Russians tested in 1949, UK in 1952, France in 1960 and China in 1964. This put a lot of pressure on Indians to have their own nuclear weapons program.

The key person who built the program was Dr. Homi Jehangir Bhabha, a Cambridge educated Nuclear physicist from the Parsi community who is related to the famous Indian industrial family, Tata. Bhabha was vociferous in building a nuclear program and even three years before India got independence, he outlined a three point nuclear program for India:

1. Build Uranium based pressurized heavy water reactors that would generate enough Plutonium.
2. Build Fast Breeder Reactor that would use the Plutonium mixed with Uranium to generate more Plutonium. Thorium would be slowly introduced.
3. Build fully self-sustaining Thorium reactors.

This staged approach would allow India to tap its vast reserves of cheap Thorium, in place of the imported, rarer Uranium that is subject to severe restrictions. However, 70 years since the original plan India never went past stage 2. This has forced the Indian government to delay its plans for moving to Thorium and explore alternative nuclear deals.

Putting the Plan to Action

In 1949, the Indian ambassador to China proposed an economic development plan to the West that would slow down the expansion of Communism in Asia. This plan was formalized in the Sri Lankan capital of Colombo and it included a big assistance by the West, led by the United States, in promoting the economy and research facilities in a group of Commonwealth countries in Asia.

As a part of this Colombo plan, India got a 40 MW experimental nuclear reactor - CIRUS (Canada-India-Reactor-United States) that was primarily funded by Canada with heavy water [needed for the nuclear energy transfer] supplied by the United States. It was set up

in Trombay in the outskirts of the metropolis of Bombay. This reactor was 40 times more powerful than the first Indian reactor - Apsara - built on the same location with the help of the United Kingdom.

The reactor produced weapons grade Plutonium as a byproduct. This could be used for nuclear weapons. Since there was no international body such as the IAEA for ensuring the safeguarding the fuel usage, the US and Canada just put the peace requirement in the contract, but trusted India to abide by its side of the contract.

Canadian collaboration at CIRUS was followed by another Canadian collaboration for setting up a much bigger 200 MW reactor in Kota, Rajasthan. India soon built its first nuclear reactor at Tarapur, a little north of Bombay, and that still remains India's largest nuclear power station.

Buddha Smiles - Moving to Nuclear Weapons

By 1958, Nehru was getting quite uneasy by the growing number of nuclear powered nations and authorized Project Phoenix that would build a Plutonium processing plant at Trombay. A third of the research budget at defense department went to fund the nuclear program.

However, the wars in 1962 [with China] and 1965 [with Pakistan] took both the time and attention off the nuclear program as it was still far away from producing a nuclear weapon. The premature death of Bhabha in 1966, under mysterious circumstances has impaired India's nuclear progress a bit. Bhabha's successor, Vikram Sarabhai didn't show as much interest in nuclear weapons due to the conflicts with his personal faiths.

In 1967, Indira Gandhi restarted the project. It was spearheaded by Raja Ramanna - who designed the nuclear device, Homi Sethna who processed the plutonium and assisted by PK Iyengar in putting the plutonium plant. The secret plant Purnima was set up in 1969. The 1971 war with Pakistan once again slowed down the progress.

Finally, the time had come on the 18th of May 1974. In the deserts of Pokhran in Rajasthan in Western India, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi took India nuclear with a single 8kT device.

The world reaction was a mix of shock and confusion. The US and USSR condemned, but in a more mellow way. France congratulated and later withdrew. Canada felt the most angst as it was its reactors that were used to produce the Plutonium.

However, the launch of India's first satellite and the imposition of a state of emergency within months of the tests, hardened the world stance. Things seemed to happen too quickly and for the outside world there seemed to be a hidden connection. There was a fear that Indira was taking India on a path that many rogue dictators elsewhere in the world did. India became a nuclear Pariah and Western cooperation ended when it comes to the space and nuclear programs.

Pokhran II

The sanctions that came after the first nuclear program, slowed India's progress a bit. In the following two decades, India didn't perform any more tests and stressed hard on the peaceful nature of the program. Although India planned a few tests in the early 1990s, Prime Minister Rao caved under US pressure as any new sanctions would put further pressure on the newly opening up economy.

In the spring of 1998, the conservatives under Atal Bihari Vajpayee came to power and lost no time in taking India to the next stage. Within weeks of taking office, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee authorized Operation Shakti - with three nuclear tests on May 11 and two more on May 13. India initially claimed the success of its hydrogen bomb along with a couple of micro weapons. This is a matter of controversy. But, the fact remained that India has now become a serious nuclear power.

Expectedly, the US imposed sanctions. But, the Indian economy had matured by this stage and within a couple of years the US had to back down. Technology collaboration started resuming in the early 2000s, culminating in the Nuclear 1-2-3 deal of 2005.

For India, the nuclear weapons became a necessity as it felt surrounded by the US allies of Pakistan, China, and the Soviets.

Chapter 14: Rice, Cow and Zero: Ancient Indian Triumvirate in new Revolutions

Sthanam sthanam dasa gunam.

- 5th century Indian Mathematician Aryabhata heralding the modern place value system in
Mathematics

Fine, but first we want you to outsource \$10 million of I.T. software work to India.

— Sam Pitroda to Jack Welch [head of GE], 1989

If I kiss your cheek, what do I get in return?

— Jack Welch

What we [TCS] learned out of [the relationship with GE] is phenomenal.

— S. Ramadorai, CEO of TCS

September 1989

Jack Welch, who headed the world's largest company, General Electric, was in New Delhi trying to find a market for his products in the growing economy. He was looking to sell airplane engines to India's government owned airlines and machinery to other government enterprises.

The government headed by Rajiv Gandhi was finishing its term and heading into Parliamentary elections. The government sent its technology advisor to meet Mr. Welch and secure something for India. Mr. Sam Pitroda (original name Satyanarayan Gangaram Pitroda) is a telecommunication expert who came to the US as a student and grew up rapidly in the 1970s telecom expansion in the US. In 1984, he got invited by Rajiv Gandhi to help India's telecom policy.

Mr. Pitroda was a shrewd negotiator who understood American businesses and salesmen. He knew Jack Welch had a lot to gain from the sale of engines and other equipment to India. Pitroda offered to provide those opportunities to GE in return for GE setting up an IT outsourcing center in India.

It was a Crazy Time in India.

A relative of mine [mentioned in one of the previous chapters] was a top exec at GE India who at the time appeared on the cover of the prestigious Fortune magazine. Out of nowhere, he joined as a college grad and went to the top of his organization using this new move of GE. I have distinct childhood memories of the feeling whenever we visited his home in Delhi. It was like entering a new world - a home built completely a replica of top notch homes in the US. The car was a Toyota coupe, imported from the US [with a left hand drive].

When Bill Gates visited India in 1995 to launch Windows 95, India's local media could

not stop talking about him. Every newspaper for that whole month carried news about Microsoft and Bill Gates. In my 8th standard class, my classmates were spending all evening programming in our new computer lab. My dad would read me stories of how programmers were changing lives all over the world. Talk of software was everywhere in the town.

The school teacher who taught us the programming language C++ in 9th standard got an offer to join an American company - making 100 times what he made as a school teacher. It was something unheard of. It looked as though anyone who can write 10 lines of code could be making the fortune of a lifetime.

The events were both exhilarating and disorienting.

Back to New Delhi.

For Welch, this was just a minor irritant. He didn't want to scuttle a deal with the Indian government and didn't have much hope out of this new center. At worst, it will be a few waste of a couple of million dollars of investment.

GE formed a number of partnerships with local companies such as TCS and Wipro. These were fledgling tech companies that were doing simple tech work at a very small scale. Wipro until then was an industrial company creating a range of products from Jasmine toilet soap to industrial cylinders [until early 1990s, Wipro was still making consumer goods such as talcum powders and baby soaps]. TCS was part of the Tata Conglomerate, set up to improve automation at its steel plants.

The deal to build technology for the world's largest corporation was a blessing sent from the heaven to these companies. The joint venture Wipro GE Medical Systems Pvt. Ltd enabled the outsourcing of medical imaging to India. TCS came up with its own deal and soon was joined by Satyam.

GE was quite impressed by the results of its initial outsourcing experiment and soon a flood of outsourcing orders came - in financial services, call support centers, and data processing. Other companies such as IBM and Accenture followed the lead of GE. In the meanwhile, Indian domestic companies learned the best practices and started getting on a rapid expansion drive.

By the late 1990s, the scare of the Y2K bug took India to the next stage. When computing systems were designed in the 1970s, year column in the databases got only two digits to represent. The early designers wanted to save the crucial storage space and 2000 was too far to worry about. However, by the late 1990s, computer architects realized that the turn of the century would completely cause chaos in their systems. Represented with just two digits, 2000 will be written as 00 causing a confusion with 1900.

Newspapers ran horror stories about how missiles loaded with nuclear weapons could be triggered due to this date confusion [most of such worries were over hyped nonsense, partly even pushed by the companies most likely to benefit from redesigning the systems]. As every major corporation in the world was rapidly going through every part of their database to add the two extra digits, Indian companies came into the picture. They offered to do that trivial job and monopolized the whole market. By 2000, India's IT companies were left with a massive network of relationships with major corporations all over the

world.

Services Revolution - a Perfect Storm for India

1. In the early 1990s, the US tech market was rapidly exploding due to the dot-com boom. Talent was very scarce and salaries in technology shot through the roof. Companies thus outsourced all the low level work.
2. As we saw in earlier chapters, India opened up its economy in 1991 that paved the way for a rapid engagement of India with the world. Tech companies were positioned right to utilize the massive growth in an economy that was to come.
3. Educated Indians spoke English, due to the legacy of British rule. This was in stark contrast to other rapidly growing Asian economies. American and British companies could outsource service work without much issue.
4. Telecom revolution allowed the possibility of video conferencing and remote management of teams. Data could now move on the information highways of the world, with relative ease.
5. In the 1980s, many Indian states, especially the ones in south India opened dozens of new engineering colleges. The engineers who came out of these were immediately tapped by the tech companies.
6. The governments of India, both in center and at the state levels were pro-tech. This is especially true of southern states like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Thus, these states began commanding a bulk of the software deals.
7. India's natural strengths and core competencies aligned right. Indians had a strong flair for mathematics since the ancient era and programming is a natural extension of mathematics. Indians were highly used to speaking multiple languages in a nation of 20+ officially recognized languages. This helped them travel the world and get consulting contracts. Finally, the chaos of the nation and the diversity of the culture helped Indians be flexible and have a hacker mindset, necessary to succeed in the software industry.

Sixteen centuries ago, when the Gupta era Mathematician Aryabhata came up with the place value system and the usage of zero to develop the modern decimal system, he might not have realized that his descendents would be using that to build India's future. In 1980, India's software exports was a mere \$4 million. In 2014-15, Indian software exports are estimated to be about \$100 billion - a 25,000 times jump.

Emergence of Bangalore as India's Silicon Valley

Tech capitals don't come out of the blue. In the case of Silicon Valley, the US government poured an enormous sum of money in building the tech backbone for their own defense needs. Out came as a result was India's Silicon Valley. India tried somewhat replicating that in the case of Bangalore.

Stage 1: Setting up the Tata Institute - Swami Vivekananda inspires JN Tata

In 1893, one of India's most popular reformist figures, Swami Vivekananda was returning from a popular trip to the world fair in Chicago.

During the return journey to India, a star entrepreneur, Jamsetji Tata [the founder of Tata group], met the Swami in the ship. Their dialogue must have been stunning enough for Tata to start an institute.

I trust, you remember me as a fellow-traveler on your voyage from Japan to Chicago. I very much recall at this moment your views on the growth of the ascetic spirit in India, and the duty, not of destroying, but of diverting it into useful channels.

I recall these ideas in connection with my scheme of Research Institute of Science for India. Do you think you would care to apply yourself to the mission of galvanizing into life our traditions in this respect?

- Jamsetji Tata

Sir Ramsay likes Bangalore

India's then viceroy, Lord Curzon liked this idea of a research university and forwarded the proposal to the Royal Society of London. There, William Ramsay, who won the Nobel Prize for discovering noble gases, was tasked with finding a suitable location. Sir Ramsay toured around India and suggested the southern city of Bangalore. He found the elevation of 4500 ft offered a very moderate climate of neither cool nor warm & thus suitable for scientific exploration.

Ruled by a great ruler

More than just the climate, the region was ruled by the legendary Krishna Raja Wadiyar IV who was really passionate about education. He was probably one of the best monarchs in India & really a technophile. The kingdom was already ruled by great kings like Tipu Sultan, who understood the value of technology. He also had a great Diwan [Prime Minister] in K. Seshadri Iyer and later Visvesvaraya who both helped setup great institutions.

Together the monarch & his Diwans built a great many things, including Shivanasamudra Falls [Asia's first hydropower plant], University of Mysore, Mysore Medical College,

State bank of Mysore, Lalith Mahal palace etc.

Wadiyar gave 372 acres of prime land in the center of the city free of cost to setup the new research institution. In 1933, the institute got its first Indian director the Nobel winning C. V. Raman, under whom the institute went to great heights.

This institution, later renamed as Indian Institute of Science, would become the core of Indian research for a century or more. It sort of became the Stanford for India's silicon valley & powered Bangalore.

Stage 2: Indian government invests gobbles of money

The region around Bangalore - Mysore state was a well run state with a high level of education investment and availability of abundant electricity through the hydropower projects.

Bangalore's climate was suitable, the city was welcoming, the infrastructure was strong and also well connected to other major southern metropolises of Madras and Hyderabad with both talent pool & transportation infrastructure.

Thus, the Indian government lost no time in putting all its research investments in the city. Bangalore is the headquarters for:

1. National Aerospace Labs
2. Hindustan Aeronautics Limited
3. Indian Space Research Organization
4. Bharat Electronics
5. Bharat Earth Movers
6. Hindustan Machine Tools
7. Indian Telephone Industries

For decades, Indian government put a sizable chunk of its investments in Bangalore. The best part about government investments is that it often constant and immune to changing economic conditions. This sustained public investments created a large tech workforce & a knowledge network that was tapped by waves of tech companies.

Stage 3: Offshoring comes to Bangalore

By 1980s, Bangalore has been already a major education center and a center of research. In 1983, N. R. Narayana Murthy [the cofounder of Infosys] decided to move its fledgling startup supporting IBM mainframes, from Pune to Bangalore, while at the same time Azim Premji [founder of Wipro] decided to setup a software subsidiary in the city. While the rest of India didn't know/care about these new entrepreneurs & busy celebrating the World Cup victory of that year, these Bangalore guys were busy scripting a new era.

In 1984, Texas Instruments setup an office in Bangalore to tap the research pool and that gave further credibility to the location. But, still the city's tech business was a small thing. This is where the 1989 deal with GE, mentioned earlier in this chapter, proved to be a game changer.

Stage 4: Startup revolution

By the late 1990s, the world was going through a frenzy. Everyone was worried about the Year 2000 problem. This dramatically increased the demand for Bangalore's engineers & there was abundant work. But, the problem passed & there was also a major meltdown in the silicon valley in 2001 after the dotcom crash. A returning pool of unemployed engineers seeded a round of new startups - who started exploring things further beyond outsourcing.

There were also other returning expats who got tired of working for big corporates like Amazon. A couple of them started Flipkart in 2007 - India's answer to online retail. In the same year, a HBS grad got tired of Mckinsey and founded the mobile ad network InMobi.

Flipkart and InMobi did to the Bangalore startup ecosystem what Google and PayPal did in the valley [albeit at a much smaller scale] They unleashed a pool of ambitious, well trained entrepreneurs from their alumni who went on to found various other startups.

India's startup story is still in the making and just two IPOs away from a massive explosion.

Green Revolution

Just two decades before the Indian invention of zero came to India's rescue [through the Y2K bug], a much bigger revolution changed India's destiny. It was a work of the Nobel winning biologist, Dr. Norman Borlaug, that was brought to India by Mr. MS Swaminathan.

Green Revolution is a collection of technology and policy initiatives funded by the Ford and Rockefeller foundations of the US that rapidly increased the yields of a few cereal crops like wheat and rice. New seed varieties and the massive usage of fertilizers were at the core of this revolution. It was a global event although it benefitted India the most.

Within four decades of the Green Revolution, wheat production increased nine times and the word famine was erased from the Indian lexicon, despite the addition of 800 million people to the Indian population since then. In 1964, India produced less than 10 million tons of wheat. In 2014, it produced more than 94 million. Increase in rice production was less dramatic, but still very impressive - from about 30 million tons in 1966 to 106 million tons in 2014.

The root of the Green Revolution lay in 1944, at the closing stages of the Second World War. In that year, a microbiologist, Dr. Norman Borlaug, working for DuPont in the US moved to Mexico taking up the offer of President Avila Camacho. Back then, Mexico imported half of its wheat. In the next 20 years, Dr. Borlaug enabled Mexico to export half of its wheat.

To enable such an explosion of production, Dr. Borlaug interbred a Japanese wheat plant Norin that allowed for sturdier stalk and better nutrient absorption [allowing heavier accumulation of the grains] and a Mexican variety developed for its disease endurance. The combination of these two varieties proved to be explosive. By 1963, 95% of the Mexican wheat fields used this variety.

In parallel, there was a revolution happening in rice, albeit at a much slower rate. International Rice Research Institute was established in the Philippines and started to become the nodal point for exchanging best practices all over Asia.

While all this was happening in Mexico and Philippines, India was reeling from a severe agricultural crisis in the mid-1960s. The two wars with China and Pakistan pushed down the rupee and made all imports costlier. The national leadership was shaky. India was willing to try out any solution to the agrarian crisis.

The Mexican wheat variant especially looked quite suitable for the lands of Punjab in northern India. It was the starting point of the Indian green revolution. Within a decade, the production grew so fast that India stopped requiring wheat imports.

For rice, the Indian agronomist Dr. Surajit Kumar De Datta came to the rescue. He discovered a new variant [prosaically named the IR8] that showed the potential to increase rice yield by up to 10 times under optimal conditions. His "miracle rice" changed the destiny of countries all over Asia, including India. It is sad that most Indians have not even heard of this hero.

Factors that helped the Green Revolution

1. Introduction of new seed varieties with the crossbreeding of both ideas and plants among multiple agricultural regions.
2. Rapid increase in the usage of tube well to irrigate fields all over the country. Punjab led the nation in irrigation. While only 20 million acres were irrigated in the 1950s, by the 1980s irrigation reached nearly 39 million acres - more than a third of the agricultural land.
3. Sharp increase in the use of chemical fertilizers. Between 1975 and 1990, India's fertilizer usage increased five times.
4. Colossal increase in pesticide use. From the 1950s to the 1980s, pesticide usage in India increased 40 times.
5. New equipments. In 1960, there were only 1,400 tractors in Punjab. By 1960, there were 200 times more tractors.

Agriculture came to India 11,000 years ago. It changed life in this massive subcontinent that is blessed with the world's largest cultivable area. Like zero, this ancient genie came to revisit in the post-independence era and the result was miraculous.

White Revolution

India is a land of cows and the world's largest milk producer by a long distance [producing 50 billion tons more than its nearest competitor, USA]. The Vedas that are at the core of Hinduism extol the virtues of cows in every opportunity. Despite all that, India was perennial short in milk production. The yield was very poor from the starved cows. Something had to change.

Between the 1960s Green Revolution and the 1980s IT Revolution, came the 1970s White Revolution. It was heralded by a Mechanical engineer from Kerala, Mr. Verghese Kurien. Kurien won government scholarship to complete his Masters in Mechanical engineering with a minor focus on Dairy engineering from Michigan State University.

To satisfy his bond commitment [for getting his Masters funded], the government asked him to serve briefly at the Government creamery in Anand, Gujarat. It served a little known cooperative named Amul that had the blessings of two major Indian politicians of that time, Sardar Vallabhai Patel and future Prime Minister Morarji Desai. Kurien planned to get out of the bond as soon as possible. But, his stint with the dairy farmers of Anand changes his life and India's.

At the core of the Operation Flood that Kurien initiated was a milk grid that connected India's core milk producing regions with the major metropolises. It also enabled the use of innovative marketing techniques that brought a higher price for the rural farmers as well as built a number of value added products such as butter and ice cream.

In 1978, India's total milk production was 25 billion MT. By 2014, it was 141 billion MT. The availability of extra milk increased the health of the nation and reduced malnutrition, besides adding further income to the rural poor.

Factors that Contributed to the White Revolution

1. Using new varieties of cows and buffaloes that produced a lot more milk. This was accompanied with the use of better vaccines that produced healthier cows.
 2. Better integration of milk consuming markets with the milk producing ones. This allowed farmers to command better prices and have more incentives to grow production.
 3. Increased availability of financing for buying cows through the nationalized banks.
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Chapter 15: Bombay Dreams

1. Brothers lost in internal migrations find each other through a family song.
2. A poor boy fallen in love with a rich, upper caste girl elopes and get married.
3. A petite, innocent girl is brutally raped. His brother avenges her death.
4. A poor, rural boy climbs the ladder of success after a motivational song.
5. A poor, rural boy unwittingly becomes a major gangster fighting” for good causes.

Peppered with four or five musical sequences, for the most part these cliched storylines define the Hindi movie industry, Bollywood and various regional movie industries of India. In a nation of 1.3 billion people and a billion different problems, the movie industry is the primary stress reliever. Viewers spanning rich and poor, urban and rural divides embrace these movies to fill their leisure time and temporarily forget the harsh realities of life. For centuries, theatre has provided as a safety valve for the Indian pressure cooker. In the past century, the movie industry has filled up the role of the traditional theatre.

Motion pictures entered India in 1896, when the pioneers of Cinema - Auguste and Louis Lumière - sent a guy named Marius Sestier to the swanky Watson hotel in Mumbai. This show inspired a local photographer, Harishchandra Sakharam Bhatavdekar, to order a camera from the UK. He shot the first film in India - a wrestling match in Mumbai. This created a minor sensation and inspired later movie makers like Hiralal Sen. A strong movie making culture was established in Bombay and the then national capital of Calcutta.

The first full length feature film Raja Harishchandra was directed and produced by Dadasaheb Phalke in 1913. Crowds thronged to the theatres; ever since, movies formed a core part of the contemporary Indian culture.

Diverse Movie Industries of India

While a casual outsider might see the Indian film industry as synonymous with Bollywood, Bollywood is neither the only film industry of India nor producer of the most number of Indian films. Bollywood is a portmanteau of Bombay and Hollywood. It is just one of the 13 movie industries in India that produce more than 10 films a year. Together these 13 produce close to seventeen hundred movies each year, of which a little more than two hundred is by Bollywood.

At the top rung of Indian Cinema is the highly commercial industries of Bollywood (Hindi), Kollywood (Tamil) and Tollywood (Telugu) each with more than 200 movies a year. Not just in naming, but even in storylines these three industries have a lot in common. Many films from these three industries are often derisively termed as the Masala (spice) movies - referring to the generous mix of multiple genre (musical, drama, thriller, comedy) just like how Indian cooking mixes a range of spices. Popular screenplays move around these industries very quickly. The core of these three industries are popular music sequences that are often used in a very formulaic way.

Next in line comes the Bengali and Malayalam movie industries with more of art films taking on social issues. The core part is the parallel cinema a new wave cinema movement that was pioneered in the 1950s by Satyajit Ray - [the don of the Bengali movie industry] and later extended to the Malayalam industry by doyens like Adoor Gopalakrishnan. The key elements of parallel cinema include realism, naturalism, and sociopolitical issues.

After this follows the Kannada and Marathi movie industries that are often overshadowed by more powerful movie industries in their neighborhood. These two make variations of parallel cinema with slightly less sociopolitical themes. Both these industries have the advantage of being based on two of the most cosmopolitan cities of India - Bengaluru and Mumbai. However, the cosmopolitan nature of these cities also gives these two industries a lot of competition from the well-funded top tier.

In the north east, the Assamese film industry has always dominated. Like the Bengali films, Assamese films are known for the portrayal of serious issues in a slower paced, sensitive style. However, the industry has been declining unable to keep pace with Bollywood that is constantly encroaching into the North East. The Manipuri industry comes next. However, given the small and diverse populace the industries there struggle to attain a sufficient scale.

A rising star is the Bhojpuri film industry targeting Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Historically, it was the poorer cousin of Bollywood with smaller budgets and more rural audiences. However, as states like Bihar are climbing the rungs of prosperity, this film industry is slowly asserting its own place, not just as the poorer version of the Hindi movie industry. As prosperity reaches India's interior, we could expect further growth in Bhojpuri and its poorer siblings - Oriya and Gujarati film industries.

Key Sources of Movie Ideas

With 1,700 movies made year after year often with low budgets and tight timelines, it is practically impossible to make a lot of original movies. Thus, most Indian filmmakers often sought various inspirations to lift the movies from:

1. **Sanskrit drama:** Three thousand years of Sanskrit drama with classics such as Kalidasa's Shakuntala and Meghadoota deeply impact Indian cinema. The key concept of Rasa - conveying complex emotions through facial expressions and body language - is a central differentiator of Indian cinema. These nine Rasas of Sringara (love), Hasya (laughter), Raudra (fury), Bhayanaka (horror), Karunya (compassion), Bibatsa (disgust), Veera (heroic), Adbuta (wonder) and Shanta (peace) form the core of Indian cinema. Dance forms like Bharatanatyam have emphasized these attributes for centuries.
2. **Hindu Epics:** In the Ramayana and Mahabharata there exist seeds for a thousand different movie plots. Hindu Puranas (mythology) also contain a rich treasure trove of drama ideas.
3. **Hollywood and foreign cinema:** Indian filmmakers, both bigger and smaller ones, often look to Hollywood for their inspiration. Popular movies like the Sound of Music and the Seven Samurai have inspired a generation of popular Hindi movies. South Indian film actor Kamal Hassan often experiments with new ideas inspired from famous Hollywood stars like the late Robin Williams.
4. **Rural folklore:** India has a rich theater tradition and storytelling was a centerpiece of this. Yatra (Bengali), Terukkuttu and Bommalattam (Tamil Nadu), Koodiyattam (Kerala), Ramlila (UP), Yakshagana (Karnataka) are some of the popular regional theatre types that had a big impact on the regional movie industries.

Trends and Patterns

Age of Epics and Royalty

The movies of the first few decades were predominantly focused on Hindu epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata and royal characters. Classical dance and classical music were mixed with ancient literature to provide very compelling movies that captured the imagination of people.

One such classic is Alam Ara [the first talking movie in India] which brought the rich tradition of “filmi music” - with original music and choreography played by the actors. The concept of “Masala movies” was heralded by the Tamil classic Chandralekha - a major filmmaking project with plenty of song and fight sequences.

The freedom movement inspired a few revolution-themed movies like Raithu Bidda [a Telugu film on landlords] that was censored by the government for fear of inciting the crowds. Smart movie directors often cleverly planted ideas related to the freedom movement through historic allegories.

Golden Age of Social Issues

Starting from 1947, the movie industries shifted much more towards social issues. Without the weight of the British censors, filmmakers utilized the prevailing social sentiment of the people. Films shifted from richness and epicness to focus on things like poverty, agriculture, and slums. While devotional and royal movies continued to be made in same numbers, the explosion in the overall movies made them increasingly a smaller percentage.

Directors such as Chetan Anand and Satyajit Ray made Indian films a popular fare in international movie festivals such as Cannes and Venice.

In Tamil Nadu, aspiring politicians used these social films as springboards for their political career. They fully leveraged the very powerful medium to get their political message to the people as the audience unwittingly got captured by hours long political advertisements. Scriptwriters such as Annadurai and M. Karunanidhi became Chief Ministers, as did the popular actors such as MG Ramachandran and J. Jayalalithaa.

Unlike the parallel cinema wave that was prevailing in the rest of India, MG Ramachandran (MGR) used mostly masala movies to take the same message across. The blend of parallel and commercial cinema brought him a tremendous advantage. While the parallel cinema was watched by a select few educated classes, MGR's movies reached most of Tamil Nadu and earned the epithet of puratchi thalaivar [revolutionary leader]. Three decades since his death, his movies continue to have a major political impact in the state.

Telugu cinema had a parallel evolution NT Rama Rao (NTR) taking the role of MGR.

Age of the Superstars and Gangsters:

By the 1970s, a critical point in Indian cinema was reached. The arrival of better technology, such as color pictures and a hippie, rebel culture in the West inspired a new era. The glossy film magazines demanded more energetic celluloid characters. The heroes of this new era neither were the moral superior like in the epic era, nor were the social revolutionaries of the golden era.

These new age heroes were young, restless youth with ambiguous morality and without the need to be social revolutionaries. They were gangsters, disco dancers, guitar players and college Romeos. For the young, post-independence generation these Superstars were mesmerizing.

Rajesh Khanna heralded the trend with the 1969 Bollywood classic *Aradhana*, that was then followed by Dharmendra's 1975 blockbuster *Sholay*. These two actors created conditions ripe for the biggest of them all - Amitabh Bachchan - to take South Asia by a storm. Amitabh often played the role of the Don - the king of the Bombay underworld. The heroes dressed in shiny bell-bottoms, oversized sunglasses and long sideburns, paired with skimpily dressed hot favorites like Zeenath Amman and Parveen Babi.

With film financing increasingly dependent on the underworld, it is likely that the underworld had a big role in making these gangster films with highly sympathetic and romantic portrayals of the ganglords.

Some of the most cliched plotlines at the start of this chapter come for this period. The missing brothers plotline was inspired by various internal migrations due to economic reasons that made families lose track of each other. The vagaries of the new city life brought a whole range of issues like exploitation of women and getting pushed into crimes.

Inspired by the "Big B" [Bachchan] and often remaking his movies came the southern superstars - Rajinikanth [Tamil], Rajkumar [Kannada,] and Chiranjeevi [Telugu]. Rajinikanth brought a unique style and was an instant hit among the audience. Chiranjeevi has become a political force in Andhra Pradesh following the mold of NTR.

In Tamil, actors Rajinikanth [screen name of the actor Sivaji Rao] and Kamal Haasan made career defining roles playing Tamil ganglords fighting the anti-Tamil riots of Mumbai. These massive hit movies - *Badhshah* and *Nayakan* inspired a wide range of other Tamil actors to don the same role [actor Vijay recently tried this familiar trope in the Tamil movie *Thalaiva*].

Age of Melodrama and Chocolate Boys:

The opening up of the Indian economy in the early 1990s brought a new era. The audience was able to watch foreign channels like HBO and Star TV and thus demanded more out of their heroes.

In the north, three khans completely took over the industry in the early 1990s. Aamir Khan, Shah Rukh Khan, and Salman Khan were good-looking heroes and gave a rich

trove of romantic flicks like Kuch Kuch Hota Hai, Hum Apke Hain Kaun, and Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge. While the length of the movie names grew significantly, the quality did not. The Hindi movie industry looked to begin a long season of rot.

The decline in the Hindi movie industry was lapped by new age southern directors like Mani Ratnam and Shankar. Manirathnam brought the social movies back with a string of explosive classics like Thalapathi (1991) and the “terrorism trilogy” - Roja (1992), Bombay, (1995) and Dil Se (1998) - giving the audience a peek into the growing Hindu-Muslim violence without the slow pace of the art cinema. He also made Iruvar (a critical history of Tamil politics), Kannathil Muthamital (a 2002 movie on Sri Lankan Tamil tragedy), and Yuva (a 2004 movie on youth revolution). Shankar gave his own social classics like Indian (1996), Mudhalvan (1999) and Anniyan (2005). However, unlike Mani Ratnam, Shankar was not able to get significant traction in the rest of India.

Present Age (2000 -)

The Hindi movie industry has gotten back some of its mojo with Ashutosh Gowariker’s 2001 classic Lagaan starring Aamir Khan that gave a fictionalized account of India’s freedom struggle. Gowariker followed that with other classics like Swades (2004) and Jodhaa Akbar (2008). This inspired other filmmakers to take more serious topics in movies such as Rang de Basanti (2006), Chak de India (2007), and Taare Zameen Par (2007). As the movie audience matures, the market is also trying to cater to different niche segments instead of making the middle-of-the-fare movies that is addressed to all audience.

The Comedy Men

The masala movie tradition requires the audience to be entertained through different means. A Comedy track is often a critical element in the masala. These tracks can often go independent of the main story plot. Other times, it is often woven with the main plot. Vadivelu, Kaunda Mani, Johny Lever, Nagesh, Brahmanandam, Vivek, Jagathy Sreekumar, and Paresh Rawal all add colors to Indian cinema and help lighten up the audience before the hero makes a major fight or a romantic move.

The Music Men

The story of Indian Cinema would be incomplete without the music directors who bring the movies to life. Film music fills the radios of every corners of India and films are the predominant vehicle for musicians to deliver their original compositions. Whether it is the dusty roads of Rampur or the gleaming offices of Bangalore, you will always find Indians humming to popular film tunes.

One of the musical greats is RD Burman who composed classical works paired with singers like Asha Bhosle and Kishore Kumar. He was the core element in making the superstars like Rajesh Khanna and Amitabh Bachchan reach all corners of India. The southern counterpart of Burman, Ilayaraja was equally good and blended modern Western music with traditional Indian music.

Since the mid-1990s, the Madras Maestro AR Rahman has completely dominated the Indian film music. In 10 of the last 20 years, Rahman has won the annual Filmfare Award for the Best Music Director (the highest one in Indian film industry). Groomed by Mani Ratnam, Rahman has now become the only Indian music director who is known in the international stage.

Chapter 16: Score Kya Hai? - The Story of Indian Sport

“What is the national sport of India?”

The quiz master gave me a full toss. I was about 12 then and leading my house - Vyasa - in a school Quiz tournament. We were already winning. I was happy that I answered the questions on nuclear test ban treaties, Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan and the evolving Asian financial crisis. I smugly looked at this final question. Such an easy one.

“C.R.I.C...” before I could finish, the kid next to me shouted “hockey”. I was furious.

“What the ****.” I gave him an angry look as he might have just costed us the competition. He was two years younger than me and was smiling at me sheepishly. I should not have picked that kid as a teammate.

The Quiz Master announced with a touch of drama, “The Vyasa team won”. I was confused. How come Cricket is not the national sport of India? [In truth, it was recently found that there is no officially designated national sport of India, although Field Hockey was popularly assumed as the national sport].

26th May 1999

We were vacationing in the Andaman islands and Kolkata. One of the few perks my dad got out of working for a government bank was this all paid annual vacation. The train was approaching Calcutta’s main railway station at Howrah. I was playing the game of “Book Cricket” with a random stranger in the train.

It was one of the dozens of nonsense Cricket-centric games Indian students invent to pass the boring times while sitting in a classroom. At that time we had no mobile phones to fiddle with nor Angry Birds to stay addicted to. Thus we had to be quite creative. The game of “Book Cricket” is one of those.

You just quickly open a random page in a book and the last digit of the page number is your score. If the last digit is “0” you are out. You quickly keep opening the pages and keep adding up the scores until you get out. The guy with the highest score wins.

The ingenuity of this game lies in the fact that you look like a studious boy from a distance. An innocent bystander (or a teacher) would assume that you are quickly referring to various concepts that you stumble across. Of course, to make this game more interesting we would add various rules and strategies. If I’m playing “an away game” the opponent would bring his book and he might have strategically folded a few pages ending with 0. If I find that out, I will call foul and we repeat the game.

The smartness lies in adding a touch of fold without a physical appearance of a foul. We also became masters at opening the book. A kid in the next class could open 2,000 pages in one hour and I could open and play even while running. We played hundreds of games and had our own minor leagues.



National Language and Religion of India

“Toss laga hua hoga. Abhi match dekhte hain,” the other kid said. It was the important World Cup game between India and Sri Lanka. We had to track it right from the toss - that will determine who gets to bat first. Time to close the book cricket. I pulled out my Sony Walkman (one of my few valuable possessions) and tuned to the Cricket commentary.

Indian trains are among the most eclectic things you would see. Around us, there was a Punjabi soldier, a Bihari trader, and a Bengali government worker all speaking mutually unintelligible languages. Each of them had different dreams, different ambitions. Some were returning home from the battlefield for vacation. Some visiting relatives. Some attending a funeral. Some in a vain search for a job in the city. Indian Railways are the soul of India.

The soldier seemed too preoccupied with some thought. It was the day when the Indian Air Force started fighting back Pakistan’s intruders in India’s state of Jammu & Kashmir. In the next few weeks, India and Pakistan would engage in a full-scale border war named after the location of the first operation - Kargil. Maybe the Jawan was worried about getting called back for the battle?

The Bengali government worker seemed more perturbed by the massive changes in the names of India’s major cities. In those few years, Bombay became Mumbai, Madras became Chennai, Calcutta became Kolkata and much later Bangalore became Bengaluru. As a traveler in a government job, it was hard to keep track of all the random name changes.

The Bihari trader was commenting on the falling state of the Indian economy. Stock market and real estate market were at their nadir. The new government under BJP promised to do a lot more as they now have a majority. But, the trader was not so optimistic. He had seen enough of promises, especially from his state Chief Minister, the colorful Lalu Prasad Yadav.

“Sri Lanka won the toss. But, they decided to field. India is batting,” I shouted at my friend. Immediately, the whole group’s attention was on me. It was Chai time and everyone just bought the Rs. 2 tea from the railway vendor.

India might speak 1,600 languages and follow 12 different religions, but Cricket is the bond. Who cares if Cricket is not the national game, it qualifies to be a national religion and probably even a national language [if languages are supposed to aid in communication].

We might hate the British for the atrocities committed during colonialism, but we are deeply thankful of the triumvirate they left us - Chai, Cricket, and the Indian Railways.

Now, we were in the midst of all the three. Let the war, economy and linguistic chauvinism wait.

The opening batsman, Sadagopan Ramesh, was the cousin of a close friend of mine. He started with a boundary. Before we could finish clapping, he was out the next ball.

“Indha thayir sadham, indha vattiyum sodhapitan,” an aunty from Madras can be heard muttering in Tamil [much more serious and profane insults in other languages have been redacted here].

“Sala, wicket close rakhna tha,” people around me were passing their expert comments as we were interpreting the things the commentators were saying. The Hindi commentator was aghast that the Sri Lankan bowler Vaas could so easily clean up ballebaaz Sadagoppan’s stumps.

Dravid and Ganguly - Fire and Ice

Now, two young icons were in the middle of things - Sourav Ganguly, the flamboyant batsman from Calcutta and Rahul Dravid, the calm boy from the south. If Sourav was the film star, who garners all the attention, Rahul was the scientist, who builds all the critical stuff and moves away from the public’s attention.

Like various other Indian icons, these two were discovered in India’s tour of England in the summer of ‘96. [I was at that point on a train to Mumbai - one of the other annual vacations.] India might have won freedom from England in 1947, but we recognize our icons only after they conquer the Lords Cricket ground in London.

This time they were playing 100 miles away from London in Somerset County. I was a diehard fanatic of Ganguly and I was impatient to watch his action on TV. I was pushing my dad to get us a quick taxi from the station to the apartment we were renting for the vacation. I couldn’t afford to miss any of Ganguly’s shots. Traffic jams were pretty bad in India’s most crowded city. I knew I would miss out on Ganguly’s innings by the time we got to the apartment.

But, we were in Calcutta [hometown of Sourav] of all places and the Bengal Tiger

[Sourav's nickname] was in action.

People pulled the TVs from their homes and shops and brought it out to the pavement. And crowds gathered around each TV. Strangers would randomly look you in the eyes and talk as though we were buddies for a long time.

When Sourav was in form, it was Diwali time in Calcutta.

Every time Dravid was on strike, people would shout "take a single and walk away". While our political leaders often sloganed "Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan, Jai Vigyan" [Long live soldiers, farmers, and scientists], the common people were only fixated on the celebrities. Add Dravid to the list of soldiers, farmers, and scientists. Poor guy, he was not a celebrity, even after he scored so much.

As Sourav made the record score with his heavy sixes, Sri Lankans were out of the game and India got a chance to move to the next round. We celebrated with random strangers on the street.

How come this game of Cricket played by colonials in white, got the attention of eclectic India and acquired a pseudo-religion status? To answer that question, we have to move to another part of England - June 25, 1983 at Lords Cricket Ground in London.

Indian Sporting History

It is not clear how important outdoor sporting activity was to ancient Indian culture. While martial arts, wrestling, and related games like Kabbadi have always been popular, it is the board games like Chess, Ludo, and Snake & Ladders where Indians had traditionally spent a lot of their time on. Thus, the modern history of organized outdoor Indian sport really starts from the British rule.

In 1900, India was first represented in the Olympics by an Indian-born Englishman named Norman Pritchard. He won two silver medals in athletics and it still remains the only two athlete from India to win multiple medals in the same Olympics.

In 1928, hockey was reintroduced in the Olympics and India got a team. On March 28, 1928, a break group of men left the Indian shores for Amsterdam, aboard the ship Kaiser-i-Hind. Merely three people came to send off the Indian team on its greatest voyage.

The team had very low expectations ahead of its first game against Austria. And a miracle came in the form of the Allahabad lad, Dhyan Chand. He scored an incredible three goals in the opening match. But, that is just the start. In the five-match tournament, he scored a record 14 goals. Next highest in the table were two other Indians with five goals each and an odd German. Chand was a sensation beyond words.

Here is how India's scorecards read:

17th May: Won Austria: 6-0

18th May: Won Belgium: 9-0

20th May: Won Denmark: 5-0

22nd May: Won Switzerland: 6-0

26th May (Final): Won Netherlands (home team): 3-0

India scored a record 29 goals with not a single goal scored against them. The goalkeeper, Richard Allen, didn't have to do a lot of work as the ball hardly came near him. Chand kept complete control over the ball at all times.

The Indian team got a hero's welcome and hockey suddenly became a sensational sport for India.

In the following Olympics in Los Angeles (1932), India scored a record 24 goals in its finals against the home team, United States. Dhyan Chand and his brother Roop Chand scored 25 of the 35 goals India scored in the tournament.

In the 1936 Olympics, India scored a record 38 goals in the tournament, and just one goal was scored against them in the finals by Germany. Chand was practically invincible in a global sport for over 20 years. The world missed his action in 1940 and '44 as the Olympics were cancelled due to war. The Indian hockey team resumed play in the 1948 Olympics and kept on its record path for 12 more years.

It was in the 1960 Olympics final where India would finally slip as its archrival Pakistan

would sneak a goal past its defence in the 11th minute. India came home disappointed with the silver, but got its revenge in the 1964 Olympics, winning the gold against Pakistan.

India's key strength in hockey relied on its stick work and wizardry. However, the introduction of artificial turfs in the 1970s pushed the game more towards strength and stamina, than mere art work. Indian hockey was unable to raise to the challenge and since the 1970s was able to win the Olympic gold only once - in 1980 when the Western world completely boycotted the Moscow Olympics due to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Other Indian Sports

Although India invented Chess and the strategy game is a favorite pastime of a score of Indians, India never really dominated Chess until the arrival of Vishy “world master” Anand. Just a year after India lost a place at the Olympics finals for the first ever time (1968 Mexico City), an icon was born in the Cauvery delta town of Mayiladuthurai in Tamil Nadu.

At the age of just 18, Anand became India’s first Grandmaster and won his first World Chess Championship in 2000. Since 2006, he has won the World Championship four times and also in the process climbed to no. 1 in the world rankings. Many reviewers rank Anand to be the all-time greatest Chess player.

Even after the spectacular rise of Anand, Indian Chess didn’t dramatically improve. Three decades after Anand’s rise as a star, only one other Indian is in the world’s top 20 - Koneru Humpy - in women’s. Unlike the glories that cricketers get, Anand is quite underrecognized and underappreciated in India.

What Anand did for Chess, Prakash Padukone did for Badminton. He won the inaugural Badminton Worldcup in 1981 and followed up winning the prestigious All-England Badminton Championship in 1982. Saina Nehwal (won Bronze in 2012 London) and Pullela Gopichand (who won the all England Championship in 2001) are the only other major badminton stars from India.

India had the occasional athletic brilliance in the Asian games in the form of Milkha Singh and PT Usha - both sensations of their time. However, India was never able to impact athletics in the world arena. Since about 2000, India has produced strong players in shooting and is able to get its 1-2 medals in each Olympics on the back of the shooters.

Rise of Cricket as a National Pastime

While the sports mentioned in the previous sections are often played and respected, nothing captures an average Indian as much as Cricket. However, it didn't start that way.

Until 1932, Cricket was not a very popular game in India and was followed primarily by the anglophone youth in the cities. The first ever recorded game of Cricket dates to 1721. In June 1932, India was admitted to the elite league of Test Cricket-playing nations - the sixth nation to be admitted - after England, Australia, South Africa, West Indies, and New Zealand. Some of the earliest players such as Maharajah Ranjit Singh and Duleep Singh Ji are still remembered.

However, India had to wait 20 years to score its first victory - in 1952 against England - and in the same year won its first series by beating the newbies Pakistan.

The 1970s was the classic era for Indian Cricket, with a spin quartet of Prasanna, Chandrasekhar, Bedi, and Venkataraghavan and a solid set of batsmen in Gavaskar and Gundappa Vishwanath. Under the captainship of Ajit Wadekar, the Indian Cricket team won back-to-back away series in England and the West Indies.

While India was putting up a solid show in Tests, it was failing to adapt to the new format - One Day Internationals, or ODIs- that became a fixture in 1974.

Cricket World Cup 1983

When India landed on the shores of England in the spring of 1983, very little was expected of them - much less than what the hockey team was expected of in the 1928 Olympics. In the previous two Cricket World Cups (in 1975 and 1979) India had won just one match in total - and that too against an absolute rookie - East Africa. In one of the infamous matches, the famous batsman Gavaskar had forgotten that he was playing a shorter format of the game.

India was put in a tough group with the invincible West Indies - who had won the previous two World Cups - a strong Australia, and a promising Zimbabwe.

In the opening match for India, played on June 9, it had to meet the West Indies. People expected the defending champions to crush the minnows. When India lost their opening batsmen - Srikkanth and Gavaskar - for cheap runs, viewers set up themselves for the obvious.

However, one unlikely hero - Yashpal Sharma - changed the game with a career-best score of 89 to take India to a very decent score of 262. When the bowlers came out to play, they took inspiration from this miraculous batting display from Sharma and did the unthinkable: they bowled out West Indies with six overs to spare and 34 runs short.

India crushed the defending champion in its opening game!

Suddenly, India felt a new energy and momentum. In the next game, they easily walked over Zimbabwe by bowling them out for a cheap 155. At the end of the league stage India was placed second and qualified for the semifinals.

It was incredible. Had India gotten back home just with that, its fans would have been quite proud. However, there was more to come.

In the semifinals, India met the home team England. The local press was reporting that India's honeymoon was soon to end. England had won the toss and elected to bat on a slow pitch at Old Trafford in Manchester. The pitch really suited the Indian medium pace bowlers, who were suddenly transformed into a lethal unit. They walked all over the English batsmen to get them out for 213. The batsmen then got into the act by whistling past the English target without breaking a sweat.

India was now in the finals! No one could believe it. A team that had won just one game in the entire two World Cups before then had now upset the three strongest sides of the tournament. Time for the final showdown.

It was a nice, warm day on the 25th of June, 1983. The Mecca of Cricket - Lord's Cricket Ground at London - was basking in the sunshine and packed to capacity. Clive Lloyd, the tall gentleman from Guyana, proudly walked out onto the center. He could sense the grandness of the venue where his team had won the previous two World Cups. It was now a matter of formality to get the hat-trick or three in a row. He called the toss correct and had no hesitation to bowl.

It was time for the world's most lethal bowling unit to mark their targets on a hapless

subcontinent batting unit, helped by prodigious seam on a classic Lord's wicket. Roberts, Garner, Holding, and Marshall didn't disappoint with their fiery ability to throw hard Cricket balls at over 90 miles an hour. The opening batsman, Srikanth, had some success, but the rest could not last long.

West Indies was all over India. At the end of their innings, India had just 183 - never enough to be even of nuisance value to the juggernaut batting unit of the West Indies.

When West Indies came down to bat, India's first victim was Gordon Greenidge. He was taken out for a paltry one run. However, that brought the two legends of the game - Viv Richards and Desmond Hayes - together. They scored runs freely. It was only a matter of time.

Out of nowhere came the Indian medium pacer Madan Lal. He took both the legends and the allrounder Gomes in quick succession in a matter of just 19 balls and six runs.

Now, India sensed that they were in the game. Captain Kapil Dev started rotating his medium pacers in an expert fashion to slowly strangle the West Indies batsman. The normally free-flowing batsmen were hamstrung by Mohinder Amarnath, who gave only a total of 12 runs in his seven overs. The West Indies' middle order lost patience and got out cheaply.

When Holding was finally caught LBW by Man-of-the-Match Amarnath, the stadium erupted. India had won. Kapil Dev was beaming when he picked up the trophy, and that was an iconic picture for a whole generation.

That victory changed the nature of Indian Cricket and in fact, the whole game of Cricket. Kapil Dev and his men got a hero's welcome and continued the momentum by winning the World Championship in Australia in 1985.

Just as Hockey faded in Indian minds with a string of defeats from the early 1980s, Cricket rose. Indians now have a new set of heroes to celebrate. With the popularisation of TV, Tendulkar and the economy, Cricket became a religion in India. And with the entry of a billion fans, the sleepy game of Cricket was permanently transformed.

Chapter 17: Into the Future

In the past 67 years, India proved its naysayers wrong by surviving as a nation of 1.3 billion people and 22 official languages. It was able to successfully integrate a variety of peripheral territories and its Constitution is a classic. It was able to withstand multiple wars and stand neutral in a highly polarized world.

While we can take comfort with the fact that we survived and we didn't end up a basket case, this is not the best we can do. We need to not just survive, but thrive. We need to push our accelerator. We need to show the world what we are capable of and be the model nation of peace. We need to be the elephant - that neither hunts nor gets hunted.

In the past 17 chapters, we saw the various things that happened in the past. In this final chapter, I will take a glimpse at the future.

I will just start with my parable of the well.

There was a nice village that had a big well in the centre. One day, there was a big robber raid on that village and many villagers jumped into the well to save themselves. Some of them fell by accident, others were pulled into it while rescuing others. Some were confused, some were just like a sheep following the leader. Few fell in to be with their friends and a few others were forced in. Eventually, everyone was in the well. Many died in the process.

A few generations grew inside the well, making use of the water and little resources. By then, the external attacks were long gone. But, the villagers didn't realize that. Scores died, living in squalor, and there was misery all around. As the number of generations grew, people started forgetting that there was once a village above the well.

One day, a guy named Mohandas finally rose up from the well and saw that there was a world around him. He started grouping others and slowly people started getting out of it.

The challenge now is broken down into four parts:

1. Convincing people about life outside the well, in the village.
2. Finding enough ropes
3. Getting them out in an orderly fashion.
4. Advocating patience as it is going to take a lot of time to get a million people out of the well.

This was the state of India and many other countries 60 years ago. Leaders in many countries have since then brought the ropes to pull out the people.

India was a little slower than a few other countries, but we still pulled out as many people as Japan and Germany did. India's middle class with college education and professional jobs is more than the population of Germany. However, the Indian well had a lot of people to start out with and thus while Germany was done with pulling 80 million people out, India is not yet done even after pulling out 150 million people since 1947. You can take

people out of the well only so fast and it takes time.

However, we can drive the process faster if:

1. We can get a lot more ropes, and
2. Dig a few more holes on the side to create alternate paths.

The ropes are in these case are the jobs. For a long time, our government was the only provider of good jobs and there are only so many jobs (ropes) to pull people out. What other countries have done is bring more ropes - entrepreneurs - and dig more side holes (foreign investments) to get the people out. Most successful countries have done this - Singapore, Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and Europe and most recently China (flooded with foreign investments and entrepreneurs).

Here is how India can jumpstart its well rescue process aka journey towards a developed society. I will focus on the practical stuff.

Step 1: Make it Easy for Entrepreneurs

Who took Japan to its heights? Its government did its part, but the bulk load was by its entrepreneurs. The folks who created Toyota, Honda, Sony, Fujitsu, Hitachi, Komatsu, Mitsubishi, Fuji, Nissan... In the case of Germany it was Daimler, Siemens, SAP, BMW and millions of smaller manufacturers. The same for US, Europe, Singapore and now China.

The ONLY way a country can get out of misery is by enabling its entrepreneurs, who will bring more ropes to pull out the people. No country has ever become developed without involving its entrepreneurs. India is the world's worst place to do business. I know it both from statistics and cutting my teeth running business there.

This can be fixed by dismantling our "License raj". Some of these are easy fixes - make it easy to register a "Private Limited", have more predictable rules (unlike the infamous "Vodafone" witch hunt - where the Indian government retroactively applied a tax rule when the company bought out the telecom player Hutch), and enable quick approvals throughout the system. Get the government out of the way.

Step 2: Get the Women Involved

Our women are underutilized in the process of pulling the people out. We give them useless tasks and don't get them to fire up. India has among the lowest percentage of women workers in a professional capacity.

All developed societies had a huge jump in women entering the workforce around the Second World War. That's how they developed. If we can get the women to join the workforce - we get twice more hands and grow twice as fast. It should be simple math, right?

We need to have a substantial push in getting the women in politics, business, and professional workplaces. If it takes some reservation to do the initial push, let's do it.

Step 3: Get Every Child Going to a Good School

Indians whine incessantly about the education system. If there was a World Cup in whining, Indians would get it for their daily complaints on the education system. For all its faults, India's best schools fill up Wall Street, Silicon Valley, Canary Wharf, McKinsey, Microsoft, Harvard, and Oxford. In a dozen places I studied, I don't know of a single friend who is not doing well. Thus, the primary problem is less in our best schools, but the fact that 95% of the population don't have access to good schools. UNICEF estimates that a third of India's children leave before finishing primary school. This leaves a huge room for improvement.

If we can get every Indian kid to have the standard of education of even a Kendriya Vidyalaya or DAV or DPS, India can have a 20X boost in productivity. That means more schools, more good teachers, better technology.

Step 4: Time to Add More Judges and Police

India has too few courts and judges. Added with archaic laws and processes, we have a dysfunctional judicial system. When the judiciary is dysfunctional, society cannot progress. Enable legal reforms to simplify the processes. But, more importantly add thousands of judges and millions of new policemen. We cannot have better security until our police and judiciary levels reach international levels. First, fix the quantity and then fix the quality.

Step 5: Fighting Graft (Corruption)

This is a complex process and there is no one-step silver bullet.

Better Technology

In Chennai, once I was almost hit by a bus when I was waiting on my bike at a signal on a nice, early morning. The signal was red, although no one was on the road. The bus behind me wanted to move ahead on the red, while I was standing in its way. Should I or should I not have obeyed that red light? Was I too dogmatic instead of pragmatic? Our poor technology (having red signal when the intersection is empty) has made a simple thing of following a rule into a dilemma. It has made rule-breaking the pragmatic option, instead of the other way around.

One way to resolve such an issue is by having better technology. If the signal detected motion on my side and not on other sides, it should directly change to green. That's what happens in developed countries. Use the right technology that makes rule-following pragmatic. When everyone around you realizes that the rule and its implementation is logical, there is less of a reason to break it (unless you are crazy).

This is just one simple example. We can have better technology throughout society. Some more examples:

1. Spend a few million rupees to design a very good website that has all the government forms used in all the government departments. The site has to be so intuitive that filling government forms should be a very simple and straightforward process. Make it very easy to get this accessible on mobile. If you do this well, you can eliminate the army of bribe seekers outside the government offices.
2. Create videos and test materials to enable a prospective drivers to learn the road rules in a simple, fun way. Every type of education can be made fun. Let them learn the rules, and then pass the test for "free" (without paying a bribe). Which Indian would not love things for free?
3. Use analytics tools to analyze what the market prices of homes are. Most of the real estate black money involves understating the sale price. Once you build a strong analytics tool, it will be hard to understate price and save tax. Same for sales tax and others. Share this data openly on the government website.
4. Make credit card transactions more prevalent. Subsidize the payment technologies so much that people get incentives not to use cash. Cash transactions are the source of half the headache.

These are starting points. There are a million things we could do as system designers. The goal of any society should be to make rule-following pragmatic. In India, many of the rules are illogical, outdated, archaic, and stupid. This has made even logical people ignore the rules. Once the rational people start following the rules, the government can go brutal on the irrational rule-breakers.

Never Have a Meaningless Rule that Cannot Be Enforced Well

Any rule that cannot be enforced is tyranny and unfair. The good ones would be the only ones to follow (due to self-conscience) and bad ones will not (no enforcement). An example of this is the prohibition law in the US in the 1920s that made it illegal for people to buy alcohol.

Alcohol is so entrenched in Western culture and so easy to manufacture that the laws were openly flouted. Crimes, gangs, mafias, and corruption ruled in cities like Chicago due to that. India has many such rules that are similar. Alcohol is bad, but cannot be banned. Same for cigarettes, drugs, prostitution, trans fats, etc. If you cannot enforce a rule very well, don't have it in the rule book. By having these weak rules, you weaken the fear and respect for law. You then create these dirty surfaces over which germs then fester. Throw these unused furniture out the window.

Simpler Rules

Fifteen years ago, the cops near my home changed one of the key roads into a one-way. As a dogmatic rule-obeyer, I biked around that road for a long time, while no one else obeyed the rule. However, once someone told me why the rule was in place - to make it easy for a local film star to park easily - it no longer made sense for me to obey that rule. I broke that one-way rule as an act of civil disobedience.

This happens all over India. There was a time when getting dollars was very hard. An honest relative of mine had to sell his Indian home and take his money back to Australia (he was a citizen there). When the Indian government blocked him from taking his own money out of India, what did he do?

Many of our laws are stupid this way. We make it illegal for someone to be gay. We make it excruciatingly difficult for someone to open a new mine. We make it impossible for someone to open a new factory. Our rules are so bad that our entrepreneurs either have to look abroad for growth or bribe.

When laws are stupid and complex, even honest people will ignore them. When an honest man is forced to break laws on a daily basis, society decays.

In 1992, Manmohan Singh destroyed the gold smuggling business overnight. He didn't use big armies or police or courts. He just made it legal for honest people to bring gold into the country. Since the early 2000s, Hawala has gone out of vogue among the good people due to RBI reforms. Never have an unnecessary rule in your book that neither makes sense nor can be enforced.

Simplify, simplify, simplify.

Reduce Scarcity

Ask the people of 1960s and 70s of what it was like to get a phone line or a scooter in their time. Most people would have bribed someone to get these basic things. Now, you pay bribes neither to get a phone line nor to get a motorbike. You don't pay bribes to get ahead of the employment queue in employment exchange either.

Make it easy for honest and rational people to get their basic needs and desires satisfied in a straightforward way. There is a reason why all the nordic countries became so egalitarian and corruption-free (although brutal crimes were very common in the previous centuries). Prosperity is good!

The movie - Guru - ends well on this idea. Ambani could have not broken the rules and not enrich the economy. Or he could break the rules and enrich the economy. Notable economist, Swami Iyer, calls this the efficient corruption vs. inefficient corruption.

In an ideal society, such a distinction should vanish and there should be no necessity for a good businessman to bribe.

Rule of Law -> Destroy a Culture of Fear

This is the fundamental duty of the government. Setting up the rule of law so that the good guys are not afraid to talk the truth. That means anyone who threatens, hurts, or murders a journalist, judge, government servant, or a whistleblower must be treated mercilessly. Once you bring the murderers and gangs to justice with tailor-made laws and fast-track courts, the culture of fear disappears. Once good people stop being afraid, they will be more open to whistleblow. This is a classic law and order issue.

On a related note, governments should also stop scaring people with misuse of slander and libel laws. Anyone in public life should not be given the right to hide behind slander laws.

Reduce Government Involvement and Destroy Monopolies

When governments are too involved in the economy, you create power-centers that become above the law. The government agencies become monopolies and laws would get written around them. You create these "babus" who become too powerful to impact your life. There is a concept called "rent seeking" where these powerful people will take "rent" for any economic activity you do (like selling vegetables on the road).

Get rid of these babus and get rid of any kind of monopolies - government or private. When there are multiple companies vying to provide services to the people, corruption becomes less necessary.

Most of the world's most corrupted countries have too much government involvement or are run by oligarchs/autocratics.

Provide Better Wages to Cops and Other Civil Servants

In most parts of India, cops get peanuts as official salary. This makes it impossible for a honest person to get in and survive. As the good apples exit, rotten apples replace them.

As it is practically impossible to survive on the government salary, bribe-taking becomes a very simple and straightforward option.

Pay the cops well and be merciless when they take a bribe. When they are paid well, they have a lot to lose when breaking the rules.

Broken Window Theory - Create Clean Zones

In public policy, there is a concept called broken-window theory. In a street, if there are windows broken by miscreants and not acted upon, it sends signals to the other baddies that rule-enforcement is weak. Crimes will fester in those areas. In the same way, you tend to put garbage in those areas where there are already piles of garbage. You are less likely to throw garbage in a clean mall.

Like a lot of crimes, corruption is a disease in that it can spread easily if there are no antibodies. To solve corruption, we need to create zones of “cleanliness” - where rules are both straightforward and strongly enforced .

Government could start this in specific departments (let us say the passport office) or specific areas (say North Delhi) and do a complete reset of the rules and enforcement. Make it impossible for anyone to break the small list of logical rules you set. Eradicate the disease in that zone, quarantine it, and go to the next zones.

Working against corruption is a complex, long slog. It involves everything from building a strong economy to creating the right policies that makes sense. It is not a switch that you can turn on and off. Even if you have honest cops and leaders, you cannot solve it without fixing the underlying problems. Even if you give a death sentence to bribe givers/takers, you cannot solve it.

When we complain of attitudes, we are copping out and taking an easy way. Attitudes are a reflection of the environment and is an adaptation. That means we need to change the environment and make it conducive to obey the rules. This will not eradicate corruption; like germs, corruption will continue to live, but can be turned powerless.

There is a famous dialogue in Kamal Hassan’s movie - Indian/Hindustani. It goes into how bribes are present even in developed societies - but it is given to prevent the official from doing their duty. By the bad people. In India, bribes are necessary to get the official to even do their duty. Even by the good people.

Our focus should primarily be on how to prevent honest and rational people from bribing. This can be done by designing a better system. Once you get the honest people out of the corruption ring, you will get the strength of truth to fight the small fraction of real baddies.

Step 6: National Level Skill Development

In the next 20 years, we need to bring 500 million people out of agriculture as we climb the ladders of prosperity. I have said this many times. We don’t need 600 million people working in farming. It is again simple math - if 600 million people are required to produce

food for 1.2 billion people, we either have to drastically push up food prices or have the farmers live in poverty.

However, if 100 million people can produce food for 1.2 billion people, the farmer salaries can go up 6X without pushing up food inflation. And all developed economies have pulled this off. This is not rocket science.

Now, what will these 500 million people do for a living? This is where we need a national level skill development. Let us produce new industrial workers, new accountants, new doctors, new mechanics, new drivers... Millions of Indian businesses are suffering from not having access to quality people.

Step 7: This is Rocket Science

India went to mobile revolution, without touching landlines. We directly went into software before we even had factories or toilets. India needs to leapfrog, wherever it is possible. Let's leverage technology to the hilt.

Let us be the most efficient guys to go to space. Let us be the leader in online education. Let us be the leader in robotics, 3D manufacturing and Internet of things (IoT) - three things that are going to drastically alter the world's economy in the next 10 years.

Just like ISRO, we need to have a national center of robotics, national center for IoT and a national institute of 3D manufacturers. Get on to this before the world even realizes this. America and Britain fully used Industrial revolution as they didn't have big industries before that and were able to leapfrog India and China. Now, it is time for the next cycle. We don't have many industries to lose now and this is when we can leapfrog.

Step 8: Tap Our Sun and Get Out of Foreign Energy

India can't forever depend on Saudi Arabia and other countries for our oil. Coal will kill our environment like it is doing to China. Hydro power will kill our forests. Thus, we need to use solar energy as a national priority. Even if it is expensive for now, we must put all our national efforts and get the economies of scale. This will give us the energy security and the one who has the energy will be one with metaphoric power.

India has 200,000sq km of deserts in the western side (Thar Desert and Rann of Kutch). These are hot almost throughout the year and in the summers can get as hot as 52C.

A big chunk of this desert is not really populated and the government owns a lot of it. What if we could take 400sq km of land out of it for solar power?

400sq km = 400,000,000sq m

A big chunk of Western India is capable of generating 2500 kWh/sq m. Thus, total production from the 400sq km = 2.5 Mwh * 400 million = 1 PWh. This is the total electricity production of India. In short, with less than 0.2% of our desert, we can almost completely wean ourselves of foreign energy.

Miles to Go Before I Sleep

*Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.
My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.
He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.
The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.*

-Robert Frost in Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

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