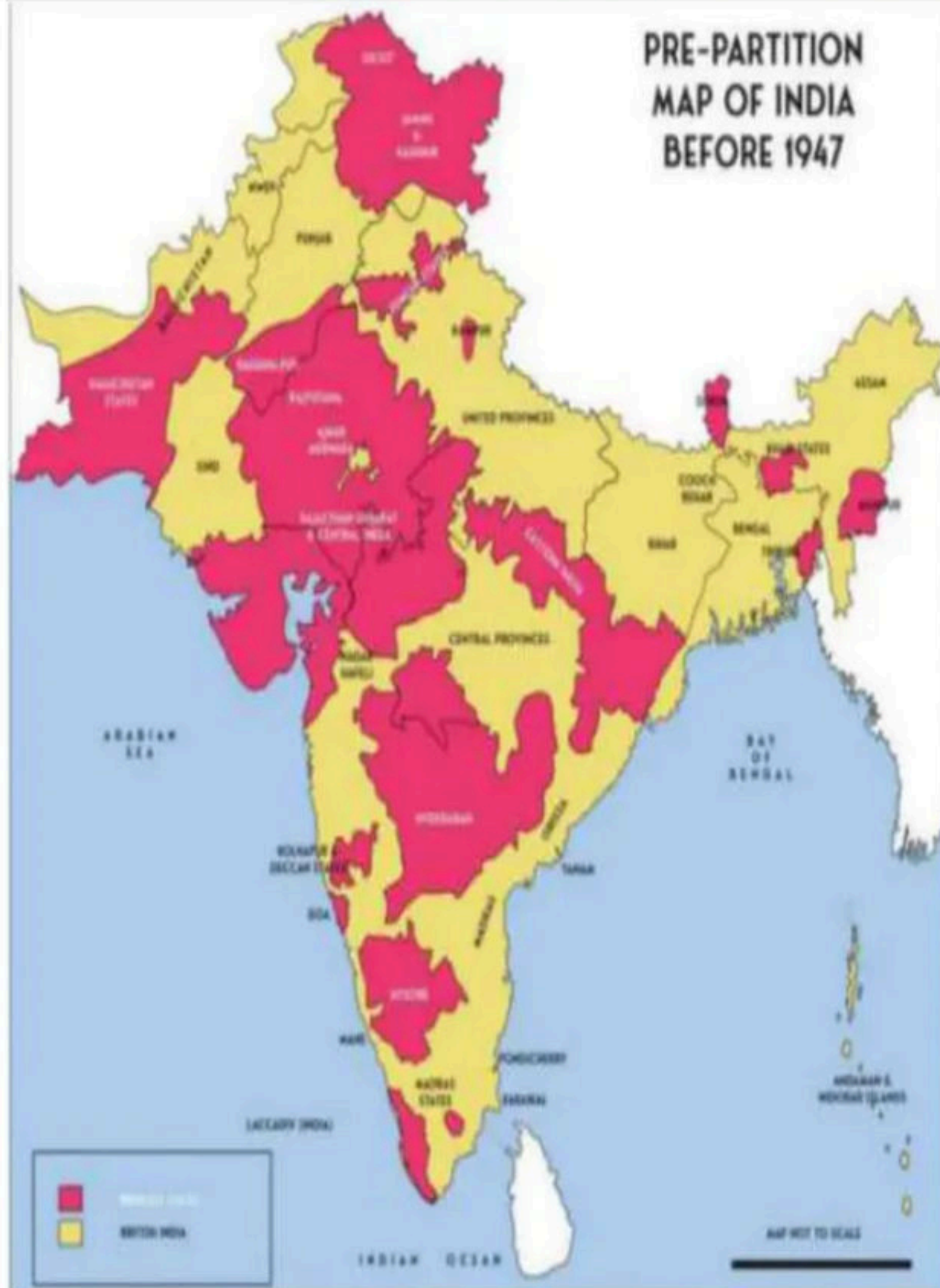


Prajamandal Movement in Princely States

Course on Social Science

**PRE-PARTITION
MAP OF INDIA
BEFORE 1947**



Since the British conquests in India followed no definite pattern, different parts of the country were not brought under the British Raj in a uniform manner.

Two-fifths of the Indian subcontinent was ruled by the Princely States.

- **Princely States recognized the paramountcy of the British government.**
- **British guaranteed the Princes protection from any military threat – internal or external.**

Political Setup of the Princely States

- **Most Princely States were run by unmitigated autocracies – absolute power concentrated in the hands of the rulers and his favourites.**
- **The burden of land tax was often heavier than in British India.**
- **Lesser implementation of rule of law (inadequate police system led to more crimes) than in British India.**
- **Lesser civil liberties.**

- Rulers had unrestrained power over the state revenues for personal use.
 - This led to them living in luxury and wasting resources – little spent on improving the lives of people.
- However, there were some good rulers and ministers – they made attempts to introduce reforms in taxation, administration and education.
 - E.g., Mysore and Baroda promoted industrial and agricultural development; administrative, political and educational reforms.

Impact of the National Movement

- As the national movement grew in strength in British India, the government asked the princes to crack down upon it.
- Any sympathy shown by the princes towards the national movement (like the Maharaja of Baroda), was looked upon by the British with extreme disfavour.
- The advance of national movement in British India and the ideas of civil liberties, responsible government and democracy, soon influenced the people of the Princely States.

1920s – Encouraged by the Khilafat and Non-Cooperation movements, many local organisations of States' people came into existence.

Praja Mandals or States' Peoples Conference were organized in Mysore, Hyderabad, Baroda, the Kathiawad states, the Deccan states, Jamnagar, Indore, Nawanagar.

- **The policy of the INC towards the Princely States was first laid out in 1920 in the Nagpur session.**
- **A resolution called upon the Princes to grant full responsible government in their States.**
- **Congress allowed residents of the states to become members.**
- **Also made it clear that the INC cannot initiate political activity in the states under the banner of INC.**
- **However, members from the states could be involved in their individual capacity as members of local political organisations.**

1927 – All India States' People's Conference (AISPC).

➤ Attended by 700 political workers from the states.

➤ Leaders: **Balwantrai Mehta**, Maniklal Kothari and G.R. Abhayankar.

- Informal links between the INC and various organization of the States' peoples (including AISPC) continued to be close.

1927 – INC reiterated its resolution of 1920.

1929 – Jawaharlal Nehru, in his presidential address in the Lahore session, declared that Princely States cannot live apart from the rest of India.

“The only people who have a right to determine the future of the states must be the people of those states.”

1935 – Government of India Act projected a scheme of a federation.

- **Princely States were to be brought under direct constitutional relationship with British India.**
- **States were to send representatives to the Federal Legislature.**
- **However, these representative were to be nominated by the Princes (not democratically elected) – therefore, in practice these seats would act as a counter to nationalists in the federal legislature.**

1937 – Congress Ministries come to power in majority of the provinces of British India.

1938 to 1939 – Praja Mandals in many princely states that earlier had no such organisations.

- **Demanded responsible government and other reforms.**
- **Major struggles in Jaipur, Kashmir, Rajkot, Patiala, Hyderabad, Mysore, Travancore, and the Orissa states.**

1938 – In its Haripura session, Congress again stuck to its view that movements in the states could not be held under the banner of the INC.

- Any movement needs to be conducted independently and through individual efforts.
- However, the renewed force and pressure from the Praja Mandals forced Gandhiji and the INC to **reverse their decision**.
- Radicals and socialists in the Congress also had been calling for this change.

March 1939 – Tripuri session of the Congress.

➤ **Resolution on new policy – Congress to be involved in the struggles of the people of the States.**

1939 – AISPC elected Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru as president for the Ludhiana session.



Rajkot was a small princely state with a population of 75,000 people.

Situated in the Kathiawad peninsula.

Important because – Rajkot was the seat of the Western India State Agency, from where the British political agent maintained his supervision on the states of the area.

1910 to 1930 – Rajkot ruled by Lakhajiraj – good ruler, who promoted industry, agriculture, education, etc.

- **Also encouraged participation of the people in government by inaugurating Rajkot Praja Pratinidhi Sabha in 1923.**
- **This representative assembly consisted of 90 representatives elected on the basis of Universal Adult Franchisee.**
- **Lakhajiraj had also encouraged nationalist political activity by giving permission to Mansukhlal Mehta and Amritlal Sheth to hold the first Kathiawad Political Conference in Rajkot, in 1921.**

- Wore khadi and was a supporter of Gandhiji.

1939 – Lakhajiraj died, and his son Dharmendra Singhji (a complete contrast to his father) ascended to the throne.

- He was only interested in his personal pleasures; de facto power in the hands of Dewan Virawala.
- Together they restricted popular governance through vetoes and state revenues were spent in personal luxury of the ruler.

- This resulted in high inflation, and people were discontented.
- Congressmen like Mansukhlal Mehta, Amrithlal Seth, Phulchand Shah, and Vrajlal Shukla led the people's struggle.

1936 – Gandhian workers began the Rajkot satyagraha.

Jethalal Joshi led a 21 day strike of 800 workers of the state owned cotton mill.

The Durbar was forced to concede to the workers demands.

- Gandhiji's wife Kasturba joined the Satyagraha (she went on an infinite fast), after the ruler of Rajkot refused to give in to Patel's demands.
- Gandhiji asked the CJI Maurice Gwyer to interfere -- CJI upheld Patel's position.
- However, Dewan Virawala continued to create communal and caste divide by asking Muslims and depressed classes to put forward their claims for representation in the people's assembly through separate electorates.
- Rajkot Satyagraha ended in a failure.

Orissa Praja Mandal

- The first sign of trouble involving a Praja Mandal arose in the princely state of Nilgiri, where peasant demands for fairer laws resulted in the ruler adopting repressive, even brutal, measures in response.
- Problems then arose also in the states of Talcher and Dhenkanal.
- While the ruler of Dhenkanal took such strong measures that several people were killed, the ruler of Talcher faced an unusual protest that attracted national attention: many of his peasantry moved out of the state to settle in temporary camps in the British-governed area of Orissa.

- Another unusual protest occurred in Nayagarh State when its ruler attempted to introduce a monopoly on the supply of betel: the population reacted by almost entirely stopping their consumption, which led to the arrest of some of its leaders.
- Discontent was voiced in other states, such as Athgarh, Baramba, Narsinghpur, Nayagarh, Ranpur and Tigiri a, sometimes resulting in violence and death.
- Following an organised "All Orissa Garjat Day" on 29 October 1938, when people attempted to voice their concerns in unity, the troubles continued into 1939.

January 1939 – a British Political Agent, Major Bazelgette, was killed while trying to defuse tensions in Ranpur.

- The news of this dampened protests elsewhere, and notably so in Nayagarh, where Bazelgette had been summoned a few days earlier to assist the beleaguered raja in calming the Praja Mandal.**
- Whilst the rajas might resort to violence, the INC, believed in non-violent protest and civil disobedience.**

- Congress leaders such as Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Subash Chandra Bose welcomed the political awakening of the people in Orissa but simultaneously condemned the killing.
- The British responded to the death by sending in troops, executing the ringleaders, and deposing the raja in favour of direct control.

1939 – A report by the Orissa States Enquiry Committee, which had been formed in 1937 to investigate the garjat states, came to nothing because of the outbreak of World War II, during the period of which the British would not countenance any changes or agitation.

- The Praja Mandal movement came to the fore again when the war ended, spurred by the possibility of wide-ranging change should the British grant India its independence.**
- The first cracks appeared when the ruler of Nilgiri attempted to put a wedge between the tribal and non-tribal communities of his state by fomenting attacks from one on the other.**

- This decision, which he hoped would undermine the Praja Mandal, created a major problem in law and order that made it necessary for the Government of Orissa to intervene on instructions from the central government.
- The central government were particularly concerned to contain the problem, which had the potential to spread into neighbouring states, and which in part had also been engendered by the unwillingness of the newly-formed Eastern States Union, comprising numerous princely states, to submit to Praja Mandal demands for democratic representation in its governance.
- Thus, Nilgiri came under the aegis of the provincial government from November 1947 and within weeks all but two of the other garjat states - Saraikela and Kharsawan - had agreed to merge with the main Orissa province.

Prominent figures in the Orissa Praja Mandal movement:

- Sarangadhar Das,
- Baisnab Charan Patnaik,
- Pabitrāmohan Pradhan,
- Nabakrushna Choudhury and
- Kailas Chandra Mahanty

Praja Mandals in Hyderabad state

1921 – Andhra Mahasabha in Andhra Pradesh region, and Karnatak Council in Karnataka region.

1937 – Maharashtra Council in Marathwada.

September 1938 – Hyderabad State Congress founded.

➤ The threatened Nizam banned the Hyderabad Congress.

October 1938 – Swami Ramanand Tiratha launched satyagraha protesting the ban on the state congress.

- **Arya Samaj, Hindu Mahasabha, and Hindu Civil Liberty Union also launched satyagraha against the religious persecution of Hindus in Hyderabad.**
- **Andhra Mahasabha focused on peasant problems under the leadership of B. Yella Reddy and Ravi Narayana Reddy.**
- **Nizam was forced to enact reforms but did not withdraw the ban on Congress.**

- Nizam had also banned the “Vande Mataram” song.
- Students of Government College of Aurangabad protested against it.

Key nationalist leaders:

- Mukundrao Pedgaonkar
- Shrinivasrao Borikar
- Govindbhai Shroff

1942 – Quit India Movement.

- **Sarojini Naidu arrested in Hyderabad.**

Hyderabad State Congress demanded:

- **Responsible government under the Nizam.**
- **Integration of Hyderabad with independent India.**
- **Grant of Civil Rights to the people of Hyderabad.**
- **Removal of the ban on Congress.**

1945-46 – Peasant movements against forced labour in Nalgonda district, Warangal and Khammam.

1946 – All India Association of People's Council demanded that the Nizam lift the ban on the INC.

July 1946 – Nizam finally lifted the ban.

Mewar Prajamandal –

April 1938 – Founded in Udaipur by Shri Manikya Lal Varma.

➤ **Since there was a ban on his entry to Mewar, he completed the foundation by staying at Ajmer.**

September 1938 – Outlawed by the Udaipur Government.

Rajasthan Praja Mandals

Jaipur Praja Mandal – (1st Praja Mandal in Rajasthan)

- **Founded by Arjunlal Sethi and Kapurlal Patni in 1931.**
- **Jamnalal Bajaj and Hiralal Shashtri revived it in 1938.**
- **Shekhawati Kisan Sabha was merged into Jaipur Praja Mandal, under the efforts of Hiralal Shashtri.**

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Shahpura Prajamandal –

- **Founded in April 1938 by Shri Ramesh Chandra Ouzha, Laduram Vyas and Abhay Singh Dangi (under support from Manikyalal Verma).**
- **Shahpura was the first Princely State in which fully democratic and responsible government was established (on 14th August, 1947).**

September 1947 – Gokulal Asawa appointed Prime Minister by Rajadhiraj Sudarshan Dev.

Jodhpur Prajamandal:

➤ Founded in 1934 by Bhanwarlal Sarraf, Abhaymal Jain and Achaleshwar Prasad.

May 1938 – Marwar Lok Parishad established.

➤ President = Ranchoddas Gattani.

➤ General Secretary = Abhaymal Jain.

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