



Mains Practice Question

Q. Examine the early challenges that India faced as a newly independent country and world's largest democracy.

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Approach

- Write about the prevailing conditions after independence in the introduction.
- Mention how it created challenges for India- both external and internal.
- Conclude by mentioning about India's democratic credentials which helped India to survive as a nation.

Introduction

15th August 1947 marked the end of colonial rule in India and the country found itself standing on the threshold of a new era wherein the task was to build a strong nation. While India found itself independent from the British, it was still to find independence from social, economic and political problems that hindered India's growth story.

Body

Challenges faced by India post independence

Internal Challenges

- **Partition and its consequences:** Partition was marked with large scale communal violence. Partition not only led to the division of assets but also created huge refugee crisis followed by the origin of Kashmir problem.
- **Mass poverty:** At the time of Independence, the incidence of poverty in India was about 80% or about 250 million. Famines and hunger pushed India to take external help for its food security.
- **Illiteracy:** When India gained Independence, its population numbered about 340 million. The literacy level then was just 12% or about 41 million.
- **Low economic capacity:** Stagnant agriculture and poor industrial base.
 - In 1947, agriculture accounted for 54% of India's GDP. At the time of independence, 60% of India's population depended on agriculture for a living.
 - During the centrally planned economy phase, the annual growth rate stagnated around 3.5% (**Hindu rate of growth**) from the 1950s to 1980s, while per capita income growth averaged 1.3%.
- **Linguistic reorganization:** Boundaries of the British Indian provinces had been drawn and redrawn in a haphazard manner without any thought to cultural and linguistic cohesion. Continued demand for linguistically homogeneous provinces led to emergence of secessionist trends.
- **Secessionist movements:** Punjab's Khalistan movement of the 1980s, Insurgency in the North-East, and the Naxal Movement in central-eastern India (1960s) were the biggest internal security challenges to India.
- **Emergency:** National Emergency of 1975 as the government's response to the JP Movement is

considered as dark phases of Indian democracy. It curtailed the fundamental rights of the citizens and shook the foundations of Indian democratic credentials.

- From 1973 there was a sharp decline in the economic situation, a combination of growing unemployment, rampant inflation, and scarcity of basic food and essential commodities created a serious crisis.

External Challenges

- Global world order marked with **cold war tensions**: Most of the developing countries were band-wagoning either of the two superpowers USA or the Soviet Union. India followed a **policy of Non-Alignment** to stay away from cold-war politics and focus on its internal development.
- **Hostile neighbours**: India had to face consequent **wars** with Pakistan (1965, 1971) and China(1962) during the early phases of its independence. This not only hindered India's growth and created regional instability.

Conclusion

It is to be noted that, Indian constitutional principles of secularism and federalism are the foundational keystone of Indian democracy. Indian democracy is a heterogeneous model with a vast socio-religious and cultural diversity. It was predicted by western political analysts that the Indian model of democracy would not last long.

However, it was due to India's strong commitment to its constitutional principles that led India to not only survive as a nation but also to emerge as the leader of the newly independent countries.

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