



Demand for Bhil Pradesh

For Prelims: Govind Giri Banjara, Mangarh Hill, Bhili language, [Panchayats \(Extension to Scheduled Areas\) Act, 1996](#), [14th Finance Commission](#), [Sixth Schedule](#), [Special Category Status](#), [Autonomous Hill Development Councils](#)

For Mains: [Regional Aspirations](#), [Sixth Schedule States](#), [Demand for smaller states](#)

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Why in News?

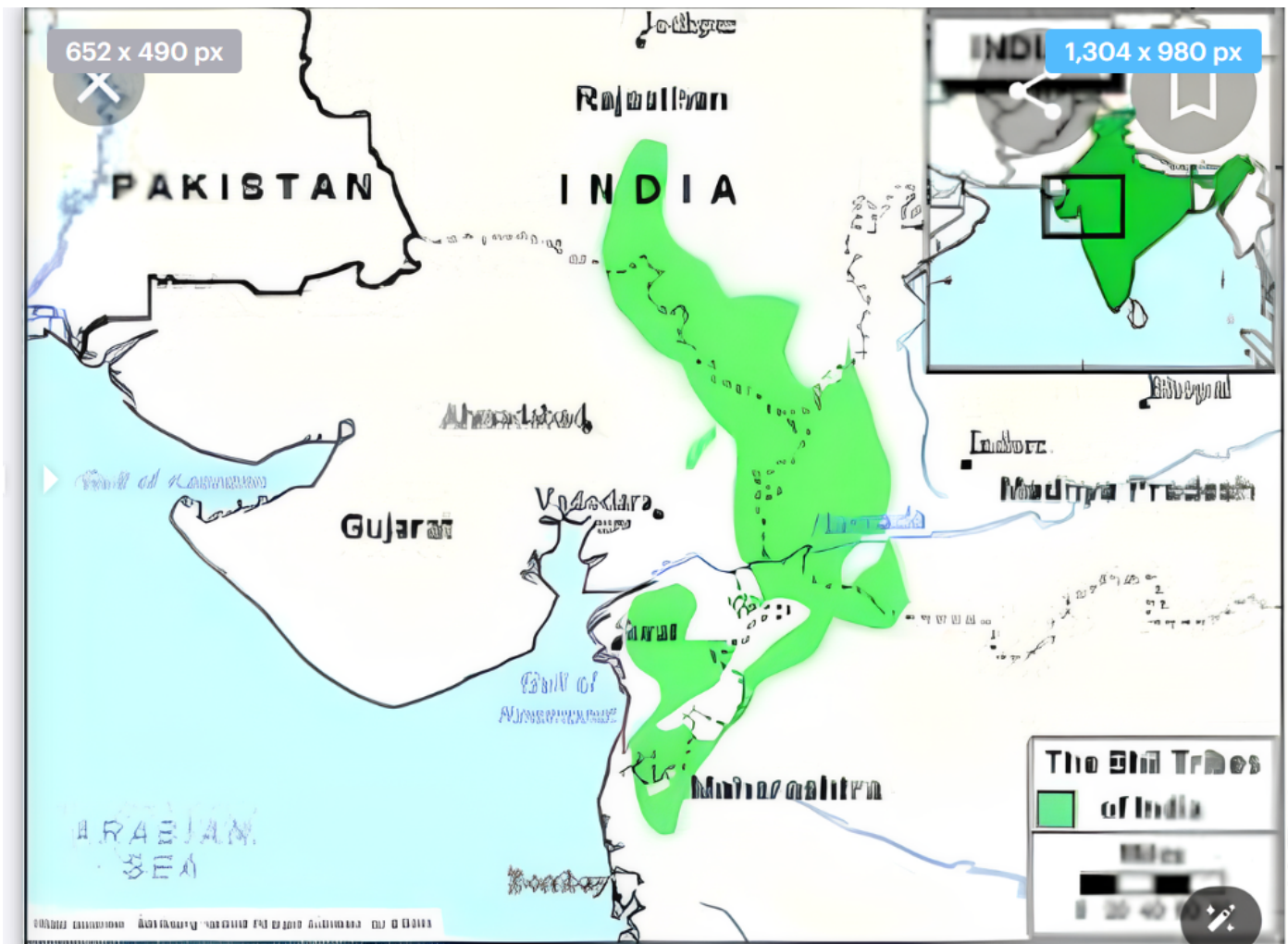
Recently, the **demand for a separate Bhil state, "Bhil Pradesh,"** has been gaining momentum in **Rajasthan and neighbouring states.**

Who are Bhills and What are their Demands?

▪ About Bhills:

- Bhills are considered as **one of the oldest tribe in India and** identified as one of the **Dravidian racial tribe of Western India** belonging to **Austroloid group of tribes.**
 - They are a **cross section of great Munda race and a wild tribe of India** and speak a language (**Bhili**) of **Dravidian origin.**
 - Once they were the ruler in parts of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Malwa, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar.
 - As per Census 2011, there are **1.7 crore Bhils across the country.**
 - Their largest concentration is in **Madhya Pradesh** at about 60 lakh, followed by 42 lakh in **Gujarat**, 41 lakh in **Rajasthan** and 26 lakh in **Maharashtra.**
 - **Bhills are Hindus by religion** and appease deities of forest and evil spirits beside pujas of Lord Shiva and Durga.

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▪ Demand of Bhil Pradesh:

- The **demand for Bhil Pradesh dates back to 1913** when **Govind Giri Banjara**, a **tribal activist and social reformer**, first called for a separate Bhil state during a mobilisation at Mangarh Hill.
 - This was **followed by a tragic massacre** where British forces killed around 1,500 tribals.
 - Over the decades, various tribal leaders, including political figures, have periodically revived this demand.
 - The proposed Bhil Pradesh would cover 49 districts across four contiguous states including Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra. This would involve 12 districts from Rajasthan.

▪ Reasons for the Demand:

- **Cultural and Linguistic Homogeneity:** The Bhil community **shares a common language, Bhili**, and cultural practices across the four states. Proponents argue that a separate state would better preserve and promote their cultural heritage.
 - The Fazl Ali Commission also considered **linguistic and cultural homogeneity** as one of the factors for the formation of the new states.
- **Geographic Considerations:** The proposed Bhil Pradesh would **encompass 49 districts across these four states**, with significant tribal populations. This region has historical and cultural ties that transcend current state boundaries.
- **Political Marginalisation:** Tribal leaders claim that existing political structures have failed to adequately address **the needs and aspirations of the Bhil community**.
 - A separate state is seen as a solution to ensure more focused governance and development.
- **Developmental Focus:** Proponents believe a separate state **would lead to more tailored development policies and better utilisation of resources** for tribal welfare.

- Historical neglect and slow implementation of laws like the [Panchayats \(Extension to Scheduled Areas\) Act, 1996](#), highlight the need for more localised governance.

▪ **Criticism of Demand:**

- Critics argue that creating states based on caste or community could lead to **further fragmentation and instability**.
 - **The Fazl Ali Commission** had opined that the **unity of India should be regarded as the primary consideration** in any redrawing of the country's political units.
- There is also **resistance from established political parties** which have complex stakes in maintaining the status quo.
- Opponents argue that forming states based on tribal identity could **exacerbate social divisions**.

What are the Other Regions Demanding Separate States?

- **Vidarbha:** It comprises the **Amravati and Nagpur divisions** of eastern Maharashtra. The [State Reorganisation Act of 1956](#) recommended the creation of Vidarbha state with Nagpur as the capital.
 - However, to alleviate the fear of neglect among Vidarbha people after its inclusion in Maharashtra state, **Nagpur was designated as the second capital**.
 - The backwardness of the region due to the neglect of successive state governments is justified as the basis for the demand for a separate state of Vidarbha.
- **Bodoland:** The Bodos are the **largest ethnic and linguistic community in northern Assam**. The agitation for the creation of a separate Bodoland state resulted in an agreement in 2003 between the GoI, the Assam state government, and the [Bodo Liberation Tigers Force](#).
 - According to the agreement, Bodos were granted the Bodoland
- There have been **demands from other quarters as well** for separate states including **Gorkhaland, Kukiland, and Mithila, etc.**



What are the Issues Arising due to the Creation of New States?

- Different statehoods may lead to the **hegemony of the dominant community/caste/tribe** over their power structures.
 - This can lead to the **emergence of intra-regional rivalries** among the sub-regions.
- The creation of new states may also lead to **certain negative political consequences** like a small group of legislators could make or break a government at will.
- There is also the **possibility of an increase in inter-state water, power, and boundary disputes**. For example disputes between **Delhi and Haryana over water sharing**.
- The division of states would **require huge funds for building new capitals** and maintaining a large number of Governors, Chief Ministers, Ministers, and administrators as the case in the

division of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana

- The creation of smaller states **only transfers power from the old state capital to the new state capital without empowering already existing institutions** like Gram Panchayat, District Collector, etc. rather than diffusion of development in the backward areas of the states.

Way Forward

- The **National Integration Council** can be strengthened to **deal with the challenges of regionalism**.
 - A high-powered commission can also be formed to assess the efficacy of existing laws & policies and propose necessary amendments **to address the regional concerns**.
- The **73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments** provided a strong foundation for Panchayati Raj and Urban Local Bodies. Strengthening these institutions through capacity building, financial empowerment, and constitutional safeguards can be more effective.
 - **Finance Commission**'s recommendations can be used as a benchmark for equitable distribution. Additionally, mechanisms for efficient resource utilization, such as performance-based budgeting, need to be strengthened.
- A Special Package, similar to the one provided to Telangana after its creation and tailored to specific regional needs, can be designed.
 - Economic parameters like per capita income, infrastructure index, and human development indicators can be used to identify deserving regions.
- The **NITI Aayog's Aspirational Districts Programme** focuses on underdevelopment. Similar programs can be launched for regions demanding statehood.
- The **Inter-State Council** provides a platform for center-state dialogue. Similar mechanisms can be created at the regional level.
 - Initiatives like the **National Cultural Fund** and the **Sahitya Akademi** support cultural preservation. Region-specific programs, including language promotion and cultural festivals, can be expanded.

Drishti Mains Question:

Q. Analyse the increasing demands for the creation of new states in India. Discuss the implications of these demands on federalism.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims:

Q1. Which of the following provisions of the Constitution of India have a bearing on Education? (2012)

1. Directive Principles of State Policy
2. Rural and Urban Local Bodies
3. Fifth Schedule
4. Sixth Schedule
5. Seventh Schedule

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a)** 1 and 2 only
- (b)** 3, 4 and 5 only
- (c)** 1, 2 and 5 only
- (d)** 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Ans: (d)

Q2. Under which Schedule of the Constitution of India can the transfer of tribal land to private parties for mining be declared null and void? (2019)

- (a) Third Schedule
- (b) Fifth Schedule
- (c) Ninth Schedule
- (d) Twelfth Schedule

Ans: (b)

Mains:

Q.1. How far do you think cooperation, competition and confrontation have shaped the nature of federation in India? Cite some recent examples to validate your answer. **(2020)**

Q.2. Though the federal principle is dominant in our constitution and that principle is one of its basic features, but it is equally true that federalism under the Indian Constitution leans in favour of a strong Center, a feature that militates against the concept of strong federalism. Discuss. **(2014)**

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