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Formation of Chhattisgarh: Historical and Constitutional Context

The formation of Chhattisgarh as the 26th state of India on **1st November 2000** marked a pivotal moment in the country's political and administrative history. The journey of Chhattisgarh from being a region within Madhya Pradesh to a separate state was driven by unique historical, geographical, cultural, and socio-economic factors. This article explores the historical evolution, constitutional processes, and socio-political dynamics that led to the creation of Chhattisgarh.

Historical Context

Ancient History

1. **Early Civilizations**:
   Chhattisgarh has a rich historical legacy that dates back to ancient times. The region, historically known as "Dakshin Kosala," finds mention in texts like the **Ramayana** and **Mahabharata**, as well as inscriptions such as the **Hathigumpha Inscription** of Kharavela.
2. **Ruling Dynasties**:
   Chhattisgarh was ruled by various dynasties, including the **Mauryas**, **Satavahanas**, **Nalas**, **Kalachuris**, and later the **Marathas**. These rulers contributed to its cultural and administrative identity.
3. **Role in Medieval Period**:
   During the medieval period, Chhattisgarh emerged as a distinct entity under the Kalachuri dynasty of Ratanpur. Their rule helped consolidate the region's identity through cultural and architectural contributions.

Colonial Era

1. **Integration into British India**:
   During British colonial rule, Chhattisgarh was administered as part of the Central Provinces and Berar. It was recognized for its mineral wealth, forest resources, and tribal population.
2. **Socio-Economic Backwardness**:
   The region remained underdeveloped due to its geographical isolation, lack of infrastructure, and neglect by successive rulers. These factors became the basis for its demand for autonomy in later years.
3. **Role in the Freedom Struggle**:
   Leaders like **Thakur Pyarelal Singh** and **Barrister Chhedilal** played an instrumental role in mobilizing the region's population during the Indian freedom struggle. The socio-economic grievances of Chhattisgarh were interwoven with its participation in the national movement.

Post-Independence Scenario

1. **Integration into Madhya Pradesh**:
   In 1956, with the reorganization of states based on linguistic criteria, Chhattisgarh became part of Madhya Pradesh. Despite its cultural and historical distinctiveness, it was administratively merged due to its shared Hindi-speaking population.
2. **Neglect and Underdevelopment**:
   Over the decades, the region experienced marginalization within Madhya Pradesh. The centralization of governance in Bhopal often overlooked the developmental needs of Chhattisgarh.

Demand for Statehood

Cultural Identity

- **Distinct Culture and Language**:
  Chhattisgarh has a unique cultural identity shaped by its **tribal traditions**, **folk art forms**, and the **Chhattisgarhi dialect**, which is distinct from the mainstream Hindi spoken in Madhya Pradesh.
- **Tribal Population**:
  The tribal population, constituting nearly one-third of the state's demographics, faced neglect and socio-economic challenges. Their aspirations for self-governance were a significant factor in the demand for statehood.

Economic Exploitation

- **Resource-Rich Region**:
  Chhattisgarh is endowed with rich mineral resources, dense forests, and abundant water bodies. However, these resources were primarily utilized for the development of other regions within Madhya Pradesh, leaving Chhattisgarh underdeveloped.
- **Poverty and Unemployment**:
  The region lagged in terms of infrastructure, education, and healthcare, resulting in high poverty and unemployment rates.

Administrative Inefficiency

- **Geographical Isolation**:
  Chhattisgarh's geographical distance from Madhya Pradesh's administrative capital, Bhopal, resulted in governance challenges and inefficiencies.
- **Neglect of Local Aspirations**:
  Developmental policies failed to address the specific needs of Chhattisgarh, leading to growing dissatisfaction among its population.

Rise of Regional Movements

1. **Formation of the Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha (CMM)**:
   Led by leaders like **Shankar Guha Niyogi**, the CMM advocated for the rights of tribal communities, local laborers, and socio-economic justice for the region.
2. **Political Advocacy**:
   Politicians from Chhattisgarh, including **Pandit Ravi Shankar Shukla**, **Shyama Charan Shukla**, and others, consistently raised the demand for statehood in both state and central legislatures.

Constitutional Context

State Reorganization in India

- **The States Reorganization Act, 1956**:
  The linguistic reorganization of states set the precedent for demands based on cultural and administrative autonomy. While this act created Madhya Pradesh, it ignored Chhattisgarh's unique identity.

Role of the Sarkaria Commission

- The **Sarkaria Commission Report** (1988) on Centre-State relations acknowledged the growing demands for smaller states to improve administrative efficiency and governance.

Formation of Chhattisgarh State Reorganization Bill

1. **Political Consensus**:
   In the late 1990s, under the leadership of then Prime Minister **Atal Bihari Vajpayee**, the central government initiated the process for creating three new states: **Chhattisgarh**, **Uttarakhand**, and **Jharkhand**.
2. **Approval by Madhya Pradesh Legislature**:
   The Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly passed the resolution for the creation of Chhattisgarh, signaling a crucial step in the constitutional process.
3. **Parliamentary Approval**:
   The **Chhattisgarh State Reorganization Bill, 2000**, was introduced and passed in the Parliament, paving the way for the state's creation.
4. **Presidential Assent**:
   The President of India gave assent to the bill, formalizing the formation of Chhattisgarh.

Legal Framework for Statehood

1. **Article 3 of the Indian Constitution**:
   The constitutional provision under **Article 3** empowers the Parliament to reorganize