

A Comprehensive Study on the Causes of Bengal's Partition in 1905



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Abstract

During the Partition of Bengal, the British Raj reconstructed the Bengal Presidency geographically (1905). The new arrangement divided the mostly Muslim eastern regions from the predominantly Hindu western provinces. It was announced by Lord Curzon, who was India's viceroy at the time, on July 20. It went into force on October 16 but was eventually annulled six years later. For UPSC, read in-depth information regarding the partition of Bengal. The Hindus of West Bengal opposed the split, arguing that it would make them a minority in a province that would also include Bihar and Orissa.

Keywords: Presidency, Hindu western districts, partition of Bengal, Hindus and Muslims

Introduction

A terrible famine struck Orissa in 1866. In the famine, millions of people perished. The British government then established an investigation committee to determine the causes of the famine. This Bengal province is excessively large, according to the assessment provided by the investigation committee. They have to deal with several administrative challenges. Due to the province's size and geographic makeup, administration was unable to respond appropriately in an emergency. Sir William Grey and Sir John Campbell warned England's top officials in 1867 and 1872, respectively, that a governor could not possibly oversee such a large province as Bengal. However, the authorities made no comment about their report. In January 1904,

the administration made the proposal for division public. Henry John Stedman Cotton, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, was against the notion (1896-1902). Most importantly, Partition serves as a lesson in the utter lack of communication between two sizable communities—Hindus and Muslims. As unbelievable as it may seem today, Hindus, Muslims, Shikhs, Christians, and other groups coexisted for hundreds of years, sometimes peacefully, occasionally in conflict, but not along the strict sectarian lines that the British monarchy created to support their "divide and rule" strategy. The British wanted to understand the demographic makeup of the country they were dominating, so they initiated this project. Among the many cultural, ethnic, and religious groupings, a feeling of distinct identities began to take shape after the 1871 census. In this census, every Indian had to be listed according to their language, caste, religion, etc. As it turned out, the broad and highly entwined nature of the religious activities that were being documented led to religious identities being given to groups when census takers were uncertain. So, without being personally aware of his or her metamorphosis, one suddenly became a member of this or that group or even religion, as designated by the census officer. It was relatively usual for one village or group of villages to adopt certain religious practises of another in the past since religious and cultural practises had overlapped and became intertwined amongst groups of people. The Secretary of State of India sanctioned the first division of Bengal along religious lines on July 20th, 1905 in London.

Lord Curzon, who was viceroy of India at the time, announced the partition of Bengal in July 1905. The division became official in October 1905. Lord Curzon created a new province called "Eastern Bengal and Assam" by taking the Dacca, Chittagong, and Rajshahi division of Bengal and joining it with Assam. The new province's capital was named Dacca. With Bihar and Orissa, the western portion of Bengal was still considered a separate province. Its capital is still Calcutta. The newly created province had a population of 31 million people, the majority of whom were Muslims, and covered an area of 106,504 square miles. The province's governor was named as Sir Joseph Bampfylde Fuller. A revenue board and a management board are also established. However, the newly created province's judiciary remained under the control of the Calcutta High Court. Western Bengal had a 141,580 square mile area, about 54 million people, the most of whom were Hindus. The Governor of the province was appointed as Sir Endro Frezer.

Objective of the study

- To know about the causes of Partition of Bengal.
- To access the impact of Partition of Bengal.

Partition of Bengal Causes

Lord Curzon, the British colonial governor of India at the time, split Bengal on October 16, 1905. Bengal, which had the same area as France but had a larger population, was split into administrative regions. It was believed that the eastern sector was poorly managed and unappreciated. By separating the province, it may be possible to establish a more powerful administration in the East, which would improve local job and educational prospects. After Curzon announced the partition of Bengal, there was a great deal of political turmoil in the region. Many Bengalis thought that the divide was just a snide dig at our country. There was a clamour for Bengal's unification as a consequence. The national anthem and flag of Bangladesh were both taken from the well-known song "Amar Sonar Bangla" by Rabindranath Tagore. The Indian National Congress condemned this effort to split the province along racial lines. Because it would have reduced the number of Bengalis speaking their language in their province, the majority of Bengalis in the west rejected the concept. The majority of Bangladeshis will speak Hindi or Odia. Many Bengali Muslims supported this choice because they thought that if they dominated the new province, it would be in their best academic, economic, and political interests. In addition, Curzon promised to build a university in Dhaka. Additionally, this was seen as an opportunity for Muslims to improve their standard of life or degree of education. Bengal's secession was largely opposed by the rest of the nation. The public uncovered the British government's "divide and rule" strategy.

Cutting relationships between the two communities and weakening patriotic spirit were the major objectives of this split. Muslims also took issue with the separation. Bengal's division led to the creation of the Swadeshi and Boycott groups in the nationalist fight. British goods are becoming less popular since they are oversaturated in India and harm the regional economy. Due to the country's major religious differences, the Muslim League was established in 1906.

History of Partition of Bengal

Viceroy Lord Curzon oversaw the partition of Bengal, which resulted in the division of Bengal into Eastern Bengal and Western Bengal, on October 16, 1905. The Bengal Presidency included the states of Bihar and Bengal as well as certain parts of Orissa, Chhattisgarh, and Assam. It was the biggest district in British India, with 78.5 million residents. British authorities claimed for many years that the enormous area of the province made it impossible to manage the process and resulted in the marginalisation of the eastern, poorer portion. The Bengal division was thus primarily proposed for administrative functions.

In order to create Assam, Lord Curzon sought to divide Bihar and Orissa and combine fifteen of Bengal's eastern provinces. Dhaka, the capital of an eastern province, had a population of 31 million, the majority of

whom were Muslims. Curzon said that he believed the new area to be Muslim after the division of Bengal. Lord Curzon wanted to separate Bengalis rather than Hindus and Muslims. The Western Districts, Bihar, and Orissa made up the other province. Because to the union of western Bengal with Orissa and Bihar, Bengali speakers are currently a minority.

Nawab Sallimullah of Dhaka encouraged division, which the Muslims rejected. The enormous population of Bengal, which made administration difficult for the British, was blamed by Indians for its split. The British, however, really wanted to undermine Bengal, the heart of nationalism, in order to further their own interests. The majority of the populace rejected this. Bengal's split led to the rise of militant nationalism.

Partition of Bengal Impact

After Curzon announced the division, there was a great deal of political turmoil in the area. Many Bengalis saw the division as a blow against their country. There was a tremendous amount of support for Bengal's togetherness. Later, Rabindranath Tagore's well-known song "Amar Sonar Bangla" served as Bangladesh's national anthem. The Indian National Congress opposed the division of the province along racial lines. The majority of Bengalis in the western side of the province rejected this decision, which would also make Bengalis a linguistic minority in their own province. There will be more people who speak Hindi and Odia than Bengali.

Many Muslims in the Bengali Muslim community welcomed the relocation because it would advance their educational, economic, and political interests to be the majority in the new province. The rest of the country united in opposition to this split. The populace exposed the British government's "divide and rule" policy. Such a divide had as its primary goals the severing of relationships between the two groups and the undermining of nationalism and state unity. There was unrest before the day of the separation. People observed a day of mourning on the anniversary of the breakup. Muslims and Hindus were exhorted by Tagore to tie Rakhis to one another in opposition. As a consequence of the partition, the Swadeshi and Boycott movements in the national fight emerged. Because British goods had damaged Indian industry and oversaturated the market, people began to reject them. The divide was effective in dividing the nation along sectarian lines, and it even influenced the foundation of the Muslim League in 1906.

Reactions of the Muslim community

The Muslim population of east Bengal was very thrilled about Bengal's division because they believed it would allow them to appeal to the British administration. Muslims in east Bengal understood that they would be allowed to trade freely and ethically. The economy would benefit from that. They believed that the zamindars would come back and focus on the lower classes. As a consequence, the Muslim community approved of the partition of Bengal. Hindus opposed the partition of Bengal and were viewed as their enemy by Muslims. Therefore, the Muslims believed they had defeated the Hindus.

Reactions of the Hindu community:

The neglected and behind-the-times Muslims were pleased with Lord Curzon's division of Bengal in 1905, but the Hindus could not agree with the British government's choice. The Hindus believed that their economy would not be able to advance as they had hoped. The ruling was rejected by the capitalist society and landlords.

Conclusion

Since 1765, Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa have been an unified province of British India. The province had been too big by 1900 for one government to manage. Due to its remoteness and weak connectivity, East Bengal has been overshadowed by West Bengal and Bihar. To create a new province with a population of 31 million, Curzon opted to combine Assam, which had been a part of the province until 1874, with 15 districts of east Bengal. The majority of the population was Muslim, and the capital was Dacca (now Dhaka, Bangladesh). The Bengali nation would be divided in two, rendering the Hindus of west Bengal, who dominated the majority of the country's trade, professions, and rural life, a minority in a region that also included all of Bihar and Orissa. They saw the division as an effort to stifle Bengal's nationalism, which was more advanced than anywhere else. Mass demonstrations, rural unrest, and a swadeshi (native) campaign to forbid the import of British products were all part of the opposition to the division. Despite the protests, the division was completed, and the fierce resistance dissipated to become a terrorist organization.

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