

COMMUNAL IMPACT OF THE PARTITION OF BENGAL IN 1905 ON HINDU-MUSLIM RELATION IN BENGAL AND ITS AFTERMATH

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<https://doi.org/10.46609/IJAH.2021.v05i02.003>

ABSTRACT

The historical partition of Bengal in 1905 was a momentous event in the history of Bengal. The significant impact of the partition had the subsequent socio-political history of Bengal and India. Hindu businessmen, lawyers, writers, scholars, zamindars, politicians and other professionals adamantly opposed partition and formed a series of powerful anti-partition movements. Educated Muslims accepted the partition because it provided them with new educational, economic, and political opportunities. This paper has examined the rationale behind the administrative reasons for the partition of Bengal in 1905, as well as how the anti-partition movement of Hindus in India developed and its reactionary far-reaching effects on the communal relations between Hindu and Muslim. Elites of Hindu and Muslim were split on the subject of partition like they had never been divided on any other public issue. The Anti-Partition movement of Congress Hindus, which started as a protest against the British government, quickly morphed into a smear campaign against Muslims who backed Partition. This article also aims at searching how this administrative division exposed the Hindu-Muslim sectarian divide in the Indian subcontinent, which led to the creation of India and Pakistan in 1947. It is a qualitative typed research paper based on a secondary source.

Keywords: Partition of Bengal, anti-partition movement, communal relation, British Government, Pakistan.

1. Introduction

Historically, the partition of Bengal in 1905 played a momentous role in the Hindu-Muslim communal relations as well as politics in Bengal. On October 16, 1905, Lord George Nathaniel Curzon, then Viceroy of India, split Bengal province into Eastern Bengal and Assam, Dhaka (Dacca) was its capital, and the rest of West Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa remained Bengal province, with its capital in Calcutta, which was also the capital of British India at the time. Curzon divided Bengal into two individual provinces to improve the province's administrative

control. This partition didn't only separate Bengal province administratively into two individual provinces, but isolated communal feelings of Hindu-Muslim relation in the Bengal region. The anti-partition agitation among Hindus in Bengal the Muslims' pro-partition zeal drove the two sects apart. About the fact that hostility between Hindus and Muslims in the new province rose day by day, the two groups' rivalry became quite acute [1].

Thus, the event sought a political regeneration of the Muslims of Bengal along with all Indian Muslims and played a significant role for emerging Muslim separate independent homeland Pakistan in 1947. M. A. Khan remarked that though this partition was a provincial affair, it stirred great communal feelings among Hindu-Muslim and it led to far-reaching impacts on the political causes of the entire Indian sub-continent [2]. As a result, how many political changes and developments were grown up in the political arena of Bangla (Bengal) and India immediately after the partition to partition (1905-1947), undoubtedly Partition of Bengal in 1905 had a great influence on all these changes. "The partition issue produced opposite reaction between the Muslims and Hindus of this province and in consequence, the two communities drifted away from one another." [3].

The anti-partition movement's mobilization led Muslims from all provinces to consider forming their political party. Thus, John R. McLane didn't ignore political intention from the British Government and he remarked- "In any final accounting, it must be stressed that the partition was intended, among other things, to destroy nationalist chances of building a political movement in which Muslim joined Hindus." [4]. This decision of the Partition was not made with malice in mind, as the word 'divide and rule' implies. The decision was seldom made in the context of aiding or hindering communalism. Rather, British actions adopted the conventional principle of colonial survival, namely, seeking powerful Indian patronage and fulfilling legitimate' ambitions. Legitimacy, on the other hand, was a relative term that fluctuated with shifts in India's political and social situation [4].

2. Data and Methodology

This research paper followed qualitative type analysis focused on history. This article is designed based on desk and library analysis using primary sources of data with secondary sources. In order to determine the causes and outcomes of the partition, the paper consulted available written books, contemporary journals, newspapers and magazines of Indian Subcontinent under British Colonial rule. Sources referred for searching the historical analysis and communal impact on the relations between Hindus and Muslims in the territory after the Partition of Bengal up to 1947, which was the year of the partition of India and of Pakistan.

3. Causes of the partition of Bengal in 1905

Under British colonial rule in India, from 1757 to 1905, Bengal was the largest and vast province with a huge administrative burden. The declared policy of the British government proved it, newly created Eastern Bengal and Assam mainly separated from Bengal province primarily with the object of administrative reason. The idea of the partition of Bengal or readjustment of the boundaries of Bengal in 1905 started from Curzon; it is not like that at all. This process had been going on for a long historical background to relieve the huge administrative burden of the largest province of Bengal in British India. And it was a long administrative struggle from many sides to make a partition and to reduce the heavy burden of administrative functions, these initiatives were formally started to play by Lord Dalhousie in 1854, who concluded that the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal's administrative workload was too much for one person. Charles Grant saw the need to divide the Bengal presidency into provinces as early as 1853, and in 1854, Bengal, which had formerly been under the Governor-General-in-Council, was placed under the Lieutenant Governor, a position established only a year before [5].

The administrative burdens of the unwieldy province of Bengal were highlighted by the special committee examining the causes of the Orissa famine of 1866. In 1867 and 1872, the province's lieutenant governors, Sir William Grey and Sir George Campbell argued that the administration of Bengal was too taxing for one person to handle [3]. The three Bengali-speaking districts of Sylhet, Cachar, and Goalpara were merged into a chief commissionership to provide relief to the Bengal government. The Bengal population was estimated to be between 40 and 50 million people when this decision was taken. The population peaked at 67 million in 1872, and by 1903, it had grown to 78.5 million, spread over 189,000 square miles of frequently rugged terrain [1].

Even after this, the state became too large, prompting proposals in 1892 and 1896 to create an Eastern Bengal province comprised of Bengal's eastern districts and Assam's eastern districts. Central Province's Chief Commissioner Andrew Fraser raised the issue of the redistribution of Oriya-speaking territories in 1901, and the Government of India secretaries drafted various schemes. When Lord Curzon received this file, dubbed "Round and Round Note", he was shocked to learn that this scheme of geographical redistribution of the provinces of Bengal, Madras, and Central Province was in the works without his knowledge. This document proves that Curzon was not the one who proposed the division of Bengal. The viceroy, on the other hand, saw the need to reorganize the Bengal-Madras-Central Province border to improve administrative performance. Of these provinces, the administrative condition of Bengal was the most complex and problematic. That can be assumed by the statement as:

--A Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, if he spent the whole of the available season of the year in touring, could yet only succeed, during his term of office, in visiting a portion of his vast charge.

It will commonly be found that places so important as Chittagong, Dacca, Cuttack, and Ranchi get not more than a single hurried visit within the five years.¹

Indeed, the administration of Bengal was less manpower-dependent in character than other Indian provinces, whereas Bengal needed the most personal supervision. For example, district-level officials in other provinces were well acquainted with the land-revenue tax and administration there; in Bengal, there was a lack of communication between the general public and the district officials as a result of the permanent settlement [1]. So, when it came to reorganizing Bengal's territorial borders, Lord Curzon's main concern was administrative efficiency, and he wrote to George Hamilton, Secretary of State, in this respect in April 1902 and 19 May 1903 [6]. Many debates on the Bengal partition were recorded till 1905 at parliament, government bodies, political fields, newspapers, civil societies, and others [5].

Hence, according to the government, the partition exclusively was an administrative initiative with three main goals.² To begin with, it hoped to relieve the Bengal government of certain logistical burdens and make sure further effective administration in the province's remote districts. Second, the government wanted to help backward Assam (which is governed by a Chief Commissioner) prosper by expanding its authority and giving it access to the sea. Third, the government saw the need to get together the disparate parts of the Uriya-speaking community under one administration [7].

To begin with, the region under undivided Bengal was much too vast and unwieldy for a single Lieutenant Governor from Calcutta to administer effectively. Second, the hegemony of Calcutta's capitalists over the agrarian economy of Eastern Bengal and Assam had stifled local initiative and development, resulting in a persistent state of poverty among the teeming millions of people who lived under-developed areas. For the primary producers, the drainage of Eastern Bengal's and Assam's rich agricultural resources to Calcutta did not provide a fair return. As a result, the partition of Bengal was calculated to improve government efficiency on the one hand, while encouraging local initiative for development and industrialization on the other [2]. Famine in the remote areas, lack of maintaining law and orders, and linguistic issues also responsible for rethinking from the government side to think about redistribution of administrative borders in Bengal at one point or another, but the government's decision to partition Bengal in 1905 was also motivated by Eastern Bengal's present socio-economic and cultural backwardness. But on the administrative side of Eastern Bengal, there was a lack of sufficient personnel to ensure that the government ran smoothly and effectively. It was said that the Eastern Bengal district's staff

¹. Govt. of India to Govt. of Bengal, 3 December 1903, Para. 2, Papers relating to the reconstitution of the provinces of Bengal and Assam. Parl. Papers 1905, Cd. 2658.

². Available at http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Partition_of_Bengal,_1905

was significantly inferior in number to the scale of officers established for Bihar and Orissa districts [1].

Calcutta and the surrounding areas, in particular, drew the Government's full attention and energies.³ In rural eastern Bengal, there were few British officials and even fewer British businessmen to draw attention to the area's needs. As a result, crime was rampant, peasants were enslaved by absentee landlords' demands, and education was ignored. The government paid no attention to communication in Bengal, a naturally difficult province. Indeed, the 6 lakhs collected annually by the Dhaka Division's Public Works Cess were taken out of the district and spent the amount elsewhere in the state, including Calcutta, Orissa, and Bihar. There was no effort made to improve communications between Chittagong's port and the Dhaka Division's commercial center. The natural main artery of communication, the Meghna River, was never used as a navigable for large ships. Even though Dhaka, the capital of Eastern Bengal, was just 264 miles from Calcutta, the rail journey between the two cities took nearly 24 hours [1].

There are also political factors, such as reducing Hindu Bengali influence in Indian politics and debunking Hindu leaders' claims to speak for Muslims. In 1900 Lord Curzon wrote, "My own belief is that the Congress is tottering to its falls and one of my great ambitions while in India to assist it to a peaceful demise." [3]. According to Fraser, if Dhaka would be declared the capital of the new province, Hindu leaders' dominance over leading Muslims would be removed [6]. He attached political concern to the administrative imperative as one of the architects of the partition scheme. Meanwhile, on 12 December 1903, the proposal for the transfer of the Chittagong Division and the districts of Dacca and Mymensingh to Assam was published in the scheme of the Bengal partition plan. Fraser wrote, "Dacca and Mymensingh would give far less trouble if they were with Assam. Eastern Bengal would ease to be so painfully prominent a factor in Bengal administration." [6]. Here, the political cause or reason for the partition can be considered merely as a policy from the British government of India; from this intention, Curzon and others took the initiative for the partition of Bengal. Even if it is assumed that the political cause was active in the partition of Bengal, it is not the main cause or the only cause. It was a trivial matter. First and foremost for which plan Bengal was partitioned, that was taken for administrative reasons.

Sir Andrew Fraser, the last Lieutenant Governor of Bengal province before partition, admitted that many districts of Eastern Bengal were neglected due to the huge burden of administrative functions on a head of a department; and officials in a department or division with a reputation for being understaffed and overburdened [1]. Since last decade of 19th Century, it was fully neglected paying proper attention to the peculiar challenges of police service in geographically

³. Legislative Proceedings of the Council of Eastern Bengal and Assam, April 1909, p.7.

far separated by rivers and streams, which made surprise and concealment so quick, and police pursuit was so difficult across Eastern Bengal. As a result, the high rates of crime and lawlessness in Eastern Bengal are understandable, and piracy was a frequent occurrence in the region's waterways. As a result, the British government formed the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, complete with its administrative apparatus.

4. Partition of Bengal

Observing and facing the long-standing administrative complexities and problems in the province of Bengal, the Government of British India finally published a plan for the territorial reorganization of Bengal in December 1903 based on the suggestions and recommendations of all-important sides. But, Curzon had already approved a limited scheme for the transfer of the Chittagong Division to Assam in the middle of 1903. When the government of India published the original plan of the partition of Bengal; it sparked a large amount of public as well as official debates. The government obtained several memorials expressing opposition to the territorial reform of Bengal. It was deeply resented that a developing area should not be comparable to an underdeveloped region [5].

By December 1903, the Government of India had sent letters to all of Bengal's local governments, which were published in the Official Gazette. Local governments were asked to express their opinions on the proposed territorial redistribution or partition of Bengal. The replies from the local governments convinced the Government of India of general soundness of the idea of the redistribution, though they led to several alterations to the details of the original plan. The responses from the local councils reassured the Indian government that the plan of the Partition of Bengal was sound in general, but they did result in several alterations to the original plan's specifics. Therefore, the Government concluded that this partition would be advantageous to the people while also improving the government. In February 1904, Curzon himself went on a tour to get a sense of public sentiment in Eastern Bengal, meeting with local leaders and giving speeches in Chittagong, Dacca, and Mymensingh. During this visit, he decided to push for an extended scheme [1].

Curzon went to England in 1904, but the scheme of territorial reorganization was worked on during his absence; when he came back to India in December 1904, it was nearly complete, and it was sent to the home authorities for approval in February 1905. On 9 June 1905, Secretary of State St. John Brondrick approved the proposals with minor changes. Officially announcement of the Bengal partition was given on 4 July in London and 7 July in Simla of India [8].

According to Brondrick's approval, the province of 'Eastern Bengal and Assam' was created, consisting of Assam and the divisions of Dacca, Chittagong, and Rajshahi, excluding Darjeeling

but including Malda and Hill Tippera districts. It had a population of 31 million people, 18 million Muslims, and 12 million Hindus, and covered an area of 106204 square miles. A lieutenant governor, a High court, a parliament house or legislative council and a Revenue Board will be part of the governing structure. Calcutta High Court's authority was preserved. On the contrary, the province of Bengal, with Calcutta as its capital, was left with the old province's remaining territory, comprising 141580 square miles with 54 million population, 42 million were Hindus, and 9 million were Muslims.[3] In a resolution dated 19 July 1905, the Government of India announced its final decision. On 16 October 1905, the Partition of Bengal became effective, new province 'Eastern Bengal and Assam' was formed [1].

5. Trend and Development of Hindu-Muslim individual position on Partition

5.1 Agitation of Hindus Immediately before the Partition Effected

The anti-partition movement's nature and trajectory are well known [5]. The original partition plan, which was published at the end of 1903, spurred widespread opposition among Hindus, especially among educated and middle-class Hindus.

This educated Hindus found a leader Surendra Nath Banarjee, editor of *The Bengalee*⁴ and an influential Congressman from Bengal, who strongly opposed the partition plan, writing in the press, holding public meetings, sending petitions, and organizing deputations to express his opposition: "We object to the proposed dismemberment of Bengal and we are sure the whole country will rise as one man to protest against it."⁵ British Indian Association held a public meeting at the Town Hall in Calcutta to protest against the Government's proposal regarding the partition of Bengal, presided over by Raja Peary Mohan Mukherjee.⁶ Numerous resolutions were passed opposing the partition plan. On the 10th of January, 1905, a conference on the Partition issue was convened. Sir Henry Cotton⁷ presided over the meeting and spoke out strongly about the partition of Bengal [1].

Immediately within the publication of the original proposal of the partition, it had provoked unparalleled opposition amongst the Hindu community, particularly among the educated-influenced Hindu Middle-class. The Hindu businessmen, lawyers, writers, scholars, zamindars, politicians, and other professionals adamantly opposed the partition and formed a series of

⁴. A Bangla medium newspaper published from Calcutta.

⁵. *The Bengalee*, 13 December 1903.

⁶. Raja Peary Mohan Mukherjee, the Zamindar of Uttapara, was a member of the Legislative Council and twice nominated to the Imperial Legislative Council, as well as one of Bengal's most powerful landowners. He was fascinated with current events. He was the Honorary Secretary of the British Indian Association of Calcutta for a time before becoming its President.

⁷. He was a strong supporter of the Indian National Congress, and in 1904 he presided over the 20th Congress session in Bombay.

powerful anti-partition movements [3]. Calcutta lawyers were worried that with the forming of East Bengal and Assam as a new province would be established in Dacca, which would subtract from the value of their own High Court. The appearance of local newspapers from Dacca, which would reduce the distribution of the Calcutta Press, was feared by journalists. Calcutta's business community visualized a change in trade from Calcutta to Chittagong port, which would be closer and, logically, cheaper. The Zamindars, who possessed large landed estates in both west and east Bengal, anticipated the need to retain separate establishments in Dacca, which would incur additional costs [7].

From the very beginning of the partition plan, all the pro-Hindu press of India, particularly the Bengali press differentiated and opposed the partition. Some British press intended opposing against the partition, the Anglo-Indian press, and yet several administrators pointed the same. *Amrita Bazar Patrika* wrote: "The Government wishes to weaken the Bengali nation by placing it under two administrations."⁸ According to the newspaper *Bengalee*, it was a manifestation of the divide-and-rule approach.⁹ *Dacca Prakash* described it as a nefarious conspiracy to break the Bengali nation.¹⁰ The partition sparked outrage in Calcutta and other regions of West Bengal, and boosted a new lease on life for eruption of Indian nationalism.

The prominent Hindu leaders convened the people to boycott British commodities on 13 July 1905, conduct mourning and cut all ties with government offices. A resolution to leave off buying British goods on condition that the "Partition resolution is not revoked" was passed with applause in a meeting held in Calcutta on August 7, 1905 (hailed as the "birthday of Indian nationalism"). The patriotic songs made by Rabindranath Tagore, Rajanikanta Sen, Dwijendralal Roy, and popularized the songs for national spirit. This, like other progressive campaigns of the day, had religious overtones. To emphasize the solemnity of the day, Pujas were offered for all Hindus. Hindu people of Bengal worshiped Mother Goddesses (especially Kali) claimed that the Partition was the same as to cut off their Mother Province. Several thousand Hindu people assembled before the central Kali temple of Calcutta on September 28, 1905, when Hindu religious dedications reached its climax, the day of the *Mahalaya*, the new-moon day before the Puja, according to *The Times*.¹¹ The Swadeshi vow was performed by the priest, and Kali the goddess was acknowledged as a representation of the motherland. Thus, the Swadeshi Movement¹² attracted a broad following among Hindus because of its religious overtones.

⁸. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 14 December 1903.

⁹. *The Bengalee*, 15 January 1904.

¹⁰. *Dacca Prakash*, 27 December 1903.

¹¹. *The Times*, 30 September 1905. Editorial, *The Bangalee*, 3 October 1905.

¹². The Swadeshi movement started in the seventies of the nineteenth century and was made important in the nineties by Mahadev Govinda Ranade's speech at the West India Industrial Conference in Poona. The Swadeshi movement

However, the taste invariably arouses animosity in the minds of ordinary Muslims. The Indian National Congress almost adopted "Bande Mataram"¹³ (Hail Motherland) as its national anthem [7]. Thus, all religious and cultural spirits were popularized through politics and were taken political-flavored across the whole of India.

5.2 The anxiety of Muslims Immediately before Partition Effected

Immediately after the publication of the issued letter of the proposals of the partition by H. H. Risely in December 1903, Hindu-Muslims together opposed the proposal; particularly people raised their voice against the scheme of the partition in East Bengal. Shila Sen drew out the scenario of the agitation in Muslim populated East Bengal as:

--It is said that about 500 meetings were held in Dacca, Mymensingh and Chittagong during December 1903 and January 1904. All people, irrespective of class, creed and community, joined these protest meetings. The initial opposition was thus universal. Not a single was held, nor a pamphlet issued in favour of the proposal. There was no distinction between the attitude of Hindus and that of Muslims of Bengal [8].

In an above-mentioned statement, Shila Sen described that 500 meetings were held in East Bengal within two months, but she didn't mention any references. Even such huge numbers of meetings were not referred by any other documents related to the Partition of Bengal. On the other hand, she suggested seeing the book of Sufia Ahmed regarding Muslim's agitation and trend against partition scheme [8]. We see Sufia Ahmed remarked that in 1903 when the Partition proposals were first published, Muslim opposition to the scheme was also expressed. Some memorials were submitted to the government that proved the protesting the proposal [1]. The mouthpiece of the educated Muslim community *The Moslem Chronicle*, the Central National Mohammedan Association of Calcutta, and some Muslim representatives opposed the proposals of the partition initially.

started as an economic movement, intending to revive the once-famous cottage industry and develop new industries in India. Later this movement turned into a political movement and became an active weapon against the partition of Bengal. Like other political movements, it has an excess of religious influence.

¹³. Bande Mataram was written in 1875 by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. At the time, he was 37 years old and employed by the British Government as a deputy collector. His poem was most definitely a reference to God Save The Queen (or King), the British national anthem. This song became an inspirational song for many Indian revolutionaries during the agitation against the Partition of Bengal, which the British effected in 1905 for administrative purposes. It soon rose to fame as a protest song in India's long fight for independence. However, some Muslims considered the song offensive because they believed that worshipping a mother was a polytheistic ritual and that the poem's other cultural impulses were Hindu. (Available at: <https://scroll.in/article/675445/a-short-recorded-history-of-the-contentious-national-song-vande-mataram>)

The fact was that Muslim people of East Bengal and other parts of the province were afraid of losing their existing civic facilities by the proposed partition, though they were back warded and underdeveloped on the whole. Thus, the secretary of the Central National Mohammedan Association sent a letter from the association and wrote that his committee recommended that if it was determined that dividing the responsibilities of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal was necessary for effective administration; the "better course would be to run Bengal into a Governorship with an Executive Council like that in Madras and Bombay." [1].

So, Muslim people were really worried from the view of the administrative side whether the proposed new province would be either conducive to them or employing troublesome. But, as the educated portion of the Muslim population heard of the government's wider scheme for a self-contained independent province, their opinions rapidly changed [1]. They knew that the Partition would be beneficial to them and that the new government would pay more heed to their particular problems. Though a few Muslims objected to the measure, the majority of Muslims believed that it would encourage them to receive their fair share of government funds. As a result, Muslims, in general, applauded the establishment of the new province [5]. "It was at this stage that Muslim politics in Bengal took a new turn. Nawab Salimullah¹⁴ emerged as a leader of the Muslim community in Bengal, especially of East Bengal. He supported the partition scheme and organized a movement in its favour." [8]. So, the general opinion of Muslim minds was in favor of the partition.

The main reason for the opposition of the Partition of Bengal from Hindus was the communal hatred towards the Muslims of East Bengal and the unjustified fear of losing their dominance and privileges in all respects. On the other hand, the people of East Bengal were given little facilities by the government, the Muslims were afraid of losing these with the creation of a new province. So, they initially opposed the scheme of the partition of Bengal.

6. Reaction and Agitation from both Muslim and Hindu communities after partition

6.2 Reactions of Muslims

When the Partition issue was settled, the Muslims were gracious in their acceptance. They greeted Bampfylde Fuller (the new Lieutenant-Governor of East Bengal and Assam) with open

¹⁴. Khwaja Salimullah (1871-1915), Nawab of Dhaka, Muslim nationalist, architect of the Muslim League, patron of education. He was born on June 7, 1871, at the Ahsan Manzil, the son of Nawab Khwaja Ahsanullah and grandson of Nawab Khwaja Abdul Ghani who had a land lordship of Dhaka state. From the time of Lord Curzon's partition scheme, he emerged as Bengal's most powerful Muslim leader. He made Bengal's partition an important landmark in the Muslim political life of India. He played a key role in Curzon's plan to create the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. When the partition scheme went into effect on 16 October 1905, Nawab Salimullah established a political association called the Provincial Muhammadan Union.

arms. Eventually, *The Moslem Chronicle*, which had at first opposed the final measure as the work of a great mind tainted by "the peculiar vanity that greatness consists in doing something unique and unparalleled" soon realized its mistake and reversed its stance [1].

After the creation of the new province Eastern Bengal and Assam, Muslim leaders considered establishing a "compact entity" and an association. Therefore, through the efforts of influential Muslims of Eastern Bengal and Assam, the Mahomedan Provincial Union was founded by the efforts of powerful Muslims in Eastern Bengal and Assam on the 16th October 1905 at a meeting held at Northbrooke Hall, Dacca. Even the creation new province was supported by some Muslim co-religionists of Calcutta. In 1905, the Muhammadan Literary Society of Calcutta published a manifesto signed by prominent Muslim leaders to dispel any doubts that existed in the minds of Muslims about the Partition of Bengal.¹⁵

Even after the creation of the new province, it was discovered that some of the Muslim community disagreed with the partition scheme. The most influential of these Muslims were Khawaja Atiqullah, Nawab Salimullah's stepbrother, who moved a resolution condemning the partition of Bengal at the Congress session in Calcutta in 1906. The actual reason for his opposition was assessed by Sufia Ahmed as "Khwaja Atiqullah's opposition to the partition seems to have been mainly due to temporary rift with his brother Salimuallah over the family property and not to any firm political belief." [1]. A memorial sent by Alimuzzaman Chowdhury of Faridpur (a staunch Congress supporter) and a few other residents of the district expressed Muslim opposition to the Partition of Bengal. They had opposed the partition for personal purposes rather than political strategies [1].

There were also Hindus from lower castes that had no sympathy for the political ambitions of Hindus from higher castes. The higher caste Hindus had occasionally mistreated Hindus from lower castes. As a result, at a meeting in Bakarganj in October 1905, some *Namasudras*¹⁶ in the district passed a resolution "That this meeting is greatly indebted to the Secretary of the State for India for his declaring the Partition of Bengal as a settled fact and admissible of no amendment." [1]. Another resolution was drafted in the following manner:

--That this meeting prays most earnestly that the Hon'ble Mr. Here will bestow the same rights and privileges upon the Namasudras as have been done upon the Mahomedans, in as much as the

¹⁵. *The Moslem Chronicle*, 11 November 1905.

¹⁶. The Namasudra sub-caste arose from Aryanisation processes that started in the very ancient period when the trend of settling society's four-fold varna divisions into a hierarchical order began. The order of puritanical precedence was used to establish the hierarchy, with the brahmins at the top and the Sudras at the bottom. And middle two positioned by Kshatriyas and Vaishyas. Sudras, the lowest members of the socio-religious hierarchy, were thought to be devoid of sattva, or truth. (Banglapedia)

Namasudras and the Mahomedans are the predominating communities of Eastern Bengal, and the latter unlike Hindus possess a good deal of sympathy for the Namasudras [1].

However, many Hindus of Eastern Bengal and Assam particularly low-caste Hindus supported the Partition and they desired to be given privileges in the new province than the previous united Bengal. On the contrary, those Muslims moved to oppose the Partition from both Eastern Bengal as well as the Western side they eagerly move to find out their benefits rather than the collective interests of the Muslim community of Bengal and the political good intention.

6.2 Hindu agitation after the implementation of Partition (After its execution)

Massive protest rallies before and after the Partition of Bengal involved millions of people in politics. The partition plan was carried out on October 16, 1995, amid protests and boycott. On Rabindranath's recommendation, this date was commemorated as 'Rakhi Bandhan' Day, symbolizing the inextricable brotherhood that exists between the citizens of East and West Bengal [5]. Anti-partition agitation took the shape of many public meetings, turbulence in many rural areas, and emerged so called Swadeshi movement to reject British manufactured goods. "The Indian National Congress continued to oppose the Partition with the utmost vigour, finding in the Swadeshi movement and then the Boycott movement apt instruments for their campaign." [1].

The Bengali student community responded enthusiastically to the call of nationalism. The Swadeshi and Boycott movement drew a large number of students, including schoolboys. The government retaliated with the renowned Carlyle Circular, which sought to suppress student involvement in the Swadeshi and Boycott movements. Both students and teachers were outspoken in their opposition to the repressive measure, which was almost universal. The first student movement in Bengal was organized and founded as a result of this protest movement. Along with the 'Anti-Circular Society', a militant student organization also emerged [7].

The nationalist newspapers' columns, especially Sandhya, Anushilan Samiti, and Jugantar, focusing the Bande Mataram,¹⁷ reflected the new militant spirit. The press played an important role in disseminating new ideas [7]. While anti-Partition agitations and protests began peacefully, when it became clear that they were not achieving the desired results, the movements eventually fell into the hands of more nationalist leaders. To make their mission successful, they planned to use two techniques: boycott and terrorism. Therefore, the younger generation, who were affiliated in politics, pursued terrorist tactics, using indiscriminate use of handguns, pistols, and explosives. The disturbance quickly devolved into chaos and disorder. Several assassinations

¹⁷. Anushilan Samiti and Jugantar were underground societies that trained up young men and women how to fight the British with armed resistance.

and attacks on the lives of officials, including Sir Andrew Fraser, were carried out. Terrorism quickly became the main part of the Swadeshi movement. Bengali extremism reached its climax, as well as the scale of official suppression and the number of preventive detention arrests, which peaked between 1908 and 1910 [7].

7. Communal Tension

The significance of partition in contemporary communalism has been emphasized [4]. But to the extent that the Boycott movement was tied to the anti Partition agitation, it necessarily created communal tension. It was given its shape at a meeting held at the house of Maharaja Surya Kanta Acharya, a leading Hindu Zamindar of Mymensingh in Eastern Bengal [1]. Thus, the movement was doomed to fail in the hands of the immature school and college students who enthusiastically embraced the Swadeshi and Boycott in response to leaders like Surendranath Banarjea's appeal, then the agitation was pursued to conflict. Consequently, community relations were strained since the partition of India [4]. Similarly, the new province has been seen to take on already existing agricultural disputes (between landlords and tenants) and communal conflicts. Hindu landlords have been trying to persuade tenants to adopt Swadeshi views and join the anti-partition movement [1].

Muslim merchants have no specific justification to advocate the boycott of British goods in favor of Hindu producers, Muslim shopkeepers who were not dissatisfied with the Partition or motivated by the Swadeshi vows with Kali found themselves being 'persuaded' to help the demonstrations. As a consequence of such communal relations, riots followed.

One such broke out in Mymensingh in Eastern Bengal in 1906. Muslim merchants and vendors had been greatly affected in the district by the announcement of the boycott program. The Boycott's local Hindu organizers had told them that if they cooperated, they would be compensated for any losses they suffered. Regrettably, the pledge was not kept. As a result, Muslims thought that the Hindus had used them for their gain. Since the Muslims, as the weaker class, were unable to exert sufficient economic pressure on the Hindus to obtain restitution, they turned to violence and rioting to achieve their goals [1]. In March 1907, the first major riot occurred in Comilla.

The Muslims in Serajganj were equally enraged by the Congress agitation, this time because their children were "employed in political demonstrations by the teachers and Hindu leaders" in the Hindu-dominated colleges. They expressed their dissatisfaction with "much ill-treatment at the hands of Hindu students and teachers", and also requested government assistance in establishing an Islamic English High School to avoid Hindu oppression [1].

The comprehensive series of riots that began in the Jamalpur district of greater Mymensingh in April, however, offered an instructive parallel. The Mymensingh riots were not only more violent, but they show how local and outside political influences, communal tensions, social divisions, and administrative action all were combined to produce communal riots.[4] Here, primary riots occurred in the towns of Comilla and Jamalpur, with secondary riots occurring in the surrounding villages and hats. The first riots erupted in places where the bhadrak community was high and politically aware, and where Hindu boycotts and anti-partition movements enraged Muslim shopkeepers (Jamalpur) and other middle-class Muslims (Comilla) [4].

The anti-Partition movement of the Congress Hindus, which started as a protest against the British government, quickly morphed into a smear campaign against Muslims who backed Partition. With each passing day, tensions between the two communities grew, and Eastern Bengal and Assam became a scene of chaos. So, Bampfylde Fuller, the province's first Lieutenant Governor, faced a very tough situation to tackle. He was singled out by the organizers of the Swadeshi movement for every form of vituperation and calumny. He was gradually trying to bring the situation under his control when suddenly because of a difference rising between him and the Government of India he resigned in August 1906. The Swadeshi movement's organizers blamed him and made him responsible for all forms of vituperation and calumny in any manner. He was increasingly attempting to regain control of the situation, but in August 1906, he abruptly resigned due to a growing schism between him and the Indian government [1].

Fuller's resignation, on the other hand, sparked outrage among Muslims not only in Eastern Bengal and Assam but also in other parts of India. The incident enraged the leaders of the new province's Muslim community the most. Several meetings were conducted in various parts of the province to express their sorrow at Fuller's resignation and to express their support for the Partition of Bengal, while also conveying their feelings that if the government ever changed its position on the Partition of Bengal, it would lower the government's reputation in the eyes of the people [1]. The Muslim feeling was that-

--the apparent yielding of Government to the agitation of the Babus has created in the minds of the public a bad political effect. On the one hand, the Hindus have been encouraged to openly defying the authorities and disseminating a seditious spirit throughout the country; and on the other hand, the general feeling of the Mohamedans is that in yielding to the Babu agitation

Government has shown its weakness and has overlooked the loyal adherence of the Mahomedan community to Government authorities.¹⁸

The partition resulted in two qualitative shifts in Hindu-Muslim elite class. Educated Muslims accepted the partition because it provided them with new educational, economic, and political opportunities. Many educated Hindus reasonably believed that the partition meant a corresponding decrease in their opportunities. As a result, Hindu and Muslim elites divided on the issue of partition as they had perhaps in no other public controversy. Lots of educated Hindus felt that the partition would result in a reduction in their opportunities. As a result, Hindu and Muslim elites were split on the subject of partition like they had never been divided on any other public issue [4].

8. Impact on next Political Changes

Because of the powerful Hindu unrest against the Partition of Bengal in 1905, which was backed by the Congress, and the government's appeasement policy for the agitators, Muslim leaders felt the need for a protective political body of India's Muslims to combat the Congress's pressure on the administration [3]. The Bengal Partition was an epoch point in the development of singular communal tune for Muslims in the nationalism. It can be argued that Indian communal nationalism came up from the struggles of Bengal. On the other hand, unrest conditions on the partition and the terrorism that resulted are seen as one of the key aspects that fueled Muslim nationalism what promoted Muslim communal political body. Muslim leaders, they became more awake of their separate identity, highlighted their own efforts on uniting the different slices of their society to form a political platform as counter-movement against the Congress, which posed a challenge to Muslims as a whole [7].

In the meantime, on December 30, 1906, the first Muslim political party All-India Muslim League was established in Dacca. Though many factors contributed to the development of such an entity, the Partition of Bengal and the threats posed regarding the issue were among the most significant [1]. The Muslim League, which was established to protect immediate Muslim rights during anti-partition movements, eventually became the platform for the Muslim nationalist movement. However, the Hindu community across India was far ahead in protests and violence under the leadership of the Congress. But the attacks on Hindus from Muslim counterpart in 1907 closely followed a nonviolent repressive effort by the Congress to gain public support for its program—a trend that would be replicated many times during the next four decades; and the

¹⁸. Sirajul Islam to Hare, 28 September 1906, enclosure, Minto to Morley, 17 October 1906, Morley Papers, Vol. III. Collected from Sufia Ahmed, *Muslim Community in Bengal 1884-1912*, Dhaka, University Press Limited, 1974, p. 213.

border between India and Pakistan was drawn in 1947 in roughly the same position as the partition line in 1905 for the same reason—it was a communal frontier [4].

Understanding the partition's political motive helps to explain later British actions and strategy. There is no question that partition increased communal tension. “A close analysis of British comments upon Hindu-Muslim trouble indicates that this effect was not an accidental or unwanted by-product but rather that one purpose of the official policy was to create an atmosphere of Hindu-Muslim rivalry.”[4].

9. Conclusion

Curzon's remarks, published after he had left India in *The Statesman* and *Friend of India*, made it clear to all that Partition of Bengal was not a spur-of-the-moment decision, rather it had been long cherished desired of the government [1]. Of course, M. A. Khan seemed to state that partition was the end product of Muslim allegiance to British rule over a long period, because the institutional justification could not be overlooked at any cost [2].

Following the partition of Bengal, fresh vigor and zeal could be seen in almost every branch of administrative infrastructure in Eastern Bengal and Assam. The new administration provided the opportunity for better government-people ties, which had been sorely lacking in the previous Bengal administration. The time allowed was too short for any spectacular achievement for the new province, but what was achieved was encouraging [1]. As Curzon put it, “The new province advanced in education, in good government, in every mark of prosperity.”¹⁹ The statistics for trade and international trade (both import and export) demonstrate Partition's positive impact on Eastern Bengal. To serve the new government, new structures were being built, and the value of building sites was quickly increasing in some regions. The province's government put a high priority on combating the rampant river violence that plagued Eastern Bengal [1]. The provincial police department was also being reformed. While a large portion of the capital was spent on Assam, which was still more backward than Eastern Bengal, the new government paid attention to improving road communications, which were complicated in some areas of the new state. The most obvious signs of progress were in the area of education. The provincial government implemented reforms and made changes at all levels of education, including basic, secondary, and higher education. The government paid special attention to female education [1]. Extra

¹⁹. Parliamentary Debates on Indian Affairs, House of Lords, February 1912, p. 38. Collected from Sufia Ahmed, *Muslim Community in Bengal 1884-1912*, Dhaka, University Press Limited, 1974, p. 222.

scholarships for Muslim students were also given as a special initiative to promote Muslim education in the province.

The Muslims in the province completely appreciated the importance of the advantages they were receiving as a result of their new status. However, major distress was awaited for them [1]. The British government agreed to annul the Partition of Bengal to appease the wrath of the assertive Bengali Hindus [7]. When the King-Emperor toured India, there were rumors that he would either dismantle or at the very least change the partition. The arrival of Lord Hardinge as Viceroy of India, on the other hand, gave the anti-Partition movement a new impetus to present their case to him. The Government of India proposed changes to the Partition of Bengal in August 1911 [1]. In a letter dated November 1, 1911, the Secretary of State gave his overall approval to the plan of the annulment of the partition of Bengal. The King-Emperor announced on the 12th of December, 1911, at Delhi Durbar. The Muslims were dissatisfied, to say the least. They became bitter over the annulment, and the community was in a state of despair. The Muslim community in Bengal, as well as the Muslim community in India as a whole, was shaken [1].

Partition's political backlash included the formation of the Muslim League in 1906, with its incipient separatism, and rioting between Hindus and Muslims in 1907. In retrospect, the partition of Bengal stands out as a significant schism in modern communalism's history and a pivotal point in the events leading up to India's partition and the emergence of Pakistan in 1947 [4].

Acknowledgement

The research for this paper was financed by none. I have completed the paper from my own finance. I like to give thanks the director and officers of IIUC (International Islamic University Chittagong) Central Library for opening their helpful arms for me. I also thank the distinguished faculties of the Department of Islamic History and Culture of Dhaka University. This paper would be remained incomplete without their guide and endless support.

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