

The Partition of Bengal

(1905)

1. Introduction
2. Historical Background
3. Causes
4. Hindu-opposition
5. Benefits of partition for Muslims.
6. Annulment of partition.
7. Effects of Annulment.

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Introduction:

Partition of Bengal was territorial reorganization of the Bengal carried out by British authorities. It divided the Muslim majority Eastern areas from the Hindu majority western areas. Partition went into effect on 16th Oct 1905, → reversed six years later. Hindus were outraged by division, claiming that it would make them minority in province. For them this partition was death-knell for their political & feudalistic supremacy. It was blessing for Muslims to reclaim their usurped rights.

Background:

- ↳ Since 1765 (Battle of Buxar) the province of Bengal (which included present-day West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Bangladesh & Assam) was under the British.
- ↳ It was the largest province under British with almost 78.5 million population. Calcutta was the capital of province.
- ↳ For British officials massive size of province and population was making administration difficult. **CSSPMS360**
- ↳ Lord Curzon (Viceroy) intended to divide Orissa & Bihar and unite 15 eastern districts of Bengal with Assam.

Causes of Partition:

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① Administrative challenge:

↳ population: was more than seven crore

↳ Area : 1,89,000 miles

One Lt. Governor was responsible for administration **CSSPMS360**

→ one visit → to Dacca & Chittagong.

② East Bengal:

↳ socio-economic development ↓

③ Linguistic issues / Ethnic polarisation

Tamil, Urdu & Malayalam.

Govt of Madras → administrative problems complained.

④ Deplorable condition of Eastern Wing:

→ neither had University.

→ no means of communication

→ outdated Railway Network.

→ Chittagong port of East Bengal did not function properly → was not connected with rest of province.

Hindu - opposition:

- ↳ They were claiming that this partition would make them minority in the other province but the hidden reasons of their opposition were following:
- ↳ Hindu Newspapers feared of Muslim press in Dacca would affect their interest especially Amrita Bazar Patrika, Bengalee
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- ↳ powerful class, whose lands were in East Bengal but lived in Calcutta, they thought their material interests were threatened with partition.
- ↳ Hindu lawyers apprehended that establishment of Dacca High Court would affect their legal practice & political interests.
- ↳ In short, this partition was a death-blow to the monopolistic interests of Hindu Nation.
- ↳ Hindus of Calcutta → Black Day.
Surrendranath Banerjee has recorded that announcement felt like bombshell: "We felt that we had been insulted humiliated & tricked."

Benefits of Partition for Muslims:

Nawab Salimullah Khan of Dacca addressing a meeting, supported the partition. He observed that "The partition of Bengal had aroused us from inaction & directed our attention to activities & struggle."

↳ Opportunity to Muslims in every field of education.

→ special attention to female education.

1905

1912

Students in
primary

≈ 3 Lac

more than
4.5 Lac.

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↳ teaching community rise.

↳ Improvement of transportation.

↳ 1906 to 1911 → more than 200 miles railway track was laid down.

↳ commerce & trade

↳ After partition Chittagong port was modernised.

↳ All this was intolerable for the Hindu traders of Calcutta.

In short, the partition of Bengal ushered in a new era of progress & prosperity for the Bengali

Features of Bengal Partition:

The British Govt decided to partition Bengal in Dec 1903. Lord Curzon was the viceroy of India at that time who made this decision.

- Bengal was divided into two provinces:
 - First was Bengal comprising of Western Bengal as well Bihar & Orissa. 2nd was East Bengal & Assam.
- W. Bengal retained Calcutta as capital while Dacca was chosen as capital for Eastern Bengal.

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- British govt partitioned Bengal on the basis of language & religion. The western half was to be Hindu majority while the eastern half was to be Muslim majority.

Annulment of Partition:

- ↳ Liberal Party → GB. → did not want any political unrest. King George V of Britain visited India & announced the cancellation of partition of Bengal on Dec 12, 1911.
- ↳ This cancellation rejuvenated the Hindus. Ambika Charan (INC mem) expressed great joy & said, "I'm ready to die happily today." **CSSPMS360**
- ↳ Shattering blow to the Muslims.
- ↳ meetings were held to deliberate upon the situation.
- ↳ All leaders criticised the cancellation.
- ↳ Nawab Vigar-ul-Mulk called it great political blunder on the part of govt to revoke the partition.
- ↳ Nawab Salimullah Khan, M Ali, Lord Minto & all other prominent leaders condemned this decision of govt.
- ↳ Muslim Press (Zamindar, Vakil, Al-Bashir, Comrade Zulqarmain, Paisa Akhbar & Mussalman) **CSSPMS360**

Effects of Annulment & Way forward:

- ↳ The annulment of partition left indelible marks on Muslim politics. Only after six weeks of cancellation of partition, Muslim leaders like Sayyid Ameer Ali, Viqar-ul-Mulk, Nawab Ali Chaudhri, Moulana M. Ali, Sayyid Raza Ali, Abdul Aziz, Samiullah Beg & others felt a strong need to bring about a change in political strategy of the Muslims.

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- ↳ tremendous change in body-politics
- ↳ Muslim politics → changed from passive to active & vigorous participation in national affairs.
- ↳ Resolution presented in the annual session of All-India Muslim League held in Calcutta in March, 1912.
Moulana M Ali → moved the resolution for All India Muslim League.