

PARTITION OF BENGAL 1905 AND ITS IMPACT ON THE POLITICS OF THE MUSLIMS OF SOUTH ASIA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to expose the hypocritical policy of Hindus and Indian National Congress towards the Muslims of South Asia and will prove that such attitude of Hindus and Pro-Hindu Organization(Indian National Congress) gave political awareness among the Muslims of the Sub-continent and created the spirit of unity among them.

INTRODUCTION

The partition of Bengal in 1905 is the greatest political event, which ultimately made it clear that the Muslims must have a political organisation of their own so that they may protect their political rights. Bengal had a very vast area and was an important province from the population point of view. The city of Calcutta was a busy port and centre of industry, trade and commerce, a number of newspapers were published from there as well as it was the Centre of political activities. It had very complicated administrative problems which claimed a major share of the government attention eventually nobody cared to look after the farflung corners of the province. There happened to be mal-administration particularly in the eastern districts. Crime and ignorance were at their height in those districts. Large estates belonged to Hindu Landlords and the Muslim peasants could hardly earn a living. In the following pages it will be proved that the negative role of Hindus and Indian National Congress opened the eyes of Muslims of South Asia and as such created political awareness among them.

PARTITION OF BENGAL

Notwithstanding this, Lord Curzon the-then Viceroy of India was convinced that the boundaries of Bengal, Assam and Central Provinces were unscientific and required adjustment. The official position was this

stated "No other provincial administrator in India had so large a charge and it was complicated by the obstacles to rapid travel. A despatch written at the time stated that if the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal spent the whole of the available season of the year in touring, he could only succeed during his term of office in visiting a portion of his vast province".¹

An Indian paper laid down "Partition of the unwieldy province of Bengal was long a crying administrative necessity admitted by all those who knew any thing about the difficulty of officials".² Lord Curzon found the Bengal presidency too large a charge for one Governor and decided to redress its boundaries. In 1905 the provinces of Bengal and Assam were reconstituted so as to form two provinces of manageable size Western Bengal with a population of 54 million of which 42 million would be Hindus and 9 million Muslims, and Eastern Bengal and Assam with a population of 31 million of which 18 million would be Muslims and 12 million Hindus.³ This scheme was sent to London by Lord Curzon in February 1905. It was sanctioned by Secretary of State for India St. John Brodrick in June and the proclamation of the formation of the new provinces was issued in September. The provinces of Eastern Bengal and Assam officially came into being on 16th October, 1905.

REACTION OF HINDUS ON PARTITION

The British had partitioned Bengal for the administrative convenience but Hindus were not happy from this decision. Bengali Hindus had every reason to be alarmed at the consequences of the partition. They not only opposed but they did their best to get the partition undone. To achieve this end they held meetings, took out processions, raised slogans and violated law and order. Later on they gave up the use of British made goods to intimidate the rulers. Their leaders openly declared that the eastern province had been created by the British to

please the Muslims and that they would establish their rule over it once again. All this resulted in creating bad blood between the Hindus and Muslims. The communal riots broke out all over the province. The Hindus accused the Muslims of excesses after every riots and advertized their own innocence. Actually the violent campaign was started by Hindu Landlords, Industrialists and Indian National Congress. The Congress could never see the Muslims stable and independent. This organization openly apposed the decision. The partition was resented because the high caste Hindus desired to have the state of things which existed before the advent of the Muslims and of the low castes for jobs. The educated Hindu feared that the creation of Muslim majority province would tend to deprive him of his existing monopoly of influence and office. The new change had led to the development of Chittagong as a port, and the Hindus of Calcutta feared it as a possible rival.⁴ Indian National Congress passed the resolution on 27-30 December 1905 which is as follows:

"That this Congress records its empathic protest against the partition of Bengal in the face of the strongest opposition on the fact of the people of the province.

That having regard to the intense dissatisfaction fact by the entire Bengali community at the dismemberment of their province and their manifest disinclination to accept the partition as an accomplished fact, this Congress appeals to the Government of India and to the Secretary of State to reverse or modify the arrangements made in such a manner as to concilate public opinion and allay the excitment and unrest present among large masses of the people.

That this Congress recommends the adoption of some arrangement which would be consistent with administrative efficiency and would place the entire Bengali community under one undivided administration

either by the appointment of Governor and Council or by adoption of some other administration arrangement that may be thought desirable".⁵

REACTION OF MUSLIMS ON PARTITION

The day the partition was effected was observed as a day of mourning by the Hindus. Among the Muslim leaders in favour of partition the most prominent was Nawab Salimullah of Dacca. In speech at Munshiganj on the day the partition scheme was put into effect, he observed that "the partition had aroused us from inaction and directed our attention to activities and struggle".⁶ He and his associates decided to organise Muslim community into a compact body and to setup an association which would serve as a mouthpiece for the expression of views on all social and political matters affecting the interests of the community. The chief object as the organisers stated was "consolidation and conversation of the strength of the Muslims of the new province as a whole for all public purposes". All other associations and organizations were asked to affiliate themselves with it. Thus the Muhmmadans Political Union was founded with Nawab Salimullah as its patron.

Muslim League in its inaugural meeting passed the following resolution on the partition of Bengal on 30th December 1906:

"Resolved that this meeting in view of the clear interest of the Muslmans of Eastern Bengal considers that the partition is sure to prove beneficial to the Mohammadan Community which constitute the vast majority of the province, and that all such methods of agitation as boycotting should be strongly condemned and discouraged".⁷

IMPACT OF PARTITION ON THE POLITICS OF MUSLIMS OF SOUTH ASIA

The Muslims of the Sub-continent firmly believed without any slightest doubt that Congress was not their

representative organisation. It only promoted Hindu interest in India and was indulged in the nefarious design of physical, social and economical extermination of the Muslims. Congress was always playing a hypocritical policy against the Muslims. The intellectuals, scholars and the common man of the Muslim Community were seriously perturbed over the Hindus and Congress attitude to the partition. The Muslims now because of their utmost despair with regard to the Congress and Hindus, decided to promote Muslim cause in the sub-continent.

In this regard a Muslim delegation was led by Sir Agha Khan, who met Mr. Minto newly appointed Viceroy of the Sub-continent at Simla. Minto was a good and sincere Viceroy of India of his discipline and qualities. During the meeting the delegation suggested various measures to improve the social, political conditions of the Muslims. They demanded a separate electorate system for Muslims in South Asia. The Viceroy sympathetically listened to the delegation and accepted this demand.

After this meeting the Muslim leaders and elite got much courage and decided to form their own organisation to safeguard the rights of the Muslims and ultimately succeeded in forming their own political party Muslim League on 30th December, 1906 in Dacca on the platform of Mohammadan Educational Conference. The formation of All India Muslim League provided a great degree of courage and determination and the Muslims moved forward with such enthusiasm under the umbrella of Muslim character which culminated into the formation of an independent entity known as PAKISTAN.

ANNULMENT OF PARTITION OF BENGAL

The most result of the Hindu agitation was a steep rise in Hindu Muslim riots. The Swadeshi led to the boycott campaign, and this in its turn, resulted in communal clashes. Muslim dealers in foreign cloth

refused to shut their business in support of Hindu boycott when Zealous Hindu volunteers forced the Muslim shopkeepers to declare hartal, bloodshed was unavoidable.⁸ This political agitation appealed to Hindu "Religious antipathy against the Muslims".⁹ Muslim meetings were broken up, Muslim leaders were insulted Muslim workers were assaulted.¹⁰ Muslims who refused to participate in the agitation were bitterly persecuted.

The Muslims kept away from the Hindu agitation against the partition of Bengal and adopted humble and loyal posture. They welcomed the partition. They impressed upon the government to maintain its decision of the partition of Bengal.

The vigorous Hindu agitation rocked the government which could not withstand the extreme pressure of the movement. The Hindus threatened the government to boycott the forthcoming tour of India of the King George V. The threat proved successful and the British Government succumbed to the Hindu agitation. The partition of Bengal was ultimately annulled on 12th December 1911 at a Royal meeting known as Delhi Darbar where the King George V announced the decision of annulment to the extreme dismay of the Muslims of the Sub-continent.

CONCLUSION

It is quite clear from facts discussed in this paper that, the Hindu agitation against the partition of Bengal strengthened the feelings of the Muslims about the Hindu designs. They realized that the Hindus would never allow the Muslims a prosperous and happy life. The Hindu agitation against the partition furthered the Two Nation Theory. This agitation also convinced the Muslim leaders of the need for a separate Muslim Political Organization which could safeguard the interests of the Muslims of India and which could counter the Hindu and Congress

propaganda.

Actually the negative and hypocritical attitude of Hindus and Indian National Congress opened the eyes of the Muslims of India and gave political awareness among them and resulted in formation of All India Muslim League in December 1906 and Muslims under the Umbrella of this organization succeeded in getting an independent Muslim state - PAKISTAN for them.

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