

GROWTH OF COMMUNALISM AND PARTITION POLITICS



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- 'Communalism is basically an ideology. Communal riots are only one consequence of the spread of this ideology. Communalism is the belief that because a group of people follow a particular religion they have, as a result, common secular, that is, social, political and economic interests.'
- 'It is the belief that in India religious groups like Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians form different and distinct communities; that all the followers of a religion share not only a commonality of religious interests but common secular interests; that there is, and can be, no such thing as an Indian nation...'



THE AVAILABLE APPROACHES TO COMMUNALISM

- One approach is that communalism is an excrescence of Indian tradition, an atavism or primitivism. This explanation tells us that we need only look to India's history to explain communalism: it is something culturally specific, like the caste system.



- A second approach is that communalism is a distortion produced by a manipulative colonial power in the interests of "divide and rule."

Gyanendra Pandey (1990b) comes rather close to this position when he calls communalism a form of "colonialist knowledge." This theory also landlocks us in India, for it emphasizes the particular distortion of Indian society produced by colonialism.



- Bipan Chandra (1984) and Partha Chatterjee (1986) represent communalism as a pathology of nationalism. They suggest that one early way of organizing a nationalist movement was to emphasize Hindu values and life ways against British ones. This kind of nationalism established a progressive politics at the outset, but it soon came to fetter the nationalist movement and later had to be attacked by the Congress.



- Ashis Nandy (1990) claims, communalism is a pathology or disease of modernity that attacks India under British rule. Nandy's explanation, however, conserves the problem on Indian terrain: this disease of modernity occurs in India as an outcome of the subcontinent's specific constitution.



PARTITION POLITICS

- Bengal was partitioned twice in last century:
 1. It was announced on the third December 1903, but first partition was carried out on 16th October, 1905
 2. Second partition was carried out in August 1947



- Partition of Bengal 1905
- What were the reasons of Partition? The answer is complicated though apparently very easy and simple.
- The British argument or the Administrative reason:

Bengal, which included Bihar and Orissa, was admittedly much too large for a single province of British India. This premier province grew too vast for efficient administration and required reorganization and intelligent division.



- Calcutta and its nearby districts attracted all the energy and attention of the government. The condition of peasants was miserable under the exaction of absentee landlords; and trade, commerce and education were being impaired.
- Especially in East Bengal, in countryside so cut off by rivers and creeks, no special attention had been paid to the peculiar difficulties of police work till the last decade of the 19th century. Organized piracy in the waterways had existed for at least a century.



- So, the government contention was that the Partition of Bengal was purely an administrative measure with two main objectives:
 1. it wanted to relieve the government of Bengal of a part of the administrative burden and to ensure more efficient administration in the outlying districts.
 2. the government desired to promote the development of backward Assam and East Bengal.



- On the contrary, the partition was seen as the implementation of the British policy of “Divide and Rule”.
- A storm of protest, as a result of partition, swept all over Bengal, particularly in Calcutta.
- “We object to the proposed dismemberment of Bengal and we are sure the whole country will rise as one man to protest against it.” – Surendranath Banerjea.
- The Congress at its annual session in 1903 condemned this preposterous scheme to undo the unity of India.



INTEREST GROUPS ALSO OPPOSED THE PARTITION:

1. **The Calcutta lawyers** apprehended that the creation of a new province would mean the establishment of a Court of Appeal at Dacca and diminish the importance of their own High Court.
2. **Journalists** feared the appearance of local newspapers, which would restrict the circulation of the Calcutta Press.
3. **The business community** of Calcutta visualized the shift of trade from Calcutta to Chittagong, which would be nearer, and logically the cheaper port.
4. **The Zamindars** who owned vast landed estates both in west and east Bengal foresaw the necessity of maintaining separate establishments at Dhaka that would involve extra expenditure.




5. **The educated Bengali Hindus** felt that it was a deliberate blow inflicted by Curzon at the national consciousness and growing solidarity of the Bengali-speaking population.

Thus, the Indian National Congress was destined to become the main platform of the Indian nationalist movement. The leadership of the Indian National Congress viewed the partition as an attempt to 'divide and rule'.



- So they appealed to the people- Muslims and Hindus in the name of Bengali nation, Bengali language and literature, Bengali history and tradition, Bengali life and customs and those appeals had tremendous impact not only on common Hindus but also on some Muslims.
- The rising Muslim bourgeoisies were by and large against the partition of Bengal in the way it was done. The self-respect was hurt because they were tagged with Assam which was then considered as the most backward area inhabited by “uncivilized tribal people”.



- In order to seek support for his partition scheme, Lord Curzon toured East Bengal in February 1904.
 - His campaign strategy was mainly based on the “promises of development” in East Bengal which he found are very underdeveloped compared to West Bengal.
 - He also gained support of Nawab Salimullah Khan by promising him a loan of 1,00,000 Pound at a nominal interest.
 - All that Sir Salimullah could do was to confuse and neutralize the Muslims.
 - The Mohammedan literary society brought out a manifesto in 1905 signed by seven leading Muslim personalities. The manifesto was circulated to the different Muslim societies of both west and east Bengal and urged the Muslims to give their unqualified support to the partition measure.
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- Muslim League was created in 1906 and supported partition of Bengal.
- 'That this meeting in view of the clear interest of the Muhammadans of Eastern Bengal consider that Partition is sure to prove beneficial to the Muhammadan community which constitute the vast majority of the populations of the new province and that all such methods of agitation such as boycotting should be strongly condemned and discouraged'. – Muslim League in its first meeting in Dhaka.



MOVEMENT AGAINST PARTITION

- *Swadeshi* movement through the concept of 'Bengalee nationalism' took steps against partition. Agitation against the partition manifested itself in the form of mass meetings, rural unrest and a *swadeshi* movement to boycott the import of British manufactured goods.
- *Swadeshi* and Boycott were the twin weapons of this nationalism and *swaraj* (self-government) its main objective.
- Two techniques of boycott and terrorism were applied to make their mission successful. the younger generation, who were unwittingly drawn into politics, adopted terrorist methods by using firearms, pistols and bombs indiscriminately.

- The agitation also generated increased demands for national education.
- The student community of Bengal responded with great enthusiasm to the call of nationalism.
- Through this protest movement the first organized student movement was born in Bengal.
- The agitations in Bengal, in fact, became a momentous national movement.
- Growth and development of Bengali nationalism with unprecedented pace.



- Anti-colonial Bengali nationalism turned into Hindu revivalism (equating Motherland with goddess Kali and adopting the song Bande Mataram.) Many Muslims objected to this anthem.
- Gradual rise of Muslims self-consciousness (a new Muslim identity). Violence in Mymensingh and Comilla.
- Because of the challenge of the movement, the annulment of the partition was made on the 20 August 1911 and the imperial capital was to be transferred from Kolkata to Delhi in north India.



- In 1947, Bengal was partitioned again, following horrific clashes between Hindus and Muslims. On this occasion, however, hardly a voice was raised in protest.
- On the contrary, the second partition was preceded by an organized agitation which demanded the vivisection of the province on the basis of religion.
- The movement was led by the very same section of Bengali society that had dominated its nationalist politics since the time of Bengal's first partition: the so called bhadralok.



- In her seminal work, *Bengal Divided*, Joya Chatterji shows that these changes in bhadralok politics and to also interpret their apparent shift from “nationalism” towards “communalism”. She argues that the relationship between Indian nationalism and communalism is complex and ambivalent, both in terms of ideology and political practice.
- This work indeed an antithesis of the popular believe that Muslim League and its “two nations theory” caused the partition. But rather the Congress as well as Hindu leaders were also equally responsible for the second partition.



Thanks!!!

