

Short Note on the Partition of Bengal (1905–1911)

Background

The Partition of Bengal was implemented by Lord Curzon, the Governor-General of India, on October 16, 1905. Bengal Presidency, which included Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, and parts of Assam, was divided due to its vast size, making governance difficult. East Bengal and Assam became a new province with Dhaka as its capital, while West Bengal, Bihar, and Odisha formed West Bengal, with Kolkata as its capital.

Causes of the Partition

1. **Administrative Reasons:** The large size of Bengal made it challenging to manage law and order effectively, necessitating administrative reorganization.
2. **Socio-Economic Reasons:** Kolkata dominated as a socio-economic hub, while Eastern Bengal lagged due to inadequate infrastructure and education, leading to economic stagnation and unemployment.
3. **Political Reasons:** The rising nationalism in Bengal, led by a united Hindu-Muslim community, threatened British rule. Dividing Bengal was intended to weaken this unity and suppress anti-British movements.

Reactions to the Partition

- **Muslim Support:** Muslims in East Bengal, led by Nawab Salimullah, supported the partition, seeing opportunities for better education and economic development.
- **Hindu Opposition:** Hindus, supported by leaders like Surendranath Banerjee and Bipin Chandra Pal, strongly opposed the partition, viewing it as a threat to national unity. Their anti-partition movement evolved into the Swadeshi movement, involving boycotts and protests.

Abolition of the Partition

The strong resistance forced the British government to annul the partition in 1911, announced by King George V during his Delhi visit. While Hindus celebrated this as a victory, Muslims felt betrayed, straining Hindu-Muslim relations and fueling the demand for a separate Muslim identity, eventually leading to the foundation of the Muslim League in 1906.

Short Note on the Bengal Famine (1943)

Causes of the Famine

1. **War-Related Factors:**
 - The fall of Burma in 1942 halted rice imports and increased exports to other Indian provinces, causing local shortages.
 - Fear of a Japanese invasion led to hoarding and reduced market supplies.
 - The British "denial" policy removed rice and boats from vulnerable coastal districts, further disrupting supply chains.
 - Inflation caused by war expenditures and the printing of currency heightened food price increases.
2. **Natural and Agricultural Factors:**
 - Poor **Aman harvest** in November-December 1942.
 - A shortage in old rice stocks carried into 1943, though the deficit was only around 6%.
3. **Man-Made Factors:**
 - Rapid inflation and speculative hoarding worsened the food crisis.
 - Prices of rice surged disproportionately to the actual decline in supply, making it unaffordable for the poor.

Features of the Famine

- Affected approximately six million people, primarily from rural poorer classes.
- Between 3.5 and 3.8 million deaths occurred due to starvation and associated epidemics.
- Migration of thousands to urban centers like Calcutta in search of food; in October 1943, an estimated 100,000 destitutes were in the city.

Amartya Sen's Commentary

- Amartya Sen criticized the standard Food Availability Decline (FAD) theory for explaining the famine.
- He argued the crisis was due to **exchange failures** and the inability of large sections of the population to afford food, not an absolute shortage of food grains.
- According to Sen, rapid food price increases outpaced agricultural labor wages and the income of non-agricultural workers, making food inaccessible.

Short Note on the Lahore Resolution

Background of the Lahore Resolution

- The idea of separate states for Hindus and Muslims emerged due to increasing communalism.
- Mohammad Ali Jinnah's 14 Points (1929) and later experiences, such as the 1937 elections, highlighted the challenges of Muslim representation under Hindu leadership.
- By 1939, Jinnah articulated the "Two Nations Theory," asserting that Hindus and Muslims were distinct nations with their own aspirations.
- The Lahore Resolution in 1940 formalized the demand for separate states for Muslims, reflecting the culmination of these ideological and political developments.

Principal Clauses of the Lahore Resolution

1. Formation of **independent states** in Muslim-majority regions of northwestern and eastern India.
2. These states would be **autonomous and sovereign**.
3. The constitution would include provisions to protect the **rights and interests of minority groups**.
4. Key powers like defense, foreign affairs, and communication would remain with the concerned states.

While the resolution did not explicitly mention "Pakistan," newspapers of the time referred to it as the "Pakistan Resolution," making the term popular.

Importance of the Lahore Resolution

- Marked a turning point in the Indian independence movement, as Muslims began to envision an independent homeland.
- Triggered strong opposition from Congress leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru.
- Jinnah's leadership and the Muslim League's efforts gained momentum toward establishing a separate Muslim state, culminating in the partition of India in August 1947 and the creation of Pakistan.