

NCERT Notes: The Partition Of Bengal - 1905 [Modern Indian History Notes For UPSC]

NCERT notes on important topics for the UPSC [Civil Services Exam](#). These notes will also be useful for other competitive exams like banking PO, SSC, state civil service exams and so on. This article talks about the Partition of Bengal 1905.

Causes, effects and outcomes of the Partition of Bengal

Lord Curzon was the Viceroy of India from 1899 to 1905. The partition of the Bengal province came into effect during his viceroyalty on 16th October 1905.

Background & the Partition

- Since 1765 (following the Battle of Buxar) the province of Bengal, which included present-day West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Bangladesh and Assam was under the British.
- It was a very large area and the population rose to almost 80 million by the first few years of the 20th century. Calcutta was the capital of the province and also of British India.
- There were difficulties in administering such a large area. The eastern part, especially in rural areas were neglected.
- That region was lacking in the fields of industry, education and employment. Much of the industry was centred on Calcutta.
- For administrative ease, the partition of the province had been proposed even before Curzon had arrived in India.
- In 1874, Assam was sliced away from Bengal and put under a Chief Commissioner.
- Initially, Lord Curzon proposed the partitioning of the province as an administrative measure solely. In 1904, he undertook a tour of eastern Bengal.
- The idea of using the Bengal partition as a political tool to undermine the growing nationalism in Bengal and other parts of India occurred later.
- As per Curzon, after the partition, the two provinces would be Bengal (including modern West Bengal, Odisha and Bihar) and Eastern Bengal and Assam.
- Bengal would also lose five Hindi-speaking states to the Central Provinces. It would gain Odia-speaking states from the Central Provinces.
- Eastern Bengal would consist of Hill Tripura, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Dhaka divisions. Its capital would be Dhaka.
- Bengal would have a Hindu majority and Eastern Bengal and Assam would have a Muslim majority population. Its capital would remain Calcutta.

Reaction to the partition of Bengal

- There was widespread political unrest in the province after Curzon announced the partition.

- Many people in Bengal regarded this partition as an insult to their motherland. There was a huge cry for the unity of Bengal. Rabindranath Tagore composed the famous song ‘Amar Sonar Bangla’ which later became the national anthem of Bangladesh.
- The Indian National Congress protested this move to separate the province on communal lines.
- Most of the Bengalis in the western part protested against this step which would also make them a linguistic minority in their own province. There would be more Odia and Hindi speaking people than Bengalis.
- Many Muslims welcomed this move since they thought that most Muslims, who were backwards in education and economic status in Bengal compared to Hindus, would benefit if they were in a majority.
- Lord Curzon also promised to start a university in Dhaka. This was also seen as an opportunity for Muslims to develop in education and improve their standard of living.
- The general protest in the rest of the country was against this partition. The people saw through the ‘divide and rule’ policy of the British authorities.
- The chief aim of such a partition was only to create a rift between the two communities and hampering the unity and nationalism in the country.
- The agitation had started much before the date of the partition itself. On the date of the partition, people observed a day of mourning. Tagore asked Hindus and Muslims to tie rakhis to each other as a mark of protest.
- A few Muslims also were against the partition.
- The Swadeshi and Boycott movements in the national struggle started as a result of this partition.
- People started boycotting British goods which had flooded the Indian market and had dealt a blow to the indigenous industry.
- The partition did succeed in creating a communal rift in the country and even contributed to the birth of the Muslim League in 1906.

Partition annulled

- Owing to mass political protests, the partition was annulled in 1911.
- New provinces were created based on linguistic lines rather than religious lines. Bihar and Orissa Province was carved out of Bengal. (Bihar and Orissa became separate provinces in 1936).
- A separate Assam province was created.
- The capital of British India was moved to Delhi from Calcutta in 1911.

Despite the annulment, the partition did create a communal divide among the Hindus and Muslims of Bengal.

NCERT Notes: Indian National Movement – Extremist Period

In the beginning of the 20th century, a new class of national leaders emerged in India which was different from the moderate group. They took a more aggressive stance against the British Empire. They were typically younger and did not believe in the soft and persuasive approach of moderate leaders.

This is an important topic for UPSC and is also relevant for different [government exams](#).

The extremist phase of Indian nationalism is from 1905 to 1920.

Background/Causes of the rise of extremism

- The failure of the moderate leaders in getting any significant results from the British authorities.
- The limitations of the moderates were the main causes of the rise of extremism.
- The partition of Bengal in 1905 opened the eyes of the Indians to the true colours of the British rulers.
- Lord Curzon and his disdain for anything Indian also created resentment and anger against the foreigners.
- There was a fear among some leaders that the moderates with their westernized notions were trying to create an India in the image of the West.
- There was a revival of national pride at that time.
- The extremist leaders were also influenced by the growth of spiritual nationalism at that time.
- The Delhi Durbar held in 1903 when people had not fully recovered from the horrific effects of the famine that killed lakhs of people drew widespread condemnation.
- Events happening around the world also inspired the extremist leaders. Abyssinia's successful repulsion of the Italian army in 1896 and Japan's defeat of Russia in 1905 shattered the notion of European invincibility.
- Other national movements like in Persia, Egypt and Turkey also motivated the Indian leaders.

Surat Split

- The differences between the moderates and the extremists became official in the Surat session of the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1907.
- The meeting was to take place in Nagpur that year. The extremists wanted Lala Lajpat Rai or Bal Gangadhar Tilak to be the President. But the moderates wanted Rash Behari Ghosh as President. There was a rule that the session's President could not be from the home province. Tilak's home province was Bombay Presidency in which Surat was also situated. So, the moderates changed the venue to Surat so that Tilak could be excluded from the presidency.
- The moderates also wanted to drop the resolutions on swadeshi, boycott movements and national education.
- Rash Behari Ghosh became the president in the session which was held at Surat.

- Tilak was not even allowed to speak and this angered the extremists, who wanted to cancel the session.
- Both sides were firm on their demands and neither was willing to find a common path.
- The moderates then held a separate meeting in which they reiterated the Congress goal of self-government within the British Empire and to adopt only constitutional methods to achieve their goals.
- Unfortunately, the Surat session was marred by the use of sticks and chappals by the members on one another.

Methods of Extremist Leaders

- The extremist goal was 'swaraj'. This, at that time either meant complete autonomy and freedom from British control, or a total Indian control over the administration but not necessarily a breakaway from Britain's imperial reign.
- This was in contrast to the moderates' demand of only an increase in the share of Indians in the administration and military upper echelons.
- The extremist leaders involved wider sections of people in the movement. They involved lower middle class people also.
- They did not stick to constitutional methods to protest and demand. They resorted to boycotts, strikes, etc. They also burned foreign-made goods.
- They believed in confrontation rather than persuasion.
- The Swadeshi movement gathered momentum in India because of the extremists' support. This led to the establishment of Indian banks, mills, factories, etc.
- They were strongly against British imperialistic policies in India.
- They took pride in Indian culture and history. They looked at the ancient scriptures for inspiration and courage.
- They believed in sacrificing everything including life for the cause of the motherland.
- They opposed westernisation of Indian society by the British.
- Tilak famously said, "Swaraj is my birth right and I shall have it."
- They were very vocal in their opposition to the British rule unlike the moderates who had faith in British justice.
- They tried to instill self-respect and patriotism in the people by invoking past heroes like Ashoka, Shivaji, Maharana Pratap and Rani Laxmibai.
- They did not believe in loyalty to the British Crown.

Extremist leaders

- Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal (the first three called Lal-Bal-Pal leading the extremist cause in Punjab, Bombay and Bengal respectively.)
- Other leaders included Aurobindo Ghosh, Rajnarayan Bose, A K Dutt, V O C Pillai.

Government reaction to extremists

- The government attacked the extremist leaders vigorously.
- Laws were passed to check their activities and influence. The following laws were passed between 1907 and 1911: Seditious Meetings Act, 1907; Indian Newspapers (Incitement to Offences) Act, 1908; Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1908; and the Indian Press Act, 1910.
- Tilak was sentenced and served in prison in Mandalay (Burma) for writing in support of revolutionaries who were involved in the killing of two British women (their original target was a British magistrate).

Impact of the Extremist Period

- Bal Gangadhar Tilak organized Ganpati and Shivaji festival to spread the message of boycotting westernization in India. This was a major social reform and had a larger impact on society.
- The slogan “Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have it” by Tilak was the talk of society.
- British goods and national education was boycotted which brought a major change in the economy of the country and gave way to employment and various other opportunities for the Indians.
- There was a major reform in education across the country as the extremists worked on establishing National universities free from government control.
-