

## Chapter Two

# Bengal from Partition, 1905 to Provincial Election, 1937

"What Bengal thinks today, India thinks tomorrow"

- Gokhale, a prominent Indian Leader

(A)

### Partition of Bengal, 1905

Partition of Bengal is one of the momentous events in the history of Bengal as well as in India. It was put to effect on 16 October, 1905 during the viceroyalty of Lord Curzon. The issues of partition led the Muslims to think that their real enemies, under the changed circumstances, were not the British with whom they were non-co-operating ever since their conquest, but the Hindu *Bhadralok*. Henceforth their political strategy was to highlight the socio-economic inequalities between the two communities, and to seek redress from the British Raj. However, the partition was annulled in December 1911 and with it the first big obvious crack in the British regime's moral structure had opened up before the Muslims' eyes. The colonial bureaucracy led them to believe that for all the ills the Muslims were suffering from, their next door Hindu neighbors were not to be blamed less. 'They' and 'we' pattern of politics that was created by the partition finally led to the second partition of Bengal in 1947. But the political developments, from social and institutional points of view, did not, however, follow any characteristic uniformly alike throughout the period.

The idea of partitioning Bengal was not merely a brain child of Lord Curzon. It did not originate with Curzon's governorship of India. Bengal, which included Bihar and Orissa since 1765, was admittedly too much large for a single province of British India. Gradually it grew too vast for efficient administration and required reorganization and intelligent division which had been culminated with the partition of Bengal in 1905. Bengal historians are not unanimous with any definite reason that created the ground of Curzon's decision. Rather the historiography of the Bengal partition of 1905 highlighted some two points of arguments vis-à-vis its background. One school of thoughts of the Bengal historians maintains that it was for administrative reasons alone that the colonial government divided Bengal. Interestingly most British Civilians of the time held this opinion. Other scholars believe that the motive of the colonial government was purely political.

### Background of the Partition

The size of Bengal presidency had worried many at various times in the British Indian history. East Bengal had turned to a depressed province of India since the mid eighteenth century. The prime reason for such decline was the transfer of capital from Dhaka to Murshidabad in the early eighteenth century only to regain its lost importance in the early twentieth century. Bengal, Bihar and Orissa had formed a single province under British India since 1765. After the British crushed the Sepoy Rebellion of 1875, they dissolved the East India Company and took direct control of the province. British control extended from Eastern Bengal across the entire Ganges plain, to the Indus valley in distant North-Western India, with Calcutta as capital. The British officials also moved into the Chittagong Hills. The British officials governed the local hill peoples, who had remained independent in their remote corner of East Bengal. According to the first Administrative Report of India the area of Bengal Presidency was 25.3 million sq. mile and the total population was 4 crore.

The post for Lieutenant Governor for Bengal was created chiefly for administrative reasons in 1854. Secretary of Britain for India Henry Stafford Northcote, the Lieutenant Governor was sent to survey the causes and effects of the famine of Orissa in 1866. He had formed a committee in 1867 and reported that the administrative incapability was the main reason behind the background, losses and casualties of the famine. Henry, wrote in a letter in 1867 that the unnatural condition of the then Bengal surpassed all examples in the whole of India. After the famine in Orissa the message was conveyed that, although Bengal was the largest in area, had the largest administrative structure and was the most important province in all of India; the efficiency of the Bengal Government was far less compared to that in Bombay or in Madras. One year later another official of Bengal Presidency William Grey proposed to divide the Bengal.

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Lord Northcote, the Secretary of State in 1867 led a special committee where he proposed of a separate province. As a result in 1874, Assam was turned into a separate province under the Chief Commissioner.

In 1872, the first census statistics of India showed that total population of the Bengal Presidency reached to 6.7 crore. Unlike Lord Northcote another British official Cambel once claimed the administrative difficulties because of that huge number of population and proposed the separation of the Bengal presidency. In 1874, on the basis of the proposal an initiative was taken to partition Bengal although it was not effectively executed.

In 1892 it was proposed that the territorial boundary of Bengal should be reconstructed after a rebellion of the Lusai tribes although it did not work out. The Commissioner of Chittagong Mr. Oldham was the first to propose in 1896 for the creation of a new province in which East Bengal should be included. He placed a proposal to the government of India that Chittagong and Dhaka should be incorporated with Assam to create a new province called East Bengal and the capital of which could either be Dhaka or Chittagong. On the other hand, four years after this proposal was made, the Chief Commissioner of Assam proposed that Chittagong, Dhaka and Mymensingh should be included to Assam. However, in 1898 the Southern part of Lusai was incorporated to Assam.

Assam chief Commissioner William Ward proposed in 1896-97 to attach Chittagong Division, Dhaka and Mymensingh to his province. At the same time there was an increasing interest in the development of Assam into a more viable province. When the subject of territorial adjustments for Bengal came up in 1901 when Fraser, the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces proposed that some territorial re-adjustments of Bengal and the Central Provinces could easily sort out the existing problem Orissa.

Fraser told that the intention behind the partition of Bengal was territorial 're-adjustments' with three main purposes. One was the constitution of a large Uriya Division by the addition to the existing Orissa Division in Bengal of the District of Sambalpur and five Feudatory states from the Central Provinces. This was a measure of great importance, though it attracted but little attention. Fraser's idea was that if a province could be created which had Uriya linguistic affinity the administrative work would become easier because then it would not be necessary for the official to learn that language.

Another point far to Bengal of the five Uriya feudatory states above referred to, and the transfer from Bengal to the Central Provinces of five Hindi states, on the other side of the province. Fraser, however, mentioned that these adjustments had no connection to the partition of Bengal. He pointed out that long before the plan for the partition of Bengal was made, some of the districts had already been included to Assam and the transfer of the

remaining territories of the province was, to him, exceedingly desirable, if not absolutely necessary because Eastern Bengal was a vast and inaccessible region. It was impossible for one Lieutenant Governor to administer it. This was also the reason why most areas of East Bengal had remained neglected. On the other hand, Assam was so small a territory that it was not viable to make it a separate province. Therefore, East Bengal and Assam were to be made one province.

For the next one and a half year Fraser's proposal was discussed and assessed by different Civilians. When on 24 May, 1902 the file containing Fraser's proposals was placed before Curzon; he made this famous comment on the lengthy process of the bureaucracy. But at the same time he took immediate steps to solve all the problems regarding territorial adjustments. William Ward's proposal was revived by Bengal's new Lt. Governor Andrew Fraser who was also the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces in a note of 28 March 1903, accepted by Lord Curzon in a minute on territorial redistribution in India on June 1, 1903. It was suitably edited for public consumption and announced for the first time in Home Secretary Risley's letter of 3 December 1903.

Relief of Bengal and improvement of Assam were the two grounds offered by Risley in support of the transfer plan. It needs to be pointed out, however that the administrative convenience was not something abstract or impartial but often closely related to the convenience of the British officials and businessmen. Thus an expansion of Assam was needed as Risley argued.

Fraser sent a note where he proposed separation of Chittagong, Dhaka and Mymensingh from Bengal proper on 18 March, 1903. Curzon cordially approved this proposal.

Risleys letter got published and immediately protests against this proposal started and gradually it became more widespread. Ibetson, a member of the Governor Generals Executive Council advised Curzon to ignore all controversies and go ahead with the partition. Ibetson argued that administrative reasons were a priority in respect to Bengal and of much greater importance in respect to Assam. He emphasized on Curzon's consideration for the reasons of administrative reforms and should materialize the partition plan in spite of opposition from all corners.

Curzon was convinced regarding the proposal's points and decided to adopt the very policy of the colonial master, Britain the "Divide and Rule". When he visited Eastern Bengal he highlighted in various meetings the various advantages the Muslims of the province would be benefited from if Bengal was divided. At different meetings Nawab Salimullah also joined him in declaring such prospects. As a result, Curzon gained the support of a large majority of the silent mass of the Muslim population in Bengal. In such circumstances, Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India decided that the province

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of Bengal should be divided so that East Bengal and Assam, where Hindus were preponderant becomes one province with its capital in Dhaka. In a speech at Dhaka on 18 February 1905, Lord Curzon said: "Pakistan would make Dacca the centre and possibly the capital of a new and self-governing administration which must give to the people of these districts by reason of their numerical strength and their superior culture the preponderating voice in the province so created, which would invest the Mohammedans of Eastern Bengal with a unity which they had not enjoyed since the days of the old Musalman Viceroys and kings."

### Reasons of the Partition

In the Bengal delta, the shape of things to come was prefigured by an administrative change. In 1905 the British divided the huge province of Bengal into a Western part (Bengal) and an Eastern part (Eastern Bengal and Assam). This decision led to a sharp division of minds all over Bengal (and indeed all over India). Many saw the Bengal partition of 1905 as a calculated move to break the anti-colonial movement, which was particularly strong in Bengal, and to divide and rule the Bengali-speaking population. It was from December, 1903 to 19 July, 1905 that the transfer plan was transformed into full scale partition. The political motive was to divide the Hindus of the Eastern and Western Bengal. Fraser wrote for the first time that the primary motive behind Bengal Partition was to make political gains in his letter of 28 March, 1903. Most of the Bangladeshi historians maintain that political reasons were, in fact, the decisive factors behind the partition of Bengal in 1905. Many factors both directly and indirectly had actively caused the partition. Administrative, political, economic, social, religious, cultural and British policies were involved for the partition of Bengal.

### Administrative Causes

Partition was promoted for administrative reasons: Bengal was as large as France but with a significantly larger population. Curzon stated the Eastern region was neglected and under-governed. By splitting the province, an improved administration could be established in the East, where subsequently, the population would benefit from new schools and employment opportunities. Sumit Sarkar believes that till 1903 the need for administrative changes was the deciding factor behind the 1905 Bengal Partition. The lieutenant governor of Bengal had to administer an area of 189,000 sq miles and by 1903 the population of the province had risen to 78.50 million. Consequently, such a vast region was impossible to be administered properly. Proposals were being made primarily for this reason for the last fifty years before the actual partition took place in order to curtail the territorial boundary of Bengal. It was also possibly under consideration that East Bengal and Assam would be developed in that case. Andrew Fraser held such an opinion.

Many districts in Eastern Bengal had been practically neglected because of isolation and poor communication which made good governance almost impossible. 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. The administrative machinery of the province was understaffed. 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 19<sup>th</sup> century. Organized piracy in the waterways had existed for at least a century.

In connection to the opinion of Sumit Sarkara, a British official Mr. McLane writes that until 1905 the reasons for partition of Bengal were latently administrative. In reality, along with administrative difficulties, there were so many problems of famine, of defense, or of linguistics those had at one time or other prompted the government to consider the redrawing of administrative boundaries. Occasional efforts were made to rearrange the administrative units of Bengal. In 1836, the upper provinces were sliced off from Bengal and placed under a lieutenant governor. For the administrative benefits in 1854, the Governor General was relieved of the direct administration of Bengal which was placed under a lieutenant governor.

In reality the government contention was that the Partition of Bengal was purely an administrative measure with three main objectives.

Firstly, 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.

Secondly, the government desired to promote the development of backward Assam (ruled by a Chief Commissioner) by enlarging its jurisdiction so as to provide it with an outlet to the sea.

Thirdly, the government felt the urgent necessity to unite the scattered sections of the Uriya-speaking population under a single administration. There were further proposals to separate Chittagong and the districts of Dhaka (then Dacca) and Mymensigh from Bengal and attach them to Assam. Similarly Chhota Nagpur was to be taken away from Bengal and incorporated with the Central Provinces. Curzon explained the reason for partition as an administrative improvement while he visited the Eastern Bengal in the year before partition.

### Political Causes

A very vocal opposition developed, especially among the middle and upper classes in Kolkata. The British Government had divided Bengal to take political advantage. Motive for political gains behind partition is the predominant reason and this opinion has been held in recent times. Amalesh

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Tripathi and Sumit Sarker had reached to a similar conclusion who think that certainly the plan for Bengal Partition was not just born out of the extreme desire to destroy the Congress which was anti-British but from the extreme hatred of the English Civilians towards the Bengalis and the need to solve the problems arising out of the hazards of administering a vast territorial expanse and the rise of the population in the province. With the extremist movement getting momentum the perception of anti-Congress bureaucrats towards the Bengalis had reached to an extreme point. It may be clearly opined that the partition of Bengal got political shape originated from the British divide and rule policy. He strongly argued that to minimize and weaken the nationalistic spirit of the Bengal Curzon took the very stern action o partitioning Bengal.

The successor of Lord Curzon, Lord Minto who used to criticize him vehemently also believed that from a political point of view alone, partition to have been very necessary. The government officially published the idea in January 1904, and in February, Lord Curzon the Governor-General of India made an official tour to Eastern districts of Bengal to assess public opinion on the partition. He consulted with leading personalities and delivered speeches at Dhaka, Chittagong and Mymensingh, explaining the government's stand on partition. Under the British the province of Bengal was as large as France, with a population of seventy-eight and a half million, nearly as populous as contemporary France and Great Britain combined. The province included Bihar and Orissa and the Eastern region was notoriously under-governed. Curzon did not intend to divide Hindus, who were the majority in the West, from Muslims, the majority in the East but only Bengalis.

The idea of the partition of Bengal originated from political reasons alone is difficult to accept. Rather political advantage which emanated from a territorial re-adjustment and the contemporary administrative situation were more acceptable reasons for the partition. The letters which have been exchanged between Curzon and Fraser in the years between 1903 and 1905 signifies the political motive behind the partition of Bengal in 1905.

### **British Divide and Rule Policy**

Curzon commented on 24 May 1905 that, the best guarantee of the political advantage of their was its disliked by the Congress party. So this is obvious that Curzon didn't like the policies taken by the Indian National Congress till 1905. Craig Baxter suggests that the "divide and rule" policy was the real reason for partition. We can say that there were others, of course, in East Bengal who was a silent mass and Curzon took the political advantage of that. The policy of 'Divide and Rule' which the British had so often

applied in their administration was also used in this case. The political reason for the partition of Bengal was the most important although the Civilians were alert in keeping it a secret. In this context the ever growing British divide and rule policy played a pivotal role for the partition of Bengal. The leadership of the Indian National Congress also viewed the partition as an attempt to 'divide and rule' and as a proof of the government's vindictive antipathy towards the outspoken *Bhadralok* intellectuals. When the British government was thinking of the administrative advantages, the political advantages were also becoming clear and a political dimension was added to it and of course, in East Bengal Curzon took the political advantage of that.

### Partition

The government announced the idea for partition in January 1904. Administrators and officers exchanged too many suggestions and arguments between 1 February and 26 April, 1904. Savage, the Commissioner of Dhaka, wrote that Eastern Bengal should be made a province so that it could have a separate Legislative Council. Fraser proposed the inclusion of Dhaka and Chittagong with this new province which was to be carved out. Curzon suggested that Pabna, Bogra and Rangpur should be included into Fraser's proposal. The Bengal Government finally managed to form a complete proposal for the partition scheme on 22 April, 1904.

Curzon had started the process of the proposal for partition of Bengal but left for holiday to England on 30 April, 1904. Risely came to the scene once again and included Rajshahi division and Maldah district to the new administrative unit by editing the prior proposal. In this connection the final draft was ready by December, 1904. Returning from holiday Curzon accepted Risley's proposal and sent it to the Secretary of State for India. Curzon pointed out the advantages of Risley's proposed inclusion. Curzon also mentioned to Godley, the ex-Secretary for the India Office that Bengal Partition was "an administrative reform of the first grade." On 9 June, 1905 the British Government agreed to the formation of the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam which was to include Dhaka, Chittagong, Hill Tippera and Assam. This new province had a population of thirty one million. The Muslims were a majority with a population of around 18 million. The Partition of Bengal in 1905 was made on October 16 by Viceroy Curzon. The former province of Bengal was divided into two new provinces "Bengal" (comprising Western Bengal as well as the province of Bihar and Orissa) and "East Bengal and Assam" with Dacca (Dhaka) being the capital of the latter and subsidiary headquarters at Chittagong. The new province called 'Eastern Bengal and Assam' would cover an area of 106,540 sq. miles with a population of 31 million comprising of 18 million Muslims and 12 million Hindus. Sir Bampfylde Fuller, was made the Lt. Governor of

the new province. Administration of the new province would consist of a Legislative Council, a Board of Revenue of two members, and the jurisdiction of the Calcutta High Court would be left undisturbed. The government pointed out that Eastern Bengal and Assam would have a clearly demarcated Western boundary and well defined geographical, ethnological, linguistic and social characteristics.

### Reactions to the Partition and the Consequences

#### Reaction to the plan:

As details of the plan became public knowledge, prominent Bengalis began a series of demonstrations against partition and a boycott of British products. A new dawn of hope for the downtrodden Bengali Muslims arose when the new province of East Bengal and Assam was created in which they could take part, not scared any more of the Bengali Hindus, who were advanced in all fields. While protest was mainly Hindu-led the Muslims nawab of Dhaka was also initially opposed to the plan, even though Dhaka would serve as capital of the new province. Lord Curzon said, "Bengal united is a power; Bengali divided will pull in several different ways." Bengalis were the first to benefit from English education in India and as an intellectual class were disproportionately represented in the Civil Service, which was, of course, dominated by colonial officials. They were also in the forefront of calls for greater participation in governance, if not for independence. By splitting Bengal, their influence would be weakened. This would also, effectively, divide the nationalist movement. Bengalis, who regarded themselves as a nation, did not want to be a linguistic minority in their own province. Indeed, many of those Hindus who were considered "unfriendly if not seditious in character" lived in the East and dominated "the whole tone of Bengal administration." Since Muslims would form the majority in the East under the plan, their power would be undermined. Baxter is thus, unlike Hardy, of the view that playing Hindu and Muslims off against each other did lie behind the partition plan. Calcutta, the capital of the united province, was still at this point also the capital of British India, which meant that Bengalis were at the very center of British power. At the same time, the Muslims of Bengal were considered loyal to the British since they had not joined the anti-British rebellion of 1857-8, so they would be rewarded.

The Hindus of West Bengal, who controlled most of Bengal's commerce and professional and rural life, complained that the Bengali nation would be split in two, making them a minority in a province including Bihar and Orissa. Religious fervor reached its peak on 28 September 1905 when thousands of Hindus gathered at the *Kali* temple in Calcutta. *Kali* was accepted as a symbol of the Motherland to the Hindus they also thought that *kali* was also venerated as the great Mother associated with the conception

of Bengal as the Motherland and this conception offered a solid basis for the support of political objectives stimulated by religious excitement. Such a religious flavor gave the movement a widespread appeal among the Hindu masses.

### Muslims Response

The Muslims in East Bengal after initial opposition tended to be much more positive about the arrangement, believing that a separate region would give them more opportunity for education, employment, and so on. The partition became effective, was probably "the first attempt to consolidate Muslims of Bengal on a political platform. They found the partition effective for them. Before the partition it was West Bengal, mainly Calcutta and its adjacent area came under the British influence and enjoyed the facility of education, development and industrialization. The traditional and reformist Muslim groups - the Faraizi, Wahabi and Taiyuni - supported the partition. The Eastern part of Bengal due to lack of communication could not have the benefits of development. The socio-economic condition of the Muslim population was poor and they suffered further under the rule of Hindu Zamindars and Landlords. The rivers were full of pirates and a minimum amount was funded for education. The Muslim populations outnumbered the Hindu population in Eastern Bengal. Muslims had feelings of alleviation in the partitioning of Bengal as they thought that they would enjoy more freedom and opportunity for education, employment, politics and economy etc. The partition caused a boost in Bengali Literature and language and Muslim society underwent a social, economic and educational uplift.

Sir Bampfylde Fuller, became the first Lieutenant-Governor of the new province of East Bengal and Assam on 16 October 1905. When he arrived at Dacca, the Muslims accorded him a rousing reception. On 16 October 1905, Mohammedan Provincial Union was founded with Nawab Sir Salimullah as its patron. The All India Muslim League founded in 1906 supported the partition. Even though Fuller openly expressed favoritism towards Muslims on the ground of the partition.

Following the partition of Bengal, Dacca was reincarnated as the provincial capital of the newly constituted Muslim-majority province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. Dhaka's profile was raised in several spheres. The pulse of the public activities quickened too, and in 1906 the All India Muslim League was founded there at the initiative of the Nawab of Dacca. The British set about developing its infrastructure by laying out a 'formal' city adjacent to Old Dacca. A civil line type administrative quarter was developed around the Ramna area North of the railway line which served Old Dacca from the new enclave. Big colonial-style bungalows and several important administrative buildings were constructed, interspersed with open spaces which were criss-crossed by straight roads and winding avenues.

Among the other important buildings constructed in this period were Curzon Hall, the High Court Building, Secretariat, Government Press and the Museum. However, this expansion came to a frustrating halt in 1911 when, in the face of growing Bengali nationalism, the partition was annulled and the provincial capital moved to Kolkata. Dacca once again relegated to the obscure position of a mere divisional headquarters. Its population which between 1901 and 1911 had increased by 21 percent saw its growth halved after the capital was removed.

The people of the Eastern Bengal got an immediate result for the partition. In the new province of East Bengal and Assam, the Bengali Muslims were given preference in government service as they held only 15.5 government service while they represented 41.13 percent of the literate population. Muslim education started to be highly elevated. There was prospect of more government money for Muslim education. Between 1906 and 1911, with increased grants-in-aid, the number of Muslims in high schools in the new province rose from 8,869 to 20,729 and in Middle English schools from 14,100 to 38,702 which reflected the development in education sector of the newly formed province.

The chanting of *Bande Mataram* -Hail to the Motherland (a cry taken from a novel written by Bengali Hindu nationalist novelist Bankim Chatterjee) was seriously disliked by the Muslims, as it was associated with Hindu goddess Kali. Henceforth, Muslim League seriously objected to the use of Bande Mataram, the party anthem of Congress as the official anthem of government, whenever provincial Congress government was formed.

There were some exceptions also in case of supporting or protesting the partition of Bengal among the Muslim leaders and organizations. The Central National Muhammedan Association, an organization of the Muslims, protested against partition of Bengal. Syed Ameeer Hossain, the Secretary of the Association wrote to the Chief Secretary in a memorandum that the Bangla speaking nation should not be divided and it was a plan which was unnecessary. Many influential Muslims who were landlords and many were associated with Congress politics residing in Kolkata objected to the partition of Bengal. Abul Kasem, Abdul Halim Ghuznavi, Abdur Rasul, Liaqat Hossain, Ismail Hossain Shiraji are noteworthy among them.

### Hindus Response

The partition met great opposition mainly from the influential educated middle-class Hindus. The educated Bengali Hindus of Bengal felt the partition a blow on them. The territorial adjustment touched their interest. They controlled most of Bengal's commerce and different professions. Calcutta lawyers apprehended that establishment of a Court of Appeal at Dhaka (Dacca) would diminish importance of their own High Court at Calcutta. Journalists feared that appearance of local newspapers would

restrict circulation of Calcutta Press. Business community of Calcutta visualized shift of trade from Calcutta to Chittagong port. The Zamindars, mostly Hindus, who owned vast landed estates both in West and East Bengal, foresaw extra expenditure. They believed the plan would encourage growth of a Muslim power in the Muslim majority Eastern Bengal- mostly peasant and illiterate- to thwart the rapidly growing strength of the educated Hindu community.

The partition had stirred up the sentiments of Hindus. There were widespread agitations across the state. October 16, 1905, the day on which the partition came into effect, was observed as a day of mourning and fasting throughout Bengal. The Amrita Bazar Patrika of Calcutta wrote in an editorial next day "the people of Calcutta observed it as the day of mourning." Rabindranath Tagore spoke out against this political event by means of a highly inspiring poem: *Banglar mati Banglar jal, Banglar bayu, banglar phal, punya houk, hey Bhagaban...* (Roughly translated into English: "May the soil of Bengal, the water and the air of Bengal be hallowed ..."). Rabindranath Tagore wrote *Amar Shonar Bangla* as a rallying cry for proponents of annulment of Partition, which, much later, in 1972, became the national anthem of Bangladesh. He himself led mass protest of people on the streets, singing the song and tying *Rakhi* (ornamental and colorful chord) on each other's wrists (to symbolize unity and brotherhood). A huge amount of nationalist literature was created during this period. During the tension of disharmony between the Muslims and the Hindus during the Swadeshi movement, Rabindranath also wrote that the Muslims could not become one with us in our agony is due to the reason that we never allowed our hearts to unite with theirs. Dadabhai Naoroji at the annual session of the Congress in Kolkata in 1906 described the partition "a bad blunder" which "may yet be rectified" by "agitation." The Bengali Hindus organized terrorist movements without Muslim participants throughout Bengal to free India from the British rule. The two leading terrorist groups, the Jugantar Dal and the Anusilan Samiti were based in East Bengal.

However, partition was especially unpopular by the people of what had become West Bengal, where a huge amount of nationalist literature was created during this period. Opposition by Indian National Congress was led by Sir Henry Cotton who had been Chief Commissioner of Assam, but Curzon was not to be moved. His successor, Lord Minto, also thought it crucial to maintain partition, commenting that it "should and must be maintained since the diminution of Bengali political agitation will assist to remove a serious cause of anxiety... It is," he continued, "the growing power of a population with great intellectual gifts and a talent for making itself heard which is not unlikely to influence public opinion at home most

mischievously." Sir Andrew Fraser, formerly Lt. Governor of Bengal stayed on as Governor of West Bengal and was especially targeted by anti-partition agitators, who derailed his train in 1907. He retired in 1908. Support for the anti-partition cause came from the Hindus throughout India, where they thought the partition of an historic province was regarded as an act of colonial arrogance and blamed on the divide and rule policy. "Calcutta," says Metcalf "came alive with rallies, bonfires of foreign goods, petitions, newspapers and posters." Anti-British and pro-self-rule sentiment increased. In fact, the Swadeshi movement itself emerged from opposition to Partition, which was regarded as "a sinister imperial design to cripple the Bengali led nationalist movement."

Later, Cotton, the Liberal MP for Nottingham East coordinated the successful campaign to oust the first lieutenant-governor of East Bengal, Sir Bampfylde Fuller. In 1906, the song "Bande Mataram" which Tagore set to music became the "informal anthem of the nationalist movement after 1905." Secret terrorist organizations began to operate, for whom Bengal as their mother-land was epitomized by the goddess Kali, "goddess of power and destruction, to whom they dedicated their weapons."

In different parts of India a number of secret societies sprang up, particularly in Bengal and Maharashtra. To terrorize British authorities they trained members, mostly students in the use of fire-arms. This was the time when the 'Swadeshi movement' to boycott British manufactured goods was first launched. They made public bonfires of foreign cloths, cigarettes, soap and anything that came handy all over India. The sale of British goods fell between 6 and 20 per cent of original levels. This was the time when extreme nationalists came to the forefront. A large number of young leaders in Bengal took up the task of educating people with Swadeshi spirit of the Indianisation of education, spearheaded by fanatic Hindu revolutionary Aurobindo Ghose. In 1905, Aurobindo Ghosh wrote '*Vawani Mandir*'. In this book, he stated the plans and programs of the Revolutionary Terrorist groups.

Though the revolutionary terrorists did not lead mass struggles against the British, their acts and sacrifices won them enormous popularity among the common people. Among the major groups were the *Abhinav Bharat* (centers in Nasik, and led by V. Savarkar), the Anushilan Samity (based in Dacca and led by Pulin Das), the Jugantar group (led by Jatindranath Mukherji) and the group led by Rash Behari Bose and Sachindranath Sanyal. These groups carried out several armed raids to raise funds and executions of English officials.

The anti-partition agitation passed into the hands of Hindu militant leaders. The clerical staff, Calcutta tram workers, jute workers, railway workers and younger generation drawn into politics, adopted terrorist methods by using

firearms, pistols and bombs indiscriminately. Several assassinations were committed. The Swadeshi movement in Bengal also saw the emergence of labor unions and professional agitators. Bombay, Madras and Punjab also witnessed the growth of a spontaneous anti-imperialist labor movement the most famous example being the 1908 strike of Bombay textile workers in protest against Tilak's arrest. The agitation took a turn towards anarchy and disorder.

The Congress' political activity in general, were strongest in Bengal. The leadership of the Indian National Congress viewed partition tantamount to vivisection of their 'Mother'. 'Bande-Mataram' became their national anthem and agitation against partition started in the form of mass meetings and rural unrest. Pujas offered to emphasize the solemn nature of the occasion. Hindu religious militancy reached its peak on 28 September 1905, the day of Mahalaya, the new-moon day before the puja, and thousands of Hindus gathered at the Kali temple in Calcutta. In Bengal the worship of Kali, wife of Shiva, had always been very popular. She possessed a two-dimensional character both generative and destructive and took great pleasure in bloody sacrifices.

Such religious flavor aroused hostility in average Muslim minds. Protest rallies were held by them urging its educated co-religionists to remain faithful to the government. Communal disturbances became a familiar feature in Eastern Bengal and Assam and followed a pattern that was repeated elsewhere. The 1907 riots represent a watershed in the history of modern Bengal.

While Hindu-Muslims relations deteriorated, political changes of great magnitude were taking place in the Government of India's policies. In the new province, Lt.Governor Bampfylde Fuller was accused by the anti-partition movement leaders as partial to Muslims. Lord Curzon had resigned as Viceroy in 1905 following dispute with the Commander-in-Chief of Indian Army. Coordinated and successful campaign and political protests and agitation led to the ouster of the Lt. Governor of East Bengal and Assam Sir Bampfylde Fuller. He resigned in August 1906. His resignation and its prompt acceptance were considered by the Muslims, a victory for the Hindus.

The civil disobedience and Swadeshi movement snowballed to such proportions that Viceroy Curzon's scheme, ostensibly for "administrative convenience", to divide Bengal into Eastern and Western provinces (whatever be the hidden reason 'divide and rule' alleged by the proponents of anti-partition) was nipped in the bud. In the face of rising opposition to colonial rule the British ended the division and the partition had to be annulled.

## Political, Educational, Economic and Social Development of the Eastern Bengal

The Eastern Bengal got a new momentum after the partition of Bengal. Dacca became tremendously developed as it never been at a short time of half a decade only. New offices, secretariat, business and trade centers, educational institutions were established here. It got a new and spirited vitality. According to Lord Curzon, the new province advanced in education, in good government, in every mark of prosperity. This development was both infrastructural and intellectual indeed.

In a sense, the formation of the Muslim League was a direct political result of the partition of Bengal. Hindu agitation after the formation of the Muslim League helped Muslims increase their nationalism. In between 1905 and 1911, the number of Muslim middle class was flourished. Economically many of the rural peasant class people were turned into middle class who led the movement of political, social and educational development for Bengal. The Muslim quota system in the government service was propagated in May 1906 and eventually from 1907 to 1911, the number of students in various educational institutions were increased almost 37% in the greater Bengal which was some 83% in the Eastern Bengal alone. This figure was the highest in any region of India. Another statistics shows that in 1901-02, total number of Muslim students in Bengal 331900 which increased to 575667 by 1911-12. In 1908-09, there were some 819 girls schools were established in the Bengal province where the total number students was 25439. In 1910-11, educational institutions were increased to 4550 and female student's number was also increased to 132239. Women education was also terrifically improved and it contributed in every sector of Bengal.

Economically Eastern Bengal province got a new looks after the partition of Bengal. Both the demand and production of Jute, the golden fiber of Bengal was highly increased which added a great value to their native cash crop. Price of jute was doubled in 1906-07 in comparison to the price in 1904. Besides jute others production was also increased during this time. As a result the partition of Bengal had become a blessing to the educative and cultivator classes.

After a long time Dacca once again became the commercial hub of this region. In trade and commerce Bengal was doing excellent after the partition of Bengal. Export became far more than import for Bengal trade. In the first year of partition of Bengal the foreign trade increased from Tk. 29827397 to Tk. 31777846 which was more than Tk. 1950449 than the prior one. This amount was increased both in export and import. Chittagong port was expanded and developed and in the 1905-06 finance year total trade of Chittagong port was Tk. 31.7 million. The provincial report shows

## Bengal from Partition, 1905 to Provincial Election, 1937

that, the amount was more than four times what it was before 1901-02 and with the impetus quite promising received under the new government, the prospect of its further development in the near future development seemed hopeful.

### Annulment of the Partition of Bengal, 1911

The civil disobedience and *Swadeshi* movement snowballed to such proportions that Viceroy Curzon's scheme, ostensibly for "administrative convenience", to divide Bengal into Eastern and Western provinces (whatever be the hidden reason 'divide and rule' alleged by the proponents) was nipped in the bud. The partition created by the partition was seditious and anarchical situation created by the partition was hollowness of the Bengali Hindu