

PARTITION OF BENGAL

1905

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INTRODUCTION

- Partition of Bengal announced by Lord Curzon in **1905**.
- Divided Bengal into **Eastern Bengal & Assam (Muslim-majority)** and **Western Bengal (Hindu-majority)**.
- First major event shaping **Muslim political consciousness** in British India.
- **Key Personalities**
 - **Lord Curzon** – architect of partition.
 - **Nawab Salimullah of Dhaka** – supported partition, mobilized Muslims.
 - **Rabindranath Tagore & Surendranath Banerjee** – Hindu opposition leaders.



BENGAL BEFORE PARTITION

- Bengal = **Largest province** of British India (80 million people).
- Administrative inefficiency due to **size & population**.
- Hindus (bhadralok class) dominated administration, trade, and education.
- Muslims largely rural, poor, and marginalized.



CAUSES OF PARTITION

- **Administrative Reasons**

- Difficult to govern vast Bengal.
- Curzon's justification: efficient administration.

- **Political Reasons**

- Hindus dominating politics & economy.
- Muslims disadvantaged; Curzon wanted to balance power.

- **Socio-Economic Angle**

- Eastern Bengal = Muslim majority (needed representation).
- Curzon aimed to **empower Muslims**.



REACTION TO THE PARTITION

■ **Reaction of Hindus**

- Strong opposition from **Indian National Congress & Hindu leaders**.
- Saw it as a “**divide and rule**” policy.
- Launch of **Swadeshi Movement (1905)** – boycotts of British goods, protests, strikes.
- Hindu press: “Attack on Bengali unity.”

■ **Reaction of Muslims**

- Generally **welcomed partition**.
- First time Muslims got **majority province (Eastern Bengal & Assam)**.
- Emergence of **Muslim political awakening**.
- Supported by **Nawab Salimullah of Dhaka**.
- Led to the foundation of **All India Muslim League (1906)**.



SIGNIFICANCE OF PARTITION FOR MUSLIMS

- Muslims realized **separate political identity**.
- Recognition that their interests were different from Hindus.
- Partition laid foundation for the **Two-Nation Theory**.
- Direct link to creation of Muslim League in Dhaka (1906).



ANNULMENT OF PARTITION (1911)

- Hindu agitation, boycotts, and unrest forced British to annul partition.
- Eastern Bengal merged back into Bengal.
- Muslims **deeply disappointed** – realization that Hindus opposed Muslim empowerment.
- This disappointment **strengthened Muslim nationalism.**

CONCLUSION

- Partition of Bengal = turning point in Indian politics.
- Showed **administrative decisions had deep communal implications.**
- Hindu-Muslim divide became sharper.
- Laid foundation for **Muslim identity politics**, leading towards Pakistan.



RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Aziz, K.K. *The Making of Pakistan* (1976).
- Choudhury, G.W. *The Last Days of United Pakistan* (1969).
- Jalal, A. *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League, and the Demand for Pakistan* (1985).
- Hardy, P. *The Muslims of British India* (1972).

