


# **Partition of Bengal (1905), the Emergence of 'Muslim Statehood' and 'Eastern' Bengal**

Aynul Islam, Associate Professor

# Defining Bengal

- **Provincial State: Area of 189,000 sq. mile**
- **Population: nearly 78 million**
- **Area: Included Hindi-speaking regions of Bihar, the Oriya-Speaking regions of Orissa as well as the Assamese Speaking region of Assam**
- **A huge administrative entity, the capital Calcutta was the capital of entire British India**

# Bengal Province



78 Million

Hindi + Oriya + Bengali

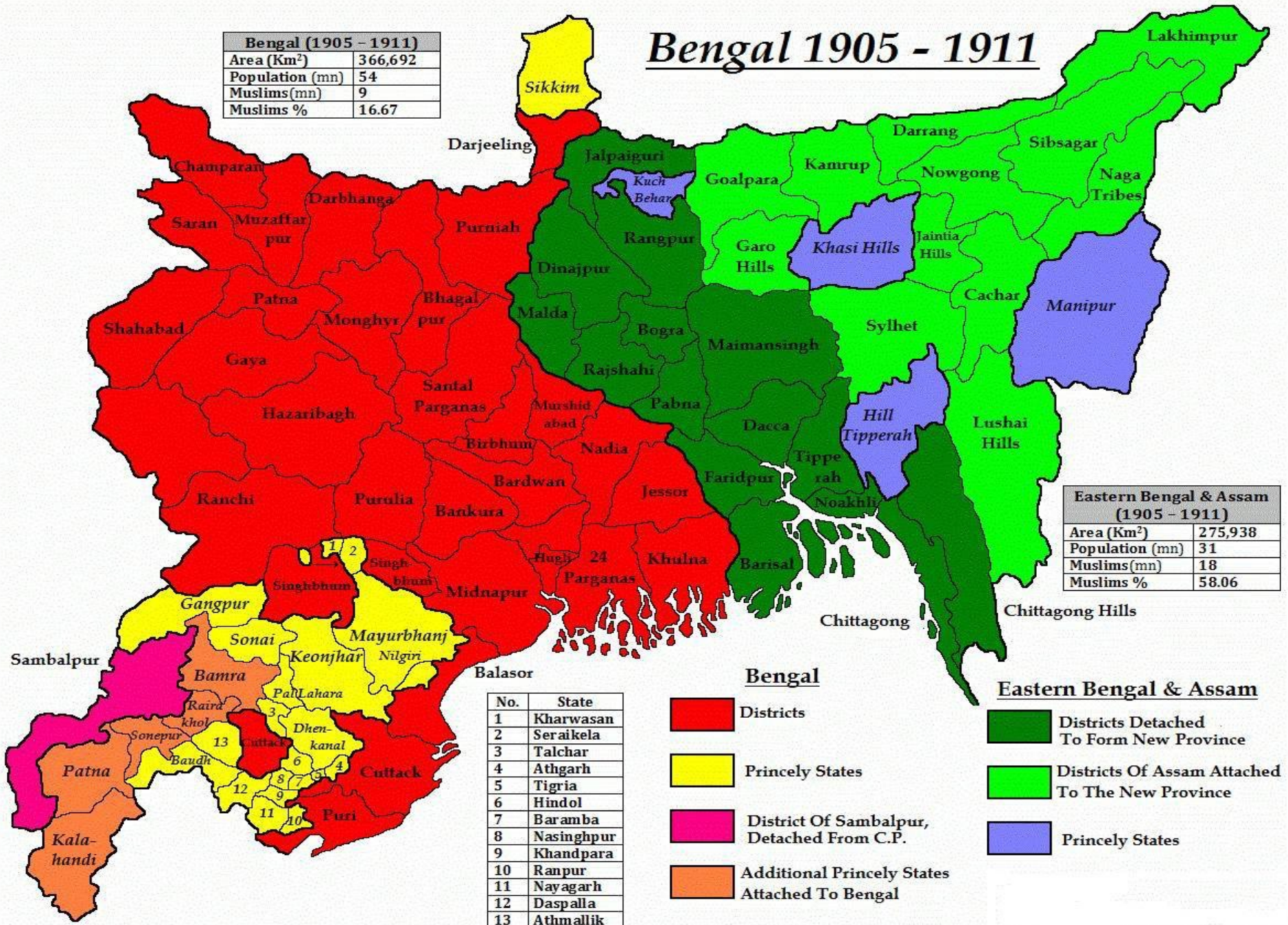
Capital of British India= Calcutta



# Bengal 1905 - 1911

Bengal (1905 - 1911)	
Area (Km <sup>2</sup> )	366,692
Population (mn)	54
Muslims (mn)	9
Muslims %	16.67

Eastern Bengal & Assam (1905 - 1911)	
Area (Km <sup>2</sup> )	275,938
Population (mn)	31
Muslims (mn)	18
Muslims %	58.06



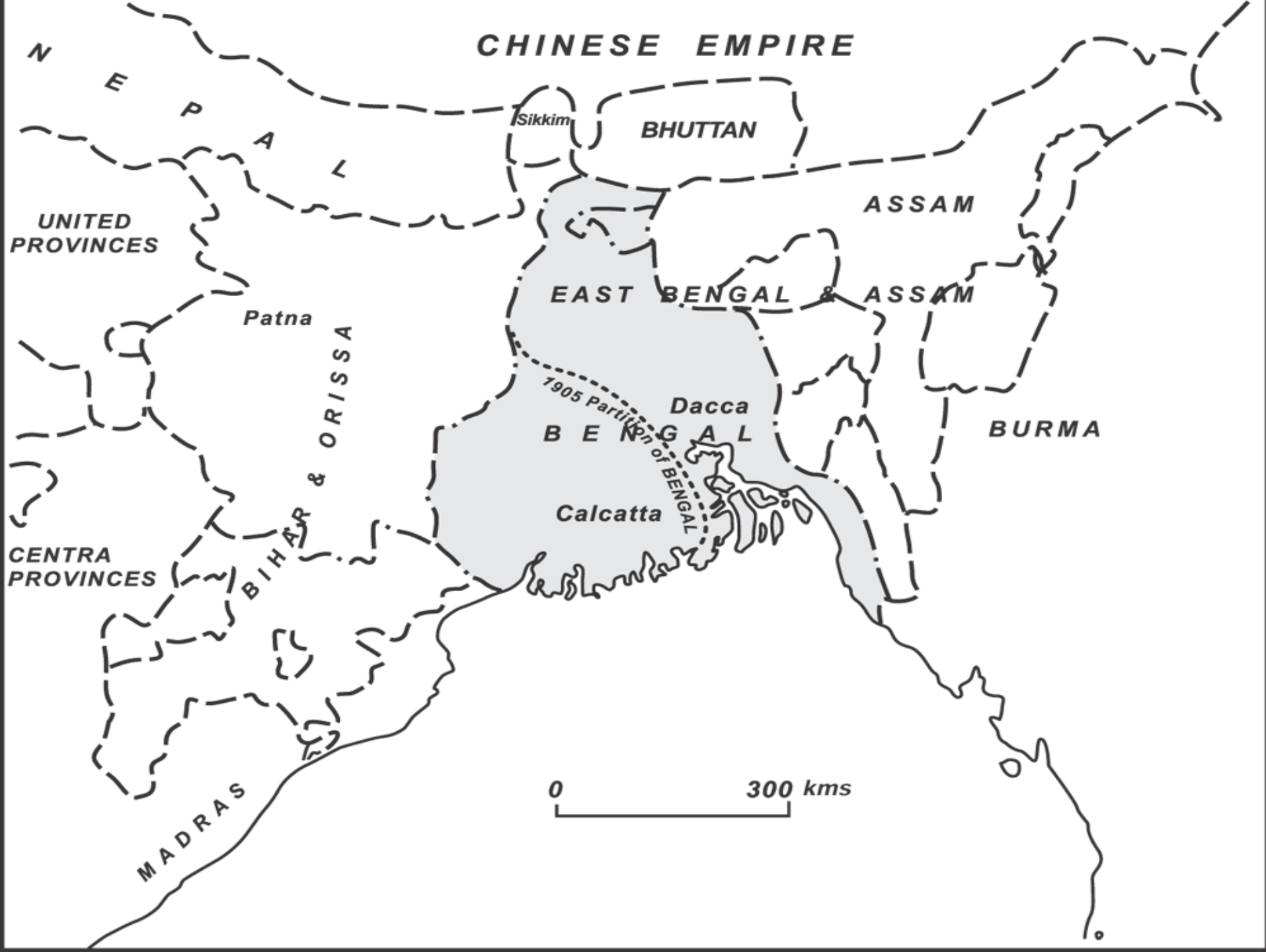
No.	State
1	Kharwasan
2	Seraikela
3	Talchar
4	Athgarh
5	Tigria
6	Hindol
7	Baramba
8	Nasinghpur
9	Khandpara
10	Ranpur
11	Nayagarh
12	Daspalla
13	Athmallik

## Bengal

- Districts
- Princely States
- District Of Sambalpur, Detached From C.P.
- Additional Princely States Attached To Bengal

## Eastern Bengal & Assam

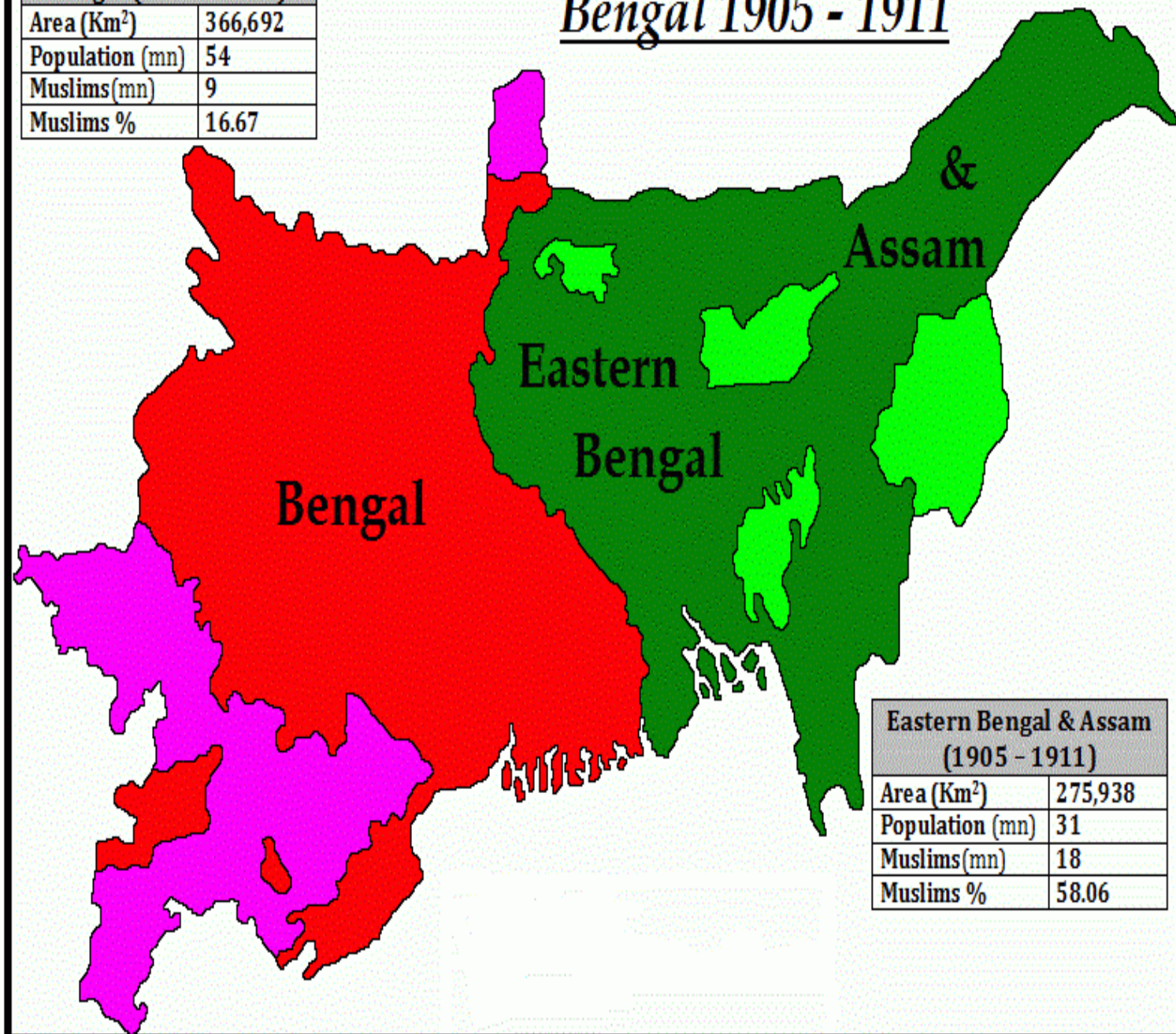
- Districts Detached To Form New Province
- Districts Of Assam Attached To The New Province
- Princely States



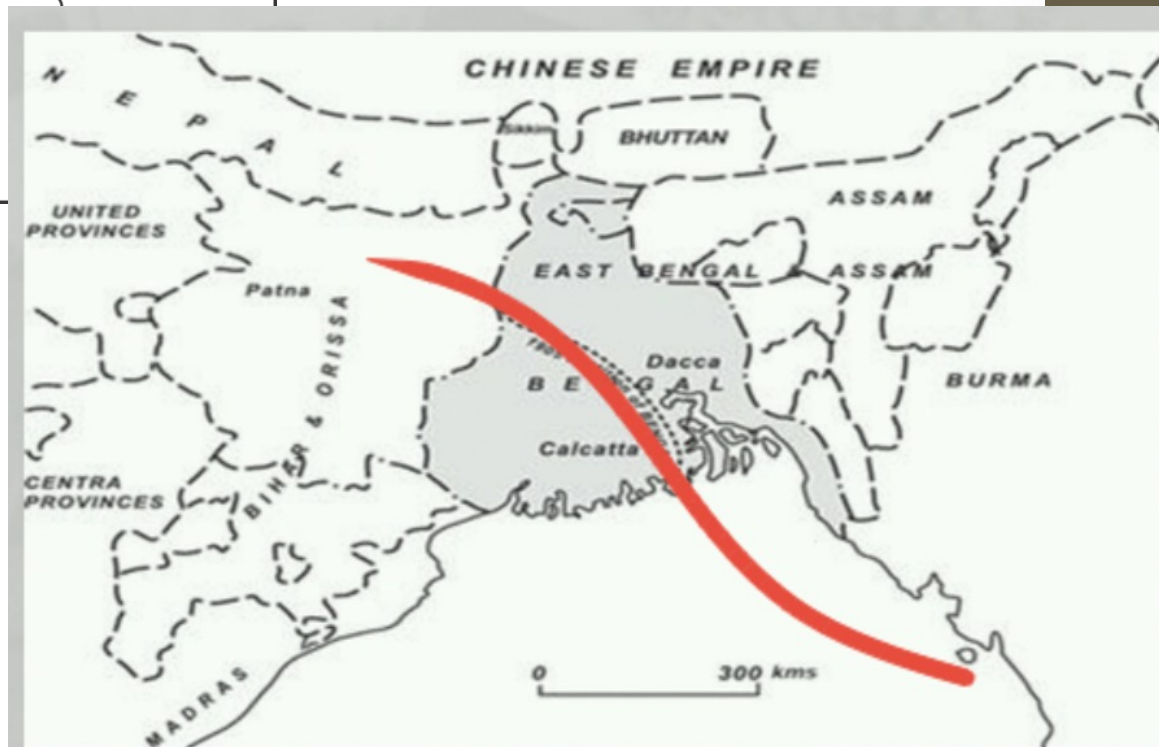
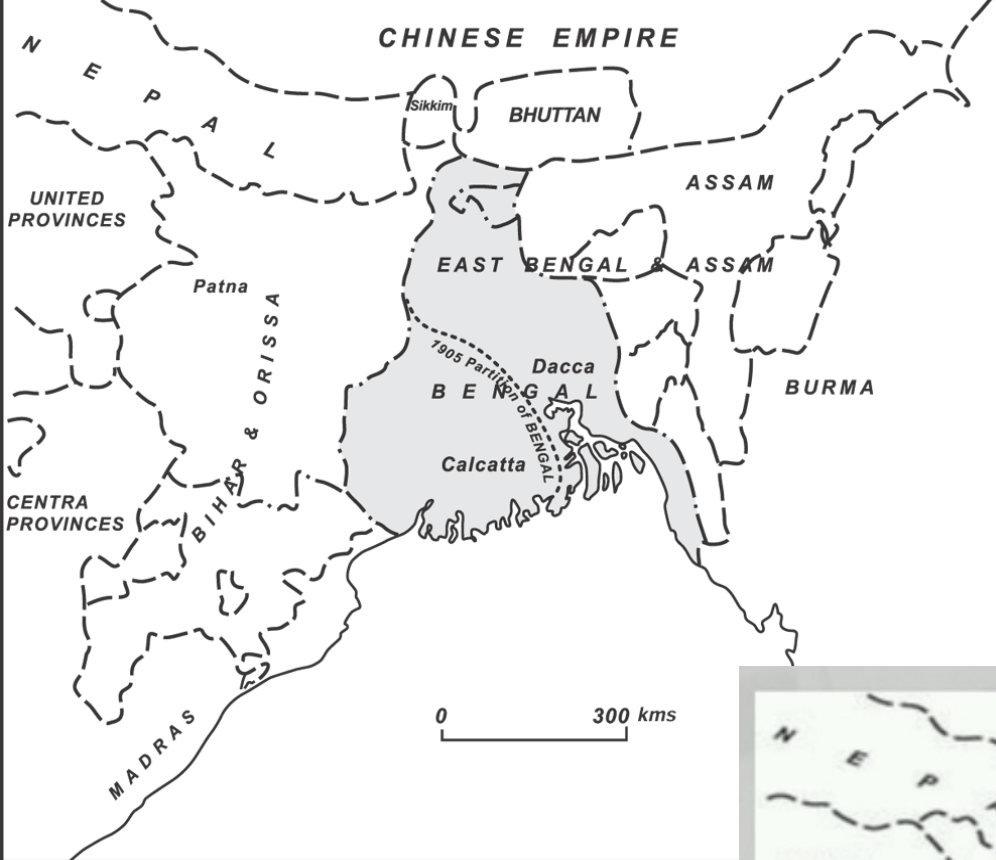


Bengal (1905 - 1911)	
Area (Km <sup>2</sup> )	366,692
Population (mn)	54
Muslims(mn)	9
Muslims %	16.67

## Bengal 1905 - 1911



Eastern Bengal & Assam (1905 - 1911)	
Area (Km <sup>2</sup> )	275,938
Population (mn)	31
Muslims(mn)	18
Muslims %	58.06



# The Partition Plan

Announced in 1904  
Lord Curzon

20 July 1905  
partition Date

The Plan

Bengal  
Western Bengal + Bihar +  
Orissa  
Hindu majority  
Capital - Calcutta

East Bengal and Assam  
Muslim Majority  
Capital- Dhaka



# **Partition of Bengal (1905): The Emergence of 'East Bengal'**

- The Bengal Presidency too large for one governor to administer and Lord Curzon (viceroy of India) decided to redraw its boundaries and divided it into two parts (1905).
- To form the two provinces of manageable size.

- Western Bengal, with a population of 54 million (42 million Hindus and 9 million Muslims); and Eastern Bengal and Assam with a population of 31 million (12 million Hindus and 18 million Muslims).
- Dhaka became the capital of the new province and hence the center of Muslim political activities.

Reason told



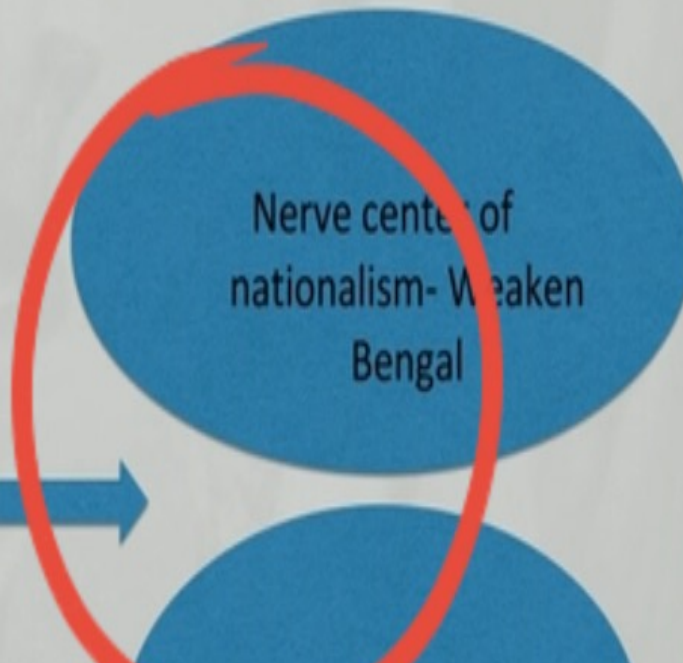
Reduce the administrative  
pressure

Good governance

The Real Reasons



Nerve center of  
nationalism- Weaken  
Bengal





# REASONS FOR THE PARTITION

- OFFICIAL REASON–
- LESS ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN ON GOVT
- MORE EFFICIENT ADMN
- DEAL WITH FAMINE AND DEFENCE
- ATTEND TO REMOTE AREAS
- ACTUAL REASONS –
- WEAKEN THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT
- POLICY OF DIVIDE AND RULE
- REACTIONARY POLICIES OF LORD CURZON TO SHOW THAT THE OPINION OF THE POLITICAL LEADERS HAD NO MEANING.

- **Process of the Partition:**

- Curzon sent the proposal to London in February 1905. The Secretary of State for India St. John Brodrich sanctioned it in June, and the proclamation/declaration of the formation of the new province was issued in September.
- The province of Bengal came into being on October 16 1905.

- **Advantage of the Partition:**
  - Incidentally, the partition went in favor of the Muslims. Before the partition, Western Bengal, being the first area to come under western influence, was developed and industrialized.
  - It was a striking contrast to the eastern part where the Muslim peasantry was crushed under the Hindu landlords, the river system was infested with pirates, and very few funds were allocated for education.



- This resulted in a series of unprecedented agitation by the Hindus. **They alleged that Lord Curzon had deliberately tried to divide the Hindus and the Muslims by drawing a line between the Hindu and the Muslim halves of Bengal.**
- **Favoring the Muslims by giving them a new province in which they were in a clear majority, had struck a deadly blow to Bengali nationality. They branded him as the upholder of the devilish policy of 'divide and rule'.**

- The Hindu community strongly opposed it. They launched a mass movement, declaring October 16 as a day of mourning.
- Influenced by the Chinese boycott of American goods, the Hindus started the **Swadeshi Movement** against the British.
- The Hindus raised the **Band-i-Mataram as the national cry** protecting worship of Shivaji as a national hero. This organized rebel movement resulted in political sabotage and communal riots.

# Understanding the paradox

- Paradoxically, while people in Calcutta were fasting and mourningg with a hartal, people in Dhaka were celebrating with prayers and thanksgiving (Senggupta, 2012)



- **British Reaction:**

- Fluid political situation, the cult of Hindu revivalism, the British decided to undo their earlier decision to please the Hindus. The provinces were reunited in 1911.
- This act saddened the Muslims. It was a catalyst in making the Muslims of India realize the *“need for a separate homeland”*.

## • **Influence of Annulment:**

- Muslim realized that their loyalty towards British cannot pay fruition.
- Adopted a new attitude to come closer to congress to find some common ground on which the two organizations could stand against the British.
- On the other hand there emerged a new set of young political leaders i.e. Mohammad Ali Jauhar, Shaukat Ali, Abul Kalam Azad, Zafar Ali Khan, and Hasrat Mohani; who through the press and platform, set the ball rolling in the direction of a full scale battle for the freedom of the country from the foreign yoke.

## Reunion of the two provinces:1911

- ❑ The two parts of Bengal were reunited in 1911.
- ❑ A new partition which divided the province on linguistic, rather than religious grounds followed
  - a) the Hindi, Oriya and Assamese areas separated to form separate administrative units
  - b) Bihar and Orissa Province was created to the west, and Assam Province to the east.
- ❑ Administrative capital of British India -Moved from Calcutta to New Delhi



# All India Muslim League (ML)-1906

- Congress (dominated by Hindus) failed to gain confidence of Muslims/minorities
- Acid Test of Sir Syed's apprehensions-Congress announcement of "Swodeshy Movement"- against partition of Bengal (1905)
- Fissures among the Indian society were deep rooted-religion, tradition and culture, norms and values-one platform was not possible

- **Factors for Formation**

- 1. Separate Identity**

- Conflicting interests between Hindus and Muslims-Congress could not safeguard interests of Muslims
    - Sir Syed's apprehensions/contentions proved by the events and circumstances
    - Sir Syed's opposition to joint electorate (demand for separate electorates) was the first seed to culminate in the formation of AIML

## 2. The attitude of Congress towards Muslims

- Congress primarily safeguard Hindu Interest- no consideration for justifiable rights of Muslims
- Congress passed resolution against partition of Bengal
- Congress announced “Sowdeshi Movement”- serious Hindu – Muslim riots
- A separate political organization was formed

# All India Muslim League (ML)

- **Aims and Objectives**

- **Phase I**

1. Secure Political Rights
2. Create loyalty to the British and to remove misunderstandings
3. Secure supremacy of Urdu Language



- **Phase II**

1. System of self government under British Government
2. New Constitution passed on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 1909 (Minto Morley Reforms)
3. Hindu Muslim Unity leading to Lucknow Pact (1916)

- **Phase III**

1. Struggle for Independent State (Starts from 1939)

# All India Muslim League (ML)- 1906

- Achievements

1. A separate political platform for Muslims
2. Political leadership (Mohammad Ali Jinnah joined in 1913, many others subsequently)
3. Filled up the vacuum of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan
4. Separate Electorates through Minto-Morley Reforms (1909)
5. Appointment of Muslim Judges in High/Supreme Court
6. Approval of Trust Bill- trust a social entity works for social benefit. Many Trusts in India denied to Muslims-act extended benefits to Muslims
7. Creation of Pakistan

# Minto Morley Reforms-1909

- Tension between Congress and ML after the Partition of Bengal (1905)
  - Muslims demanded “Separate Electorate” during Simla Deputation (1906) prior to creation of Muslim League
  - Muslim League intensified efforts for the said demand and convinced British who brought reforms in the shape of Indian Council Act 1909
- 
- **Indian Council act 1909**
    - Approved by British Parliament and enforced on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1909

- **Salient Features**

- Muslims' demand of Separate Electorate accepted
- Modus operandi for election
- Members of Councils could raise questions relating to administration and policy and discuss budget item wise

- **Congress/Hindu Reaction**

- Hindu Politicians and Congress launched a campaign against the adoption of the main demand of Separate Electorate for Muslims
- Hindu-Muslim relation further deteriorated

- **Role of Muslim League**

- First achievement of ML within two years of the establishment
- British govt for the first time accepted that in India where different nationalities live western type of democracy was inapplicable-voice of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan reality
- The status of ML established as the only political organization representing Muslims



- **Importance of Reform for Muslims**

- Muslims' main demand of separate electorate was accepted in the provinces
- Muslims were given double vote (they could vote separately for Muslims and also for general constituency)
- Legal and constitutional status of Muslims in India as a separate entity was accepted
- Congress had not accepted ML and Muslim as separate entity
- Congress realized that ML was an important factor in Indian Politics

- The reforms play significant role in the constitutional history/development in India
- But for Muslims they were of paramount importance and shaped their political fate
- Had there been no provision of Separate Electorate least Chances of Lucknow Pact (1916) consequently no concept of Pakistan Resolution.