**2. How and why were the partitions of Bengal in 1905 and 1947 different from each other? What forces and circumstances informed the divisions in each instance? Analyze and discuss based on your class lectures and required readings.**

**The Partitions of Bengal in 1905 and 1947**

**Introduction:**

The arrival of the British East India company solely proposed to expand their business in India which later on led to conquering and ruling the Indian subcontinent starting from the victory in the battle of Palashi in 1757. The company ruled over India under the British government for 200 years until they divided India into two independent countries in 1947 and left the land forever. However, the partition that the British made before leaving India in 1947 into two different countries based on religion is the countries we now live independently. After the birth of India and Pakistan, the land of Bengal went through another period of dictatorship to finally become an independent country that it is today. However, the history behind the Bengal division of 1905 leading up to the 1947 partition of the Indian subcontinent has a significant role in our lives today.

**Partition of 1905:**

The British had the power to rule over a large part of India during the colonial period where Bengal was the largest of the three presidencies they had divided their administration into. The Bengal presidency had a population of 78.50 million ( ‘Partition of Bengal, 1905’, 2021) and it was always an issue for the British to rule over such a huge province with so much population so Bengal presidency was divided into two different provinces by the viceroy of India, Lor Curzon as East Bengal having muslim population in majoirity and West Bengal where hindu population was in majority. This partition of 1905 was the beginning of all sorts of communal issues in British India.

Even though the British declared the reason for this partition to be an administrative challenge, it being so specifically based on religion made it obvious that the British had some different motive behind it. To begin with, the British wanted to satisfy the Muslim elites in the estern Bengal by increasing opportunities for them. To illustrate, the hindus of western province of Bengal were always given more opportunities than the muslims from the beginning as Calcutta was the capital of Bengal and East Bengal with muslim majority always was deprived of the opportunities that the West Bengal received. Moreover, many zamindars shifted to Calcutta for better living opportunities by hiring intermediates and due to this sub-infeudation system the estern Bengal’s peasants started to live a miserable life and western Bengal started to have higher economic development. At this time, after dividing Bengal the British made Dhaka the capital of estern Bengal which increased many opportunities for them including infrastructural development, education facilities and many more.

Religion had always been an issue among common people and different religions were often oppressed by hidnu religion due to their complicated caste system. The British took advantage of the religion and tried to apply the divide and rule policy separating hindu and muslims through creating such circumstances so that they turn themselves against each other and pull back from anti-colonial movements. Before the partition of 1905 many movements were formed in Bengal against the British colonial rule. Additionally, many hindu’s were getting educated so they started to protest for their indian nationalism as well. Additionally after the formation of Indian National congress in 1885 (Haq, 2013) many hindus of Bengal protested for their economical and political rights who were needed to be oppressed. It was at this time when the division of Bengal took place with a motive to break the unity of Bengal and stop all the resistance movements that took place by increasing the religious riots. Hence, the partition created many opportunities for the muslims in east Bengal with all the administrative improvements and facilities which created jealousy among the hindus which was a way of the british to control the hindus. Moreover, the more facilities that the muslims received the more the riots with hindus increased and there aroused two diffrent nationalities of hindu and muslim which broke the sense of Indian nationalism amoung the people of Bengal. Additionally, the people stopped protesting against the colonial rule as muslims were getting what they wanted and hindus were occupied with their riots against the muslims. This is how the British used the people as their puppets to establish their domination in India.

**Partition of 1947:**

The partition of 1905 led to the division of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 which resulted in the creation of two independent countries, India and Pakistan which was again based on religion where Pakistan was a muslim India a hindu nation country. The crisis of world war II on the British economy along with many political and communal riots led to the creation of two different countries where political parties played a huge role. The already divided mindset of hindu-muslim became the objective of the partition when Muslim league’s leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah proposed his two nation theory.

The first partition of Bengal was annulled in 1911 due to many radical activities and resistance movements. Again the communal differences created between hindus and muslims stayed and became even wider which resulted in the partition of 1947. The government of india act of 1935 which said the Indian political parties could control the provinces, led to the election of 1937 where National congress won the highest seats but Muslim league surprisingly faced huge failure even in muslim majority provinces. Again in 1940 Muslim league held a conference with all other political identities with two objectives. Firstly, Jinnah wanted to figure out the reason why Muslim league didn’t win the election. Secondly, he wanted to see if helping the British in the second world war could benefit them in any way whereas National congress and other political parties had refused to help them because they included India in the war and started taking Indian soldiers without consulting with Indian politicians. Moreover, Stafford Cripps made vague promises to the Indians in an attempt to fool them which resulted in starting a quit india movement mainly by Congress. Again, since Muslim league couldn’t win the election, in that Lahore conference Jinnah proposed his two nation theory where he asked for two different states for hindus and muslims which had a great impact on the division of 1947 as Muslim league later on decided to help the British in war so that facilitated them as well. He claimed that muslims are not a minority group of people but they are a nation by any definition who must have their own homelands, territories, and states (Metcalf, 2006).

According to a recent study, the Bengal famine of 1943, which killed up to three million people, was not caused by natural calamities but rather by Winston Churchill's "total policy failure" as British Prime Minister (Kuchay, 2019). Winston Churchill and his cabinet’s administrative mismanagement caused this famine to break out as they took food from Bengal for their soldiers, trade in waterways stopped, market price increased and so on. This mismanagement and crisis created an even stronger agitation against the British to leave India. Besides, the British wanted to give up India as they had economic burden due to WWII and the USA was strongly pressurizing to break out colonial rules so an election took place in 1945 where Muslim league won 95 percent of muslim reserved seats (*Elections of 1945–46*, 2021). In 1946 a last attempt to keep a united India was proposed in the cabinet mission plan which Congress refused as they feared of losing their powers to rule the center. Accordingly, in 16th August of 1946 as Muslim league announced general strike, the common people started killing each other out of religious hatred which led around four thousand people to die. After the 1946 incident it was made obvious to Lord Mountbatten that the people of these two nationalities can’t live together. Additionally, with all the communal riots and resistance movements the British had to leave India so he proposed the partition of India which was accepted by political parties. Accordingly, they sent Sir Cyril Radcliff to divide India into two parts which went on to take place in August of 1947 instead of before planned 1948 since they were too scared to be in India .

**Comparison:**

The partition of both 1905 and 1947 separated hindu and muslims into two different parts yet the motive behind these divisions were quite different.

The British divided Bengal into two parts to prevent the anti colonial movements that were getting stronger in Bengal due to the belief of Indian nationalism which was a strategic move to increase the British Raj in India. As a result, conflict of hindu muslim turned into two diffrent nationalities so they stopped focusing on indian nationalism and jealousy and communal roits took place of that as muslims were getting more oppertunities than the hindus. On the contrary, in the 1947 partition the anti colonial movement had become so much stronger along with religious domination and political pressure that the British had no other way but to divide the Indian subcontinent. Additionally, the economic crisis due to world world two made it hard for them to fight for colonial rule.

Accordingly, this partition resulted in a full scale partition into two different independent countries whereas the partition of Bengal in 1905 was just separating a province under the Indian subcontinent which later on reunited. Again the partition of 47 included much political pressure for the British to leave India whereas in 1905 British intentionally planned the division to their own benefits and political parties rather opposed it. In fact, Muslim league introduced two nation theory on which this partion was formed which shows how much the Indian parties wanted this separation. Although in 1905 the British tried to satisfy the muslim elites by making Dhaka the capital and increasing opportunities for muslims.

After the 1905 partition In Calcutta, there was a lot of outspoken opposition, especially among the middle and upper classes. They were concerned about losing economic clout, as well as inconvenience and competitiveness (Schendal, 2009) so they broke out in various resistance movements such as swadeshi movement which later on had great impact on the annulment of 1911. However, after the partition of 1947 millions of people had to go through migration and it was a mascara in the Indian subcontinent. Over the course of three or four months in late 1947, an estimated 5 million Hindus and Sikhs went from West Punjab to India, while 5.5 million Muslims moved in the opposite direction (Metcalf, 2006). Even after this crisis there were no more major protests for reuniting the divided India.

**Conclusion:**

On the whole, Despite the fact that both partitions were created by dividing religious nations, the causes and circumstances that drove them were vastly different. The aftermath of the 1905 partition, namely swadeshi movement and separated nationalities slowly led to the partition of 1947 as it was the beginning of the communal riots which was one of the main reasons for the two different nations following Mohammad Ali Jinnah’s proposal along with all the economical and international pressure that the British had after the second world war. To sum up, the partition of Bengal in 1905 sowed the seeds of religious nationalism in Bengal, paving the way for India’s independence from the British in 1947.

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