

Finding the Bengal Presidency too large for one governor to administer, in 1905 the English decided to redraw its boundaries and divided it into two parts.

The provinces of Bengal and Assam were reconstituted so as 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). The territory to be transferred from Bengal to the new province consisted of the districts of Chittagong and Dhaka Divisions, Rajshahi Division excluding Darjeeling, and the District of Malda.

Curzon, the Viceroy of India, sent the proposal to London in February 1905. The province of Bengal and Assam came into being on October 16 1905.

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 Muslims outnumbered the Hindus in Eastern Bengal and this alleviated the Bengali Muslims politically and economically. This resulted in a series of unprecedented agitation by the Hindus

The Muslims of India welcomed the partition of Bengal, but the Hindu community strongly opposed it. They launched a mass movement, declaring October 16 as a day of mourning in Calcutta. Influenced by the Chinese boycott of American goods, the Hindus started the Swadeshi Movement against the British. In the meantime, the Hindus raised the Band-i-Mataram as the national cry protecting worship of Shivaji as a national hero. This organized anarchist movement took a terrorist turn resulting in political sabotage and communal riots.

Keeping in view the fluid political situation in India and 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.