

Partition and it's reasons

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Manifest pedagogy: With the rising communal divisions in Indian society the issues of the past are being re-mined. In this process of re-mining some pertinent questions are being asked on the history of India by the political class. These questions have the possibility of triggering many Upsc relevant topics. If we keep aside the politics these questions can be brilliant dimensions for us to explore. This article is one such endeavor to understand the partition of the country in this new light.

In news: The Home Minister Amit Shah had blamed the Congress for partition on religious lines while introducing the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill in Lok Sabha.

Placing it in syllabus: Modern Indian History

Dimensions:

- Evolution of communal politics from the time of Syed Ahmed Khan
- British divide and rule politics
- Muhmmad ali Jinnah transition to radical communalism
- Reasons for Congress acceptance of partition
- Mountbatten plan provisions

Content:

Evolution of communal politics from the time of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan:

- Sir Syed Ahmed Khan was a renowned **Muslim reformer** of the 19th century.
- He was the first Indian Muslim to contribute to the intellectual and **institutional foundation of Muslim**

modernization in Southern Asia.

- He was very upset to observe the depressed condition of the Muslims everywhere.
- He had realized that there is a need to the **exclusion of mistrust about the Muslims from the minds of British rulers.**
- He wrote an **Essay "The causes of the Indian Revolt"** after 1857 mutiny, in which he proved that there were many factors which led to the rebellion and that only the Muslims were not to be held responsible for it.
- He **thought that Congress was mainly a Hindu body and advised the Muslims not to join it.**
- He requested the **Muslims to get modern education** first then come in the field of politics in order to protect their rights.
- He believed that the political activity would divert the attention of the Muslims from the constructive task and revive British mistrust.
- In 1867, a movement started at Benares to replace Urdu, the language cultivated by the Muslims, with Hindi. Along with this, attempts **to substitute Hindi for Urdu in the publications of the Scientific Society** convinced Sayyid that the paths of the Hindus and the Muslims must diverge.
- He started an influential **journal, Tahdhib al-Akhlaq ("Social Reform")**, for the "uplift and reform of the Muslim".
- A **Muslim school was established at Aligarh in May 1875** and in January 1877 the foundation stone of the college was laid by the Viceroy.
- In **1886 Sayyid organized the All-India Muhammadan Educational Conference**, which met annually at different places to promote education and to provide the Muslims with a common platform.
- **His viewpoints guided the creation of the All India Muslim League in 1906**, as a political party separate from the Congress.

- Sir Syed's ideas encouraged both the liberal, pro-British politicians of the Muslim League and the **religious ideologues of the Khilafat struggle**.
- His support of Urdu led to its extensive use amongst Indian Muslim communities and following the Partition of India, its adoption as an official language in Pakistan.

British divide and rule politics:

- The British had been horrified, during the Revolt of 1857, to see Hindus and Muslims fighting side by side and under each other's command against the foreign oppressor.
- Hence they planned that the **seeds of division were sown to prevent a unified nationalist movement** that could overthrow the British.
- The colonial policy of "**divide et impera**" (divide and rule) fomented religious antagonisms to facilitate continued imperial rule and reached its culmination in 1947.
- Both **communal conflict and Muslim separatism in India** are seen as being created by this strategy.
- The British policy of Divide and Rule could succeed only because of **internal social and political conditions** in India.
- The British government used **communalism to counter and weaken the growing national movement** and the welding of the Indian people into a nation.
- The **Partition of Bengal in 1905** based on the hidden agenda of separating people on communal lines was the first important step towards Divide and rule policy.
- **Shimla deputation** (Muslims) led by Aga Khan met Lord Minto at Shimla on 1, October 1906 demanded **separate Muslim electorates** which was accepted by the British.
- The **All-India Muslim League was founded on 30 December 1906** by a group of big zamindars, ex-bureaucrats and other upper class Muslims with the **objective of**

promoting among Indian Muslims feelings of loyalty towards the British government.

- By signing the Congress-League Pact, known popularly as the **Lucknow Pact (1916)** both parties accepted separate electorates and the system of weightage and reservation of seats for the minorities in the legislatures.
- Thus Congress formally recognised communal politics.
- The appointment of the Simon Commission (1927-30) and the Round Table Conferences at London (1930-32) again brought the Muslim League into activity by 1934 and Mohammed Ali Jinnah became the undisputed leader of the Muslim League.
- The **Muslim League observed a Day of Deliverance when the Congress Ministries resigned in October 1939** over the British war on Germany issue.
- British appointed unelected Muslim Leaguers in their place and openly helped the Muslim League take advantage of this unexpected opportunity to exercise influence and patronage.

Muhammad Ali Jinnah's transition to radical communalism:

- M.A. Jinnah came back to India after becoming a Barrister in 1906 as a **secular, liberal nationalist**, a follower of Dadabhai Naoroji.
- From nationalist, **he became communal nationalist in 1913 when he joined the Muslim League.**
- He revived the down-and-out Muslim League in 1924 and started building it upon and around the demand for **safeguarding 'the interest and rights of the Muslims.'**
- His **politics was now based on the basic communal idea that** *'Muslims should organize themselves, stand united and should press every reasonable point for the protection of their community.'*
- As the Congress organized the massive mass movement of 1930 and started moving towards a more radical socio-economic programme, he **returned from Britain to India in**

1936 to once again revive the Muslim League.

- From now on, his entire political campaign among Muslims was to appeal to them that the **Congress wanted not independence from British imperialism but a Hindu raj** in cooperation with the British and domination over Muslims.
- In 1946, he **asked Muslims to vote for the League** and said that if they failed to realize their duty, in future they would be reduced to the status of Sudras and Islam would be vanquished from India.
- League meetings were often held in the mosques after Friday prayers.
- The Quran was widely used as the League's symbol and the **League's fight with the Congress was portrayed as a fight between Islam and Kufr (infidelity).**

Reasons for Congress acceptance of partition:

- The **Congress had failed over the years to bring the Muslim masses into the nationalist mainstream.**
- It had also **failed to stem the surging waves of Muslim communalism**, especially, since 1937.
- Autonomy of Muslim majority provinces was accepted in 1942 at the time of the **Cripps Mission.**
- Gandhiji in his talks with Jinnah in 1944 went a step further and accepted the **right of self-determination of Muslim majority provinces.**
- In June 1946, Congress finally conceded the possibility of a **separate constituent assembly formed by the Muslim majority provinces** (included under the Group B and C of the **Cabinet Mission Plan**).
- The Congress and League interpreted the Mission plan in their own way, both seeing it as a confirmation of their own stand.
- The **Interim Government was formed on 2nd September 1946** with Congress members alone with Nehru as the de facto head.

- This was **against the League's insistence** that all settlements be acceptable to it.
- Muslim communal groups provoked **communal frenzy in Calcutta on 16 August 1946.**
- **Hindu groups retaliated in equal measure** and the cost was 5000 lives lost.
- The date for British withdrawal from India was fixed as 30th June 1948 and the appointment of a new Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, was announced.
- **Official reference to Partition** came in early March 1947 when the Congress Working Committee passed a resolution that Punjab and Bengal must be partitioned if the country was divided.
- By June 1947, the Congress leaders had realized that **only an immediate transfer of power could check the menace of the communal violence** which was spreading quickly due to the Muslim League's call for Direct Action.
- **Congress accepted the partition formula laid in 3rd June Plan of Lord Mountbatten.**
- The acceptance of Partition in 1947 was nothing but culmination of the step by step concession granted to the League in its rhetoric of a sovereign Muslim state.

Mountbatten plan provisions:

Mountbatten was the **last Viceroy who came to India** and charged with the task of winding up the Raj by 30th June 1948. **Mountbatten's formula was to divide India but retain maximum unity.**

Provisions:

- **British India was to be partitioned into two dominions – India and Pakistan.**
- The constitution framed by the Constituent Assembly would not be applicable to the Muslim-majority areas (as these would become Pakistan).

- The question of a separate constituent assembly for the Muslim-majority areas would be decided by these provinces.
- As per the plan, the legislative assemblies of Bengal and Punjab met and voted for the partition. Hence it was decided to partition these two provinces along religious lines.
- The legislative assembly of Sindh would decide whether to join the Indian constituent assembly or not. (It decided to go with Pakistan).
- A referendum was held on NWFP and Sylhet district (in the province of Assam) to decide which dominion to join. NWFP decided to join Pakistan while Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan boycotted and rejected the referendum.
- The date for the transfer of power was to be August 15, 1947.
- To fix the international boundaries between the two countries, the **Boundary Commission was established chaired by Sir Cyril Radcliffe**. The commission was to demarcate Bengal and Punjab into the two new countries.
- The princely states were given the choice to either remain independent or accede to India or Pakistan. The British suzerainty over these kingdoms was terminated.
- The British monarch would no longer use the title 'Emperor of India'.
- After the dominions were created, the British Parliament could not enact any law in the territories of the new dominions.
- Until the time the new constitutions came into existence, the Governor-General would assent any law passed by the constituent assemblies of the dominions in His Majesty's name.