

PAPER 1 DSE-A-1 SEM -5: HISTORY OF BENGAL (c.1757-1905)

VII. PARTITION OF BENGAL 1905: CURZON AND THE ADMINISTRATIVE BLUEPRINT

NOTE -4

SUMMARY

Lord Curzon's administration has remained famous-and notorious-for its intense activity and veritable cult of efficiency. The net result was the beginning of quite a new phase in the history of Indian nationalism with the struggle against the Partition of Bengal. On 19 July 1905, Lord Curzon issued an order dividing the province of Bengal into two parts: Eastern Bengal and Assam. The conditions for the emergence of militant nationalism had thus developed when in 1905 the partition of Bengal was announced and the Indian national movement entered its second stage.

It was said that the existing province of Bengal was too big to be efficiently administered by a single provincial government. However, the officials who worked out the plan had also other political ends in view. They hoped to stem the rising tide of nationalism in Bengal, considered at the time to be the nerve centre of Indian nationalism. The Partition took effect on 16 October 1905.

The destruction of the bond that, united the Bengalis, under colour of providing for administrative efficiency, considerably weakened the politically advanced Bengali intelligentsia. It splits them into two separate Provinces, in both of which they would be outnumbered by other elements of the population, and kindled religious animosities, thus interfering with the growth of a true national spirit transcending creed and community. The Partition of Bengal, carried out despite the strongest opposition from Nationalisms, whose leaders included both

Hindus and Muslims roused a fierce spirit of resistance among them and gave a new turn to the political movement.

Anti-Partition Movement

The Anti-Partition Movement was the work of the entire national leadership of Bengal and not of any one section of the movement. Its most prominent leaders at the initial stage were moderate leaders like Surendranath Banerjee and Krishna Kumar Mitra; militant and revolutionary nationalists took over in the later stages. In fact, both the moderate and militant nationalists co-operated with one another during the course of the movement.

The Anti-Partition Movement was initiated on 7 August 1905. On that day a massive demonstration against the partition was organised in the Town Hall in Calcutta. From this meeting delegates dispersed to spread the movement to the rest of the province.

The partition took effect on 16 October 1905. The leaders of the protest movement declared it to be a day of national mourning throughout Bengal. It was observed as a day of fasting. There was a hartal in Calcutta. People walked barefooted and bathed in the Ganga in the early morning hours. Rabindranath Tagore composed the national song, Amar Sonar Bangla, for the occasion which was sung by huge crowds parading the streets. The streets of Calcutta were full of the cries of 'Bande Mataram' which overnight became the national song of Bengal and which was soon to become the theme song of the national movement.

The Bengalis openly defied the Government and sought to exert pressure upon it by the adoption of such political weapons as the boycott of British goods, Swadeshi (use of indigenous goods), and the spread of National Education. Mass meetings were held all over Bengal where Swadeshi or the use of Indian

goods and the boycott of British goods were proclaimed and pledged. In many places public burning of foreign cloth were organised and shops selling foreign cloth were picketed. The Swadeshi Movement was an immense success. A prominent part was played by the students of Bengal in the Swadeshi agitation. They picketed the shops selling foreign cloth and other foreign goods. Women also joined processions and picketed the shops dealing in foreign goods.

REFERENCE

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