

12th Standard History

Understanding Partition Politics, Memories, Experiences

- The British policy of Divide and Rule played a key role in spreading of communal-ism.
- Earlier the British attitude towards the Muslim was not favorable, they think that they were responsible for the revolt of 1857.
- But soon they felt that due to their behavior Hindus grew stronger, so they reversed their policy.
- Now, they began to take side with the Muslims and turned against Hindus.
- Bengal was partitioned in 1905 by Lord Curzen. He said Bengal was partitioned due to administrative problems.
- The real objective of British behind the partition of Bengal was to sow the seed of disunity between the Hindus and the Muslims.
- By the act of 1909 British government gave the Muslims the right of separate electorate.
- In, 1916 Lucknow Pact was signed between Congress and the Muslim League. It was an important landmark step forward in achieving Hindu-Muslim unity. But it was really an agreement for cooperation in the political field on the basis of common programme.

- In February 1937, elections to the provincial assembly were held, in which only few had the right to vote.
- To solve the political crisis of India, Lord Attlee sent Cabinet Mission to India.
- The Muslim League, on 6th June 1946 accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan as the foundation of Pakistan was inherent in it, but Congress opposed it.
- To solve the political tangle of India Lord Mount Batten arrived India. He proposed his plan on 3 June 1947, in which he stated that country would be divided into two Dominions, i. e. India and Pakistan. It was accepted by both Congress and Muslim League.

The joy of independence from colonial rule was tarnished by the partition and violence which was unleashed after the partition. Some of the incidents and facts about partition

- And its disturbing experiences can be known by interviews, books and other related documents.
- Partition caused at very large scale violence, thousands of people were killed, innumerable women were raped and abducted. There was large scale displacement of people across the border, millions were uprooted and transformed into refugees. In all, approximately 15 million had to move across the newly created borders.
- Displaced people lost their all immovable property and most of their movable property, separated from their relatives and friends as well. People were stripped of their local culture and were forced to begin life from scratch.

- Speaking of these killings, arson, rape and loot that came along with partition, observers and scholars have sometimes used the expression 'holocaust', with primary meaning of destruction or slaughter on a mass scale.

Historical Background of Partition:

- There are several events which gave fuel to fire for partition of India and Pakistan, whether directly or indirectly.
- Politicisation of religion started with separate electorate in 1909. It was further strengthened by colonial government of India in 1919.
- Community identities no longer indicated simple difference in faith and belief, they became mean to active opposition and hostility between communities.
- Communal identities were further consolidated during 1920s and 1930s by music before masjid, by Cow Protection Movement and Shuddhi Movement of Arya Samaj. Hindus were angered by the rapid spread of tabligh (propaganda) and tanzim (organisation).
- Middle class publicist and communal activist sought to build greater solidarity within their communities and mobilising people against other community. Every communal riot deepened the difference between communities.

The Provincial Elections of 1937 and its Result:

- In 1937, for the first time provincial elections were held. In this election, Congress won majority in 5 provinces and formed government in 7 provinces out of 11.
- Congress fared badly in reserved constituencies, even Muslim league performed poorly and captured only few seats of reserved categories. In United Province, Muslim league wanted to form government with Congress but Congress rejected it as they had absolute majority. This rejection led to believe by leagues member that they would not get political power as they are minority. League also believed that only Muslim party can represent Muslims and Congress is a Hindu party.
- In 1930's, league's social support was fairly small and weak, so league started working enthusiastically to expand its social support in all the Muslim dominated areas.
- Congress and its ministries failed in countering the hatred and suspicion spreaded by league. Congress failed in winning over the Muslim masses.
- Growth of RSS and Hindu Mahasabha also played an important role in widening the difference between Hindus and Muslims.

The 'Pakistan' Resolution:

- On 23rd March, 1940, league passed a resolution demanding a measure of autonomy for Muslim majority areas of the sub-continent. This resolution never mentioned partition or a separate state.

- Earlier in 1930, Urdu poet Mohammad Iqbal spoke about re-organisation of Muslim majority areas in the North-Western India into autonomous unit within a large federation. He also not imagined a separate country at the time of his speech.

The sudden Demand of Partition:

- None of the leaders of Muslim league were clear about Pakistan.
- Demand for autonomous area was made in 1940 and within 7 years only partition took place.
- Even, Jinnah in the beginning may have seen the Pakistan as bargaining tool for preventing British to grant concession to Congress and to gain favours for Muslims.

Important Events during Partition: Negotiation and Discussions Started Again

- Negotiations between British, Congress and Muslim league began in 1945 but the discussions broke down due to Jinnah's unrelenting demands about members of council and communal veto.
- In 1946, again provincial elections were held. In this election, Congress swept general constituencies and league succeed in gaining large majority of Muslim vote.

- The League's success to capture seats reserved for Muslims was spectacular. It won all 30 reserved constituencies in the centre and 442 out of 509 seats in the provinces. Therefore, in 1946 league established itself as dominant party among Muslims.

Cabinet Mission Came to India:

- In March 1946, Cabinet Mission came to India to make a suitable political framework for India.
- Mission recommended India to be united with three tier confederation. It grouped provincial assemblies into 3 sections. A for Hindu majority province, while B and C were for Muslim majority areas of North-West and North-East. Cabinet Mission proposed a weak centre and provinces will have power to set up intermediate level executives and legislature of their own.
- Initially, all parties agreed but later league demanded that grouping should be made compulsory and should have right to secede from the union. While Congress wanted that provinces should be given the right to join the group. So due to differences, talks broke down.
- Now Congress sensed after this failure that partition became inevitable and took it as tragic but unavoidable. But Mahatma Gandhi and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan of North-West frontier province continued to oppose the idea of partition.

Re-Election in the Year 1946:

- After withdrawal from Cabinet Mission, Muslims league decided on direct action for winning its Pakistan demand. It announced 16th August, 1946 as 'direct action day'. Initially riots broke out in Calcutta and gradually spread to other parts of Northern India.
- In March 1947, Congress accepted division of Punjab in 2 halves, one will be Muslim majority and other will be Hindu/Sikh majority. Similarly, Bengal was also divided.

The Withdrawal of Law and Order Situation:

- Large scale bloodshed took place in the year 1947. Governance structure of the country was totally collapsed, there was complete loss of authority. British officials were reluctant to take decisions and did not know how to handle the situation. British were busy preparing to quit India.
- Top leaders barring Gandhiji were engaged in negotiation regarding Independence. Indian Civil Servants in the affected areas were concerned for their own life. Problem became more complicated when soldiers and policemen forgot their professional commitment and helped their co-religionist and attacked members of other communities.

Condition of Women during the Partition:

- During the partition women suffered the most. Women were raped, abducted, sold and forced to settle down to a new life with stranger in unknown circumstances. Some began to develop a new family bond in their changed circumstances.
- Government of both India and Pakistan showed lack of understanding of emotions and sometimes forcefully sent women away from their new relatives. They did not consult the concerned women and undermine their rights to take decisions.
- Notion of honour drew on a conception of masculinity, defined as ownership of zan [women] and zamin [land]. Virility, it was believed that lay in ability to protect your possession i.e. zan and zamin from outsiders.
- So when men feared that their women-wives, daughters, sisters would be violated by enemy, they killed their women themselves. There was an incident in village of Rawalpindi, where 90 Sikh women voluntarily jumped into well for protecting themselves from outsiders.
- These incidents were seen as 'martyrdom and it is believed that men at that time had to courageously accept the decision of women and in some cases even persuade them to kill themselves.

Role of Mahatma Gandhi during Partition:

- Using Turmoil, Gandhiji took brave effort to restore peace, toured villages of Noakhali (East Bengal), villages in Bihar then riots torn Calcutta and Delhi to stop communal killing and reassure the safety of minority community.
- In East Bengal, he assured safety of Hindus, while in Delhi he told Hindus and Sikhs to protect Muslims and tried to build a spirit of mutual trust.
- Gandhiji began a fast to bring about a change in the heart of people. Many Hindus, Sikh migrants fasten with him. The effect of the fast was 'electric' as people started to realise the misdeed what they have done with other communities. But only with martyrdom of Gandhiji, finally this massacre ended.

Regional Variations in Partition:

- The partition brought carnage and thousand of lives were lost.
- In Punjab, there was a mass displacement of Hindu and Sikh population from Pakistani side to Indian side and displacement of Punjabi Muslims to Pakistan from Indian side.
- Displacement of people in Punjab was very agonising. Property were looted, women were killed, abducted and raped. There was large scale massacre.

- In Bengal, people moved across porous border, suffering was less concentrated and agonising in Bengal in comparison to Punjab. There was also not total displacement of Hindu and Muslim population in Bengal.
- Some Muslims families of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Hyderabad also migrated to Pakistan during 1950s and early 1960's.
- Jinnah's theory of two state based on religion failed when East Bengal separated it from West Pakistan and become independent country as Bangladesh in 1971.
- In Punjab and Bengal there is huge similarity in both these states. Women and girls were the prime target of persecution. Attacker treated women bodies as territory to be conquered.
- Discouraging women of community was seen as dishonouring community.

Help, Humanity and Harmony:

- There is history' of help, and humanity beneath the debris of violence and pain of partition. Numerous stories are there when people took an extra effort to help the victims of partition.
- Many stories of caring, sharing, empathy are present, stories of opening of new opportunities and of triumph over trauma are also present.
- For e.g. the story of Khushdeva Singh, a Sikh doctor's work, is one of the finest examples, who helped many migrants whether of Muslim, Hindu

or Sikh communities with affection. He provided them shelter, food, security, etc in times of partition.

Oral Testimonies and History:

- Oral narratives, memoirs, diaries, family histories, first hand written accounts helped in understanding the suffering of people during the time of partition.
- Lives of the affected people changed drastically between 1946-50. They bore immense, psychological, emotional and social pain.
- Oral testimonies helps us to know about experience and memory in detail. It enabled historians to write rich and vivid account of suffering and anguish of people. Official record tells us about policy matters and high level decision of government and its machinery.
- Oral histories provided historian the experiences of poor and powerless. It gives information about significant help and empathy of people in easing out the life of affected person.
- The oral history of partition has succeeded in exploring experiences of those men and women who were earlier ignored and taken for granted or mentioned in passing history.
- Some historians casts doubt on oral history as they say oral history lacks concreteness and chronology. Oral histories are not able to provide overall bigger picture and are usually touching the tangential issues. Reliability of oral histories can be corroborated and examined by the

evidences from other sources. Oral history should not be seen as tangential if one has to know about experience of people.

- Oral histories are not easily available and affected People might not like to share their sufferings to strangers. The oral historian faces the daunting task of having to shift, the actual experiences of partition from the web of constructed memories.

Important Terms:

- **Unionist Party:** This party stood for the interests of all landlords in Punjab. It was founded in the year 1923.
- **Confederation:** It refers to a union of fairly autonomous and sovereign states with a central government.
- **Arya Samaj:** Founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati in the year 1875.
- **Muslim League:** Founded in the year 1906.
- **Hindu Mahasabha:** Founded in the year 1915.
- **Federal Union:** Autonomous federation given autonomous status. Its Central Government has some limited powers.
- **Lucknow Pact:** A pact between Congress and Muslim League signed in the year 1916.
- **Pakistan:** Came into existence after partition of India. Choudhary Rehmat Ali, a Punjabi- Muslim student at Cambridge, coined the name 'Pakistan' for the first time in the year 1933.

- **Muslim League's Resolution at Lahore:** In 1940, the Muslim League moved a resolution at Lahore demanding a measure of autonomy for the Muslim-majority areas.
- **General Elections of 1946:** In the year 1946, last general elections were held of pre-independence. Major political parties of India contested the election. The Indian Congress won massively in the general elections of constituencies. The Muslim also won in Muslim constituencies.
- **Cabinet Mission:** A three-member Cabinet Mission arrived in India in March 1946.

Time line:

- 1905 – Partitioned on Bengal
- 1906 – Muslim League was formed
- 1916 – Lucknow Pact was signed
- 22 Dec, 1939 – Deliverance day, observed by Muslim League
- 16 Aug, 1946 – Direct Action Day plan celebrated by Muslim League
- 3 June, 1947 – Declaration and acceptance
- 15 August, 1947 – India became free and emerged as an independent nation.