



IIT ROORKEE



NPTEL ONLINE
CERTIFICATION COURSE

Partition of India in Print Media and Cinema

LECTURE 01 - HISTORY OF THE PARTITION OF INDIA

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Partition of India: Introduction

- The Partition of India, also known as the **Great Divide**, is a historical event and a chapter that has stayed on the Indian and World History as a live moment.
- The thread of Partition mainly goes back to the “**Divide and Rule**” policy enforced by the British administrators, which is a policy to separate the Indian geopolitical space in terms of language and religion.

Partition of India: Introduction

- Celebration of freedom from colonial rule coincides with the cracking of the sub-continent into India and Pakistan. However, the triumph of independence was marred by **unimaginable violence** and **bloodshed**.
- In August 1947, when, after three hundred years in India, the British finally left, the subcontinent was partitioned into two independent nation states: **Hindu-majority India** and **Muslim-majority Pakistan**.
- Sir Cyril Radcliffe, a British lawyer who lacked the basic knowledge of India, was given only five weeks to redraw all the borders of South Asia. It is popularly believed that Sir Cyril Radcliffe imposed the Boundary Award 'from above.'
- Joya Chatterji - The Boundary Commission of Bengal and Punjab comprised a four-judge panel who were political appointees by the Congress and the Muslim League.
- The arbitrary nature of Partition by the British government is understood from the decision taken by the Bengal Boundary Commission to partition the Bengal province and tag the Eastern half as "**East Pakistan**," whereas geographically it was not abutting the West Punjab region that became "**West Pakistan**."



Partition of India: Introduction

- The rise of Hindu and Muslim nationalism coupled with the divide and rule policies by the British further precipitated the Partition.
- Yet, it is also true that after the Second World War, Britain lacked the resources with which to control its greatest imperial asset, and its exit from India was hastily and clumsily improvised.
- The epicenters of Indian Partition were Punjab and Bengal, even though several other provinces had witnessed considerable turmoil before, during and after the Partition.

Partition of India: Introduction

- After the end of British colonialism, the geographical span of India was dismembered along the communal lines, apparently to facilitate administration and stem the risk of continuous civil wars, which, according to critics like John Mearsheimer and Stephen Van Evera, was deemed as the inevitable fate of several postcolonial nations
- One of the prominent theorists, Donald Horowitz, who is in favor of Partition to avoid ethnic civil wars, claims – “If it is impossible for groups to live together in a heterogeneous state, perhaps it is better for them to live apart in more than one homogeneous state, even if this necessitates population transfers” (437).
- Carter Johnson’s study suggests that between 1945 and 1999, 55% to 72% of the civil wars were ethnic wars, and according to cross-cultural evidence, the ethnic wars last longer than the non-ethnic wars.



Partition of India: Introduction

- Numerous literary works, mainly in Urdu, Hindi, Bengali and English, portray the victims and their sufferings of Partition; and its consequences in post-Partition times.
- While Partition memory has become synonymous with celebration of patriotic exploits of prominent leaders, till in the recent past time, the possibility of alternate voices as narrators of post-Partition experiences - **the woman, the child, the religious minority and the Dalit** - remained submerged. Discovery of these accounts tend to complicate the Partition discourse.

Partition of India: Introduction

- Partition Studies can be unpacked through historical, sociological, literary interventions as well as in terms of feminist, Dalit, juvenile, specially abled, transgender and queer perspectives.
- **Partha Chatterjee, Mushirul Hasan and Gyanendra Pandey** have examined the Partition from the subaltern's perspective.
- **Ravinder Kaur, Ranabir Samaddar, Gurharpal Singh and Ian Talbot** study the socio-historical and political aspects of stratified Punjabi and Bengali refugee identities in post-Partition India.
- **Urvashi Butalia, Ritu Menon, and Kamla Bhasin** have produced important feminist interpretations of the Partition catastrophe, incorporating interviews of West Punjabi women who survived and witnessed brutality, and exploring the bureaucratic processes of rehabilitation and the problems they provoked over the post-Partition years.



Partition of India: Introduction

- Scholars such as **Nandi Bhatia**, **Jill Didur**, and **Mushirul Hassan** emphasize the importance of studying marginal voices and the vital role that unofficial memorialization plays in literature.
- **Oral histories, accounts and reminiscences** have a supplementary value that celebrate the personal and bring to light the un/under-explored dimensions of Partition.

Partition of India: Introduction

- While proponents of two-nation theory such as **M.A. Jinnah** or **R.C. Majumdar** argued for division along communal lines, there were other motivations too that played significant roles in the division of the subcontinent. These factors include class, caste, language and regional politics.
- At the time of Partition, there was a three-cornered negotiation between plenipotentiaries speaking for the British, the Congress and the Muslim League.

Indian National Congress

- Formed in 1885 by Allan Octavian Hume, a retired British civil servant.
- Other founding members include Dadabhai Naoroji and Dinshaw Wacha..
- The first session was held in Bombay under the presidency of Womesh Chandra Bonnerjee in 1885.
- The Congress was basically a movement of the upper and middle class, western-educated Indians in its moderate phase.

Prominent leaders of INC

- ✓ **Dadabhai Naoroji** - Known as the 'Grand old man of India.' The first Indian to become a member of the House of Commons in Britain.
- ✓ **Womesh Chandra Bonnerjee** - The first president of the INC, and the first Indian to act as Standing Counsel.
- ✓ **G Subramania Aiyer** - Founded 'The Hindu' newspaper where he criticised British imperialism. Co-founded the Madras Mahajana Sabha.
- ✓ **Gopal Krishna Gokhale** - Regarded as Mahatma Gandhi's political mentor. Founded the Servants of India Society.
- ✓ **Sir Surendranath Banerjee** - Also called 'Rashtraguru' and 'Indian Burke'. Founded the Indian National Association which later merged with the INC. Cleared the Indian Civil Service but was discharged due to racial discrimination.

The Moderate Congress (1885-1905)

- Indian nationalism arose in the latter half of the 19th century as a result of various factors, such as western education, socio-religious reforms, and different British policies and so on.
- In 1885, the Indian National Congress was formed which played a significant role in India's freedom movement.
- The time period from **1885 to 1905** is called the '**Moderate Phase**'. The leaders of this phase are called moderates.
- The moderates followed the middle path against the British Empire and relied in restraint in their demonstration and peaceful methods to achieve their aim rather than violence and confrontation.

The Moderate Congress (1885-1905)

- The focus of the moderates was to educate people, arouse the political consciousness and agency, and enable them to form their opinion.
- The moderates criticized the government using print media, such as newspaper and journal.
- Their major demands included more powers for the local bodies, of legislative councils, separation of the judiciary from the executive, abolition of salt tax, reduction of spending on army, etc.
- They fought for civil rights including **right to speech, thought, and expression** of modern democratic ideas through a free press and campaigns.

Demands by the Moderate Congress

- Education of the masses and organizing public opinion, making people aware of their rights.. Increasing spending on education of Indians.
- **Indian representation in the Executive Council** and in the Indian Council in London.
- Reform of the legislative councils; Separation of the executive from the judiciary.
- Decreased land revenue tax and ending peasant oppression.
- Reduced spending on the army. Repealing the Arms Act of 1878.
- **Abolishing salt tax** and duty on sugar.
- Holding the ICS exam in India along with England to allow more Indians the opportunity to take part in the administration.
- Freedom of speech and expression. Freedom to form associations.
- End of economic drain of India by the British.

The Extremists

- The partition of Bengal in 1905 opened the eyes of the Indians to the true colors of the British rulers.
- Lord Curzon and his disdain for anything Indian created resentment and anger against the colonizers.
- There was a fear among some leaders that the moderates with their westernized notions were trying to create an India in the image of the West.
- There was a revival of national pride at that time.
- The extremist leaders were also influenced by the growth of spiritual nationalism at that time.



The Extremists

- The extremist goal was 'swaraj'. This, at that time, either meant **complete autonomy** and freedom from British control, or a total Indian control over the administration but not necessarily a break away from Britain's imperial reign.
- This contrasted with the moderates' demand of only an increase in the share of Indians in the administration and military upper echelons.
- The extremist leaders involved wider sections of people in the movement. They involved lower-middle-class people also.
- They did not stick to constitutional methods to protest and demand. They resorted to boycotts, strikes, etc. They also burned foreign-made goods. They believed in confrontation rather than persuasion.

The Extremists

- They were strongly against British imperialistic policies in India.
- They took pride in Indian culture and history. They looked at the ancient scriptures for inspiration and courage.
- They opposed westernization of Indian society by the British.
- **Bal Gangadhar Tilak** famously said, “Swaraj is my birth right and I shall have it.”

THANK YOU

