

The Partition of 1947: A Historical Analysis of Underlying Realities

Sudhir Rai

Master's in Department of History, Guru Ghasidas University, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh, India

Abstract: This article seeks to shed light on the role of a particular historical event in providing legitimacy to Communal and national politics. The Partition of India in 1947 was both a violent result of long-standing hostility between Hindu and Muslim extremists and, after Independence, became an example of violent conflict that ethnic and religious extremists well as hard-line groups in India and Pakistan, looked up to and copied.

It also argues that the partition shows the worst side of identity politics: When trust and understanding are lost, fear and insecurity take over, causing problems at many levels of state and society and creates a harmful socio-political system. I try to show how such a system functions within the domestic sphere as well as in India-Pakistan political interaction This not only destroyed the millions of life but also left the horror of mindless hate and violence. Being a student in department of history, I try to show how the partition of Indian Subcontinent affected the people and tragic that India should have found Dominion status in Division not in unity.

Keywords: India, Partition of 1947

INTRODUCTION

The partition of British India in 1947, which resulted in establishment of the two sovereign nations, India and Pakistan, was Succeeded by one of the most brutal and bloody-migration and ethnic cleansings recorded in history. The religious furry and violence that it unleashed caused the deaths of Some 2 million Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. An estimated 12-15 million people were forcibly transferred between the two countries 'At least 7,0000 Women suffered Sexual violence. The trauma that experienced by people during this period has been significant as a result the relationships between the two nations as well as between their population and several gaps have not returned to normal even after more than a half century: rather, they have deteriorated consistently over time. Ethnic conflict currently permeates the domestic politics of both nations, and the hardliners within their military establishments have been exerting considerable in influence lor an extended period.

Since may 1998, when both nations show cased their capability to detonate nuclear devices, they have been on the brink of the nuclear conflict. Such a war would likely pose a severethreat to human life and civilization in this region. At present, south is indisputably the most perilous nuclear flashpoint globally.

CONFLICTING NATIONALISM AND COMMUNAL CONCERNS IN COLONIAL INDIA:

Under the guidance of M.K. Gandhi, India,under the Indian National Congress (1885) initiated a prolonged struggle for freedom from 1915 onwards, integrating nonviolent civil disobedience and mass mobilization into a successful approach to oppose colonial governance. While Muslims participated at various levels within the congress, it was primarily upper-caste

Hindus who constituted its backbone. Numerous congress leaders and members faced imprisonment on several occasions Nevertheless, the movement remainedfocused on the narrow issue of self-governance and subsequently, independence. Gandhi's vision for the nation was one of communitarian pluralism, encompassing the diverse religious Communities of India.

The congress aimed to maintain the unity of India: However, for several reasons, it was unable to persuade the Muslim league that its interpretation of nationalism would not result in the enduring dominance of Hindus. According to 1941 Census, the total population of India was 382, 643, 745 in which approx. 56% Hindu dominion. Only about 10 percent of the population of British India was enfranchised [5]

In 1930, at the annual session of the Muslim league at Allahabad, Muhammad Iqbal put forth the idea of separate Muslim state to be created in the Muslim majority zone of north-west India. He based his argument on a novel 'Two-nation theory'[6]. According to which India consisted of two separate and distinct nations Hindus and Muslims.

"THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WAS MEDIATOR RATHER THEN ARBITRATOR"

On February 20(1947), clement Atlee had announced in the house of commons that the government has decided to hand-over power and leave India not later than 30 June 1948.The whole process however was fast forwarded by Mountbatten by almost a year. There was widespread Opposition to the plan in general and more specifically to the idea that a country such as India should be partitioned on the basis of religious following, the mental divide appears, it was said, to have existed only among the leaders and other interests who saw in the country's partition their own bright future.

THE ALL INIDA MUSLIM LEAGUE RESOLVES ON PARTITION

The All India Muslim League had met on June a 1947 at the imperial Hotel in new Delhi. The resolution seeking partition was virtually unanimous -300 for and 10 against Jinnah is seen making the announcement of the passage of the resolution to the press. Many league leaders were unhappy for the division of the new dominion of Pakistan into two wings East and west . The east of the Pakistan was forced to separate and formed the new dominion of Bangladesh in 1971.

Al though the Muslim league was success full in presenting a broad Muslim unity against congress, however the success in making the east Pakistan as independent dominion of Bangladesh cost between 1.5 to 3 million of lives. [1]

THE MASTERMINDS OF THE COMMUNAL RIOTS

The history of India's partition is incomplete without a mention of the sordid episode of the great Calcutta killings of 1946,

when Calcutta was taken over by vicious forces of communal frenzy. The Muslim league fought the election based on a single point agenda-creation of Pakistan. The veiled propaganda was that the campaign was to oust the British but in reality it was against the Sikhs and the Hindus. The initial proposal of two nation theory was completely rejected by the Indian National Congress, further inciting Jinnah to devise the plan of 'Direct Action' [3]

In Jinnah's words "we do not want war if you want war, we accept your offer unhesitatingly. We will either have a divided India or a destroyed India" [2]

Syed Muhammad Usman, who was the mayor of Calcutta offered his complete support to the Muslim league's propaganda and issued a widely circulated leaflet that said "infidels, Your end is not far away! You will be massacred".

In order for the riots to be successful with respect to the Muslim league's agenda, Hindu police officers in or around Calcutta were sent to leave or purposely transferred and were replaced by Muslims officers in nearly 22 out of 24 police stations by the then prime minister of Bengal, HS Suhrawardy. It was pertinent as these officers aided in the butchering, raping and looting of Hindus in Calcutta.

On 1st August 1946, an Urdu newspaper 'Asre Jadid' published an editorial titled "direct Action". In this article, it blamed the Britishers' rule for the direct action. It said, "these Britishers who do not exercise their votes in the constituent Assembly Election are responsible for the present state of the affairs." It blamed the Britishers for appeasing the Congress and conspiring by putting Hindus against Muslim interests. It said, "Direct action should be taken against them. To the Muslims, Direct action means a fight and a fight implies violence. Direct action may not be civil disobedience but will be in the nature of revolt. There are many instances of British ingratitude to the Muslims and hence the decision of the British to handover the power to Congress is not surprising. "Suranjan Das in his book-Communal riots in Bengal quoted another leaflet titled 'Quami Jung ka Tabl-e-baz aaya' which means 'The drum announcing the war for the community has been clarified."

LINE OF PARTITION

Radcliffe, the man who assigned to draw the line for partition had never earlier visited India. There was no way he could have understood its complexities. When he was first approached to head the Punjab Boundary Commission, he was expected to complete the task by June 1948. But as it turned out with the transfer of power being postponed by almost a year, he had just three weeks to draw the line. The process was conducted like a personal agenda. As this report suggests the whole plan and the postponed schedule of its implementation was seen as a personal triumph of the viceroy.

'Dangerous Principle – namely a man who changes his nationality with religion'

"Frankly I am unable to understand... the reason behind the acceptance of the British plan of partition... I am bound to support my government... I regret to say however that... we have accepted a dangerous principle namely a man changes his nationality with religion... Whether the acceptance of this rather reactionary principle will help India to avoid civil war I do not know."

William Dobie
(M.P, House of Commons)
(The Tribune, June 6, 1947)

In June 1947, Mountbatten asked Cyril Radcliffe a barrister, to chair two boundary commissions—one for Bengal. He had no knowledge of India and had never been to India before. Mountbatten considered this a favourable point as no one would accuse him of being biased one way or another. The members of the Boundary Commission were evenly divided and could not agree on the division. The decision was thus left to Radcliffe. He arrived in India on July 7, and completed his report by August 12.

THE FIST ATTACKS: RAMGANJ POLICE STATION AREA

One of the first attacks was launched on the Hindu-owned businesses of a Bazaar in the Ramganj police station areas. Soon, a fanatic mob raided the houses of eminent Hindus of the area, Surendra Nath Basu and Rajendra Lal Roychowdhury who was the president of the Noakhali Bar Association and a prominent Hindu Mahasabha leader. Roychowdhury was hacked to death by the Muslim schoolboys and his severed head was gifted to Sarwar. His two daughters were abducted and presented to Sarwar's loyalists as 'War booty'. Freedom fighter Lal Mohan Sen, who had fought the British in 1930 and spent 16 years in jail, was also not spared either. Numerous Hindu houses were set ablaze using petrol. The use of petrol in remote areas like Sandweep where motor cars were hardly seen proved these attacks were premeditated. 270 killed, 1600 injured in two days. Eye-witness accounts of the Calcutta massacre in which over 4000 people were butchered and more than 11,000 injured reveal the horror of the four days through which the city's 4,000,000 inhabitants have passed away.

THE PARTITION AND THE PERSISTENT RIVALRY BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN

The persistent rivalry between India and Pakistan is often attributed to differing views on national identity, a lack of trust, territorial disputes particularly over Kashmir – and the rise of Pakistan as a state dominated by military influence. These factors track back to the partition, although the differences between India and Pakistan have grown more intricate since gaining independence.

The Partition brought international attention to the longstanding ideological rifts between the Congress and the Muslim League. These divisions were rooted in opposing ideas of a composite, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious Indian nationalism versus a distinct Muslim separatism. The violence during Partition further entrenched negative stereotypes of the Hindu and Muslim. Hindu nationalism perceives the partition as a denial of the reality of Indian unity. Both the Congress and the Muslim League are held accountable for this 'tragedy'.

The Kashmir dispute is frequently regarded as the primary reason for the rivalry between India and Pakistan. It is recognized that this issue transcended mere territorial disagreements, representing the conflicting notions of national identity that we have been examining. For Pakistan, the Muslim majority in Kashmir was central to the state's identification of religious identity with territory, encapsulated in its two-nation theory. Kashmir represented the 'K' in this identity. In addition to Nehru's personal connection to Kashmir, the presence of the Muslim majority state within the Indian union illustrated the early post-colonial State's dedication to a diverse pluralistic society, which contradicted the two-nation theory that justified Pakistan's creation. The Kashmir dispute was also associated with the partition in two additional, less-discussed ways. Firstly, the encouragement of the Pakistan tribal invasion by the Pakistani state was a

response to the killings of Muslims in the Jammu province, which- contributed to a surge of refugees threatening to overwhelm the nascent state. Secondly the later of accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India was perceived by many in Pakistan as a result of 'Partisan' boundary award by the British the nation further fuelled the believe that the partition had been biased in Favor of India, compelling an embattled Pakistan to struggle for its very existence. The Pakistan Army has historical engaged in adventurism regarding Kashmir, as evidenced by the 1965 war and the more recent Kargil conflict in 1999. Its efforts to seize Kashmir from India have sustained the ongoing rivalry. Even when the army has withdrawn to its barracks, its behind the-scenes influence has hindered civilian efforts to enhance relation with India.

CONCLUSION

The Subcontinent has undergone Significant transformations since gaining independence Both India and Pakistan have become more populous, prosperous, and powerful than what might have been envisioned in 1947. Since the economic liberalization in 1991, India is emerging as an economic powerhouse that could potentially rival China. However, this assignment has contended that the legacy of the Partition Continues to cast a shadow over both nations. The relationship between these 'distant neighbours' is rooted in their conflicting interpretations of 1947. The Kashmir dispute has come to symbolize these opposing narratives.

The partition has also influenced the domestic politics of subcontinent. The fear of further division has undermined the legitimacy of ethno-linguistic and regional aspirations in both India and Pakistan. The increasing strength of religious nationalism has further marginalised minorities in both nations. Ultimately, the mass migration, insecure borders, and the perceived threats From a powerful and hostile neighbour have fostered the development of what some scholars refer as the garrison state in Pakistan. The military has subsequently pursued its own institutional interests. Its influence has also thrived on geopolitical conflicts that have extended beyond the immediate region and for beyond the partition legacy of enmity with India- namely the cold war and more recently the 'war on terror'. The army' influence persists, despite periodic transitions from military rule to elected Governments.

References

- [1] Khan, Yasmin:- the Great Partition (August 1,2007, vale University press)
- [2] Ian, Talbot and Singh, Gurharpal: The Partition of India. (July 23, 2009, Cambridge university press)
- [3] Chandra, Bipan: India's struggle for independences. (1988, Penguin house)
- [4] Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar: From Plassey to Partition and after. (January 1, 2004, Orient Black swan)
- [5] Guha, Ramchandra; India after Gandhi (July 24, 2007, Harper Collins).
- [6] Guha, Ramchandra; Gandhi: the years that changed the world. (September 27,2018, Penguin Random house).