

## **Interpretation of Partition**

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Partition was the division of British India into the two separate states of India and Pakistan on August 14-15, 1947. The very concept of division was popularised by British politics. The three concept, namely Communalism, Nationalism and Imperialism were the crux of Partition. The speed with which things moved between, 1937-47, made partition inevitable. Mountbatten had put his plans for the partition of India before the 'big seven Indian leaders-Nehru, Patel, Kriplani, Jinnah, Liaqat, Nishtar and Baldev Singh on 2 June. Congress had accepted the plan and Jinnah undertook to do his most to make the plan work. However the impending division of India had made Gandhi unhappy. On 3<sup>rd</sup> June, Mountbatten announced the British Government's acceptance of the principles of partition. The partition was to be effected in the following manner- if the members of the Legislative Assemblies of Bengal and the Punjab were to decide in favour of partition by a simple majority, a boundary commission, set up by viceroy, would demarcate the appropriate boundaries. Sindh and Baluchistan would decide which Constituent Assembly to join. In the Frontier province, there was to be a referendum whether it would join East Bengal or remain in Assam. The British Parliament would undertake legislation to transfer power before the end of 1947 to one or two successor authorities on a Dominion Status basis without any prejudice to the final decision of the Constituent Assembly to stay in Commonwealth or not. The Muslim League accepted the plan within a week. The Congress too accepted the plan and according to Maulana Azad, it had no alternative. Gandhi who had opposed the division of India, also supported the resolution which was carried by 157 votes to 29 with 32 members remaining neutral.

On 4 July, 1947, The Indian Independence Bill was introduced in the House of Commons. The bill after a long debates was passed by the House of Commons on 15 July, and the House of Lords, on the following day. The Bill received royal ascent on 18 July. The Act provided for the partition of India and the establishment of two dominions-India and Pakistan-on 15 August 1947.Each dominion was to have a Governor-General appointed by the King. The Legislatures of both Dominions were empowered to make the laws for their Dominions. The jurisdiction of the British Parliament over India was to cease from 15 August 1947. It is well known that Maulana had opposed the Partition plan, but like others he too readily agreed to the Partition plan. Nehru too must have thought that Partition would be temporary, but all had a come to an agreement on partition. The British Raj finally made its exit. On 14<sup>th</sup> August, the Dominion of Pakistan was inaugurated and Jinnah became the Governor General. At the midnight of 14<sup>th</sup> August, the Indian Constituent Assembly met at Delhi to assume sovereignty. On the morning of 15<sup>th</sup> August, Lord Mountbatten was sworn in as the Governor General and he in turn sworn in Jawaharlal Nehru as the first Prime Minister of a free India.

As freedom came with partition, the immediate anxiety of everyone was about the award of the Boundary Commissions formed under Sir Cyril Radcliffe. The deciding factor, of course was to be religious demography of each district, but other factors such as rivers as natural boundaries, administrative units, economic viability, railway and road connections and infrastructural facilities such as the canal system in the Punjab were also to be taken into consideration. Both parties-Hindus and Muslims presented their cases in legalistic terms through their counsels. The Sikhs, as a third party in Punjab, further complicated the situation, as demographically they were scattered throughout the region, and they demanded that their holy shrines should be in East Punjab in India. So the

boundary lines drawn hastily were bound to be problematic and leave many unhappy.

In the award, West Punjab, went to Pakistan, received 62,000 square miles of territory and 15, 800, 000 people, of whom 11,850,000 were Muslims. East Punjab that remained in India received 37,000 square miles of territory, with a population of 12, 600, 000 of whom 4, 375,000, were Muslims, while East Bengal, which was to constitute East Pakistan, received 49, 400 square miles of territory and 39, 100, 100 people of whom 27, 700, 000 were Muslims. Following a referendum in July 1947, the district of Sylhet was transferred to East Bengal from Assam, which was left with no direct rail link with the rest of India. The district of Khulina with a Muslim population of 49.3 percent was given over to Pakistan. On the other hand largely Muslim majority areas in Malda, Nadia and Murshidabad districts were added to West Bengal. Economically, Pakistan became more agriculture based, while mineral resources and industries remained in India. But in both sides there were sizeable number of minorities.

To Pakistan, Partition itself was freedom- freedom from the political domination of the Hindu majority. In India while few rejoiced , the refugees and the minorities paid the heaviest price. There was a scene of violence, in Punjab, about four and half million Hindus and Sikhs arrived in East Punjab, while five and half million Hindus and Sikhs arrived in East Punjab, while five and half million Muslims departed for West Pakistan between August and November 1947. On the other side when Bengal was partitioned, 42 percent of its non -Muslim population were left in East Pakistan, by June 1948, about 1.1 million of them had migrated to West Bengal.

These displaced people were refugees. August 15 heralded a new kind of freedom in the Punjab. There was violence in Punjab too. This was however two way traffic, when Hindu and Sikh refugees arrived from West Punjab, it required a Muslim exodus from India to accommodate them in the latter's empty houses.

Refugee resettlement proved to be a major problem for the government as the pattern of influx varied across the regions. The Government of India immediately established an Emergency Committee of the Cabinet to deal with the situation in Delhi and Mission of Relief and Rehabilitation was set up to look after the refugees. For urban refugees industrial and vocational training schemes were provided and grants were offered to start small businesses or industries. Both East Punjab and the national government mobilised massive resources for refugee rehabilitation. In Bengal the process was much more prolonged and complicated, as initially in 1947-48 only a relatively small group who could arrange exchange of property or jobs migrated to West Bengal. The problem arose when a larger peasant migration from East Pakistan took place after fresh outbreak of violence in Khulna in December- January 1949-50.

On 8 April 1950, Nehru signed with his Pakistani counterpart, Liaquat Ali Khan what is known as Delhi Pact on minorities. It was meant to restore communal peace in both countries through appointment of ministers from minority communities in both Pakistan and India and as both central and provincial levels. Minority commissions were to be formed in West Bengal, Assam and East Bengal. Refugees were to be encouraged to return to their original homes and measures were to be taken to restore their properties on return.

The debates and political controversies that arose around the riots revealed that the Indian nation was still deeply divided on the minority question, particularly on the issue of citizenship of the Muslims who chose to remain in India, even though India had chosen to be secular. However, Nehru pursued the secularist agenda of the Congress. The Congress victory in the first national election of 1951-52 set the country on what came to be known as the Nehruvian path of secularism and socialism. But the processes of Partition and decolonisation had also left other residual problems for the new nation state to handle in its initial

years. Over half of the refugees, eventually settled in towns, particularly in U.P and the great cities of Delhi and Calcutta.

Even after so many years of partition, the relationship between the two countries is far more being friendly nations. There are still billion of people, who live in the shadow of partition. Kashmir still remains the bone of contention of politics between the two.