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**THE EARLY PHASE OF THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE (1900 – 1915)**

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**THE PARTITION OF BENGAL (1905)****Lord Curzon, the New Viceroy**

On 30 December 1889, Lord Curzon took over as the new viceroy of India. Lord Curzon ordered the partition of Bengal in 1905. He wanted to improve the administrative efficiency in that huge and populous region, where the Bengali Hindu intelligentsia exerted considerable influence on local and national politics. The partition of Bengal came into effect on 16 October 1905, through a royal proclamation. The partition created a new province of East Bengal, which later became East Pakistan, the present day Bangladesh. The government explained that the partition was for stimulating the growth of the under developed eastern region of Bengal.

**Partition of Bengal**

Finding the Bengal presidency too large for one governor to administer, in 1905, the British decided to redraw its boundaries and divide it into two parts. The provinces of Bengal and Assam were reconstituted to form two provinces of manageable size-West Bengal, with a population of 54 million (42 million Hindus and 18 million Muslims). The territory to be transferred from Bengal to the new province consisted of the districts of Chittagong and Dhaka Divisions, Rajshahi Division excluding Darjeeling and the District of Malda. Lord Curzon sent the proposal to London in February, 1905. The secretary of state for India, Sir John Brodrick, sanctioned it in June, and the proclamation of the

formation of the new province was issued in September. The province of Bengal and Assam came into being on 16 October 1905.

**Reasons for the Partition of Bengal**

The partition of Bengal sought to destroy the political influence of the educated middle class among whom the Bengali intelligentsia were the most prominent. It also set up a communal gulf between the Hindus and the Muslims. The Indian National Congress Unanimously condemned the partition of Bengal. Actually, the main most advanced region of the country at that time.

**Reaction of the People**

An ill-conceived and hastily implemented action, the partition outraged the Bengalis. Not only had the government failed to consult the Indian public of their opinion, but the action appeared to reflect the British resolve to 'divide and rule'. Widespread agitation ensued on the streets and in the press, and the Congress advocated boycotting British products under the banner of *swadeshi*. The Congress-led boycott of the British goods was so successful that it unleashed anti-British forces to an extent unknown since the sepoy Rebellion. A cycle of the violence, terrorism and repression ensued in some parts of the country. Indians launched a mass movement, declaring 16 October as the day of mourning in Kolkata raising Vande-Mataram as the national cry protecting the Indian nationality. This organised anarchist movement took a

terrorist turn, resulting in political sabotage and riots.

### Reversal of the Partition

Keeping in view the fluid political situation in India, the British tried to mitigate the situation by announcing a series of constitutional reforms in 1909, and by appointing a few moderates to the imperial and provincial councils. In what the British saw as an additional goodwill gesture, in 1911, King Emperor George V (1910-1936) visited India for a durbar, during which he announced the reversal of the partition of Bengal and the transfer of the capital from Kolkata to a newly planned city to be built immediately south of Delhi, which became New Delhi.

### SWADESHI MOVEMENT (1905)

#### Beginning

The *swadeshi* Movement had its genesis in the anti-partition movement started to oppose the British decision to divide Bengal. With the start of the *Swadeshi* Movement at the turn of the century, the Indian national movement took a major leap forward. The richness of the movement was not confined to politics alone. Women, students and a large section of the urban and a rural population of Bengal and other parts of India became actively involved in the national movement.

#### Components of the swadeshi Movement

Various sections participated in the swadeshi agitation for different reasons, and these differences got reflected in the movement. For instance, Hindu Zamindars of East Bengal, who were opposed to the partition, so as not to become a religious minority in a situation of increasing peasant unrest, employed openly communal propaganda throughout their agitation-promoting Shivaji utsavs, image-worship, Hindu ceremonies

and so on. This propaganda infected the entire movement, and weakened it considerably as communal riots broke out in Mymensingh in 1907-1908. But many Muslims still joined the movement. Among the noted swadeshi agitators were men like Ghaznavi, Rasul Din Mohammed, Dedar Bux, Moniruzzaman, Ismail Hussain siraji, Abul Hussain, Abul Gafer, and Liakat Husain. The 10,000-strong joint Hindu-Muslim student procession in Kolkata on 23 September 1905, also testified the potential for communal solidarity on the swadeshi issue. The fact that it could be a triumph has to be ascribed to British divide-and-rule policies and to Zamindars' objectively furthering the designs of the British by heightening communal propaganda. The appeal of the swadeshi movement was its straightforward mass approach and its rejection of 'prayer petition' politics. Along with this movement came enunciated and widely propagated theories for not simply a limited reform of British rule, but its complete overthrow.

#### Banaras session of the Congress

The Indian National Congress took up the swadeshi call in its Banaras session, 1905, presided over by G.K. Gokhale. Militant nationalism spearheaded by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra pal, Lala Lajpat Rai and Aurobindo Ghosh was, however, in the favour of extending the movement to the rest of India and carrying it beyond the programme of just swadeshi and boycott of goods to full-fledged political mass struggle. On 7 August 1905, a resolution to boycott the British goods was adopted at a meeting of the Indian National Congress held in Kolkata. It began as a purely economic measure for the development of the Indian industry. Bonfires of foreign goods were conducted on a large scale in all major cities. It had many positive consequences: (a) it

encouraged Indian industries especially the small and medium-scale, (b) many swadeshi banks and insurance companies were launched and (c) development of journalism and national poetry which inculcated the feeling of nationalism in the Indian masses.

### Spread of the Swadeshi Movement

The message of swadeshi and boycott soon spread to the rest of the country: Lokmanya Tilak took the movement to different parts of India, especially Poona and Mumbai. Ajit Singh and Lala Lajpat Rai spread the swadeshi message in Punjab and other parts of northern India; Syed Haidar Raza set up the agenda in Delhi, Rawalpindi, Kangra, Jammu, Multan and Hardwar witnessed active participation in the swadeshi Movement; Chidambaram Pillai took the movement to Chennai president, which was also galvanised by Bipin Chandra Pal's extensive lecture tour.

### The 1906 Congress Session

By the 1906 session of the Congress, the 'extremists'.....

Congress, by their sheer numbers and popularity, .....

Poised to take over the Congress. One factor was the .....

To hold the session at Kolkata. 'Extremists' from different.....had forged some links in the interim, and there were attempts ..... to elect one of them as the president of the Congress. The..... was scotched by the 'moderates'. They elected the aged..... respected Naaraji instead. The 1906 Congress ..... was forced to accept four resolutions which they were ..... with-on the partition of Bengal, on the boycott movement on swadeshi, and on self-government. However, the

1906, Congress was by no means a radical affair. The ..... managed to lone down each resolution considerat..... made them ambiguous. Thus, 'Swaraj' became 'the system of government obtaining in the self-governing British colonies'. .... effort of the 'extremists', to have the resolution in support .... Bengal boycott movement extended to cover other ..... was defeated. And the Congress leaders were .... to review even such limited defeats at the next session..... 'moderates' made sure that the mistake of locating the Congress at Kolkata was not repeated.

### ORIGIN OF THE MUSLIM LEAGUE (1906)

#### Fear of Minority Status

By 1900, although the Congress had emerged as an all-India political organisation, its achievement was undermined by its singular failure to attract Muslim. Who had by then begun to be aware of their inadequate education and under representation in government service. Muslim leaders saw that their community had fallen behind the Hindus. Attacks by Hindus reformers against religious conversion, cow slaughter and the preservation of Urdu in the Arabic Script deepened their fears of minority status and the denial of their rights if the Congress alone were to represent the people of India.

#### Loyalty to the British

For many Muslims, loyalty to the British crown seemed preferable to cooperation with the Congress leaders. **Sir Syed Ahmed Khan** (1817-1898) launched a movement for Muslim regeneration that culminated in the foundation in 1875 of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh, UP (renamed Aligarh Muslim

University in 1921). Its objective was to educate the wealthy students by emphasising the compatibility of Islam with modern Western knowledge. The diversity among India's Muslims, however, made it impossible to bring about uniform cultural and intellectual regeneration.

### Simla Conference

When Lord Minto was appointed as the Viceroy of India in 1905, new reforms were indicated in which the electoral principle would be extended. The anti-partition agitation had convinced the Muslims of the futility of expecting any fair play from the Hindu majority. Therefore, to safeguard their interests, the Muslim leaders drew up a plan for separate electorates for their community, and presented it to Lord Minto at Simla, on 1 October 1906.

**Syed Ali Bigham** wrote the text of the plan. The Simla deputation consisted of 70 representatives, representing all opinions of the Muslim community, and headed by Sir Aga Khan who read the address. The long address said, among the other things, that the position of the Muslim community should not be estimated by its numerical strength alone, but in terms of its political importance and services rendered to the Empire. He also pointed out that the representative institutions of the West were inappropriate for India and that their application was raising difficult problems. He stressed the need for utmost care while introducing or extending the electoral system in whatever sphere, be it municipal or provincial. He stated that the Muslim should be represented as a community. The Viceroy, in his reply to the Simla deputation address, reassured the Muslim that their political rights and interests as a community would be safeguarded by any administrative reorganisation under him.

The

acceptance of the deputation's demands proved to be a turning point in the history of India. For the first time, the Hindu-Muslim conflict was raised to the constitutional plane. The Muslim made it clear that they had no confidence in the Hindu majority and that they were not prepared to put their future in the hands of an assembly selected on the assumed basis of a homogeneous Indian nation. It is in this sense that the beginning of separate electorate may be seen as the beginning of the realisation of the two-nation theory. Its final and inevitable consequence being the partition of British India in 1947. The Simla deputation was successful because the Muslims strongly urged to protect their separate identity, and also because the British responded to their demands, as Lord Minto was anxious to apply the age-old 'divide and rule' policy of the British. Separate electorates were given statutory recognition in the Indian Councils Act of 1909. Muslims were accorded not only the right to elect their representatives in general constituencies. In addition, they were also given weightage in representation.

### Foundation of the Muslim League

The major inspiring factor for the creation of the Muslim League was that the Muslim intellectual class sought representation the masses looked for a right kind of platform that could unite them. It was the knowledge of western thought of John Locke, Milton and Thomas Paine at the MAO college that began the rise of Muslim nationalism. On 30 December 1906, the yearly convention of the Muhammadan Educational Conference was conducted at Dacca (now, Dhaka). The chairman of the convention was Nawab **Viqar-ul-Mulk**. Nearly three thousand members attended the session. It was the largest-ever representative assembly of the Muslim in India. For the first time, the conference removed its ban on

discussions over political issues. In the conference, **Nawab Sallimullah Khan** proposed the interests of the Muslims. In 1906, the **All India Muslim League** was formed. Aga Khan, Nawab Samlimullah of Ducca and Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk were its important founding leaders. Lucknow was chosen as the headquarters of the All India Muslim League. Aga Khan was elected as its first president, Other six vice-presidents, a secretary and two joint secretaries were also elected for a term of 3 years. The number of members was 400. They belonged proportionality to all provinces. **Maulana Muhammad Ali Jouhar** drafted the constitution of the League, known as the **Green Book**, **Syed Ameer Ali** set up a branch of the league in London in 1908. The following were the objectives of the Muslim league:

1. To inculcate a feeling of loyalty among Muslims towards the government and to remove the misunderstandings and misconceptions about its actions and intentions.
2. To safeguard and put forward the political rights and interests of the Indian Muslims and to represent their needs and aspirations to the government.
3. To check the ill will between the Muslims and the other communities its own purposes.

A Muslim deputation met with the Viceroy. **Gilbert John Elliot** (1905-1910), seeking concessions from the impending constitutional reforms, including special considerations in government service and electorates.

### **Recognition by the British**

Many Hindu histories and several British writers have alleged that the Muslim League was founded at official instigation. They argue that it was Lord

Minto who inspired the establishment of a Muslim organisation to divide the Congress and to minimise the strength of the Indian freedom movement.

### **The Freedom Movement**

The British recognised the Muslim League by increasing the number of elective offices reserved for the Muslim in the India Councils Act of 1909. The Muslim League insisted on its separateness from the Hindu-dominated Congress, as the voice a 'nation within a nation'. The League supported the partition of Bengal, opposed swadeshi movement and demanded special safeguards for its community, and separate electorates for the Muslims. This led to communal differences between the Hindus and the Muslims.

### **RESOLUTION OF SWARAJ (1906)**

The Extremist leaders were Lala Lajpat Rai. Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal. These three were also known as Lal-Bal-Pal. The movement that these leaders started alarmed the British. Tilak coined the famous slogan, 'Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have it'. In all the other movements before, the participants were the well educated in the middle class. However, in this movement, started by Lal-Bal-Pal, the whole of India moved as one. In this movement, they stressed on swadeshi and boycott.

### **The moderate Viewpoint**

In December 1906, at the Koilkata Congress Session, the Congress under the leadership of Dadabhai Naoroji adopted swaraj as the goal of the Indian people. In his presidential address. Naoroji declared that the goal of the Indian National congress was 'Self-government or swaraj like that of the United Kingdom'. The session passed the resolution on boycott.



Swadeshi and national education. The differences between the moderates and the extremists became apparent. Especially regarding the pace of the movement and the techniques to be adopted for the struggle, and the reluctance of the moderates to launch any agitation for the attainment of Swaraj. The differences came to a head in 1907, at the surat session of the congress, where the party split with serious consequences for the swadeshi movement.

### **Change of Venue of the 1907 Congress Session** ★

The site of the 1907 Congress session was originally Nagpur-a Tilak stronghold, where the local delegates would have swung the issue in favour of the 'extremists'. However, the Mehla-Wacha-Gokhale combine, with its greater control over the actual machinery of the Congress, got the location transferred to surat-a stronghold of the 'moderates'.

### **SURAT SESSION: SPLIT IN CONGRESS (1907)**

#### **Confrontation at the Session**

The Indian National Congress split into two groups-the extremists and the moderates-at the Surat session in 1907, held on the banks of the Tapti River. The extremists were led by lokmanya Tilak, Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal and the moderates were led by Gopal Krishna Gokhale. At the Surat session, the moderate and the extremists' delegates of the Congress met in an atmosphere surcharged with excitement and anger.

The moderates were deeply hurt by the ridicule and venom poured on them by the extremists in the mass meetings held at Surat a few days before the session and the extremists were excited by the rumour that the moderates wanted to scuttle their Kolkata resolutions. The Congress session started

with the objection made by the extremists to the duly elected president for the year, Ras Behari Bose. As both sides came to the session prepared for the confrontation, the split was inevitable.

### **Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866-1915)**

A Brahmin from Maharashtra, he was educated in India and became involved in the nationalist movement when he was quite young. A moderate, he stressed negotiation and conciliation rather than non-cooperation or violence. He was elected to the Mumbai Legislative Council in 1902. The conflict of Gokhale's moderate views with the more militant ideas of Bal Gangadhar Tilak led to a breach in the Indian National Congress that nearly immobilised it from 1907 to 1916. Gokhale was instrumental in forming the Servants of India Society, a nationalist organisation whose members, sworn to poverty and obedience, were enlisted to serve as volunteers for the social, political and economic welfare of India. In the course of the Indian freedom, he rejected the title of 'knight' and refused to accept a position in the council of the Secretary of State for India.

#### **Suppression of the Extremists**

The suddenness of the Surat fiasco took the extremists leaders by surprise and they offered their cooperation to the working committee of the Congress by accepting the presidency of Ras Behari Bose. However, the moderates would not relent as they found themselves on firm ground. The government used this opportunity to launch a massive attack on the extremists by suppressing their newspaper and arresting their main leader, Tilak, and sending him to Mandalay jail for 6 years. It passed the Seditious Meeting Act (1907), to control demonstrations and public meetings,

and also enacted the Newspaper Incitement to Offences Act (1908) to curb the critical press. Later, it passed the Criminal Law Amendment Act (1908) to bring to trial the agitating politicians under the charges of terrorist's offences. The extremists were not able to organise an effective alternate party, or to sustain the movement. Aurobindo Ghosh gave up politics and left for Puducherry. Bipin Chandra Pal also left politics temporarily and Lala Lajpat Rai left for Britain. After 1908, the national movement as a whole declined.

### **Bal Gangadhar Tilak(1856-1920)**

Tilak was a journalist in Poona, and in his newspapers, Kesari [Lion] in Marathi and Mahratta in English, he set forth his nationalist ideals. He sought a Hindu revival based on Maratha traditions and independence [Swaraj] from the British. After the Indian National Congress was founded (1885), Tilak became the acknowledged leader of the extreme wing. He fought the moderate measures of Gopal Krishna Gokhale and advocated resistance to the British rule. He was arrested (1897) by the British and imprisoned for 18 months. In 1907, a split took place in the Congress, and Tilak led his extremist's wing out of the party. The next year he was again imprisoned this time for 6 years. Unlike Gandhi, he welcomed the Maitland-Chelmsford Report (1918), which conceded a substantial measure of self-rule.

### **Influence of the Extremists on the National Movement Before 1916**

Despite an able leadership, the extremists could not influence the course of the national movement in the direction of active political agitation, as the moderates, who were still a

stronger group, would not allow them. The moderates still firmly believed in the policy of social reforms, gradual political development and the remaking of India largely in the image of the west. Soon after the Surat split, the moderates called a convention in 1908, and framed a party constitution to debar the extremist's leaders from the Indian National Congress. It was only in 1916, that the moderates and the extremists again joined hands for the national cause.

The achievements of the extremists were:

1. They instilled courage and self-confidence among the masses;
2. They made the concept of the Indian nation more precise and forceful;
3. They made patriotism a major factor in Indian politics;
4. Their sacrifices helped the cause of freedom and democracy in the country;
5. They championed the boycott of foreign goods, which helped in the development of Indian industries.

### **MORALITY-MINTO REFORMS (1909)**

#### **Initiatives of Lord Morley and Lord Minto**

Lord Morley, who was the secretary of state for Indian Affairs declared in the British parliament in the year 1906 that his government wished to bring new reforms for India. The reforms would enable the locals to exercise more powers in the legislative affairs. This initiated a series of correspondence between him and Lord Minto, who was the then Governor General of India. A committee was constituted to give suggestion about the scheme of reforms. The committee tabled its report. When the report had been approved by Lord Minto and Lord Morley, the act of 1909 was passed by the British

parliament. The Morlay-Minto reforms suggested a separate electorate for Muslims, apart from some other constitutional measures. The government wished to develop a gulf within the Congress on one hand by garnering the support of the moderates, and on the other, to win over the Muslims and put them against the Hindus. The reforms introduced the system of separate electorates under which the Muslims could only vote for Muslim candidates. This was done with an objective of creating a notion that the political, economic and cultural interests of the Hindus and Muslims were different. The Indian political leaders were against these reforms. The following were the main features of the Act of 1909:

1. The number of members of the Legislative Council at the centre was increased from 16 to 60.
2. The number of members of the provincial Legislatures was also increased. It was fixed as 50 in the provinces of Bengal, Chennai and Mumbai, and at 30 for the rest of the provinces.
3. There were four categories of the members of the Legislative councils, both at the centre and in the provinces-ex-officio members (Governor-General and the members of the Executive Councils), nominated non-official members (nominated by the Governor-General but who were not government officials) and elected members (elected by different categories of Indian people).
4. Right of separate electorates for the Muslims.
5. Official members were to form the majority at the centre, but in the provinces non-official members would be in majority.
6. The members of the Legislative Councils were permitted to discuss the budgets, suggest amendments and even to vote on them except on those items that were included as non-voter items. They were also entitled to ask supplementary questions during the legislative proceedings.
7. The Secretary of State for India was empowered to increase the number of the Executive Councils of Chennai and Mumbai from two to four.
8. Two Indians were nominated to the council of the Secretary of State for Indian Affairs.
9. The Governor-General was accorded the power to nominate one Indian member to his Executive Council.

#### **Indians Councils Act (1909)**

The Indian Councils Act introduced the principle of 'elections', which actually meant a minority of indirectly elected members in the Central Legislative Council and a majority of indirectly elected members in the provincial councils. The Councils themselves allowed only some powers of discussion, pulling of questions and sponsoring of resolutions. These Councils had no control over the administration or finance, let alone defence or foreign policy. The reforms were made with the sole intent of isolating the growing nationality movement. Repression had already started with the police's forcible entry into the 1906 Barisal conference of Dulf's Bandhab Samiti, where they beat up a large number of the participants. The Bande Mataram Slogan was banned. Even more systematic repression followed with the agitations in Punjab and the rise of the revolutionary terrorists in Bengal. The major measures included the banning of 'seditious' meetings in specific areas



(May and November 1907), Press acts enabling the seizure of press (June 1908, February 1910), the Criminal Law Amendment Act (December 1908), which permitted bans on the principal societies in Bengal and deportations. Lala Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh were deported in May 1907; nine Bengal leaders including Aswini Kumar Dutt were deported in December 1908; Chidambaram Pillai and others from Chennai were arrested; and Tilak was sentenced to 6 years in prison on 22 July 1908.

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