

Partition of Bengal (1947), Refugee Life Struggle in Contemporary Bengali Novels

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Abstract

In 1947, on the basis of Jinnah's 'Two Nation Theory', our country was divided – Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan. The line drawn by Sir Cyril Radcliffe to separate East Pakistan from India was a deeply disputed one. This is perhaps the pinnacle of disaster in the Indian subcontinent against the conquest of independence. Some events carry their subsequent consequences in themselves. A collection of Bengali short stories that reflect the sentiments of the time, a generation is discussed with an attempt to outline personal and social struggles.

Key Words: Partition, Majority, Struggles, Independent, Separation & Consequences.

Introduction

The trauma of the Partition of India in 1947 unfolded differently in Bengal than in Punjab. The partition of Punjab in the West happened all at once and was sudden, cataclysmic and violent. The partition of Bengal, on the other hand, was a slow process, the displacement took place in waves and the trauma took a spiritual and psychological turn, though no less violent than Punjab. The 1947 partition of Bengal is quite different from the sudden disastrous partition of Punjab due to several historical, social and political reasons. Bengali literature, which is based on the experiences of Partition, is therefore diverse and varied in the reactions of 1947 not only as an event, but as a metaphor or in the reactions of thousands of people who were traumatized or communal polarisation lived and protested is diverse is diverse Migration, resettlement and resettlement. This research argues that the vast reserves of literature created by the partition between the Bengali-speaking peoples of West Bengal, the Northeast and Bangladesh have not been studied together in an organic way. The research sheds light on how entire communities

have felt, remembered and attempted to resist the development of horrific division and communal hatred over time.

From the Calcutta riots and Noakhali communal massacre to post-Partition refugee settlements in Dandakaranya and Marichjhapi and enclaves in the Indo-Bangladesh border, the 1947 partition of Bengal has played out in different geographical locations that give different meanings to people's movements. , This research argues that there is not one division, but several smaller ones, each with its own distinct pattern of pain, crime and violence, faced by different people on the basis of race, gender and religion.

The Partition of Bengal in 1947, part of the Partition of India, divided the British Indian province of Bengal along the Radcliffe Line between the Dominion of India and the Dominion of Pakistan. Hindu-majority West Bengal became a state of India, and Muslim-majority East Bengal (now Bangladesh) became a province of Pakistan.

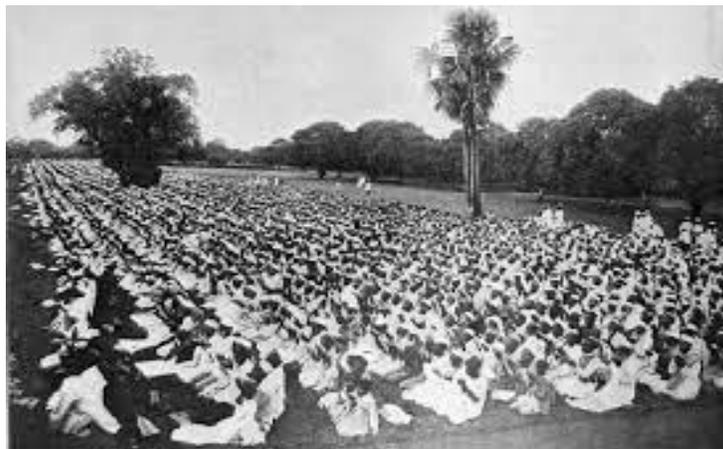


FIG 1: PARTITION OF BENGAL 1947

On 20 June 1947, the Bengal Legislative Assembly met to decide the future of the Bengal Presidency, whether it was a united Bengal within India or Pakistan, or divided into East and West Bengal. In the initial joint session, the 120–90 Assembly decided that it should remain united if it joined the new Constituent Assembly of Pakistan. Later, a separate meeting of legislators from West Bengal 58-21 decided that the province should be divided and that West Bengal should join the existing Constituent Assembly of India. In another separate meeting of

legislators from East Bengal, it was decided that the province should not be partitioned and that East Bengal should join Pakistan in case of partition in 107–34. On 6 July 1947, the Sylhet plebiscite decided to separate Sylhet from Assam and merge it into East Bengal.

The partition, with the transfer of power to Pakistan and India on 14–15 August 1947, was known as the 3 June Plan, or Mountbatten Plan. Indian independence, on 15 August 1947, ended more than 150 years of British influence in the Indian subcontinent. After the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971, East Pakistan became an independent country of Bangladesh. In 1905, the first partition in Bengal was implemented as an administrative preference as it would be easier to govern the two provinces, West and East Bengal. The partition divided the province between West Bengal, of which the majority were Hindus, and East Bengal, of which the majority were Muslims, but Hindus in East Bengal and Muslims in West Bengal were a substantial minority. While the Muslims were in favor of partition, as they would have their own province, the Hindus opposed it. The dispute escalated into violence and protests, and in 1911 the provinces were reunited.



FIG 2: PARTITION OF BENGAL 1947

However, disagreements between Hindus and Muslims in Bengal that led to the Partition of Bengal in 1905, and laws including the Second Partition of Bengal in 1947 were enacted to meet the political needs of the parties involved. According to the plan, on 20 June 1947, the members of the Bengal Legislative Assembly cast three separate votes on the proposal for the partition of Bengal. In a joint session of the House composed of all the members of the Legislative Assembly, the division of the joint session of the House was 126 votes against and 90 votes for

joining the existing Constituent Assembly (India). The Muslim-majority member areas of Bengal passed a resolution 106–35 against the partition of Bengal in a separate session and instead joined a new Constituent Assembly (Pakistan) altogether. A separate meeting of members from non-Muslim-majority areas of Bengal decided 58–21 for the division of the province.

Under the Mountbatten Plan, a majority of votes in favor of the division of one of the ideologically divided parts of the Assembly would have decided the division of the province, and so the June 20 proceedings resulted in the partition of Bengal. This set the stage for the creation of West Bengal as a province of India and East Bengal as the Dominion Province of Pakistan. Also, according to the Mountbatten plan, the voters of Sylhet were voted to join East Bengal in a referendum held on 6 July. In addition, the Boundary Commission, headed by Sir Cyril Radcliffe, decided on the territorial demarcation between the two newly created provinces. Power was transferred to Pakistan and India on 14 and 15 August respectively under the Indian Independence Act 1947.

Protest Against Partition of India

Opposition to the Partition of India More details. Overall nationalism, Hindu-Muslim unity and religious harmony in India in Bengal, Syed Habib-ul Rehman of the Krishak Praja Party said that the partition of India was "absurd" and "shouting". Criticizing the entire province of Bengal and the partition of India, Syed Habib-ul Rahman said that "Indians, both Hindus and Muslims, live in a common homeland, use a common language and branches of literature, and are proud of it. The greatness of a common Hindu and Muslim culture." " heritage has evolved.



FIG 3: PROTEST AGAINST PARTITION

United Bengal Scheme

After it became clear that the partition of India on the basis of the two-nation theory would almost certainly result in the partition of Bengal on religious lines, the leader of the Bengal Provincial Muslim League, Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy, came up with a new plan, to form an independent state. The State of Bengal, which shall neither join Pakistan nor India, and shall remain undivided. Suhrawardy realised that if Bengal was partitioned, it would be economically disastrous for East Bengal as all coal mines, all but two jute mills and other industrial plants would certainly go to the western part since they were in overwhelmingly-Hindu areas. Most importantly, Calcutta, India's largest city and an industrial and commercial center and largest port, will also move to the western part. Suhrawardy expressed his views at a press conference in Delhi on 24 April 1947.



FIG 4: UNITED BENGAL SCHEME

However, this plan was in direct contrast to the plan of the Muslim League, which sought the creation of a separate Muslim homeland based on the two-nation theory. The opinion of the Bengal Provincial Muslim League leadership was divided. Leader Abul Hashim supported it, but Nurul Amin and Mohammad Akram Khan opposed it. However, Muhammad Ali Jinnah realized the validity of Suhrawardy's argument and gave his tacit support to the plan. After Jinnah's approval, Suhrawardy began to gather support for his plan. As far as the Congress is concerned, only a handful of leaders agreed with the plan, such as the influential Bengal Provincial Congress leader Sarat Chandra Bose, Netaji's elder brother and Kiran Shankar Roy. However, most other

leaders and Congress leaders, including Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel, rejected the plan. The Nationalist Hindu Mahasabha, led by Syama Prasad Mookerjee, strongly opposed this and regarded it as nothing more than Suhrawardy's ploy to prevent the division of the state so that its industrial west, including the city of Kolkata, remained under the League's control. It also claimed that even if the plan was for a sovereign Bengal state, it would be a virtual Pakistan, and the Hindu minority would always be at the mercy of the Muslim majority.

Impact of Partition on Refugee Bengali Women

The effects of 1947 partition of India, is still considered as the largest human migration that the society has seen witnessed in the history. The impact of the partition was the highest only on the people from East Bengal, especially women who unfortunately became the refugees within their own state which was previously united. When thousands of refugees were coming out from East Bengal every day after the February Riot in 1950, the East Bengali woman had to pay the cost of independence by their chastity, lives of their husbands, their own life as well as the lives of their beloved children. Women were the most common targets of attack especially at that time. Forced marriage, rape and abduction of women on a large scale were very common ways of attacks upon the minorities. The refugee women were humiliated and badly tortured on their way to West Bengal in the form of search by the Pakistani customs officers and staff. The impact of those incidents still lasts in the society. This research paper intends investigate the partition of Bengal (1947), refugee life struggle in contemporary Bengali novels.



FIG 5: BENGALI REFUGEE WOMEN

After much persecution and suffering, the refugees came to West Bengal where there was no one to welcome them. But they faced different problems each time. A large number of them came to Sealdah station where they had to spend a few days or a week, a few times more than a month. The refugees were asked to stay in the open station premises. Women living behind closed doors were suddenly forced to step out of their homes. Sure, it shocked him, at least sometimes. Everywhere in the camps and at Sealdah station, refugee girls were exploited and their innocence was abused by men. They were misled and put in a helpless position. Forced marriage was a very common feature of this difficult time. The suffering of the women who had to accept their kidnappers as husbands was indeed tremendous.

Both the governments took some initiative to cure those affected women and send them back to their parents. But it was a difficult task. The government's initiative failed to solve the problem and added a new dimension to it. Many of the abducted women, the official recovery operation meant a second uprootment. Many of them openly protested against the recovery operation and refused to return to their parents or relations. They clearly knew what awaited them. They were reluctant to go there because they knew that their family and society were not good enough to accept them wholeheartedly.

Displacement 1946 to 1971

After the partition of Bengal between Hindu-majority West Bengal and Muslim-majority East Bengal, there was an influx of refugees from both sides. An estimation suggests that before Partition, West Bengal had a population of 21.2 million, of whom 5.7 million, or roughly 30 percent, were Muslim minorities, and East Bengal had 39.1 million people, of whom 11.4 million, or roughly 33 percent, were predominantly Hindu minorities. Nearly 5 million Hindus have left Pakistan's East Bengal for India's West Bengal region, and about 3 million Muslims have left India's West Bengal for Pakistan's East Bengal region immediately after Partition because of violence and rioting resulting from mobs supporting West Bengal and East Bengal. By 1960 an estimated 1 million Hindu refugees had entered West Bengal, and about 700,000 Muslims had left for East Pakistan. The influx of refugees into Bengal was coupled with the fact that the government was less prepared to rehabilitate them, resulting in huge housing and

sanitation problems for millions of people, most of whom were large property owners in East Bengal.

During the East Pakistan riots of 1964, according to Indian officials, 135,000 Hindu refugees arrived in West Bengal from East Pakistan, and Muslims began to migrate from West Bengal to East Pakistan. According to Pakistani figures, 83,000 Muslim refugees had arrived from West Bengal in early April. In 1971, during the Bangladesh Liberation War against Pakistan, an estimated 7,235,916 refugees arrived in West Bengal from Bangladesh, India, about 95% of them were Bengali Hindus and after Bangladesh's independence, about 521,912 were Bengali Hindu refugees. Were. Decided to stay back in West Bengal. Bangladeshi Hindus mainly settled in Nadia, North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas districts of West Bengal after 1971.

Results After Partition

Before the official Radcliffe Line was drawn in 1947, these were the religious demographics in Bengal: Muslim-majority districts: Dinajpur, Rangpur, Malda, Murshidabad, Rajshahi, Bogra, Pabna, Mymensingh, Jessore, Nadia, Faridpur, Dhaka, Tippera, Bakerganj, Noakhali and Chittagong. Hindu-majority districts: Calcutta, Howrah, Hooghly, Birbhum, Burdwan, Bankura, Midnapore, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, 24 Pargana and Khulna Buddhist-majority district: Chittagong Hill Tract.

Final Results After Partition

Pakistan: East Dinajpur, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Bogra, Pabna, Mymensingh, Sylhet (except Karimganj), Khulna, Bakerganj, plain Tippera (Tripura), Noakhali, Chittagong, Jessore, East Nadia, Chittagong Hill Tracts. In India: West Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, Malda, Murshidabad, West Nadia, Calcutta, 24 Pargana, Burdwan, Birbhum, Midnapore, Howrah, Hooghly and Karimganj district in Assam.

Crisis Due to Displacement After Partition

Mass exodus of population started soon after partition. Lakhs of Hindus came to India from East Bengal. Most of them settled in West Bengal. A significant number also went to Assam, Tripura and other states. However, the refugee crisis was markedly different from the crisis in Punjab on

India's western border. There were widespread communal riots in Punjab just before the partition. The result was an exodus of population in Punjab almost immediately after partition, as fearful people from both sides left their homes. Within a year, the population exchange between East and West Punjab was largely complete, but violence in Bengal was confined to Kolkata and Noakhali. So, in Bengal, migration happened much more slowly and continued in the three decades after partition. Although the riots in pre-independence Bengal were limited, the environment was still communally charged. Hindus in East Bengal and Muslims in West Bengal both felt insecure and had to make an important decision whether to move to another country or live under another community for an uncertain future. Among the Hindus of East Bengal, who were placed in an economically better position, they were left out earlier. Government servants were given the opportunity to exchange their posts between India and Pakistan. The educated urban upper and middle classes, the rural elite, merchants, businessmen and artisans left for India soon after Partition. They often had relatives and other relations in West Bengal and settled down with little difficulty. Muslims followed a similar pattern. The urban and educated upper and middle classes first left for East Bengal. However, it was more difficult for poor Hindus in East Bengal, most of whom are Dalits, to migrate. His only asset was immovable land holdings. Many sharecroppers had no skill other than farming. As a result, most of them decided to stay in East Bengal. However, the political climate in Pakistan deteriorated soon after Partition and communal violence began to escalate. In 1950, there were horrific riots in Barisal and other places in East Pakistan, leading to further exodus of Hindus.

Government Scheme for Displacement

In Punjab, the Indian government anticipated population transfer and was ready to take proactive measures. Land plots vacated by Muslims were allotted to the visiting Hindu and Sikh refugees. The government allocated adequate resources for the resettlement of refugees in Punjab. In contrast, there was no such plan in the eastern part of the country. Neither the central nor the state governments of West Bengal expected large-scale population exchanges, and there was no coordinated policy to rehabilitate millions of homeless people. The newly independent country had few resources, and the central government was tired of settling seven million refugees in Punjab. Instead of providing resettlement, the Indian government tried to stop and even reverse the influx of refugees from East Bengal. India and Pakistan signed the Liaquat-Nehru Pact in

1950, to prevent any kind of population exchange between West and East Bengal. Both countries agreed to take back the refugees and return them their property, which they had evacuated to their respective countries. However, in practice, both countries failed to maintain it. Even after the governments of both countries failed to provide any significant aid, it became clear that there was a determination not to send the refugees back. The government's policy of East Bengal refugee resettlement mostly involved sending them to evacuated areas, mostly outside West Bengal. One of the most controversial plans was the government's decision to forcibly resettle refugees in Dandakaranya, a barren land in central India.

Social Impact due to Displacement

Without the aid of the government, the refugees often settled themselves. Some got jobs in factories. Many embraced small businesses and hawking. Several refugee colonies emerged in Nadia, 24 Parganas and the suburbs of Kolkata. More recently it has been argued that refugees facilitated an incremental urbanization within the boundaries of Calcutta, without accumulation. This process has been termed as 'urbanization with accumulation'.

Economic Impact in West Bengal

Radcliffe's line divided Bengal into two parts, which historically have always been a single economic, cultural and ethnic (Bengali-Hindu or Bengali-Muslim) region. The two parts were closely intertwined. The Fertile East produced food and raw materials that the West consumed and the Industrial West produced manufactured goods that were consumed by the East. According to the POV, it was considered either an exploitative or mutually beneficial trade and exchange. This, of course, was severely hampered by the Partition. Rail, road and water communication routes were cut between them. After partition, West Bengal faced acute shortage of food as fertile rice producing districts moved to East Bengal. This decrease continued into the 1950s and 1960s as well. By 1959, West Bengal faced an annual food shortage of 950,000 tones. Hunger strike has become common in Kolkata. Jute was the largest industry in Bengal at the time of partition. The Radcliffe Line left every single jute mill in West Bengal, but four-fifths of the jute-producing land in East Bengal. The best quality fiber yielding varieties of jute were cultivated mostly in East Bengal. India and Pakistan initially agreed on a trade deal for West Bengal's mills to import raw jute from East Bengal. However, Pakistan had plans to set up its

own mills and ban the export of raw jute to India. The mills of West Bengal faced acute shortage and the industry faced crisis. On the other hand, the jute farmers in East Bengal were now without a market to sell their produce. The export of jute to West Bengal suddenly became an anti-national act for Pakistan. Smuggling of raw jute increased across the border, but West Bengal rapidly increased jute production and became largely self-sufficient in jute in the mid-1950s.

Conclusion

Partition and East Bengali migrant women displaced millions who left their homes in search of their religious identity, a path that marked a less idealistic reality of hardship and alienation. Partition brought with it the burden of adjustment, be it Hindu or Muslim. Unfortunately for Bengal, its trust with fragmented land and life didn't officially end until 1971 when Bangladesh was born. The weaker sections suffered a lot during this period.

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