

INDIAN INDEPENDENCE AT THE MID NIGHT : ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with the immediate consequences after Independence of India. After introduction, it will reveal that how the Indian Self-Government was formed and what are the challenges it faced after partition. The division of various resources according to the 1947 act, division of boundary, division of civil employees, infrastructure, finances, military personnel and its establishment etc. are explained in detail. The paper also deals with the worst face of the violence due to partition and rehabilitation of the people across the border. Later, the Lucknow Pact signed between Liaquat and Nehru is also part of this paper. My aim is to make understand the students, scholars and the people of our country, the prices paid by the Indians even after independence. The article shows the way, that even after this disaster event also, how the people of India grew up gradually to come parallel to the technically sound nations of the world.

KEYWORDS: India, Independence, Conflicts, Division

INTRODUCTION

After long struggle and sacrifice, finally the Indians reached to its ultimate goal of independence of the country as promised by the Labour Party Government of British. It was the 15th day of August 1947, when Indian people opened their eyes in free India. They celebrated their first day of independence like a person who constructs his own house at the Everest after long struggle and pains taking efforts and enjoys the days of peace. On 14th August, 1947 a session of the Constituent Assembly in Parliament House was called at 11 o'clock night. The Session was chaired by Dr. Rajendra Prasad. On this occasion Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, who was elected as the first prime minister of Independent India, expressed his feelings in his epoch making speech. He said: 'Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time has come when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. It is our fault, of course, and we may it suffer for our failings. But I cannot excuse or forgive the British authorities for the deliberate part they have played in creating disruption in India. All other injuries will pass, but this will continue to plague us for a much longer period. At the stroke of midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life of freedom'. Further he said: at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India'. Early morning on 15th August, 1947, being a Prime Minister of India, Pt. Nehru hoisted the Indian national tri-colour flag on the Lahori Gate of Red Fort in Delhi. The first day of the Independent India was celebrated as a national festival and people gathered to welcome the great leaders of the nation. The people of India looked forward with new hope of ray in new India.

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Undoubtedly, the happiness of freedom was unlimited but it mixed with a lot of pain and sadness, because the dream of Indian unity was shattered. The India was divided, but the worst thing was that the relationship between two countries was torn. It created the gap between brothers and sisters, fathers and son and also between the two brothers. Because of the partition, thousands of the people lost their lives across the border and the lakhs of people became refugees in their own land as they were forced to vacate the lands of their ancestors.

FORMATION OF SELF GOVERNMENT AFTER INDEPENDENCE

The Lord Mountbatten was appointed as a first Governor-General of the free India and the Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru took over as a first Prime Minister of India on 15th August, 1947. With Pt. Nehru, 15 other members were sworn-in as a minister, to assist him. Shri Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was appointed as the Deputy Prime Minister of India and served on this post till his last breath in December 1950. After Lord Mountbatten as Governor-General of free India, Sri C. Rajagopalachari became the first Indian Governor-General of free India who served till India became republic on 26th January, 1950 and elected Dr. Rajendra Prasad as its first president.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF FREE INDIA

It was a hilarious moment to every Indian as they obtained freedom from the shackles of the British rule. Though, India was divided in two dominion states, but there were many princely states during that time and it was the

biggest challenge to unite them. Besides this, the other challenges were of territory, administration, to prevent communal riots, rehabilitation of refugees, to protect the Muslims staying in India and also to give safe passage to the migrating Muslims from the communal gangs in addition to beware of the Communist insurgency. All these challenges were of immediate nature because if any of these problems arises then it will be difficult to control it. The other major problems those may not require immediate attention but to be sorted out as earliest were: formation of the constituent assembly and of the Indian Constitution and conducting the free and fair elections. Besides these issues, as India being an agrarian country, there was requirement of abolition of feudal set up in agriculture and industrial sector etc.

DIVISION: THE WORST FACE OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT

The division report of two dominion states of India was already prepared by the Boundary Commission on 12th August 1947, but it was disclosed to public on 15th August. This cleverness was shown by the Lord Mountbatten intentionally so in case the communal riots take place then it should not fall on the head of British Government. But the way, British government demarcated the boundary and left the people burn in fire of communalism, was the most unethical.

In fact the British Government was very well aware that the communal clash may occur in the same way as occurred in August 1946 and if this time the communal clash occurred due to the independence with partition then the condition of the country will be more inflammable. His guess was perfect. The areas, in which the Radcliffe Line was drawn, those areas were more vulnerable as most of the cases of the rapes, murders, kidnappings, robbery and attack were reported in these areas only. The people from all the religions laced with local weapons roaming around the cities to kill each other. The worst situation was seen in the trains those were passing through the demarcation line. In these trains the dead bodies of the refugees of across the border was found. In this about 60,000 people from the west and 120,000 people from the east were killed. In the area of Bengal the violence was lesser comparing to the Punjab because the Gandhiji made his best efforts to stop the violence through fasts. In other places of the north India i.e. Delhi region the minority community was on the receiving end because of the revenge of Punjab.

As said earlier the Lord Mountbatten was expecting that after independence with partition the communal violence may occur, hence to counter it, he ordered 50,000 men of the Boundary Force to get assembled. But Pt. Jawaher Lal Nehru did not allow because the Boundary Force was also communally divided and the British officers were in hurry to leave the India. In the words of the Lockhart, who was the

Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army from 15th August to 31st December, 1947: 'the widespread disorder would have been under control, if all the personnel from civil and armed services had been placed in their respective countries'.

DIVISION OF RESOURCES ACCORDING TO THE ACT OF 1947

In Act of the 1947, the procedure and solutions of the three main issues was mentioned. These issues were i) to solve the issue of settlement of the boundaries between the two nations; ii) the division of apparatus and personnel of Indian Civil Services and other services; iii) division of military assets and formations.

a) Division of states of Punjab and Bengal between the two dominions: Sir Cyril Radcliffe was appointed to divide the country between two dominion states. The major problem was in partition of the Punjab and Bengal provinces because both the provinces were of Muslim majority. Thus, according to the partition plan the members of the Punjab and Bengal legislative assemblies met in two sections, i) those representing the Muslim majority districts and ii) the rest of the province. Like this they decided by simple majority in favour of the partition of the two provinces.

i) The area of West Punjab gone to Pakistan with territory of 62,000 square miles, and 15.7 million people (according to 1941 census) in which 11.85 million were Muslims.

ii) The area of East Punjab went to India with territory of 37,000 square miles and 12.6 million people of whom 4.37 million were Muslims.

iii) In case of Bengal the West Bengal became the part of India with territory of 28,000 square miles, and 21.2 million people, of which 5.3 million were Muslims.

iv) The area of East Bengal went to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), with territory of 49,400 square miles and 39.10 million people out of these 27.7 million were Muslims and the rest were non-Muslims.

The above division shows that both the sides of the Radcliffe Line, number of the people became religious minority i.e. 20 million non-Muslims in Pakistan and 42 million Muslims in India.

b) Division by Boundary Commission: The British government appointed the Boundary Commission under the chairmanship of Sir Cyril Radcliffe. This Commission consisted, the 2 Muslims and 2 non-Muslim judges. The drawback of this commission was that Sir Radcliffe was not aware much about the India. The material he brought like; maps and census related data was not latest. Though by this material only he wants to draw the boundaries and sort out the disputed points. Of course, the religious population was the deciding factor about the people but other issues like: division

of rivers as natural boundaries, railways and roadway links, administrative units, and other related facilities such as the canal system etc. to be taken into consideration. For all this hectic work, Sir Radcliffe got only six weeks time. In this connection, Walter Reid said: in 'Keeping the Jewel in the Crown' that: 'He (Radcliffe) tried to take account of irrigation canals and water supplies so that there was enough water in the Central Punjab, but on the scale with which he was dealing, he was bound to make mistakes. If villages weren't bisected by the boundary they were separated from the villager's fields, railway stations from the towns they served and communities from the resources on which they relied'. In this connection even Leonard Mosley wrote the quote of Radcliffe in 'The Last Days of the British Raj'. About his appointment regarding the chairman of Boundary Commission Sir Radcliffe said: 'They had absolutely no conception. They asked me to come in and do this sticky job for them, and when I had done it they hated it. But what could they expect in the circumstances? Surely, they must have realised what was coming to them once they had decided on partition. But they had made absolutely no plans for coping with the situation'.

c) **Division of Resources:** The India's partition was not only territorial but it was division of the resources of the civil and military forces, equipments and other infrastructures also.

i) **Division of Civil Government employees and infrastructure:** After the territorial division the main issue was to sort out the division of civilian government employees and infrastructure. Thus, a partition council was established under president ship of the Governor-General, which consist two representatives from India and two from the Pakistan. To support the council, a steering committee was formed. It consists of H. M. Patel and Mohammad Ali. Firstly all the civil servants were asked to give their option that in which country they want to serve. In this regard approximately 1,60,000 employees asked for transfer from India to Pakistan and vice versa. During the partition, the Indian civil servants were in very limited numbers hence the option were also limited. Thus, the distinction was made between the Europeans and the Indians civil servants to both the countries. The Indian civil servants were also having option to continue their services in India or Pakistan. Though, the British officers given an opportunity that if they wish then they can continue their same services on their existing pay perks and if they wish they can take retirement also.

ii) **Division of Finances:** The division of the finance was more challengeable, comparing to the other resources. The tension arose about the available cash and balance in addition to the allocation of public debt. The Pakistan claimed the ¼ of the total cash, but India did not agree. The historian Ramachandra Guha wrote in his book 'India After Gandhi' that 'the Indian government had withheld Pakistan's share of the 'Sterling Balance' which the British owed jointly to the

two dominions, a debt incurred on account of Indian contributions to the Second World War. The amount was some Rs 550 million. The Indian government was not keen to release the money due to Pakistan, as it was angry with Pakistan for having attempted to seize Kashmir by force. Gandhi saw this as being unnecessarily spiteful. He went on a fast and made the ending of the fast conditional on the transfer of the money owed to Pakistan. He succeeded in pressurising the Congress leadership to decide to give more cash resources to Pakistan.

iii) **Division of Military Personnel and Establishment:** To divide the military bases (Army, Navy Air Force and Para- Military forces) a joint defence council was set up under headship of Auchinleck. The council gathered the information regarding the armed forces personnel and their arms and ammunition, defence equipments and accessories, plants and machinery, stores and their materials and decided that the Muslim-majority units should be transferred to the Pakistan and non-Muslim units to the India. Even, accordingly the Auchinleck also said to the British army to leave with their moveable defence infrastructure. The British Army Officials started to leave India w. e. f. 17th August, 1947 and by end of the February-1948, they completed the process.

REHABILITATION AND RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES

The people those have crossed the border from Pakistan during partition they were called the refugees and those left India and went to Pakistan, they called Mohajirs because they had not left their homes voluntarily. In fact this was the biggest drawback during partition that there was no exchange of the population properly in both sides of government. So, the rehabilitation and resettlement of refugees and Mohajirs became an immediate challenge to the Governments of the India and Pakistan. The Nehru government formed a Cabinet Committee in Delhi to deal with the situation and also formed a Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation to look after the refugees. For the people those left the India their 'evacuee property' was also protected by the Government for the future if they come back. But the refugees those occupied empty houses of the Muslims to them it was almost difficult to force them out. This was another reason that those displaced people did not turn up. In East Punjab refugees stayed temporarily in refugee camps till 1949. The Nehru government took many corrective measures to accommodate these refugees. In urban areas the government started industrial and vocational training schemes and gave grants to the refugees to start small businesses or industries. For refugees of rural areas the Government gave the land and subsidised loans for agricultural and housing. However, the State and Central Government provided maximum resources to the refugees still these were inadequate. In this case the people of the depressed class were big looser comparing to the

people from the higher caste. But the people of good political link got the good opportunity.

In eastern sector especially in Bengal, this problem continued for longer time and also became complicated. But the great thing was that some of the high-caste landlord and middle class Hindus migrated to the West Bengal through exchange of the property and government service mutually. This happened till 1948 only. In December-January (1949-50) again the violence was occurred in Khulna (Bengal) in which the large number of the peasants left the East Pakistan. In anticipation, the anti-Muslim riots began here in February 1950. These riots forced approximately one million Muslims to leave the West Bengal. Hence, due to this, further situation became worst and the anti-Hindu violence in East Pakistan took place. Thus till 1951, nearly 15 lakhs Hindu refugees came to West Bengal. This became the biggest challenge to both the government i.e. State as well as the Centre.

LIAQUAT-NEHRU PACT

The Liaquat-Nehru Pact is also known as the Delhi Pact on Minorities. This pact was signed between Indian Prime Minister Pt. Jawaher Lal Nehru and then Prime Minister of Pakistan Liaquat Ali to sort out the problems of the refugees and also to restore and maintain the communal peace across the border especially in Punjab and the Bengal. In this connection an agreement was signed by both the Prime Ministers on 8th April, 1950. According to this Pact both the countries are suppose to appoint the ministers from minority communities in State as well as in the Centre. Simultaneously, Pact says that a Minority Commissions should also be set up in parallel to the Inquiry Commission to find out the reasons of the communal riots in both the countries. Further it will suggest the corrective measures to prevent such riots in future. Under the Pact, India and the Pakistan also agreed to depute two Central Ministers of the minority community, at both the sides of the border in the affected regions till situation normalise. Both the government tried to motivate refugees to go back their original homes. But mission was failed because of lack of believe and confidence in respective Government for safety and the securities. The Indian Government brought an Act in 1968, under which the property of refugees were declared as the enemy property (Enemy Property Act-1968, further amended in 2016). The Liaquat-Nehru Pact was criticised by the Hindu fundamentalists like; S. P. Mukherjee and K.C. Neogy. Mr. Mukherjee resigned from the Nehru Cabinet against the provisions of this Pact. The Nehru Government opened the Centres of Refugee Settlements in some places of Delhi capital such as: Lajpat Nagar, Punjabi Bagh, and Nizamuddin East etc. Some of these areas

constructed the housing complexes, so the refugees can get settled permanently. The people those came from the West Pakistan settled in Punjab, which is now known as Haryana. The Sindh Hindus settled in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. The Ulhasnagar in Maharashtra was developed especially for the refugees of Sindh. In eastern states of West Bengal, Tripura, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya and other states of eastern region accommodated the refugees of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). The Government also settled some refugees in the Andaman Islands. That is the region that at present the Bengali speaking people have the largest population in some of the parts of the Andaman Islands.

CONCLUSION

After the Indian Independence Act-1947, India got freedom from Colonial rule. The Mountbatten Plan of 3rd June, 1947 was accepted on 4th July and on 15th July bill was kept in the British Parliament which was passed on 16th July. The British Crown signed the Bill on 18th July, 1947. Hence, within 15 days the Bill became an Act. Sir Samuel told about this Act 'it is an event in the history: 'Treaty of peace signed without war'. But after the independence, the Indian people faced the challenges of the division of the movable and non-moveable property. Of course, gradually, the issues of the territory, administration, rehabilitation of refugees and communist insurgency were also sorted out. After these challenges the Indian Leaders formed the Government under the Prime Minister ship of the Pt. J. L. Nehru and took the steps to develop the nation through concrete planning. He was assisted with various ministers those have segregated the work of urgent nature and long term planning. But the seeds of hate sown by the British between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, resulted the death of lakhs of Indians across the borders. Even today also the proxy war had become order of the day between India and Pakistan. The Indo-Pak wars of 1965, 1971 and the Kargil war (1999) are the example of the communalism of Pakistan. Still, India always came out with flying colours in all the proxy wars with Pakistan.

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