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**Chapter: Two Nations Theory, Negotiations on Partition of  
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**Two Nations Theory, Negotiations on Partition of India and Pakistan.**

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## **Two Nations Theory, Negotiations on Partition of India and Pakistan.**

### **Introduction**

The plan to partition British India into two states was announced on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1947. These two states would be India and Pakistan. The latter, that is Pakistan was to include the North West Frontier Province, Baluchistan, 16 districts from Punjab, East Bengal, Muslim majority provinces of Sind. There exist disagreements amongst scholars regarding the factors leading to Partition. The role played by the Indian National Congress, Muslim League and the British authorities, significantly shaped the course of Independence in the Sub-Continent. Some have argued that it was the inability of the Indian National Congress to forge an alliance with the Muslim League that gave rise to Muslim separatism. It has also been argued that it was the strength and popularity of the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan that led to Partition. Some suggest that it was the British policy of divide and rule which resulted in Partition. This chapter will explore these debates in detail. There has been disagreement about the causative factors behind Partition of India and Pakistan but there is no disagreement about the fact that this was one of the most tumultuous and violent processes of modern times.

Millions of people were displaced during and after partition. Even before the exact boundary between these two states was formalized by the Boundary Commission, movement of population began across expected borders. It has been estimated that within two weeks of declaration of independence, about 35 lakh Hindus and Sikhs had crossed over from West to East Punjab. Additionally, by 6<sup>th</sup> November, 1947 about 29,000 refugees had moved across both directions, around 673 refugee trains had transported about 23 lakh people between 27<sup>th</sup> August and 6<sup>th</sup> November, 1947. It has been approximated that by the time migration of people ended around 8 million people had been displaced across the borders of Punjab and Bengal (Menon and Bhasin, 1993, pg. WS-3). During this transition people suffered acts of intense brutality. Many trains and caravans of people which left from either side of the border to cross over to the other side in the hope of a better future, never reached their destinations instead each passenger was killed

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on route. Women were abducted and sexually harassed, some women were even killed by the men of their own communities in order to 'save' them from being tortured. The partition of India and Pakistan has been one of the bloodiest events in modern history.

Against this back drop, the following chapter would address some key issues pertaining to the partition and the two nation theory. Section one would look at the chronology of events that led upto the partition. Section two would explore the arguments of Jinnah and the Muslim League on the two-nation theory. Section three would focus on the role played by contending parties in the process of Partition including the British and the Indian National Congress. Section four would examine the various causes which have been attributed to fuelling the partition. Section five would explore the aftermath of Partition.

Before embarking on a journey to discover tenets of the two-nation theory and the partition of India, let us have a look at the map proposed for the partition.

Map 1- India and Pakistan in October 1947.

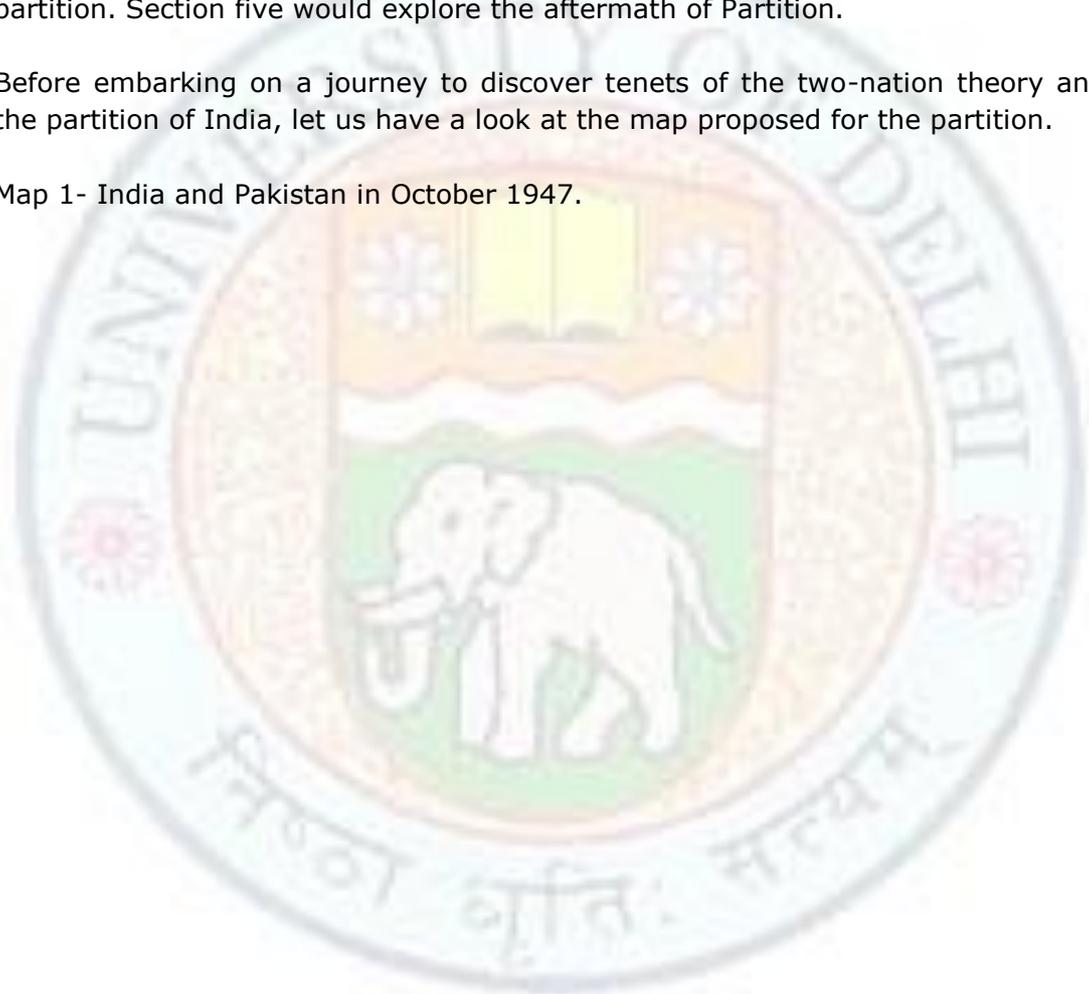




FIG. 1—Territorial structure of India and Pakistan. Boundaries: 1, Former Indian Empire; 2, Indo-Pakistan; 3, Provinces, Major States and Agencies; 4, Minor State; 5, Pakistan Provinces; 6, States adhering to Pakistan; 7, Indian Provinces; 8, States adhering to Indian Union; 9, States declared for independence or of doubtful status on October 1, 1947; 10, Foreign Possessions: 1, Diu, 2, Damão, 3, Goa (Portuguese); 4, Mahé, 5, Karikal, 6, Pondichéri, 7, Yanam, 8, Chandernagor (French).

Source- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Partition-of-India-Spate-Jan-1948.jpg> as viewed on 25/2/2014.

## Section 1: Critical events from 1909 to 1947 leading upto Partition.

The partition of Bengal served as the first act of the British towards breaking Hindu Muslim unity. The introduction of the Morley Minto reforms in 1909 proved to be a critical juncture in struggle against colonial domination in India. The Morley Minto reforms or the India Council Act Of 1909 were drafted by John Morley (Liberal Secretary of State for India) and the Earl of Minto (Governor

General of India). These reforms came as a response of the imperial British administration to the popular uprising which followed the partition of Bengal in 1905.

It has been argued that the intention behind these reforms was to check Indian nationalist unity by promoting the sentiment of Muslim communalism. It was the first time in British India that under the ambit of these reforms it became possible to elect political representatives to legislative councils. The reforms introduced a system under which separate electorates were formed wherein only Muslims could vote for Muslim candidates in constituencies reserved for them. Additionally, seats were reserved for Muslims in the Imperial Legislature, Provincial Councils, and in District and Municipal Boards. By so doing the British wanted to promote the idea that the political, economic and cultural interests of the Muslims and Hindus were separate (Chandra, Mukherjee, Panikkar, Mahajan, 1987, pg. 142).

The Montagu Chelmsford reforms or the Government of India Act 1919 in addition to the reservation of seats for Muslims, included provisions for the reservation of seats in provincial and Imperial legislatures for Sikhs, Anglo-Indians, Indian Christians and domicile Europeans.

The next big milestone for the purposes of the current context was the Hindu Muslim unity as part of the Non-Cooperation movement and fall out of Muslim support on the Khilafat issue. After World War 1, the Muslims in India were dismayed by the fact that the Caliph of Turkey would no longer retain his powers over the Muslim holy places. The Caliph was viewed by the Muslims as their spiritual head and it was his duty to look after the holy places. When Gandhi ji and other Congress leaders were planning the Non-Cooperation movement in 1920, the Muslims agreed to join them to express their discontent about the above mentioned issue. The period for which the movement persisted, there was remarkable Hindu Muslim unity in terms of their participation in it.

Following the Chauri Chaura incident where some British policemen were killed due to some action initiated by the participants of the Non-Cooperation movement, the movement itself was called off by Gandhi ji. The Muslim leaders felt betrayed since their cause of revolting against the removal of the Caliphate was left unfinished due to the calling off of the movement. From that time on, the differences between the Hindus and the Muslims only increased over a period of time and eventually became irreconcilable.

After 1930 the demand for a separate Muslim Nation after independence began to be articulated. Sir Muhammad Iqbal became the leader of the Muslim League in 1930 and for the first time articulated a demand for a separate Muslim state. He argued that Muslims and Hindus constituted two different nations in themselves and were incompatible. The congress rejected this theory and argued in favour of a united India based on unity between different religious groups.

The policy of the British to divide and rule got exemplified in the Communal Award of 1932. This policy further strengthened the provisions for separate electorates. In 1940 Jinnah declared at the Muslim League conference held at Lahore, "Hindus and the Muslims belong to two different religions, philosophies,

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social customs and literature.... It is quite clear that Hindus and Muslims derive their inspiration from different sources of history. They have different epics, different heroes and different episodes.... To yoke together two such nations under a single state, one as a numerical minority and the other as a majority, must lead to growing discontent and final destruction of any fabric that may be so built up for the government of such a state" ( Courtesy wikipedia- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All-India\\_Muslim\\_League](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All-India_Muslim_League), seen on 3/3/2014).



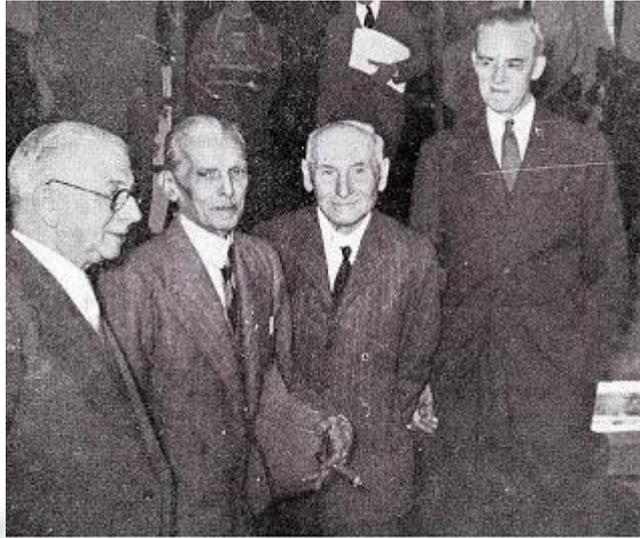
Picture- Muslim League session at Lahore 1940. Source- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All-India\\_Muslim\\_League](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All-India_Muslim_League). As viewed on 3/3/2014.

By 1946, it had become clear that the British would have to transfer power and end their colonial rule. The major conflict that ensued now was one between the notions of independence held by the Congress and the Muslim League. The Congress wanted power to be transferred to one center whereas the Muslim League wanted the establishment of two states wherein one would be a Muslim nation. Extending their argument about a united political center, the Congress suggested that the demands of the minorities could be accommodated by working out a framework of power sharing. The British also wanted to transfer the political power to a united center as they could not envisage a future Pakistan as their ally. A united India seemed to be a potential ally from the perspective of the British. The British policy reflected this view as it was argued that the minority would be allowed to veto the decision of a united India.

The Cripps Mission in 1942 suggested that India be granted a Dominion status under the British empire. The Mission did not accept the demand for Pakistan but allowed for a provision whereby provinces could secede from the Indian Union. The Congress and the Muslim League interpreted this in their own unique ways. The Congress argued that the Cripps Mission had disapproved the suggestion of partitioning India but they found the provision for secession problematic. The Muslim League on the other hand said that the very provision for secession was provided by Cripps to allow for the possibility of partition of India.

The Cabinet Mission plan of 1946 began by arguing for transfer of power to a united India with provisional autonomy to Muslims dominated areas. An interim government was formed in September 1946 but it only had representatives from the Congress as the Muslim League was not willing to settle for anything less than an independent Pakistan (Chandra, Mukherjee, Panikkar, Mahajan, 1987, pg.493).

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Jinnah (2nd from left) With the member of the Cabinet Mission. Mr. Alaxendar (left) Lord Pethic Lawrence and Sir Stafford Cripps

Picture- Cabinet Mission Plan 1946. Source- <http://m-a-jinnah.blogspot.in/2010/04/cabinet-mission-1946.html>. As viewed on 3/3/2014.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> August 1946 Jinnah declared Direct Action Day and the Muslim League raised the demand for an independent Pakistan. There were communal tensions amongst the Hindus and the Muslims in places including Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, Bihar, Punjab. Communal frenzy was beginning to take shape in various parts of India. In Calcutta 16-20<sup>th</sup> August 1946 came to be known as 'Great Killing' as there was sporadic rioting, murder and looting (Godbole, 2006, pg.36). Thousands of wounded people were admitted to hospitals. When Jinnah was asked to respond to the situation, he lamented that it was the Congress's suppression of Muslims that was leading to these tensions were brewing and the only way out was to establish Pakistan.

The British were caught in a situation wherein their negotiations with the League were at a stalemate and in order to curb communal violence it was decided to accept the League's demands. Had the British worked hard at the negotiations between the Congress and the Muslim League perhaps another solution could have emerged. The British announced that 30<sup>th</sup> June 1947 would be the time that they would initiate withdrawal from India and appointed Lord Mountbatten as the Viceroy to oversee the transfer of power. He was asked by the British government to explore options of creating a united India or the option of partition. Around this period the communal tensions were very high. Mountbatten agreed with the Muslim League's demand for an independent Pakistan but he also saw merit in the Congress's demand for unity. Hence, it was decided that even though Pakistan would be created, attempts would be made to keep it as small as possible.

The Mountbatten plan as announced on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1947, stated that power would be transferred from the British to two states- India and Pakistan. In order to secure a Dominion status to India and to escape from their responsibility to curb the rapidly deteriorating communal situation, the British announced the date of independence as 15 August 1947. Following these decisions massive outflows of

population began from both sides of the newly declared borders. No one could have foreseen the extent of devastation that was to follow in the process of partitioning British colonial India.

It is critical to ask, how was the idea of partition defended in ideological and theoretical terms? What was the argumentative justification which was provided to support the demand for partition? We would explore these questions in subsequent sections.

## **Section 2: Jinnah, Muslim League and the two-nation theory.**

In order to grasp the two-nation theory it is important to examine the philosophical strands in Muslim political thought which supported this idea. Muhammad Ali Jinnah is believed to be the founder of Pakistan. He believed that the Muslims of South Asia constituted a separate 'nation' which had a single culture and language. According to Jinnah, since Hindu and Muslim religions were so vastly different culturally, it would be impossible for them to co-exist in one nation state. Besides, Muslims would constitute a numerical minority in India and this would lead to a situation where their rights would be curbed. Hence it was critical to establish two-nations (Shani, 2007, pg. 70). Interestingly Jinnah envisaged Pakistan as a secular sovereign state where all religions would be treated equally.

In order to deeply understand the two-nation theory, it is important to examine the Presidential address of Jinnah to the Muslim League in Lahore in 1940. In his address, Jinnah emphasized that the Muslim League was the sole organization, which was committed to voicing the concerns of Muslims in colonial India. He argued that in Congress led Provinces Muslims had been betrayed after the 1937 elections, as their interests had not been adequately looked into. He urged the Muslims to organize themselves into a self-reliant political community divorced from the Congress.

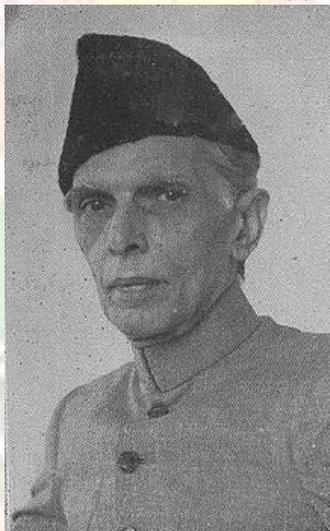
Further, in his Presidential Address of 1940 Jinnah voiced his disagreement with Gandhi on the question of the possibility for securing the rights of minorities in independent India. He suggested that the Congress was dominated by Hindus and was incapable to responding to Muslim concerns. He feared that the Constituent Assembly would also be dominated by Hindus and so would independent India, leaving no space for Muslim self-expression in political, economic and cultural terms. According to Jinnah, since Muslims were equal stakeholders in the process of determining the contours of independence, the British had to acknowledge this equality in all decision-making processes leading to the formalization of independence (Jinnah, 1940).

Jinnah stressed that Hindus and Muslims constituted different nations. Since Muslims constituted a distinct nation, they were entitled to their own homeland or territory. He argued, "The Muslims cannot divorce their religion from politics. In Islam religious and political beliefs are not separated from each other. Religion

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and politics are inseparably associated in the minds and thoughts of all Muslims... Their religion includes their politics and their politics are a part of their religion. The mosque not only constitutes a place of worship but also the Assembly Hall... They are born into a system... Hence Hindu-Muslim unity or nationalism, signifying homogeneity between them in all non-religious matters, is an unimaginable. The Islamic polity in which religion and politics are inseparably united requires perfect isolation for its development. The idea of a common state with heterogeneous membership is alien to Islam and can never be fruitful" (as quoted in Shakir, 1986, pg. 153). If the British were concerned about the peace in the region, they would need to support the creation of separate homelands for Hindus and Muslims. This would be the only way of avoiding communal war because once these two nations would have room for political self-expression, there would remain no reason for antagonism. He envisaged future India and Pakistan as sharing cordial relations.

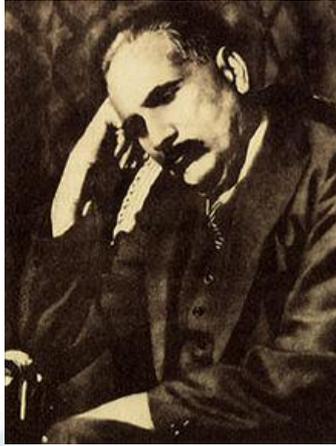
In short this was the explanation that Jinnah offered for his two-nation theory. Clearly, according to this theorization not much was said about equality between upper and lower classes of Muslims rather an attempt was made to silently pave the way for consolidating the rule of the Muslim upper classes.



Picture- Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Source-

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad\\_Ali\\_Jinnah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad_Ali_Jinnah). As seen on 4/3/2104.

It is critical to point out that even though Jinnah is seen as the founder of Pakistan, another important political figure whose thought added to the development of the two-nation theory was Muhammad Iqbal.



Picture- Muhammad Iqbal. Source- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad\\_Iqbal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad_Iqbal). As seen on 4/3/2014.

Iqbal emphasised the cultural aspect of Islam and suggested that Muslims were to get together on geo-political basis. A pan Islamic identity was seen to be problematic by Iqbal. He suggested that each region in the world had its specific addition to Islam and in order to ensure that Muslims of a region flourish, they must come together in that area. Islam was the basis of identity and this must translate into political identity as well. The concept of territorial nationalism was critical to his thought. Nationalism as a concept was seen to be important only in so far as it served as a point of merger between Muslim identity and Islam. In other words nationalism was to be incorporated between the idea of Islam. Iqbal found Indian nationalism problematic because it did not adequately recognize Muslim identity (Puri, 1996, pg. 592). Iqbal did not create a hierarchy between religions. He did not intend to say that any religion was superior to another. However, he did want to lay emphasis on the need for political, cultural and economic rights for the Muslim community. He was skeptical of an independent India characterized by the domination of Hindus. The most interesting aspect of Iqbal's conceptualization of assertion of Muslim political identity was that he argued for provisional autonomy for Muslim dominated areas within an Indian Union.

It is important to point out that Jinnah's conception of the two-nation theory developed in dialogue with some Muslim League members. In 1939 a League Working Committee was set up which looked in to the matter of articulating political interests of Muslims. Some argued for a loose federation with autonomy for Muslims, whilst others professed the division of colonial India into three sovereign states- Pakistan, Bengal and Hindustan (Moore, 1993, pg. 173). Jinnah rejected both these suggestions. After the 1940 Presidential address, Jinnah proclaimed himself as the sole spokesperson of the Muslims and created a stage where the British and Congress were asked to directly negotiate with him on the matter. Within the Muslim League, he pressurized members to agree with the two-nation theory and those who didn't agree were asked to resign.

However, it is important to point out that 'Pakistan' was not a well worked out political idea. In the sense that Jinnah's conception of the borders of Pakistan and the nature of proposed relationship between eastern and western regions of Pakistan, were unclear in his statements. For instance, it has been pointed out

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that at the time of the Cripps negotiations, Jinnah argued to let Defense and Foreign Affairs of the proposed Muslim nation rest with the British for a stipulated time (Moore, 1993, pg. 187). It was only towards 1944-45 that he began speaking about an independent sovereign Pakistan. The only thing Jinnah emphasized repeatedly was the right the Muslims had for self-determination.

It needs to be added that there was a strand of Muslim political thought that was against the idea of a separate Muslim nation. There existed a strand of Muslim nationalism in Colonial India which believed in secularism. This ideology can be seen in the work of Abul Kalam Azad.



Picture- Abul Kalam Azad. Source- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abul\\_Kalam\\_Azad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abul_Kalam_Azad). As seen on 4/3/2014.

Azad believed in the idea of a composite Indian nationalism. He believed, like Gandhi ji that Muslims and Hindus could peacefully co-exist and grow together, within a united nation state. Azad based his beliefs on the scriptural thesis of Quran. His main aim was the integration of the millat (a form of community) and adoption of principles of shariat by all Muslims. Azad supported the theorization of 'wahdat-e-adyan' (unity of all religions). He believed in the unity of all religions and the common purpose of all religions as the elevation of human spirit and inculcating faith in God. Respect was to be shown to all religions equally and there was no hierarchy amongst religions. For Azad the most important aspect of Islam was 'ruboobiyat' (meaning mercy and justice) which he thought accrued to all humans irrespective of their religion or race (Puri, 1996, pg. 593).

Azad did want to create space in Indian nationalism for a distinct Muslim identity but within a federative structure of power sharing. Azad was undoubtedly secular and democratic in his ideas. Extending his ambit of criticism of foreign rule on economic grounds, Azad vouched for the creation of one united independent state.

There have been other significant thinkers in Muslim political thought but for the current project it is important to point out that Muslim political thought was not homogeneous. There were currents in Muslim political thought which supported the two nation theory, as well as opposed the two nation theory. However, due to certain planned and unplanned contingencies of history the proponents of the two-nation theory won during negotiations with the British.

### **Section 3: Role of British and Indian National Congress.**

In the following section the policies of the British Colonial state would be examined. Subsequently, the dilemmas and decision of the Congress pertaining to the issue of Muslim separatism and Partition would be analyzed.

#### The Colonial State's policies-

It has been argued that the British policy of Divide and Rule in colonial India culminated in the form of Partition between India and Pakistan. The policy of Divide and Rule and the growth of communalism were interrelated. The policy of Divide and Rule led to communalism and extreme communalism led to Partition. The British Colonial state chose to strengthen its power in India by adopting the strategy of dividing social groups and pitting them against each other. It has been argued that the Colonial government used this policy to weaken the Indian National movement (Chandra, Mukherjee, Panikkar, Mahajan, 1987, pg. 408-9). The Colonial state supported communal strategies in the name of protecting the interests of the minorities. The British said that in order to deal with the problem of Hindu-Muslim discord and in order to avert the threat of Hindu majoritarianism, it was critical to give special representation rights to the minorities. Communalism developed with the support of the policies of the Colonial state.

Colonial policies strengthened communal practices in the following ways. Firstly, communities were separated and defined on grounds of religious affiliation. This meant that Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs etc. were treated as separate communities and were given representational rights accordingly. Further these communities were believed to be completely different and hostile to each other. Thus, it was argued that only the representatives of each community could represent the interests of that community. India was seen as an amalgamation of these diverse cultural groups which did not have the capacity to unite according to the British. Secondly, the Colonial government extended privileges to communal actors and agreed to communal demands. For instance- the Communal Award of 1932 was a response of the British to the communal demands of those times. Thirdly, the British readily accepted the communal spokespersons as the sole representatives of their communities. Towards the end of the British rule, Jinnah was seen as the sole spokesperson of the Muslims in Colonial India, in spite of the fact that other Muslim leaders were present within the Muslim League and in the Congress who were opposed to the idea of Partition. Most importantly, the policy of introducing separate electorates by the British led to the creation of separate political communities based on religious affiliation. Muslim League gained electoral support of Muslim Indians during elections before Independence in 1946, they won 90% of Muslim seats. This made it possible to articulate the idea of Partition based on popular support as a legitimate demand to avert the threat of Hindu majority rule (Chandra, Mukherjee, Panikkar, Mahajan, 1987, pg. 408-9).

Communalism strengthened due to other reasons also but it could not have flourished the way it did without the support of the British Colonial state.

Towards the end of the British rule, the Colonial state was finding it difficult to deal with the law and order problems posed by communal violence. Partition was the way chosen to deal with this. Though Partition did not seem to be the first option even for the British. The Cripps Mission was sent to India to respond to the demand for self-government, clearly rejected the idea of Partition. Even in 1946, an analysis of the British state actors speeches it can be ascertained that Partition was not an option. Attlee's statement in March 1946 was based on the argument that the Muslim minority would not be allowed to have its way in all decisions pertaining to transfer of power. Initially even the Cabinet Mission was not in favour of Partition. They suggested the establishment of three areas-one consisting of Bombay, Madras, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Central Provinces and Orissa; second consisting of NWFP, Punjab and Sind; third consisting of Assam and Bengal. A common centre was to be responsible for defense and foreign affairs (Chandra, Mukherjee, Panikkar, Mahajan, 1987, pg. 492-93). There would be provisions for provinces to move out of these groups. The Congress did not agree to this proposal as its members wanted a clear support for a united India and the Muslim League demanded the right for these provinces to question these groups right in the beginning rather than after ten years.

The Congress interpreted the plan as being principally against Pakistan, even though there were some problematic provisions. An interim government was formed in September 1946 with the Congress at the helm of affairs. By October the Muslim League also joined the Interim government. The Congress and the Muslim League demanded the dissolution of the Interim government, as they did not agree with each others political decisions.

When the British appointed Lord Mountbatten to oversee the transfer of power from British Colonial state, they were still considering the possibility of the option of Partition. Mountbatten could not persuade Jinnah for a united India and could not control the communal violence prevalent at that time, resulting in the decision to Partition Colonial India. There exist many controversies around the manner in which these decisions were negotiated and the manner in which boundaries were decided (see Datta, 2002, pg. 35). It needs to be stressed in the end that the British played a decisive role in the process of the negotiations on Partition.

### The dilemmas and decisions of the Congress-

Sucheta Mahajan has argued that the moment of independence and Partition in 1947 need to be viewed as the culmination of the Indian national movement's successes and failures. The Indian national movement succeeded in forming an alliance between some classes and communities and in acquiring independence from the British, but it failed to create unity which could have prevented Partition (Mahajan, 2002, pg. 67). What happened in 1947 was a result of the collapse of negotiations between the Congress and the Muslim League. Nor could the Congress garner the support of the Muslims especially after 1937, nor could it find a lasting solution to the strengthening Muslim communal politics.

There were various reasons behind the decision of the Congress to ultimately accept the demand of the Muslim League for Partition. Essentially the Congress did not vouch for Partition of India. Congress leaders wanted the British to transfer power to a united India. One of the reasons for accepting the demand for Pakistan was that the Congress leaders came to the conclusion that the demand was based on 'popular will' (Mahajan, 2002, pg. 70). Gandhi ji said; " The demand has been granted because you asked for it. The Congress never asked for it... But the Congress can feel the pulse of the people. It realized that the Khalsa as also the Hindu desires it.... They have taken this course because they realized that it was not possible to get around the Muslim League in any other way... We do not wish to force anyone. We tried hard. We tried to reason with them but they refused to come into the Constituent Assembly" (as quoted in Mahajan, 2002, pg. 70). Gandhi ji accepted the Muslim right to seek self-determination. Gandhi ji's stand on the issue was complicated and remains difficult to understand.

On one hand Gandhi ji was firmly opposed to the very idea of Partition. He worked very hard to build solidarity in the Indian national movement and espoused his belief in the equality of all religions, castes and classes. It is important to note that in his writings and speeches he articulated his stand against the two-nation theory. He said that the argument that Hindus and Muslims comprise two different nations was 'untrue' (Gandhi, 1940; as quoted in Hasan, 1993, pg. 70). He vehemently disagreed with Jinnah regarding incompatibility of Hindu and Muslim interests. Gandhi ji argued that Hindus and Muslims had been in conflict over different issues in the past but there also existed a history of shared struggles and collective living. He emphasized that Hindus and Muslims could overcome enmity and forge lasting relationships. He tried his utmost to build an alliance with the Muslim League. Even after he sensed that no one was ready to oppose Partition, he urged people to not accept it in their hearts. However, after these attempts failed he agreed to Partition on grounds of respecting the popular will of the people.

Gandhi ji believed that the will of the Muslims was to be respected and it would not be fair to coerce them either way. Still he argued that other actions/decisions which would strengthen the move towards Partition, were not to be supported. For instance, he opposed the partition of the army and he also opposed the migration of people across borders. He argued that Muslims were an integral part of India and they need not feel forced to join Pakistan. Even Nehru urged people to continue to stay where they had been living prior to the decision to partition India but examining the rising communal tension around the time of Partition, he changed his opinion.

It has been suggested that one of the reasons that the Congress leadership agreed to Partition was also because they saw it as a sort of temporary measure (Mahajan, 2002, pg. 74). It was thought by some that after passions subsided, people would see the futility of Partition and would want to re-unite. Though after Nehru comprehended that Congress hope of a united India was being seen by the Muslim League as an attempt to dominate over them, he changed his stance. Nehru worked hard to understand and deal with the demand for Partition.

Nehru argued that Partition would not benefit the Muslims in the long run. In economic terms the Muslims would suffer as the regions which had predominantly Muslim population were economically backward. Once the Partition would take place it would become difficult for them to gain economic growth. Additionally, these regions would lose contact with industrial and mineral rich areas of India. Nehru also argued that there should have been a plebiscite to determine Muslim popular will on the subject of Partition. According to Nehru, some leaders of the Muslim League had artificially created the demand for Partition and it had been projected as a popular demand. He urged the contending parties to view the prospect of Partition practically and see the inherent follies in the proposal itself (Nehru, as quoted in Hasan, 1993, pgs.74-80).

Mahajan also suggests that the Congress accepted the proposal for Partition in the hope that it would finally help in ending the wide spread communal violence prevalent in Colonial India in 1946-47 (Mahajan, 2002, pg. 76). The Congress could have opted to oppose the demand for Partition through use of force but this was against its democratic ideals. When dialogue and negotiations with the Muslim League failed and the Interim government didn't succeed, the Congress accepted the demand for Pakistan. It has been mentioned in previous sections of this chapter how the negotiations between the Congress, the British government and the Muslim League failed to work out a plan for transferring power to a united India. The Congress tried to pressurize the British to transfer power to a united India but didn't succeed in the endeavor primarily because of its inability to forge a united front with the Muslim League representatives.

#### **Section 4: Why did partition take place? Was it only because of the two-nation theory?**

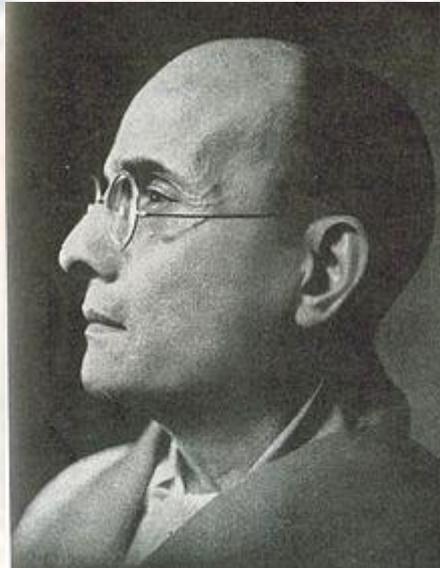
When we try to find answers to the question why did partition happen, we find many answers. Firstly, it has been argued that it was because of the divide and rule policy of the British that Pakistan and India were divided. Secondly, it has been suggested that the fight between Muslim and Hindu communalists and the formulation of the two-nation theory led to the partition. Thirdly, it has been argued that it was only due to the pressure put on British authorities by elites such as Jinnah that partition became a reality. Fourthly, it has been argued that a support base had begun to emerge amongst Muslims which supported the two nation idea. It was this support which the Muslim League was able to consolidate and push for partition.

There is merit in all the above-mentioned arguments but rather than seeing separately as singular causes, we need to view them together. In other words it was due to a combination of causes that the partition of British India took place. The British did follow a policy of divide and rule. This becomes evident in their decisions to partition Bengal and to introduce separate electorates for the Muslims. Separate electorates implied that a Muslim electorate and a Muslim political identity began to emerge wherein Muslims leaders began to address only

## Two Nations Theory, Negotiations on Partition of India and Pakistan

Muslims and Muslim votes only considered Muslim leaders (Hardiman, 1982, pg. 1492). It was the strengthening of communal division between Hindus and Muslims that resulted in Partition. This argument has been explored in section three of this chapter.

This isn't all. The role of Hindu communalism also needs to be examined in this context. It needs to be understood that both Muslim and Hindu communalism fuelled each other. Arguments in favour of Hindutva seem to have been articulating the anxieties of upper caste/class Hindus during the national movement in India, who felt alienated and threatened by the political agenda for recognition and power sharing by the Muslims, the secular policies of congress and the pursuit of the policy of reservation by the British. V.D. Savarkar in his attempts to answering the question who is a Hindu? Went to great lengths to create a distinctive political and cultural Hindu identity. Hindus according to his conceptualization were defined on the bases of the territory they inhabited, their common lineage, common culture and common language.



Picture- V.D. Savarkar. Source- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vinayak\\_Damodar\\_Savarkar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vinayak_Damodar_Savarkar).  
As viewed on 5/3/2014.

Savarkar used myths as well as extremely selective authentic historical work to create his notion of the Hindu identity. He worked on the construction of a politically expedient narrative. It is extremely interesting to examine the manner in which 'Hindutva' was being constructed through the text of the document 'Who is a Hindu?' and yet it was being claimed that it was an ancient construct the origins of which it seems are beyond the scope of history to capture. It was critical in Savarkar's conceptualization that a Hindu state be created. On the question of how the minorities were to be assimilated in the Hindu state, Savarkar argued that minorities were welcome to be a part of the Hindu nation till they acknowledged the superiority of the Hindu nation itself. Additionally, the minorities had to acknowledge their connections with the Hindu religion and way of life (Dixit, 1986, pg. 133).

Savarkar argued, "we shall ever guarantee protection to the religion, culture and language of the minorities for themselves, but we shall no longer tolerate and aggression on their part on the equal liberty of the Hindus to guard their religion,

culture and language as well. If non-Hindu minorities are to be protected, then surely the Hindu majority also must be protected against any aggressive minority in India" (as quoted in Dixit, 1986, pg. 133). Clearly this was a response to the rising demands of the Muslims in British India. M.S. Golwalker argued that the aim of Hindu ideology was the conversion of secular India into a Hindu state for the growth of the 'Hindu personality'. Secondly, to gain control over parts which used to belong to the Hindu nation. Thirdly, to generate a spirit of solidarity amongst Hindus by a process of purification of their race (Dixit, 1986, pg. 135). This formed part of the ideological basis which fuelled Hindu communalism. Both Hindu and Muslim communalism responded to each other and this race became incompatible beyond a certain stage leading to partition. The role played by the Congress or in other words the lack of a constructive role played by the Congress in negotiating with the British and with the Muslim League also led to the eventuality of partition.

It has been argued that if we think of the two-nation theory as the only causative factor leading to the partition between Pakistan and India then we tend to generalize events on the basis of accounting for the actions of only a few elite individuals. The two-nation theory does not adequately explain the political, economic and cultural impact of certain key policies introduced by the British which led to the consolidation of the Muslim political identity (Hasan, 1998, pg. 2663). For instance one of the critical aspects about the rallying cry for Pakistan was that not everyone who supported the claim for an independent Muslim state was equally vested in the idea.

Mushirul Hasan suggests that many were forced into taking Islamic positions on the issue. Additionally, landed classes in Punjab and United Provinces created a platform for articulating their material interests by supporting the Muslim League. In other words, Muslims did not necessarily support the cause of the creation of a separate Muslim nation as much as certain groups used this campaign to bargain for more power for themselves. The idea of a separate Muslim state was not supported as much by religious leaders of the Muslims as much as it was supported by certain struggling classes. These included the professional groups from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Hyderabad and the trading and banking communities of Gujarat, Bombay and Calcutta (Hasan, 1998, pg. 2665). These classes saw in the idea of Pakistan space for access to power for themselves and lesser competition.

Groups which had benefited from the British rule were against the League's demands initially. For example the Muslim landlords of UP revolted against the League. However after these groups felt that the Congress was going against their interests and adopting land reform measures, they began to support the Muslim League again. The interest of the landlords in supporting the battle cry for Pakistan was not based on their support for a separate Muslim political entity. These were more interested in securing their property rights and they felt that if they rendered support to the Muslim League, they would be able to hold on to their privileges.

Hasan also points out that there were those Muslims who did not support partition at all. Such as the Khudai Khidmatgars in the North West Frontier Province, the Ulema of Deoband and Momins of Bihar. These were reduced to

marginalized voices of dissent against the creation of Pakistan. The larger point that needs to be emphasized is that the Muslim League was not as cohesive as it is made out to be.

Muslims in British India did not constitute a homogeneous group. There were religious Muslims who were devoted to the idea of a separate nation for Muslims. On the other hand there were secular Muslims who were not enchanted by the idea of Pakistan (Shani, 2007, pg. 77). In this context to see Jinnah as the legitimate spokesperson for all Muslim interests does not throw adequate light on the complexities of the circumstances.

Another fact which is not adequately emphasised in writing on Partition, is that many people who did not live in the areas which were to be partitioned, were not aware of the intensity of the situation. The British, the Congress and the Muslim League could not imagine the amount of displacement and violence that partition would bring along. On the other hand there were people living in British India who were not impacted by the Partition at all (Hasan, 1998, pg. 2666).

It is important to point out that the events of the last ten years before independence played an important role in determining the final contours of independence and Partition. Hasan has argued that the process of consolidation of the Muslim League was very slow before the 1940's (Hasan, 1993, pg. 5). Relations between different communities, especially between the Hindus and the Muslims had also not deteriorated until the post-Khilafat incident and end of the Non-Cooperation movement. In the 1930's there existed no plan for creating Pakistan. Scholars like Iqbal articulated the need for exclusive political rights for Muslims but he did not argue for separatism just as yet. The Muslim League also did not have a mass base amongst Muslims in the 1930's. Some critical events in later years made the demand for Pakistan possible. Additionally, even till 1935 Congress and the Muslim League had similar perspectives on political and agrarian issues pertaining to Colonial India.

Further, it has been argued that the Second World War and the political scenario that emerged in Colonial India created space for Jinnah to build a strong relationship with the British and demand separatism. The British during this time negotiated with Jinnah as this alliance benefited them politically. In this process the British began to accord legitimacy to the Muslim League's critique of the Congress and began to accept Jinnah as the spokesperson of all Muslim interests in Colonial India. The Congress, especially Gandhi ji and Nehru failed to successfully negotiate with the Muslim League in this period.

The Congress decision of not forming a coalition with the Muslim League created a platform for the strengthening of the Muslim League in 1937. In U.P. the Congress government was accused of being partial towards Hindus and ignoring issues of Muslims. In Bihar and Central Provinces, the Vidya Mandir and Wardha schemes of education and the singing of Bande Mataram proved to be serious issues around which communal politics developed (Hasan, 1993, pg. 17). Muslims were dissatisfied with lack of representation of their interests in policy decisions of the Congress. Given this scenario and given the Government of India Act of 1935, the clash of interests between communities began to take a political shape.

It became possible to channelize the electorate and general public along communal lines as the possibility of communal political representation had been created by British policies. Jinnah and the members of the Muslim League who agreed with him were able to channelize this dissent into the demand for a separate state. As has already been pointed out in Section 2 of this chapter, it also needs to be remembered that Pakistan was not the vision of all Muslims. It was the formulation of some politically powerful Muslims who had managed to secure bargaining power within their community and with the British.

## **Section 5: Aftermath of the decision to Partition India and Pakistan.**

The movement of people across both ends of the border began much before 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947. Men, women and children; Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs moved across the borders and were subjected to communal riots. Many women were abducted, forced to change their religion and sexually assaulted. Millions of people lost their lives and livelihood and millions of people got displaced. Gyanendra Pandey has argued that violence is not an aberration in the discourse of development of modernity. Instead, violence is constitutive of the very formation of the modern nation states even though this is not always acknowledged (Pandey, 1994, pgs. 192-3).

The region of Punjab was divided and the cities of Lahore and Amritsar witnessed mass migration. According to one set of estimates a total of about half a million Sikhs and Hindus moved from the side of newly formed Pakistan, and around six million Muslims moved for the Indian side of the border. In the regions around Bengal, migration of millions of people happened intermittently over a protracted period of time. These flows of migration happened against the backdrop of communal violence induced by the Partition. Estimates are that about 200,000 to about 1,000,000 people were killed. One hundred thousand women were kidnaped. Women suffered on account of being seen as the upholders of 'honour' of their communities. In order to dishonour the 'other' community, women of that community were targeted. There was also loss of property of communities which migrated across the borders. Sikhs and Hindus are believed to have left property close to Rs. 500 crores in Pakistan. Muslims are believed to have left property worth Rs. 100 crores in India (Talbot & Tatla, 2006, pgs. 1-2).

Talbot and Tatla have argued that there were three distinct phases of violence witnessed in the Lahore and Amritsar area (Talbot & Tatla, 2006, pgs. 6-7). The first was associated with the resignation of Khizr Hayat Khan Tiwana and the coalition ministry he headed. This meant that Muslim League lost power in that region. In early March 1947 rioting started in Amritsar and Multan. Many non-Muslims were killed in districts of Rawalpindi Division, namely, Attock, Rawalpindi and Jhelum. The second phase of violence started in May 1947 and included serious confrontations leading to stabbing and bombing in Amritsar, Lahore and Gurgaon district. The scale of damage was so much that Nehru called for army intervention to stop violence. The third phase began when the British left after Partition and this was the most gruesome phase. There were unprecedented acts

of violence at the individual and at the collective level initiated by members of Hindu, Sikh and Muslim religions. It is important to hold all communities culpable for acts of violence initiated by them and at the same time it is important to register that all communities suffered losses of unimaginable proportions.

Banerjee whilst reviewing Urvashi Bhutalia's path breaking work on survivors of partition, has stated that women suffered violence not only on account of the 'enemy' community but also from their own respective communities. For instance some Sikh clans killed 'their' women in order to save them from the atrocities they would suffer at the hands of the other community i.e. Muslims. In the name of protecting honour it was critical for the community to save their women even if it meant killing them (Banerjee, 1998, pg. 2518). Several Hindu and Sikh women became a part of Muslim households through forced as well as voluntary conversions.



Picture- A crowd of Muslims at the Old Fort (Purana Qila) in Delhi, which had been converted into a vast camp for Muslim refugees waiting to be transported to Pakistan.

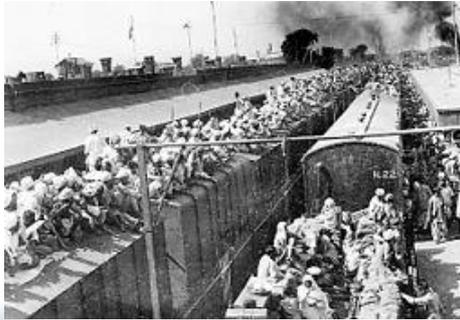
*Manchester Guardian*, 27 September 1947. Source-

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partition\\_of\\_India#World\\_War\\_I.2C\\_Lucknow\\_Pact:\\_1914.E2.80.931918](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partition_of_India#World_War_I.2C_Lucknow_Pact:_1914.E2.80.931918). As seen on 3/3/2014.

Forms of brutality experienced during partition were unprecedented and had never before been seen in any communal riots. In the name of dishonoring the enemy; Muslim women were abducted by Sikh and Hindu men, and Hindu and Sikh women were abducted by Muslim men. Aysha Ghani, has argued that the issue of abducted women was taken up in the inter-dominion conference between India and Pakistan, in December 1947; as the bodies of these abducted women served as reminders of loss for both new nation-states, and the act of abduction of women emasculated the state and community in India and Pakistan. Both states agreed to work towards the recovery of 'their' women from the 'other'

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state (Ghani, 2009, pg.179). Ghani (2009) suggests that the public and mass nature of abduction from both sides of the newly formed borders, and the public nature of return; relegated women to the status of victim citizens.



**Picture-** Photo of a railway station in Punjab. Many people abandoned their fixed assets and crossed newly formed borders. Source- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partition\\_of\\_India#World\\_War\\_I.2C\\_Lucknow\\_Pact:\\_1914.E2.80.931918](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partition_of_India#World_War_I.2C_Lucknow_Pact:_1914.E2.80.931918). As seen on 3/3/2014.

After Partition, attempts were made by the Indian and Pakistani governments to 'rescue' their women. By December 1949, 12,000 women had been recovered by India and 6,000 women had been recovered by Pakistan. Though through the process of 'recovery' many women went back to their families in Pakistan and India; and to that extent from the perspective of the nation states, the process of recovery was successful even if to a limited extent. But for the women who suffered abduction, physical abuse on the one hand, and continuous displacement on the other hand; this process of recovery was fraught with contradictions. The rescue teams were not equipped to deal with the sensitive matters, which had arisen in the lives of these women in the time that they had lived away from 'their' homes; many women had married men of the 'other' religion had now had children within these marriages, many women were still pregnant at the time that they were 'rescued'. Thus, for these women being rescued by their native families/religious groups/ state to which they should have owed their allegiance; meant an act of double displacement.

In Pakistan, according to Ghani (2009) political leaders used the religious ambit of Islam and the 'high' status given to women therein; to publically argue that the abducted women who did come back were to be accepted by their family members, as well as by the nation state. It was through this process that the Pakistani state sought to consolidate itself and its citizens within the framework governed by commitment to law and progressive modern governance; for the Pakistani state threatened to legally penalize men who did not accept 'their' abducted women back.



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Picture – Image of Partition of India in 1947. Source-  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partition\\_of\\_India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partition_of_India). As seen on 4/3/2014.

There can be no conclusion to the bloody realities of the Partition between India and Pakistan. Till date both states do not share cordial relations with each other. They have fought four wars- 1947, 1965, 1971 and 1999. It is critical for establishing peace in South Asia that we move beyond the history of partition by acknowledging our losses and build a new era of solidarity across the nations.



Exercise

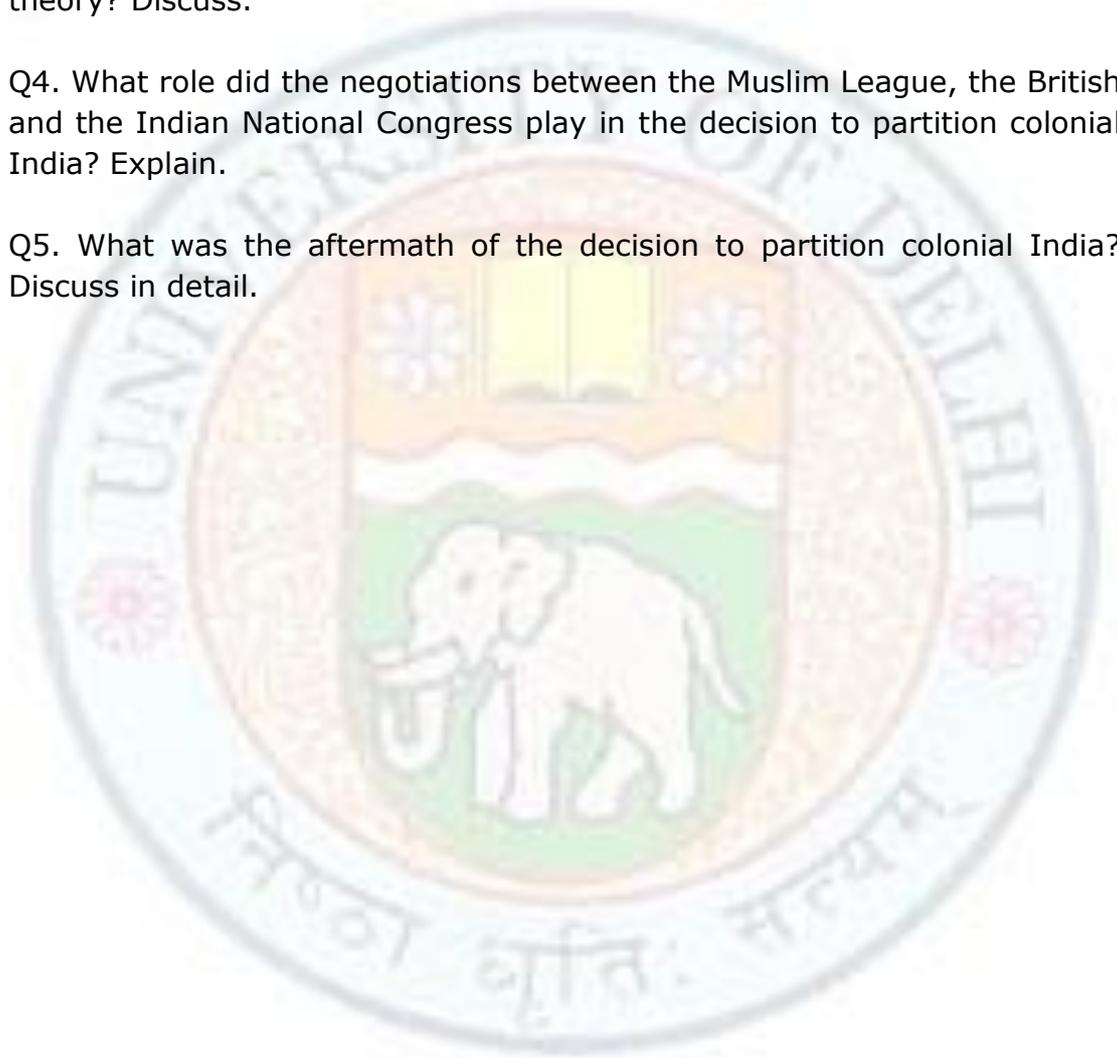
Q1. Explain the two-nations theory? In what context and by whom was it formulated?

Q2. What were the factors responsible for the partition of colonial India? Elaborate.

Q3. Why did partition take place? Was it only because of the two-nation theory? Discuss.

Q4. What role did the negotiations between the Muslim League, the British and the Indian National Congress play in the decision to partition colonial India? Explain.

Q5. What was the aftermath of the decision to partition colonial India? Discuss in detail.



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